

October 20, 1979

I watched the thin black line of graphite wind its way down the page of my journal giving tangibility to my thought as it formed the first outlines of a face.

It was a good day. The faint rumbles in the distant reported the approach of a storm. I was comfortably situated in my study, a snifter of brandy gloriously warming me from within and the sweet aroma of my pipe tobacco completing the aura of artistic sophistication, San Fernando Valley style.

I took the drawing to the next level, shading in the face, carefully adding eyes, mouth, and nose. No sketch of an old friend or a woman who had caught my eye before walking on by this; I was placing in my journal the visage of the dark creature I had encountered the previous day

My work was interrupted by a great flash of lightning and a nearly simultaneous crash of thunder. On the other side of the door the muted sounds of lowered voices and muffled footsteps invaded my sanctuary and made me grudgingly remember the study was part of a larger household.

This point was driven home further by a knock on the door and a voice calling out, "Are you alright?"

It suddenly occurred to me that the number of times I had answered that question had become well nigh incalculable.

The door began to open as another powerful left-and-right of thunder and lightning rocked the house and introduced the first wave of rain. The light of the hallway crept in through the opening door and a face began to materialize out of the night.

"Here we go," I thought, fully expecting the ubiquitous red eyes and another slippage into worlds unknown. But this time the face belonged to someone I actually knew, my wife.

"I'm fine," I finally answered. "How is Susan?"

"She's still asleep," Paula said.

I was thankful for the childish ability to sleep through the fiercest storms, as I was eager to return to my drawing and preferred a quiet house when I was working. Paula closed the door behind her and I sensed that she was upset with me, but I didn't care. All I wanted was to be left alone to be about my work.

The storm was settling down to its own work of drenching the immediate world, the tempo of the rain redirecting my thoughts from wives and sleeping children to my journal and my feelings of anger at just about everything. I didn't know why I was angry but, again, I didn't really care. I scratched my pencil across the white page before me, making a sound about as pleasant as fingernails on a blackboard. I was impatient to complete my rendering of the ephemeral creature that had dropped in on me the day before.

It seemed an eternity since I had stood vis-à-vis that being, just the two of us in the thick foliage of Stony Point. As per usual I had arrived early to outdistance the crowds of rock climbers who began converging on *my* mountain before 8 A.M., by noon swarming over the entire area like ants over a mound of sugar. Not that I begrudged the others the pleasures of the rocks and trails, but I did treasure my time alone there.

My head was already pounding like a ship's engine room. I gingerly removed my glasses and slipped them into my jacket pocket. I looked up into a blurry landscape, which did not perturb me as I was there to meditate, not hike. And the journey I was to go on required clarity of inner vision rather than an outer eagle eye.

I eased myself down on the rock, facing what I called the tree of transformation, the hard, uneven surface uncomfortable to my legs. I shifted around until I had attained a comfortable position, relaxed, and gently expanded my thoughts beyond the confinement of mundane pursuits. As my mind cleared, a soft breeze added its understated caress to my efforts as did the soothing balm of the aromas of nature that permeated the mountain. The coolness of the morning air was profoundly refreshing and I began to float into a rather splendid state of consciousness.

My concentration was disturbed by flies buzzing around my head, followed by a very strong blast of wind out of the southwest that almost knocked me off my perch. As I righted myself, I was gripped by something that seemed to have emerged out of the wind itself, eyes staring out of the dust cloud that eddied in the wind.

The upsurge of fright was immediately calmed by a voice that said, "Be at peace, listen to my voice."

I listened. The voice spoke of love and acceptance, the unity of all things, peace and joy. And then, after the soothing monologue, a warning. "You are in grave danger." It was only then that the cloud condensed into a recognizable countenance, marked by scars and deeply etched wounds. The face sweated blood and I could sense tremendous pain and anguish, almost as if this were the being's natural emotional state and that it had long since resigned itself to suffering in perpetuity. And yet I still felt great peace also emanating from it. A strange concatenation of feelings.

"You will be afflicted by a mysterious ailment that could end your life; you must be prepared for its unseen intrusion into your being."

Naturally I was concerned and enquired as to the nature of the coming malady, but I received no reply. I swabbed the perspiration from my face and watched the face disperse back into the wind, leaving me alone with my fear. I instinctively reached out for the vanishing figure but succeeded only in swatting empty air and tumbling off the rock to the dirt beneath. My eyes were most with tears as the vision completely disappeared.

The crash and bang of the storm jolted me out of my reverie and landed me back in the present. The staccato sound of the uneven sheets of rain mirrored the lack of balance in my mental-emotional make up as I wondered how the creature's prophecy would eventually manifest. There was no doubt about the apparition's sincerity and I could not afford to call its veracity into question. I had to remain vigilant to any possible fulfillment of the words I had heard.

I was concerned for Susan; I did not want to leave her fatherless. I was envisioning the worst possible scenario, and yet I knew I would not have been given the warning to be on the alert if my fate were sealed.

What could the ailment be? An emotional one would be far more preferable to one physical as I felt myself better able to handle something of a psychological nature. At the time I little suspected that my transformation and healing would proceed along an all-embracing physical-spiritual axis.

Thor's fury was beginning to move on its way, leaving behind the tail end of the storm. The wind still annoyed the louvered windows of my study and there was still enough precipitation to serenade my thoughts as I reclined in the leather armchair and continue my review of the events of yesterday.

I lifted myself up off the ground. Although the vision was complete, its message delivered, I had found in my prior experiences on that mountain that, even after an episode seemed to be over there was often further work to be accomplished while I made my way through the mountain's trails. I felt the need to continue walking and let the rest of the day take its own course.

Grayish clouds began to appear in the blue sky, blowing in from the northwest. A hint of rain was in the air as I made my way to the tree of magic. I ended up at a place that the evening's rain would transform from a dry old creek bed into a torrent of gushing, muddy water. I was well acquainted with flash floods that arose from nowhere to cover the mountain and threaten all that lay in the path of the angry inundation. I hastened to finish my work on the mountain and return home before the storm struck its first meaningful blow.

At the tree of magic, I rested my hands on her tender surface, praying for her power. Many were the times I had come to this place to renew my connection with the potent energies of this wondrous being. Near the tree was the gnarled, weather-beaten remains of an old log whose contours looked as though they had been shaped by human hands but which had, in fact, been crafted by long exposure to nature's elements. I sat down on the log, cleared my mind, and made myself available to the inflow of my inner energies.

Almost immediately I was struck by a rush of psychic wind blowing from within out and carrying me into a psychic night without end. This vast inner space was familiar to me from previous journeys and I was acquainted with its purpose: it functions as a barrier on the outer rim of cosmic realms and protects wanderers and insouciant travelers into the unknown from entering spaces from which they would not be able to return.

Once past this barrier there is no return without either a competent spirit guide or the personal knowledge and experience to make the homeward journey. The one who manages to penetrate this barrier without the means of return will never come back.

Out of the infinite night a patch of light appeared, moving in my general direction. Eons seemed to pass before I was able to make out Charon gliding on the gust of spiritual wind.

“Welcome,” he said, reaching to take my hand. “Come with me, and stay close.”

As always, I heeded without question or reservation, although as we neared what I called the second barrier of darkness, I began to feel very uneasy. I wanted to return to the mountain, to the tree of magic, to my home and study.

Charon pointed to a luminous rainbow in the distance. The cosmic wind had raised its voice and I was unable to hear his discourse on where we were and the prerequisites for penetrating the barrier and entering the other side of eternity. He pulled me close to him and with a firm hold upon my arm, he propelled us through the barrier and into the rainbow of light on the other side.

Words fail to describe the vision that unfolded before me on the other side. Imagine an infinitude of prisms splitting the white light of God into its constituent colors and shining forth a kaleidoscope of unspeakable hues that not only penetrated the soul but comprised the soul itself.

I was not at peace, I *was* peace. I did not feel at home, but that I was Home. I was the universe, one with all things. There was no feeling of life or death, of ego or self, only perfect unity with all that is.

I knew I never wanted to leave this place or, rather, to release this state of consciousness, for now that I knew I was one with all, it was not really a matter of departure from a place. I wanted to exist in this state of...what...Cosmic Consciousness?...forever.

But that was not to be, as the next instant I was back at the tree of magic, lying next to it on the ground. Charon was not with me and the world seemed not to have changed much in my mental absence.

I wanted to return immediately to that state of exalted consciousness but I was ruefully aware that this was not the time for it and that many such experiences would be necessary before I could once again experience what I had just been privileged to pass through.

I sat back in my chair and lit my pipe, blowing clouds of fragrant smoke into the room, the aromatic mist creating pleasant shapes in the steadily burning flame of the candle on the desk.

The storm finally moved on its way and with it went the lingering effects of yesterday. My drawing was finished, closing out the chapter that began on the mountain. It would be years before I fully comprehended the prophecies given that leaden day in Chatsworth but my view of the other side had imparted a calm and comforting certitude of the future that assuaged all trepidation as to what might eventually come.

I knew beyond all doubt that I, that we, are never alone, that we are forever surrounded by, and part of, infinite beauty and glory beyond all imagining. It is there, waiting for us to reach a stage where it can contact us and direct us to our true home.

I finished my ruminations, extinguished the candle, leaned back into soft, yielding red leather, emptied my pipe, took a long deep breath, finished the brandy and fell asleep in the chair.

That night I dreamt of rainbows in eternity.

Postscript

The following day the moisture from the storm still clung to mineral and vegetable kingdom alike and made the surroundings fresh and clean as I climbed to the tree of transformation. I was hoping to attract my allies and be given some guidance, or at least a clue, as to future events. Insecurity, as you will understand, ran deeply in me.

This particular trail is steep and the muddy conditions created an even greater hazard. At one point I stopped to clean the caked clay off my boots. Striking them against a bed of small rocks to remove the damp clods, I heard the faint echo of a voice, indistinct at first but quickly becoming clear with audible words.

The voice seemed to come from everywhere yet was localized nowhere. I put my boots back on and trekked on to the tree when the figure I had seen the day before suddenly arose to block my path. Removing its hooded cloak, the red eyes stabbed out at me.

“Why have you returned to the tree?” the spirit asked.

I told him I felt my business remained unfinished and I was seeking further information. After all, it was my future we were talking about.

He moved closer to me and I noted the underbrush was in no way disturbed by his passage over it. He spoke again.

“You continually live in fear of the future. It is time that you gave up the control of your life to the vastness.”

Reflexively I began to stammer a denial, but I knew the spirit was right and he knew I knew it. I needed to develop real faith in the process of my own journey to wholeness. I freely confessed this to my astral friend, thanked him for his concern and kindness and headed back up the soggy trail to my car.

I was forced to face the fact I had tried to manipulate the energy and elicit from it answers I wanted to hear and, in so doing, was trying to get out ahead of what was obviously a carefully planned timetable for the healing of Myron Dyal, who couldn't be allowed to move too quickly and that for his own good. “The wind must ever be tempered to the shorn lamb,” as St. Augustine so eloquently phrased it.

I was ashamed of myself as I drove home, guiding the car back up the wet Topanga Canyon, but it was shame mixed with affection for and trust in the spirit who had shown me more kindness than most people had and certainly more patience than I probably had deserved.

I basked in his love all the way home.