

January 2004

I have been called to the mountain today and, heeding the voice of my energy, I was reflecting on the gentle beauties of nature that are manifested in my special spot in such an unforced and, so, powerful and effective way.

I entered into a state of attunement with the vibrations of...God, Gaia, the Cosmic, Omneity, the Tao, Brahman...every culture has its word, its cherished name for the Creator of those simple things on which my meditation was focused, the rocks, trees, the happy chirping of the birds, even the probably unsatisfiable longing brought forth by the sound of the approaching train.

The blue-and-silver Super Liner sped by quickly, plunged into the tunnel carved into the side of the Santa Susana Mountains, its diesel rumble enhancing rather than disturbing the pleasantly bucolic scene, then it is gone, ostensibly on its way to Simi Valley and points north, but in my meditation it has receded into the tunnel of forever where it will always remain a part of the memory of the day.

My surroundings are decidedly different from my inner reality, however, as the healing balm of the atmosphere had not yet fully penetrated my consciousness. I arrived here feeling empty, forlorn and depressed, the spiritually walking wounded, the emotionally dead. Above me, the sleek black forms of crows and incongruously mobile bodies of the bulky screech owls hover and circle against the azure backdrop of the sky. Above them the true masters of the Chatsworth airways, the majestic hawks, effortlessly glided along their invisible paths, imperiously ignoring the moaning cries of crow and disdaining the dreaded beaks and talons of the owls, so feared by other, lesser creatures in the area.

The day is anointed with its own sweetness, as have been most of my days here. No matter how black my mood, my main place of power has always welcomed me and always embraced me in the arms of home. My habit had been to visit every weekend, with few exceptions. I also missed very few weekdays, spending time here before or after my business day. Whenever I came, however much time I felt I would be able to spend amidst the rocks and trees, my visits here were always sojourns, seeking something, something I had had and lost, something I had never possessed or, as you have read, times when I knew not what I had come to find.

Sometimes I left empty-handed. On other occasions I would simply enjoy the setting, the sunrises and sunsets, allowing the tranquility to seep deeply into my psyche. But when my energy specifically called me to this location, there was always a definite purpose behind it. The lesson may have dealt with trust or obedience, there might be a major visionary experience, as with the Black Minotaur or the epic spiritual battle that had been fought over Topanga Canyon. Always there would be a message, either unmistakably laid upon the surface of the event or encrypted in symbols demanding my own efforts to decipher, but at the core of each

episode is always a scintillating point of light, a kernel of truth that I am expected to sow, cultivate, and, at the proper moment for harvesting, reap and do something with.

As I gazed into the distance this day I focused on a crow, shiny black wings bright with sunlight. I see someone hiking one of the trails beneath my position. So many more people come here than in years gone by, rock climbers, hikers, scout troops, emergency crews training for rescues in rugged terrain. In days gone by, this area was practically deserted save for the occasional hobo, the odd backpacker now and then, and even troubled artists who incorporated the mountain into their lifelong vision quest.

The population has increased dramatically and I was experiencing this by way of the plethora of people crawling all over the place. Fortunately, by late afternoon they will have largely deserted Stony Point and I'll once more be one with the solitude.

Most of the people who frequent Stony Point (or anywhere else, for that matter) like to have the setting on their own terms, their psychic noses being pushed out of joint if everything is not just as they like it. It may be too dark for them or too light, the wind may be too severe or rain might be falling, there could be too many specimens of animal life or not enough, the locale is too far from civilization for some, too close for others, and so on.

What most want is their brand of weekend afternoon quietude, a leisurely stroll, holding hands, a brief smooching session, or what have you. But now, they're leaving, going to pick children up from their whatever lessons or perhaps returning home to watch The Big Game of the Week or some other nonsense on the great god television. I see individuals, couples, small groups, heading for their vehicles parked along the canyon, chattering, leaving Stony Point behind them, not taking anything away with them. I hope they enjoyed their day. They do not exist as a lasting part of my memory, naught but fleeting impressions of a cloud of dust raised by boots and sneakers, vaguely heard conversations wafting on the breeze, a soft drink can carelessly tossed among the bushes. Now they are gone.

Unlike the others, what I experience on the mountain bears a far stronger imprint of reality than the rest of my life. The soft rustling of leaves in the wind, the old burned out trees, the mossy green bedspreads covering the rocks, it all has meaning to me, far more so than for the others, with their barely registered details of a few hours spent away from Blockbuster and Starbucks and Kentucky Fried Chicken and a cinemplex with a couple of dozen screens, all of which, of course, are within five minutes' driving time of my mountain. Thank God I can leave all that behind and wrap myself in the mystical cloak of the shrinking afternoon sunlight, as I approached that time I like to call the crack between worlds.

My vantage point allows me to see the entire vista of the mountain. Looking to the right I see the face carved into the rock by nature's art tools, the winds that howl and shriek through the canyon. The mouth of the stone face is agape at the wondrous spectacles it has seen, the

distinctive nose has inhaled many an intoxicating aroma, the beard goes all the way to the sandy floor, the gigantic head encloses a sandstone brain that ponders thoughts beyond the ken of man.

To the east is a large tree, which I make the focal point of my contemplation, drawing forth from its innermost center a point of meditation, as I call it. I open myself to the energy that it releases from its own being and injects into my soul. This is a vortex that facilitates my connection with deeper areas of my being, a tunnel into my unconscious that is normally sealed behind barriers that permit the safety and comfort of living most of my life without the input of these higher strata of knowledge and wisdom.

But today I have been brought to the mountain to open those portals, to force them apart if need be, in order to cauterize the pain that has me in its grasp.

The tree that has captured my attention opens up, splitting itself for my edification, unleashing some sort of red substance that flows unimpeded from an unseen spigot at the tree's center. The red liquid cascades down to the green grass at the roots of the tree, then flows over the earth as water, but it is not colored water, nor blood. Somehow I divine – perhaps the knowledge communicated by the tree itself – that this redness is the medium for the life force that flows through the leaves. The red begins to vanish almost immediately, leaving behind nothing but the opening in the tree, which I know, also intuitively, is a womb containing a creature awaiting birth. It has not yet fully gestated, is not quite ready for emergence into the world, but I can see it moving behind a veil of crimson. Although I cannot make out any details, I can see the size is impressive.

Then the sudden birth is sprung upon me, the creature literally erupts from its wooden confines. It wastes no time flopping about on the ground, does not crawl or stumble on hesitant legs. It takes to the sky, flying off to the east, skimming over the hilltops and making for the distant mountains. This creation has been born from the tree and is on its way into a new life.

The birth canal, no longer needed, closes, the reddish placenta dissolves back into the greenery of the mountain, and all returns to normal, as it was before the vision commenced. All I see now is an ordinary tree covered by the shadow of the rocks.

But another appearance is at hand; Charon emerges from the shadow. He stands on a white cloud stationary in the air just above the rock situated beside the Tree of Knowledge. My spirit guide gestures for me to accompany him. I arise and with a step of faith join him on his cloudy platform. Without a word, he covers me with his cloak and we are off, coming to rest on a familiar patch of sidewalk, flanked on the right by a long hedge whose visible pulsations seem keyed to our breathing. At the left is a bank of branches, trees, and brambles that looks to be impenetrable and impassable. From the tangle of growth I can hear low voices, the murmur of forgotten memories, the prophecies of tomorrow's dreams, the dialogue of eternities yet to come.

An orange light inhabits the space between two of the trees. As we near it I feel a sense of apprehension, obviously mine, not Charon's, who assures me all is well as we continue on our

way. We reach the light, now tinged with yellow, and are absorbed into it. The power of its intensity is overwhelming and my shielding of my eyes draws from Charon a command to peer directly into this glowing fireball.

It is as a sun at dawn or dusk, especially intense at its first appearance of final bow. I obey Charon but see nothing but the bright yellow-gold that swallows all else up in the field of its all-encompassing radiance. The orb turns white and seems to penetrate my cranium, revolving through my head. It is a fire that engulfs the universe and I am located at its center. I am the solitary human witness to the white fire burning on the mountain, above it, beneath it, all around it, through it. We plunge into the blaze, remaining as intact and unconsumed by the psychic conflagration as the mountain itself, as unharmed and untouched by the impossibly hot flames as were Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, into whose seven-times-hotter-than-normal fire they were not exposed until their faith was already perfect and able to withstand it. As were Daniel's three companions, we are protected by the power of God.

Charon tells me to step into the fire. I do so, then look back to see a pillar of fire preventing ingress to any others who might follow. I turn back and we proceed up the sidewalk, the pavement giving way to a dirt trail that takes us to the top of a mountain. Without Charon's speaking, I know this is the journey I have been on these many long years and I feel that, finally, I am approaching the final steps.

Perfectly aware of my thoughts, Charon shakes his head, indicating there are still many more steps to take on this path.

"We have a long journey ahead of us," he says, "so you must not tarry and distract yourself with a lot of unnecessary thoughts."

Far in the distance is a range of blue mountains, their peaceful aura beckoning to me. I also see a bend in the road up ahead. Meanwhile, Charon and I stand before a black rock, covered over with brown and umber. Our destination is a great tree covered with the golden leaves of Autumn, which I take as a symbol of my birth. A Libra, I am a creature of Autumn. The tree is as me, it is me, a sentinel guarding this place of spiritual unity.

I follow the inner prompting to lay my hand against the tree. The bark is rough, with a scaly consistency, and yet I sense it contains healing virtue. The tree and I unify our consciousnesses. A bough drops into my hand a reddish brown leaf, a tear shed by the soul of the tree. I gaze deeply into the center of the leaf and see an eye looking back at me. Charon suggests I look deeply into the eye.

I focus on the deep blue iris and my vision takes me all the way home. The blue fills me, unleashing memories inscribed on the pages of my soul.

Also out of this sea of color three beings, silhouetted in white, come towards me. Although it is difficult to assess their position in relation to ours I feel they are not far distant and are rapidly closing the distance between themselves and Charon and me.

They reach us and I am surrounded by them. They place their hands upon me, hands of healing power, their regenerative forces infusing me, restoring and renewing my entire being, my mind, they direct their light into my eyes.

I am flooded by their brilliant essence, I am aglow from crown to heel, I can almost see the light seeping through my pores. The sensation is beyond words and I am perfectly at rest within its glow.

Their work finished, they back away, the light is fully absorbed by my being and the contrast almost feels like death. The healers take their leave. The panorama of blue collapses in on itself, reducing to a circle, then the eye, then the leaf.

I find myself back where it started, looking at the eye in the center of the leaf. Then I retreat back into the fire, pass backwards through the inferno, then I am on the sidewalk.

Finally, I am back at Stony Point, hearing the traffic on the freeway, the whistle of yet another train winding through the mountain pass. I have returned to what passes for normalcy.

I return home, turning the episode over in my thoughts, and pondering the life that has brought me to this present moment. I consider the many years of painful struggle, the magic and wonder and mystery.

All in all, from the earliest experiences to the final analysis, it has been worth it, more than worth it, and I have finally wrestled and fought my way to a consciousness, to a stage of healing and wholeness, where I actually look forward to the future.