

Enough

The Book of James

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Standing Dead Publications
PO Box 387
O'Brien, Oregon 97534

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ISBN 978-0-9845693-6-6

Standing Dead—

Let us cast aside the husk, walk away from that which was our name,
and leave it as a dead thing. Standing Dead are we—as a tree rent by
lightening: now bright and sudden, we who refuse to fall.

This is for my friend Jacqueline... another who has cheated the storm.

As a shattered puddle struck into mist... *As Mist!* So was he that morning to have been dreaming and then, to know her, to know that the dream was real! To look up from his weeping dream and see that she had found him, broken and alone, complete and ruined, bright and glad burnt up into mist, set before the sun as a silent prayer dreaming, and to awake and discover, the dream was real. The tears fell from James's eyes and he beheld her, form and essence, a spirit, an imagining struck into truth. She was real!

And James spoke within his glad heart, "Oh how many days have swept up through my world, clear and ice as light and water, spray and laughter before the sun, yellow and golden, innocent and weeping... to have found you.

The war and my weary soul, creased and spent, a sad leather soul, ugly and brown, peeled up from the depths of Man, a leather scab and a tough skin, a lie upon a lie, so did I pour my disgrace, my pain and my knowing before the sun, alone in dreams, knowing and dreaming, again and at last to understand the play, the saga of ruined shadows and posturing stupidity, the self-misunderstanding which broke me open, again and at last, broken open, shimmering before the sun, alone in my dreaming, my knowing, all sad selves

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peeled open and raw, sparkling and dancing in glad silver sun, ice and pure cold wells filled with light, knowing and forgetting, each year a season, a tear, another hollow of light before the pain of my broken promise before time—the ruin splintered into shards of diamond, sparkling and liquid, tears of new happiness to begin again, to know only now, the gem again liquid, pouring and poured into form, a new promise, a new name only now spoken aloud, torn from the moorings of past and at last—present... alone."

So had James found the road to the chill glad salvation of his ruined war-torn, singed, burnt-up soul, now spilt open in the solitude of the Alaskan wilderness. Complete, naked, wise—and alone.

To have found Carolyn in his dream, not as a ghost or an imagining of tenderness and torment, but real, James fell back to earth from the ice heaven of his self-redemption, fell into the warmth and weeping sun of a new and complete bliss beyond the scope of his understanding—and so—as one who was wise he did not understand... but enfolded her within his still richer bliss, an earthly bliss struck and pooled with rose light and iced light, cold and heat, tears and hollow sorrow, that is at last filled.

He did not care how she had found him, so alone and pure—as ice twice melted and twice wept, hidden so many years deep in the wilderness, but she had! And now James ascended as light buoyed atop light, could he elude her, climbing up into the highest ice cave where even her wicked climbing spirit would strain to reach, and now, James felt the chill air tease his cheek, and let the bright cold snap from the first stretch of his nimble fingers as he began to write:

I stand before this day... new and broken, a promise as yet unaware of itself, a question overflowing of any limit or any answer, new and unknown. How else am I to embrace the day but as the day itself? An unknown too broad to ask,

a hollow too gracious, too unsure, too eager to find, to feel every empty wanting place, now and again, open and aching, sultry and wanton in its aching to be filled, so do I spill my soul into the day, alone and pure, so do I dream the seasons, pluck the colors of my heaven and dream all the world back into itself, now alive in it, now it in me, as time and loneliness, fullness and knowing, forgetting and dying, life breathes me into herself and she into me, living and dying, innocent, perfect, pure and alone.

So was I everything and nothing, a hollow filled with light, a sigh lost, spent as a private whisper, a breath of fragrant and forgotten light, as a hue whispered amongst gracious silent shadows, until you found me.

Now I am no longer a dream, alone and complete, I am twice alive within you, a dreamer in whom I may imagine even the impossible, the ludicrous and foolish, to imagine... that it matters. I must write my poetry for you quickly, for you have become quite strong and will soon find me, even here, where the sun is too weary to reach, in the midst of this blue ice chill, here in my secret ice cave filled with blue ice and splintered silver light. Oh how I am like this cave, my light sneaking past itself, into itself, to find the gem hidden so bashfully within itself, shameless and laughing am I to pour the jewel fourth and speak its name aloud! Who but you could join me in making innocent and bright all that is forbidden, to gladly drink from the most remote ice springs, here so high? Who but you could be strong enough to earn this place beside me, here where light can hardly climb, here where only the wind and the beating of eagle's wings in ice air find solace—here in the purest solitude, here all others are forbidden. Only you have strength to find joy with me, heat and bounty of spirit to bring warmth and the honied spirit of golden heat to thaw even these heights, so severe and unforgiving, so pure and austere, our heights, now melting, flowing gladly, solved and swept up into the

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warmth of your soul, your arms outstretched around the golden horizon, my warmth within your light, now a whisper swells past knowing, between us the secret can not escape, as the breath of a new name, tender and warm, brazen and foolish, a new prayer from unknown lips... innocent, strong and wise.

Carolyn in close pursuit:

Oh to think, even for a moment, to think you might lose me, me, the shadow who is cast before your moments, that I might forgive you the very essence of the thought—an insult! For I am your fore-soul—the soul before your intentions, the idea of you exists in the wake of my expectation and so, you are but my late imagining, a necessity which is cast into form after I have imagined you! So do you seek to hide from me, as the past hides from the future, here in the present you are always waiting, the whisper conjured after the ear, the thought after the deed, just as I have imagined you! So do I will you, and so you are here, exactly as I require it! Ha!

In laughter the two lovers met, the game ended there in the ice cave, the joyous task at last alive, a single thought suspended between two minds. The two had become again, here in the Alaskan wilderness they were gladly shattered and without form, spilled into the same moment as one mind, as a cacophonous joyous murk of mind and sun, love and mischievous misdeed and prank, joy and affirmation, two laughing spirits boiled into one voice spilled upon the page, inseparable and incombinable, a single unity in endless division, my impossibility within you, the two known and unmixable, as one but unknowable, so do I know you, and you me, as one voice which comes, speaks even before the words are known, an ineffable poem, too empty not to speak, as an impossibility unresisting of itself, a self-

creation, as hunger which becomes a blessing, a sweetness—at last filled. So did you appear to me after all those years of loss and want, just as I to you, as a sweet wraith of prised beauty, the death rattle of all empty places, the joy of a new fullness too over ripe, too sweet and ripe with blood and need, so wanton was the sight, so voluptuous and impossible the fullness to behold you, to know it was true, real... and oh how real! My weeping treasure, so overflowing with every burst happiness and sorrow, so red and bruised with every new happiness bearing down upon your engorged soul, so tender and burnt, each second of feeling and light as a wound struck into your trembling soul, burst and weeping, outstretched before me, a river of pain and sweetness into which I might fall, and again be born. So did I find your soul, and imagined of happiness never knowing that even happiness, particularly our happiness, must, and should, always come at blood's cost. How much must we know to find such laughter... indeed, how very much!

After hearing the tale, how you were knocked to pieces and crushed, laid up as waves and waste upon an unforgiving and noble shore, where only silence judged the wound, and the wound could bear the fruit of that ecstasy which life had denied, alone and burst, pure and new, the mirror and begetter of all things, as crushed light redoubled in laughter, as platinum tears and true happiness burst from the dark, a shuddering pain at the birth of joy itself and then to find even a cup to hold this burst spirit of joy, a chalice into which it might be poured, spilled into light and laughter that knows... and is affirmed.

Oh how you have poured my soul from your bottle of dreams and let me see it. Gentle were you in revealing the sad, stupid, childish turnings of my sick soul, a sad child cupped in your tender hands, her wounds lavished and

forgotten, the tears of a thousand tortured cries, no longer choked within my breast, but free in waves of pain and happiness, pouring and over-pouring from my burst soul, an anguish spent, known and affirmed in daylight, to have you know me—to know everything—to touch it—to know it as you know it, to dream in daylight with our eyes open, and to remember... everything!

Can you see the price, the glorious and happy cost, to know so much—in daylight—can you ever know the cost of such happiness? Happiness bought at the dearest and most noble cost?—the death of shame! That and that alone, is the price of happiness—and even that I have gladly paid so that we may be here together, at last, on the highest, most unforgiving and truthful peaks... as equals.

Yes my love, you have cost me the full comfort and health of my ignorance to find my innocence, this innocent laughter, so cold, mocking, joyful and pure boiling up as the clearest iced light at the heart of all knowledge, all which is innocent and joyous in knowing even, itself. So has my soul, my ignorance been boiled, sanctified and permeated with light, until knowing itself became innocent, the reason spent, the question asked afresh.

How weak was I! Always struggling to find even the traces of your shadow as you crept silently and gladly through the forest, effortless and evil as a proud spirit born for such things as life and death, so far over me were you then! But now...Ha! I am faster than your second glance, smarter than your doubt, and stronger than you thought! Admit it— I have caught you—even you can not elude my grasp, and I have won! Admit it!

As James read what she had written he understood the depth of her anguish, her honesty and her victory. She was magnificent! Carolyn had understood herself completely,

unmasked and reborn in naked tears and laughter, she was a tumult of feeling without restraint, an honesty hovering over life, a spirit trembling before each moment as if before an unknown, before the very question itself, an open eye, unblinking and unknown before itself, exposed and trembling before life, her strength opened up and unresisting of the answer, strong enough to ask the question, her soul was a naked wound, a perfect bliss without form or presupposition: to listen for that which is most delicate and still, a trembling expectation, a trembling question spoken aloud, as if strong enough, curious enough to hear...the answer?...a new blossom about to unfold, to invite every unknown heat into itself, to ask and be naked, to invite even destruction if that were life's decree, her answer— Yes! She was strong enough even for that!— So did she find herself before life, a sultry tenderness, a fragrant whisper with the courage of a burst star... so did she tremble before each moment, the question asked, the answer pouring into her open heart, filling her, rewarding her, pouring every depth and beauty out through her empty soul, now full for having asked, red and full with the blood, the gratitude, heat and happiness spilling out from her over full heart, sweet and salt, pure and glad are your tears, your strength, your innocence... my one who knows... my innocent one.

And so he looked upon her, after the years of joyous toil had freed her limbs from every weakness, now supple and strong, her flesh a golden stretch of caramel sweetness and light, rippling with the curve of her breast and her will, bronze and sultry, undeniable and potent in its voluptuous rapture, the sight can not be withstood, endured, beheld, it must be known, felt and become, so potent and trembling a thing, so healthy and brown, tan and taut sinew, what holds firm and what yields, tracing their hands over her soul, the play of strength and yielding, taut and relenting, firm and

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bountiful is her strength! Oh you have but won and I will admit it! Yes, you have won!

And so James saw the curve of newest dawn, sweet and supple, fresh in every way before the sleeping day, teasing open the weary eyes of sleepless day now spilt into gladness to find her. For each day is such a seduction as this, a sultry quivering of unknown places, where Life herself might gaze upon the glow, and might herself be seduced. So warm and giving is the sight, the very sight of such health, trembling, quivering, aching expectantly, arched in supple tension before each moment. It is at such a sight as this that Life finally understands herself, finally relents before such beauty and accepts, yields, and at last knows herself... at last seduced to look, the trembling bounty, the question, only now, too sweet and full, too ripe to refuse.

And the seasons drew themselves around Carolyn and James as a cloak, ever more quietly, ever more softly spoke the whisper of their old world, and the cloak of forgetfulness closed lovingly around them, each season unfurled before them, bounty and cruelty, sun and ice, cruel and sultry is life, unthinking, exquisite and anguished are we beneath her winds, each breath unthinking and necessary, we feel and forget, while she sleeps on, forever breathing, and dreaming.

So did the moonlight stroke her hair and smudge the night with flecks of rose and amber, the scent of night and jasmine, the moonlight dripping as honey on her cheek, the day's labor of twenty heavy packs of wood and weight slip into the moonlit places so tender and guarded, now washed by the summer river... and the moonlight is bashful and teases in what of her glow she leaves to the unspoken places, alluring and hidden is her knowledge, her splendor graced in shadow and bashful shade. Strength made pure, innocent, needful of itself and needing itself, steps into the moonlight, as milk spills over laughter, she is adorned with moonlight, dripping white and pure over the outstretched sweep of her open belly, the curve of her supple breast dripping in milklight, pure clear and white, spilling itself as

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liquid light, touching, hovering, a delicate breath hangs silently upon her breast, arched and dripping in still moonlight. So beautiful is she, so beautiful is strength before heaven!

And as a celebration, a strength and a gratitude did they enjoin life and each other, as the true gratitude which erupts in spontaneous abandon, a giddy bubble of excess and affirmation, as the joy which must be born of strength and health, overflowing and overspilling as Life did they unknowingly repay each day in the unthinking joy that must spill over the banks of any life worthy, fertile, rich enough in pain, truth and joy that it must spill over, a current now too full to contain its truth, even the waters themselves seem to speak, to lie to us, to suggest and entice, "Even More!" Am I strong enough to imagine something better? Could something be above, over, even *this*? Can I afford even a daemon, am I strong enough for that, strong enough for hope?

And with the cool distance of the seasons they did grow as Life would have them, strong and beautiful, tireless and prankish, honest and weeping, living— Dreaming. So did the days pass and find them complete, shameless as aged children, laughing and wise. Their minds open and hungry, their bodies flourishing and taut as a bow string vibrating against the silver mystery of life, her challenge a perfect note, silver and bright, spent amidst forgotten sun, or cradled silently in spilled moonlight.

So it was a day like any other, the sun had begun its lazy stretch across the sky and poured her warmth and golden light through the window in lavish abandon. James watched as the day began, and Carolyn slept, her easy breath so delicate and unaware, the magnificence of her relaxed body, so able and supple, now able to run at an hour's span without a break or complaint. Her body had responded to the labors of life with newfound reserves to answer every resistance, her sleeping form, so vulnerable and perfect, lean and tight, graceful and supple, sweet and evil. Her body was a magnificence: the firm legs, the round sweep of her breast, the curve of her loin, so firm and sweet. Oh she was an animal of the highest splendor and James could not resist himself— The round warmth of her silken, firm perfection, so sultry, so round and ripe, so unaware! James could no longer resist the day or his beloved, and as one is want to do with any ripe perfect thing, he bit it. The right buttock, so exquisite and round, so firm and silken—it had to be done. He bit.

"Ouch!! Hey! What the fuck?! You prick! James— You prick!!!"

And so it was with a shout of pain and laughter that they welcomed the day, its bottom slapped pink, or rightly bitten before breakfast. After a wake up like that James knew he would have to cook, but the meal was good, and she soon forgave him, even if only to get in close enough to return the favor.

"Hey James, catch!" and he is stupid and grabs the towel she tosses, and while he is doing that, she is already there, with his hands busy she's up under him and "Chomp!" "Ouch!" Now she's laughing her ass off and James is covering his with the towel. Nope, Carolyn was just too damn fast. He never got away with anything anymore. She was absolutely perfect. Even better... Dangerous.

Nothing is as seductive as strength, and she felt her chest tighten to see him, so damn right, every feeling pouring over his outstretched soul, a giddy vibration beneath the sun, a shameless laughter that finally surrenders the spark, borne aloft as a silver ember, the shining note of spilled innocence, unsullied and silver, unabashed and unfettered, a child's thoughtless soul unhinged and the silver bubble spent out, unthinking and unafraid, innocent, beautiful and cruel is the purest laughter, silver and joyous.

Carolyn had returned James's wake up bite with one of her own, and upon seeing the welt, her laughter was uncontrollable. It was all James could do to catch her. She must have let him... or perhaps she was just out of breath from laughing. Yes, she was magnificent... even dangerous. Worthy in every way.

He caught her, collapsed alongside her, giddy and reeling, silly beyond belief and choking for breath. He touched her cheek, and swept her hair away from the curve of her jaw, and brushed his fingers as gently as a shadow of feathers, felt but never felt, as a whisper of a whisper did he kiss the rose curve, the delicate rouged seam of her

trembling mouth, so sweet and yielding, so tender and giving.

It was a day as any other, and as god and goddess they found form and nourishment in harmony with the world around them. So distant were they from the sick place that had spawned them, the feted stream so long drowned in the wash of days and light, that it seemed as if it had always been so, they had always been as they are, as god and goddess, always above mankind, as if there were no feted stream from whence they had come and of which they had done more, and even *overcome*, it seemed as if they could forget, even this. But even the gods were born, every strength is but an overcoming, a creating, a building of the possible, of a *new* god, indeed every new god must acknowledge that it came into being as just such an overcoming, an admission, that every supreme and valuable thing came into being precisely *because* it was once otherwise!

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As they walked back to camp that evening James and Carolyn heard something terrible and familiar, a forgotten echo that tugged at their ear, familiar and necrotic, pitiful and old, the sound of the sick thing that had born them, the thing they had so long ago spat out now tugged at their ear, desperate and wanting, the pitiful, plaintiff, broken sound of the race that gave them succor and form, the sad, broken, disfigured cry of humanity, most pitiful and wanting, familiar and wet, cloying and sick with the damp of weakness and self-loathing: The sour damp of self-doubt, pitiful, familiar and broken.

A voice crept up from the darkness, like a furtive oil, so distant, a fading stain of sound, almost beyond, too faint to taste as it stained the still night air,

"Ohhh... the world is gone, the world is dead, all are dead, nothing left, nothing but pain. Oh God, only pain... Oh my suffering, Ahhhh... they are all dead, so dead and blessed are they. I am too weak to follow, too weak to find them. Blessed are the dead... Ahhhh my lost soul, has found— Pain. Only pain... nothing but pain. Ahhhhh my suffering, my pain..."

So they helped him up from the ditch onto the trail, helped this vacant ghost from the world, so wan and thin, white and brittle, his face a stretched mask of pain, his mouth a crooked gash, a bloody wound squirming in contractions of sudden torment, then open and slack, lax and forgetting of itself to expose the running bloody gums pierced with a rotten fence of uneven broken teeth, ground away and splintered into sharp crooked points, his breath as his spirit, necrotic and pungent with the scent and sound of fear and decay. Every weakness, every self-deception and piteous, pitiful wallowing in decay, every false truth and true reason to abandon the question, to collapse and accept, to expect or perish, to have given or refuse, every ill-constituted, ill-conceived formulation of the puzzle, the very heart of the error they had created and recreated themselves above, all of the wretched twice spoilt slough, the yellow fat, the running sore, so miserable and slick, so unhealthy and vile stood before them... the abomination... the thing—so ugly and degenerate. At once they both recognized this sad hopeful wraith, this profane promise, this festering thing for what it was, their mother, the mother of all misery: The Soul of Man.

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They helped it to its feet, this sallow spirit of misery and misapprehension, for it could no longer stand, its strength wasted and spent in the contractions of its anguish, its misery and self-pity. For three days they nurtured it, fed it, spoke softly and gently into the shattered ruin of its misunderstood soul, but to no avail. The creature took no food, heard no word but those from within its broken mind, a twisting puppet, a marionette with tangled strings and a cruel puppeteer, jerking and spasming, cut and torn open, the chant mad and broken, always the same, "The world is dead...all are dead. Nothing but pain, only pain. Ohhhh how blessed are the dead! How weak am I to leave them, how I suffer—oh my suffering... the world is dead, all dead. Ahhhhhh! My pain! My pain! My suffering..."

Every cool shadow passed upon his skin as a knife's edge, the sun burst his every nerve in red anguish. The night was an emptiness only the pain of memory could fill, and the dawn, a peeling away of his tender flesh to unleash the most vile slap, the stench and shame of disgrace and failure, guilt and a trembling hand too weak to finish the work of Life and left her disgraced and suffering to know herself. Life herself too nauseous to gaze upon this creature,

this thing, too weak to die, too ugly to allow, an insult to every bright healthy thing, and a wretchedness, an ugly suffering to itself.

They placed it upon a bench under the cool shadows of a softly nodding pine, gracious and gentle, the tips of newest feathered green stirring an invisible whisper, finding the soul of a distant breeze, bending and stretching, sweeping the arch of the sky in hushed reverence, playful and serene, the shadows stroke the earth, the tracings of a distant perfect whisper... buoyant and weightless, a hollow shadow filled with the promise of light, tender and real, as a shadow bestows her cool kiss, the splash, the sweetest shelter of her tender damp, her shelter before the sun. So did she end its misery, the endless chanting and suffering, the insult and stain upon the sweetest grace of life, chanting its endless mantra of suffering and wretchedness, of endless pain and suffering, a torture to itself and a torment to the eye of all who behold it, as a cool shadow, a pure splash of cleansing light was the crack of the pistol shot, and the blessed silence that followed.

It had become more than either of them could bear, the constant madness, the unthinking misery, and it was clear what had to be done... oh so very clear, and now, the air was still and pure, innocent and silent, reborn to stillness, again sacred and innocent, now unburdened and unsullied, again pure and sanctified in gracious repose and tender stillness, at last unfettered and unsullied, reclaimed, no longer sullied and spoiled under the suffering soul of Man.

As the smoke and sound of the pistol shot cleared, the silent majesty of Life swept the stain of suffering and sickness from the air. James held her in silent gratitude, for in empathy alone had she cleansed this stain from the bruised heart of Life, as kindness and kindness alone is death to such suffering, and in kindness to Life do we cleanse the air of all that is too weak and sick to meet her

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challenge, and can but sully her name. So does Life become profane, her name a curse in the mouth of the hopeless suffering of Man... until at last his soul proves too weak, too comfortable and weak, to imagine her otherwise. One of them had to act, for the sake of life itself it had to be done, and that day, she proved the stronger.

The measure of any relationship can be found over breakfast. Now some ten months after the unwelcome intrusion of humanity into their world, it seemed as if a single drop of noxious blood had fallen into the pure well of their happiness. A drop of unwelcome revelation about their origins, and after falling into the endless pool of time, it seemed as if it had, at last, dispersed. Carolyn was chewing her breakfast and with a spark in her eye remarked,

"So James, I finished the twenty-three volumes of Freud from your memory pad, and yesterday, I took advantage of our long stretch of free time and wrote a metapsychological paper, an analysis of the mental transformations endemic to the Emotive Rationalist ideal, to use Norman's term for the end state we have achieved here in the wilderness. An articulation of the process in metapsychological language. We can discuss the bulk of it later, the ideas about hypercathexis and preconscious linguistic recognition of emergent unconscious structures can be addressed later, as well as the parallel between Norman's Native Psychoanalysis and Freud's metapsychology of the unconscious processes, but for now read the last paragraph and see if you agree. I believe I have it all well summed."

She was beaming. Carolyn had become quite brilliant. So this would be their topic for the day's discussion which would grace their trip to lunch and love by the river. Some psychology to accompany the poetry of the day.

James greedily took her essay in hand, placed the memory pad in the satchel, and then removed it. No, he could not wait to see. He turned on the pad and began to read the last few paragraphs as she had asked: "The task then remains to explain the metapsychological transformations which account for the emergence of a steady state mania over time, a fixed hypertrophic relation of both heightened experiential proportion, and its attendant intellectual parallel evidenced in every sort of sublimation, spanning the full breath of artistic and logical endeavor. The error, the modern construction of personality, is founded upon a logical fracture, a moral supposition. Freud rightly noted that much of neurosis is a moral disease, and indeed, we have found that morality creates immorality, which fosters the former and in error we are born as moral and immoral—indeed, for such is the fracture along which all our suffering is christened and called: Right!

First and foremost, all of the existing ego is exposed to the sum total of repressed and fixated libidinal content through waking dreams. The ego is thusly annihilated and its form, dependent upon its repressions, is replaced with libido, which once unfettered from shameful ideational pairings (reaction formations) becomes undifferentiated, and in total sum, available to fuel all activity, both mental and sexual, which now flourish under the absence of repression. This is a model for sublimation, "Sublimation by Integration," as opposed to the construction of modern personality which is by contrast modeled on "Sublimation by Repression."

As the fundamental structures of modern personality are destroyed, the libido liberated is used to fuel a new steady

state, which by virtue of comparison to baseline appears as manic, but, can be more rightly recognized as an atavism, a return to an older form where morally based repression was relatively undeveloped, and sublimation rampant. Now it is clear why the ancient Greeks produced such a volume of extraordinary work—the road to sublimation by integration was clear and unfettered by moral repression.

In this atavistic return to an unrepressed consciousness, our modern intellect is a new passenger, an abundantly fueled hypertrophic spectator, the emotional, experiential and intellectual beneficiary of this atavism so rich in freshly unbound libidinal cathexes, this atavism upon which the very height of the future remains so delicately perched. One can only lament that Freud's metapsychological papers on sublimation were never found. Although he understood the relationship between repression and sublimation to be various, his further views on the matter remain obscure, although it seems likely that he too, would have found its capacities increased for the copious profusion of undifferentiated libido available through the wholesale removal of infantile repressions and amnesias.

In conclusion:

Sublimation via repression and sublimation via integration are related in efficiency, toxicity and output, as are the modes of fission and fusion in their attributes as energy sources. One is more easily accomplished, but is dirty, toxic, and hypocritical to claim itself efficient beyond its cost.”

Yes, thought James, you can tell the health of a relationship over breakfast. With their lunch basket full, and their minds turning, the two began the long hike, carefully descending the rocky trails that led to the riverbank, with its welcoming green heat and folded tongues of glad shade, and it seemed as if it had never happened, as if there was no

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fetid stream from whence they came, no drop of brown blood in the clear well of their happiness...

The golden warmth of day, the sultry shifting veil of scent and sound, the tangled fingers of hidden breeze and breath, all the wonder of what was real that lay unfurled before them, every scent and seduction to life poured out as radiance and warmth, taste and sound, bashful and overripe, spilling and singing the promise, real and alluring, Life's ultimate seduction and gracious truth poured out over all of creation and enfolded them gladly into her breast, so real and sweet— Ahhhh, but alas, it was not enough. It was too late. A Daemon, a prick of truth and brown blood, a Hope, sweet, gnawing and malignant, stooped and crouching, a Daemon slipped between the leaves of their happiness, and placed a want there, an unknown, a hope—a question.

It is debatable... but inevitable. Does the salmon return to its place of origin to "reproduce," or, more accurately, is the instinct simply to repeat a fundamental error, and die? The philosophical point may be debatable, but the outcome is not. Now that the thought had at last come up from the depths, it spread like a grass fire, dancing up every silken hillside in delight, new sparks and crackling bright flame. How beautiful and unexpected to see, how high might the flames climb, and then, the smoke, where will it lead? As a

fire, a compulsion masquerading as curiosity, first underground, then everywhere and anywhere they turned. The topic would not die, but as a golden Daemon, but as Hope, crackled again to life and light.

"James, the world was a vulgar place, but, you know, it was the people that made it so, the people, and if the Mad Man is right, if they are all dead, well, what then? What then! ...Aren't you curious?"

"Yes, the idea has crossed my mind as well. How we feel every passing shade and hue upon our outstretched soul, a leaf tugged in every breeze, turned toward the new warmth of day. If it is true, if they are gone, how can one not expect, and wonder? Oh yes, Carolyn if it is true, if they are all dead, the shores cleansed and new, what then, yes, what then?"

"Ahhhh my love— I must know it too! I am too strong, too foolish and over full with life not to risk, not to know!"

And so of one foolish mind and one ache they turned their backs upon this life and turned their strength toward the familiar and the unknown, set their will into the current, and began to retrace the steps of their happiness, to set out into the world from whence they came—the words of a Mad Man's broken lament, now an undying echo, the ember of Hope's foolish promise.

So having gathered their strength, their hope and all the supplies their packs and legs could hold, the two set out to test the truth of the words which the Mad Man had uttered, and to answer their hope. The glacier ice sheets and granite peaks shawled in their cloak of timeless drifting snow passed before their tender eyes, the wooded shelter of trees and shadow, sky and covetous shade, the wide silent glade spilled open for them, graced in pearls of ice and frosted blue light, shimmering before the first feathered brush of Dawn's platinum and rose, her breath, her light soaking into the purple black arch of heaven. All of the Earth's unspoken bounty, her secret treasure poured out, fell into their eye and wet their soul, her song of spilled silver light and hot sultry rouge, her heat, her highest singing noon filled their ear and enfolded them within her warmth, until at last, they left of her.

The highway was black asphalt, the heat radiated off its hard artificial surface in waves of translucent visual distortion, and pools of silver mirage. There was no one minding the gate at the Alaska National State Park, no cars on the highway, only mirage and Hope pooled in heat, tar and boiling waves of silver black heat upon the roadway...

nothing... silence. Their hearts were light as their step. It seemed as if the Mad Man was right! There was no one. As they camped that evening and lit their fire, the orange warmth, the glow of hope and its reflection in each other was a new and wondrous warmth, a glow from within, an unknown with hints of the familiar, the scent of an imagining mingled with the smoke, crackling and purring its orange heat into their ear, and in each other's arms, they slept.

Awake at dawn with no sound upon the highway, the sun stretching its first lazy golden fingers, its first reluctant drops of light, as honey poured up into the day, felt, tasted before it is seen, glowing, whispering of unknown enchantments, asking Hope's empty questions, and then, filling them.

Down the shimmering black highway and up, no sound but their shadow slipping into the next moment and still... nothing. The Mad Man must be right! The world is free of them, free of the whole misshapen blight of humanity. Could it be? A tinge of desperation, a melancholy hesitation, a single black moment of remorse to see the town was empty, then to know it, to know the fact: They were alone! Their hearts raced, they looked around the small community and saw nothing moving, only open doors and abandoned lives, homes with their mouths gaping, their doors wide, cars abandoned, lives left to nothing, not even a ghost remained to claim them, these ordinary lives, lives lived collecting things, competing and collecting and now, the entire thing—to have up and walked away from it, walked away from... Everything.

If the world was dead, it had left this place first, and found a better one to commit the final act, because there was nothing, no one, no bodies, no people, just blessed perfect silence. James and Carolyn could not believe it. Perhaps

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the Mad Man was right. Perhaps the whole world was theirs.

Enough

As they wandered around the homes, all the world frozen as if in the middle of an ordinary day, and it seemed as if the people had utterly vanished, just walked off, drove off and left everything without the slightest concern, no care taken to lock any door or secure any object of value against theft. It was downright unamerican, not to mention a little spooky.

James sat in the kitchen of a perfectly good home with cans of perfectly good food and enjoyed a fine meal. They stretched out on a strange bed, listened, and looked around the room. Only silence. He kissed her open mouth and gently drew himself toward her, so sweet, so gentle and forbidden, to tease open the petals of happiness and find all that was coveted and kept, is open and unresisting, sweet, wondrous and warm is our knowledge of those forbidden places which might finally yield, relent in supple silence and at last—be known.

To know her there, to be swept into the tide of such happiness, there, in this forbidden place, this place which is now mine and mine alone to know, to have, to feel such a thing, such a forbidden thing, in daylight—in innocence!

The two lovers were aglow and alight with it all... The Mad Man was right!

As evening fell they gathered a canned feast, a cornucopia of every variety, meats, beans, vegetables and golden broth, candied ham and spiced jerky, all carelessly discarded, left and abandoned, so wholesome and wondrous, so sweet and nourishing. Ahhhh.... to prepare, to taste and sup in the twilight, alone and full, with but birdsong and crickets, new starlight and the scents of distant blossoms kissed by the unfolding evening, buoyed by her hidden breeze and breath, the fragrance vanishing amidst chill ink air and awakening starlight. All the night sky arching over and before them, pristine and preserved, breathing, spending the day's perfect promise... in silence.

The mirage was real. They collected a dozen, dozen candles, and warmed the water in pots set on blue flame... clear and silver, liquid heat, poured into a dusty tub, the steam of luxury and the gentle bouquet of tangled breeze spilling through the window... a dozen dozen dim stars flickering amidst steam, the tan curve of her breast submerged in supple shades of golden mist and heat, all of the world held its breath, and then, slipped into the poured warmth of luxury and tender bronze light, licking the night aglow with bashful warmth, and stretching golden drops of spilled heat.

Enough

Dawn's first splash of careless sun fell as a golden whisper amongst silence, as spilt rubies and ripples of stretched amber did she pour herself over the awakening world, so full and overflowing with promise kept was the day, new and perfect, a fresh and impossible enchantment, as a first kiss recreates, reawakens the hidden to light. An unknown too distant to know rises up, awakens for the first time, aglow and alive was the day, thick and ripe with life as fresh fruit, alive with rouged heat, nourished and sweet, aglow with Sun's Blood, her golden skin stretched and ripe, new and alluring, sultry with unknown tastes and sweetness.

As the two lovers awoke to the dream, the blessed dream, oh how wondrous to behold! The clean air, the still folds of pure air and silence, the magic of this world, once so false and greedy, noisy and restless, posturing and hungry, so very stupid and mean, now cleansed and shining, preserved and perfect: preserved... in perfect silence.

The car keys were hanging on a peg. The two lovers filled the trunk with food and water, turned the key and let the engine settle. James reached over and clasped her hand, her eyes damp, his filled with tears, his heart hammering with excitement.

"OK, here we go... we will see soon enough."

"James, I can hardly stand it. Do you think it's true?"

"I don't know, but, I wonder... first off, where are the cars? We haven't seen a single one on the highway, and there aren't even close to enough, nowhere even near enough of them left here in town to account for them all. They must have left in their cars and trucks, right? Americans do not walk—we drive—period. So where are all the cars, and then, the people? Cars don't disappear any more than people—where the hell is everybody— Where?"

"I could not care less. I hope we find nothing. I can live with a mystery... Oh god James, I hope it's true. I don't care how, I just want it to be true— I want the Mad Man to be right. I need him to be right. James, if he is, James... the whole world could be pure—innocent! Oh James. It just has to be true."

He squeezed her hand. Oh how he needed what she needed, oh yes, it just had to be true. He leaned toward her and kissed her, oh so tenderly and sweetly did he find her needful soul, so hopeful and delicate, so alive and afraid, a kiss and a soul tugged, trembling in the same hopeful sun and wind, at last torn free from the branch that gave it succor, released and swirling, suspended, hovering, swimming in light, free and climbing, gladly licked up in a current of chance, wind and light.

Enough

James eased the car onto the highway. It had been many years since he had traveled by other than foot, and it seemed unreal and impossible as the miles unreeled before him at such a calamitous and wasteful pace. How much of this world was he cheated out of to hurry over its surface with such abandon? Soon his thoughts returned to more practical questions, like where everyone and everything had gone. At two hours traveling at a steady 60 miles per hour there was nothing, and no one. Had America finally had enough, enough of being America? There is no greater love affair than that of an American and his possessions, and his car, his vehicle, is chief among them, the pinnacle of self-identity. James would sooner imagine a community of Americans forfeiting their lives before their sacred possessions, and the car, the automobile, was by far one of, if not *the* most "sacred" possession of all. Where were they?

James approached a huge rise in the topography, a mountain pass climbing many thousands of feet. The automobile soon began to lose speed as the engine commenced to unleash a foreboding chorus of ticking and slapping sounds indicating a desperate condition of mechanical strain, and he had to downshift or risk

overheating. At a shuddering, knocking 35 miles per hour the crest of the rise was within sight, and soon, at 6000 feet elevation over the valley below, the answer became clear: The cars were here. All of them.

The roadway below was filled with an endless line of traffic, abandoned vehicles, aerodynamic sculpture frozen "ad infinitum"... cars as far as the eye could see and beyond, the horizon clear and bright, the surface of the roadway and tundra littered, covered, saturated and engulfed by thousands, hundreds of thousands of cars. The sight was strange, foreboding, impossible and astonishing, the proliferation of vehicles seen from on high, like fat ants, insects shining in every garish color, a horde of shiny beads, painted and striped in ugly neon, impossible, unnatural and glittering like a frozen sea of dead gleaming insects carpeting the horizon. Then closer and closer, the eye more and more crowded by the sight, the sun glinting off of paint, chrome and glass, until the expanse of hoods, fenders, metal, rubber, and silver chrome became identifiable as a plethora of vehicles, a claustrophobic desert of metal and color, the roadway and landscape clogged and covered with what was most unique about this culture, most distinctive, coveted and American about America, so carelessly strewn about as a box of spilled matchsticks... abandoned.

They looked at each other dumbstruck and amazed, unable to speak. Carolyn found her tongue first, "Well, it seems we have found those missing cars you were so concerned with." In an equally cool tone James matched her indifference and responded, "Yes, it would appear so..."

As James pulled up to the edge of the seemingly infinite expanse of discarded vehicles, this impossible sight, so unreal as to be truly impossible, he remained aloof and coy, looked casually at Carolyn, and remarked coolly, "OK love, it's time for a stroll." It was clear they would be walking for weeks, for hundreds of miles through a surreal sea of metal

and money, this multitudinous testament to the expanse of the American landscape, her equally over-arching vanity, and even more enormous, and eternally preponderant laziness. However long or short the distance America never walks— America drives. It was absolutely impossible, to see so many of America's precious cars in one place, impossible to see them abandoned, and impossible that those who drove them should, or could, walk away. Everything about the scene was... impossible. James added in his most casual tone, "Mmmmmm, yes, yes, a bit of a stroll don't you think?" Carolyn could no longer contain herself and broke wide open laughing and gasping, "Fucking unfucking believable— James!— James!! What in the fuck is this?? What??" James remained aloof and responded, "A very *long* walk indeed." Then surrendered to his amazement and began to point and laugh, wandering from car to car, "Carolyn, they are all gone, a million fucking cars and no people. All fucking GONE! What the hell is this? This is insane! What in the fuck is this?"

"It's god damn... impossible..."

"Did you know of an American to just up and leave their car? Just leave it unlocked and walk off—walk away—ever? Has that *EVER* happened? Impossible!"

The two stunned and amazed lovers collected their packs and began to walk and look, look and check, and soon they discovered that they were alone, exactly as before, quite entirely alone. Although one mystery was solved, the location of the missing cars, a second and more important one remained: the location of the people.

"I don't care where they are, where they've gone means nothing to me, so long as they are gone."

She said the words, but they belonged to his heart with equal fullness, and James squeezed her shoulder to hear them, to hear her speak his thoughts. As they crouched

around the fire that evening, the future seemed to fill the present, the scent of lavender blossoms swept into a distant wind, warm and fragrant, painting the air with the scent of furthest hope, for a moment brought close enough to taste. As the purple black of evening spread her dark wing across the heavens, sweeping the greedy sun under the horizon, the sky filled with silent dark ink and the faint chips of starlight were coaxed to waking, night's whispering shards of diamond, a splintered whisper of long faded and distant days and forgotten sun, so old and fresh, so silver and new at last piercing evening's tender still, a fresh promise, a drop of platinum and quicksilver crept softly into their wanting hearts and cooled them, silver and pure, a whisper of new light, sacred, innocent and aged.

Enough

To awake and to walk, legs stretching and pulling, a hunger which satisfies itself to look, and to see... that it is alone. A feeling, a seeing, an open gulf of every distance, the question which precedes every horizon, the yawn which hopes each day into being, each mile, each step answered the question, again and again, asked and answered in blissful, stretching silver silence. After two days it was becoming mundane, almost normal to be wandering in a sea of glass and metal, sun and waves of shimmering heat cascading up, rising off the hunched hoods and puckered fenders, a billowing plume of heat dancing over the expanse of painted metal, a festival of chaos and color, creased metal and rubber cooking in the sun. It seemed almost normal, ordinary by way of repetition, a vanishing perception as the absurd becomes once its name is familiar. An ordinary climb in the scorching blaze of mid day, between the bumpers and hoods up the steeply graded roadway, hour after singing hour, stretching upward toward the summit of another unnamed peak, another towering ripple of earth and loft to be traversed.

But as they climbed, a silken thread of sound, at first no more than a hint, a delicate outline of a whisper, then as a

subtle rushing silence, a delicate white slip of sound whispering an invitation, subtle, hushed and alluring, then hissing and vanishing in the shifting wind, now brighter and fuller, rushing and white, hissing and breathless, the echo growing louder and louder, the resonance swallowed up into itself again and again, until the depths of a white hissing thunder, a booming rushing cacophony of shuddering resonance and hissing burst droplets, streams and torrents of water, crashing downward—a waterfall rent the landscape, the world now cleft in two, broken into two halves, each on either side of the glad silver wound. The columns and streams of hissing water and silver sound like a living column of liquid bone, an endless silver freight train of froth and white light pounding, pouring downward, splintering into mist, crushed upon the rocks below, its liquid heart spattered into cloud and mist, its soul broken open and boiled up as mist before the sun, its secret petals teased open in gentle hue, as opal spilt into air, a shifting whisper of spilt color, aglow, radiant and then vanishing, alive and laughing, a splash of glad paint from Life's hidden palette, her heart so glad and gracious, so overflowing and bashful are the hues of her soul... once burst!

As the two lovers beheld the ineffable sight, the towering columns of silver white water crushed into sprays of steam and boiling prised mist, a colored tangle of sprays, hissing streams and plumes of billowing color, swells of purple and red, shifting green curtains of sound and steam, roiling curtains of hissing white and vanishing tongues of opal spray boiling into the depths of the canyon, a heaving symphony of rushing sound and crushed light which held all the splendor, the highest promise of Life opened up before them, nature spilling her unthinking riches out before them as she had done so many times before. But as they beheld the sight in rapture and wonder, the play of hot and cool against their skin, the sheets of hot sun and tongues of cool

spray brought with them something new and unfamiliar. The two remained strangely transfixed, frozen and yet aware as the feeling slipped into their hearts and quietly whispered its name, as if it had always been there.

Gently it crept into their open hearts, a golden glow, a serene hunger, an empty ache, a sweet hunger, warm and needful, a golden hollow, sweet and empty. Somehow, it had always been there, now glowing and stretching within them, so warm and empty, a golden hunger and a warm ache filled an old place with hope, and they knew that there was more... a way to *fill* the yearning, empty, voluptuous hollow in their souls. This magnificent hunger which glows within them might be filled, filled with something pure and perfect, something sure and ineffable, something they could feel but could not touch called to them, whispered within them of a next, a perfection, a beyond, another—another more pure promise seemed to call to them from this outpouring of life, as if there was an answer beyond, beyond the outpouring of her riches. Somehow the golden hunger contained within it the answer to the ache, the answer somehow buried within the question itself. The ache called to their spirits, sumptuous and golden was its song, its sumptuous hunger which calls one deeper and deeper into the riddle of its undoing. So did the Siren breathe her song of hunger and hope, her singing seduction and whispers of a true world, her hungry mirage so thick with meaning, a new name whispered into the winds of their soul, and they listened... and looked away.

The golden vision bubbled from within them, a deep sense of meaning and purpose, a need which had too long been ignored seemed to find voice from within their hearts. A need, so empty and pure, so sad and wanting, the sweetness of the bruise—the ache was a seduction and brought with it a sense of purpose and a knowledge: The hollow could be filled—and *would* be filled... at this their hearts quickened and jumped. Oh yes, it could be filled, although the way seemed unclear, as if only a deeper surrender to the question itself might bring the blessed answer... and then, as the heat of the day bit into the land the currents of warmth and cool spray began to shift, and as the day beat its relentless heat upon them, it seemed as if the sun itself had burnt away the vision, now but a strange and distant mirage, an imagining born of an alien dream.

"James, what was that? You felt it too, right? I'm not going crazy, right?"

"Oh yes Carolyn, I felt it... a calling—a golden calling, empty and beautiful, a sweet pain... a calling..." She finished his thought,

Enough

"Needful and sumptuous, as if there was a reason, a meaning, and the ache was from not knowing, the glow from wanting to know..." He continued the thought,

"...and if you could just surrender to the hunger and look deeper, the answer, something better, a perfection could fill it, and you could find it, if you kept looking deeper." It was clear that they had both shared the same experience, and in that there was some comfort, some assurance that the vision was real, and their condition a product of something other than madness.

As the heat of the day scalded the golden vision into memory, the acres of glimmering metal seemed to consume each other, folding together into a homogeneous landscape of multicolored insects shimmering beneath waves of silver heat and yellow sun. As noon passed, the lovers swept through an easy curve of shimmering asphalt pooled in mirage and silver heat, and ever so gradually ascended a gentle crest in the roadway which had obscured their view, they first laid eyes upon it: A splintered crag of rock jutting some 3000 feet into the air, a grey granite spire, a natural monolith of grey stone flecked in glimmering mica. A clear crystalline schist of shimmering light sparkled off the unassailable granite slab, a grey finger of stone thrust into the air long ago, tumbled skyward in some ancient bout of geological dyspepsia, now grey and impossible, a glittering monument to the heaving discord in the earth, so immutable and unassailable, tossed skyward one afternoon a few hundred thousand years past as product of a bit of geological indigestion, so imposing and unreal, jutting into the sky. As the two squinted and looked, they could just see it, just see the monastery built atop its uppermost peak, an impossible refuge, a gateway between earth and heaven.

As they gazed upon the sight, the perfect silence enfolded them in tender arms. To see the bright spire and behold the magnificent stone edifice perched so carefully upon its most forbidding and uppermost peak, the sight was inspiring. A silver white glove of silent snow graced the northern face which crackled in silver sun and splatterings of frozen light, each silver splinter cracked open in a chip of crystal schist, a shimmering grey diamond glazed in light and silence. Only the wind filled their ear, and hope buoyed their hearts.

The sight was as sublime as it was irresistible, and they began to climb. Only the wing beats of silence, the swirling currents under the cupped arch of eagle's wings accompanied them as they stretched upward toward the sun. Only hope and purity, snow and drifting light falling upon distant ice, pure and sweet in its silver silence was their companion, and hope their consort in this pure new world, so silent and pristine, so pure and hopeful, now cleansed of the soot and shadow of Man!

Closer and closer they climbed, closer and closer to the distant peak, closer and closer to the abbey, shining with ice and blue bright diamond light, its roof cupped in the gliding silent shadow of eagle's wings, until at last the abbey came

into full view, at last swept out from under the clouds. The two lovers were awestruck. The sheer magnificence of the intricate stonework and the exquisite lines of the roof, its slope alone concealing at least six stories of elevation under its gentle curve. They stood in silent rapture and were stunned to behold its singular beauty.

Then they saw it, the impossible, the unthinkable and unknowable answer, the question stood drowned before them, a curl of smoke rising from the most distant chimney, the thick vapors hung in the air like an abominable ribbon of despair, a rising crooked finger of poison, a single curl of grey-black smoke crept into the cloudless arch of day, an oily stain of grey, sure, ugly and mocking as it spread its smudged brown palm over the sky. Someone had just lit a fire in the abbey... they were not alone.

Aaaahhh— Look! They were not alone! To know it!— Gutted and Ruined, Winded and Sick as a single wet groan, Slit open and Slouched, Spilled out and Ruined—so was their hope, Soiled, Naked and Beaten, a fish with its belly slit pouring out its life's blood, Wasted, spilled out from the tender cavern of their hearts, now pouring forth, each precious drop soaking into the brown earth... *Wasted*. They were not alone.

And it was under the weight of this hopeless shadow, wet, dank and brooding, sick and damp with the truth, the fact like wet tar, the truth into which their most tender Hope had been cast, so that it might drown. Gutted, winded and sick, stammering and reeling upon drunken legs, the two lovers collected themselves, and began to ask questions. If there were people alive up there, perhaps they had answers, answers to the hundreds of questions they needed answered. Perhaps these people knew the *reason* for all of this. And as two young souls brave enough to ask such a question, and imagining themselves even so strong as to sustain the

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answer, they began again, step over step, climbing closer and closer to the truth.

Soon they had drawn up before the heavy wooden door, ancient and foreboding, a thousand pounds of balanced timber hinged on but a few ounces of ornate brass, a piece of delicate work so expertly turned out as to blur the line between craft and art. In contrast to the ancient door, stood an arch of new wood into which some few words were lovingly carved in the most exquisite detail:

"Tempus est Deus"

"What do you make of that?" said James before pulling the monstrous rope with its huge hanging brass ring, which he assumed would actuate some chime, bell or other signal that would alert those buried deep within the walls of the sanctuary that they were there, and in need of admittance.

"I think it means 'Time is God' or 'God is Time' or 'God is Tomorrow'... my Latin is a bit weak, but that should do."

"Yeah, that's about as close as I can get to it too, but the wood is new. It must be the motto of the current residents." James pulled the ring, listened and waited.

Ten minutes had passed and the two had gathered a thousand questions bristling to jump from their tongues, their curiosity mingled with a strange and unexpected sense

of relief that they were not the last people on earth after all. As the door began to inch open, its great weight expertly counterbalanced and compensated for, so the monstrous slab of wood seemed to glide, to float open, coaxed only by the faintest whisper of a touch, but few ounces of gentle weight as the breath of an autumn sigh upon leaves, her slender ivory fingers pressed upon the frame with the weight of a shadow, and ever so slowly, the timbers did yield... and from the depths of the edifice came a cool breeze, as tender and white as the brittle spirit who stood before them, now glowing in a serene alabaster splash of cool light, her thin white face, itself a promise, a gentle hollow into which light might fall: a perfect question. As they gazed upon her they knew the first precious drops of yearning, honied and sweet with emptiness and longing, dripping and hollow with sweetness, so hungry to know, so needful and glowing was the feeling, each drop upon the next, pooled and glowing, as a golden sweet hollow in their souls. All that they had questioned of and quested for fell away from them, they no longer knew of want or reason, only of bliss, golden hunger and the blessed answer buried within it. They wanted but one thing... to know.

Enough

They followed the sister of light, her gaunt frame hardly concealed by the simple wrapping which was distinctive of their order. She led them into a bright office with many open windows and it seemed as if their hearts would not be still, squirming and beating in a frenzy that soon stole their breath and filled them with a sense of the eternal, a trembling hunger and a giddy rush of light and breath that all but hollowed out their legs, and soon found them gladly sitting across from the deacon of the order, their chests pounding and tears brimming in their glad eyes, eyes that beheld a new world, and understood it naught. The deacon told them of themselves. They were now called to become members of this order, the blessed order of Hope. All were one in the vision of the true light, one amidst the sweet hunger which loves and needs, which knows of sweet hunger and yearning toward God, and it was God that was the filler of this Hope, the filler and redeemer of this blessed hunger, and so, like all members of the order, they were called here in Hope, "Hope and longing most sweet and golden has gathered us here. Hope has gathered us here for but one purpose— To quench the sweetness of that Hope in purest knowledge: The knowledge of God." Their purpose

on earth: To know God. Their motto: God is Time— God is the future— God is tomorrow. "It is in Hope that we are gathered to know the truth, the future... We crave but one thing—to know God." Clearly the deacon knew of them, better than they knew of themselves, and each of his words fell into their empty glad hearts as a precious gem, a splinter of truth and light, a kernel around which Hope and knowledge of God may grow.

As it was explained to them, the abbey itself was the first mystery. A profound mystery which opened the doorway to the purest exaltation, whereby they too, could eventually worship and be laid bare before the very heart of true knowledge, to be as they all were, trembling and naked in gratitude each day before God. "You will then see how close you can come to happiness, to truly knowing him and his purity, how close to his spirit and his name, to be here, and to touch... the beyond. How closely we dare look toward Hope, and even to hear his name, Ahhhh, to hear and feel is enough for us, yes enough to know this much, oh yes enough; but never to look! Remember that, and you will remain with us, in the doorway to divinity, stretched in bliss between Knowledge and Hope, the present and the future, as a name on the lips of God, a name soon to be blessed, but not yet spoken."

Somehow the pair knew his words carried the very kernel, the heart of the mystery, and they turned the words over ceaselessly in their minds, looking for some way at the meat in the nut. First they must know the abbey. A seven day ordeal of bliss and fasting whereby they might gradually be introduced to the mysteries of the human spirit and its transcendence.

Enough

The sister led them to the bottom of the stairway, vast and broad it cascaded upward nine stories above the basement, and at its very uppermost vaulted peak was a cut crystal skylight which remained open in all weather throughout the seasons so as to "Spill the breath of the divine ever downward unto our grateful souls," as the sister informed them. The abbey seemed to call out to them, each nook and crevice reached out to them and invited them in, to crouch beneath their hidden worlds and slip into the mystery, complete and infinite, tucked secretly away within each intricate carving and open place was another world contained within, and containing within it, some ultimate mystery, like a living altar to the glowing secret within them, the monastery called out to them from a thousand intricate places, sung and spoke to them in silent invitation. They were to ascend the stairway and not to wander, but remain focused on their goal and climb to the top. There, they were to spend a day and night in contemplation, and then, proceed downward to the next floor and then again, each in turn, a day and a night, one at a time. It was explained to them that in this way they would learn, a little at a time, what was needful, until at the end of the seven day

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ordeal, they might then be permitted food and find strength enough to endure the ecstasies which would follow, and take their rightful place as members of the order.

Enough

As they ascended the stairwell, the heartbeat of the sun streaming through the skylight became brighter and brighter, its white and yellow vibrations of light swelling with each step, fading and swelling, over and over until the hammer stroke of the sun's pulse became the only voice, the only thought, the building hammer blows of a brighter and brighter fullness, a brass and silver vibration pulling them ever higher, ever closer to another truth... pure and swelling, filling the empty aching places with sweet hunger that promised, that knew of its quenching, the knowledge they climbed ever closer to with each step, the knowledge of God.

Ah! With each step they knew more and more, felt and knew the truth, the hunger so golden and hollow, sweet and tortured but never tortured, for the knowledge, the sure knowledge that the trembling empty places will be quenched and filled. This hunger and yearning for that which was not, but had to be, to know it even without touching it, the golden hunger which knows its cloying empty aching places will one day be filled, a hunger for the future that sure knowledge feels, knows, will come—this hollow yearning for the beyond, that which finally fills and knows, this

honed empty yearning that knows, somehow, it will be filled. To surrender to the golden question and hear the answer at last, surely the priest was right—the golden hunger that craved and knew of eternity, of the answer—was this not Hope? Are they not called here under just this sign, the hunger that looks beyond, into fullness, into itself to find the future, the golden answer buried within the very question, a riddle which unfolds itself—is that not Hope? And the answer they seek, the silver tongue of purity and knowledge which cools the sweet ache of every suffering and uncertainty, the knowledge, the truth so close and so distant, this answer to the trembling question, so serene and pure, the very essence of truth, the quenching of all golden longing and sweet hunger, the silver promise within the question to which we might surrender, the knowledge of bliss—was this not God? For them Hope and God became more real, more tangible and solid with each step, the pulse of light beating louder and louder as a swinging hammer upon the brass hollow of their souls, until the twelve bell-strokes of noon had fallen, one upon the next, louder and louder—and only the sound remained... their souls but a dim spark before the mystery.

Now at the top of the stairs, their hearts squirming and pounding, their hands shaking with hungry anticipation, their souls and skin crawling with fear and longing, happiness and a hollow ache glowing so deep within them, pulling them deeper and deeper into their hunger, golden and wanting, sultry and empty were their hearts, hollow with hunger and longing that knows it will be filled, that it must be filled!

The rows of doors seemed asymmetrical and hunched, slouched and uneven. The cracks under the doorways beckoned to them with hungry light, each entryway unable to contain all of its secret, each room a promise, a world jealous and hungry for their souls, a living world waiting to

Enough

enfold and consume them, doorway upon doorway each like a teasing hungry spirit into which they might enfold their souls, a promise and an invitation.

Carolyn chose which one— James turned the knob, and opened the passageway to their souls.

The door swung open and light poured out, a solid block of pure white, a singing vibration of purity filling their desperate craving, for a moment solid and then, as a hint of something too potent and sweet is swallowed into the vastness of the sea, they stepped into the room, the window open and the breeze spilling in like Hope, light spilled from the coldest spring at the heart of knowledge, purity and light, sweet fingers of light playing across the silver waters of their soul, a pool of platinum still and shining, a stretched silver skin taut with hunger, a mirror of infinite depth, a quivering sorrow, the empty cry of swallowed longing and unmet hope, slowly opened and trembling, its rippling surface now still, hungry and delicate, unresisting before the tender light, each drop a blessed ripple upon the emptiness, the weight of purest light, as a shadow falls and breathes upon the earth, so gentle and pure is the weight of light tracing the tender places, each place its golden fingers fall, its silver drops of hunger and promise, the pool quivers and surrenders its open places to the light, so thick with promise, as a drop of honey spreads its golden bead over a warm thing, slowly unfolding, stretching into and over its sunken places, now sweet with longing, ripple upon ripple filling

the hunger, placing honied drops and quivering ripples of hope and yearning, glowing and empty, sweet and full with need, so did the light fall upon the hollow of their souls. The sweat pouring from their shuddering bodies, their clothes a fetter now cast aside, their bodies now poured out pure and trembling with hunger, poured like cream into a wide vessel, each inch of their soul open and spilled out, cream and sweetness, naked and trembling before the sun.

And so did hope open the petals of their soul before God, ever closer and closer to the quivering secret, the answer to the sweet hope and hunger that grew as a flame within them, warm and nourishing was the golden hollow, the flame of Hope, the question and the promise swelling, glowing within them. Day after day, their bodies grew weaker and weaker. Honied water and rose petals did little to sustain them, but the voice of Hope, "to surrender to the question is to draw the answer near"—so did She speak to them! Day after day, weaker and closer, each floor lower drew an even more potent experience from the hollow of their soul, their bodies arched and quivering, shuddering in hunger which drew ever more from them, the cream spread thinner and thinner. As a golden palm is Hope, so gracious is her hand, opening to hold the brittle shell of their world, now just a pure hollow where light may find shelter, a need for light to trace with gentle fingers. The palm of their lives unfolded its secrets and spent itself. Gladly did they squander and spend their bodies to come closer to the truth, the bead of quicksilver light, pure and platinum, silver and cool was the truth, the cooling bead of iced light nearly cupped in the trembling hollow of their outstretched souls.

Then, their final and most complete surrender had passed, and the seventh day had turned into night. Their souls were as two broken vessels twice drained and spent, washed pure in light, their bodies naked and white, arching and shuddering, open and surrendering, drinking in the hunger and the light, a question, open before God. The evening's cool breath brought a welcome whisper of relief, sweet and cool is evening's brow to the hungry day, so needful and wanting, our backs arched, our souls poured out into the heart of the sun, now cooled in evening's tender breath. The door opened and a white spirit, a sister of delicate beauty, a whispering soul did bestow robes unto them, so they might adorn their nakedness before the sun until the time is sweet for offering. And so they did pour themselves into the loose folds of silken fabric, so easy and sweet to feel the weight of silk tug at tender skin, skin so pale and tender it is bruised by the weight of moonlight. And the pure spirit of the evening did kiss them gently, and sweetly did grace their cheek with her tender windswept touch, and did bestow a basket of some lean fare for them, and honied water, sweet with the petals of roses floating upon its silver surface, so they might sup and find strength

enough to begin again. She did take gentle care and slowly did wash them, unaware but aware, slowly and gently she did care for them, the sponge wet and gentle, tugging at their tender skin, sweetening and cleansing their bodies, so they might be pure before God, and begin again.

As the two exhausted souls awoke the next morning, the spirit of kindness they had dreamt had done more than wash them with such tenderness and give them loose robes of silk, robes which slipped over them sweetly as breath, she had also bestowed a kindness of spirit, a parchment written in fine hand upon which the following words were delicately inscribed:

"Let us not resist God, but invite Him. Let us become pure and unresisting, inviting and worthy of Hope. Let us fast and "Become"—tender, welcoming and pure, a question unrefusing of the answer, until we can feel the very weight of light, of Life pressing upon our open heart.

And so may we then bend our souls gladly toward God—humble and glad, worthy and unrefusing of the answer. Let us fast and then stand— Stand before the future, rise up and meet the answer, not buoyed by food and flesh, but nourished by purity itself, by the vision of what is *real*, what is yet and sure to come. Let us stand strengthened and sustained by the future, nourished in the one real food and true lasting sustenance— Blessed Hope."

The door eased open and a gentle sister did enter the chamber, her face as an oval smudge of cool ivory light, the frail ghost of kindness, as a pale wisp of smoke. From the petals of her lips slipped a voice so feeble, so frail as to touch upon a holy thing, a whisper too frail to hold, her voice as a thin hint of mist, a wisp too faint to be here, and too close to be beyond, a spirit stretched across a gateway, pure, distant and holy.

"Come with me, you who are ready."

And so they followed her as silence behind a shadow, not walking, but gliding, floating on legs too weak to walk, with but hope to hold them, floating as a spirit rises to unburden the soul of its weight, now light, alone, untethered, gliding above themselves, swept behind and over, as silence follows a shadow.

The door to the deacon's chambers was open, light, and tangled fingers of cool breeze, a tender promise invited them into the doorway, and their hearts were glad and steady, purring with golden hunger and the silver sparks of a new soul freshly opened and deeply tasted now brimming over, warm and seeking, broken open and nourished, strong

Enough

enough to ask again. They were then told something of the mystery which had cleansed them, and how each drop in elevation brought with it a more and more potent experience, each a step closer to the fulfillment of Hope, and knowledge of God. The thicker the air, the brighter the light and the closer to the divine.

Each day the order gathered early down in the grove below, a plateau of swept green moss where they remained each day until late in the afternoon. As the sun breathes her golden warmth, her hope, upon the sunken winds below, they rise up and pour over the plateau bringing the breath of the divine, an ecstasy far more potent than those available in the abbey. All are cautioned, all know, all are sure to remain seated during the daily ritual of knowledge. For to plunge one's head up into the very breath of divinity, is to dare madness. They were warned never to look over the cliff, "Let it be enough to imagine the name of God, and remain here. For to look upon His face and know Him, is to become divine, to become part of His blessed name."

The plateau was itself an embankment, and the more senior members of the order were seated farther forward, as they were stronger and closer to God, and hence, were able to know more, able to sustain more of the knowledge, knowledge which if drunk in too deeply, became a bliss, a call, a hunger too deep to resist—the hunger to know God.

"So does Hope shelter us under her divine promise, until at last, we might know."

They turned his words over in their minds, these cryptic, serene and hopeful words which spoke of a greater, deeper knowledge of life and of themselves than they could stretch to grasp. And as the sun set, they wondered at it all... and waited.

As the dawn crept near, her gentle fingers of early light and cool breeze spilled quietly through the window, cooling their skin, white and pure, dipped in the last pool of moonlight, a new breeze whispering the name of the day into their souls, brushing them with light, coaxing them to life and hope. By the time the sun was up they were seated upon the plateau, the first thick rays of golden heat pouring down into the canyon below, pouring her bounty of warm yellow blood and honied light into the hidden places to warm them, and stir the soul of God. As the first breath of the canyon's cool air was warmed and lifted up, spilling over them and into them, their hearts began to race, their blood ran thick with warmth and hunger, their bodies becoming impossibly hot, now unfolded from the robes, quivering and white, trembling beneath the sun, soaking the very heart of light into themselves, swallowing the very heart of hunger, now pouring over them, their souls as their bodies, white and trembling, open, oh so very open and tender, sweet and giving, tender, yielding and open, closer and closer to the question, arching up in hunger, white and supple is their need, the golden hunger pouring into and through them, their soul spread open as a fan trembles in the breeze, open

Enough

and quivering, naked and pure, a shuddering hunger trembling before God.

And the days did pass into weeks, and the weeks into months, closer and closer to the question, they answered each day with fasting and naked devotion, their will manifest in purest surrender, their bodies as a tender pool before the sun, her glad heat licking at the shining surface, licking up its shimmering silver soul into the air, drop by drop, swept aloft, the glad silver splash yielding its rippled depths up into the warmth, an offering now thinner and thinner before the question, so did their bodies become white and gaunt, frail as ghost's breath, pale, thin and tender, a sigh holding onto and releasing of life, a wisp of life stretched across a doorway, a shadow of life and substance, at once both light and shadow, as a prayer unresisting of the wind, its words as a last whisper surrendered, suspended and vanishing, a lingering shadow stretched, listening, a whisper hovering between here and the answer, between today and God.

As thin tender ghosts slipped into skin, white as cream, thin and brittle as the highest mountain air, too cold to feel, a breath too thin to taste, a wraith wrapped in flesh of fasting and light, hunger and sacrifice. Their days were spent hungry and bright, their bodies dwindling and faded, a hollow splash of life most holy and distant, a still pool, a hollow and a question unspeaking, a sacrifice ineffable, silent and pure—only the question remained—only an emptiness—a place for light to rest.

And so they passed their days in blissful hunger as whispering ghosts, sipping upon the nectar of golden hunger and sweet silver light, the cool bead of iced light nestled within Hope's golden palm, her fingers now unfolding the ineffable answer, drawing closer and closer, sipping the light from their outstretched offering, and in return, offering up the golden nectar of need and knowledge, until the very name of God seemed to trace itself upon their lips, so close and yet, unknown.... So did they sip as Tantalus did sip, to see without tasting, to know without hearing, their lips wet with the divine, the purest silver beads of light traced delicate strokes of silver damp over their lips, slipping, pure and cool is the silver shadowed soul of the divine, tracing her ineffable promise with moist lips, her quenching draught withheld, the whisper too faint, her damp but a single kiss for parched lips. Cracked and arid were their souls, hungry and wanting, desperate to be parted and receive the name, wishing only to be cleaved and filled, poured and painted with rain and silver streams of knowing, the answer that would slake them, so thin, dry and taut; a snap of static cracks into light and begs the rain to spill, a restless dry spark crawling over dust and desert, an invitation reaching

up into a cloud, hungrily teasing the hammer stroke of lightning that splits it open and spills out the answer—So does every hungry question, long to be ended.

As a handful of pearls set upon soft green moss, the faithful had nestled themselves gently into place, the embankment cloaked in a silent hush, the day suspended, still, pregnant and waiting, holding its breath in one last silent dark gulp, before spilling her golden heart out into light. Gently and slowly did she pour her thick honied warmth spreading slowly into the cool of the canyon below, warm and golden, as a pat of butter melts in summer sun was her first kiss of heat, gently stirring the cool places to overflowing, spilling upward over sheer grey granite walls shimmering with schist, glimmering and grey, an expanse of chipped diamond ice and rock stretching upward, embedded in the clouds above—the breath of Day's first rising hope now just awakening, stretching upward, spilling up the walls of the canyon over the embankment at the foot of the abbey, bringing with it, the Day's first shuddering glimpse of the divine.

James drank the first sweet hints of wisdom into himself, sipping the air into his soul, his heart warmed from within, the familiar heat washing outward over him, shuddering and warm with hunger, glowing and hot, the sweat pooling on his tender skin, the robes unfolded, each inch of gaunt ivory flesh now a mirror for the question, a mirror outstretched, hungry and dripping in light... And he returned to himself, gulping in the light, to see Carolyn, the spark of golden red sun warmed, swept through her hair and over her skin, light now flowing double thick as pulled amber taffy to have kissed her, his beloved, a peach and amber hollow of warmth and spilled light, her ivory skin unfolded before the answer, arching up to sweetness, and he was again lost and enveloped, surrendering and swallowed back up into the question, himself part of the light, beyond this place, now

distant and pure, beyond this world, and so, closer—to knowing.

How many times he traveled into the light and returned, the hours stretched into minutes, the minutes into years and back again... Oh how many times he did travel closer and closer to the answer and then return to find his empty hope back there again, nestled as a pearl in green moss, his soul a shuddering empty bliss sipping upon Hope's silver breath to vanish and then return—how many times did he travel toward the beyond... he did not know. As if a drop of water boiled into cloud, licked up into the heavens, burnt up into wind and cloud, and then tumbling out again, clear and falling, reborn as a round silver drop upon the moss, again looking for the answer, sipping at the wind, but this time, something was different. Carolyn was gone.

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