

June 1962

I was very comfortable where I was and had no immediate plans to go anywhere. It was the proverbial day at the beach, a cloudless summer's day, beautiful blue sky, calm ocean and, of course, the girls, those California girls immortalized by the Beach Boys, who glided across the sand in their colorful bikinis.

This hot day was the first time I had been to the beach since I had broken up with Bonnie ten months earlier. She had moved on to stalk better game, a man who actually had a materially comfortable future or some other such thing. I allowed the sight of a girl in a red bikini rolling over on her towel to push aside thoughts of the past, allowing her sensual movements to work as a healing balm. It was only partially successful as I was getting depressed thinking about the love I had lost. The seaside hijinx of the people actually enjoying themselves was becoming painful.

I glanced at my watch. It was 12:30. I decided to leave. I got my things together and headed off the sand toward my car.

The noonday sun was beating down mercilessly on my already sunburned shoulders and I hurried up the stairs leading to parking area.

I drove up the Imperial Highway to the accompaniment of the rather dark, sensuous sounds of jazz, the intricate twists and turns of the improvised melody making me feel somewhat better. This lasted until I got home, facing my empty room, an expression of the emptiness I was feeling in my life.

The shower felt as good as the embrace of the former girlfriend I was still thinking about, damn it. The heat outside was forgotten in the coolness of the gentle cascade washing over me.

I threw myself on the bed, tossing aside the towel, and turned on the stereo. The music cut me loose from the moorings of the day's harsher realities. As welcome as this was, the agreeable trance did not last long as by the end of the day I was already feeling the approach of unwelcome forces.

I dressed for dinner, then decided to take a drive before eating. I went up into the hills overlooking the city, driving too fast through the canyons as evening began its rapid descent, almost as though I were trying to outrun the onset of night. Or maybe I was just dramatically acting out the undeniable truth that, like the car, I was going nowhere and very quickly.

I punched the radio's on button and set the dial to a pop station playing an up tempo song that matched the actions of the car as I skidded over sand and rock, sliding past a sharp curve and then heading down into the valley. The music gave me strength, made me one with the powers of the night.

I stamped down on the accelerator and headed for the summit of Ridge Drive.

Even though I had a momentary destination I was still unclear where exactly I was headed, in both the immediate and larger sense, but right then it did not matter. I was caught up in the speed, the music, and the road ahead of me.

The music changed tempo and with it my strength began to ebb. I switched off the radio and drove to the summit in quiet. The sun had fully set and whatever good the day had held seemed to disappear along with it.

It was 8:30 PM and I didn't really care if I missed dinner. I got out of the car and walked through the warm night, feeling my shirt clinging to sunburned flesh while I meandered through the parking lot and up to the reservoir.

I stood by the wire fence protecting unstable personalities such as Myron Dyal from hurling themselves into the water, ordinarily dark blue but now black as it reflected the night sky.

It had been over a year since I'd graduated from high school, I was far from making scholastic waves at college, and the answers to the issues troubling me were as elusive as ever. I cared about nothing, cared for no one, with myself at the top of the list.

I knew Bonnie had been right to divest herself of me, as I would only have dragged her down with me, probably not the most attractive of qualities. I bent down and picked up a small stone, tossing it up and down in the air. What was I going to do with my life, I wondered for the umpteenth time.

I seriously considered suicide as I tossed the stone over the fence and into the water, thinking it wouldn't take much to climb over and follow the rock down to the bottom of the reservoir. The sleep of death held more attraction than anything I was facing during my waking hours, my so-called life.

The full moon had arisen and with its light a bit of sanity crept into my thoughts, enough to eschew self-murder and head back to the car. All of a sudden, my stomach cramped, my arm jumped, and I was shaking all over as the old song said, quivers down my backbone and all.

The last thing I saw before hitting the asphalt was the moon calmly smiling down upon me. The next thing that came into view was something resembling a falling leaf or blue-black bird sailing towards me, gliding on an unfelt wind in the surrealism of the night where two worlds were converging.

The wings floating by somehow released all the tension and anxiety that had been building to a crescendo since the afternoon. The leafy look of the thing had now completely given way to a bird-like shape, soaring on the currents of wind that buoyed it up and carried it onward and

upward. It then banked and headed towards the ground, coming to rest not far from where I lay, gracefully folded its wings, then turned its round head towards me, fixing its gaze directly on me.

As I looked into its eyes, they seemed to become portals into the future. My consciousness filled with light as this temporal vortex opened itself up to me. Whether I mentally dived into it or it grew to engulf me I do not know. What I do know is that this window into my own destiny showed me a great room filled with paintings and sculpture and books, the sound of music and an underlying stillness that was as the “peace that passeth understanding.”

I spied a man seated at a large desk, writing intently in a large, black book of some kind. I was positioned to his rear, able to see little of him save the back of his head. At my wish to see more, he turned around, not appearing to see me but apparently checking to see what had disturbed his concentration. The only things missing from this Louis the Whatever hotel suite scene from *2001* was the prime rib and broken wine glass.

Somehow I knew, intuitively or at an even deeper level, that this was me, later in life, filling his/my journal with his/my most intimate thoughts, things he/I would not even come near to wanting to share with others until his/my later years, and even then with much trepidation and hesitancy. The hair was gray, the face expressive of memories, too painful to be spoken, almost too much so to be committed to writing.

I felt, I hoped, the paintings, sculptures, and drawings were my own work. Though at the time of the vision I had had no training in or experience with the visual arts, my gut feeling was that these unusual works of art would be the fruits of my mind and hands, integral parts of my eventual attainment of a state of wholeness and reconciliation with all that would transpire up to that future time.

The already folded wings of the bird that had been my guide began to enfold into themselves and I knew this signaled the end of the revelation. The bird disappeared on the current of cosmic wind and was instantly out of my sight.

I came back to worldly consciousness to the sound of the water lapping against the side of the reservoir. My head was not pounding as usual; it felt rather mushy. I could not yet focus my eyes and had difficulty standing.

I decided a good rest was in order. I leaned back against the fence and closed my eyes, listening to the sounds of the night. As relaxing as that was, I knew time had not halted for Myron’s vision and I had to get out of there. There would probably be security guards making their rounds, or a patrolling police car would be rolling through there to make sure all was well, or perhaps some psychotic would come there to have a vision.

Despite my good intentions, I was in no shape, physically or mentally, to attempt to drive, not without endangering myself and anyone unfortunate enough to be near me on the road in that condition.

I tried to stand. My head hit the fence, which retaliated by scraping my back, which had a less than therapeutic effect on my sunburn. Physical debilitation and mental confusion be damned, I had to get off that mountain.

Summoning all my strength, I was able to rise and half walk, half stumble my way to the car. Trusting that God watched over little children, fools, and guys named Dyal, I drove off, winding my way back down through the hills towards home.

Still shaky but at least feeling a little better, my thoughts turned back to the man at the desk. I was still somewhat baffled by the large amount of art portrayed in the vision. I was a musician, a fledgling composer of sorts, but had never drawn anything more complex or visually arresting than my church scribbles. Yet I knew all the art I had seen was of my own creation. Another question. The music in the vision, had that been of my composition?

The matter of the art would be settled in 1975 when, after a profound encounter with my own unconscious self, I began filling a log book with stick drawings, a continuing record of dreams and visions, crude renderings that would eventually evolve into proper drawings, as well as paintings and sculptures.

Intent on navigating through the hills, I suddenly became aware that my sense of direction had not matched my concentrated effort to keep from tumbling over the side. As I slowed to negotiate a sharp turn, I realized I had no idea where I was. The scenery was unfamiliar as were the street names. I followed the road I was on to a four-way intersection of main thoroughfares. Which way to go?

Following my still blurry eyes, I turned right and headed for wherever the street would take me. Confusion increased as I passed one unfamiliar building after another. Finally a stoplight appeared. I braked at the intersection of La Brea and Slauson. Although I seemed to know where I was and what route I needed to take to get home, it was more of an intuitive feeling; objective knowledge failed me. I just couldn't pull myself together to grasp the concrete realities necessary to get from point A to home sweet home.

The green light pushed me on my way. My mind was enwrapped in a dense fog as I battled vainly to get a grip on my memory. I drove the streets of a cityscape I couldn't fathom. Not a thing looked familiar but I knew I lived here, this was my home turf, yet the knowledge of the back of my hand failed me.

I strained to find a familiar landmark, that one thing that jars the memory of an amnesiac into remembrance but it refused to let itself be found. My memory had shut itself down. Perhaps the reason I couldn't find my way around town was because my memory had left town, taken a little vacation away from me.

Then the lights went out and I was slipping into a seemingly bottomless well of darkness, out of the car, plunging down, down...

The room was filled with light as I awakened from what surely had to be one of the worst nightmares of even my highly eventful dream life. The room was spinning as though I had an inner ear infection and merely standing up was a major chore. I grabbed a window ledge to steady myself, but I fell and hit first the wall then the floor, probably looking like someone doing a bad imitation of a pinball.

A brief flash of brilliant sunlight assaulted my eyes and forced me into a clearer state of mind. I shook my head from side to side and tried to scrape together a few shards of composure. Finally I started to come around and as my head slowly cleared I realized that the events of the prior evening were not a dream. I also realized I had no idea how I had gotten home.

When I was able to inject a little more clarity into my thought process, I took a stab at assembling the incidents of the night and early morning into some sort of reasonable picture. My recollections were still vague, disjointed, unable to be united into a meaningful whole. It was frightening.

Despite the brightness of a new day, I was still drifting through memories of yesterday and could not fight my way back through the mist to bring myself fully into the present. Even the ordered sanity of the bathroom was of no help, though its facilities were useful for cleaning myself up.

After washing my face and combing my hair, I dressed while deciding what I should do. The best option was to get back out on the road and see if I could somehow retrace my journey and figure out where the heck I had been and, hopefully, what I had done, preferably before I saw myself on one of those late night “suspects wanted” programs.

One thing I did remember, hazily, was some sort of prophetic vision that placed me in the role of visual artist, which had no connection with my life as a musician. I could understand the need to give artistic expression to the tumult that resided within me, but the only way to do that was through music. I was no painter, sculptor, or lithographer anymore than I was a writer or poet or a pawn and a king. What, then, was this art all about? Besides, weren't all painters somewhat odd, outsiders, not quite part of the mainstream consciousness...? I stopped that train of thought immediately, not wanting to finish it out to its logical conclusion.

I got in the car and made my first destination a local restaurant. I might have been beginning an adventure in consciousness, but my stomach was making the demands of one that had missed both dinner and breakfast.

As I ate, I noticed the contours of the room began to modify their shape, becoming elongated. The texture of the plastic booth took on a strange quality. The people were surrounded by strange auras, obscuring their features and making them look like ghosts in an unreal setting.

I gulped my hot coffee, burning my mouth, and adding that little bit of pain to the overall scenario. I set the cup down, reached for my water glass, knocked it over, then reached for a napkin on another table when suddenly my eyesight turned on me. I was unable to see the restaurant or the other patrons. All that was visible was a green fog that completely filled the eatery.

I began to hyperventilate.

“Calm down,” I ordered myself. “Take it easy, this will work itself out.”

I closed my eyes and leaned back into the soft plastic of the seat. The next thing I felt was someone shaking my arm and calling out, “Are you all right?”

I opened my eyes to see a waitress standing over me.

“You’ve been sitting there over an hour,” she reported. “We thought you’d fallen asleep or had passed out. Are you okay?”

“Yeah,” I said. “Just bring me the check.”

I paid the bill and left. Outside the day looked strange, nothing seemed to fit or connect with anything else, least of all me. It was last night all over again.

I took a look around, hoping to spot at least some small corner of the world that made sense to me, but all I saw were non-human creatures puttering around the parking lot. That certainly was not reassuring.

I sat down on a bench and tried to collect my thoughts. I closed my eyes and leaned back when without warning my head cleared and all returned to normal. I was back but from where I couldn’t begin to say.

My old chum fear appeared and filled me to overflowing. As per usual at that time, I had no one to turn to, no one to talk to, so also as usual I kept the whole thing bottled up inside.

Until now.