

March 6, 1996

The ache in my legs was already making itself felt that morning. I had no inkling as to what kind of day this would turn out to be nor did I much care, quite frankly. Hope for better things was once more diminishing rapidly in the face of the return of the old dark thoughts. The only difference was that the period of time between visionary episodes was increasing.

The subtlety of it all, of the events, the unusual moments threaded together into something larger than the whole, can exhibit a very elusive quality, thus feelings of optimism, powerful upon arrival, can quickly dissipate. The psychic pressure builds inexorably, I feel it coursing through my being. Anger rears its head, as does the tendency towards isolation.

I despise such a mindset and though by necessity I have learned to live with it, still its onset brings depression in tow.

March had arrived and with it the evening song of the nightingales, whose happy chirps in the dead of night lead one to think all is well with the world. This day had been good and I was now climbing a trail above the Santa Susana Mountains. I was struck by the vivid green shades of the grass in anticipation of Spring, and I was a little impatient to begin setting all the soon coming "color moments" to canvass. Weeks had passed since I had last held a paintbrush and I was eager to start a new project.

A gentle wind sighed past my ankles, the dry grass all around me conforming to its will, the tangle of green blades resembling a pile of straw, then seeming to arrange themselves into a more definite shape.

I continued down toward the valley, marveling at the bright shades of blue, green, and yellow brought out by the rays of the mid day sun. Winding my way down to the floor of the valley below, I reached out to steady myself with the aid of an old sandstone rock.

Without a hint of a prior signal that anything was amiss, I was suddenly inside a sound-free vacuum. No songs of birds, rustle of leaves in the wind, distant sounds of traffic. Nothing. It was though I had been struck stone deaf. My eyesight was still perfectly normal and I was momentarily taken aback by the leaves falling all around me.

The reddish brown leaves formed heaps around me, which congregated into the form of a woman, green-eyed but with no other aspects of her face visible. Surrounded by a cloudy formation illuminated from within, her form and the light moved in unison. Any possible fear was pushed out of my psyche by the sheer beauty of this creature. I was literally unable to tear my gaze away from her.

She spoke, her voice as music gliding on the wind. Unfortunately, her words were unclear, made so by the fantasia of her voice, the dreamy quality of the sound obscuring the words. I could not make out what language she was speaking if, indeed, it was one that any human would recognize.

She walked towards me, coming to a halt a scant few feet from me.

“You must learn to control your anger,” she advised, “it will be your undoing.”

At that moment, my attention was snatched away from the continuing materialization of her form by a strong gust of wind that hit me head on, so forceful it sent me to the ground.

“You see what anger can do when it is not under control,” she said with a smile that turned into a laugh.

I was as bowled over by her beauty as by the wind and my voice was nowhere to be found.

The interesting thing about this episode was its timeliness; I had spent the better part of a year wrestling with my anger, trying to exercise a greater degree of control over it. My success had been partial at best. Whenever I thought I had the upper hand, something would come roaring out of the dim caverns of my inner consciousness, triggering a new spate of upset. Then commenced the blame game, creating more anger.

I looked into my lady friend’s eyes, knowing by the look in them that she was keenly aware of my thoughts.

“Don’t take it all so seriously,” she said lightly.

I attempted to focus my energy, but the harder I tried to reel this vision in, the more it slipped away. Finding my voice, I called out, requesting she linger a moment. She did not respond, vanishing in an instant.

The vibration of her being remained strongly behind and I found myself having difficulty breathing. Also, the underbrush was thickly studded with brambles and thistles hooking themselves to my garments and hemming me in. Pulling myself this way and that, scratched by thorns, movements restricted, frustrated, the old anger began to assert itself, thereby proving the point of the entire lesson. Indeed, I could hear the faint sound of the spirit woman’s delightful laugh as I continued my manful struggle to the death against the tumbleweeds and heavy shrubbery.

Having reached my limit, I ceased fighting and sought rest on a large rock formation in the center of the canyon. Upset, I attempted to free my arm from the encroaching brush with a mighty jerk, tearing my new shirt from elbow to shoulder.

“Goddammit!” I shouted unceremoniously.

The surrounding rocks echoed my blasphemy throughout the canyon walls, disappearing into the sound of the wind. Again I heard the sweet sound of feminine laughter, seeming to fill every little niche of the canyon.

Suddenly I hated that laughter and its mockery, but at least I was clear enough about it to realize I needed to rein myself in, calm down, and center myself. I was only making a bad situation even worse and that in every possible way.

Concurrent with these thoughts and by way of a reply, the laughter became encouraging words, soft and soothing with their comfort. Then, as if by magic, I was released from the sharp embrace of thorns and brambles, free in more ways than one. Anger was replaced by peace.

The wind brushing against the rocky ridge well above me was an extension of my inner sigh of relief and release.

“Be at peace,” I heard repeated on the breath of the breeze, over and over until it blended with the other sounds to be heard on the mountainside.

Finally, the entirety of the lesson sank in. I turned away and climbed down the trail to the canyon’s edge, then trudged up the ridge to my car.

The anger was still gone. Peace still reigned.