

May 1976

The events that I am about to describe to you might seem like an extraordinarily wild flight of fancy worthy of Philip K. Dick or a plunge into a nightmarish abyss out of the darkest corners of William Burroughs' fevered mind, but I assure you it is neither. I actually experienced what I will relate and the vision, as you will be able to understand, had a profound and long lasting effect upon me. This had to happen, as given the human nature's stubborn resistance to change, an apocalyptic encounter with one's own deepest nether regions is often necessary in order to facilitate evolutionary growth.

This episode occurred in the late afternoon on my mountain, Stony Point, in a location to which I have appended the name "place of the four stars," because of the four stars someone had painted on the rock formations. What would have prompted someone to so decorate these formations, laid out along the four cardinal points, I have no idea, although it does not appear to be the usual childish graffiti or the effects of malicious vandalism.

I had been feeling dizzy throughout the day and I sat down to my meditation with a blinding headache. The wind was blowing and its action almost seemed to be causing the sun's disappearance over the western mountaintops. Soon it was dark, very dark, and the fact that I was alone somehow made the darkness seem even more intense.

I was seated on one of the star-decorated rocks, facing what had been the rapidly setting sun, now engulfed by the lonely night. A quick movement caught by my peripheral vision caused me to turn around in time to see something black and without form emerging from, the green foliage surrounding the base of the formation. Even with the wind I could discern something else was moving the branches.

Fear wrapped itself around me. This could have been anything, including a mountain lion, a fox afflicted with rabies, anything. I could easily have been severely injured by any number of potential causes, trapped up there with no chance of calling for assistance.

Not knowing what was coming, I decided it would be safer to be up and ready to move than being locked in a lotus position atop the rock. I untangled my legs and stood, then carefully made my way down the sandy face of the sandstone pillar. At one point I lost my grip, scraping my arm along the rocky surface and drawing blood, not a scent you want wafting on the wind on a dark night with wild animals roaming about.

An involuntary scream of pain and surprise was halted halfway through my throat by the sight of a black figure poised in the brush to my left. As it was positioned precariously close to a forty foot drop it seemed safer to set my course in the opposite direction, northwest, rather than try to run past him. Taking as much care as possible under the circumstances, balancing my need to get away with the need to do so in one piece, I moved as rapidly as possible up, around, then down the trail.

Without warning, the Black Minotaur appeared directly in my path.

The Minotaur, as you may know, is a figure found in Greek mythology, half man and half bull, and you probably remember something about Theseus going into the labyrinth to kill it. I had no idea why I would have a vision of a Minotaur, as I had no particular interest in the Greek classics.

The Minotaur stood eight or nine feet tall and was very striking in appearance, largely colored black with shades of gray and red eyes that burned as coals in the night. Perhaps from them came the illumination of his features, which were hard and rough. For a moment, my shock was leavened by the sheer spectacle of his presence. Then, I realized this creature's pose was entirely threatening. Concurrent with this realization was the sudden manifestation in my hand of a crude weapon, a stone club. Suddenly, I knew I had to kill this monster.

This was not just an intuitive flash or hunch; the desire, indeed, the very need to kill this thing took full possession of my reason, triggering within me an irrepressible rage that demanded I kill it, violently, tearing it to pieces. There was no purpose behind the feeling, no thoughts accompanying the feelings; it was raw emotion pouring forth from who knew what source.

Firmly grasping the club I approached the Minotaur as determinedly and defiantly as David did Goliath, raising the club and smashing my opponent squarely in the face with all my strength.

He laughed at me, an odd reaction that seemed out of synch with the torrent of Minotaur blood that cascaded down over me. Emboldened by the blood, I landed a second blow with the club, causing the creature to turn and run away, again laughing, calling to the Gods, mocking me.

I took off after it, scrambling through the dense, dangerous brush, plunging on through the darkness, staying close to the creature as it headed in a westerly direction, towards another cliff that ended in a perpendicular drop. My pursuit ended with my being enmeshed in weeds and unceremoniously pulled to the ground, where I was instantly embedded with thorns and thistles.

I pulled myself up, glimpsing the blood that had flowed from the earlier gash inflicted by the rock. The sight of the blood fueled my anger and energized me to continue the chase. I was as a hound from hell sniffing out a trail of blood and consumed by the lust to kill my quarry. It was a purely animalistic drive, devoid of reason, utterly, primitively instinctual.

He continued to evade me and I continued giving chase, down one side of the hill, up another, to the north then the northwest, down thin, winding trails, through crevasses in the rocks, through openings in the ragged brush, all the while the Minotaur goading me, egging me on, daring me to pursue him, challenging me to catch him.

As I pursued him once more down the hillside, I could see the red blood standing out in stark relief against the black flesh, the blood I had drawn with my club.

As the chase continued, seemingly without conclusion, I was becoming tired, my breath deeply sucked in and forcibly pushed out, the bellows sound uniting with the wind to produce an eerie confluence of tones that was the only suitable soundtrack to such a scenario. The Minotaur seemed to possess the Incredible Hulk's enviable trait of growing stronger the more he exerts himself.

Our derby of death led us into a clearing, where he stopped and turned to face me. Standing absolutely still, looking like a Grecian statue honoring mythical days of yore, he watched me approach, the two red eyes blazing out through the dark like twin laser beams fixed unblinkingly upon me.

I ran up and pounded the club into his face, then sent a tremendous blow crashing into its chest. I followed this up with a veritable rain of blows, each one opening up flesh and sending forth small rivers of blood, the red liquid spraying up and down, to the right and to the left. I kept up the frenzied attack until I literally could not raise the club to strike it again.

It was dead, finally, and I was drained of all strength, enervated by the chase, by the combat, by the unfiltered emotion that had been coursing through me, by the sudden let down after the continual adrenaline rush.

I sat down heavily, rib cage expanding and contracting powerfully as I attempted to steady my breathing, surrounded by gore and blood and troubled sand eddying around me as a turbulent audience to my victory.

A knife appeared in my belt, actually more of a small sword, perhaps two or three feet long, no more. I drew it with a weary flourish and with a gesture that Manolete himself would have envied, cut off its head. What followed was a systematic butchery of the creature, arms, legs, testes.

I built a campfire and roasted the severed Minotaur parts, filling the night air with a shower of sparks and a pungent cloud of dark, rolling smoke.

Throwing the roasted parts into a providentially appearing kettle, I prepared Minotaur stew for dinner, feasting well on the exotic dish, which I washed down with its blood, smearing what I did not quaff all over my face and body.

This was not a meal to curb any physical hunger. It was a ritual, an intaking of the Minotaur's very life force. I knew I had to make it a part of me, had to merge the creature's innermost essence with mine, to become one with it. He had given up his life for that very purpose, of that I was convinced beyond the slightest doubt.

I savored the smoothness of the warm human-animal blood as it slid down my throat. When I was through, I became aware of music whose rhythm lifted me up and made me dance around the cauldron. The movement made me aware of my exhaustion and I sat back down to drink more blood and extract more succulent body parts from the stew, including the now lifeless red eyes.

Sated in every possible way, I collapsed down into the dust and slept for what I estimated to have been about an hour. Awakening, I noticed the fire had died out and left me encased in darkness. The trees and bushes were strewn with the remains of the Minotaur, a few shreds of which remained in the kettle.

In the midst of the gruesome evening's last remaining evidence, I felt well, elated, one with the universe. In some way I could not explain, I had undergone regeneration, a rebirth whose effects ramified deeply into every part of my being, both known and unknown, those familiar and beyond my present ken, yet somehow destined to be revealed in the future.

I was keenly aware that the Minotaur had given up its life that I might be made anew and I sent up praises to his name on the unseen waves of the wind.

I stood up and poured water from my canteen over the bedraggled coals of the dead fire, then spread the cold, wet coals over the ground. I gathered up the Minotaur's remains and placed them in what appeared to be a small bronze chest. Walking back down the mountain, I was bursting with a new energy that continued to flow through me as I walked through the dry riverbed and up to Topanga Canyon and my white truck, which had been quietly parked on Topanga all through the night's bizarre passion play.

The bronze chest safely next to me on the front seat, I threw the truck into a U-turn and drove south down Topanga Canyon and towards home, which was on a street called Hemingway, none of whose stories came anywhere near the interest or intensity of what I had just been through.

Paula and Susan were on the couch watching television. Silently, I passed by them and went into my study, hearing almost subliminally soft music from an unidentifiable source. I shut the door and sprawled on the red and white checkerboard rug. The floor was warm, the room dark. I lit a candle and collapsed back to the floor, watching the seemingly disembodied candle flame bob and weave in the blackness. Then I fell asleep.

When I awakened the candle had burned almost all the way down, the melted wax forming a soft mass on the tabletop. Freshly fallen wax, still liquid, flowed against and around the base of an old clock. It was while watching this small flood that I realized the bronze chest was right next to me.

I opened the box and consumed the remaining parts of the Minotaur. When the last morsel disappeared, so did the box, whose actual existence is still debatable. I lay back down, placing a cushion beneath my head, and fixated on the shadows of the candlelight upon the ceiling. It was mesmerizing.

Suddenly I found myself experiencing an overpowering feeling of guilt. What had happened to me tonight? Then I knew the awful truth: I was insane! I had to be. Minotaurs were the stuff of legend, they had never existed, could not possibly exist. I had been hallucinating. The sudden invalidation of my entire experience on the mountain flooded me with fear and anxiety. As I grappled with my confusion, some of the candle wax flowed off the table and down onto my

hand, burning me and snapping me out of my daze. I rolled upright, sat myself in a lotus posture for meditation, and focused in on trying to recreate the night's events, the strangeness of which put me in such a mental state I did not even flinch when I noticed the dark figure standing near the study door.

He stood right next to my stereo, from which point he reached out his hand to me. With his other hand he pulled back his hood, exposing his gleaming red eyes, making me think the Black Minotaur was back again. Or was it his restless spirit come to do something horrific to me?

The figure moved my way just as a gust of wind blew through the window and extinguished the already faltering candle. The room was plummeted into pitch blackness broken only by the twin red eyes now freely floating in space. Only the knowledge that my wife and daughter were nearby squelched the scream I felt rising. I reached out to see if I could make contact with the thing, which I could not. It glided back into my bookcases then made itself one with the night, becoming transparent as a ghost.

I asked what it wanted, what its purpose here was, what I could do for it. I received no answers to my questions. Only silence and those crimson eyes which gradually dissipated and were replaced by the dark.

The full impact of the day's events finally settled in on me and I felt sick, physically ill. I desperately needed to discuss all this with someone, but whom? Paula and Susan were quite obviously out of the question. I called my friend William, starting the conversation hesitantly, then describing my adventure in detail. He listened in such silence I wondered if he had simply put down the receiver and walked away from me and my madness. I asked if he was still there and in a rather subdued voice, he assured me he was.

I asked what he thought of my experience. He told me he wanted to formulate an answer that made sense, not the most comforting of responses. He did suggest I seek the proverbial "professional help" and referred me to his therapist.

I told him I couldn't afford a therapist and their outrageous charges. William had an appointment scheduled for the next day, which he volunteered to give up so I could have the session. He promised to call the doctor and arrange it; all I would have to do is show up. Thankful for his assistance, I nonetheless had more than a few concerns at the prospect of actually seeing a...therapist.

After work the next evening I arrived early for my appointment with the therapist, whom I will call by his first name, Russ. I decided to kill some time with a walk around the park across the street from his office building. I was still anxious but more reconciled to the need to tell my story. Precisely at 6:30 I knocked on Russ' door.

Russ was a tall man, with strong features and, in his way, handsome. His casual attire of Levis and brown shorts signaled that he was not a Gentleman's Quarterly kind of guy, which helped put me more at ease. The office was filled with books and religious bric-a-brac. The film of dust covering the books and the soft light from the corner of the room gave the office a homey feeling. I knew he was a Jungian analyst and regarded the interior life of the human psyche with the utmost seriousness. I liked him immediately.

He asked me to explain what was going on with me and how he could help me. With some reluctance and more than a little embarrassment I expounded the entire tale of the previous day's events.

He listened intently, concentrating on my words, never once interrupting or taking notes as he absorbed every aspect of my tale, no doubt including those I only inferred, hoping he would extrapolate the rest, which I'm sure he did.

When I was finished, he asked a thoroughly unexpected question. "What did you do with the energy the Minotaur gave you?"

This was not the interrogative I was expecting, thinking it would be more along the lines of how many drinks had I had before going to the mountain.

"What?" I asked, more than a little startled.

"The Minotaur gave up his life," Russ said. "You consumed him. So, what did you do with all the magic and energy he gave you?"

"Nothing," I replied, rather lamely.

"Nothing? Why?"

Completely confused, I had no idea what to say. Fortunately, Russ said it for me.

"You had a real opportunity to expand your consciousness by ingesting his energy," Russ explained, "and you let it pass by. Too bad."

This made me feel even worse and yet I was also comforted by Russ' unquestioned acceptance of my encounter with a mythological beast.

The time passed very quickly and we arranged to meet the next week. As we shook hands I thanked him for his kindness.

It was a long drive home from Santa Monica to the San Fernando Valley, but for the first time in I didn't know how long, I was at peace.