

May 9, 1957

I ran through the late afternoon happily, enjoying the last rays of the sun as it bid goodbye to the hemisphere and tucked itself away on the other side of the world. It had actually been a good day, for once, and I was able to relax and thrill in the joy of the moment like any other kid.

I slowed my pace to something resembling a skip, and then executed a 10.0 swan dive into a pile of someone's freshly mown grass. I lay still in a jumble of green and exulted in the breathtaking sunset, displaying expertly mixed shades of red, purple, bluish green, and yellow. The awesome spectacle worked its wonderful magic on me and I'd hoped it would last forever.

I remained amidst the soft texture and naturally intoxicating aroma of newly cut grass until afternoon melted into evening. I indulged the luxury of casting my mind adrift in a rare state of peace and feeling a real oneness with the world and all within it. Finally I hoisted myself up and started for home, the sidewalk a little tough going for my bare feet, but my skin retained the fragrance of grass and it added a special ambience to the night air that closed in around me.

Without warning, the blessed peaceful feeling turned dark. My right arm began to shake, my head was thrown back and I plunged into darkness. I tried to focus on what I thought was Venus, attempting to concentrate on its bright, steady light, the most luminous thing in the dusky sky, but to no avail. I fell and hit the curb near the rain gutter then surrendered myself to the vision that was taking shape all around me, pushing out the oncoming night and transporting me into another episode.

My first impression was of being surrounded by a golden aura, then I became aware of a host of beings coming from what seemed miles away. The light shining from and around them was in stark contrast to and enhanced the darkness that silhouetted their forms, not that I could tell much about their figures, as their own illumination obscured the details of their appearance.

As I watched them draw closer, I realized I was not gripped with the usual fear. Although grateful, it was almost as though I were without an old friend or, more accurately, a familiar companion.

As I mused over this new wrinkle in the adventures of Myron Dyal, a great ball of fire shot out of the darkness and hit me as an express train. The impact sent me flying through the air, not necessarily with the greatest of ease, and I landed on a desert plane. The ball of light did not linger; it faded swiftly, making an odd hissing sound as it sputtered out, leaving the scene cloaked in a forbidding darkness. The atmosphere was absolutely dead, nothing moving in any direction, nothing disturbing the flat terrain with low slung hills in the far distance.

My head was experiencing the usual dizziness and my muscles felt tight and were throbbing painfully. I surveyed this new world, catching sight of another group of beings, wearing white robes tied with golden ropes around their waists. They had me surrounded. I still felt no fear, assured by the light of their countenances and the feeling of love forming a protective circle around me.

“Welcome to Zelcon,” said one of these beings, whom I mentally dubbed Elders, reaching out his hand toward me. I shook his hand, the contact warming me and bringing an influx of joyful peace into my heart. In some way I was unable to explain, I knew that I was very well acquainted with these loving beings, indeed, that I was related to them.

Thanking them for their kindness towards me, I asked if they would tell me where we were and requested an explanation of Zelcon.

“This is not the time for explanations,” the Elder replied. “It is a time for healing.”

I noticed that he still had hold of my hand. The power that flowed through that contact sank deeply into my soul, healing my dizziness, and imparting a feeling of connection with all existence.

The feeling of happiness left me breathless and I basked in the light of the Elders. Then the surrounding golden halo began to recede into the darkness and, in a moment it and the Elders were gone.

“Wait!” I cried. “Wait!”

The echo of my pleas rang in my ears as I came out of the vision to find myself lying in the gutter.

I arose to the sound of barking dogs, only to fall again, cracking my knee on the concrete, but rather than linger over the injury, I got back up and hastened home.

When I got home I tried to get to my room for a period of recovery, but just as I settled myself down I heard my mother’s voice calling me to dinner. It was not until then that I noticed the blood on my leg and face. Somewhat panicked, I went to the bathroom to wash up before appearing at the table. Previous experience assured me she would subject me to a third degree at the first sight of my injuries and I wanted to have ready a set of answers equal to the questions. I was actually more afraid of her than the seizure that had gripped me on the street.

I must have looked worse than I thought, judging by her overkill reaction to the sight of me. She demanded to know what had happened to me and I made up an answer that, although the details of it now escape me, must have been outlandish because I do recall that at the time, even I couldn’t have believed it.

But Mom didn't seem in the mood for a monologue because she glossed over whatever cock-and-bull story I'd made up on the spot, said grace, then passed me the mashed potatoes. (Mom, incidentally, was an extraordinary Southern cook. As a parent, she may not have been Donna Reed, but her culinary abilities almost made up for it).

I never liked lying to my mother, but it became a necessary tool in my survival kit. She had set the salvation of my soul as her highest priority, my sanity and physical well-being were relegated to secondary slots. If she could see to it that my soul were saved, then one fine morning when I was running the streets of gold, I would have the mind of Christ and a glorified body and then, by crikey, I would be pleased that she and Dad had physically and psychologically beaten the fear of the Lord into me.

One example of the above approach to Christianity had occurred a few years previously. After much soul searching prayer and body-denying fasting, it was concluded that my seizures were the product of demonic interlopers and so I was taken away to church for an exorcism. Yes, an exorcism, in twentieth century Southern California.

I clearly recall the words screamed to the high heavens – or should that be the low hells – by our erstwhile minister.

“Demon, come out of this child! In the name of the Son of God, the Lord Jesus Christ,” as though Satan needed that last bit of exposition to clear up his confusion as to who was meant by the appellation “son of God.”

I vaguely recall him adding, “It is the power of Christ that compels you,” but I know this was one of Max von Sydow's lines in *The Exorcist*, so either I have confused one hardly believable urban nightmare for another, or it is a generic line well known in the annals of exorcism. I do remember that in the film, this admonition carried not the slightest weight with old Pazzuzu, who kept poor Linda Blair hovering twixt bed and ceiling, until Max bellowed, “It's the power of God Himself that compels you,” which did the trick, as always.

The exorcism, or whatever name would best fit such a carnival of lunacy, went on for hours, and in the simple minds of the perpetrators was a howling (as it were) success. God had pulled another demon possessed wretch from the very brink of Hades, and Myron Dyal had been emptied of nefarious spirits, hopefully having been diverted into a herd of swine or whatever suitable animals were handy in Inglewood.

There were, of course, a few inconsequential details that had been overlooked, either by design or sheer idiocy. First and foremost was the fact I was not demonically possessed and secondly was that I was just as afflicted with seizure disorder as when the scriptures started flying and the devil-bashing fulminations began.

I suspect my parents neglected to pay for my exorcism because, months later, while I watched a great yellow full moon rise in the night sky, I was repossessed. Or so the story went. And off to the exorcist's house we went.

It seemed that with this go round they all laid on the demon casting out routine with a double dose of pseudo-Biblical thickness. What would be next, snake handling?

I decided right then and there that this would be the last bout of such nonsense that would ever see my participation. From that day on, I would remain silent on the subject of seizures. Never again would I come anywhere near mentioning anything that could be construed as a seizure, a semi-seizure, or the son of seizure. Solemn was my vow to myself that I would make the journey to wholeness alone.