

August 20, 1986

The nightmare was back.

I was running down a long red tunnel, my reserves of endurance were exhausted and I was at the point of collapse. A strange wheel hurtled towards me at light speed. Avoiding a collision with this speeding discus was impossible. There was nothing to do but kneel as a repentant sinner and humbly await the inevitable doom.

The wheel grew larger as it neared me, finally becoming so monstrous it seemed to blend with the sky, obscuring everything except the red dust kicked up by its inexorable spinning towards me.

I screamed and, as so often happens in dreams, no sound came forth. I tried to run and, of course, was frozen in place. The huge dust-covered wheel thundered on; nothing would deter it from its mission, nothing could be interposed between us.

I awakened screaming into the night, the usual end to a reprise of the dream that had been recurring for the last month.

Perspiration soaked me as though I had been strolling through a monsoon. I rolled over, inhaled deeply, and luxuriated in the relief that it had been nothing but a dream.

I heaved myself out of bed and showered, made the inevitable and soothing coffee and settled down with it and my favorite type of muffin. I started building up my hope for a normal day, encouraged by the friendly warmth of the black coffee that almost never failed to give me pleasure.

The effects of the nightmare continued to linger as the morning wore on. Outside, the sky was wrapped in a grayish white cover of clouds with patches of blue remaining to create a nice contrast. The call to my mountain was strong and I heeded, reaching my favorite place of power somewhere in the vicinity of 8:30 AM.

There was no traffic on Topanga Canyon or in the hilly expanse I called my spiritual home. I walked my usual route through the formations of rock and plant life, truly enjoying the feel of the soft earth after a week on the concrete sidewalks of supposed civilization. I could feel the life force of the animals all around, above, and beneath me. The rocky citizens of the point called up wonderful pictures in my imagination, whirling and weaving and leaving me delightful giddy.

I arrived at a large group of formations that have graced those hills since time immemorial and would be there, probably along with bats and beetles, long after man has disappeared from the face of the earth. I pulled and lifted myself to the top then sat down and summoned my energy to me.

As I slowed my breathing and quieted myself, I noticed the atmosphere darkening with the approach of a bank of fog that seemed to be coming from a grove of bushes growing around another rock formation. Then I could see the reason for the odd mist: Charon was approaching.

Except for the fog, there was nothing unusual about his appearing.

“I hope this day finds you well,” he said in his unique phraseology as his manifestation continued to stabilize. “We have much to do,” he promised, “for this day will be very difficult for you. Get a hold of yourself and listen to me very carefully.”

Charon’s promise of a difficult day ahead was producing unease, a cramping stomach and buzzing head that seemed to rotate as fast and threateningly as the wheel in the dream.

“We are going to fight a great battle here today and the outcome of that battle will determine whether you will live or die.”

The statement was made as matter-of-factly as an invitation to lunch. If my life were to be on the line I would have preferred a little more melodrama, but Charon in his wisdom was well aware of that and knew that I would probably be producing enough of that of my own accord and was therefore speaking calmly and rationally.

“You mean, this very day will decide my life? If I die during this battle or am defeated, my life is over?”

Charon nodded affirmatively. The sluice gates of fear were jerked open, flooding every corner of me.

Fog continued to close in, shutting out the sunlight. The fog had a living, sentient quality, a life it shared with the humanoid figures it was generating, black robed, skeleton creatures atop black horses riding down to Earth from the southwest.

Charon rose high in the air, faced the north, and cried out “Oh, great army of Zelcon, join us in this day of death, come with us to battle!”

Instantly as the last syllable died out, the sky filled with riders on red horses. “Come to me,” Charon said loudly, “come now, join us in the great fire of Zelcon!”

The entire scenario was straight out of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to St. John. In a word, apocalyptic. The end of everything. And yet, the Greek word *apocalupsis* actually means “unveiling” hence the book of *revelation*.

Fire burned all around and the riders were suddenly surrounding us. Charon bade me draw my sword (which I did not know I had) and join him. He and I mounted steeds provided for us then joined our red garbed comrades in the sky which was now filled with dust and flame so thick it was almost impossible to see the proverbial hand in front of the face.

The enemy approached and it was not a matter of seeing the whites of their eyes but the reds, as they glowed crimson and numbered as the stars. Two vast airborne armies clashed in the astral skies over Chatsworth that morning, battling furiously in the dust and light, the flashing flames and meteor showers of reddened eyes.

For hours the combat raged, the black hoard not departing until late in the day. The various reddish hues commingled with blood that flowed through the gray clouds until by late afternoon the entire atmosphere was gleaming red with freely gushing blood and bloodied bodies.

Charon ordered the collection of the bodies, which he suspended from oak trees that stood as witness to the war that had been fought above Topanga Canyon and environs. Fires were lit and the mountain became a funeral pyre for bodies, decapitated heads, smoke and ashes flying madly. I was sickened by the sight of the efficiently professional dismemberment of the fallen enemy.

A lá the Black Minotaur, various bodily parts were thrown into cauldrons for boiling, the smoke from the cooking fires billowing up into the unreal atmosphere. At last all preparations were in order and the banquetting commenced. We soldiers feasted and feasted well, as well as King Arthur and his companions ever had. We fed on the enemy's energy, drank their blood, and consumed their flesh well into the evening hours.

Darkness settled over the mountain, ringing down the curtain on an unspeakably horrific day. My cohorts and I were covered in flesh and blood and bucolic dust. As the celebration of our triumph continued there was dancing and revelry amidst the aroma of dead and roasted flesh. Finally, the great masters of war decided it was time to call it a day and return to Valhalla or wherever else they had hailed from.

As they departed into the night sky, Charon raised his hands to salute the victors. The embers of the many fires were going out when my spirit guide and I began our descent from the mountain.

The day had been malevolent, violent, but undoubtedly absolutely necessary for me, as it had been the day of my salvation. I rested against Charon for support as we made our way to my car, still innocently and uncomprehendingly parked on Topanga Canyon.

When we reached the car Charon smiled at me and vanished, leaving me with a heart filled with gratitude to him and love for him for all that he had given me.

The victory was his, for he had saved me from eternal darkness.