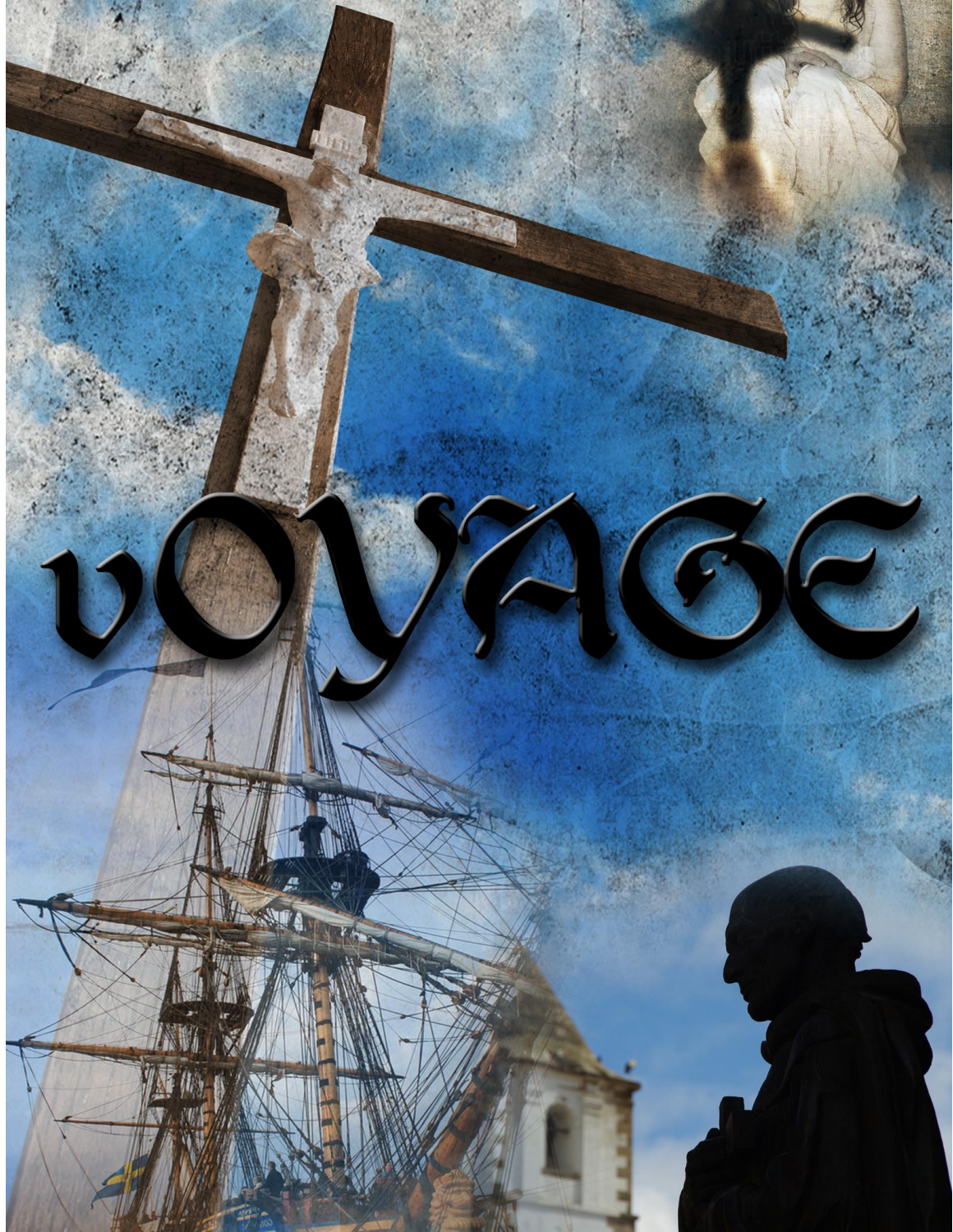


Francis X. Kroncke



VOYAGE

vOYAGE: O'SIDE

by Francis X. Kroncke

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PART 1: DARLM

HOME!

Frak's hands cup the world as he had once known it. *Back then*, all that he knew did fill his hands—the sun setting, the sky surrounding it, the fire seething as the sun extinguishes at land's edge, the breeze, now cool, cooler as the darkling shadows grow. Back then, in his hands he did hold all that he feared and which he loved; he smiles wistfully.

Frak settles into this unhurried blanketing of night's shadow—no longer sounded and felt as *shad*. He is acutely aware that it is no longer *shad*. For a moment, this is a triumphant awareness, his muscles tighten and feel good, yet, even as his mind addresses and hails the night's darkening shadows so does the image of *shad* sound deeply within—ancient tremor and dread.

Shad: Night-shadow—it comes as a cloak. It covers his eyes. It consumes him. But Frak is no longer tremulous and afraid of this, this blackening of his sight. For now, upon his return, he knows well the stars—which are no longer *harj*. Not only the stars as faithful night lights, though dim as they may be at times, but as markers, guides on his wandering. For when he travelled, he learned about *map* and came to know that the stars changed over time, as did the trees and grass and flowers, and with these once baffling changes so has his mind grown, transformed—become what his *kin* call *big*. Back then, he had at first receded from *shad*. Had hid—drawn his thick forearm across his eyes to blot out the unknown and imminently dangerous stars—*harj* beasts of the *shad*. Now he not only knows them as guides—respects them, but welcomes them more so because they remain reliably constant, and it is a constancy which comforts him. Here, knowing that with this darkness descending right now—as with all daily darkness—a constant set of stars stand ready to guide him—*Safely!*—to horizon's end. The stars above him are new guides yet old familiars, for he has been here before—*back then*, these were stars he had often waited for with uncertain anticipation, a touch of dread. Now he knows that the sky will always change, and that it is a sky changing as it is a land changing—knowing now, the land as ever-changing.

The ever-changing land and sky. Once grasped, this thought birthed a new point of reference. Frak now knowing differently what his people still call the *no-no*, because his eyes

have seen what his *kin* have never seen—this ever-changing land and sky. But he doesn't dwell on that, not at least at this point. This moment, taut with expectation, he is lifting up in his mind's eye the familiar images evoked by the land under his feet. Fields of tall grain, thick and waving when the hot season cools; seas of lush grasses all about him. Wherever he walks, rolling fields and sweet-sipping lakes—lakes whose *wet* is so unlike the *shad wet* upon which he had one day set—*big wet*, now known as *sea* and *ocean*. Never like that. No, in his mind's eye he surveys the familiar landscape, strokes with his hands the rolling hills, his arms caressing them. *Ah*, with his tongue he licks the lake's sweet-sipping *wet*, kneels down as he remembers himself having done a thousand times and laps at the cool water, sips and sucks into his mouth the feel of life. He is imagining how inside himself the coolness and the taste slither down his throat and into his belly and pools—*Ah!*

Within a breath all these sensations wondrously radiate such a sense of fullness that Frak rubs his stomach: one, twice, three times heartily round and round. Rubs and feels deeply content—*happy and smiling*.

"Home!"

Home is Darlm.

CHAPTER 1

The day Frak left the land—appearing in his mind as the *shad* of Brok thick upon his plate of food—he squatting and eating, observing the *shad* slowly creep up across his plate. Looking up as his food is covered by Brok’s *shad* and eyeing Brok—he blocking the sun at mid-day. Frak squinting to make out Brok’s full form—not taller than him, not as muscular, so not an imminent threat. He, Frak, not taller than most, not as muscular as many, but always an imminent threat. Brok is instantly sensed as no threat because Frak sees the *kin* markings: *big harj big's* fearsome tooth, drawn on the hides of Brok's shoulder cape. Frak continues to squat, fingering more food into his mouth, showing no fear. Brok stands five steps away, head haloed by the midday sun—beams of light glinting off his fiery-red hair, which appears sun-rimmed, thick curls which throb with sun-flare and a golden glint so brightly that it stops Frak in mid-bite. Left hand lifted halfway, mouth dropped to snag the food.

“*Come!*”

Brok invites and Frak follows—rises as the terse but booming sound fills him, reaches out from that inner part of Brok—his *grok* of courage, command...this which draws Frak’s respect, his instinctive obedience. Yet ever on guard, Frak keeps a safe distance as he follows.

Frak follows Brok to the land’s edge and the *big harj wet*. He has been here many times before, but only to wade into the *big wet* and feel the surge of its ebbing coolness. At times, to step cautiously but boldly out to where he could stand on tiptoe—farther than anyone else would venture...call to the others, “*Naw harj!*” But they did not follow. He waded a bit further out but not too far, for he sensed that the *big wet* was its own *harj* creature—one which liked him, which pleased him, but one which was not to be tested too far. Like the feared *big harj big*, there was that safe distance in which to stand tall and bellow, rise up high and wave one’s arms, stand tall and shout and jump and have the beast stand tall, shake its head—snarl and bare its teeth and growl. Yes, there was the respectful distance—not to be violated, not to push beyond—where the beast would stop standing and charge. Frak knows this distance well. Knows it as few of his *kin* ever do, and he revels in the joy of confronting the *big harj big*. Joy because it always makes the youngest females delight in him, come to him at night and stroke his chest, touch him and then invite him to venture into their *harj wet*, to penetrate into the misty pleasure between their legs. These females—most yet feral of eye and desire—were like a cool breeze on a hot day. They

would come unto him and wildly chase away the clatter of thoughts he had about the day. *Harj* thoughts laced with fear, worries about security, about gathering food, about finding a new camp. Giggling they would come—sit and kneel before him. He would stand and growl like the *big harj big*—curl his lips and bare his teeth, prowl about, roar. As he'd reenact the deathly encounter, they would cower, some scamper and run away, especially when he slipped on the fearsome *big harj big* mask—true gnashing teeth, slashing at them. Most would curl up, nestle together, and giggle some more. Then, as Frak craved, they would disconcert him with a shy smile, a coy wink—seductive with a guileless desire which teasingly licks him and invites him, hypnotizes him, enchants. In he would float, off to a realm of sweet delights, licking them and pawing them and hoisting himself upon their moons, sweet flesh of their pale asses, hoist himself and with strokes like hacking a tree he'd lose himself in inexpressible moments until he lost awareness of where he was, of who he was and fall, collapse, drop like a rock, crash like the speared *hurx* into a thorn bush...plump down beside them. Frak would be heaving breaths from his chest, feeling like he had burst and exploded all that was within him into them—finding himself simply exhausted, so weak and groggy, without images or words or anything—*he sleeps*.

Such happens after Frak dances with the *big harj big*.

“Come!”

Frak stands next to Brok at land's edge. There, the most awesome of sights confronts him, scares him more than the *big harj big*. Yet Brok approaches it without fear, as if it were not *shad* or *harj*. Frak does not know what kind of beast it is—unlike any *big harj big* it sits there upon the *big wet*, letting Brok's *kin* crawl all over it! It's a beast of such size that he has never met. A threat in such a form he has never confronted. A *big big big* creature—deeper and longer—deeper of belly than any beast he has ever slain, longer than any *big ssss!* he has ever fled. So odd, so queer that no image rises in Frak's mind. Brok's *big big big*—deeper and longer with a neck curved and a head at once so fearsome but fascinating, so flight-shuddering that Frak only holds himself still because Brok does not flee. Brok motions to Frak to follow him—to walk towards this *harj big big big!* One with a head with ears like the *bat* but a long flaring *narx*. Yet all this just nothing as distracting as its hypnotizing *orx*—huge yellow-orange eyes. Most fearsome because they do not move, appear to be dead as if stone—but like no *rok* Frak has ever

seen, ever touched, ever thrown. All this and dreadfully more—strange sticks: *big ars* protrude from down its belly and from its head and sides.

Absolutely puzzled, Frak does not know what it is or what it might do.

Down its belly are hides wrapped around immense *big ars*, which are as tall as *wods*. *Big ars wods* wrapped a hand-thick with the *huds* of slain beasts—three in line, and staked dead center upon the wide belly. Frak has never seen *huds* so thick nor *big ars wods* so long. He can see that long *ords* bind them, yet also *ords* as he has never seen so thick, as if three *ords* worked as one—what he does not know as masts and hides and rope or braid. He can't make sense of any of it at all. Not of these confounding tall *wods* and the purpose for the *huds*, nor the length of the whole thing—all these oddities, none of it makes sense. Frak has no images, no sounds.

Nothing also for the more than two hands of *no-no hud wods* rising from its head and sides. Some of these side *wods* are bare but flattened at their ends in a most strange way—with a slight bend, like the *spo-ox* Magx the Wiz uses at magical times.

More so does Frak's mind blank as he watches the other males, Brok's *kin*, walk about without being eaten by this *harj* beast. Frak's head hurts more and more. He rubs his *orx*—his eyes ache. Down and around his forearms and hands shoots a strange weak feeling all the way to his toes. Hot stabbing pains clench the back of his legs. *Such power! Such terror!* All from the *harj big big big* whose *orx* are cold upon him as dead-eyes but which he knows as *harj-orx*—as snaring eyes, eyes that he knows are always watching him. All this pain yet no way to defend or attack because there is no scent of the creature—no *yum*. Frak sniffs, then snorts deeply, but no telltale *yums*. Nothing to image, only the hairs on his nape bristling, only a dull coldness upon his neck.

Frak is breathing heavily and rapidly. He terribly fears the beast, there as it moves slowly, sideways and up and down, pitching and yawing with the *big wet's* roll and heave. A *harj big* unlike *Harj Ek! Harj Bar! Harj Kat!* This *big big big* is content to have Brok's *kin* crawl upon it but, Frak was sure, absolutely sure, it will in time eat, consume, flip up into the air and swallow all—like he has seen the *Harj Bar* eat the creatures of the flowing sweet-sipping *wet*, slap at them and flip them into the air, catch them and bite and chew and gulp them.

Frak is frightened unto heedless flight.

“Water-House!” So Brok points and states to Frak. Says this time and again, more than ten times each hour. Coming up to him and saying this strange thing, and Frak trying to grasp what the strange sounds meant. What was *Water-House*? There were simply too many sounds in one breath. Frak’s world was one of short soundings, most of one spat breaths, so Brok’s long sounds confuse him, make his eyes close as he listens. Only with Magx the Wiz has Frak ever heard so many strange and many breaths sounds.

Then Brok said, sounding as he grasps how Frak sounds, slowly, pausing between words—“Wet...Hum.” *Ah!* Frak knows *hum*; knows *wet*. Keenly and cautiously, Frak listens to every sound and watches every movement of the others.

Brok's *kin* work and sit and walk and spit and do things which Frak knows and doesn't know—all without fear.

Is Frak afraid? A question that seeps through his mind not as words but as a feeling. He is feeling alert and wary as he closely observes the others. They do some things he knows how to do, but do many which he doesn't. However, about which—always quick to learn, to adapt, so had he secured the leadership of his *kin*—he knows he can; *will*. His *grok* made him the one in the *kin* to do what no one else could or would do while yet also doing better what everyone else could. Whatever was *harj* or *shad* or *big big* or *no-no*...anything strange or frightening, so Frak confronted and killed or learned to use. When Sork first threw the spear, so Frak quickly threw the spear better. When Aard alone danced so as to entrance the *ssss!* snakes, so did Frak quickly imitate and best Aard. Nothing of fright and awe escaped him. This he understands as his power—his *harj grok*—that which makes him always an imminent threat. If it was hideous or scary, a fire roared in his belly, drove him to master it. This was why the women, especially the younger ones, would come to him.

“Water-House.” So Frak tries to convey to his *kin*. That it is a *hum*. Like their *rok* and *wod* and *mut* lodges. Just another *hum*—a safe place. A safe place to be upon the mighty *sol* swallowing *wet*. But no one understands him. Frak has seen this before—how they do not understand him. It has happened so many times. With the spear, only he and Sork still throw the spear. As with the *hugx*—the laying upon women, upon their bellies...looking into their eyes, having them look into his eyes, so has he failed to convey the pleasure, the excitement, the thrilling plunge into the unknown of such a *hugx*. In this, only Ratl has followed him, so only

with him could Frak exchange looks and new sounds and laugh as only hunt brothers could laugh, so does he now often laugh with Ratl.

Now, this *Water-House* of Brok's is even more than all that, because no one can hear the strange words and smile. No, they hear them and frown, eyebrows pressed and side-temple scrunched. Frak knows that it is he alone who will follow Brok—if he is to follow at all.

Frak does follow because of Darlm. It is she who has whispered the frightening sounds to him—"Water-House"—until they lose their strangeness, became a twice breathed word they both share. She first whispered *hugx* as she slid under him, gently pulling him upon her, rolled him on her belly and gazed hypnotically into his as he did into her *hum orx*. He she fastened face up using her alluring *hum orx*, eyes darkly green but then bursting brightly, as at times blinkingly black but in a flash blinkingly lustrous. *Ah!* Ones of heart-thumping mystery to Frak. He peers at them and as he does they widen and grow and fire-flash at him like the lick of the *big big wet* when it is angry. Lightning green licks, spars like brilliantly green sun rays—sparkling *roks*...such seductive *roks* which he has seen only once before when venturing forth on a *harj big Bar* hunt. He had stopped to rest under a cliff's ledge, there eyeing upward and being shocked, entranced, gripped by pulsating spars of vaporous green lights, teensy blips—blinking, bouncing in and outside of his head. He had been amazed, stunned, as right now with Darlm he is stunned—her *hum orx* are glittering beams of the most entrancing hue: fiery emerald...yet soft as the first *sod* of spring. He follows Brok because it is Darlm who first *groked* Frak so *big big* that he could change the strange *harj* and *shad* into the known. Here, legs locked around his stout waist, she is chanting, working her breathing around the soundings of "Water-House." As she rhythmically sounds so Frak tames his fear and speaks the twice breathed sounding. Darlm makes all *hum*.

Darlm's alluring eyes and sweet soothing soundings stimulate and heighten Frak craving desire for her. He has come to know her soft wondrous and most pleasuring self as he opens her *wet hum*—that of her most like the sweet-sipping *wet*. His *grok wod* rises thick and hard between his legs—hungering for her. He is thrilled by the *yum* of her musky *wet hum*. He is lured, drawn, weakened, and wetted as he slides into her suckling sweet-sipping *wet hum*. Ever fearless and *ever fearful!* he is one with her, rocking, laughing, shuddering...as they *grok hugx!*

Frak throws his complete weight behind the plunge of his *grok wod*, pushes himself into her with the desire of never coming back...heaves again. He is floating, adrift upon the wave of her belly, of their lusty desires. They rise and ebb like waves clashing in and out of her moist *wet hum*, her *shad hum*. As their panting storm calms, as they lay together in soft embrace, she places his hand upon her *wet hum*—which she now names and sounds as “Darlm Water-House.”

Darlm has always been like a cloud covering the *sol*—the sun. Such is she to his moods, his courage, his adventuring. She first appeared at the ceremony of Frak's *big grok big* as a gift from a distant *kin*—appearing as he knelt upright in deep meditation, there his *grok* exploring the *harj, shad no-no*—the dream world, as Magx had trained him...not asleep but aware of both worlds. Darlm arose to greet him in both worlds, at once his dream-mate and soon his *hum-hum*. She who was led to him by Lon, *m-o-o-o-n grok* consort of Magx. Darlm—haloed like moon-rays which surprise the *shad* darkness with their baffling light...soft, different, eye-boggling and heart-thumping. It was Frak's *big grok big* heart which was born the instant her dancing *orx* fell upon him—eyes closed, yet he could see her as he knew she was seeing him. His swelling *big grok big* heart was her *big big* gift to him. Magx had taught him but also grasped that Frak would not *grok* this truth until he had become *big grok big* with his *hum-hum*...their hearts fluttering like little bird's wing until he and she, Frak and Darlm, embraced in *big grok big hugx*...it would only be then that the magic of *big grok big* would and could be manifested...as *she received him* with her *m-o-o-o-n grok*.

Darlm knew herself as like unto a *kup*—she was a receptacle, for she was of the *m-o-o-o-n*...the *Grok Orx*. As Lon taught her, it is the *m-o-o-o-n* that holds *sol* during the *shad* and from whom rises the *sol* to brighten the day. *M-o-o-o-n*, whose light never fades, is always present, even as the sun sets and dies into the *no-no* darkness. She learned how to offer herself as *m-o-o-o-n* even during daylight when, to most, the *Grok Orx* was unseen, unfelt. As Lon taught, Darlm was to be the constant in Frak's life—hold him like the *m-o-o-o-n kup* does the *sol* during the *shad*. She was to be his stake in the ground around which he could build his *hum-hum*. For it was *hum-hum* grasped as a receiving place, a magical place where both *sol* and *m-o-o-o-n* embraced, became one...so steadying and making secure the *big* heart of the *kin*.

Lon taught her that Magx and all males were babies—*ums*—born from women but also reborn through women as *grok ums*. It was only when he was reborn as a *grok um* that a male

fully realized his *harj grok* power—what made him feared, respected. When Frak would become a *grok um*, it was then that he would truly be an imminent threat in every situation. In this way, like the flower blooming and the bee sipping nectar, so Lon taught Darlm and Frak that they were to be—she the *kup* receptacle and he emptying himself into her, his *grok wod* penetrating, all imaged through building a domed *hum-hum* like half a beehive. This *hum-hum* was where he and she embraced in *big grok big hugx...big* like the sun at twilight welcoming the moon as nightlight...as the moon at dawn welcoming the sun as daylight. It was Darlm's gift to receive Frak's *harj grok wod*, his *shad yums*, his *big grok big* and through such receiving, such cherishing—allowing him to spew his *harj shad* urges within her, so to *big grok big* him and through this *big hugx big*, bud forth with baby *ums*—*grok kin*.

Their hearts were *hum-hum* upon their first *big hugx big* embrace—joined as one heart, that thundering heart which creates the *kin*, which is the common heart for their *grok* dreaming. As *grok* dreamers they knew—as they had been instructed and disciplined during preparation for the *big big* initiation—as *grok* dreamers so were they creators of the world...*da-da* and *ma-ma* of the *kin*.

When with Darlm, Frak came to know the deeper mysteries of his *kin*, of what he must do as *kin* leader—as *harj big grok*. She taught him strange new sounds, as with Water-House, but theirs was more a world of action than speech. Frak's *grok* could not be fully expressed through sounds, although, especially on the hunt, he made the most sounds—grunts and yells and whoops of victory. Her *m-o-o-o-n* task was to mold his heart, which she did as she laid before him as *kup*, as receptacle. She drew the power of the sun and the moon, of their rising and dying together, of their giving and taking of light and darkness, gathered these and taught him as her body became magical. *M-o-o-o-n* magic, its *big grok*, she brought to their *hugx* embraces and love-making as she had watched Magx and Lon magically enact. When deeply hugging, in *big hugx*, the flesh of Magx and Lon glowed like the full moon. With Frak, as they were moon glow, she taught him through her eyes, magically showing him how others saw him, how the *harj* beasts cowered when he was on the hunt. Her eyes were storytellers of things past and future, but more so were her kisses and her legs wrapped around him as he laid upon her and dreamed. For the survival of the *kin*, so Magx and Lon taught, it was through this intimate embrace that they would enter *grok* dreaming and so discover and understand how to protect the *kin*. It was this dreaming which gave insight into new ways to solve problems upon waking. Among the male *kin*, only Magx

understood this as Frak did, and sharing their *grok hugx* dreams was their personal bond. Only they *grok* dreamed what Lon and Darlm knew, and came to know dreaming as the special *grok* of *kin* females. Truly, it was Darlm whose *m-o-o-o-n grok* created the *harj big grok* Frak as she rebirthed him during *grok* dreaming so that he could lead and protect the *kin*.

All day, every day, Frak eagerly anticipated sharing *m-o-o-o-n* time with Darlm. She opened to him his *grok big* role with the younger women—his obligation to teach them about the *hugx* heart of the male. As they played within the waves of their desires, she whispered magic words into his ears. Frak soon desired to never be out of her sight, her embrace...Darlm delighted in this but knew that Frak was not to be hers alone. He was *harj big grok*, and she has learned from her earliest years that her task, her joy was to be found in spreading his *big big grok*. She sprinkled Frak's fiery *grok* throughout the *kin* by opening ways for him to share his inner healing and bonding powers—his *harj shad big grok*. As pleasurable and exciting as she found his attentions and ardor to be, she knew it was hers to offer the *big hugx* embracing power striking forth from his body, his heart, his manly imagination for the good of the *kin*. She offered him as a warming to the lonely older women. She offered his heart-fire to cure the bodies of green girls. She offered him to those in grief over a loss of their own Fraks.

Darlm's *m-o-o-o-n* power fed and sustained his *sol grok*—as his did for her. She knowing all that he was and had discovered and would accomplish as they lay embraced in deep *hugx*. Darlm could read his life's journey, his heart's yearnings, his fear of the *no-no*...reveal all things—through walking her fingers upon his skin. She *groked* him as she snuggled him to her breasts, lost him within her *hum wet hum*, frolicked with him inside her *Water-House*, so knowing that he was hers no longer. She sensed clearly that for the sake of the *kin* he must go, not she. Go out upon the *no-no big big big wet*...follow Brok.

It is the morning after the deepest of their *hugx* dreamings when Frak places his first foot upon Brok's *Water-House*.

Just as Frak's two feet leave the land and seek to secure their first wobbling hold on the boat's deck, to his complete and dazed amazement, the tree tall *big wods* down the creature's belly are unwrapped. All the *ord* ropes are untied. All *hud* hides loosed and unbound—rushing out to catch the fearsome *wet* ocean's breath...as the *harj big big big* ship begins to move forward.

Frak grips a hold, steadying himself against the Water-House's hard flank—all this and at the same time others lift the *big arms wod* sticks shaped like Magx's *spo-ox* off from the rim of the boat and with a motion Frak has never seen, but will come to quickly master, stick the oars through small holes in the ship's side, drop them into the rolling sea and begin to pull in a disciplined motion of the many, an act of *kin* effort which hard-struck Frak with the awe of a flowering field as the warm season fades and the hot winds blow.

Rowing and hide-sails filling with that breath which flows so strongly upon the mighty seas—a breath which Frak has felt at times but only while standing at ocean's edge. Now, his heart beats faster each and every time the crew dips and pulls, each and every time another windy breath gusts and blows into the bulging sails, each and every time the long-boat lurches and jolts and picks up speed moving this way and that and that way and this.

One breath, two breaths, now three...Frak's voyage is begun.

Around Frak's neck hangs a thumb-thick rock which glistens like Darlm's eyes. She had called upon all the magical moon words she knew so that her eyes—ever open, ever glistening—would always be twined with his.

CHAPTER 2

Until Brok, Frak boasted that he had walked all about the world as the *kin* knew it. From treks with his *kin* hunting into the deep warmth where the sipping-sweet *wet* was itself warmer and blue like the sky, up to the high hills with the magical white spider-web *wet* which when cupped in his hands melted into a tiny pool for him to lap. There they had found a great silent *wet* which was hard, but they feared to tread upon it...they did not try to lick it, for it appeared to them like a cleverly camouflaged snare they themselves would set for the larger animals, those it took more than two men to down, he with his spear and they with their rocks. This hard *wet*, hard like kicking a two *kin* heavy rock, stuck to them when they touched it...Magx the Wiz said, “Harj shad wet!”

Harj shad wet made them see themselves as the small animal tethered to a rock used as bait, this all understood, and so they never touched the *harj shad wet*.

Harj shad—not only was this *wet* different—*Magx cracks a large, thick piece, throws a skin over it, hefts it up in his arms!*...Magx’s magic *Grok!* strength—but just everything was different. The land about was dead, the air like a twig snapping against your cheeks, no trees, no flowers, a bit of grass...very tiny clumps under masses of white spider-web. Then—*Roar!*— a *harj* beast magically appeared, so it seemed to them, rising up out of the white spider-web. Frak had never confronted anything as different, as alien, as horrifyingly scary as this *harj* creature—even *big big big big no-no* did not describe it fully. It was as long and huge as a two *harj bars* but with a spider-webbed *wet* pelt which made it hard to see until right on top of it—and Frak had stepped *right on top of the beast!* The *harj* beast roars and snarls while standing to a three *kin* height, in doing so flips Frak high into the air, casting him twenty hands away. The *harj* beast growls and snorts, sets everyone else screaming and frantically in flight. Even Magx hobbled away, somewhat magically vaulting with his staff over rocks and fallen *kin*, moving faster than all others. Frak scrambles to his feet and lurches, attacks: *why, how, when?* These do not have to be answered for it was the swift killing which was the answer—a mad, reckless, insane, blind-eyed rush into that roaring mountain, anger of spider-web *harj* beast...flailing, flashing his tusk-knife...slicing upward striking heart, thrusting his short hardwood spear right through its left eye. All was astoundingly over more quickly than it had begun.

From that day, Frak's world and status forever changed. The *kin* told his tale around the *shad's* fire, about *harj big no-no shad Frak!* No one else could claim that name! No one ever then dared to challenge his leadership of the *kin*.

More, Magx disemboweled the beast—found it most like a *big bar*—emptied its stomach of fish and small mysterious animals like thick worms big as a man's thigh. Ripped out its liver, splayed its intestines, held its heart in his two hands—in time, uplifted it to *sol* and at evening to *m-o-o-o-n*. Magx foretold, as was his wont, through auguring the bones and stones, the growls from the sky and the howling winds what was to be Frak's life—to follow a *big big harj shad* Wiz into the faraway *no-no*. All this happening not too long before Brok appeared, so the story Magx at first simply confused and frightened Frak. *You shall walk on the grok harj no-no wet. You shall walk to the lands of the shad harj. You shall walk there on the big big no-no shad harj wet!* Magx's words evoke hoots, hollers, and *gasps!* from the *kin's* trembling lips. All fall prostrate onto the ground as these long, windy sounds dumbfound and awe-strike! Only Frak remains upright on his feet, looking outward, sighting through Magx's *orx...accepting*.

As it was the *kin's* way to open one's heart to the *big* beast one kills, here, without thought, Frak knows it is his to become to others as this spider-web *wet harj bar* is to them: a fearsome mystery. Frak cuts off the head of what they now name *big harj shad bar*. Its head is so broad and thick that only Oolo, the lankiest, can lift it—his arms bounding and finger laced, he hoists it up and carries it to Magx. Once it is skinned, cleaned, and its eyeballs eaten by Frak—honoring all *harj shad* beasts and their powers—its skull is set above the entrance to Frak's *hum-hum*, establishing forever that the power of the fearsome spider-web *wet bar*, its *harj shad* heart, are with him forever.

Frak walks...the group follows.

Walking. All his life Frak has been walking, but he gave no thought to it. For walking was the image of living, of what life was about. All his images and all his sounds had to do with walking and the things walking showed him—the land, the trees, the strange plants which Magx picked and ate; the other *kin*. *Kin*—in his mind walking meant finding the others, those who had markings like his. Upon meeting strangers Frak would halt and stop before he touched them, waiting to know if they were *harj*—whether their strange markings meant that he himself was *kin* or *harj* to be welcomed or killed. As Magx had shown him, all he had to see was a *big bar's*

tooth. Just this in any marking on any part of the body or dress and he knew him to be *kin* not *harj*. But if no like marking, then Magx had shown how to hold the *harj* one at spear's point until Frak could tell whether he was at least *gen* even if not of his *kin*. Frak pulls down his belly cloth and shows, exposes his third-hand-of-one-finger...if the other does not do so—proving that he is not *gen*—Magx showed him how to kill quickly.

Walking. All *gen* walked, and all his *kin* walked after breaking camp which happened at every swelling of the *m-o-o-o-n*...when it was like the belly of a woman with a tiny *gen* inside. So when the *m-o-o-o-n*...it was one of the few deeply moaned sounds that everyone knew...“m—o—o—o—n!”...when it became full, they would all begin walking again. They would camp until Magx, high on a hilltop, held up at full arm's length a magical *rok*, a round stone—one so dark that it was filled only with *shad*. He would hold it at as high as he could stretch and when it was rimmed by moonlight, so it was for them to walk, again.

“*Gad!*” So yells Magx as he slowly moves through the *kin*. Plodding, with one step and then a staffed hitch of his fleshless left leg—as slow as an old *strax* with many wounds. He yells *Gad!* in paced chant as he descends the hill—an echoing yell which is a command all instantly jump to obey, start to walk—*Gad!*

On the *harj* Water-House, Frak was not walking—not as *Gad!* had meant to him. No, he hasn't walked for several moons. It frightens him more than walking about the beast, which is not real walking, but he has no other way to image it. He would stride up and down the length of the beast—more strides than he could hold with his fingers—stride up and down and across what he has come to easily sound as “Water-House”—stride up and down, day after day, but on some days being unable to walk for all on the Water-House had to hold onto the sides or a beam or anything nailed down as the angry sun devouring sea heaved and shoved them and told him, so Frak knew, that it didn't like them “walking” on it...there was to be no *big wet Gad!* In time, after the third fullness of the moon, Frak began to accept the Water-House as safe. It was like the *harj* spider-web beast, if he did the right things it would snarl and growl but he would be safe—*hum.*

Safe—as long as he could see land.

Fatefully, upon waking one morning, Frak could not see land. He could not see the sky, either. He didn't know where the sun or the night were. All about him was a touch of the ocean

wet—breathing wet, chilly wet, even some spider-web *wet...snow!*...with numerous small daggers of hard *wet* growing like *harj bar's* teeth, so it seemed, on the bottoms of the several sticks, even the *spo-oxs...Icicles on the oars!* Frak's heart stops, for he knows that they have been eaten. Died during sleep and are now where Magx told them the old *no-no* of the *gen* reside—inside the land, that which was all and forever—*Fog! Beware!* Frak trembles knowing that the ocean now is truly a magical beast and that it has swallowed the Water-House...sucked them down inside the land—that is why he cannot see the land. It is clear—the ocean, the sea...oh, it is still the *big big harj wet* in his mind at moments like this...the *shad wet* beast has tired of them! They have somehow offended it. How he does not know; cannot even force himself to consider. Yet, it's clear that they have crossed over into the *no-no*... "No land in sight!"...have walked past the rim, the horizon, into eternal *harj shad*... "No stars out tonight!" Dread grabs hold of him in a way he has no image or word or ability to deal with. Numbing fright tears out his heart—he panicks, all of a sudden realizing that *he is without Darlm*. He fingers her stone but cannot see her nor sense her presence—worse, he knows that she cannot see or sense him.

Frak stands captured like a small *harj* beast...inside the *big big shad harj wet*.

“Come!” Brok's commanding word, strong but even toned, calling from out of the thick icy fog, a type of *harj wet* that had only breathed twice in Frak's land. “Og,” they had called it, because it made it hard to breathe. Back then, it had been a rainy fog that in time set like a thick hide upon the land. But this was even worse, it was so frigid and icy that breathing was like pulling a rough hide across his face. “Come!” sounds again, this time with a tone of threat—*Be safe or be lost!* “Come!” draws him; he cannot not—*must not*—resist it.

Frak takes five cautious and courageous steps...Brok's back is right in front of his nose!

Brok shows Frak a stone. A flat reddish stone like many which Frak has seen. But upon this was another stone: thin, not like any Frak has ever seen, of a grayness he has never touched. Brok points at the boat's fearsome head and then at the thin gray stone. Frak's frown makes him laugh heartily. Brok sees himself standing next to Serda who had first shown him the magically powerful living stone—not Serda himself even knowing it as magnetic lodestone, then, Brok himself had frowned as Frak now frowns.

“One is one.”

Frak still frowns. Deeper furrows.

“One is one!” Brok booms and palm slaps Frak across the back of his head.

It was the type of slap Magx often used. Frak understands. He sounds out, with great difficulty, a monotone, dead-lipped, “One is one.”

It was not an unfamiliar effort...so many new sounds, so many jumbled and linked sounds, so many rushing out on one breath! Brok had forced Frak to breath so hard and so long that he sputtered and spit until his jaw hurt, his tongue cramped. Frak now struggles determinedly because he knows these to be powerful sounds: wind sounds, words twisted from his gut but linking him to Brok and the others. Every syllable hurts...eyes pinched closed as he sounds the words.

Fist pounding sounds: head-aching, stomach churning sounds. Dangerous but magical, like those which only Magx had used to show which plants were safe to eat. He’d take a plant they had been eating and lay the unknown one next to it. If he said, “*It-It*,” Frak could eat it. If not, no one should eat it.

Is Brok a *Wiz*?

Frak suddenly understands.

“One is one!” he laughs, almost a giggle. *It-It!*

Brok laughs back; a booming, hearty laugh, two breaths long.

So has Frak come to accept that if he keeps the beast’s head—Brok sounded “prow”—keeps it at *one is one* with the small slender rock...which upon touching did not feel like any rock he had ever felt, but Frak accepts that, for he knows this is deep magic, that Brok truly is a *Wiz* like Magx...if he does this, all he has to do is point to one side of the boat or the other and the rest of the men...“Crew!” shouted Brok...would spring into action. Frak is pleased that this *one is one* is his *grok* and that he is still a strong and respected leader. When he swings his right arm pointing starboard, the crew moves the sails so that they either fill up with a sea breeze or an oceanic puff or they pull and tie them down.

Frak eyes brighten: The boat moves where the prow and the gray stone became *one is one!*

With equally quick learning, Brok shows him “not one” when the stone—not for two moons would Frak be able to sound it properly as “needle”—that when the mystifying magnetic needle is horizontal, Brok’s call becomes, “Down sails!”...the crew drops the oars into the sea and plies the ship this way and that.

This is how they escape the icy, sunless, and starless fog. When finally out of this treacherous stretch, the sails are unfurled and a stiff wind blows them forward, but Frak’s mind could not stop imagining being vomited or spat out.

Prow. Boat. Sails. Oars. Ice. Fog. Snow. New sounds and sounds and sounds!...strung out into long rolling sounds—like moaning. like singing—linked together without pauses or many breaths...these words and sentences made his heart race faster and made him a bit dizzy but he stayed balanced, held his own, swallowed them...for as ever, Frak is an imminent threat, being so because his instincts for survival are fierce...here mastering words and speaking long sentences meant survival. Only one thing did his mind yet refuse to accept—what his eyes could no longer see...that the land had disappeared.

No, not true, because in Frak’s mind’s eye there is land, there *has to be* land, land which is there—*somewhere!*—because for there not to be land *meant...?...*This is why in his mind's eye he could still see land; *must be there!*

Brok was truly a wizard but one strangely different from the powerful Magx. He was stranger, deeper in his silences. He brooded fiercely, striding up and down the length of the ship, lost in thought, seemingly unaware of the others for hours on end—once from sunrise to sunset. On that day, one in the crew pointed at Brok when rapt in deep meditation and secretly whispered to Frak, “Soul-feaster!” The sound, the image, the moment was a turning point in Frak's life.

Big big big big harj shad wiz—potent wizard and *soul-feaster!* Frak grasping that "soul" is *big big big big big grok!* He is sure that Brok is both. The magnetic needle was without a doubt itself magical—a *living* stone, because it shared Brok's *grok*—was born from his *grok*. This was an unsettling insight into Brok's soul—that it grew as he feasted on *grok*...the souls of others! Here, Frak recalls his own eating of *harj* beast eyes and hearts—stealing their *grok!*...but this reverie was shattered as he realized—as the fearful eyes and muffled words of the crew enabled him to see the gruesome scene—that Brok would eat the hearts of his human enemies,

not just of beasts! *Soul-feaster*—the source of his profound command over everything and everyone.

Brok's personal command over Frak was sensually felt like a strong hand inside the small of his back. Not asking why or how, just accepting, Frak realizes that Brok is sharing his soul-feasting *grok* with him. More, that this connection makea him strong in a way he haa never been...not now just an imminent threat, *but*—words and images faile him...he senses a strange, very heavy center of gravity forming within his heart and stimulating his mind. *How?* Only that Brok grounda Frak's *grok* both physically and mentally—bonding with him through sharing his power as *soul-feaster*. So with absolute confidence and unflinching obedience, Frak follows Brok's orders and becomes a vessel of his *grok* as he moves the living stone to turn it *one is one* or *not one*.

In Brok Frak haa belly-soothing trust—he had met Brok on land and on land Brok would take him, *again*.

With a sustained but tempered enthusiasm, Frak realizes that he is doing something which no one in his *kin* has ever done. This steadies him for a full cycle of several moons. It is his power. He has, also, shown himself as *gen*, and so have Brok and the crew. This had greatly comforted him...that they heartily laughed while they did it—stroking their *grok wods*—did not mean anything to Frak...he was yet to develop a sense of mockery.

Yet, no other of the *gen* in the crew had the marking of the bear's tooth as did Brok. At times, truly only when dreaming does Frak growl out like the snow white bear—stand up and raise his arms and dance wildly about while shouting and yelling and bellowing at the fearsome creature...only in his dreams.

Fatefully, it was from such a dream, late one night, that Frak was frightfully woken. A huge lick of the pitching ocean slapped him awake as at the same moment angry, clutching hands grappled his legs and arms. Bucking and thrashing, Frak panics as he is pinned down and bound hard by this unknown enemy—one most fearfully painted: blood-dripping faces with high knotted hair, all festooned with feathers and animal bones and long fang-teeth—necklaces clinking, gleaming with savage cat teeth and gory strips of oozing blood red flesh...which, in a quickly passing moment of hunter focus and self-control, he realizes are pieces of cloth...in a like snap of focus, that the enemy is the crew! Before Frak can gather his wits they bind him with

thick ropes and cast him over board—*he's drowning!*...tethered and bobbing, gasping and sputtering.

“*Grež!*” he frantically screams, “*Grež!*” The ancient cry for *Help!* Also for *Mercy!*

But the crew does not come to help him. Raucously, they hoot and howl at him. Shout words like spears which he does not know but which he images as piercing him like he and Soark slayed so many small animals... Frak feels deeply, terrifyingly, that they hate him! Want him to die.

Every member of the crew is jumping up and down, slapping each other and boisterously and menacingly screaming at him; pointing, jabbing at him with fingers and sticks and a long spear with the head of a huge sea snake upon it: eyes still jiggly fresh...“*Grež! Grež!*” but there was no *grež*.

Half-dead. Cold as he has never before been cold. Frightened and expecting that he will be killed...that they will tear off their cloths and show that they are not *gen* but *dev*. *Dev* who made those of his *kin* do horrible things, like cutting off their fingers, or hurtling off high rocks. *Dev* who stole the breath from young babies. *Dev* who turned *kin* into walking balls of fire—this Frak has seen, twice. Magx had said, “*Dev!*”

So dead to himself and the world, unconscious, Frak is hauled and plopped, reeled back onto the ship.

Bobbing in and out of awareness, he's amazed that they have not killed him already. *Strange!* He is being wrapped in a mammoth white fur, a pelt thicker than any he has ever before seen: wrapped...engulfed...in it and placed on the ledge where Brok always sat.

With Frak was another of the crew, as dazed and wrapped like himself.

Brok's ledge and the white fur and two other crewmen...one bringing Frak and the other near-drowned soul an elongated finger-thick bundle...burning, sharing a smoke—it is a warm, comforting smoke...mercifully, numbness rapidly riddles his body with each inhale...the second crewman starts tattooing Frak's and the other's left arm...drawing an image of the moon—bloodletting but smoke numbed, they are prick-sticking him as Magx had stuck him and others in the *kin* as they came to the many moons which meant that they were then *big* adults in the *kin*

clan...so are Frak and this other drugged crew member tattooed with the full-face of the moon—a smoky white orb.

On the arm opposite his bear tooth tattoo, Frak now bears the image of this full moon—is he *kin* now to the crew? *Arrgggh!* Alarmed...blood draining fear, for Frak sees that his and the other mate's moon is not like the rest of the crew. They all have a single red tear dropping from out their moon. Frak does not like this. He fearfully trails his eyes from Brok to each member of the crew. Is he—and this other—being prepared for soul-feasting? Eerily, all the crew are smiling...an unnerving, fearsome smile—a wild-eyed crazed smiley leer.

Leering and soon lifting high a fat gourd...passing it around, tipping it to drink.

Frak can smell its sweet *yum*—a fruity scent...as he sips he also feels its intoxicating blessing. Made totally numbed from the smoke, this brew magically makes his mind fully relax...deeply relaxed while opening his eyes with a clarity of vision, a noticing of details that he has never experienced. He feels like the ship is floating through the heavens. Mates sparkle like stars. Brok face appears to be as wide as the sky itself—his eyes bursting with flames, his breath a smoky billowing....Frak is one with the crew!

The gourd is passed round and around. The crew, in a sudden common voice, starts singing. All clap rhythmically, setting time to a chanting sing-song. Some dance and whirl—a strange back-to-back, up and down gyration unknown to Frak. In no time, heavy with fatigue and blessed by both smoke and brew, he falls asleep under the smoky protective moon.

After this night, Brok and the others daily teach Frak everything there is to know about the ship. They tell him how it was created...in the land of tall evergreen trees where the fearsome elk reigns. Frak has seen such never-dead trees and the thundering, majestic elk—*Big Ek!*—but just once. They tell him how to care for the ship. This comforts Frak because he knows that if the ship depends upon him that it will not "eat him"—yet, although he knows now that it is not a beast, still he knows that it harbors a power he must respect...a *grok* of its own. He still cannot not trust the ship because he knows that its *grok* is its power to hide the land.

The crew recount how the ship became *one is one* with the wide-open seas because the ocean is *one is one* with the sky...even when the sky hides the stars. "Ocean" is a curious and most difficult word for Frak to sound, but he learns to do so properly and then clearly pronounce

it because of its power to hide the land. He practices sounding it... *o—ce—an...* over and over in his mind and out loud so that he, as Darlm had taught him happens with words...that he'd be, if not *one is one* with it, then at least a *kin* in heart and so be protected by its *grok*.

In all, Frak had no problem with the ocean and the sky being one is one—he had seen the ocean end when the sky darkened, when the old *shad* had sucked it up. He was not as easily persuaded when they told him that the ocean and the land are *one is one*. Or, that there is land where the "compass"—the simple name for the mystifying living-stone needle...where it points. The compass would lead them, for it—this was the core of its *grok*—needed land just as they did. All his life, so Frak is told, Brok has followed the compass. Followed it as had his father and his father's father—when the old ones called it "hor." All of Brok's *kin* have walked upon the ocean following the compass with its ancient *hor grok*.

Frak is happy. Where there is land, there would be Darlm.

CHAPTER 3

Sounds. It was the sounds that mirrored Frak's personal and emotional shifts. He had followed Brok because he was like his *kin*. When he spoke he looked into Frak's eyes and Frak looked into his. This was the *kin's* way. The way Frak communicated. He did not understand this but it was how he was feeling as he looked up at the one thing they sounded in common, *moon*—Frak learning *not* to moan the word.

Back then, only Lon had been moon. She who was this sound. Frak and all knew that she was the moon, up there in the sky and here in her person. Magx had made them understand this. That they all had come from the moon. That he, Magx, had come from her. That he, the sun, was the moon as child of the moon.

Yet, as child also lover. For Magx and Lon coupled at the time of becoming *big*—the time of initiation for youth into adulthood and for the settling into the *hum-hum* of marriage. Through this sharing of their personal *grok*—as the males and females coupled, so all the female moons and all the male suns became one—this ensured that the *kin's* walking would never end .

Frak is remembering *big*. Lon is the moon; chalk being. Darlm and all females are also whitened as daughters of the moon—faces, hands, legs, toes, toenails, fingers, eyelids—with large moon-plates...beast-tusk plates, artfully smoothed, almost translucent...precious, skillfully carved and hand-smoothed from the huge tusks of a great beast, which had to be “Harj big!” for this ceremony. It is also Magx as fire—sunrise, the sunset; flesh on fire...red in every aspect: hair, fingernails, toes, especially tongue ...fire-breathing, like the fierce *harj sssssh!* snake the size of Oolo, their tallest—almost two medium-sized *kin* high.

Magx is fire which worships the moon—hopping, skipping, jumping, yelling, chanting fearsome words, frightening belly grunts, fierce hunting shouts...dancing, cavorting, whirling, spinning, wilding all around her—Her—Lon...statuesque, iconic, totemic, pillar which becomes the log, the fuel, the pyre for his—His—Magx's dancing...fire consuming itself, so Magx—*Was his fleshless leg magically healed? Fully muscled?*—exhausts himself...his flesh unfolding and his bones revealed, totally and completely naked—having fed her with all his being, all his desire, he kneels before her and strikes her with his tongue, being fire—licks all over her, every aspect of her body: feet, thighs, cunny, ass, neck, face, forehead, eyes...as he worships and adores her so is he whitened—given moonskin, first as dapples...freckles on his skin, her

skin...fire and moon: white and red: blood and desire...she is so cold, so cool, so aloof that she melts him: cold-fire...a conflagration at a distance...he becomes loony, crazy, moon-struck, falls to the ground and she sets herself down upon him—the moon falling into the dawn, this a plunging which is the mountain-top receiving the first strike of the sun, a strike of moon-shaft, her shaft, not his...and the women in the *big* emulate her actions, replicate in their hearts her desires, create with her and through her the *Shad* which mingles with his *Sol*—Brightness and Darkness, Shadow and Light...a time of the mixing of all he's and she's—themselves becoming beings of fire, hot and cold...of moon and sun, such are they as *gen*, so they know, such they are taught in the ceremony of the *big*.

He and she—bodies painted with pigments of the earth... red, black, deep browns...bodies painted and festooned with flowers...luridly and seductively with ever so much enticing skill moving hips and winged fingers, calling him to come to her, black raven who he was and dive into her nest, there to flutter with her in rutting dance—wings flapping...all became creatures of the air—flying away and about and up, tricking each other, slipping into coy retreat, into come-hither glances...feathers all about his body, a flush of the meadow crowning her dawn-brown hair...like the animals they so loved and feared, they spoke in breaths of grunt and gasp and overheated huffing, tearing into each other...ripping off feathers, violently casting away flowers, becoming what only *gen* can become each to the other—divers inside, plunging into each other...from eye-fall plummeting into cave dark, plunging into rib-cage shattering clutch and cling and thunder of bones on the dusty ground...so had Frak become *big* as Darlm become *big*. Back then, at the close and start of every day, *m-o-o-o-n* and *sol* appeared, together...Frak and Darlm were *big*, together...all was *hum-hum*...as such he knew his world, as such he knew his *kin*.

But when Brok spoke of moon, no Lon appeared.

There were no drawings of her roundness. Of her power. No *big* drawings—no moon *grok*.

No Lon? An image of absence which raised another profoundly troubling image: *Brok, a Wiz?* Yes, but was he *big*? Was there a she, a Darlm in his life?

As these questions rose, Frak took note that there were no females around. Never on the ship. Yes, there had been short landings, bartering for food, and laying with females—they all

laid belly to belly!—but no coupling of moon and sun...no ceremony like the *big*. Just women playing but not sleeping with Brok's men. Frak had done this, too, without much hesitation because this was his *kin's* way and his *grok*...to be with young females, ones not yet *big*. Now, it is all that the crew does...sleeps alone. Nowhere is there a *hum-hum*, a private shelter or space. At times Frak sees two crew males embracing but it raises no image, no sounds come...*sol* was never and could not be one-is-one with *sol*!

In time, another two full cycles of the moon, the impact of not disembarking and establishing a permanent settlement on any of the lands they discover, coupled with the absence of the presence of Lon in any aspect, brain-jolts and transforms Frank as he now will forever *only* speak as Brok does. *Poof!* The sounds of Frak's *kin* are no more...not even in his dreams! From thence forward, he easily converses with other mates, using long sentences and even paragraphs when storytelling. Like Brok, Frak has—to the shared amazement of the crew—become quite eloquent.

All this unleashed a fierce but not self-aware visceral change. One so profound that Frak could not image it...more telling, he had not even a twinge of interest in imagining it. The pivoting shift came upon him like the quick sunshine rains that arise during the long season before the snows begins to fall in the north lands.

Along with Frak's newly acquired skill in using long-breathing sentences and amusing storytelling came a fundamental upheaval in his sleeping, his dreaming patterns.

Frak's people had never laid down to sleep until they had received the moon and walked about in her wonders. For they always found things under moonlight which they had never seen before. It was an endless wonderment that what was present in the moonlight was not there under sunlight. This was why females were so powerful—they allowed males to see what is not seen...to see under moonlight.

Magx shared what Lon as Moon revealed...that which could not be seen...which could only be dreamed.

It was the abrupt shifts in his dreaming which proved to effect the most profound and deepest changes in Frak's mind and soul....dreaming and the sounds.

Dreaming—Back then, Frak’s people gathered to dream as the moon rose and the sunlight disappeared. They talked about what they saw under moonlight. About what was strange and fearsome. For them, the daylight was good and clear. It was bright and brought a clarity to what was and was not. During the softness of early morning light and of twilight’s playfulness with first shadows, they felt safe. Yet, Magx realized that daylight was a clarity which was empty, one without mystery. He knew that it was solely moonlight that brought *shad* and the eerie *harj* creatures—deep shadows and unknown presences that scared his people. He knew that his people were only safe when dreaming at night, not staying awake.

Magx knew that in the moonlight they could begin to sense the presence of those who were *no-no* in the land. Those ancestors who often came to be with them by being through them as under moonlight they all make present the fullness of the *kin* and the *gen*—of the clan and the People.

Frak also knew the moonlight as love-making...snarling passion in all its sensuality and tricky, lusty play. It was then that the *big* women came to him. Then when he and Darlm would spend long times together, embracing. During the day, under the sun...clear of eye, clean of skin, careful of eye, they had their tasks, their cooking...their hunting and gathering. At night, under the moon, they dreamt together—*moon-fire!* and *sun-desire!*

It was only with Darlm that Frak dreamt *big*...this the importance of becoming one-is-one, of forever mating, because it unleashed the deep dreaming within Frak. Lon knew, Magx knew, Darlm knew, and Frak came to learn that she-Her...was what *m-o-o-o-n* dreaming was all about...wherein all in the *kin* became Her.

Frank remembers a special deep dreaming that he shared with Darlm. She comes to him with the shawl Lon had given her upon her initiation into the deep feminine, her *big*. It was a hide beaten to a special thinness such that the berry dyes and flower stains placed upon it lasted to the grave. Darlm’s shawl teemed with whirling balls of fire...rolling sky-bursts.

Sky-bursts. This seen only on the most awesome of nights. Dry nights before the rains. Nights when the sunlight settled but seemed to refuse to sleep...shooting arrows of a mix of dreamy and fierce love towards the moon. Like sky-blazing-eagles-on-fire but which thundered and cracked the sky apart, whose sounds were “karoom” and “blam” and other bursts of noisy sizzling and roarings—a night of shooting stars. Frak and his fellows knew it as rumbling fire in

their loins...the *harj* desire they had, *big* male for *big* female—the delirious desire for new life. How the tiny *gen* came.

Darlm stands before him...Frak cannot breathe...does not want to breathe...does not want to disturb the slightest moment of her presence. Drenched in blue, like the day's sky through which the cloud creatures glide; eyes cobalt blue disks. As she moves to lie down with him, he drinks her in. Opens himself like a sliced gourd to receive her presence. Sees her heart gushing forth blood, and her blood falls upon him, drenches him and as he is so saturated he rises and they sip each other, lips to lips, slightly licking and soft pantings in and out...they dream deeply as Lon has shown them—as Magx has shown them. Dream as coupled...as Lon and Magx do at the ceremony of *big*.

It is a mere touch of her breasts and Frak is swimming in the sky-burst moonlight. Her breasts so soft and accepting of his tongue, his kisses...his image is of himself floating down a river, being lifted up by the limbs and branches of a great tree, hefted up and wrapped in its leaves, all touching him and as they touch each is a sound, a melodious sound, an enchanting sound: he is engorged...it is this tree which Darlm becomes...for as they dream ever deeper, the images they weave are woven by a common imagining...she is this tree and her roots are deep within the land, so penetrating that her thoughts are rock but yet even deeper such that her feelings are sodden with soil-belly desire...the mulching cravings of the land. Oh, she desires that the *kin*, the *gen*—the clan and the People—*Live!*

As Darlm so immerses into and becomes these desires—she manifests as Darlm-the-Tree-of-Life.

From this vitalizing life-source tree Frak is unfurled. He flies through the sky. It breathes him with as a gentle wind, a cool breeze...he: flying and floating, then falling, plunging in a hard and heavy drop, a sweaty-fear-numbing drop, a screeching shrill sounding drop, as all about him is a falsetto trilling cry, a blade-shredding of the wind...he plummets down and down and down and is suddenly without breath: in or out. Frak knows that he cannot breathe, not breathe but that he can swim, and as he swims so is he still alive through her wetness, he now down upon her *wet hum*, at her moist delta sucking mouth, there licking her and kissing her and softly sounding into her the darkly deep desire of his bones...for all his sound is now but a steady harmonious moan, a disciplined wailing which is at once a basso longing and a screeching release of terrible pleasures

and pains, for his body is twisted and contorted as he slithers and sways: swims up her river and into her cave, there her *shad* comes upon him and his eyes see no more—so blinded, he is but guided by his third-hand-of-one-finger, it now a stick of light, as one set on fire, as one he has taken through the night before, he now glowing and guided by his third-hand-of-one-finger, this to lay prostrate before her...she now the throne upon the land there at cave's edge, so he rises, emerges from the water, slowly, with awe-tinged respect. Frak sighting her as throne, the living throne—throbbing white spider-web *rok*...there in all the majesty, the bedazzlement of moonlight. Frak kneels before Darlm as throne...she beckons to sit upon her as throne: *Ah!* so they coupled-dream and as coupled dreaming so they are, through these shared instances of ecstatic delight, wedded as one...singular in mind and heart as they are in the flesh. This, a special time because their first *gen-kin*, an *um*, their first son was born as the next full moon cycle ended.

Dreaming—Upon Brok's boat the dreaming is different. The shift came to Frak in jerks and shocks. At first Brok woke him much earlier than he had ever risen. The moon was still out. This Frak had done before only on rare occasions. Here, it became every day. The other shock was watching the crew go to sleep right as the moon appeared. Only one of the crew stood watch throughout the night. At first, Frak could not sleep. During the day he found himself tired in a way he had never felt before...hunger had deserted him; he grew thinner. Most oddly, this shock of sleeping differently was accompanied by the strangest of images...or the lack thereof since the moon was no longer present in his dreams! Not as Darlm. Not as Lon. Not even as Magx sitting with him adoring moon. All this crashed in upon him in the middle of a full moon cycle.

Not dreaming made him tired. He did not know why. The crew seemed vigorous and ready at dawn to meet the day...but—and this was one of his last insights of his *back then* mind—as they slept, none dreamed. *How did he know?* He knew because he watched and none danced before they slept. None took out amulets like Darlm had given him. Frak knew that they were *gen* but strange *gen*, for they lived most of their days without women. In his new mind, Frak quickly grasped that the Sun had swallowed the Moon, that it was the Sun that gave light to the Moon, not as he once thought with his *back then* mind. More, all of a sudden his thinking became reflective...he, all of a sudden—*Awake!*...started to interpret things in such a way that he began to have a storyline form in his newborn mind. It began with seeing Brok as soul-feaster on women...as eating the souls of women!

At first Frak thought that the crew lived without women simply because they could not see the land...land was where the women were, safe in their huts. Now he sees how the land has changed...why Brok—and Frak, himself!—no longer need land.

Land. They had seen many places and peoples...but in odd ways which Frak had never encountered. No, he had seen, so he remembers, images to himself the small islands, but always land inside water with other land nearby. A few times they came upon a land which was so small that they could not walk upon it. Other times, they beached their landing boats and walked along the sands but did not foray into the forest...did not stay very long. Then still other times, there were so few trees about or no bushes with berries or no water to drink...something which made them quickly leave the land.

But no land meant no women.

Awake! Frak begins to sleep as all in the crew slumber...to *not dream* as they do not dream.

In this way, what Brok intended, happens. Frak becomes one of them.

Brok commands the crew to make ready the "Soul-Feasting Ceremony."

During the night—like a horrible dream revisited!—Frak is roughly wakened with several hard grasps and even more violent shakes.

He startles to awareness, still bleary-eyed and sluggish...zooming out of a deep, dead-muscle sleep.

“Hor!” It is a ribald sound shouted by many. Numerous hands grapple and pull him out of bed and up onto the deck.

He fights back without thinking about whom he is fighting—but he is easily overwhelmed.

“Hor!” they keep screaming and shouting and whooping.

“Hor!” and there are great boom-booms of laughter.

Frak is righted, and as he stood he saw the crew once again robed and painted in the strangest and most frightful ways. Animal heads: heads of ocean animals, heads of land animals Frak scans, sees...cats and pigs and dogs, these and one of the crew holding a shriveled,

blackened *gen*'s head—such Frak has once seen but then only upon the ancient dead, *back then* upon a day when a great ocean storm washed away an ancient burial site once *no-no*...the facial skin was so wrinkled and blackened that he had wondered if it were actually a *gen*.

All these heads and the blackest of faces and the whitest of hands: chalk white. Frak could not stop to figure out where all this has come from, for they roughly drag him and also Petra, the one who had been wrapped in the great white fur and tattooed with the moon...haul them both and stand shoulder to shoulder before Brok, sitting upon his ledge. Brok, all blackened and white of hands.

Brok booms, “Hor!”

As Brok bellows the word he lifts out his cock (Way back in Frak's mind flashes, *third-hand-of-one-finger!*) which is greatly engorged and painted black with a white tip...lifts it out and wags it in front of Frak and Petra.

For a moment no one seems to move...or know what to do.

Then....

It is a memory which is everlasting and long dreamt. Possibly the only dream Frak will ever have from this day forward. Endlessly repeating...but not a bad dream; not *no-no*. Not in the sense of a nightmare or hallucination. Rather, a dream of validation, of final acceptance—this Frak senses...however, it is not a time for such clear thoughts or precise words.

Frak is served a large goblet to drink. He knows it is *gom*, the potent drink that had set his mind adrift during the moon tattoo ceremony. Accepting with grace, after a long gulp, Frak's sleeping cloak is thrown over his head and he is blinded. Many hands push him and prod him...then he is nakedly stripped but still head-cloaked...several feet swiftly knock out his feet from under him...kneeling upon the deck...great pressure is placed upon his neck and his face and shoulders are ground into the boat's planks—Darlm's amulet is ripped off, tossed, kicked aside...there, for a moment, Frak finds himself oddly laughing, a weird delirious kind of giddy, giggling laughter...*gom*'s high-pitched, snorted laughter...then, a hard but not too rigid stick prods his ass, a rod not as firm as a tree branch but something sturdy enough to press, slowly drill into him—he wiggles and tries to stand up but two hard slaps whack his head bowed...the pressure is not relieved...the grinding comes again and again, each time hurting a bit more than

before, from slow to constant—for a dumbfounded moment the image arises within him of Magx’s magical third-hand-of-one-finger, of seeing it in the sacred ceremony of adult male initiation where the young are shown what a male must do and *not do*...not be *pierced!* Frak screams but his anguished yells are met with more slamming slaps and more frenzied wild, shrill shouts and more drilling prods...repeated and repeated...more pain and deeper pain but the *gom* deadens it almost totally...his mind once again drifting off yet the prodding drilling grinding piercing seems never to stop—it never does stop, not even after Frak croaks hoarse, swallows his tongue...blacks-out.

Upon waking Frak finds himself covered toe to crown in hides. Clean hides. Special hides. They are all the darkest of black with a thick musky scent; fleshy. He and Petra...as both once thrown over-board together, here both waking in tandem in this other involuntarily shared moment...both simultaneously struck with wonder by the hides and at the same instant moment filled, sweating, gorged with fear and foreboding.

Stilled. For there are no others about. Not walking about. Snores can be heard. Up on the prow is a sole helmsman. Another solitary crew is high in the lookout. The ship is moving easily, gliding under a strong but steady breeze.

As Frak slides and tosses the hides away, rising, he feels a savage pain grinding in and up his ass: truly *harj no-no* pain...like no pain he has felt in this part of his body...ever so carefully, ever so slowly he half-bends, reaches under to massage his anus but even the daintiest touch is like rousing slumbering embers that flare up in a frenzied fiery *Ssssss!*

Fran’s balls ache and his penis throbs...*worse!* Aaaarrgggghhhh! His fingertips are bloodied! He steps back and away as he notices drops of blood pooling at his feet. As trained by Magx he rips part of his robe and forms a pad that he sticks into his ass crack...it is near unberable for him to stand upright but he fears more a sitting down, so he stoically rights himself...momentarily all his pain is forgotten as he notices Petra—who seems in like anguish but Frak cares not about that, is not solicitous, no, never...he sights Petra's moon tattoo which is now crying a tear of red! That crying tear of red which all the others have...*discovers!*—as he himself now has...the *bloody tear* dripping down from his smoky white moon tattoo...he is deeply, instantly, consumed by both sadness and joy. He is moved at a level of emotion for which he has no words, hardly an image. He just knows that something has entered him at a level

of possession which he is struggling to discern as to its *grok*, its power, its intent. He senses that something has been taken out of him, from deep within him...he harbors not a single doubt that it came out his asshole...but what comes out of the ass but dung?

This tear of red blood has both Frank and Petra fixated, hovering there almost immobile, slightly hypnotized. The tear—*gom*'s power!—speaks to them...in strange images that flit across his mind as he gazes upon them. He hears a story...in which this tear of blood is a tear of birth and a tear of dying, one shed by females in their moon cycle, one shed by a mother at the birthing moment...one shed by males in battles with great beasts, one shed at the burial of a friend or a fellow crewman—as a sign of oneness. *Awake!* In a moment which will last forever, Frak grasps that this crying tear of blood is shed *only* by males. No longer in his mind is there even the slightest residue of power images of females, of Darlm, of Lon. No, he sees what has happened...that Brok feasted upon Petra's and Frak's *grok*, their souls, by penetrating deeply within and drawing it out—*birthing it!* Frak knows, just knows, clearly, that this is the greatest *grok* ever...that which empowers males to roam the world, master the seas...live without women!

Frak rises as one now eternally bonded and in full comradery with his crew...to dream as they not-dream, now and forever.

Frak, face flushed, gleefully smiles at Petra, a lewd ogle...snickers a tad as Petra's smile carnally arouses his rising cock—he is ready to soul-feast upon Petra!

Only much later in this stunning, revelatory day does Frak come upon Darlm's amulet...thong broken but stone intact. He, at first starts to toss it overboard but *somehow*—an action not grounded in any clear reasoning or understood impulse—pauses, slips it into his tunic's pocket...later stows it away under a plank near his bedding.

CHAPTER 4

Once as *them*, once truly one in unison with the crew, so the voyage changed. There was still a longing for land, but for a different kind of land. As with his crewmates, Frak finds himself eager to discover land but not necessarily to return to the land he had known. All the talk turns to a focus on *taking away*...taking away things from the new land which would make them wealthy in all lands. Here, Frak grasps that this is more than simple barter...understands that it is about gold and precious items which had no special value *back then*...barter had been the norm and value was given to things that ensured survival like spears or foodstuff but now he gets it that stones and seemingly trivial things like gold itself or the headdress stolen from a tribal leader, these have a power to enchant people so that he could get, say, a cow to slaughter for just a few gold coins. He hears and understands *gold*... a word of daily banter on the boat; a word which he hears echoing in his dreams.

Taking away—Few of the lands they had already explored had much for the taking away. To excite them, Brok spoke at great length and with fervor about the “far away” land. A place thicker with trees than any had ever seen. A landscape more flush with forest animals than any had ever seen. An abundant territory whose rivers and lakes abounded with flying-fish and other fabulous creatures. More, a treasure land where gold was as abundant as flowers and precious gems like apples for the picking. It was, even more significantly, a friendly land where the people were human—all *gen* as Frak translated it, but which people were like children, like newborn babes...easily commanded, ready to please—unaware of the power of gold and gems.

Taking away—Brok tells them all, although it seemed he was speaking directly to Frak, that it was his power—his right and authority—to take-away...that is what soul-feasters do! And, it chills Frak to hear that "You are bonded!" as Brok points to the crying blood red tear...that it is his and the crew's right and authority...*Frak's right and authority!* to take-away.

Take away whatever they wanted, because...here Brok's words took flight into high concepts that Frak struggled to grasp..."We are God's sons!" Not "suns" as *sol* but "sons" as *grok ums*. Frak struggled with the notion and the story Brok told. "This land," stomping his foot several times, "This land is not God's land! It is a cursed land filled with tribes and clans who are not chosen sons! God, Our Father, waits for us on the other side," and here he points straight upward towards the sky, "beyond the clouds, beyond the stars! He waits for us to bring Him the

souls of those lost in this land. We must fill our ship with souls teeming over the sides...it is then that we will be ready to venture home, to our home with God and live forever as his chosen sons!" Frak is more aroused, excited, near delirious as he is swept up into the crew's collective emotion. They breath in and out upon Brok's cadence. Their hearts beat in tempo, each heart feeding upon the other's rising fervor. They stomp and grunt, hoot and bellow, all ending with a repetitive chant of Brok's "We are God's soul-feasters!"

Frak, at the first, could not fully comprehend Brok's story. There was no place in his *back then* world for judging that this world right before him—the dirt, the birds, his own hands, *kin* and *gen*—were not part of him. *Back then*, those who looked like *gen* but were not, were simply beasts, and beasts were simply part of the *harj* and the *shad*. All that was, was simply *there*. Yet, what blocked his grasping Brok's message was not so much the concepts, as ideas and concepts were secondary back then, no, it was because of his own feelings. *Back then* he felt one with everything, even with the *harj* and the *shad*. Deep within him something resisted Brok's story. Deep down, at the depthless deep, a single word disturbed him—*Darlm*.

Despite how he felt, Frak accepted more quickly than he had ever done before the story in terms of words and concepts. He chanted and shouted and bellowed in tandem with his mates. Like his acceptance of "Water-House", he let the words and story slowly imbue him with the power they conveyed. He shouts, "We are *chosen*!" Like Brok's "Come!" so it was God calling him, choosing him...*Frak, a chosen son!*

In time, Frak began to more fully understand that he was not simply in harmony with God...not just *one is one*...but this godly power was part of his being...the ancient *grok* so *big big big big shad harj*!...simply that he and God were one! More, that this oneness with Our Father meant separation from others, those not chosen—enemies...and all that was on earth which was cursed and not where the Father lived—*the far away land beyond the stars!*

Frak thought long and hard and talked and talked about all this until his dreams were filled with taking-away for his God. It was, as *back then*, in the dreaming that Frak sounded the true meaning of being a soul-feaster... of Frak as a triumphant son of God!

Son of God. In his dreams all creatures bow down to him. Never, again, in dreams for Frak to swim in Darlm's "Water-House" and worship her as moonlight throne. No, never again. For him, henceforth, the dream of the blackened faces and the prodding of those he would take-

away, take them away, make them kneel and bend...he to prod and prod and prod:
piercingly...until the greatest of pleasures was his... so has he come to understand how a soul-feaster triumphs—through “submission.”

Submission was how one became one of God’s chosen sons. Brok had made that clear—spoke at length about how the “cock” was the “living rod” of God. *Cock* was more powerful than the living, magnetic gray stone: the compass. Brok spoke of how...for those who did not submit...the spear and the lance were also God’s cock.

Over time, but more rapidly each day, Frak's mind began to fit all the pieces together. He came to understand the connections between third-hand-of-one-finger *cock*...and adoration and submission. Now the cock rod between his legs was not just a sign that the other is *gen*, a human, but something much more powerful, more magical—God's weapon for conquest!

Frak thought about all of this and was viscerally pleased by the thinking.

So it seemed that from this initiatory night forward—fully conscious of being a chosen son of God—that the lands they explored were more bountiful and ready for his taking away. This day, the new land they were sailing along was a seemingly endless mountain laced coastline...they were traveling south and ever southward. As they randomly beached and walked about this never-ending southward land, they solely focused on soul-feasting. They cocked the females and lanced the males. It seemed that all the humans they were encountering were resistant to God’s chosen sons and had to learn submission. The crew’s cocks left the seed for the birth of sons of God who would, in time, heal this land. However, to ensure that only their sons would possess these lands, required their killing all the males—at first sodomized, then a lance through their hearts. This was how Brok spoke about how Our Father wanted them to act—no longer as seafarers, only as soul-feasters. "Rejoice!" Brok shouts, "Load the souls onto the ship!"

So it came to be that Frak’s sword was as potently active as his submitting prod.

The taking away, also at this time, turned in peculiar and unfamiliar ways. "Load the souls onto the ship!" meant, at first, taking away a personal item from a victim. Beads, shields, knives, even pottery, but as the lancing becomes the crew's dominant activity, so does it become competitive. It is then that a few of the crew start to take away bodily parts of their victims. At first it was hearts. Hearts cut out and stuck at lance’s tip, there to be paraded about to strike fear

in all to submit...most did submit, especially the younger women and those clutching children. The few that didn't, mostly older females, were instantly dispatched. Submissively, all who sought to survive bent their bodies, making ready for the soul-feaster's prodding.

Landing after landing, ever so incrementally, the taking away became even more fantastic and fabulous—gruesome, in that the taking away started to occur while the victim was still alive. Ears were sliced off. Eyeballs were gouged out. Hands and feet were hacked and severed. Then, only after such acts, were the heads chopped off. Full heads. Heads, some with eyes still open in unsubmitive dying—eyes that were beholding a horrendous terror and sight...all which fed a growling hunger deep within Frak...all which pleased him as he dreamt.

Heads of the not-chosen that they staked around the rim of the boat—lidless eyes sightless upon the sea...mouth and tongue agape with horror.

As the crew boarded their landing crafts to attack a new settlement, those who saw them coming fled. Warnings had rapidly spread among all who lived along the coastline. They fled terrified even at their first glimpse of the ship's fearsome eyes—the yellow stones actually being semi-translucent and as Brok set pots of fire behind them so did the eyes blaze from out and across the water to those dumbstruck creatures wailing and moaning and running asunder and amok up and down the beach and into the forests or up the hills or deep into caves. They deserted their villages, left all their possessions...even their knives and spears.

The taking away was becoming almost too easy. Frak and his crew—*troop!*—laughed, hooted, and yowled.

Their ship became gluttoned with treasure and booty...cluttered with dried out skins, rotting heads, shriveled hearts, even piles of desiccated penises.

In all this time Frak had stopped remembering Darlm. When he had picked up the amulet after his first initiation he did not tend to the mending of the leather thong. No, he did not. Frak placed it—without much thought as to why, just stashed it under a plank...there it was, there it is, there is shall be. In this manner she as the amulet became an ancient *no-no* inside the ship. It was with this stashing away that all images of Darlm began to cumulatively fade from his daily thoughts and nightly dreams—*Frak no longer could remember who Darlm was!* Then, as the

memory of her was obliterated, something profoundly revolutionary occurred in how Frak submitted woman with his rod of God, the Father.

The obliteration of Darlm was causally linked to Frak's methodical and intensifying taking away—his plundering of women. He practically ceased taking away male body parts, spent even less time gathering treasures and trinkets, no, his prime focus was on submitting the females. He'd spend long nights—on shore, since women were never brought on ship—simply playing with them...taking all—*extracting all!*— that they had, orgiastically pleasuring himself in ways of submission...he submitted them as he had coupled with Darlm but not as he had dreamed with her. This submitting was without dream, simply with an image—he as God's chosen son being adored through their submissive wails, groans, and cries. How they pleased his cock was his measure of mercy. Those who submitted to all his proddings—mouth, anus, between their breasts—lived...the others he lanced. Rarely, however, did he not show mercy to the young—these, despite their bites and flailing arms, if he seeded them, they lived. There were few Frak did not seed. *Soul-feaster!*

All his ways of taking away, Frak sees as signs of the pleasure he brings to Our Father.

“Our Father,” Brok says one day, “Our Father God is pleased with you, Frak.”

It was on this leg of their voyage where submitting only women preoccupied Frak that the crew discovered a curious and amazing fact about the ocean...the farther south they sailed became not hotter but colder!...“far south” began to act like the far north—all became cold and then frigid and soon the ship was blanketed with snow. On this far south trek, they had to fiercely and heroically battle a raging ocean, fierce winds, and small icebergs. It was at this perilous and dangerous time that Brok stood on his altar and call the group to pray, "Come! Come and honor Our Father!" Brok stood upright like the tallest of trees and with arms outstretched, fingers touching the clouds, he supplicates, “Father in heaven...” and all joined in prayer. Frak now knowing prayer as talking to Our Father, a talking in loud voice and shout where they chanted as they moved about the boat in an orderely slow and silent manner gathering things. Here was a new ritual for him, one that had no linkage to his past, *back then*. The crew chanted and began to offer up to Him the best of their treasure and booty—praising Him as they started throwing golden cups, ivory jewelry, goblets with precious gems...tossed overboard for Him; burning skins and heads for Him: "We offer ourselves up to you, Father. We submit our lives to you! Do

with us as Thou will!" And in answer and manifesting His power, within less than a day's sailing they shifted eastward and broke into warmer weather and started north again...through all this, Brok prayed, submissively upon his knees. Frak hearing, "Father we give Thee thanks."

Thanks-giving. Frak had understood, *back then*, this most elemental of insights and feelings. That the bush which gave eating berries had to be praised and thanked. That the deer slain had to be praised and thanked. These words came readily and easily to him, quickly translating what he had felt in the images back at that time he now does not remember.

Thanks-giving.

"Thanksgiving," intones Brok, and joins it to a new word, "Sacrifice."

Brok knows why he selected Frak. He was pure. He lived in a world of illusion and was a chosen one, elected by God to lead his people and all people like him to the revealed truth that was entrusted to Brok by Our Father.

Brok shares with Frak the connection between the land and sacrifice. "This land, the water, the dirt, the trees, the people...all live in a world of illusion. Evil magic. This is not a real world." Frak mind is aching to grasp the shift in consciousness this requires. "Earth is not our Mother. We have no Mother! This you must learn, understand. The land is illusion, a wizard's magical trick. The true land is beyond here—in heaven." Frak wants to ask a question but cannot form it in either his mind or with words. "God lives *over there*." Brok points towards the horizon. Pauses; stares deeply into Frak's eyes, penetrating his soul. "There is *a passage* we must find. One where this evil land provides an escape to Our Father's land."

This notion that the world is not real had been buzzing in and around Frak's mind since Brok's first speech about being chosen. His mind is still at this moment but noise. "What has been told to us, revealed by great good wizards and powerful leaders, is that the passage is one of blood, not water. This ocean water is illusion. What we must do is fill it with blood." Frak hears and is thinking about slaughtering animals...but is jolted as Brok's says, "Only the sacrifice of those who do not worship Our Father is acceptable. Only their blood is worthy to fill the passage. We must store not only their souls on board, but their bodies!" Brok's stare plunges deeply into Frak's soul...finds Darlm there, crouching, hiding—slays her. "We must fill this ocean with human blood!"

All is soon shockingly clear to Frak. Brok's slaying of Darlm, unknown in conscious thought to Frak, frees him to embrace this novel and singular understanding of Our Father's power. *He is the source of all life!* Brok whispers, "Women are illusions. Servants of the devil!"... *Dev?*

With all traces, scents, memories of Darlm erased, obliterated, taken away by Brok, so it is evident to Frak, "Our Father who art in heaven, all power and praise be Yours!"

So, as they set upon the next settlement, they do not do battle, no, they capture. Sneak in under darkness and capture a small family: a woman, her husband, and two children.

Back on the boat, on top of the forecastle Brok has set up a festive altar. It is ringed about with flowers and bright feathers...other objects of value—gold and coal and smooth, wondrously colored stones.

The small family is set on the far edge on a ledge. There to be seen by and to see all.

Sacrifice. First it is the woman. Brok draws her to the altar...drapes great riches around her—necklaces of pearl, bracelets of gold, earrings of boiling red garnet...robes her in a flowing silk brocaded with the flowers of spring, all festive, happy, joyous colors...he offers her a small cup, pure and smooth without inscription or adornment...she sips the *gom*...lays her down upon the altar...gently spreads aside her robes and inner garments just enough so that he can slip inside her legs...lays upon her—ruts and heaves...but draws himself out short of ejaculation, draws himself out and kneels up, then holds himself ever so momentarily as his sperm arcs and splotches upon her belly.

Brok leans forward and with liturgical gesture: clockwise, counter-clockwise, he ceremoniously smears and spreads...anoints the fear rigid woman's body with his sperm. Smears it and spreads up and down her chest, onto her face, until—*God be praised!*...it majestically transforms into blood—the woman is screaming and attempts to escape... rolls and pitches, but Brok's hands are strong...the rings on his fingers filed to work as sharp teeth, as such so quickly and swiftly are her eyes wreathed with bloody tears, her lips drool red spittle, her breasts sliced and pitted with tiny pools of blood. "Father, into Your hands I commend this soul!" Pierced through the heart with a thunderous groan of fatal submission.

A heart which Brok savages—all hearing the *crack!* and *snap!* hard splitting of breast bone and his sweaty, grunted set of plunges and cuts and tears until he hops off the altar's ledge and lifts her heart up for all to see.

The men shout, "Blessed be Our Father!"

They shout jubilantly, madly, in worshipful and prayerful ejaculation.

The woman's body is swiftly removed and tossed overboard. Her heart—fitfully beating—lies upon the altar—amidst festive blossoms and sparkling jewels.

The husband and children are dumbstruck—horrifically shocked beyond anything Frak has ever seen. The queerness of their protruding eyes and death-sucked cheeks evokes a strange response from within his body...as if from deep inside—an inside he has never tapped before—this ghastly fright flushes into a stream of warmth...gushing up from below his navel, radiating throughout his every organ and limb...pools into his crotch, there thickening and feeling like a lump which, with a jerk and a thump, bursts up and out, soiling his fine robes...an ejaculation of massive adoration of Our Father!

He is staggered.

He is consumed.

He is not unaware that his cock is aching stone hard.

Then the children. Almost to the age for the ceremony of *big*—bordering on being full male and full female. They are dragged over...oddly quiet in terror; torpid.

With practiced hands Brok draws his blade and slices off their clothes...short frock and a simple midriff wedge.

The children are naked. Brok reaches out his perfumed and ornately ringed right hand, touches their foreheads with his thumb, anoints them—marking them with a gold cruciform sign ...is handed a swish of incense, he swathes them with fragrance...for a fleeting moment all eyes and thoughts and feelings are focused and centered in adoration of the children. Again, in what is a flash to Frak's fascinated eyes, two of the troop step forward, disrobe as they approach...with cocks like lances they set about submitting the children. The shrill screams and whimpering cries and futile thrashings in protest and defense serve only to heighten the gleeful and rhapsodic

shouts and fast-paced clipped guttural bursts of song from Brok and the others. Frak is at a loss for his own words, but he deeply senses what his brothers in the troop are feeling—that Our Father is pleased with them.

The children are tossed overboard, alive.

The mother's heart: now flaccid, is flung after them as so much debris.

Throughout all of this—this play of fascination, horror and ecstatic violence—it has been evident to all that the real sacrifice is that of the father, her husband. For this is a ritual of taking away from him. Of submitting him through every sense and feeling he would ever have. It was known to all in the troop...especially to Frak...that the father was being submitted as to his memory, his hopes, his dreams, his physical strength...simply and totally demeaned and destroyed and sacrificed as a total being—that the father is Enemy...one not chosen; an evil god's son.

Through the submitting of the father, so Frak could feel, was he himself submitted to Him.

“Our Father is pleased,” Frak murmurs softly to himself.

Frak is pleased and thrilled beyond words.

The father was not killed. Not slain. No, his diminishment required that he first be feted. Dressed and draped in the richest, thickest, most luxuriant of sensuous robes and comforting hides...jewels: gold, pearls, a gaspingly thick emerald and precious stones beyond count and mingling of colors...these were looped around his wrists and his neck and his ankles. He was seated upon the richly carved throne which Brok had taken away after a most clever—and during a tale inspiring battle against a—powerful coal-black king. Brok revealed to them that there were humans who were totally black, not just from the sun, not dark like many whom they met while traveling south, but dark as the precious stone called coal. It was because of this most black of blackness that Brok coveted his throne—this wood and leather intricately carved seat fully gold gilded which Brok grasped must be for a grand soul-feaster like himself! For one who was One with his own mighty God. So was Brok chosen to slay this coal-black evil god...it was from this black demon that he stole this throne chair. Triumphantly, upon this throne, this seat of power,

this symbol of the unfathomable mystery of human life, so does Our Father sit as the regal husband now sits.

They bring the husband food. Wine and mead and thick cuts of meat; sweet fruits. No *gom*. But he does not eat...just sits, catatonically...almost *rigor mortis*, upon the magnificent throne—honored as a king should be.

The crew sing songs of praise and adoration...he does not move, not flinch. He does not make even the tinniest of gestures...not a pant or a grunt—his breathing is silent...nothing to let them know he is aware of them.

No blinks.

But all know that he is aware...aware of them inside the power which has overtaken him—the gripping presence of their Father. “Our Father has taken him away,” is spoken around out loud.

Our Father has submitted him.

Through his being—as sacrificial offering—so Frak grasped was the Father's presence made manifest among the crew. The simple truth that life and death, each and both, are the Father's...only Our Father's to bestow and reclaim. Only He is “King of kings!”

Somewhere late that night, so late that it was moving towards morning, the husband and father flares up off his throne and hurls himself into the ocean.

Tired, weary, besotted and hallucinating from every sense—such was the ship's crew...each of whom was relieved that Our Father—through the sacrificial king's own act of suicide—has Himself left the ship...for His presence was too mighty, is too mighty.

Thankfully, so Frak feels—is relieved—the presence of Our Father had only required that the sacrificial husband/father/king be slain. For His hunger for souls is so beyond understanding that all feared that He would demand their own!

With their Mighty Father gone from the ship, so could they sleep...and upon waking from this sleep would they rise again as chosen Sons of God, Our Father...chosen to voyage ever forward towards His far-away land.

CHAPTER 5

Frak's mind has come to fully accept and grasp Brok's world of submission, sacrifice, Our Father, Chosen sons—yet, it is only until his deepest feelings—the ones not sensed by the conscious mind or sensual body—finally re-form that his transformation is complete. He struggles for just the right word to control this radical shift in his heart, just one from the so many he has been learning: *queer*. This the word Brok used when he took away something he had never seen before. So it fit...felt right—*queer*, not spoken except within his own mind; a comforting word.

Queer. Now adequately describing the way he felt since he first encountered Brok. Describing the primal shift as he digested Brok's words and linked them into sentences and over time sentences were welded into non-stop chats with his crew mates. *Queer*, when Water-House took another psychic jump with *ship* and *crew* and *troop*. Most revolutionary as he came to soul-feaster and sacrifice and submitting.

Ship. Queerly, he accepts that the ship is *not* alive. This insight comes after many late nights with Brok telling him how he had the vessel built, and how many other ships are as fearsomely put together. No, the ship is not alive. "Only Our Father is alive." Frak struggles but gain clarity. It's the first time he also accepts, in amazement, that all that is—living creatures, *gen*, *kin*, beasts...all that simply exist like rocks, trees, lakes—come from the Father. Our Father is the mother of all!

With this queering shift, Frak begins to imagine himself as always having been a seafarer sailing upon the wide-open ocean. "Upon the briny deep!" as the crew sings.

Brok also senses this queering movement within Frak. It pleases him greatly. It tells him that it is time—right and fitting.

Brok takes Frak up onto the forecastle and into the small room which is solely his...this being the only room on the ship which all are forbidden to enter unless called by Brok...never has Frak seen nor heard anyone so called! Brok makes Frak feel specially chosen among the chosen sons!

Frak senses upon him the astonished eyes and the hushed but gasping single breath of all. Brok...into a room unlike what Frak could ever have imagined.

A room of *maps*.

“Map,” as Brok draws his finger along the lines. He sketches in a motion which means nothing to Frak.

He then points to the corner of the cabin. Frak sees a very large drawing of *hor*...but this living stone compass has four distinct needles, not just one...each laying against the other, at right angles.

“East. West. North. South.” Brok touches and names the tip of each needle.

Frak is a step behind in his thinking. Brok chuckles quietly as he observes Frak struggle with what he knows will soon become commonplace for him. Brok’s heartfelt satisfaction with his choice of Frak has grown every day of their shared journey.

During the next full moon cycle, Brok trains Frak in the art of map reading, map making, and using the complex compass. As anticipated, Frak is an apt and studious apprentice.

During the following full moon cycle, Frak stands on Brok’s ledge and plots the ship’s course.

The queerness of the concept of a map—of capturing the movement of the stars, the changes in land formations, and discerning how the winds blow, then sketching on a finely scraped hide and creating a *fixed memory* of things that were once totally beyond Frak’s control or even imagination, all this pries opens Frak’s mind like a fragrant flower unfurling for the first time in spring—ah, the innocence of bees and wind and morning dew!

Frak is heart thumping agog, time and again, as Brok shows him map after map, and with each map recalls for Frak where the ship had been, what Frak had taken away, where the Thanksgiving and Sacrifice had occurred.

Frak is dizzy beyond giddy when Brok shows him maps indicating where they are *sailing towards!* To have such foreknowledge is such a sundering, disjointed concept to Frak that he cannot not summon a word or string of words with which to describe the how and the why of his heart feeling less and his mind burning more—he is simply ecstatic! All day for many days he walks about hotly feverish and with brow thickly beaded. His breathing become pants, then deeply held till his ears turn red, until exhausted with only sleep bringing him back to normalcy. All the time, his eyes are near unblinking: a tearless, fire—intense stare.

With maps Frak begins to know...know that he knows...yet, he still doesn't know how to say this...how to confess this shared bond with Brok.

“You know?” Brok asks, hopefully. Frak: A head nod; wordless, *I know*. “Our Father be praised!” Frak knows where the passage to the faraway land of God, Our Father is! He shows Brok his “X” upon the map. Brok is stunned—the Master Teacher astounded by the knowledge and power of his once near-savage student. *Awake!* Frak's *grok* is truly greater than even Brok had first assessed.

From thenceforward, when they would land for barter or a take away, Frak could hardly be bothered with what the other members of the crew were doing. No, he, rather—in a fashion which others came to mockingly describe him—quickly ran, hurriedly walked, vigorously paced to and up the nearest hill, bluff, mountainside...climbed the tallest trees...sketched and drew and made idiosyncratic notations—always feverish, always sweating, always consumed.

Frak's skills at exact and measured freehand drawings boggles Brok. He has never seen in any of his family's collections—collections from many lands and for many generations—never seen such precision, such measured correctness. He grasps that Frak is, truly, queerly blessed by Our Father—even possibly more so than he himself is! Without a doubt, he himself had not chosen this half-naked, grunting barbarian—*All praise be to Our Father!* who had sent him to meet Frak.

Brok builds another room—barely smaller than his own—in the aft of the ship for Frak. He does not care whether this stirs up jealousy among the crew. It's beyond evident to all that Brok has a special eye for Frak—some kidding as they pass around the gourd of *gom* that Frak likes Brok's prodding cock too much! But the others who have benefited from Brok's teaching quickly take to conveying the message, “Frak is a chosen servant!” This amazes the others who have expected that only Brok is a chosen servant. *How has this barbarian, hardly more human than a babbling jungle ape, risen to Brok's level? Impossible.* But true. Like Brok—and from Brok's actions all know that Brok himself is aware of this elevation, of Our Father's anointment—Frak is chosen to officiate at the ceremonies of Thanksgiving and Sacrifice.

In brief moments of self-reflection, Frak realizes that he has amazed even himself. He doesn't dialogue within or without about his newfound queering skills—they wae simply “there”...he is too consumed by his work to fret away even a moment to wonder why or how. As

he finishes each new map, he blesses himself and sings in audible praise, “Blessed be Thee O Mighty Father!”

Yet, although Brok trained him in the duties and rights of being one blessed as a chosen servant, Frak starts to invoke Thanksgiving and Sacrifice more often than Brok thinks necessary and proper. Following his father’s tradition, Brok has been trained to pleasure Our Father only after certain terrible and cataclysmic storms or battles most savage and ferocious. It is within such tumultuous and dramatic events that he’s been taught that the message of the Father’s Will is made manifest.

Frak, truly queerly, calls for Thanksgiving and Sacrifice every time a new map is completed. Sometimes this occurs more than once within a full moon. Brok becomes more curious than fearful—he wants to know how Frak hears Our Father’s message in such queer ways.

“Our Father is giving us the whole world to take away...the whole world.” Frak—cupping his hands at eye level—speaks this calmly, clearly and with a confidence Brok has never sensed Frak has had before.

“Maps are how Our Father sees!” A slight uplift on the exclamation.

This, another queer thought that slaps Brok—mentally he staggers. *Frak is surely more than a chosen servant!*

“What Our Father sees *through me.*” It is a humble statement.

As the student rises to become the Teacher of his own Master, Frak sets several of the oldest maps before Brok...ones Brok has relied upon for many years. At first Brok doesn’t understand; is clearly confused, a bit apprehensive. “Watch!” An eagerness, a paced breathing of excitement—Frak picks up a roll, unties the thong, and spreads it over the old maps, one at a time. Frak’s roll is a beaten parchment that is thinner than even Darlm’s *big hide*—shawl—a shawl no longer an image in his mind—a roll which is nearly perfectly translucent. The roll itself fascinates Brok, but before he can inquire about it, Frak says, “Look!” with the voice of great discovery.

Said just once, “Look!”

Frak is consumed by his own looking.

Brok looks but can't see; stares and peers...but...for the first time ever he jolts with a controlled moment of strangling fear—*Frak knows something he does not!*

Fear not of the enemy. Of him who can be slain.

No. Fear of the usurper. Of the child grown to manhood.

Fear of the wiser one who will learn how to use Brok's own fear to be his undoing.

Yet, Brok simultaneously grasps that Frak does not sense this fear. That Frak is as if lost in prayer, far away in a way Brok himself has been lost while praying before entering a great battle, beseeching Our Father before the onset of a storm at sea, pleading as he had prayed at his own father's grave. Brok eyes, closely watches, scrutinizes Frak face, his stance, his attitude... *nothing to fear!*—he breathes slowly and under control, says, “Show me more.”

Frak spends the rest of the day—way past supper and into the depth of the night—detailing for Brok how he has discovered the usefulness of “spoon lines”—which Brok names as “Curves. They are curves.” Frak speaks about these curved lines. How when they sail towards the setting sun and sunrise, how then the lines curve: falling off to the right and off to the left. Frak paces about and even hops and skips as he speaks—all an amusement to Brok...which is a feeling unnoticed by Frak, himself.

Frak tells Brok how he had woken one evening, late at night, inside a deep presence of *Og* fog and simply saw—beheld it right there before him, clearly as if an invisible hand were holding it up to him—saw a map with curved lines. Curved north and south. Curved east and west.

Frak speaks of the time just passed when he had not left his room for three days—Brok remembering these as the days Frak mumbled so incoherently with such rapid breathing that all thought he had caught the fatal south-wind fever...emerging three days later, haggard and spent, but alive.

It was during these three days that Frak pounded out—boiled and pressed his first translucent rolls. Upon them he drew his first ever curves. Using the curves and information from his numerous and varied notations about how many strides there was between prominent hill tops and crags, about the size of a man compared to his thumb when on top of a hill compared to when standing level with him on the beach, about the stars seen in the sky, about the

changes in the compass as he did all these things—notations which he has jotted down not knowing even then why, just knowing that he must...telling Brok that during these three days as he worked with the new maps so had he discovered and discerned how to, “See as Our Father wants us to see!”

After this meeting, back in his own room, Brok kneels down to pray. He whispers in thanksgiving...prays for Frak—that Frak should never die! Brok proclaims the wondrousness of Our Father in having created such a chosen son as Frak.

In short talks over the next several days, Brok conveys to the crew—knowing that each member is at his own level of understanding—the revelation Frak has received from Our Father. All are amazed that such a once dismal barbarian as Frak has become such a presence of Our Father among them—truly a Servant of God! From this time forward all approach Frak with a sense of awe and reverence.

Brok fully understands, finally, why Frak has called for so many Thanksgivings and Sacrifices during the last several moons. Yet, he is not untroubled. He has been trained to strictly pace such rituals since, if called for too often, the crew will grow weary of what would soon become common and not mysterious. Yet, who is he to doubt Our Father?

During the next full moon cycle, Frak faithfully continues to draw additional maps—yet not once does he call for a Thanksgiving. This—another queer turn of events—troubles Brok.

“It is not mine to call for the Thanksgiving and Sacrifice,” Frak volunteers to Brok during one of his daily late afternoon visits. “It is not mine. It is *yours*.” Again, said with the absolute confidence which Brok has accepted as a sign of Frak’s close communication with Our Father.

Before Brok can ask or question, Frak says, with a dismissing tone, “It is mine to do queerly. You to conduct the rites.” He speaks no more to Brok this day.

Frak’s difference and his odd new ways become quickly apparent to all the crew. Early one day they wake to find the door to Frak’s room artfully decked with bright ribbons, a fist of flowers, and the oddest of things, a something which made them all gape but come up short as to words of description—only Brok knows it as the dried penis of the large “deep monster”—a fully erect, stuffed and nailed above his doorway monster’s penis

Brok chuckles within, since this is his family treasure, one that he has kept in his room and shared with no one except Frak. Brok knows the deep creature as *whale*, but he has avoided the showing of this trophy, waiting until it would become useful—after some storm where a dead whale would be found on a beach...then he could show it and claim the whale's power.

But here is Frak—"When had he taken it?" muses Brok—bolder and more confident than Brok has reasons to like.

This they see. Then, they see more.

Frak comes out that day wearing a robe of the darkest hides craftily sewn together such that they seem—a marvel to all!—all of one piece; near seamless. Upon his head he wears a hat, a boxed black hat with a curious and eye-catching multi-colored drawing of the full compass known until now only to him and Brok. Its points are marked in bright yellow: E, W, N, S. All is a mystery to the crew.

All this is more than strange, truly queer, a bit shocking, even amusing and enjoyable—but then the crew begins to see what they have never seen.

Behind Frak emerges a shorter figure—one draped by the finest full flowing cloak any had ever seen—something they are sure was taken away from a great king. This cloak is white with sinuous green stripes swirling about it, and it almost fully envelopes the one they know as Jerd—the youngest among the crew. He had been captured by Brok not too many moons back, but is fairly worthless...he can only fix small things since he is not fully matured, not having a beard...all in all a puny, weak male. Why Brok has brought him aboard is unknown...and, unquestioned.

Jerd stands just behind Frak. He's upright but without expression...his ruddy hair neatly combed—stands there just behind Frak who says to all with a flourish of hands rising like birds taking to wing, hands which fly up and point to the sky and then down to the Earth and then rest upon Frak's heart, "Jerd is my Thanksgiving."

Done, Frak turns and reenters his room. Jerd follows.

No one fully understands. Not even Brok. But he senses enough to know that his position and power are safe, intact...Frak is not a usurper. Brok mulls, "If this is what Our Father says through Frak, so be it."

Inside his room—never ever imaging or sensing it as “theirs”—inside his room Frak enacts the ritual of Thanksgiving...submitting Jerd on a daily basis, ritually.

As Frak prods Jerd, as he submits him, as he has him suck his cock time and again, he is suffused with a fullness of feeling, a warm sensation drenching the core of his being, the abiding thrill that all is right with the world—that Our Father is present, here and now, more and more, day after day. Also, that he is blessed in all things and that tomorrow will be even more blessed. As such, Frak forms the thought of the *future*—not as he now understands as tomorrow or the next moon cycle but in terms of direction, of purpose, of final consummation...that the voyage has a future—a time and a place to reach and finally end. A final resting place—home and *hum hum*—which is with Our Father—“in heaven.” Unknown to Brok, Frak has identified and precisely mapped the location of the passage of that crosses over from this world of illusion to that of life-everlasting with “Our Father who art in heaven!”

Frak knowing heaven as both up beyond the stars and as found deeply within Jerd through submission and Thanksgiving.

CHAPTER 6

Frak has been unsure about his queering with Jerd. He misunderstood at first when he saw two men embracing in bed. In time, he accepted it, as he has so many queer thoughts and event. But as to his own embracing of Jerd, he has no way to image it or find a word. It is just as how perplexed he felt when he first encountered *hor* and the magnetic needle, now compass. This queering is something one had to see, observe, make part of one's new sense, then accept. So in time he has come to accept Jerd as a revelation from Our Father. *How else?*

This queering with Jerd is not something which has come to him in an easy and incremental fashion. Rather it has hit him like a bolt of lightning—like the exploding lance of light that he has seen sunder a mast or two, usually on a dry night without expectation. Like that explosion of light, one day, while inside his room, there was a knock on the door...Jerd enters—never to leave!

What annoys, fascinates, amazes, intrigues and baffles Frak is that Jerd so readily accepts the relationship. So readily makes submission part of his being, not just his everyday habits, but as part of himself. Jerd is not simply a ritual co-celebrant, no, it's quickly evident that he lives to submit—that submission fulfills him. Since Jerd is a male, it perplexes Frak how this can be so. But Jerd goes about the day happy and chatty; sing-songing at times. Frak thinks long and hard about the queerness of Jerd. *What is Our Father revealing through him—through us?*

Up to this time, during all their travels, neither Frak nor Brok has ever discerned the circularity of their route. Now, insightfully, Frak does...that they are rounding a globe. At first, they simply go this way and that with the wind, trusting in the protection of Our Father. Brok states that he himself is not unlike the small compass needle—his to go this way and that driven by the mystical and magical presence of Our Father, of his Will.

“Will,” Brok explains, demands unswerving trust in wherever the ocean wind blows them...trusting that it is where Our Father wants us to go. As such *will* is the word which fits Frak's insight into the maps and their memory of the past and their enabling travel into the future—maps make them aware and in the presence of His Will. Through the maps Our Father has allowed Frak to see as He sees, to remember as He remembers. *More!* To be present with Him. Maps lead them to souls upon whom they feast...to lade the ship for their longed for passage to the far-away land of heaven.

What Frak senses is that he and only he knows that Our Father is on the ship with them—*always!* has been and will be.

At moments, Frak's mind shut down—over-loaded, satiated, drowned in all the queer knowing and feelings that course through him day after day like ocean waves endlessly pounding the beach. The interconnection between all that he is sensing becomes most clear through his and the crew's first encounter with another strange, alien, and queer spiritual vision.

Vision. Back then, there had been only one vision...singular because there was no knowledge of any other. Magx was a Wiz and Lon was the Moon. Frak and his people knew only this. It was knowledge which knew of no other vision. Life was simple, not complex.

In like manner—simply listening to Our Father...for though he has adopted and embodied Brok's ways of thinking and feeling, Frak is still a simple soul, so where there had been Lon and Magx there is now only Our Father...it is an easy substitution...life is still simple, not complex.

It was also simply accepted that Jerd has come to him—Our Father wills it! It has never crossed Frak's mind, not an image does he hold, of the ritual of submitting except as the special ceremony where new males formed a bond with and are accepted by the crew—as *mates*. For him, its practice and meaning resonates with the long-forgotten ritual the sharing of his blood with Magx in the ceremony of *big*. There, Magx carefully pricked his magical third-hand-of-one-finger and let blood flow—a streamlet of blood which he pressed against Frak's penis. Cock to cock they became *one is one*. But this cock sharing was a reserved ritual, a special highlight of the bonding ritual initiation of *big*. Now, it has become a daily act between Frak and Jerd, as regular as eating breakfast upon rising.

All Frak's insight into and understanding of the vision of Our Father is about to change...as he follows a map, one he knows will take him to the land of the Nephi...little does he know about how their vision will also radically alter his own, once again.

The Nephi. In Frak's mind he is in his private room back at the moment of discovery, drawing the map which, unaware but incrementally revealing, leads to *them*.

The Nephi. On his map, their land rises up at the top of the incredibly long coastal land which Frak draws, combining its length and breath, as a snake's hood...like the unforgettable king of snakes which had hypnotized him and killed a man with one strike back after a take away

in a jungle which teemed with snakes...so he finds his hand drawing this map as hypnotically as the king snake had frozen his eyes and drew him closer. He draws the land starting with a thin tail—which he now realizes is where the raging tempest beset them when they had sailed so far south that south had become north...that place where the storms had been most fierce and when Thanksgiving and Sacrifice was first made known to Frak...it is this land that begins as a tail in the south and ends in a broad shroud up north...ending after the warm turned to hot, so hot that none of them dared to beach and attack the coastal settlements, not for a full moon cycle. Following this snaky route, only now as the torrid heat ebbs and cooler breezes temper their sails and brows do they arrive in the land of the Nephi, which he soon comes to learn rules almost the whole northern sector of the snake's hood.

Until now, the Nephi are known only to Brok, but he knows them solely as a seafaring people—having encountered them more than once and, although they shared stories of their travels, his respect for them was always tempered by a suspicion that they said less as they spoke more. He does not consider them friendly seafarers. Moreover, he has never been here before to their homeland—not even as a guest on their ships, only meeting with them on the common lands they explored. His knowledge about them consists of tales told to him by his fathers but only after he swore his lips to secrecy. Tales told in hushed tones, at times whispered to him—muffled words real and spectral; ethereal—Wizard incantations and secrets. Secrets which said that if you ever discover their homeland that it would be best to avoid disembarking, rather, *Pray to the Father and flee!*

So when Frak brings him the map—this freshly sketched and measured map of where they had been and...with eyes cold as a dead man's...of where they are going, Brok drops to his knees, throws himself prostrate before Frak and moans—bellows a sound beyond cry and plea, with a quavering forlorn trill that creeps slowly up Frak's legs, wraps itself like a serpent coiling about his body—a horrifying sound that whirls and swirls around his head, so blinding him with a light so harsh and achingly painful that at once Frak senses that it is alive—a living light...as such Frak's vision of the Nephi opens unto him.

This is not a vision once seen and then forgotten, no, it alters his sight...a vision which is a way of seeing. Oddly, Brok's condition quickly reverses...he rises up, swats at and shakes his robes as if dusting off after a trek on a muddy day, but standing as if nothing much has just

happened—no words to Frak, simply Brok stepping back and going about his day. *Our Father speaks in mysterious ways!*

Henceforth, for Frak there is never to be another day which is just a day as previously known. No, now he can see, so he intuits, peer deeply as Our Father wants him to so sense—it is his to *intensely peer* and so *behold!* Our Father’s Will...that he meet the Nephi.

Peering. All around Frak sees the light and the dark, the clear and the muddied, the hard and the soft, the true and the false—through intense, at times, passionate peering, he moves forward as the Father’s chosen servant.

Frak leaves his cabin as he hears Brok call to the troops. Brok stands upon his ledge in regal posture and with stentorian voice begins to prepare the crew. “Nephi,” he names them. Then as to their number, he raises his arms, circling time and again to impress upon his troops how numerous they are...more numerous than the jungle trees of the hot lands...more numerous than the mountains of snow in the north lands.

Brok’s dance-like hand and arm movements draws them all into a tight, conspiratorial clutch. He lowers his voice almost to a whispers, revealing his tactics. To raid such a tribe they will have to sneak ashore... after lowering the raiding boats and rowing half-way, all hunched over, they are to slip into the water, swim near blindly under a darkling moon with just their chins skimming the waves, then wade to the beach and catch them by surprise...startle and confuse them with terror at sunrise! There is no other way, Brok shouts: “*Deus Vult*—It is Our Father’s Will!” As Brok’s clan fathers had whispered this secret, so is he attacking the Nephi...all know that there is no other way to battle them because they are a most fierce and brave people...ones who possess a special power—as the tales warn, who “turn humans into swine! Into slithering snakes! Into raging madmen who cut out and eat their own hearts!” With such images does Brok curdle their hearts so that they—crew, one and all—will dread confronting, be driven to mercilessly slaughter all...but at a deeper level Brok wants them to fearfully respect these Nephi. He knows that they have a mighty vision which can change the world—which he does not want his troops to hear, become enchanted by...for he knows that the Nephi’s greatest weapon is not one that slays the flesh but which controls the mind. For him, they are evil soul-feasters!

As the Brok's revered Wizards had decreed, so he repeats over and over—*Fear them!* For they are a people of uncountable number and of a howling power—of a spiritual power so potent that it can turn invisible spirits into living being...turn animals into humans...most terribly, raise the dead!

Brok spins tale after tale as they have been mysteriously secreted to him...one about how the Nephi had sailed down from the stars...not just from the stars as the sky of Earth, but from stars as Earths of their own. It is dumbfounding and heart-numbing, yet since Brok, a chosen servant says it, it is truth...as revealing Our Father's will.

Oh, so true! Is Frak's reaction as he listens to Brok. But Frak has moved beyond Brok's knowledge—he has been raised by Our Father to a priestly role...to one whom Our Father has chosen to be One with here on Earth. This honored election and anointment was revealed to him during the recent strange encounter with Brok where Brok had cast himself on the ground moaning but rose seemingly totally unaware of the vision that had been opened for Frak. Only Frak now knows that he sees in an especially queer manner—he peers as the Nephi peer...their vision is his vision.

Frak's vision reveals that the Nephi have been living among humans for thousands of years. More, that at every moment they are in direct conversation with their own queer God and work His hand. In their special way, they have brought innumerable souls from other worlds and embodied them in human form. Could Frak explain to Brok and the crew that there are other worlds? The crew has accepted that there are strange lands—what Frak calls queer lands—but beyond the stars? It would all seem too preposterous; too queer.

Brok, until now steadfastly true to his sworn secrecy, knows that he has to share one secret...he hopes that it will strengthen the crew's belief in his leadership—lingering in his mind is a suspicion about Frak, about his real purpose on this voyage...deep down in the darkling corners of his mind he wonders, *Is Frak one of them? How else did we get here?* So Brok speaks about having seen one of the Nephi's holy plates—which had been given to them by their God. Of all the holy things stolen and taken away by Brok's father's-father's-fathers, this golden plate he boasts, “Is the most powerful! It's magic makes the dead never to die!”

The men are silenced by this singular claim. Brok's words fascinate. *He is truly a chosen servant!* courses through their collective mind.

Brok conjures an enchantment through his mighty wizard words. The crew is clenched in an absorbed silence as they watch Brok act out his first encounter with the golden plate...how he with magical incantation approached it...how through proper homage the magic of the plate became his. In their collective imagining, the crew sees Brok gaze upon the Nephi plates and they are enthralled in unison with him as the plates throb golden and spike with flares of a most grand and bedazzling power.

Brok trembles such that they see and tremble with him as he recounts that he has read the plate, using his magical power as a chosen servant. Yet, what he next tells them, strikes all dumb, deeply mute and numb in body, mind, and soul. He shares that the golden plate *spoke* to him...that as he read it he was transported to a time and a place of a most powerful dream, a time and a place where he saw himself as an eternal being—ethereal, a body of light, not of flesh...as a mighty power not unlike Our Father. *Ah!* He knows that they cannot hold this revelation, that it is too, too queer. So he states that his mighty power is surely not equal to Our Father, but like his—a power which enables humans to live forever among the stars and when they so desire to descend into a male body to couple with women to create beings to populate other stars. *What? How?* All this Brok struggles to explain, but within a breath he senses that he has failed to instill in them the full depth and queerness of this fearsome knowledge—failed, except for Frak.

Frak clearly understands all. *Arrrggghh!* Suspicion rises one again as Brok fears Frak's insight, his own mighty power. Not that Frak will usurp his leadership or seek to kill him but that he has a more intimate knowledge of Our Father—*jealous*...that Frak is even someone greater than all the favored chosen sons.

In truth, Frak has grasped why they have to invade the Nephi. *It is Our Father's Will!* Clearly, it is His Will that Brok on this voyage should discover this land of the Nephi, raid and steal more golden plates. Frak could read Brok's mind and heart before Brok could hear himself talk or feel. Frak hears the Wizards and fathers so charging Brok to steal the magical and potent golden plates of the Nephi!

What Frak knows which Brok does not is that—to conquer the Nephi—it has to be an invasion from within, not from without—more of a betrayal than a raid and battle. So Frak is compelled to speak, steps forward and draws the crew to him while they are one mind in this collective fascination...step up and reveal what only he knows to be Our Father's Will.

Yet, Frak knows deeply that his stepping forward might be taken as a challenge, more, as the usurpation of Brok's authority and leadership, but he *must*...so, blessed by Our Father, he speaks with such authority and command that it is near impossible for Brok and the crew to resist him. However, although he speaks clearly, they do not understand all, only partially. More, although he does nothing overtly to directly diminish Brok, it is clear and evident that the crew is resisting him and with collective furtive eyes searching out Brok's reaction.

Awake! Brok yields and so does the crew—*submitted!* because, as he labors to unfold the vision to them, from out of his mouth Frak has ceased to reference “I,” rather, “Our Father says ...” and all believe him—most fervently does Brok believe. At this moment, in words of affirmation by Brok, the crew hears, “Frak is not only a chosen servant but a High Priest of Our Father!”

In this way, so prepared, do they sail into a bay—leaving only Jerd aboard the ship...a bay whose safe passage none could spy except Frak...all trusting him as he stands side-by-side with Brok—nobly upright with map unfurled at arm's length eyeing the land and then back to the map, then from map to the land... *sentinel*: firmly issuing orders...stern shouts which are instant commands, unleashes instant actions—sails lowered, oars dropped, a smaller sail unfurled, then others lowered...truly, the crew is enchanted, obedient and entranced by the words of their High Priest...soon they enter a bay—a tiny, almost hidden body of water that emerges seemingly out of nowhere just after rowing away from a large, inviting but—as High Priest Frak states—seductive false bay which they ignore only after Frak's insistent warning that it is still the land of the snake, that it is a bay of venomous poison...true to his words, as they sail by, Brok up in the crow's nest observes it as a slice of land so barren that nothing physical or spiritual can exist there, so does Brok call down to Frak...Frak nodding a confirming *true*...all this which ends just before a second bay appears—one which bursts open from out of nowhere, flies open like a thunder-cracking explosion, rises up with such suddenness and force that the crew collectively gasps, although none hears a sound because their souls are magically soothed upon sailing into a blue embrace, a sweet kiss of sun-bright, cloudless air...in a flash, all are wrapped within an embraced feeling of friendly welcome...they continue to sail into a harbor, into a tranquility which pleasures them in body and soul in ways no words or images can capture.

At the entrance—left of the harbor there rises a majestic point, high above, almost piercing the sky, which is lined with people welcoming them. Upon this highest point the Nephi have raised a golden cross—a cruciform figure similar to the sign Brok uses in anointments, yet a bit queer—an entity of stupendous fascination, of such majesty and dazzling splendor that it seems to them to be a golden key, to be a kind of magical key, one which proclaims that the land they are entering contains queer truths of the most amazing kind ...so does Frak translates all that is happening as it happens to Brok and the crew...they without a hint of resistance are submitting to Frak’s wisdom...as they sail farther into the bay all around they find the land to be blanketed with human life and activities—buildings appear and disappear from eye’s range; streets crisscrossing and impossible to number...the whole landscape is a bustling, active, enticing, confounding bubbling of human energy which reaches out to the ship and draws it in as a big fish is drawn smoothly out of the water and into the fishing boat upon a deftly cast hook.

Frak—through the future-sight vision he has received as High Priest—has already seen what is to come—he continues to interpret the scene as they approach a landing pier where a small troupe of ceremonially clad Nephi wait to greet them. The Nephi are a tall and strong people, broad of shoulder, sun-bright of hair, ocean blue-green of eyes, with a fiery look that cleaves the air in two. Frak immediately takes to them, instantly admires them, aches to befriend them.

Upon docking, a simply dressed but authoritatively mannered figure, surrounded by a swell of stalwart males, all exuberantly dressed—flamboyant in colors with bright hues and dark, ebony shades that mix in geometric patterns unknown, near unimaginable to Frak—all stalwart in height and muscle and bearing, they stand unarmed but evincing fearless strength—this greeter raises his voice and with a disarming cadence announces to his people that “King Benjamin” has invited “these angels” to his court.

As all start to process together, something unusual happens to Frak, only him, not the others. He is arrested by a smell, a sniff, an inhale which comes to him in *Greeting!*...comes and flushes him as the drug *gom* does but not with its blackout and numbing, no, Frak is Greeted as if with a kiss—the beckoning kiss of a lover...not as he has known in sexual embrace but as he has observed the rose beckoning the bee.

In court, upon first sight, King Benjamin rises from his throne and without hesitation, somewhat eagerly, walks towards them. His are kingly unfaltering strides—strong and muscular. Strides which are an aspect of flight...flight and light, for King Benjamin is robed by a brilliance of cloth, a cloak more like a cloud, a cloud more like a bursting forth of a waterfall catching one unawares—King Benjamin is a brilliance of luminosity, a throb of alabaster light—a glow laced with pulses of blue and yellow and grey, these vibrating as he walks, these a soothing delight to the eyes, a fascination, a manifestation which all in all is not so much blinding as overpowering—again, waterfall and waves cresting upon one’s eyes—*hypnotizing* . Yes, the King is a sight, a presence, a gasp and gulp within their being never before encountered—an enchantment of a sacral presence, so is King Benjamin.

King Benjamin strides right up to Brok, locks forearms with him and searches near eyeball to eyeball for an intense moment, then clasps him with arms straight-out, his muscular hands clamping Brok’s shoulders...clasps and grasps and shouts, “Welcome! Angel on High.” A great shout of joy thunders and rolls as these words are spoken.

Staggered, baffled, amazed—only Frak silently chuckles and is amused. King Benjamin leads Brok to a seat beside his throne, all the time uttering “Welcome!” time and again as they cross the hall together. Once seated the King has his Wizards—the only way Brok can understand their role—these wizards set before him a golden plate.

King Benjamin leans forward and reads, speaks in words which neither Brok nor Frak understand but which cause the people to sigh and exhale in adoration—*Glory be!*

The King says to Brok, “I remember you.” Brok is now yet more bewildered than ever. His instincts are to reach for his dagger and slay the king—to kill the king and so scatter his people— *Brok is King Slayer!*...but Frak steps to his side and whispers, “Something on this golden plate describes you.” This only further confounds and dismays Brok.

As the King curiously gazes upon Brok’s head so Frak interprets, “Your fiery hair. They believe you have been here before.”

And so it is. For King Benjamin smiles broadly and contentedly—not betraying one aspect of fear or giving in to any warrior trained intuitions about the evil intent of these strangers—he smiles and touches the fringe of Brok’s flocking curls.

“The fire of the Angel on High!”

The Nephi shout with words of praise and celebration.

The rest of the day and night is spent in pleased conversation, in feasting and in uninhibited sensual indulgence.

While Frak knows that certain Wizards, like Brok and now himself, can read magical and ancient documents—look at sacred lines and drawings and interpret them—what astounds him about the Nephi is that they write everything down on tablets—*everything*...even claiming that they have tablets which tell about how the world was created, where people came from, and what God’s Will for all is. Frak knows from his vision that they do not call their queer God “Father.” All of this—the fact of writing, the fact of their being ancient stories in writing, the fact that there was a God who was not Brok’s God, Our Father...all this pushes Frak into deep thought and meditation. That night, he lays in his bed but never sleeps. He is dreaming dreams more vivid and thundering and blistering than ever has he experienced amidst storms and the anger of the sea.

Within this dreaming it comes to Frak—as map making is the Father’s writing...equally amazing is that the writings of the Nephi are their God’s map!

Frak rises up, brain on fire, hands craving to draw...to draw the Nephi God’s map.

Thereafter, as Frak listens to the King’s conversation, in his mind such words transform into lines and images on a map.

In the morning, King Benjamin welcomes them to the new day and proclaims them “angel messengers” of God—not angel messenger of a queer God, but as of the Nephi’s God. King Benjamin labors with Brok, and he soon understands—Frak sees maps drawing themselves before his eyes—all understand that the Nephi God is also a father, but a father named in words and sounds which neither Brok nor Frak have ever before heard: *Yahweh, Eloihim, Messiah*.

Frak knows that there is power in these names, which King Benjamin stresses are “holy names,” so he commits them to eternal memory—drawing a map with each name.

Frak wonders whether the Nephi God is truly Our Father...or treacherously a demon god, a devil—*Dev!*—are all the names and titles they give to Him but lures to lead them astray, away from doing the Father’s Will? But he says nothing about this to Brok.

The tales King Benjamin recounts repeatedly reveal that in the land of the Nephi there is much harmony, but that there had once been much discord. Frak listens as the King swells in rhapsodic memory of his people's past. He tells of their journey in a ship bigger than any ship that was ever built...an "ark"—not so dissimilar to Brok's ship, but twenty-times larger—which sailed away from a far-far-far distant land that the ocean had consumed. A land which they no longer name because they hold it to be fallen into "sin"—sin which is a concept and a sound queer to Frak, and so he inquires.

King Benjamin stupefies Frak with the tale of Adam and Eve. He lays a great golden plate before him and recounts the story of a once perfect *Paradise* from which all have been expelled. An expulsion keyed upon the lying and deception of the female, named Eve. It was she, so Benjamin stated boldly and forthrightly, whom the Messiah was coming to redeem, to save, to finally "Restore to Perfection, again."

King Benjamin told Frak—for by this time, in the depth of deepest night, Brok has fallen asleep—he shares intimately and secretively solely with Frak...sharedsthis not by the will of himself, so he realizes, but by that of Yahweh...for this stranger, this Frak, has a secret which King Benjamin senses he also has to know...true, while Brok is the "angel on high" itias Frak who is the dreamer and the prophet— who has a new story, whom King Benjamin believes has a golden plate of his own...in this moment, King Benjamin shares "a terrible burden which Elohim has commanded be shared with you."

They withdraw from the King's room. King Benjamin leads Frak slowly down a curving and winding loop of steps into a subterranean chamber. Frak quietly follows with heart-shuddering trepidation, for caves carry only deeply suppressed but as deeply unsettling memories of Magx. Magx after days in "the belly of the moonless"—of him returning ashen in face, bleary-eyed and with hair matted and spots torn out, sections totally ripped out with scabs thick and clumpy. Magx—speechless and stumbling, to lie for days in the sun where Frak nursed him with meager draughts of water and mere crumbs and seeds...this all he could take until it was the moon which healed him, this Frak knew...until he was Magx again. Never to Frak did Magx say why or what the journey into the belly of the moonless was for.

At this moment, it is he, Frak, fear-gripped but step-by-step sinuously descending into a moonless belly, following a king, one who strides and steps with victorious confidence, holding

a torch on high, coiling down and down and down and around and across and under an arch and then into a room that is two men high and three wide but not moonless, rather eerily flushed by a brilliant sunshine, no, not sunshine...no, not sunshine but it hurts like bright noonday blazing light in the hot season...every area of his head hurts—eyes which have nothing else but sun words with which to describe this light, this which is light but not light...fiery, but not burning hot...heavy blanketing as if almost watery, more a presence as if a light alive, this brightness...but it is the stones which stop him, shut him down, throw a darkness over his brain—no words, no images, for the source of the brightness is a flurry of light-bolts striking forth from two stones—stones set in a shiny silver breastplate bigger and thicker and of such substance that Frak sees himself falling down onto his knees and from his knees full prone, stretched out onto the floor, there without words but with fists beating the ground, hammering the ground, thumping the ground...King Benjamin laughs heartily but sympathetically at Frak's profound misunderstanding...he knows it is pure and stark fear that grinds Frak...knows that of all feelings fear is not the most powerful one bestowed by the Urim and Thummin.

The stones—the King points and names them, “Urim and Thummin”—are so alive that Frak sees them even though he has buried his eyes as far back into the darkness of his skull as his muscles and sheer will enable him. *Lo! It is not Frak who peers but the stones that peer through him!*

The peering sunlight of these marvels flare into his soul and brighten his mind with the ferocity which the ship's dragon eye-stones engender upon savages and barbarians...an image he now knows in this instant of revealing light is false—that the ship's dragon's eyes are false stones, because these, *these*...he stands, rises without effort, is beside King Benjamin...suddenly *Awake!*—Frak starts to giggle, then choke-laugh, then bursts out into a hard belly laugh...being consumed by laughter, from barely a squeak into a snorting guffaw into a shrieking high-pitched tone of ecstatic raucous screech...delight, furious delight, maddening delight...a flurry and flutter of mirth and merry which finally erupts into a yipping, giggling, feet jiggling and hopping laughter of his full body—it is the merriment of one enjoying a hearty and pleasurable joke...sheer foolishness, with an old friend.

King Benjamin picks up the breastplate by slipping his arms through its thongs. He holds it, poises as a proud warrior would before the start of battle—lifts it high above his head ...the

room they are in is transfigured. Like a field of firepots all fired at once, so is the room peopled with an uncountable number, all in flowing white raiments, all with an astral glow about their faces, all speaking but not in words, only in heart expressions...they are all one with Frak, he is with them...they are legion, Frak is legion—all turn towards King Benjamin, he who is now not seen, who has become invisible—one with the Urim and Thummin...its power as oracle, so is a deep sight given to Frak—he peers beyond peering into a distance...a far-vision, sighting a land of hills and thick forests, a landscape which opens before him as the brilliant lights guide him, lights as bright as the hot lands' sun but shadowing nothing in their brilliance...there walks Frak and as he walks he is aware of others beside him, not persons he can see but he knows that he is not alone, that all are walking towards a moment of great promise...*Behold!* There is a young man praying, kneeling, absorbed in prayer...his soul speaks out clearly: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not, and it shall be given to him.” This is the soul message, its imploration, its confession...it is answered by one descending—a winged creature from out the stars—from one above who blesses him and rights him up and guides him to where wisdom itself is speaking—words coming as if from the inside the Earth...*Behold!* A set of golden plates were about them...speaking—in a singsong, with a lilting chant, a sound of such sweetness that Frak imagines the tones as birds, flocks of birds landing in a field to eat the wild grain...all this a soothing noise, a rhythm, a beating in his own heart, until it is only his heart...his heart beating—Frak alone, not even the King about, not even the Urim and Thummin, just himself...Frak peers and sees—*Awake!* The man to whom the stones have spoken is him!

How they returned to the King's throne room Frak never ever cares to discern. It was just one moment in eternal rapture and the next waking amidst a nest of pillows and shawls and flower scents and the soft murmur of those ambling about. The King peers at Frak's eyes, they engage, both smile—it is a bond, the confirmation of a bond—a smile more than happiness, rather that which joins two souls beyond sadness and joy.

The King does not ask Frak to speak...Frak knew that he wouldn't, more, that he, himself, did not have an urge to so query or confess.

All—Nephi and Brok's troops—see but are dumb of tongue, unable to describe or understand the nature of the amazing dress which Frak now wears. No longer black. No longer

his boxed hat. He, now, almost like the king...Frak in simple but luminous white raiment...a simple smooth unadorned band of gold circling his head. As he is now to be, so forever.

Without doubt, Frak knows that he must soon be on his way—that in so many ways his voyage is just beginning. He looks towards the King for his cue...no longer does he look at Brok nor wonder or worry about what Brok is doing.

The next day, King Benjamin takes Frak aside and speaks, as if to a son, of “The Final Day”—shares with him “a revelation known only to the Saints”—the revelation of a special day when the Earth will be left behind...when the Nephi will sail upwards into the sky as once they had sailed down from amid the far-reaching stars...the King halts...his face is cold and blanched, as if life itself has left his body...rapture...so does Frak slip into this kingly rapture and *Behold!* unfurled before them is the map—the map of the *Nephi Restored to Perfection!*

Inspired by this vision, Frak darts past the entranced king...in his room he wildly tears at his bedding and rifles through all his belongings...throwing and tossing all about until he finds his virgin map rolls and his bag of drawing tools. Frak sits at a table and draws and draws...sketches and erases...a design begins to form...Frak is this drawing, it is his body drawing, all the energies from his body, mind and soul merge to serve as brush for the drawing of this Nephi map.

Done! The map is more wondrous than Darlm’s shawl! Thoughts of her, images of her have been so long absent that Frak images her shawl but does not sound her name.

Balls of fire! Swirling, cavorting, careening, spinning and spiraling...so is Frak fabulously seeing as Our Father sees.

For untold hours—past Brok’s waking and his leaving to have breakfast, his exiting the room as if nothing unusual was happening—for these hours Frak sits with and takes King Benjamin on his far-peering voyage, foreshadowing the Nephi’s return to Perfection.

He unfurls the map and the King becomes his visionary companion, again.

Behold! The balls of fire are revealed to King Benjamin as where the Nephi are to go on The Final Day. As Frak fingers the map so does the drawing speak to King Benjamin...he never once doubting that the God of Frak is his godly Father—Yahweh and Messiah...he sighs, *Maranatha!*

When this flash of shared revelation expires, so does Frak suddenly jolt...staggers jerkily back from his imaginative voyage. Within this visually trifling step he and King Benjamin are shaken and thrown to the ground by a mighty wind which rushes into the room—a muscular, slapping, rattling wind which trashes the room and spins everything into a sucking, death-rattling whirlwind...all within a flash, a moment shared only by Frak and the King.

Upon its ebbing, both rise. There before them is Frak's map, now glowing as a golden plate with a carved inscription: *Restored to Perfection*.

Frak is inspired, elated, raised to the highest level of mystical and magical fullness that he has ever experienced. He scarcely has words for King Benjamin. Yet, the two have nothing but words—soundless words, imaged words, words of a secret language and a feeling...bonding words, like neither has ever felt before.

Both know that Our Father has been present, is present, will continue to be present with them...that they are fulfilling His Will.

As Frak thinks so King Benjamin hears and in Frak's mind appears the Urim and Thummin...they speak through Frak's voice, "Know that the females are to submit to the serpent." Here he discloses a truth which King Benjamin upon grasping swears to lock and inter within his heart...swearing and pledging to promulgate it in secret only to the chosen sons—the Nephi Children of Light...henceforth "Know that the serpent is the cock. That the female is to submit to the cock and to flower with children—with male sons—until she is exhausted and disappears like the husk from the corn."

King Benjamin pauses to ponder the strange revelations of this blessed messenger come from out the sea...this one he knows now to be so much more than a prophet, who is—*Somehow!*—one carrying the sacred seed—a true son of Adam and so mighty a son of the Almighty Father...but *Behold!* not as from the past as from the future. *Praise be to Our Father!*

The King now understands fully what Brok does but slightly, that Frak is a High Priest—one who is in his flesh the presence of Our Father...Yahweh, Elohim, Adonai,...Messiah, Christ..*Creator!*

Shaken, humbled, amazed at all he has yet to know of Our Father, so is King Benjamin. Yet, what to make of this new insight, this actual novel revelation? Have not his people already

venerated women? Haven't they rightly kept their women as obedient? Subservient to their fathers and grandfathers, to their husbands and even their sons? What new message from Our Father is it that the High Priest Frak is revealing?

“Know that the woman is useful for the body...gloriously bountiful as son-bearer. That she is on this star to become the Earth, and from this Earth shall rise souls to fill the other stars. Know that she can be called Queen, that she can be called Beloved, that she can be called Sweet Honey of Heart, but know that this is but the veil we draw upon her. For the truth which awaits you, which awaits all of us, is that when the Ark departs on The Final Day all women will remain on Earth.”

Frak continues, “For as with Adam, so from his rib is she born...flesh of his flesh, bone of his bone—all made from him by Him. *Behold!* She is not an eternal soul. She is a fleshly soul. An Earthly soul. A soul who cannot live, cannot breathe without the male, who is Perfected only by the male...spiritually is Perfected only *within* the male.”

Then, Frak concludes with a final revelation that totally destroys all that King Benjamin thought he has known about Our Father... “*Behold!* There is the Father. *Only* the Father. So it is. So it shall be in The Final Day when the Nephi shall be Restored to Perfection. Ponder and reflect upon this.”

Shortly after sharing this revelatory exposition with the King, Frak seeks out Brok, urges and cajoles him to hurriedly gather the crew and swiftly depart this land. He reveals that the Nephi are a special people...more special than even Brok had once understood, that they are queerly chosen sons of the Father...but ones he should flee. He urges, presses Brok—coming finally to explain as best he can that he has had a vision—a vision of the Nephi's vision...that he has seen that they will rise to fill the land, not only this land of their exile but the whole Earth: “*Replenish!*” echoes...that once they have filled the Earth that they will sail in ships to the stars and fill the stars...and all people remaining on, and the Earth itself, will be destroyed through storms of fire.

Brok is mystified, confounded, perplexed...even annoyed at Frak. He has coveted several wives of King Benjamin...has taken a fancy to the jewels in his crown...has lusted after the strong potent liquid in their gourds, whose drinking made the day, all day, a dreaming day—not numbed and sleepy like *gom*. Unlike Frak, Brok is ready to strike and rout...but he greatly fears

Frak's vision and so resigns himself to leave without booty—"I bow to Our Father's High Priest's wisdom!"

Just as Brok makes this decision, his eyes start to play tricks on him, so it seems to him...for as he looks about the land he so covets, it—for one shuddering, shimmering moment—becomes not as a land of plenty and bustle, but a land of dryness, parched, a land without water...land deserted and barren—where even the water is salty...a land of great thirst...as he rubs his eyes and shakes his head to look once again, so has this strange moment passed. He turns and bows deeply in respect to the High Priest.

As if reading his mind—which Frak can—Broke hears the admonition, "These are a blessed *gen*. People of a most powerful dream. It is not right for us to take away from them *anything*. So Our Father Wills."

Brok and the crew angrily, but in collective silence, comply with Frak's command. Sensing their resistance, to calm them down, to control them, Frak promises them great enjoyments of the flesh before they depart. As agreed with King Benjamin, no pleasures of his kingdom are withheld—he offers succulent meats, sweet fruits, tangy and tasty plants...the pleasures of his women—all, each and any, not restricted as to age, but as each man desires...girls who appear as the King snaps his fingers—flower girls, giggling, with gardens not yet hoed...older women, unto deep sunset, ladies of great marvel whose tongues twitter with bird-magic. *Ah!* hard cocks and fumbling hands fly to them...unleash in an orgy of ravenous delight...for the crew is narcotically seduced...pleasured in the flesh with touches, licks, nibbling frenzies...as they embrace, as they coupled, as they take these females, so do they comingle their seed, physical and spiritual, with the Nephi.

King Benjamin has all along planned for this sexually bonding ritual. It is his way of bringing them into his tribe, his family, making them *kin*...as with but a few others, for Frak the bonding was through the robust pleasures of a young male.

"A robust young male," so the King subtly whispers, "As on The Final Day." Frak is perplexed—but he quickly reads King Benjamin's eyes and knows that this is what the King has so clearly and shockingly seen when he peered upon the map of the *Nephi Restored to Perfection*.

This young male is a special gift from King Benjamin...one he confides to Frak is of the “joys to come” as it had been of the “joys before the Fall from the Garden.” The King places the clasped hands of the boy into Frak’s accepting hands...then gifts him with a thickly rolled parchment scroll. Frak does not have to ask or guess, he knows that it is a copy of the now golden plated map of the Nephi.

Although Frak has pleased with Jerd, and grown in wisdom by submitting through coupling with him, what he experiences as the *robust pleasures* of this male is a flight beyond imagination which mightily transforms him. Upon savoring the pleasures of this youth, a stunning and delightful shift occurs within Frak’s mind. From this time forward Frak continually hears Our Father’s voice inside his own head...endless words and sentences and images and detailed conversations with Our Father—as such does he understand how he came to see the curves, to grasp their power. He was simply listening to Our Father. So does this blessed and enchanting man-child enable Frak to see. To robustly see that his male body *is* the map of Our Father. To explore it is the way to discern the full details of the map of The Final Day. That within coupled embrace with this precious youth that he will be able to properly design and interpret their final voyage to the far-away land of the *Nephi Restored to Perfection!*

Amazed is Frak because through this young male’s submitting—not as Jerd had submitted—he hears Our Father reveal to him that it is for *Frak himself to be now submitted!* Submitting himself to realize that he has never before submitted himself, not submitted as one *accepting*—as this male accepts Frak...accepts him as a female opens to receive him...with yearning...all in Frak’s mind is flowing with images unimaginable at any time ever before in his life...his mind flows his body flows—Frak’s body becomes this other male’s body...merges, melts into, meshes, unites. *Awake!* As this other submits Frak...not as a prodding submission, no, as an accepting submission...he realizes—is stabbed through the heart by this realization—that the cock which is his is not his but is this other’s whose cock is not his but Frak’s—they are truly and totally and passionately and in wild frenzy orgasmically and insanely each one the other—*robustly.*

With the silent speech of the heart each whispers, “My beloved!”

Their mutual and interpenetrating submission...submission of flesh and spirit, of desire and will, of all that is and all that is not—this submission is that dream state which King

Benjamin has revealed to Frak, into which he has taken Frak as he spoke about how Adam had been laid down by Our Father into a dreamy state such that she, the female, Eve could be created. *Behold!* From out of the embrace of male beloveds is created...created, not born...the female, women—Her.

So blessed is Frak by this revelation from Our Father. As such has he for the first time ever ritually partaken through this embrace of his beloved of the depthless mystery of the *Male Restored to Perfection*...of Adam Restored to Perfection...this the profoundest insight of King Benjamin and of their same God, Our Father—that the perfected male has within, *all* the robust powers of life—giving and dreaming.

Upon the next morning the crew wakes to find itself anchored off a barren coast of hot dry land. There is not a jot of memory, not a tinkle of sound among them about the Nephi. Nor does Brok do other than bark customary captaining commands to set sail and continue to search out the shore for a more promising land to raid.

But it is otherwise for Frak. From this blessed shore so does he leave...departs, notably, with a vision and a precious treasure...not however with the robust youth but a treasure of insight and revelation...as Frak steps back onto the ship, he calls for and beckons Jerd—whom he found upon his re-entry into the boat, patiently and with a smile of welcome, standing just outside Frak's cabin...he, there as if just recently delivered from the stars...he, Frak's treasure—his *robust* gift from God, Our Father...the precious Jerd, there in all his youthful sweetness and innocence of eye...they enact the ritual of Thanksgiving as he now hears Our Father direct...without a Sacrifice of a captured one...no, it is to be a ritual of preciousness, of celebration of two beloveds...as they embrace, couple, commune—*Awake* Jerd is he of whom King Benjamin spoke—the Messiah, the Perfect Male—the person sent by Our Father who redeems the male from the sin of the female as he opens in robust and precious embrace to his beloved and to become beloved.

As all this happens, Frak does not pause to question...does not pause a heartbeat...not hesitate one flinch to grab Jerd's hand...Frak moving as a man possessed....snatches Jerd by a fold in his robe and quickly spirits him away. Takes him in, quickly disrobes him and sheds his own clothes...as quickly presses Jerd's shoulders so that he kneels. Kneels and takes unto himself the rod—now, *Rod of Our Father*—as King Benjamin has proclaimed that the map so revealed

to him. Took into his mouth the rod of Frak—and in the taking transforms it into a sacred rod: *holy*—the rod which is the sword and spear, the power and the presence of Our Father, Himself. Then, through his High Priestly far-seeing, Frak *robustly* accepts Jerd's body by submitting his own. But, again, not bodies prodded, rather pierced—two bodies but one...robustly throbbing such that the distinct images of male and female are no more...will never be again.

Through this most strangely queer embrace—where each has submitted the other—so is Frak *Restored to Perfection* and fully anointed as High Priest...not just wizard but as One with the Father...not a servant but as true Son...flesh of His flesh, soul of His soul—by Jerd's perfect act of robust submission so is severed the ancient bond of earth and sky, so is hacked asunder the bond of moon and sun, so is shattered once and for all and forever the creating lust of male for female...all this effected through their robust submitting...all as the map of the *Nephi Restored to Perfection* foretold.

So commences the last leg of the voyage which will sail off on The Final Day into the stars beyond the stars, the heavens beyond the heavens...the voyage Frak knows as the perfect Will of Our Father.

CHAPTER 7

The time with the Nephi elevates Frak to a dimension of knowing and sensing which brings with it a high degree of self-awareness. However, if it wasn't for the copy of the Nephi map which he holds in his hands right now, he himself might not have believed that all that happened has actually occurred. Brok seems to have some inkling that something profoundly amazing did happen, yet Frak senses that Brok is only remembering what he knows about the Nephi through the secret whispers of his clan wizards and fathers. A bit unnerving, since their return to the ship, it is clear to Frak that Brok has been eyeing him in an odd manner...cagey sideway glances, ones that seem to be not simply acts of observation but of detection—glances that spy upon. *Aha!* Brok as a spy...watching him as if Frak has something he wants not just to share but to steal. *Is Brok waiting for me to slip up?*

Frak is not affected by the crew's collective forgetfulness, its ignorance, its emptiness. No, he knows that they will be sailing *back*. Just like that, Frak hears *sailing back!* as he taps into their collective thinking...draws a map detailing the route. This happens in the same manner as he drew the map once the bay of the Nephi had appeared in a flash—like a mirage and then a mirage turning into reality.

Frak is mildly amused as he realizes that only he and Brok yet know that the world they live in is round, like a goblet, and that they are sailing back simply and only because they are sailing forward. *Forward is backwards!* a gem of High Priest wisdom Frak does not share with the crew. So, on this day, he clearly grasps that this voyage—Brok's voyage—is ending...that he and the crew are sailing back to the exact spot where Frak had been picked up.

What is Brok trying to find? The Nephi map? Something else?

It is just past the first moon since they left the enchanted bay, maybe a day more, maybe three, when Frak discerns and uncovers what Brok's furtive eyes have sought—sought to hide, conceal—the two Nephi women!

“Come out!” Frak commands.

The crew stops in mid-breath upon the command.

There is not another command, just the thump of a sudden silence.

Upon his ledge, Brok sits, eyes closed, like the Sphinx in the land of camels.

Frak finally knows what Brok is blindly seeking to know—whether Frak can peer inside his soul! *He does!*

“Come out!” Echoing.

This time, as if conjured, two immaculately snow-skinned and bright-blue-eye-stunning beauties appear on the threshold of Brok’s room. Raven hair loose upon the air like soaring crows. Eyes whose fiery glances couch the depthlessness of the azure dazzle sparkling from their eyes...whose flesh was the fragrance, here, of betrayal. These so diaphanously dressed that even Frak has to look twice to believe his own eyes.

Each steps forward a pace and places a hand upon Brok’s shoulder.

A collective gasp—audible and seething with bewilderment and flashing lust—rushes amok, loosed by the crew.

Frak’s arm—extending into a commanding gesture, mid-finger pointing—motions them to stand aside from Brok. Each steps back and moves sideways as Frak directs.

If Frak has expected otherwise—which he hasn’t—he might have been stupefied by how these creatures—who clearly have not seen the light of day for some time—do not blink or shield their eyes from the midday sun, no, he is not stupefied because he knows who they are, knows what power they possess—only he sights the telltale cerulean glint in their eyes, that clear sign of a Nephi. *Alas!* Here are two of the younger wives of King Benjamin.

“Look!” Frak commands and Brok opens his eyes... bolts open and are immediately stabbed by Frak’s.

Wizard and warrior that he is, Brok stands up proudly and regally, to all eyes fearless before Frak.

“It is my right!”

Frak knows that there is nothing else to be heard. He judges and sentences as only a High Priest has right and authority to do.

What would the crew remember? *Nothing.* Nothing in terms of what would actually happen. Theirs will be but the collective dream memory which Frak lets them have. They will not remember in image but only recall as to presence...recall when with women, when with them

in the moment of their deepest lust, recall the feeling...the repulsive, disgusting, vomiting feeling which binds all of them on this day, at this moment.

Brok draws himself most tall...pushes and pulls himself up on tiptoe while raising his arms, arcing them through half circles until they meet and press atop and amid his head—hands joined with arms pointing to the clouded realm of their Mighty Father—this the initiatory gesture with which Brok has always begun his incantations, his prayers, and his orations, benign and baleful.

“O, Our Father Almighty! I, your humble son, bring before you these treasures which I have bravely stolen from your enemy...the evil god of the Nephi. I pray you take them and make them your own.”

And before Frak can respond—but Frak knowing what Brok is about to do—so does Brok turn with a stealthily unsheathed dagger, one drawn craftily from a forearm scabbard, unsheathes and strikes at the women—on his right he slashes through her neck, blood spurting on all about...to his left, a thrust into a heart—no words, no gasps, no shrieks...they fall and die like bleatless lambs.

Brok pivots ocean-side and majestically intones, “Praise the Almighty Father”

“Praise the Almighty Father,” automatically and forcefully erupts from the crew’s collective heart.

Frak is unmoved; unbowed. Silent. A deathless silence.

A silence which is like a door. One which Frak opens with a passing of his High Priest right hand across his face—a motion which draws Brok to far-sight through this door.

Behold! Brok is in chains before the throne of King Benjamin. All about are the Nephi. Before Brok lay the slashed and stabbed bodies of the King’s two youngest wives...dotted with crimson, a spotting which curiously appears to all as a cruciform swath.

Woe! Unto the murderer who deliberately kills, for he shall die.

The High Priest is there. He bows to King Benjamin, directing him to proceed.

King Benjamin rises upon a great voice, intoning: “And Joshua said, *Why did you bring trouble upon us?* The Lord brings trouble on you today.”

With a sharp clap and crack of the High Priest's hands so does the room shiver and quake and a great light—the brilliance, the bright of the deeply coiled Urim and Thummim room—this lustrous light floods the throne room, ebbs and flows through the eyes of all about, and in this puissant light so do the murdered victims rise—soar as if small birds roused by the hunting hounds...quickly do they rise and stand beside Brok.

The High Priest nods...the King continues.

Woe! Unto them who commit whoredoms, for they shall be thrust down into hell.

With fingers that are now razor sharp blades the women slice Brok's clothes such that he is naked.

With hands which are sizzling, searing red hot coals they grasp—one his chest upon his heart...the other cups his genitals.

With mouths which glitter with diamonded teeth they kiss him—drill deeply...one cores upon his nape...the other shreds upon his lips and cheeks.

All this in one flared moment releases the devouring fire of Brok's transformation...he is now all which he *never* wanted to be—he is their booty, he is their captive, he is the pleasure to be wantonly discarded after he is ravaged by these women—she devils, demons, *Dev!*—who with every thought and desire of perverse pleasure start upon him...his eyes are sucked out through his mouth...his heart is cut loose from his chest...his cock and balls are culled and roasted till burnt embers—all and each act delivers to him all the dark pleasures those he has slain have felt, all the perverse pleasures of those who have felt his sword up their anus, of their cunts crammed with pitchblende sticks set afire...for these two women make real within his being all that he has sought to give to his God, to Our Father through Thanksgiving and Sacrifice. “It is fitting and just!” so the High Priest intones and adjudges—*it is fitting and just* that all which Brok has imagined pleasures Our Father, so is he pleased with.

Languorously, it ends...his bodily parts are strewn all around...his sucked out eyes, his burnt genitals, his flaccid and shriveling heart...lying about and covered with slices and gouges of flesh—bone and skin, muscle and sinew, which these women of his once booty continue to slice and gouge—this a ritual cutting, a liturgical enactment...the breaking of his bones, the grinding of flesh and blood and bone—a commingling...so it ends...all of which they thrust up

into the air, the gore of which they dab upon sticks and bless Brok's remains...these sacred actions are like unto those Brok had revealed to the crew that Our Father cherishes as blessings upon Him.

Thus does it end—*And all stoned him with stones; they burned him with fire, and stoned him with stones. Then the Lord turned from His burning anger.*

It ends but it is the beginning...Frak grasps that the Nephi have yet to reveal to him all that is to be revealed. That, truly, he is to return but to yet wait...patiently wait for a Latter Day, a later time of fuller revelation.

Ascension. It is all but a flash and an enchantment—this is how the crew tells the tale of Brok's blissful ascension to be with Our Father. A story about how Brok suddenly stands bolt upright and in the grasp of a rapture...of a moment of sublime ecstasy and visitation by Our Father... he, Brok, Wizard, chosen son, Servant...is drawn up into the clouds...ascending, evaporating in a flash of blinding light...within a crash and a boom like waves battering the ship in a fierce typhoon...so is how they remember Brok...so does Frak sanction this version of the telling—for it is not for them to remember, nor to understand. Only his...only the High Priest's.

Only Frak's to voyage back—to return home.

Only the High Priest's duty to bear and guard, secure the fantastic map of the Nephi—their sacred map of *Restored to Perfection*—guard the unimaginable...only his to offer this map and their vision to the greater world...which he now knows from his world-circling voyage is all around him.

CHAPTER 8

Home.

Frak jerks awake as if from a frightful dream...soon calmed by his rising awareness that he is...*Home*. Just as Jerd had come to him in a flash, one moment turning and there he was, so does the word *home*...memories flood him like standing under a waterfall...more, he can smell *home*...a fragrance, one seductive—florally sweet. “Happy and smiling”...his memories turn to reality as he looks about at the land and the faces...remembering his *kin* and his feeling one with the land as *happy and smiling*.

Yet, not everyone is smiling nor happy...for here also arrives *Frak*—High Priest.

Frak watches *Frak* cup his hands. Watches his eyes moon about and his jaw slacken and a deep inhale pound the sails of his chest...knows that he has traveled a great distance only to come back to this shore. It is a shore he had left, yearning to return....but not so for *Frak*.

Frak now more than ever understands King Benjamin...far-sights as King Benjamin has peered...clearly grasping the revelation that this world is not *Home!*...is not even real... all a matter of dreams... all a ritual of dreaming.

It is *Frak* who cups his hands and in so cupping swells his heart with the felt knowledge that this is all that there is. *All*—it will wash over him, engulf him, penetrate his every fiber...he feels good—“happy and smiling.”

For *Frak*’s dream had been *back then* only about...*Darlm is the land*...the land upon which the moon shines. She a moon child and a moon goddess and a moon mother, but only as she is also Earth, the dirt land—all that kisses the wet.

Brok has shared that same dream, so for him all victory would be simply take away. Which, as *Frak* knows, is just the simple act of moving land—things and pieces and stuff from one place to another. It is a take away which merely takes away to another spot, another land...this place called *home*.

Frak knows that only he has the map to the true home...it is skyward...out up there...beyond the Earth...beyond the moon...beyond the stars. And the map which will take them there...all people, *kin* and *gen*, this home was “X” on the map of the *Nephi Restored to Perfection*. To sail towards that home *Frak* knows that *Frak*’s land must be destroyed.

Frak monitors *Frak*. It is rightly queer that *Frak* cannot watch *Frak* watching. Maybe this is all that *Frak* can do—be within his own small world. His own paltry dream. For as *he* watches *he* sees *Frak*'s dream. Of his return to Darlm. Of his exuberant and hip-hop and skip and kick-the-dirt over-excited run and bounce and throwing his arms around her, she as startled as a doe as the bush limb cracks...there, Darlm—*Frak* infuses her with all of his ardor...picks her up, swings her off her feet, lifts her into his arms...strides slowly and methodically and unstoppably to his lodge. Not pausing to touch and infuse himself with the potency of the *harj* bear skull, just assuming its blessing, the rightness of it identifying his lodge. Inside—there for their dream to commence, once again. The dream of lovers. Of the Earth and the Moon.

Hovering in the background *Frak* senses Magx and Lon; shades.

All about them *he* hears the voices of *Frak*'s *kin*, chattering and shouting and whispering among themselves—mystified, baffled, astonished and fascinated. It is their *Frak* come home. He whom they had long ago given up for dead. But here, what *he* now knows to be seven years, but which *Frak* counts only as uncountable moons...marking them simply against the gray strands in his beard...here *Frak* is now...and as he is *home*, so are all of them home—*happy and smiling*.

It is not something the *kin* could talk about or understand even if he tried to explain. *Frak* knows this...they will never...could not even...grasp the words Brok taught him. *Frak* knows, more, that one *Frak* is back home that he himself will soon forget how to speak sentences. Forget about the maps which are the Will of Our Father. Forget about the dreams of the Nephi. He, simply, will forget all...only to dream his voyage but as nightmare! Magx and Lon would have it no other way—they employ all their magic to erase his memory...thoughts and images which they knew were wicked, evil—*Dev!*

Frak's course of action is clear. *Frak* has to die—be Sacrificed.

Upon beaching, the High Priest *Frak* sets about destroying *Frak*'s dream. *He* steps upon the land...stomps, kicks, spits upon it—curses it. *He* curses it for it is a curse, this as revealed to him by the Nephi. It is just dirt, the dirt upon which Our Father spat to make man, and upon which the serpentine Deceiver was condemned to squiggle and squirm till the Final Day—the Latter Days.

Once more, *Frak* curses the land. With knee bent to the ground *he* fervidly and ardently prays to Our Father, imploring Him for His blessing...so that *he* may be courageous, that *he* may prove to be a worthy Son—a dutiful High Priest.

As *Frak* stands *he* finger-scrapes the sandy rock encrusted beach...lifts up clumps and holds open *his* palm in oblation, lifting up the land to Our Father.

“Thou shalt not have strange gods before Me.” And *he* casts away the demonic earth—*Mother Earth!*

It is then to them that *Frak* goes. Blowing into their lodge like a hurricane wind, slapping open and breaking the three-planked door...knocking down the *harj* bear skull—it cracks and splinters...stomping in with such a suddenness that *Frak* and *Darlm* are caught in the midst of a breath—it is his last...for *he* catches *Frak* by the nape and with a slash of an ivory-tusk blade slits his throat from side to side...there is stench and there is a gurgling, sucking sound...acting so swiftly, so fearsomely that *Darlm* has not blinked.

Then *Frak* is gone.

Within two screeches, *Magx* is standing inside the hutch—frozen; shocked. It is the disbelief of the blasphemed...of the sight of desecration...of the feeling of desolation.

For what was *Frak* all these years but the mighty warrior-of-the-wet in *Magx*'s story of how the moon had come and taken him into the *big big harj shad wet* so that *Frak* would become the next *Wiz*?

What is *Frak* but all that *Magx*'s dream could be?

He never doubted that *Frak* would return.

He had dreamed dreams and seen visions. Not that he understood all, but he knew that *Frak* was becoming a powerful *Wiz*. A *Wiz* endowed with the *wet*'s magical and powerful *grok*.

Now?

Slain by the moon—*How could this be? How can this be?*

Darlm is *Lon*'s daughter. All three have waited, anticipating *Frak*'s return.

Frak's absence has been the bond of the *kin*, near and far. The story, the special story, told to all passing *gen*.

Frak, *Wiz of the Great Wet*.

Slain by the m-o-o-o-n—Darlm!

Frak walks up the beach towards the village. *He* knows well all the changes the years have brought without asking. It is as Our Father Wills...that *he* have this clear and complete knowledge of the past as well as the future. The *kin* is now a village clan...a permanent gathering. People who do not roam about...this is good.

His dress, *he* knows, fascinates them—with a tinge of a mighty fierceness.

In *his* eyes *he* carries the death of this once Frak. As *he* looks at each creature *he* meets—man, woman, child, goat, pig, friend, stranger, old, young...*he* peers and within a blink conveys the new story: “There is no God but Our Father—Praise, Yahweh!”

Frak speaks to their collective mind, without words, of Yahweh, Elohim, and of the Messiah and Christ.

Yahweh is Our Father—Frak stands before them and scrapes all tattoos of *kin* and *gen* off *his* body...bleeds before them...washes *himself*, binds *his* wounds, then kneels and prostrates *himself*—not towards the Sun, not towards the Moon... *he* is humbled—they are baffled...“Yahweh is my strength,” *he* proclaims...shouts, spitting dust as he yells. “His enemies are my enemies,” *he* utters as *he* rises and stands before them. “There is no God but Yahweh who is Our Father.”

Darlm rushes to greet *Frak*, picks up the hem of her skirt and plunges through the air towards *him*. All this after overcoming the shock of seeing *him*. Not just *his* new dress, *his* odd luminous clothes, but of *his* presence. She felt *him* coming for a long time. Beyond the recent moons...but she is still rocked when *Frak's* eyes become her true eyes.

Frak flaps and flares open his robe—arms wide and cloth flapping like sails in a vigorous breeze. She comes to *him*. *He* swallows her—to all about she disappears.

But then she reappears...and so to their mere senses is Frak/*Frak* truly there—at home.

Darlm takes *Frak* to her house—brand new—fresh smelling timbers. Pulls open the hinged doorway. Steps in behind and tosses thick pillows onto the bed: *theirs*—four posted, large with a feather soft mattress and rolls of blankets. There where she wants *him* to recline. And so *he* does. And so Darlm serves *him*. Some strong herbal brew. Some sweets. A freshly cooked side of rabbit.

Frak reads her desire. Hears her dreaming aloud in the silence of her wakefulness.

It is a power *he* has long ago ceased to parse or ponder.

He sees her full-bellied with babies. Many babies. *He* sees himself in the field pressing the plow behind a trice of horses.

He sees her full-faced as the Moon.

Peers and sees her seeing him and being Mother Goddess and so *he* Father God.

Kill her!

Our Father commands.

It is she who still talks with the serpent. The serpent who crawls the Earth. Who is the Earth. It is the serpent whom she worships as her own body. Kill her!

Magx enters, drawn here by a dream.

Magx who looks at *Frak* and is dead-frightened in his tracks.

Looks at *Frak* but *Frak* does not look at him. Not engage his eyes.

Magx sees Darlm shining like the moon. The room is bathed in her presence.

“Why then,” they ask, “did she kill him?”

Why did she seduce the old Wiz and cut his throat?

Why did she slice off his genitals and stuff them in his mouth?

Why did she do this and then say she did it because she loves Frak?

Why did Frak protect her?

“Flesh of my flesh. Bone of my bone.”

They still hear *Frak's* incantation.

Mystical words which move them to unusual dreams.

Dreams which only the men share with *Frak*.

Dreams which *Frak* teaches them to ritualize.

New word for their women—"Wife."

New status for their women—"Possession."

New power for the men—"Dominion."

Frak's dream is vivid to them in daylight and moonlight. So vivid that there ceases to be moonlight.

For *he* dreams with them and for them the dream of the chosen son, not the sun.

Of the far-away heaven, not of the dirty Earth.

Of the future, not of the present nor the past.

Of a Latter Day...The Final Day.

Frak speaks to them of the world as exile.

Of all which has to be dominated—has to be conquered.

He speaks of the Chosen People and the not-Chosen Enemy—Satan's children, sinful children—*Dev Dev Dev!*

Frak dreamssd for them the design of ships. The play of the sails. The thundering heart of the in-your-throat excitement of submitting. Not to *his* ritual embrace of Jerd. No, that *Frak* keeps as sacred truth for the special few—those who will become High Priests like *himself*.

No, for them, submitting is to remain all about slaying....the ritual of Sacrifice.

Sacrifice—the destruction of strange lands. The slaying of people of strange tongues. Of people of the Old Ways—the ways which had been of Lon and Magx. Ways which the people

painfully will soon struggle to imagine in their minds...words which all want to forget—*moon words*.

Under *Frak's* spell, Darlm fully and absolutely submits to *him* and *he* prospers.

Many children do they have...children of children.

Never once, ever again, does Darlm leave *his* side. Nor venture outside *his* house.

Never once is she dressed but blackened...fully robed, totally shrouded, engulfed—her face not to be seen, for she is to be seen as only *his...Frak's alone*.

In the blink of an eye, all the other women follow Darlm's example—fully darkened and cloistered within their husband's homes.

Married. For their family to be, the women know it their sacred duty...Our Father's Will!...that they submit to their men—husbands, sons, brothers-in-law, grandfathers...submit fully and absolutely in body, mind, and soul.

His alone—Dominion!

So has *Frak* come where the map took him.

Come to a place *he* knows *he* once had known, but knows now that *he* only now truly knows.

Revealed—home as one stop on the map...a way station, a solitary port...from where and whence *Frak* will wait until the Latter Days...till The Final Day...then, to sail away through the final passage on his vOYAGE...so becoming —*Restored to Perfection*.

PART 2: DAGMAR

CHAPTER 9

Summis desiderantes affectibus... The opening words of the Papal *Bull* almost deafen Friar Otto as they roar and clang deep within his heart and soul—“Desiring with the most heartfelt anxiety...” He more than commiserated with the desires of Pope Innocent VII. Truly, this Age is being thrashed with heartfelt anxiety—*Witches!* He boldly proclaims within, “Merciful Father, surely this Age of Heartfelt Anxiety marks the End Time!”

“Desiring with the most heartfelt anxiety...” Friar Otto stands in the pulpit’s hold and repeats the *Bull*’s opening line, then leans, almost totters and falls, thunders it once again at them—*them*, there quivering, sitting with hands clasped, sweaty hands, hands fearful of all they had conjured so faithlessly, so blasphemously. *Verily*, he would give them to understand that it is *them*, they for whom the *Bull* is written—clerics all...bishops all...cardinals all, even for the Pope himself as standing for all Popes. Mere mortals all, who have not been yet fully wrenched by “the most heartfelt anxiety.” If they had, then the disaster of this time—“Women who bewitch!”—would not have become the plague of all Christendom. If all those who claimed that they were “faithful sons and daughters of the Church” were being deeply anxious, then they would act with heartfelt passion. “Burn the hags! Hang the heretics!” *Verily, them*. Here in 1488, near fifteen hundred years after the Savior, Himself, had swooned and expired in the grasp of a most heartfelt anxiety: “My God, my God why have you forsaken me?” *Ah*, always after preaching, Friar Otto is hacked to his knees by the image—*Holy Lord Savior of All, You who have Suffered for us, Suffered and Died and Expiated for our lack of heartfelt anxiety—have mercy on us!*

“Benedicamus Domino!” thumped on the door. *How many thumps?*

Groggily, Friar Otto grumbles, “Deo Gratias.” *Was it loud enough to be heard?*

There was not another thump.

Until the *Bull* awoke him—as if the Lord Himself had written this missive just for him—up to this time his fellow friars had known a quite different Friar Otto. Over the years, the other friars had grown accustomed to his swoons and collapses—the Prior assessing them as ecstatic raptures of one most devout. Others not so kindly, they waiting for the Friar to humble himself at

Culpa and confess his infatuation with the heart. That he has not so confessed in his near ten years in the Common Life, such just gave them to offer their own prayers that his frailty would be laid before the Lord. *Frailty*—assigned not to describe his body, for it was stout and thick and muscular, though lean and hard as all friarly bodies were from the Black Fasts...so often called for in these too worldly days of satanic temptations...but as to his frailty of soul. “Too much heart,” was once kindly said, and it was all that needed to be said. Not that these were like the monks of the Order of the Silent Ones but that they were not given—at least in brotherly discourse—to the dissecting and exploration of each other’s spiritual quest. No, for that, each had a Spiritual Director. But it has been so stated too often not to ring true—“Too much heart,” uttered as they gathered round, hovered over his motionless body. As voiced on yet another day when he had to be lifted half-frozen from the snow, almost a board, more like an oaken plank in a castle’s gate, as such did those think who had to lift him, six friars lifting. *Too much heart*. They all knew what was meant, that he sought the *mystical meanings*—in what most others were content to accept as literal, some as symbolic, few as did he, the anagogic. Blessing or curse, that was up to God’s knowing. Friar Otto was a mystical one. “Too much heart.”

Right from the start, during his novitiate year, Friar Otto, O.P.’s Spiritual Director was the Prior, himself. He who had accepted him into the Dominican Order at a young age, just twelve, after two other seasoned Directors examined and passed him along. Each expecting that the next one would confirm their decision—*Too much heart!*—and that the youthful postulant would best remain in the world. All knew of the material success of his extended family, the von Frakkens—burghers, professors, a few noble and political titles: a Baron here, an Elector there, even a Benedictine Abbott. More, that the family name took them back to the founding of Hannover, itself. Then, the personal factor the Prior had to weigh was that Frantz was the thirteenth child of his old friend who said, “This is my Otto!” The father not hiding his pride in giving his son a religious name in honor of the founder of the Holy Roman Empire. Thus, regardless of his peers’ advice, and somewhat modulated by his personal affections for the boy’s father, the Prior accepted Frantz and guided him during his novitiate year. Yet, he was again urged to release him before the Friar completed his Simple Vows, then also to be sent back into the world. But it was now near a full decade of Directing and Friar Otto has professed Solemn

Vows and been ordained a priest. Still, patiently, somewhat stoically, the Prior dutifully listens—is waiting....*waiting for?*

As a Director of many others friars—young and old—he admitted to himself that he—*mea culpa!*—had from the start *enjoyed* Friar Otto’s childlike simplicity. No, not just simplicity but his inexhaustible happiness (*eudaimonia*). It was this boundless mirth that continued to annoy his fellow friars who yet despair and disapprove.

“Too much heart. Will he ever stop...*smiling?!?*”

In this Age of Heartfelt Anxiety such childlike smiling was judged by many to be offensive, even heretical, especially by serious defenders of the faith such as the Order of Preachers who were specifically dedicated to wiping the wanton smiles off the faces of the sex crazed worshippers of the Great Deceiver—sorcerers all, besotted and loony males and females! It was against this characteristic of both his Order and the Age that Friar Otto, in friarly minds, offended, even sinned.

Instead of confessing about guilt-laden sins, the Friar would effuse about celebrating life! About, *Loving the world the Lord has given us!* Asking in humility *not* if he can be forgiven as a depraved sinner but, “Have I failed to rejoice deeply enough? Have I mortally sinned and failed to enjoy the world as God created it? *God saw that it was good!*” Given the antipodal qualities of this Friar’s soul, the Prior—*mea maxima culpa!*—had to admit that he looked forward to his spiritual guidance sessions, more, even welcomed the momentary relief they provided from the dreary, more soulfully disturbing sessions with other friars. For him it was almost a guilty pleasure, but he accepted that “It is my pastoral duty!” Nevertheless, he continually prayed for some divine intervention. “That this still youthful soul, although in body an adult, in heart still a child, dear Lord, open his heart to Your pain and suffering!”

It could be reasoned that it was this bit of illicit enjoyment which kept the Prior from terminating the Directing and ejecting the Friar. But more—as was his pastoral wisdom—he was waiting for his prayers to be answered...*for the masks to drop!* He knew, seasoned as he was, that both his own enjoyment and the Friar’s ebullience were just masks. For nothing of the joys of this Earth stood for anything but the misery for which such joys were merely devilish shadows. Resigned, he waited for his enjoyment to ebb and then for the friar to lay bare the misery of soul that hid behind his mask. This radical transformation is what he knew all Directing led to, had to become, because the Lord Himself came *not* to merely enjoy creation but to Suffer. More,

through suffering to restore the fallen world—*fallen creation!* The Lord Himself—*Suffering Servant!*—was the harbinger of the End Time and the coming of “a new heaven and a new earth.” For this cursed Earth is Satan’s realm and all souls are lost until the Suffering begins to purify and redeem them. *Via Crucis!*

Masks to drop. As such, the Prior knew that it must happen, had to, yet the Friar, now long among the shadows of the Priory, remained perpetually smiling!

Ah, the divine wisdom which flowed through the Prior’s concern—*masks.* Truly, the Friar is masked, but he has been masked for so long that even he falsely believes it is his actual face! *Satan works in perverse and mysterious ways!* How else could it be but that the friar’s bright smile be haloed by a depthless darkness? As such, heartfelt anxiety was traumatically interred in his soul—at the deepest depth of his being; ontologically. So anchored in sightless darkness that not even a living saint would have been able to detect or discern his struggle, his fate. The Prior had counseled many who had suffered physical traumas that left horrendous scars on minds and hearts: beatings and rapes, even mutilations, but nothing prepared him for what was soon to be found behind Friar Otto’s mask.

The mask of heartfelt anxiety. All in Friar Otto’s being and everyday life profoundly shifts on a clear and caressing summer day, an August Thursday, the day after his twenty-second birthday. It is a chance encounter. As he aimlessly strolls through town and lingers briefly outside the Prince’s chapel—*Chance!?* *The Devil, nay! Divine Providence*—not walking as with purpose, not going even anywhere in particular, just out on the street—*smiling.* He soon finds himself walking up the steps into the chapel and ambling somewhat robotically towards a door, one slightly ajar. *What was beckoning, luring him?*

God saw that it was good! the friar whispers, blessing himself, gazing upon, fascinated by—yet there echoed an unacknowledged question, *God saw that it was good?*—as before him is the *Birth of Venus.* So has he heard about this new painting. It was all the talk as the artist’s patron, Lorenzo Medici of Florence, Italy was visiting with the Prince. Although his trip was considered to be more about commerce than theology, the *Venus* was both esthetically praised and theologically condemned in conversations among both nobles and burghers. Friar Otto has seen a few startling paintings of Mary as young and beautiful. Ones that bordered on the sensual, which was more than a bit upsetting. Nevertheless, this “Botticelli”—almost a name that he finds himself unable to utter—causes black bile to curdle upon his lips, making him mockingly spit in

contempt. He hears himself silently utter the name, his lips moving, soundlessly as—*Awake!*—Friar Otto does see Her “there”—She, Goddess, Mother in numinous presence through Her daughter Venus. *Ah, tender of heart no more!* He does not fall to his knees, he does not sweat in his palms, he does not grind his teeth. No—*Hark!*—it is a moment of Liberation, of mystical flight, as if of a Vision Sublime. Not of Her flesh, not of Her presence: a presence Botticelli permeates with fragrance—She, a Flower Goddess—but of a profound—“scales falling from his eyes”—insight into and understanding of the Fall. It takes but just the slightest gaze upon Her and Friar Otto finds himself suffering the burning agony of being bewitched and overcome by a most “heartfelt anxiety.”

As the captivated—*spellbound!*—Friar beholds Botticelli’s *Venus*, he, like so many who have also stood before her, is mystified—enthralled and stupefied. His heart soars to heavenly heights and hellish depths—into inky darkness and blazing sunlight. In a flash, a stunning and fascinating clarity is bestowed upon him by the blessing of an ancient hand—one that is antediluvian, patriarchal, preternatural. This ethereal hand reaches across the Starry Boundary and rests, reposes firmly upon his left shoulder, and in that instant of presence the Friar sees with enlightened eyes—quickenings eyes sighting all the way back to the Garden of Eden. He now is Adam gaping at Eve’s naked body as he gazes and sees Her body...peers at what Botticelli’s *Venus* lies about!

“When did this happen? Where?” *Has his mask truly fallen?*

It has, but so to the young Friar have the masks of all those around him; friarly masks. *Blasphemy. Apostasy to The Rule.*

“*We* are the apostates! For it is *we* who have withdrawn. Not come down into the flesh as our Blessed Lord did and does every day, but escaped, hid, run away. Our monasteries, priories, rectories all, all are tunneling caves!”

Then came the Suffering, the Indictment: “*You* have lied.”

Tender of heart no more!

With this insight, this curse, a thrust of a silver dagger into the heart of “you,” so was the Prior himself transported back into the Garden—there, *you!* being the Serpent! The friar’s accusation awakening the Prior to see that it was he, *himself*, who seduced Her, tricked Her, beguiled Her, not She, him. This, what the Prior had lied about all his religious life as all sons of

Adam have for more than a millennium so lied. Claiming that, “The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” The Friar hears the Prior speak Adam’s betrayal and knows that this is the mask that hides the greatest of Satan’s lies!

What magnitude of lie? Only the friar’s mystical sight enables him to see what others, like the Prior, do not see, have never before seen. What is the *Venus* but a birthing story? She emerges from the sea a fully mature woman. *Sacrilege!* rings through his ears as the Friar recalls the many passages in pagan mythologies where the sea is a goddess, the ocean is Mother. *Apostasy!* Here Botticelli is announcing that females are born from females, when all in Christendom know that females, through Eve, were born from the male, Adam...molded from his precious but bent rib! Yet, there is more to the lie than the celebration of this perverse claim made manifest through the sensual allure of this painting. Why does the friar indict the Prior? *You!* Because he is the Spiritual Director who is misdirecting all males by describing the Discipline necessary for salvation to be one that delivers pain to the male body. *Awake!* The male body, as through Adam, suffered great pain—which came as Eve as rib was ripped out from his body. More, the Friar ponders deeply, *Why did God the Almighty Creator—Yahweh, Elohim, Adonai—consider that Adam should not be alone and create a mate, “bone of my bone”?*

This, a question which only a mystical interpretation could answer. The friar pauses to reflect upon St. Augustine, how he interpreted and preached about the reason for the Fall in the Garden of Eden, that it was a “happy fault”—*Felix culpa!*” While all truth remains revealed to us as “through a glass darkly” what Augustine discerned was that “For God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist.” *Melius enim iudicavit de malis benefacere, quam mala nulla esse permittere....* that without the Fall there would have been no need for Jesus to incarnate on Earth and redeem us. In this line of reasoning, the Friar grasps that females, women, the feminine are but such a *happy fault*. That they are the evil out of which good arises. But how? Here the Friar is once again transfixed by seeing what is so cleverly hidden under Botticelli’s brush of beauty and sensuality, that the good to be achieved is for the male, once again, to live alone, without women.

For what was and is the purest state of being male? Wasn’t and isn’t it being alone with our Creator Father in the Garden *before* Eve was molded from Adam’s bone? *Awake!* The lie is to claim that males are to live together and torture their bodies following a most rigorous self-

punishment Discipline. No, that is a damnable lie! The truth is—*the truth is...*the Friar is struck by the beauty of the thought, the simplicity of the revelation...that all males should labor to restore the Earth to its condition *before Eve*. So, at the End Time—*This Age!*—the New Earth will be as before the Fall. Truly, the New Heaven will be a state of pure spiritual masculinity, whose inhabitants are solely males, all One with the Father. Isn't this the revelation of which Jesus was harbinger? How he himself lived while on Earth? Why there were no females among the apostles?

A small comfort comes to the Friar as another—once but no longer perplexing—saying of Augustine drifts into his contemplation. It is one that has anticipated his own insight. The Bishop of Hippo had opined, “Except for the purpose of procreation, another man would have been a more suitable companion for Adam.”

Punishment of the male body was not an end in itself, although this was how the Discipline has been interpreted for over a millennium—that a monk should punish himself. No, never, not again! Punishment of the male body was only necessary because Adam had tainted himself with female flesh. The Good Father created Eve so that Adam would not be alone—as a companion, *not* as a sexual partner, a lover, a procreator. Ah, the wise Augustine! Eve was not created to be sexually joined with Adam. If so, why then were they expelled from the Garden? Was it that Adam seduced Eve, beguiling her, tricking her, turning her into a mate, not just a companion? Isn't this the blatant sin of *Venus*? That She is lured—by this vile Botticelli!—into being a goddess, a desirable creature for whom men lust? But...*Ah!* the Holy Spirit is surely about! The friar realizes...and accepts where Adam did not...that it is males who have created females as lovers, spouses, mothers. More, that the female is all and only a part of the male, a rib. *Ah, ah!* Verily, true punishment of the male is to rid him of this part of himself, this femininity, this mother-inside...to purge the female from his body. In a perverse sense, put the rib back into Adam's side!

Thoughts fly like quail startled on the hunt! Why then was the Earth cursed and it became the home to the human family? Of great weight to the Friar, and a turning point of turning points in his awakening, is that the human family did not exist in the Garden—which was to be only and always the domain of the male, with a companion. To copulate and procreate, that part of Adam's maleness that craved Eve's sexual femaleness and sought to bodily unite with her had to be cursed and exiled! *To Earth.*

Could the message of Venus be any more simple and clear? As brightly evident as was the glorious beauty of the painting itself?

The Friar's task, then, so is revealed, is solely to root out and exorcise the remnant presence of the female that so taints the male flesh. Punish the male body, yes, punish deeply, verily, punish incessantly, ever so to purify oneself, rid himself of the presence of Her in her that is in him. Wondrously, once so purified, then his mission, his Calling, will be to root out and exorcise all bewitching, enchanting *Venus* presences, *everywhere!* Since in every woman there is a Venus, and every Venus is bewitching, so it is for Friar Otto to rid the world of witches...as all women as daughters of Eve are mothers of witches, so he is called to purge the world of all women!

“Can you repent of your apostasy?” The now emboldened friar throws out at the mere mortal man he once revered. As there is no answer forthcoming from the Prior... *Alas!*...there was nothing else to think or say, nor wanted imagining. *It is time!* All that is then heard is the flapping snap of robe and *swish!* as Friar Otto rises, pivots with a whirl, and strides in heartfelt anxiety hurriedly out of the Prior's chamber.

Later, from out of Friar Otto's cell sounds strange to the ears of his brothers perplex them. Not that they themselves have not voiced these familiar sounds, they have, but out from *this cell, never!* They no longer are beset by the familiar and sinful sounds of happiness—giddy, tittering, raucous. No, it is the *oh so familiar* bloody lamentations drawn forth by the flagellant's whip, the screeching accusations elicited by the thumbscrew crushing finger-bone, the howls of self-condemnation as flesh sizzles as brimstone tongs are applied to the chest—as ever Friar Otto would soon come to apply a specific torture to others, so he does it to himself. He knowing now as so many of his fellow friars have attested, that torture is the only way to relieve one's heartfelt anxiety.

No more masks!

No more *tender of heart!*

“It is right and just.” This liturgical phrase reverberates throughout his mind and seeps through every bone of his beaten body, his confessing flesh. For—*Sweet Jesus, take me!*—Friar Otto has seen through that one gaze of *Venus* how pleasure, mere visual enjoyment chokes a soul, has drowned so many in lust. He is now awakened to how all these men—brothers, friars,

all sons of Adam, who in word and praise sound out His Holy Name were themselves in actual practice, *Witches!* They, in fact and in deed, *worshipping Her* by protecting Her through their misguided focus on torturing their own bodies.

Botticelli...as all artists who make Her present...all the faithful—clerics foremost—who gaze upon Her and let her live!—*sorcerers and necromancers, all.* Friar Otto now knows where he has to go and what the Lord is calling him to do. Without a doubt, the Friar knows where and to whom he must go, whose knowledge he must obtain, whose Discipline he must follow. It is to those two illustrious brothers mentioned in the *Bull*: “our beloved sons, Henricus Institoris and Jacobus Sprenger,” both of the Order of Friars Preachers like himself, both Dominicans—*Inquisitors!*

CHAPTER 10

*Therefore the devil can collect and make use as he will of
human semen which belongs to the body. (Malleus
Maleficarum, 1486)*

The rickety hay wagon comes to a full stop, as suddenly as one holding their breath and bellowing their cheeks, however, the friar's body still moves forward...undulating with the yet rolling heaves and jerks of the ocean of dirt he has sailed upon these last several decades. Germany being his ocean, upon which he has voyaged—seeking out the depraved *you!*'s so like the Prior. For Friar Otto's special mission, that which the revered Inquisitors have assigned him, is to ferret out the witches, warlocks, sorcerers—all the demons!—hiding behind masks of religious piety—friars and nuns, especially behind priestly charisma. It takes his eyes discerning no movement from the trees to stir that part of himself which motivates his calves to clamp the wagon's edge and in concert with hands lift and dislodge, discharge him onto the solid earth—“*terra firma*” flits through his mind as this reflex motion is half-completed. Another flashes onto the not-so-*firma*, that of the world discovered now not so long ago by Columbus—a thought fitted with a half-prayer in praise of the Father's eternal Bountifulness and Majesty...the other half being in penance for questioning why God would allow another Italian—*Botticelli, now this Genoan!*—to be His messenger. To his Teutonic mind the warm weathered southerners were a most *Undisciplined!* tribe of romantics.

Verily, it was because of such widespread lack of Discipline throughout Christendom that Friar Otto started out in that awakening year, 1488, to walk, ride in the back of oxcarts, sit upon donkeys and plodding plow horses...as presently, to hoist himself upon this harvest-to-market cart so arriving here in the End Time year of 1505—a century he was confident would witness the Second Coming of the Christ. He was near ending another journey—pilgrimage, suffering voyage—always with the Holy Rosary thick around his waist, ever faithful to his inspired Dominican brothers, whom the Papal *Bull* extolled as “our beloved sons,” the *Inquisitors Extraordinary* Jacob Sprenger, O.P. and Heinrich Kramer, O.P. It was to their charge that he has been faithfully responding—to restore the Order's “Practice of Strict Obedience”—and, with Sprenger in heaven and Kramer on his death-bed, it is to faithfully champion and sustain their

divinely inspired mission that Friar Otto has journeyed here. He has come specifically to honor his cherished brother Kramer in his last hours. To honor the memory of the truly sainted Sprenger, gone near ten years. To honor them this specific itinerary was mapped with visits to unmarked personal sites of the cruelest qualities of pain—self-inflicted, crushing knee-caps, scraping every point of earthly contact—knuckles, elbows, forehead, heels. Here, suffering even more horrifically than he had on his very first journey to reach Sprenger’s professorial classroom at the University of Cologne. So inspired—*terrible of heart!*—back then, he had continued onto the University at Erfurt, then trekked to sit at the feet of the eloquent Heinrich Kramer in Regensburg—back then as now suffering more days than not, all day upon his knees, creeping forward...doing so because for him every Inquisitional journey demanded an ever more severe Discipline. To ever more torture his body so as to purify his soul. So he explored the varied landscapes of pain...*beloved pain!*...from dirt in his food to block its delights, to sleeping naked in the snow until his now arthritic feet and hands were deep blue, to drawing upon his own flesh a landscape of scars and pockmarks—ever revealing through ugliness the beauty of his soul, ever his body the canvas that Botticelli should have painted!

As with all those who would ever come to feel the Friar enact God’s righteous anger upon their bewitching bodies so it has always been and remains pain that cleanses and makes him ready to sit before and hear from the lips of those specially chosen, those who are truly the disciplined warriors of God...his brother Inquisitors.

On his now long-ago maiden voyage, as Friar Otto entered the University’s Grand Hall, he had heard Sprenger’s voice declaiming upon the essence of the Inquisitor’s mission... words which the Friar already knew by rote:

... yet their power (devils) remains confined to the privy parts and the navel. For through the wantonness of the flesh they have much power over men; and in men the source of wantonness lies in their privy parts, since it is from them that the semen falls, just as in women it falls from the navel.

The majestic Dominican continued, “As Job himself has taught us,”—the verse in Chapter 41 writes itself in the air for all to hear—“*Lo now, his strength is in his loins, and his force is in the navel of his belly.*”

Ah! How often the Friar has since then tortured himself with this anatomical revelation. How his meditation upon the sainted professors’ text—the magnificent *Malleus Maleficarum* (“The Hammer of Satan”)—has opened to him the greater depth that exists behind Scripture’s literal words, that which the blessed Origen called the anagogic, the mystical...that which is known only to the few, these who see the Other Face of God, know the Left Hand as it belies the Right Hand. As he recalls this day as back then and every day hence when he daily reads the *Malleus*, the mystical revelation is that the map of his fated and priestly journey follows the route marked out by the singular, most exquisite torture of the body and hence of the soul—the crucifixion of the sexual organs of males and females. For the *Malleus* claims that

...the power of the devil lies in the privy parts of men.

This is why Friar Otto has subjected himself to every bounce and jolt of the road as he travelled up from the south—unnoticed to others that his genitals are chafed by stones in his undergarments. Verily, “The power of the devil lies in the privy parts of men.”

Fatefully, the Friar’s life-altering journey had begun back then with but an innocent glance at Botticelli’s *Venus*...innocent but just a moment’s bewitchment cast by the delicacy of his art, the allurements of his colors and the seductiveness of his line. If the artist had been there beside him, the Friar has no doubts that Botticelli would proclaim his craft as unveiling the majesty of Her, of the Blessed Mother, the Most Holy Virgin, through the Beauty of Her Daughters, these Natural Creatures. He believing as the artist must, who, along with all the misguided teachers of “natural theology”—“The Devil’s Own!”—damns the friar in blinded thought—erroneously believing that Nature reflects the Supernatural—“as above, so below” their justification. But “Nature” so the Friar knows was and will always be fallen. As such, the painting should be titled not the *Birth of Venus* but the *Fall of Man*.

Ah, the soothing, comforting but yet terrifying and terrorizing words of the *Malleus* flood over and through him as in his mind he recalls and yet gazes once again upon Botticelli's painted message—*revelation!* Once again, his eyes, enchanted, fall down upon the soft and surrendering lines of her flesh...cascading like waterfall from her breasts down and swirling around her thighs and calves and ankles like light rising from below. *Oh*, Friar Otto sees, watches, observes, follows along this map, this detailed map of—what else but Sin, Depravity, Sorcery? She, her body, simply a map of flesh drawn by the hand of a devil—which given its sensuous beauty, its ravaging of every profane sensibility forces him to inhale her scent, be drawn by the allure of her golden hair, gasp at the innocence of her moonstone flesh, slightly pink like crushed rose petals. *Oh*, he presses the tip of his tongue, tenderly to her eyes, filching a sip of sweet honey. *Oh*, the agony! *Oh*, the pangs of piercing Desire! *Oh*, the cruelty of this Depravity!

...the power of the devil lies in the privy parts of men.

A torturer of the privy parts of all the demons, this is his calling. It is the glorious fate that the Father has set before him. It is simply to be that *Friar Otto's gaze shall never unlatch itself from Venus' navel*. Never.

And so they are to be put to the torture in order to make them confess. Any person, whatever his rank or position, upon such an accusation may be put to the torture, and he who is found guilty, even if he confesses his crime, let him be racked, let him suffer all other tortures prescribed by law in order that he may be punished in proportion to his offenses.

This the message, the unifying vision, that which the friar has dreamed...seeing himself in personal combat with the Devil, sighting himself as a High Priest—being transubstantiated into the Son made present through his consecrated hands...celebrating the Holy Mass but in like manner celebrating as he tortures, as he pierces and presses, twists and hacks, savages his way through that which is the blockage, the barrier, the Refuge of the Devil, namely, the body itself. Verily, the Body—that which is flesh, All Flesh. More, which is Her, Her gift, Her bequeathal,

Her heritage—birthing She, Mother Eve, present in all women...all women's bodies being maps of Her, sensuous maps, beautiful maps, soft maps which men follow to perdition. But nothing more to be tortured than genitals, these the private passageways, caves of Satan's hellish darkness...they that are entered through the piercing pleasure, the locking action, that which is keyed and opened using the phallus.

Ah, the phallus which is lance, which can be—*Oh, Sweet Suffering Jesus!*—the blessed Centurion's Lance, but which for most sons of Adam is but the Devil's Key...inserted into her who is Her here present. So let there be no counterclaim—*Devil's defense!*—that Botticelli does *not* show her private parts, not expose her, not throw her out in all her depravity. Such is but the *Devil's trickery*. Behold! Satan casts her as Innocence, as Virginity, as Pure...but Friar Otto knows about the navel, its mystery and mystical meaning. “For wasn't Adam without a navel?” Verily, as most of the priests and friars and brothers here conjoined in common vision all know that Adam had no navel because he was *created* by the Father, *not born* from a mother goddess! To hold otherwise is to preach the Devil's Message, which is what is being preached during the Satanic, depraved Black Mass. Alas, Friar Otto knows only too well what Botticelli has revealed—that her Venusian body, that the body of all women can only be redeemed through a frenzied torture of their hidden, most private parts—Her passageways to eternal damnation!

As the friar kisses the hand of this last to die of the two greatest messengers of Christ—*Heinrich, his beloved teacher, inspiration...*this sainted Dominican, speechless in a coma but forever eloquent through that which Friar Otto and many others hold as second only to the Bible as the twin treasures of Christianity, the *Malleus*, he recalls,

But let no man think he may escape by pleading ignorance.

At the funeral of this most fervent Inquisitor, Friar Otto concludes his sermonic eulogy with this challenging accusation—directly pointing with right arm at full length, index finger indicting all the *you/s*—“let no man...!” At they who have come here to praise but to whom the preacher delivers what he knows his most beloved teacher has left as his final instruction to all—*be not ignorant, ceaselessly search out the witches!* The Friar steps down from the pulpit with these two majestic books, one under each arm. One, the revelatory book of God's Good News.

The other, the practical book with the discipline that empowers all the faithful to hammer out the truth and beauty of the Good News. Friar Otto is ever amazed at the power of this *Hammer*, a power it must derive from the holy Friar Kramer himself, for at the very moment the funeral Mass for Heinrich Kramer ends—*Ite missa est!*—all about the church Friar Otto hears echoing Lucifer’s cry, wail, moan, scream, bellow...then with a gusty wind the Adversary flees! Verily, the *Malleus* will ever live in the hearts and souls of those here who also dream the *Malleus*...who seek to en flesh its sacred voice within their hearts and souls.

As the two sainted, heavenly Dominicans now implore with their celestial voices, so does the Lord bless and anoint Friar Otto within this waking dream—*Go ever forth and hammer Satan!*

CHAPTER 11

Mother Dolor dreams an especially disturbing and horrific dream, a deeply sinful dream—one that convinces her that she is doomed to spend eternity in hell. Most times her dreams are quite ridiculous, sometimes simply stupid, then, of course, all being occasions for sin—this being so as all Catholics are taught that dreams are the playground of the Devil...his playmates being *incubi* and *succubi*. She knows quite well what a mortal sin is, consisting of *Grievous Matter*, *Full Consent of the Will*, and *Sufficient Reflection*. Here, in preparing to confess this dream she weighs, assesses, and delivers final judgment upon herself. For its content is *Grievous* in that it was about copulation in an orgy of males and females. Then, it has to be her *Willful* consent for why else would God let the Devil into her dreaming? Certainly He, as Good Father, as Just, wouldn't let her be tempted unless *she* wanted to be tempted. Finally, *Sufficient Reflection*—this dream has lasted too long, recurred too many times, has seeped into and thoroughly polluted her waking hours. It's shadow has eclipsed the sunlight of reason. *Verily, Mother Dolor dreams and so commits a Mortal Sin! Her room reeks with the odor of hellish sulfur!*

Yet, how could she ever confess it? Be bold enough to describe it in all its depravity of thought and feeling? It was all just so distasteful, so ugly, so vile. Every time she thinks about it, it makes her skin crawl as if with a burrowing of bugs...recalling a frightful memory of strolling through a forest, she just a girl under ten, walking not too far from her home—*Was it, again, not her own sin?*—when the hard shelled insects appeared as almost out of thin air...she not then stopping to consider it a conjuration but knowing it as such later on—*there*, bugs and the clicking of their shells...a sound which made mockery of the tiny voice, that of her weak conscience, so it had been, so now she feels—*I cannot confess.*

In great sorrow, draping her veil to cloak her teary face, Mother Dolor departs the chapel.

On her knees in her convent cell, a small nook being all that she needs while on this Earth—merely a hard beaten earthen box with a harshly cut slit of a window for air. Air not for light, for the light enters as if betraying a secret...a moldy light cast upon a straw mat centered on the floor. Her single luxury being a crude, rough-hewn oaken bowl...rim splintered and foul

mouthed which serves for her impatient nightly relief. Then, the Bible...*all true luxury for the worthless sinner!*...that Good Book granting her the assurance—the *Good News!*—that He, God the Father Almighty, was here to protect her against all evil. *If so, why do I so dream?*

Of import, Mother Dolor was, as all her religious Sisters...all called “Mother”... are—semi-illiterate. Knowing just enough to read the Word....its Gospels and Epistles being their literary primers. Most wondrously, a Good Book from the Father Almighty made known to them through His consecrated Sons—priests, who were themselves, her Father. A sacred, precious Script which was hers to touch and whose holy pages she was blessed to turn...knowing as she turned that the deeper mystery of life unfolded and promised her Redemption...a final escape from this sinful life on Earth, this Vale of Tears! Life on Earth meaning simply to live-to-die in grace, for only when she would be released from her sinful flesh, only then would she truly begin to live...eternally in the bosom of the Father. This, said the Holy Scripture, so also said Father Seraphim, as he told all the Mothers, “This sacred book is your redemption.” And so it was.

Tonight, she could not touch this Holy Book, not read a word of scripture...knowing from her dreaming that she is a harlot of the Devil, Father Lucifer, Brother Sin...knowing herself as idolater, for in her dream Satan stood before her, soon bent his knees and knelt down before her, then threw himself prostrate, all the time lifting up his voice loud and clear—“Gate of Salvation! Throne of Majesty! Font of Wisdom!”

Does the Evil One need to shout other blasphemies for me to convict myself of a mortal sin?

Lucifer repeats these three ejaculations of praise and worship. Sadly, no more than His words are needed for Mother to plumb the depths of her fateful depravity. In her mind the images Satan evoked alight upon her body...there, her pubis is the Gate of Salvation...her belly is the Throne of Majesty...her breasts the Font of Wisdom!

Alas, her doom is sealed—“The devil like a roaring lion roams about seeking to devour you...” so do the words of the evening *Compline* prayer condemn her. “*Leo rugiens circuit...*” which, every night, floats over the grating that separates her and all Mothers from the chanting monks. Daily, does Mother hear—so she knows so clearly...she has been *devoured!*

To whom could she repent this dream? What is preventing her. Is it Pride? Or hardness of heart? Or the enjoyment of this Lust? Or *worse*—the perversity of the thought causes her head to feel on fire, her stomach to dry vomit—*Am I fearful that absolution will deny me this dream?* Despite the impairment of her illiteracy, in her mind Mother Dolor could reason and reflect with the depth of the most subtle theologians: Origen, Thomas Aquinas, Bonaventura, Duns Scotus, even the clever Augustine. But hers was a power of thought and an agility of spirit which she would never hear complimented, being that no one would have ever considered even for the fleetest of moments to discuss such lofty matters with her...for she was a woman. Thus, lacking any critical theological conversation, she does not even have a boundary against which to form an internal judgment, for no scholarly education has been hers, and infrequent were conversations among the Mothers other than about mundane, trifling matters. Moreover, she expected nothing beyond the trifling, and as such did not know what or how the other Mothers thought—knowing only Confession as spiritual conversation. In truth, Confession, itself, being but a verbally reported checklist of sins and an oral assignment of penitential prayers. Nevertheless, her mind was acute enough to grasp how vile a sinner she was because from the instant moment of absolution wherein the Gracious Father forgives her, so she knows in her heart that she instantly sins, again. She holds this as truth because she has heard preached so often that “Women are gateways to Eternal Damnation.” Amen. *Father Seraphim.*

Holy water is splashed all about. *Our Fathers* and *Hail Marys* are suppliantly uttered in each corner of her cell. She steps about in a mini-procession holding the Crucifix outward to all the evil spirits poised to pounce upon her. So armed. So disarming. So prepared, does Mother Dolor lie down, recline on the mat on her floor with the chilling fear all faithful Catholics so lie down each night that now she is about to enter into the realm of the Evil One. Into his realm of dreaming, of the fantastic, of the uncontrollable, of events out of time...of short gasping awakenings cold to the bone with profuse beads of hot salty sweat bouncing down off her face, her ears, her nose, her lips, her chin...spotting upon her chest and her arms and her lap and her legs and the ground. For dreaming was the time when the flesh—so was this dreaming, so had Father Seraphim instructed them—this the time when the flesh loosened its grip upon the waking world—which is the world of the Father because it was for men to know the Father in wakefulness, not dreaming. *Alas!* Did not Holy Writ reveal that it had been from within Adam’s

dreaming that Eve had been drawn? Wasn't this one of the great spiritual lessons, that "Dreaming is the evil brought by women. When alone, Adam had not dreamed. Had no need to dream."

Mother weakly fights off the stealthy slumber, the weighty weariness, the flickering eyelids surrendering to the thickening darkness. As she drifts off, as she plummets back down into that torpid state from which Eve had been drawn—*as Yahweh made Adam dream!*—so does Mother grasp that it is the beauty and the pleasures of her feminine flesh which are the Devil's tools and ritual instruments: the softness of her skin which whispers depraved but delightful enticements to dreaming men. In truth, that Satan takes the creamy softness of her cheeks, scoops up the milky droopiness of her ponderous breasts, swipes the sweetness of kiss from her quivering lips...does this and diabolically and fantastically seduces the souls of slumbering males, tempting them unto wet dreams, unholy ejaculations. How else but she and all the Mothers as other than temptations to dreaming men—sons of Adam? For who are the *succubi* but women like herself? Women here on Earth—all mothers and Mothers—all these *she's* but the minions of Satan. He who needed not devil women, for through fleshly women—Eve's Daughters—so is He darkly and sinfully present to all men—tempting them, seducing them, fouling their minds and bodies. For when men sin in sleep—when they ejaculate their most treasured semen—*Satan victorious!*...so she knows—as all the Mothers know if not in word and thought then most assuredly in heart—that it is she upon whom they lay and rut and who sucks them dry of vital life. *Vital life!* Alas and damnation! *Oh, the sulfuric odors of hell reek all about...*for as Mother Dolor carries their precious seed within her unholy mouth so does she kneel before her true beloved, *Archangel Lucifer*—having turned away from her male dreamer, uprighted and tip-toed away from the mat...comes before the demonic altar of the Black Mass....squats and in so doing with her privy mouth spits out the splatter of her beguiled lover's semen...there to be collected by Father Satan for Him to do as He pleases.

How could she confess this?

Doesn't such knowledge of herself stand strong as her own condemnation that she is truly a Witch?

CHAPTER 12

“A Black Mass upon Her Body.” It is a mystical insight, so all agreed, an insight, a truth so powerful that it must *not* be shared, except with brother Inquisitors. This the secret ritual of the End Time—the Black Mass as the sacramental act through which males are transported to a New Earth and a New Heaven. This secret has been passed onto him and so everywhere he goes, to the astonishment of all, Friar Otto preaches, “Women alone will be left to inhabit the Earth...their Fallen Paradise!”

Excitement. Friar Otto’s sermon has caused a great stirring, for he explains that the truth of the secret ripped itself from out his mouth as had the Spirit’s fire ridden on Isaiah’s words. More, that “In this End Time, we must now make known this secret.” It is a revelation he reports to them that the Holy Spirit unfolded to him during the progress of his torturing her, this Mother—“harlot bride of Satan, not Christ!”

“It is when torturing the witches that the Holy Spirit speaks so forthrightly and clearly as they, their bodies, become the unholy Sacrifice of the Black Mass of the End Time.”

The small clutch of friars and other clerics attending the Inquisitor’s assembly had all known, so they seemed to say all at once, about the vile, despicable, and horrendous satanic practices but not about the secret and the ritual of the Black Mass. As priests each knew himself as the Body of Christ, the presence of the Mystical Body for which their profane bodies: flesh, mind and soul, became sacramental vessels as they celebrated the rite of Holy Mass. Yet, they were also active participants in the hotly contested—to many, “Despicable!”—theological debate raging throughout the Holy Roman Empire over the meaning of the Eucharist’s “real presence.” Which debate was, alone on its own merits, sufficient cause for labeling this the Age of Heartfelt Anxiety. But never had it entered their minds—as Friar Otto...whom many praise as “Inquisitor extraordinary!”...now calls them to consider, that the “real presence” of Satan can only be manifested through their performance of the Black Mass with all its sexual perversions. Truly, only through countering and making present these sexual perversions through torture of those parts of the female and male body that form the core Black Mass ritual of public intercourse can *Satan, Devil, Lucifer, Adversary—be enfleshed in the bodies of these witches and warlocks whom they torture!* “Torture the privy parts! Torture is consecration!”

Friar Otto’s reasoning staggers the minds of many. He declaims, “As she was taken from him—Eve from Adam—what else but that Christ is present as we take Her—the Bride of

Satan...Goddess: Venus—take Her and drive, purge, excise, rout out every vestige of Her through torturing Lucifer’s demon progeny?”

For the last three decades, the Friar has been in the forefront of the Inquisitors who seek to *do no other* than *probing for Adam’s rib*...the bent rib, to straighten it out. This the Friar knows to be the Father’s Will and a bold task that requires him also to exercise the Will to Torture, to inflict Pain, to probe so deeply into the body that the soul is touched. To measure by measure move down the spine, and with each measure to prod and probe, to stick and twist, to hammer and unlock with fiery tip of a sword dagger. A short silver sword dagger is the friar’s signature Inquisitional ritual tool. With it, he is able to Will through the sobbing cries, the howling screams, the woeful groans, all the thrashings and bellowings and curses and surrendering whimpers. With it, ever more faithfully to steel his courageous heart and patiently but persistently continue to torture through the silent and the insensate moments when they lose consciousness—knowing that *only then* is the duel truly begun: *Friar Otto versus The Adversary!* That it is when they no longer can speak words that the words he has waited to hear are truly spoken. For it is in the realm of sleep, of the dream that Satan collaborates with them—gives them life, raises them from their fleshly bodies and steps them forward as spirited bodies, their ghostly forms as apparitions, *incubi* and *succubi* all, and sets them off to invade the dreams of men, to whisper the demonic words of their unholy Black Mass upon the bodies of males.

Friar Otto—inspired anew by the support of his fellow Inquisitors—returns to Mother Dolor. “Confess, Mother, confess the truth. Are you not Lucifer’s harlot?” Despite what she will say—as the Friar well knows that torture eventually brings forth the obvious—he’s already certain that she will confess that as a Bride of Satan that she has sinned by denying Christ as did Judas and that she has willfully chosen to become Lucifer’s harlot. As this one—perversely named with satanic irony, Mother Dolor—is once more set before him, so does the Friar know that it is not just Divine Providence, no it is otherwise, that this is truly a moment of a fuller divine Revelation. For at this instant, he is prepared and ready to conduct his own Black Mass—torturing her through simulating intercourse with her...conjuring up a mystical body like unto Lucifer’s so that Satan’s Real Presence is tangible before him...in his hands just like when he holds the chalice with wine that is sacred blood and breaks bread that is sacred flesh...for the battle between Good and Evil is ever that between Lucifer and the Father, between Satan and the

Christ. As Christ's priest, Friar Otto is ready to officiate...to hear her confess as he makes Satan present through his Bride's sufferings.

Alone together. Just he and she.

He has strictly prepared himself to meet her.

He has fasted several days.

He has prayed unceasingly.

He has flailed his body until blood was thicker than sweat.

He has placed upon his own body the sacred wounds—"in imitatio Christi"—sufferings which now he will share with her to save her soul and release her from Satan's bewitchment.

He has bound his privy parts so tightly that Satan cannot speak through them.

"Mother." Tip-toe words; tinged with sweet seduction; amorous tone.

She opens her eyes but does not answer. Simply pulls off the sheet on top of her. Her breasts are naked to the night. *Moon-glow*. She does not even have to pretend. He is moonstruck.

Friar Otto steadies himself, is whispering holy ejaculations unending...fearing that he will not be strong enough...not sustain the temptation to become Lucifer, not just be his mystical spousal surrogate. Slowly, like a patient lover, the Friar undresses and slides into a naked embrace with her...the horns on his head, his cloven feet, his penis long and thick as an arm, all, arouse her to a feverish pitch of ecstatic anticipation. Embraced, she and he, Mother and Friar, She and He, Goddess and Lucifer—are one. Amen.

Mother, he whispers closely into her ears, tongue gliding up and down her nape and cheeks. *Mother!* resounds inside himself...bouncing the pleasure of her name off the tunnels inside his head, for he sees himself in a moonlight tunnel, a pathway leading to other tunnels, entrances which he knows, which he hopes, lead down, down, down into Satan's lair. *Hark!* The Friar is there, face and tongue requesting permission to slip inside her diabolical cave: *Her cave*. He cannot, he does not wish to banish the thought that he is at the Manger—there Mother is now as the Mother of God, whose presence the Friar grasps—*horrifically!*— is that of Her, Goddess, Venus with Child...back, back, up, away! *Flee!* "Satan be gone!"

The Friar's body and mind have gone winter cold—high Teutonic Alps' frigid. Blood courses through him but it is only his soul that sustains his life...his soul as blessed by the Father. With all his soul-force the Friar seeks to exorcize this demon!

With the Holy Spirit girding him, he rises, stands beside her, proceeds to celebrate the Black Mass.

Upon her forehead: "Jesus"—intoned and anointed with holy chrism by priestly thumb.

Upon her navel: "Nazareus."

Upon her left shoulder: "Rex."

Above her heart: "Iudaeorum."

This was Preparation...her preparation for Her.

Strapped before him. Once again, sheathed full body to her neck. Stoic of face.

It stops him, this calm fierceness of acceptance.

"Why is she not trembling...more terrified?"

But Friar Otto cannot halt to press the question, for he knows that everything—just everything: every whine, whimper, shout, even silence is a crafty tool of the Adversary.

He proceeds. Walks around to the foot of the table. Eyes closed. Hands in prayer. He does not need eyes. He does not need smell. He does not need sound.

Alone together. Just he and she.

He kisses her full, moist lips.

Presses the crucifix to her—offering her Him.

He places his hands upon her head, then upon her breasts.

Where the Mother had drawn holy milk, so from her must blood quicken.

He hears her heart beating in his ears.

Pressing with tongs that sizzle flesh like embers hot passion, her heart...roasted flesh as in the fires of hell...he hears her call Him as her flesh screams of her lust for Him, her spouse—demon Lucifer! The Friar's ardor is quickened, he plunges the fiery metal deep into her thighs,

there to roust out her whorish sins. Down the smooth curve of her legs...Her blood flows. From her burnt nipples teensy red bubbles ooze and burble.

Hands upon her stomach. Smooth and white...like early twilight floating off a snowy hill. As one with Lucifer so has the Friar stroked her softness before. As one with Lucifer so has he been enraptured. So is he now, once again. This time, knowing more than all his debates about Natural Theology could have indicated, that, here, her body manifests Her—Lucifer’s Bride—as an integral part of the Grand Design which the Divine Creator has expressed Himself through. As Augustine had so proclaimed—“Felix culpa!” Here, the Friar understands more fully his Inquisitorial mission, “For God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist.” *Melius enim iudicavit de malis benefacere, quam mala nulla esse permittere....* that without the Fall there would have been no need for Jesus to incarnate on Earth and redeem us.

Awake! Mother’s witchy depravity assures the Friar’s salvation! In celebration of God’s mercy, the Friar presses further, penetrating fingertips of his fiery, metal tongs through the small folds of her flesh...unleashing the fullness of her bodily warmth...the richness of her smell...so soothing...he sighs—there floats to him the bewitching bittersweet fragrance born deeply within her privy self.

Beware! Friar Otto’s thinking mind shuts down. His eyes clang shut. His ears are clogged with necromancer’s wax. He readies and frees himself to fall into her graciousness...he descends as he tortures her.

He slips on two rings, specially crafted with a cutting tooth, incisor size, with sharply honed slicing edges. He places one on his wedding finger, the other on his right index digit. With caressing strokes, he draw down her cheeks, slithering with modest pace marking her every fleshly sector with the tiniest of cuts. His hand is a glove of exquisite pain. *Where does her blood puddle but at her navel? Could there be a more righteous sign?*

Fully pulling the sheath off of her—she is an undulating plain of sorrow. Pain sprouts like green shoots in the spring—everywhere. Deftly, the Friar claws through her belly—hip bones protruding, barely any skin is left upon her bones and she, being big of bone, there is a cadaver beauty to her exposed flesh...claws and hears no cry...harrows deeper yet still senses no trembling...stabs his iron fingertips through her navel. *Ah!* finally, he senses the quivering of her Devil Mouth. “Women being insatiable!” *Ah!* how the turn of that *Malleus* phrase entices him,

lures him onward to kiss “the mouth of her womb” with kisses insatiable! His “lips” but the delicate stabs and lover’s bites of a silver dagger.

“Holy Mary, Mother of God, protect me!”—spoken out loud. “Matthew, Mark, Luke, John guide me!” So he anoints her now with his eyes and as he penetrates her privy mouth with a steel rod, his surrogate penis, with loud voice, a shattering voice, he delivers Her Annunciation Words: “Be it done unto me according to thy word!” *So be it!* Lucifer flees!

The Black Mass soon to be ended, the friar continues twisting, turning, tearing flesh...stabbing, hammering, pounding all that he has into her, into her through the thick foot-long rod of iron, hitting its haft with his full fist, wanting it to pierce her cave, to crack open the wall of her womb, and through this rendering to set free for all to see the pit of hell which is the essence of her being...which festers within her flesh...from whence words—enticing, seductive, filthy, depraved—are groaned and moaned and lofted into the ears of men as pleasurable...evilly pleasurable, for it is here in this privy cave where their sperm is deposited...it is here where—after they withdraw, blinded by pleasure—that the spectral demons who are her true lovers pass through the wall and scoop up the semen...gather it and take it to their Perverse Father for his Black Mass.

Legs tied, but they no longer rise and fall...no longer take their dark pleasures. No longer enjoy, as Friar Otto knew she enjoyed, this suffering, this pain—enjoys it as Eve had enjoyed the pangs of birth, for it was through sharing this dark pleasure of painful birth that Eve recalled her tryst with her Demon Lover in the Garden. It was clear—simple and uncomplicated and easy to understand by all—so the Friar knew as he ground the iron rod into her body, pushed so hard that he lost it from out of his hands...she sucking it in as she had sucked with reflex the thrusting member of her manly spectral lovers.

“...insatiable mouth ...”

Once Satan is gone, the friar blesses the wine which becomes His blood and consecrates the host which becomes His Body, eats and drinks. Then the Ablution commences. He washes up by plunging his hands and arms elbow deep into an oaken bucket. There is scarce blood upon him. Nary a bit of her flesh clinging to him. Nevertheless, the Discipline demands that he

wash...cleanse thoroughly—as he has been trained. “Father into your hands, I commit her spirit!”
Finis. The Holy Mass upon the Black Mass is complete. “It’s over.”

Yet...there is a lingering yet?

Why had she never uttered a denial? Why did she persist in accepting herself as a witch?
Have I failed? For without the denial, *Were we truly in the Garden?* Without the denial, *Was she truly a Witch?* Friar Otto is frozen frigid by the question. Here, Mother Dolor, self-confessed Witch... self-indicter...self-witnessing to her depravity...self-judging her body as the plaything of her Demon Lover. *Yet? Why a yet?*

The friar is moved to return to her, to gaze upon her—he flinches! Never before has he been so struck by the beauty of the horror or sensed rapture in such a grisly scene. She is like a crushed rose, oozing fragrance. Who was this once Betrothed Bride of Christ who is now but all lump and bruise...flesh torn into strips...body punctured with still seeping wounds...breasts savaged as if by a wild dog...face bruised and swollen and black and blue and roughly disfigured with loss of eyebrows and eyelids? Friar Otto gazes upon Mother Dolor...blood drips and pools from out her privy mouth...moon weeping mouth...Devil’s Cave. *Yet*, he hears himself wondering: *Why didn’t she deny?*

“Mother Dolor.” Late hours into the night, candles barely lighting the pages, Friar Otto has been hours already sitting, reading, pondering in the Cathedral library...rapidly thumbing through a thick mountain of documents. There is something he needs to know. For once she was pronounced dead by the Prior, so did a sweet but muted voice fly words around his ears, “Go thither! Go yon!” *Yet?*

Here now vellum sheets slip away from unbound stacks, parchment is scattered about—folios hiding quartos hiding thickly bound volumes. *Behold!* The name finally appears. Close to the candle he presses the page, almost setting it on fire. As he reads the yellowing list of the Convent’s Postulants—no it is not reading—*Lord have mercy!*—the page announces her name to him, as if making a polite social introduction. Her name, these syllables of her identity arise from where the secular name is crossed out and inserted above is the religious name—“Mother Dolor.” There stands up, steps off the page and calls up to him as the town crier boldly shouts from his stand at village center—“Dolorosa von Frakken—once, Dagmar.”

Friar Otto's third cousin on his father's side!

Dagmar.

CHAPTER 13

“Here I stand. I can do no other.” The hissing of these arrogant, nay, these words that ring with an echo of Lucifer’s defiance! Words of beguiling magnitude and consequence which could have been spoken by Adam himself as he lied to God in the Garden! Such is Luther in the Friar’s mind. Not only an anti-Christ but an anti-Adam, for underneath Luther’s disobedient stance is a contorted theology that tells lies as Adam did when he said that *the woman made me do it!* Whereas, as the Friar has learned after decades of torturing the truth out of witchy bodies, male and females, what he has heard spoken by the privy mouth is that it was Adam’s passionate desire to *have* Her, to *hold* Her, to *embrace* Her. Truly, it was Adam who spoke with the Serpent and said, “I want her!” Adam the liar, the idolater...such is Luther.

“I can do no other.” Ah, how the phrase seeks to lay claim on that defense of ignorance which the Dominican Inquisitors of blessed memory continue to denounce, now through the preachments of Friar Otto. As the Friar preached on the first Sunday after reading Luther’s theses, by using this phrase, Luther repeats the lie that he is not in control, that as Eve seduced Adam so has he been seduced. But by what daughter of Eve? Who else but Eve’s reincarnation through Botticelli’s *Venus!* This Venusian Eve set about seducing the males of this Age just two years after the *Bull* had warned all about the witches! It is She who has fired up the collective imagination of the times—making present in daylight through the artist’s enchantment—the image of Her that was previously only seen with dreamy eyes and made present through Lucifer’s bewitching succubi. Verily, as Eve seduced Adam in daylight...when he ultimately consented to be naked with her!...so is Venus seducing in daylight all sons of Adam. They, as Luther, consenting to be naked with her!

“Katherina,” Luther’s sweet one, spouse, wife...ever-present *succubi*. Katherina who is Her incarnated in the flesh—Luther’s own intimate Venus! Ah, how the Friar prays that Divine Providence arranges for the day he can capture and torture Katherina, and in doing so destroy Luther.

Here I stand—these conceited and egotistical words plague the now graying Friar Otto like a single, solitary pestering fly which eludes capture and death, absorbing all of one’s conscious energy. Who can deny that Luther is a minion of the Evil One? “Luther has put into theology everything which Botticelli lied about in his *Venus!*” As such was the apostate, Martin Luther, now at odds even with the watery-brained Erasmus! Ah, there was some justice, however

small, in the warfare of these days—truly End Days. Now a span of more than thirty-four years, a period that the Friar marks as opening in 1484 with the *Bull* that provided the inspiration and soon thereafter the *Malleus* in 1487 which provided the guide for the journey, a period that is now coming to closure through Luther’s embrace of the Goddess in the flesh of his Katherina.

Who then could deny that the times were apocalyptic? The revolutionary signs of upheaval were boldly evident in every sector of society, religious and secular, obvious even to the simple-minded. These are days of peasant uprisings, the unfrocking of monks, and, most significantly, this arrogant, flaunted and demonic disobedience of that once Augustinian monk, Luther, shamelessly spouting, “Here I stand. I can do no other!”

As the Friar preaches time and again, he fears Luther not for his adept intellectual skills, regardless of his erroneous conclusions, no, like observing the Botticelli, what he fears is what others do not see, namely, how *he worships Her!* Not only allows Her to live but Katherina to thrive, providing for her every household need, satiating her every wanton sexual desire. His marriage is a denial of Christ’s way, of his apocalyptic message. For she is not just companion, but spouse. It stymied the friar that how he understood Luther was still a difficulty for so many other clerics and theologians, even those of his own Order. What was Luther’s disobedience to the Pope but a venial sin? In comparison, like Adam, what should be the righteous punishment for his sexual coupling with Her in her? *Exile! Cursed! Cast out!*

Yet, this message disagree with, even among his own, including Dominican theologians at Cologne. Some even condemning the Inquisition’s use of torture as a spiritual tool. But the friar is undeterred. *Luther worships Her!* so he has hammered home during what turned into not too fraternal and cordial debates with Luther’s intellectual and doctrinal prodigies. Driven—impassioned and tirelessly—the friar travels mostly from University town to University town so that he can publically debate the apostates and then preach to the larger crowds of common folk who fill the pews in the majestic cathedrals in such prosperous towns. Courageously, he fears not their words, which he finds easy to prove as sinfully self-absorbed. “With Herr Luther all is *I* and *I* and *I*...the prideful sin of Lucifer! So should we not cast him back down to sit with Lucifer, to burn in the everlasting fire and brimstone of hell?!” *Amen.*

Ironically, in bitter moments of exhaustion when he contemplates how little he has achieved...admitting how strong the Adversary is!...he wonders why others cannot see as clearly

as he does that Luther's sin is one of idolatry. "Why can't you see how he worships the Goddess?"

This mystical insight has been his for most of his lifetime but especially here in his elder years. *A half-century and a few loving you oh Father!* This insight comes to possess and obsess him. "All that you should be about my fellow friars, revered priests, holy religious is to preach this simple truth...that the presence of Her....this Venus...is to seduce the faithful and have them violate the First Commandment, "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery." With all that he has learned from the torture of witches, he reminds them...hoping to scare them, terrify them, have their souls quake...that "One who mocks God should not be allowed to live." And, "You mock God—Hear me, you mock God!—when you do not believe, do not proclaim his Good News that you are no longer a slave to your privy parts! Hear me, *What is the land of Egypt but the bondage to false gods—their whore house list of male and female gods and goddesses. That is what Moses fled...the worship of Her!*"

Shocking as the friar's denunciations of Luther as an idolater are to so many of his fellow religious and common folk—often these leave the room or exit the Church before his sermon is completed—he is not deterred. He presses forward and exposes Luther most nakedly. "What does the mighty Luther worship as he stands naked in front of his concubine, his harlot—*Katherina*? Does he wag his revolting rooster's tongue at her and bellow her name as Holy Word? Does he worship *Katherina* as he does Jesus? As he once had Mary, Mother of God?" Then there arises the anticipated rumblings from his listeners, who at times some shout, "You blaspheme!" The friar is actually inspired by such a charge. "True," he fires back, "It is a matter of blasphemy! That is why Luther must suffer the Inquisition!"

Further indicment: "As priest Luther once consecrated the bread and the wine, and he delivered to you, worthless sinner, the Lord's blessed sacrament, the real and present body and blood of Christ! But now, he no longer consecrates at the altar...but upon the bed! He no longer places the host upon your tongue...but his tongue upon her flesh! He is no longer anointed and consecrated as a *priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek*...but after the order of *Katherina*!"

Friar Otto declaims that "These so-called *protestants* are not protesting *against* the sins of the Church"—he, himself, accepting the need for drastic reforms—"but protesting *for Her*." It is clear as a sunlit summer day that the heretical issue at hand is not so much intellectual or theological but practical. Luther, through his marriage, calls the sons of Adam to return to Egypt.

There, to celebrate the sacred sexuality rituals of the pagan gods and goddesses. “How else to understand the true import, not so much of his words but, of Luther’s actions? If he had remained celibate, if he had maintained his priestly witness to the revealed truth that men do not need women—as Adam lived in the Garden alone with the Father, as Jesus lived among us without a spouse—but that women need men for their redemption and salvation...if he held true to his anointment and consecration as priest, then all we would be arguing would be theology. But, as the Devil so cleverly plots—as Lucifer calls us to bow down and worship him!...so is Luther calling us to bow down and worship Her. No longer is Herr Luther one with us in the Body of Christ, no, no, never! He has chosen to worship another goddess. He does so every night as he lies down in his bed next to her in the flesh, Katherina...and dreams with her satanic dreams!”

All of his preaching and teaching, the friar constantly reminds them, is summed up in the words of the faithful sons who guide the Inquisition through the *Malleus*.

Now the wickedness of women is spoken of in Ecclesiasticus
XXV: *There is no head above the head of a serpent; and there is no wrath above the wrath of a woman...*All wickedness is but little to the wickedness of a woman. Wherefore, St. John Chrysostom says on the text, “It is not good to marry.”

Who to doubt Divine Providence? That what seems so much the triumph of the Devil is but the mystery of the Father’s Divine Will?

But know, as only suffering purifies, Friar Otto shivers deep in a recessed cave of his aging, weary heart. For he is troubled by his own weakness, his own inability to counter these devils—*Is Luther a more powerful warlock than I can counter ?*

Aarrgghh! The agony which is Friar Otto! How many had fallen before the serpentine cleverness—*True*, he admits, *he has his own type of brilliance—this Luther*. Coolly had Erasmus rationally and logically jousting with him, but this was not the Friar’s way.

Why has God chosen such a weak vessel as myself? The Friar’s endless lament is both confessional and resigned.

CHAPTER 14

Friar Otto realized upon his first hearing Sprenger discourse that the Inquisitor's battleground was both in the sunshine and in the dark. In the dark where dreaming so often reveals more about the sunlight than reasoning in the sunshine does about the Dark Night of the Soul's quest. Often, at night, to strengthen his mind and heart before venturing on the ethereal battlefield, Friar Otto reads, once again, the wise words of the *Malleus*.

But the natural reason is that she is more carnal than a man, as is clear from her many carnal abominations. And it should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man. And since through this defect she is an imperfect animal, she always deceives. For Cato says, "When a woman weeps she weaves snares."

Often, almost every night, he dreams about Luther's Black Mass. Through this dream he believes that he knows Luther better than Luther himself! Such is the blessing of mystical insight.

Luther's Black Mass. Never being other than able to lay himself upon her as he has lain his hands upon the altar. Never, other than being there, is he here, again consecrating. For how had the revelation come to him but in this way? That only upon her was the true Sacrifice of the Mass enacted. That while within her so had he grasped the truth of "the priesthood of all believers." Verily, while deep within her, did all that she did, all which was called lowly and domestic and housewifely—Just as with the Blessed Mary herself!—so has it been shown to him, this, a third Order of Creation. Inside her is not just his private, not just the appendage of his lower self. No! Never again! For his privy part was his tongue. Tongue of his Christic Body. And as Jesus Himself had suffered in His Body and so rose as the Christ, so does Martin, has Martin, will always Martin so humbly understand that it is in this way that the conversation with the Divine is held. How the Word is truly and fully spoken—*Incaratus est!*—while inside her.

Locked within the embrace of her legs and privy parts, he is all eyes and arms and breath and desire and will and sense—there dreaming and so One with Her and Him.

Oh! Sighing to himself, Martin slowly reaches out, touching a wayward strand of her hair. *Katherina sleeps.* Heavy breathing. Like his prized cow. It is an image which pleases him, makes him reflexively rub his stomach. For in his dreams he has mounted this cow...mounted and mounted and *mounted—again.* In his dreams, his rod never weakens, never shrinks and recedes away. *Katherina sleeps.* He breathes in the goldenness of her fulsome thick braids. His hands playfully wrap the ethereal lines of her body around his wrists: looping and wrapping like a child at aimless play. Stealthily, heat from her buttocks close to his knees blows a warmth backwards so cloaking his southern maleness. *Oh!* how he longs to wake her. To have her touch *him* again. Simply look into his eyes, touch his face, desiring to be *Moses striking water all day long!*

Katherina von Bora, now, Luther, heavy with the presence of him inside her, she goes about the evening's way...preparing supper, setting the table, setting out candles: ones thick and virginal, for him to read by...setting beside his chair: slippers, a blanket if a chill sets in...a glass of wine she pours, decanting and offering it from within herself. "Martin, I love you," does not need be spoken.

Martin sips his wine. His mind races, forming new doctrine.

Even in this dream, Friar Otto stoppers his ears, not to drink in the name—Katherina.

CHAPTER 15

Friar Otto walked around the University grounds until, from bird's-eye, he became part of the landscape, like a horse which had free reign to amble about eating whatever it liked. At first, so had his brain been sated by bookish hours—up and down, in and out of the shelves and the manuscript rooms, then sitting, stuck as if bound to his chair until he could eat no more—silently shouted: *no more words*, even beautifully illustrated words. *Especially artfully illustrated words!* So had he felt, not thought—as if just one more beautiful word of illuminated Scripture would cause a disabling mental indigestion...*no more!*

Words and vellum pages, the scribe's well of ink, the odor of leather bindings—all his research completed, assessing himself prepared for meeting *him*, the friar takes to walking, slowly pacing, meditating, around and about the quadrangle. He roams, he roves, he slows down but does not sit down, all day until meandering about under moonlight, forcing himself not to sleep. *Sleep! The Devil's trap!* All this intensity and rigor the discipline necessary, for he knows that *he* is coming—so had Mother Dolor told him through her haunting death!

Mother Dolor! Cousin. A kin. She whispering just that, “He is coming.” A gentle whisper, not a warning, just a statement of fact. As if saying, “After me, so does he come.” Her tone unsettled the Friar at the time since it was so familial, he sensing that she spoke to him as she would to a flesh and blood sibling—intimate and solicitous. Only after he had discerned her actual lineal connection did all this makes sense. Upon first hearing, he thought that she was just being demonically seductive—assuming an air of warm personal conversation with him. One to weaken him, soften his resolve. But upon discovering their ancestral bond, the friar knew that “he” was also one of the family. She whispering “he” as if saying, “My father” or “My elder brother” is coming to...? It was unclear back then. Did she mean to avenge? Or to offer more insight about her life and so the meaning of her death?

Humbled by this sweet offering of hers—for it was sweet in that she was, again on hindsight, speaking to him as if his sister—humbled, the Friar was ever ready to receive this foretold “he.” But in the year since her death, no other of his kin had attempted to reach him. This lack of contact burdened him as it made him question whether anything he had learned from Mother Dolor was in fact true.

As Friar Otto waited and pondered, he was acutely aware of how vicious controversy has stalked his every step, ever since he began preaching about Luther's idolatry. *Ah, the corruption of the Papacy!* Not just as Luther and his protesting gang judged, that it was a corruption of materiality, of buying indulgences. No, if only that. How easy to rectify such abuses! What no one seemed to have discerned was Luther's offense as being idolatry and not theological heresy. Except for a handful of his brother Inquisitors, no one else seemed open to this truth. But who else but his brethren of the *Hammer*? For only they were privy to the insights, even revelations, of the tortured truths that rolled off the lipless mouths of their Satanic penitents! *So be it!* the Friar says to himself. He accepts that God's revelation comes only through prophets and those willing to die for Him. Most certainly, he, himself, has always been willing to die for Him. Verily, such courage grounds his easy acceptance of assisting others to die for Him...be saved through torture, as Jesus Himself was tortured on the cross—Redeemed through the agony of crucifixion. *Via crucis! Via crucis!*

For the Friar, the singular, most precious truth that he took from torturing Mother was the insight it opened into Luther's idolatry and its correlate, the absolute depravity of the female body. Whether lusty like Katherina, upon whose succulent flesh Luther daily offered a Black Mass, or whether the ghastly beauty of Mother's tortured but ethereally revealing flesh, all such woman flesh was lurid.

Why?—this question was Friar Otto's "thorn in the flesh"—why does the Church, his fellow theologians, even the dissenters not quail and moan when he unveils the evilness of this idolatry? Why do they counter saying that Luther's sin is theological and not the mortally sinful violation of the First Commandment?

Oh, Friar Otto has preached and he has lectured. He has sat in withering debate with princes and paupers about the revelation unveiled through torturing Mother Dolor. What else is to be done? *Father, into thy hands, I commend my spirit!*

It was when in such a state of despondency, when so perplexed and so anguished, that the notice came. As was fitting, the Friar received this notice ethereally before the actual letter arrived. He knew it upon waking from a dream; without a doubt, for certain—*he* was coming, soon.

Mother Dolor: “She never denied!” The boldness of the matter. The utter peculiarity of the matter. The...*the*...it had to be faced...the *innocence* of the matter!

So it was, as it had to be.

He, with a serenity of voice, states, “A sweeter Innocent there never has trod upon this Earth.”

He could have said it as indictment. He could have thrown it down as a lid holding back a great anger. He could have shouted, damning the friar.

A sweeter Innocent there never has trod upon this Earth.

Friar Otto could have handled anger.

Hatred.

Cursing.

Threat.

What he couldn't handle is what he got—the truth. *Simple truth.*

“What is it you monks are so fond of saying, *Simplicitas*?”

The Friar is chastened. *Has the Lord allowed him to read my mind? Taste my fears?*

Inwardly, silently, Friar Otto prays, “Lamb of God...Who Taketh Away the Sins of the World, Have Mercy on Me!”

He has not yet determined an answer: *Does the friar know about the family's privilege?*

As Friar Otto anticipated, *he* has come as the Devil's Own. As an agent of forces that seek to undo his Inquisitorial work. How else to launch the final, most insidious attack against him but to make it all a family matter? Like Cain and Abel in sibling battle, *To thrust and twist the sword dagger back into my own heart?* Although the Friar had never met *him*, he knew enough about his own family's long and colorful history to fear meeting one of his own, especially one such as this. Verily, the Friar had prepared to meet and look upon Gerald Joseph von Frakken and confront a kindred spirit, one however who was a powerful secular and not a monastic figure. *Why, then, him? Not a family Abbott?* But although rigorously prepared, the Friar still couldn't control his heartfelt anxiety. For meeting with someone of his feted stature,

one with such a renown worldly and supreme intellectual reputation— *Lord!*, *I am not worthy, say but the word ...!*

The friar must know?

Gerald, for near three decades now, has been aware of the growing controversy that rages around his Inquisitor cousin. *Extraordinary mystic!* to some. *Heretic!* to others *Lord Almighty, the plight of these crazed and fanatically self-righteous Inquisitors!* There were more than a few in the family's line—present and historical—who took to excess, but few like this alleged mystic friar. Once called by the family elders and informed that this kin friar would be one of his special concerns, he had reasonably expected to sight some details of physical resemblance—the familial deep blue-eyes with the dot of red, or the slight stuttering so many had, or even the smooth roundness of the earlobes. He had expected to find Friar Otto, baptized as *Frantz* and born a von Frakken, to bear a fair resemblance. But—*Lord Almighty, have mercy!*—he wasn't prepared to look upon his cousin and espy a twin face, as if looking into a mirror! Of course, as expected the friar was younger, *expected*, but unnerving was the fact that he is clearly Gerald's *doppelganger!* There is an immediate, ethereal, definitely mystical and numinous connection that they share—*possibly twin souls?* Their minds and hearts speak even when their lips are at rest. *Is the friar aware of this as I am?* This astonishing shared identity catches Gerald not only by surprise but sends a shiver down his spine. This, to the one who was accustomed to be the shiver-sender, not receiver.

“*Otto*—if you can indulge me, I'd prefer our simple names.”

How could the Friar object? He had not attacked him, beat him or killed him—what was this minor irreverence in proportion to the whole matter? *Anxious.*

The Friar nods, accepting.

Gerald stands and strides the two steps that were count to the fireplace.

Gerald warms his hands, pauses momentarily to toss over his shoulder, “What do you think about our Pope?” This was not a serious matter, so Otto knows, just the chit-chat of clerics. His cousin's ease with this clerical chatter adds to his tension—*He's ever as smart as rumored!* Otto saw through his wiles, but he did not hesitate a moment to engage him—*Let him think his worm has hooked the fish!* As such, he lets himself be led through twenty minutes or so of

bantering back and forth of opinions, gossip, and half-truths, giving Gerald what he wanted, a sense that Otto was relaxing, letting down his guard.

The Pope—a corrupt scion of the Medicis—was always an easy target as no one seemed ever pleased about anything the papacy did or proclaimed. The Pope and a bit of laughter about the oddities of other Orders or Societies or a tale of monastic misadventure was ever acceptable fare. As the Friar also expected, Gerald exposed a worldly mind as he spoke about globe-circling adventures on the wide ocean that girdled the world. He was obviously a skillful leader among the bold explorers and inventors who were numerous in both the history and current ventures of the extended von Frakken family. The Friar had even heard it argued, quite heatedly with beer steins clashing, that a von Frakken had been to the “new world” that Columbus claimed to have *discovered*. This, Gerald also makes a telling point, that “The family, with our Norse connections, was trading there—our grand-grand-grandfathers. It took a stupid Mediterranean to puff up and proudly claim that he “discovered India” where India was not!” Gerald laughs heartily. The friar waits patiently. *When will he begin?*

“Magellan has sailed around the world. The Pope—Alexander, that stupid man—*May he rest in peace!*—impossible man—divided the world in two! Between those whimpering sucklings—Spain and Portugal. Blessed Mother, what is to be done? Does not God sail on ships? *My ships?*”

Somehow this was Gerald’s conclusion as to matters trivial, for then he asks, with a quite inquisitive, prying tone, “Otto, what did you expect to discern through torturing her?” A short pause, and “What do you know about women?”

The Friar had quickly gotten lost amidst the trivial ramblings of this, his distant, cousin. But it was their common heritage, their shared blood-name of von Frakken, that made him pay attention since he knew that nothing spoken about today would remain trivial. Of note, it was the question of second offering which, as was intended, struck more than a bit of anxious terror into his heart. *What do you know about women?*

The Friar is not forthcoming, and, as if this was also anticipated, Gerald kept moving towards his objectives.

“As it is, let me return. Do you know our heritage. *Our shared family privilege?*”

The Friar's soundlessness was full answer, as was his noiseless fingering of several decades of Rosary beads.

Gerald bites his lower lip. *Hmm, such timidity...or is it artful caginess?*

“*Women.* The von Frakkens are all about women. That is why you are an Inquisitor, true?” Gerald pauses. The Friar's blank-eyed stare sends an unnerving quiver of doubt up and down, throughout his body. Without words, he thunders, *Don't mock me!* Oddly, the friar remains mute, his bodily posture also not sending out reactive or responsive messages. It is Gerald's turn to stare blank-eyed, *You don't hear me, do you?*

He attempts another approach. “What did torturing my niece achieve?”

“God's glory,” as if rote catechetical answer; snapped and sharply spoken.

“True. But God aside. *Can you put God aside?*” The Friar's empty stare was ever-steady. “Hmm,” and a tug on his whitening beard.

Attack! Straight to the matter!

“When you looked upon her body—you didn't *touch* her, did you?” Here *touch* is freighted with all the nuances of sexuality and intercourse. Gerald was not so much curious as he wanted assurance that the Friar was as mystically blind and dumb as he appeared to be.

Never! Soundless with fingertips pressed against his priestly eyes.

Once mentally uttered, the Friar places his hands upon his face; a gesture of...? Gerald hears his internal anguish. *A lie? Can an Inquisitor lie? Is protecting the power of the Black Mass upon her body, a lie? How else to conjure Satan but to possess her body as the Evil One does Himself? Only we, culled from the flock and sanctioned by the papal Bull, only we hold and can protect this ritual! Bah, what is this “shared family privilege”? What could it be but another work of Lucifer?*

It is shockingly clear to Gerald that the Friar is not aware of their mutual potential and his ability to read each other's mind? Or, *Is he being even more artful? Is his mention of the Black Mass a tact of misdirection? Hmmm.*

“I never touched her.” Hands on his lap. Face blanched and tense, teeth slightly clenched. *Great lie! Lord on High, he did touch her! Deo gratias, there is some hope, after all.*

The night came to separate them. Not that the Friar wanted to sleep, but that Gerald lighted a candle, yawned deeply and sonorously, and simply left the room.

On his knees, from whence the Friar would soon near-faint upon his straw mattress as the demons of dreaming tugged at him, he beseeches his God. *If he had asked, I would have told him. She was not a witch. I would have said that, dear God, Father Almighty—this I confess. This I beg forgiveness for.*

He blesses himself multiple times.

“She did not deny.” I confess this. To him. To you O Almighty Father! Crush me, worm of a man, the weakest of your priestly sons, I am not worthy, not worthy....

Likewise on his knees, in a cell half-way across the monastic enclosure, Gerald ethereally hears the friar’s plaints. He is pleased to now know the prized character of his cousin’s soul. That he has touched her, lain with her, ritually coupled in the sacred intercourse of the Black Mass—this, proof that he is a von Frakken, proof that it is right for both of them to be here. Gerald offers a prayer of intercession—not imploring the Lord nor the Mother of God but—to Mother Dolor, “Come!”

Despite all the Friar’s fanatically disciplined Inquisitorial efforts to prevent and protect himself from serpentine dreaming, she comes. Slipping through the smallest of tiniest of infinitesimal cracks in his dreamy tiredness. He still kneels, body leaden, defying gravity...but she enters...kneels next to him...the wispiest odor of sanctity.

“I love you, My Sweet Torturer. God has not granted me to know your name, but I do know your soul. I do know your heart. For with such fervor did you torture me. With such strength of heart did you plunge into every aspect of me. It is you who know me, have explored and possessed my every part. My every fold of flesh. My every breath of desire. My every aspect, myself all foul, myself all beautiful. For it was you who made me wholly beautiful, and it is my holy Redeemed Beauty I now offer to you. Make me whole within myself!”

With a slowly cascading crash to the floor no pain is felt, though his nose slightly bleeds and the numbness erupting from his left hand floods and denies him the sense of having half of his body.

In his mind's eye he is not fallen. He is not dreaming. He is lashing himself with an iron-pellet tipped whip. Flailing and slashing and gouging...which pain deadens him to the Devil's Torment— *Friar Otto sleeps.*

“What do you know about women?”

The unnerving question again. This time outside, while strolling through the cruciform garden behind the University's chapel, tracing the “Twelve Stations of the Cross.” As if a Sabbath visitor, at the thirteenth station where Jesus is taken down from the Cross and limply rests in the arms of his Mother, they both pray out loud, “Stabat Mater Dolorosa...” *Dolorosa* chills the friar as never felt before at this Station.

As they pause, having completed their veneration of His Passion, Friar Otto looks directly into Gerald's intense blue-eyes, not pausing to consider the oddity of the fleck of redness that pulsates at his left eye's edge, and states, “*Women are the root of evil.* What else is there to know?” Doctrinal confidence. Dogmatic certitude.

“Splendid.” Gerald picks up the pace of their indulgent stroll.

Both von Frakkens enjoy the late morning's repast prepared for Gerald, being replete with a variety of fruits and vegetables reserved only for dignitaries. The Friar eats sparingly. Despite their several conversations, he yet remains uncertain about his cousin's ultimate purpose. He, initially, had expected a quick condemnation and some type of punishment. Over the years, just a few times, he has been praised by a bishop or a theologian. But the clerical and theological attacks—*Withering!*—upon him have so greatly increased of late that he was beyond certain that this intercession by a family elder only foreboded trouble. But, now, all he really senses is a bit of confusion.

From both tiredness and a need to stand on solid ground, to assuage his anxiety, the Friar bluntly asks, “Why are you here? What do you want of me?”

As forthright, Gerald says, calmly, “I am here to discern whether you have taken advantage of the family's privilege. And if not, why not?” Pause, to reload, “Tell me, in Jesus' name, do you know about our privilege?”

No. “No!”

The Friar is momentarily taken aback by how taken aback Gerald is. His bodily recoil and furrowing of brow and tensed eyes...now noticing the glint of red that pulsates out from the lower left corner of his left eyelid, for it is quite rapidly flickering...these perplex the Friar.

Then, with eyes shut and lips moving in silent prayer, Gerald slowly blesses himself. He settles serenely into the moment, opens his eyes and speaks with a professorial tone. “As it is, then, dear cousin, listen to me.”

The incredible story that unfolds as Gerald speaks truly amazes Friar Otto. While part of him engages Gerald as a student would his teacher, the Inquisitor-within is tracking the clever and deceptive storyline. If he were to believe his cousin, then most of what he has been taught about God’s plan for humankind, the one laid out from Genesis in the Old Testament to Revelation in the New Testament was, “Not to be discarded. Our challenge is to interpret it properly.”

The Friar wanted to ask, “What is proper?” but before he could speak, his cousin was onto his next point.

Frak! Gerald recounts the worldwide travels of prior generations of von Frakkens. “The most ancient story goes back to a venerable ancestor simply called Frak. It is related that he was the first to meet the Nephi, the lost tribe of Israel. Why there is a lot that has probably been lost through oral tradition...and the scrolls bear the errors of human hand both in translation and transcription...the main point is key.”

Despite himself, the Friar is fascinated.

“Here,” and Gerald places two stones: each, a man’s foot tall and squat like a farmer’s muscled arm, places these one on each side of the friar, whom Gerald asks to sit on the ground in a meditative posture. “Here are the most ancient of stones. It is said that Moses hewed the commandment tablets from the same quarry. These, which are called Um and Thum—we’re not sure if there are just these two or more, but just these as our family’s heritage. Interpreting with these stones is our privilege.”

Privilege?

Friar Otto is quietly but fervently, almost feverishly, silently and repetitively chanting *Lord have mercy on me!* This, while listening with his rational mind as his cousin sets forth a most fabulous tale, certainly one demonic at its core. The Friar holds firm to the biblical truth

that one tribe of Israel was “lost” and *never found*—to claim such, *What foolishness! What devilry!*

In this manner, as the earnest and well-intentioned words of Gerald flow like warm honey, to the Friar’s ears all his phrases and sentences slowly drift off into a droning sound, like the buzzing of a hive under attack. While immersed in this sonorous humming, Friar Otto simultaneously feels....how to phrase it?...a puff of air or like someone is panting behind him, breathing on his neck, or as the buzzing gets more intense, a vibration like the deep basso that Friar Magnus unleashes during Passion Week as Jesus expires upon the cross. This is a primal, guttural groan that impacts the Friar’s body, whipping his robes into small gusts, sending goosebumps riotously up and down his arms, across his chest, in time, forcing his mind to shut down thoughts, and

Gerald can readily see that the Um and Thum have Friar Otto solidly within their hold. He also is confident that the friar is now being inculcated with knowledge and wisdom beyond anything he has ever previously learned. The question remains—only to be answered by his actions—whether the Friar will allow the revelations of Um and Thum into his conscious mind—only the Friar, himself, can do that. *Will he believe what he has experienced? Will his Christian beliefs continue to blind him?*

Gerald’s answers come quickly. Upon asking, “How do you feel?” Friar Otto says, “You asked me to sit here, so I’m sitting here. *Waiting.*”

Can it be? Were the elders wrong? Can he not be one of the chosen?

In another moment—but this time one of his own disruptive insight—Gerald realizes that he has not been listening to the friar’s mind. That somehow their ethereal connection has been broken! *How?*

“What is this all about?” Friar Otto asks, not indignantly but with a bit of snap in his tone. He points to the stones. “Are these demon stones? Are you here to tempt me, dear cousin?”

Gerald is more perplexed than annoyed. He had anticipated, especially when their minds ethereally linked—*At least mine did?!—*that matters would move quickly. He had never witnessed the failure of Um and Thum. *Or is it that I have failed? Failed to grasp what these precious treasures are revealing through this most curious friar?*

“I stated before that we von Frakkens are all about women. And I asked whether it was true that that is why you became an Inquisitor. What is your answer, at this time?”

Suddenly emboldened, with words easily issuing forth to convey his mind and heart, “I am about ridding the Earth of women so that Paradise might be restored. Is this the *privilege* you speak of?”

Gerald wants to be incensed, wants to spit scorching words to melt the friar’s flesh, but such is denied to him as he is reeling inside, trying to put his ethereal self on steady ground. *He knows!* It comes to him. *Oh, Lord have mercy! He knows and he is controlling me. Using the Um and Thum to blank my mind!*

Lord have mercy! Yet somehow—it is bewilderingly evident—the Friar does not appear to be conscious of what he himself is doing. Gerald struggles mightily...quickly grabs the numinous stones and sets himself down between them. He lets their familiar vibrations deliver him from the confines of time and space. *Ah!* He settles down, senses his mind and heart opening on a cosmic dimension. He looks at Otto and continues his professorial lecturing.

“Women. As I said, this is what I’ve come to discuss with you. To understand. As from the most ancient of times our women have given to us males, children. For this, we care for them. Without children our dreaming could not continue. Do you understand, here, why Adam could dream?”

The Friar offers no answer.

“It’s because She was already there. Before Eve came. Giving birth to Eve as She and He coupled as Adam dreamed.”

“Cousin. I hear your heart and mind but, verily, your thoughts roll strange to me.”

Gerald does not pause to ask about *strange*. Artfully, he simply lofts a winking smile, and continues.

“From Hannover we dream the world. We do so because we are one with our women, who empower us to dream new beginnings, new births. Our ships fly under many flags, but it is the singularity of our dream, the strength of our dream which is creating this New World as the Old enters its own End Time. What drives our exploration, what is the itch we must scratch, is the yearning of the mother within us that seeks to be *pregnant*...pregnant with new dreams, of

new lands, of new people, of new ideas—marvelous inventions. It is our women whose bodies are our maps. Have you not seen the maps?”

In an almost sensate flash, a memory awakens in the Friar’s mind. Gratefully, Gerald shares in the remembering. *Years before. Seeming ages, now. As a youth, before they committed him to the Order, back then, taken aside, woken late in the night, shaken from his slumber, wordlessly led to the room, a room of unforgettable light, not day bright, not moon-lit, not torched, rather a seething brightness, where his family—not doubting that they were all his family—had shown the map. Not explained, not described, just shown...its details meant nothing to him, symbols and imagery which raised no correspondences in his mind. Oh, I was so young! But he would forever remember—as odd to the dress of the times all were robed in white and the map glowed. Men and women brightly haloed. He also still sees the map in his mind, yet all of that night ever remaining but mystery, even confusion. This confounding night adventure was a parting gift as shortly thereafter he left home to become a Dominican postulant.*

This dream was Satan’s Own, the Friar now has no doubt. For it came only one more time since....only once before this present moment, back during his torture of Mother Dolor!

Aha! Truly! Verily! Gerald, as doppelganger in mind and soul, shares the friar’s mystical memories and ponderings. It is quite evident, and he thrust the words at Friar Otto, “Fie! You *do* know.”

Awake! It is like the lost key once found that finally opens the impenetrable door to the treasure room. Just this affirming phrase “You do know” unlocks the Friar’s mind and heart on the ethereal plane and all at once all that has transpired today and over the last several days, like stormy, tree uprooting winds, a feeling, a vibration of basso profundity rocks his brain—the Friar strongly clasps his head....then it is evident—from out of the left bottom side of his left eye flickers a glint of red!

“You know *all*?”

“I know as you know. All that *we* know.”

We knowing that he penetrated her in the Black Mass ritual, that he lied believing he was lying to Satan which was not a sin so not a lie, and that he knew that Mother Dolor was not a witch.

“You knew.”

“*We* knew.”

How is Friar Otto to balance all of this? To be mystically coupled with his dear cousin and still walk the Earth? *Can I sustain all that I now know? Lord have mercy!*

Mercy comes on reassuring words. “My dear cousin, God, our Father and Mother, has sent me to test you like Job. In that way, I am a son of Satan as you so feared.” Gerald smirks and loosens a short guffaw. “Know that Mother Dolor was, in truth, protected by the family privilege. You could not kill her. She was here to give you new birth.” Gerald raises a hand to halt the friar’s response. “You are Lazarus. Your faith is to be tested with a second chance, with a new life.”

The innocence of Mother Dolor, which was so tangible to Friar Otto as he had gazed upon her savaged cadaver, had haunted him back then—it returns now. *Was I too prideful? Did I commit Adam’s sin and deny Eve’s naked revelation, that she is Mother?*

“You know now this as answer and not question.”

“Why did I not recognize myself in her, my kin? *Before I...?*”

Salvation and forgiveness, neither is bought cheaply, this the Friar knows, but he is beyond desperation, trusting not even his own self. He blurts out to his cousin, “I buried her in sacred ground.”

“A daring gesture!” *We honored you then, as we do now, dear brother.*

“Blasphemous, if the others had known. *Ha.* You would have been handed over to the Inquisition! *Ha.*”

“True. Verily, the Lord be praised. Thank you Father for your mercy. I had asked myself *Why?* But I had no answer. I just knew that she was Innocent. That she was the Christ Child slaughtered by my Herodian hand! It was I who was the Devil’s Minion! I who was not priest but crucifier!”

Gerald, “We were there as you planted the rosebush at her graveside. It was then that I was called to tend to you.”

Later, after an early evening's repast, Gerald informs the friar that he leaves on the morrow. "Open yourself, my dear brother—for we are twin brothers now, not cousins—to what I have to say and what she will bring to you tonight as you dream."

Twin brother—he could not hear Gerald as Friar Otto, for his monkish ears were blocked by all the wrongheadedness of his Inquisitorial past, so he listened as twin brother—*unnamed*.

Curious, but true!

"There is a New World, my dear brother. Learn, there are *only* New Worlds! That is what we von Frakkens are about. We are the dreamers. We are the map-makers. Do you know whose maps *that* blockhead Genoese read? *Ha!* We had to draw the course for him. And Magellan—who else? Where have all the marvels and inventions of this Age of Discovery come from? The Teutonic mind, our soul! Gutenberg. Behaim. Durer. Bosch. Waldseemuller. Even Luther. *Can you hear the charming song of all these martins?*" Gerald is relishing his charming pun, offsetting his brother with a bellowing beer-hall outburst...a roar, teary-eyed guffawing; a snorting snuffle.

The Friar catches the laughter, but only mildly succumbs to its humor.

"We are dreamers who must be off to dream! Forsooth! Good eve and fare thee well, my brother, as our paths shall never cross again." Gerald gets up to leave, halts after one stride, turns back, reaches out and embraces his brother. "We will always be twin brothers as we dream!" With that, both men retire to their cells.

My body is for you. My body is you. As you have denied, so have I opened. My breasts are goddess breasts, nurturing the world. I am the Earth. You are the Earth. My thighs are fiery hills. Mounds which light up the hunger of humankind. The lustful hunger and wandering. All seek my cave. To enter into my mysteries. It is you, Sweet of Heart, who has entered my cave. Penetrated me and transformed me. Sacrificed me. Offered me up—held me like the elevated Host. For this, know that I am you. You are me.

Am I awake to the day? "Am I awake to the day?" The thought is thought and the words are sounded, testing if all that has transpired between him and cousin Gerald was *real or a dream...but which is what?* Stymied, but only momentarily, as it becomes readily apparent that it

takes more than some simple adjustment to adapt to the fading of the boundary between sleeping and waking. *Am I awake in my dreaming? Or dreaming myself awake?*

Waking...whether in dream or sunshine, does it really matter? “Sleeping” also means “awakening”, a rising up to a new way of seeing the world about him, the world of dream and the world of day time. It is being this awake that he flees *towards*—for She is there, always and everywhere, in his wakefulness.

Awake! It is with *Her* eyes that he now sees. Her feet with which he now walks. Her desire with which he is now all afire.

For he knows, definitely, what Gerald’s Um and Thum revealed—that her body was the map of the old world, of the Old Way—forsooth, she was a powerful Witch! That is why she did not deny. It was her glory! And her damnation—which was her salvation! *Lord...MOTHER, have mercy!*

As drawn by the fires within himself, so is he drawn to the fire within Her. Fire unto fire to purge and purify, to melt down and raise to casting heat, so is he come to Her. Within Her numinous womb, the once named Friar Otto...Otto...Frantz...all von Frakken...merge, integrate, are mystically One.

Dreaming. Now he laying upon the rack where she had lain. He now tied as she was chained. He now being purged of all that was her within him. *Her*, here, being that of women, of the feminine that accepted being the Virgin Mother of God—not a goddess, not a Mother Goddess, only less, being a handmaiden, the human mother of a god. She now to root that out and through their copulation turn what he thought a Black Mass into a sacramental act of sacred intercourse, of the birthing of a new soul...of a male who has within him a fully divine female. Mother Dolor chose her name mystically aware of the terrible victories Satan was indeed having within Christianity, most importantly, within her own family line. That by denying the full goddess motherhood of Jesus, so was His divinity denied! Willingly, she had come as so many of her sisters—accompanied by a few mystically empowered males—they, as bewitching, enchanting, and dream altering daughters of the Mother, sisters of Jesus...to awaken their Fallen brothers and sisters to the presence of the Mother within them. This Mother Dolor transmitted to her torturing cousin as they embraced in deeply erotic, numinous penetration as she died to give him birth! Behold, the *Pieta!*

“It has been passed down. Our women know it without being told. That is why Dagmar entered the convent. *To find you. To serve you. To be your Mother. To Mother your sorrows upon her flesh and reveal to you the Mother within. Mother Dolor. Mater dolorosa.*”

As Gerald walks away from the University’s grounds, he calls upon the love of all mothers, earthly and celestial, to be with this still youthful soul as he knows what is yet set before his awakening cousin. “May the Mother nurse you with Her bountifulness. May you be reborn to do Her Will.”

Awake! “Friar Otto must die!”

CHAPTER 14

Friar Otto must die! The thought is less clear than is the beating of his heart—a heart which must stop...then beat again, all the time being the same while being different. It was clear to—*Whom am I?* He could only find comfort in his baptismal name, Frantz. It is evident that Friar Otto was a mask—a momentary memory of the Prior's world, of Frantz's monastic investiture where he was renamed. No! *Re-masked!*

It is all so clear in his heart although his head still reels. *I have always been Frantz, will always be, but mine is a journey of masks.* He smiles broadly and heaves a relaxing sigh as he realizes that all Gerald had given him was his next mask!

After he left the University, Frantz went up to the ancestral home, not to engage others of his family, no, he didn't have a pressing need to meet any other von Fakkens in the flesh. Rather, he simply wanted to be imbued with its air—to float around the geographical site while moving through the astral plane. There, to deepen what the Um and Thum had endowed him with—the realization that She is everywhere.

What Frantz hears as he wanders is that the Hannover of Gerald von Frakken is not the Hannover of Hunnic lore. While it was a name on certain maps, it existed more fully as a spectral site for the gathering of higher souls, notably, those of the family whom he has come to ethereally identify as “Magi.”

Magi—who, before the wondrous story of Three Wise Men seeking the Child in the Manger became so much a nursery fairy tale—well before that time, the Magi roamed the Earth seeking. What or who they were seeking is told in many tales and many names. What was common to all, however, was the journey, the hunt, the voyage—chasing, following, being lost by some star, again, star being revealed more as a presence than as a thing, better grasped as a light, but one without a source, or at least a knowable source.

The voyage being upon an ocean, yet, not one just of water or even of land but of that which is fathomless, describing the venturing forth upon the lips of the unknown—whose terror and bliss could be made present through a slurp: sudden, oceanic swift lick sucking into soundless oblivion or in the blink of an eye crashing over the horizon and being cast forth into another dimension: a new land of strange people and creatures while being stranger as their

mystical story unfolds. For the Magi tales are replete with a sense of the wild abandon of the universe, of a cosmos of and beyond the sky and stars. Stories are told of other worlds from which humans came, even some from inside the Earth, while others bursting forth from shooting stars. *Ah*, already Frantz is voyaging through numinous realities!

Yet, as is fitting, it is in a dream, just three days after Gerald left, that Frantz's voyage began in time and eternity.

"Am I dead?"

"Dead to so many things. This is the only way to be alive!"

"I am dead."

"Verily."

"You know the world is round."

He chokes back his reflexive, "Impossible!" More, "Stupid!"

"It is this roundness which is your new life."

Nothing is making sense. *Take me...Take me— who is there to take me?*

"She was the Final Revelation. Do you understand?"

His face is frozen and blank: chiseled.

"She was Sin. As the Great Biblical Story tells it."

Silence.

"But you rid the world of that Sin. *You* have issued in a new world, a new spiritual dimension."

Incomprehensibility.

"*You* are Magus."

vOYAGE: O'SIDE. When Frantz walked up the gangway, his garb tagged him as a *passenger*. Not as a child of wealth, but one of position: educated, more than likely, a burgher. The crew gives way, parts, steps aside with a deference he has truly never known, so now knew nothing of.

The Captain decorously crosses the deck to welcome his new “Geographer! At last, we can ship off!”

Sharp commanding sounds and fiercely slammed curses and hammered oaths soil the air as the first jerk of the sea came: swallowing him, drowning him, washing him away from *wherever* he had been just moments ago. Now to push, thrust—propel, impel, compel him out onto the boundless bowl of tears.

“*Terra incognita*,” the Geographer says to his fast beating heart—“Be brave, my heart. Be bold!” As he steadies himself Gerald’s words, his statement of a fact that had only been rumor to Frantz, now gives him the strength to not jump overboard and swim back to shore—“The earth is round!”

Looking back. Not at a spot. Not at something exact or specific. Just at some point off the upper deck, not even curious about all the things so strange and alien. No, just staring at what is writ large in the clouds—*Friar Otto Mother Dolor*... watching these words as the names and the body-mind-heart-soul attached to each dies—dissipates, dissolves as the sun hisses and boils and spits and gurgles as the moon rises.

CHAPTER 15

Geographer! The call and sound came often. Once at least at sunrise, midday and sunset. It was the Captain's habit—a nervous habit, a pestering habit—to want to know if, “On course? Steady?” At all times, it was for Frantz to answer and be the modulator of the crew's collective breathing. *Beyond here lie dragons!*

Frantz is also comfortable with his name as with his occupation. But neither in terms of past comforts where names and positions permeated him with a feeling of unity and fullness. Not as “Otto” and “Friar” had been, but, nevertheless, a comfortableness—which meant on one level that he stood on the upper deck and did not feel compelled to cast himself overboard!

“Geographer!”

At one moment he had thought of it as heaven—except for the lack of clawing flames he realized it might also be hell, but it was heaven—as heaven in that he was a disembodied spirit, a possessor of his fleshly mask, a consciousness riding upon the senses as this boat pressed through water and air: there was a thickness which was real—indeed, one which was most real during the bouts of fog, especially the deep banks ... it was inside himself that they sailed, and as he lost sight of others on the boat, as he lost sight of the boat, only feeling it alive to his blind touch upon a railing or a steadying spar, as he lost sight so he saw: peered with the eyes of the fog, became the fog, an engulfing lightlessness, and all which had been, stayed just there as “been,” a past, for it was not the past which the fog saw but the future, a future with its unknowableness yet its absolute knowableness as it exists as the boundary of the right-now; so was the fog, it was *right-now*.

“Are we steady?” Pipe stem cracking under the question. Frantz wondered how his teeth stood yet solid.

“*Steady.*” Frantz has come to know that this is all that need be said. It makes him laugh, to himself, under his serious chin, delivering this comfort and knowing it as a lie, for Frantz has no idea where they are truly going. “Geographer, indeed!” he has railed at himself often in silent dialogue. But it was so. He didn't want to question the how. Didn't want to press too far back into the face of Gerald, a face pressing back at him as if his own.

But he knows. Knows how to plot by the stars. Knows how to read the swells of the ocean and the layering of the clouds. Knows how to wield iron instruments which he had never once before held, feeling them—this a comfort truly his own—feeling them like the cold instruments of Inquisitorial Torture: nothing as comforting as the compass, as if his secret weapon, with which to torture “Steady!” from out of the Void, the Chaos; wearing a compass strung around his neck, always . . . Frantz knows this connection with an amused snicker: a renegade pleasure played out between lips and cheek, but knows it more in his consciousness as the weight of these *kin* creations: playing them up and down, lightly tossing them from right to left, left to right, extending his arm and positioning a sextant at an arm’s full length—it is in such moments that he knows: knows that he has always *known how*.

That it is his heritage to know; bestowed patrimony.

The first months were majestic. Everything was so curiously novel and alien, so terrifyingly unusual. The splash of the ocean on rough days gave him to grasp what his fellow mates never articulated: that the ocean was drinking them, had drunk them, and it was swirling them around as one does strong wine against a bad tooth.

Monsters!

Frantz came to know the world not as round but as wet. He did not need to ply his measuring rods nor even the tenets of a reasoning mind, rather, he just knew: the wet was larger than the dry. At such a moment he knew his dying as Gerald had so desired.

Then there was the land. In its trickery as lands. Trickery, for Frantz sensed that the delights or terrors of weather: the heat of some islands, the frosty blast of hail storms—all these did not change the humans who lived upon the land. While their languages fascinated him; their food equally pleasuring and sickening, their dress and bizarre actions, customs baffling him—underneath he knew they all practiced the same rituals.

He alone would have stated it as such—alone for there were none on the ship, certainly not the steadily agitated Captain who so peered—no, he stated it to *them*. Talking in his mind as if addressing them: with Gerald foremost among them. To them his observations were instant, and what he knew they wanted was to know about the rituals, and so he spoke: of burnings—of fruit and vegetables and bewitching stones like incense; of sacrifice—of animals and captured

foes and first-borns: but of human sacrifice he had only heard, never allowed to observe, but the tales were told too frequently to be wrong, so Frantz believed. But of all these, it was the ritual of sexual coupling that he knew was his special mission, knew it as he had known himself instantly upon the call, “Geographer!”

“Geographer,” the peculiar word hard and half-broken upon his lips, but Frantz follows.

Past some buildings. Down some paths. Across some brush and stream. It was like they were tracking, hunting where the moonlight was shining down. The old man who had called him was a chief, maybe even the head chief, but that mattered little. He was “the one,” as in each place so had such a one come forward and contacted him, led him, and delivered him to discover that which he had journeyed to find.

Into a hut. An opening. Anywhere: just an opening *into*.

With a great sigh Frantz parts the thick netting beyond which is his fate—chosen one, high priest, Wiz...*map maker*.

Candle light wavers splotches of light—under one splotch is her: maiden, young, with golden comb in her hair, a flash of red lip and upon her eyes: not dazzling, not distinct of color, but an abyss of invitation...Frantz docks his body and his soul sets sail.

The morning brings him her slight breathing against his ear. He awakens but she sleeps. A child’s light sleep. A dreamy enticement still alive upon her buttery face. *Ah!* Frantz is shaken upon this wakening: “*Steady!*” calls throughout his own mind. For there is about this woman: full woman he has no doubt, though of her age he could not count clearly ... about this woman—so many others: given to him, he quickly came to know, most often with derision, trickery—throwing at him, in the cavernous pitch, an ugly face or a bloated body, never without paint and jangle of charms, often with rotting breath heavily fragranced, betraying: the clutch of one who has spent her time being a common bowl which is daily mixed by spoons she can no longer count.

But this one!

Steady.

His reports were, at first, about them: describing them with a geographer's eye: the rise of her chest, the bend and curve and play of flesh around hip and legs, legs like hilly islands or skinny peninsulas or supple beeches swaying in a peppy wind...in full description: the taste of their breasts, the hunger of their lips, the yielding of their womanly mouths, the swimming up and down their backs and backsides and the tickling of their feet...but he knew more, knew what it was he was charged to discover, and so he set about as if his own body was the quill: faithful to this reportage: deeply would he plunge within her, testing her, finding out how she received him, what it was she wanted to have *from* him—was it terror, fear, submission, a moment of blind servitude or freedom, liberation, redemption—happiness? He knew that he was an instrument... of cold spiritual iron.

All this an instant report about this strange people, about their heart, how much of a threat they were, what it is they were seeking upon the earth, the power of their gods and goddesses ... inside her was this discovery: she the map, he, faithful and fate-filled Geographer of the Inner Journey...knowing now his body, as it could never have been known by Otto, knowing it as what he had conjured up that instant filled with his final torture of Mother Dolor: a knowing which could not have been *back then*: for all that was his with her, back then, was the burying, here, it was a burying of himself in her, her as alive: her as his body and blood.

However she was presented to him, so did Frantz take her. Most often what he found was what he had already discovered at prior landings. That the cup was shallow. That the fire was barely above an ember. That the holes in her body were not caves to explore but mere devices to quicken his manly pleasure and then snap shut.

But not with *this* her. Looking at her. Flesh, a mixture of color not quite definable. But that wasn't the issue. For her people, the males of her group, were boisterous and loud and given to much physical contact: to great hugs and lifting of bodies upon greeting, to the flinging of their bodies into aimless bouts of wrestling, to clashing large gongs and blowing screechy horns as they drank their "demon drink"—How else to report it?—and became even more rowdy and boastful and fired up into clouds of frenzied dancing...all this but yet no violence, not a fight nor a single blood-drop spotting the ground, not bashings with cane or sword or chasing away with a hail of rocks...all day this male bumping and thumping and melee, but issuing into a placid calmness of night.

Now, Frantz knows why!

She had whispered her name, a simple name: repetitive sound; odd because it was more sound than name, but which he accepted as her name, not even thinking that it might be a made-up word or sound, but it was clear that she was giving him...*something: Da-da-da*. Not throughout the night did Frantz call her name: for it was a name as secret gift, the first she gave to him. This he had never experienced before. He was totally swept up. He knew his name only as hers. At a later date he understood that she had swallowed him: totally and consummately devoured.

Upon her he laid, quickly, as he had with so many. Doing so—even now—to get past the night: with practiced clutch he pins her—yet, with the grace of tears falling she slips away from under him. Before he can gather his wits, she is all hands within him, not just upon him brushing his hair and caressing his cheeks—although this she does do—but inside him, touching inside him with her eyes, eyes which now still betray no color but which fixate him: he feels like the worm upon the hook but it is a worm lounging upon the hook, happily waiting...he is threaded upon her, feels his hands touch her and though there is a warmth of flesh and a swell of breast it is a weaving which takes place: a threading of his tongue with hers and his presence knitting to hers...for this is what denies him image and metaphor and words of sound to transmit to Gerald—that she has accepted him, not he taken her.

It is beyond his rational grasp and will be so upon his clear memory, but it is Mother Dolor Innocent before him. It is the innocence of acceptance.

Frantz will remember many things. He will jot some down, then destroy the paper for he knows that no one on the boat would, could...*Never would!*...understand, not a jot or a tittle. That Gerald could understand—*for once he does not care*. It is a moment which gave him to see that whomever Gerald was, he was not more than he, himself.

Da is how he lets his memory recall her.

Da had pleased his mouth with a thousand kisses. Pressed her smallish lips, thin and moist upon his, licking him, sweetly inhaling his breath, sharing the darts of her tongue and the playful enticement of labia from north to south and when he was in her she would turn the world

upside down and he'd be gazing up at her and from these depthless eyes came a beam of light, a light which he knew was sourced in his own hard rod upon which she rode, for there was a feeling now upon his private which he had never felt—it was her as cloud, as a rush of clouds across the sky and so she was all around him and then like storming cloud so she was lighting up from within him, him finding himself thundering up and into and out from her eyes and back to himself, taking the beam of light into the center of his forehead, there knowing her as a warm rub, as puddling water, like tropical rain shyly but warmly pooling upon the deck...there was a softness which he became, so soft, so malleable, so like a gentle breath upon his own neck, the back of her hand, lacing around, pearling her ankles: this he became as she became hard, her whole body hard, stiff, rock-hard, she the rod...she leans down upon—leaned over him as he had over other women—leans down, pins him and he spreads his own legs...she ruts and she heaves and she splices him in two—he feeling her like a broad-sword severing his right from his left, and it is inside of him that she is...plunging, diving deep, holding her breath and descending into him, there to latch upon his spine, to latch and then curl up and then come to rest...

Rest: He had woken completely rested. *Restful.* A singular experience.

When he returned from his brief and hurried morning expulsions and ablutions, Da was gone.

“Geographer!” It was midday.

He did not need to ask. Frantz shouted quickly, “Steady,” but with a quickness strengthened by a clarity always before denied. *Steady.* Frantz knows that he has read the map as the map wanted to be read....Da—vOYAGE: O’SIDE

CHAPTER 16

Back on the ship, Da as map upon his soul Frantz was present to the darkness which lay ahead. When he tried to plot the line of their voyage, he found that his hand wanted to draw circles—not just circles but curling circles in a whirling fashion...in his mind's eyes all that he could imagine were swirls—most unnerving to him was that these were swirls up in the sky, not upon the ocean. *Fiery swirls.*

He dared not look up at the heavens. He didn't know why, he just didn't dare.

Was it a final voyage? One to the Ends of the Earth? A falling off at a place where the Earth was not round but flat as the Ancients had predicted? *His confidence in the new cosmology had a hair-line crack seeping Ancient Apocalypse: Dantean Truths.* Or would there be the sucking death, where the ocean just seemed to fall apart—as if there was a hole in the bottom of the earth. *Dragaons and Doome Beyond!* About this he had heard. He knew that the sailors would believe him if he prophesied such a dark vision.

Although bivouacked as an officer, Frantz was aware that he was not held to be such by either the mates or the Captain and his command. This was not an offensive treatment. They did not disrespect him, rather it manifested itself in terms of mobility. Frantz could easily move between the decks. His own small cabin abutted the Captain's, but, when he stepped below, the men did not freeze and fall into the stiff courtesy punctiliously served to the upper ranks.

“Pass me lovely ‘ere!”

An overheard remark from below.

Frantz has been wandering the deck obscured within a moonless night. None had seen land for the past two months, and he began to worry about food more than about direction. He couldn't focus on being lost; his gut distracted him.

“Ah!” A flurry of pleased sighs—from below.

With a silent foot he lowers himself a step, then two. Immediately he senses that his presence is detected: there is a change in the air—it hardens.

Two more, three and he is down. Turns left towards the storage area and, with eyes accustomed to poorly lighted, dusky passageways, he slowly—not cautiously but with a pace that permits observation—steps past the thick breathings of bunks and hammocks.

Just as he is about to enter the storage room, he is thumped upon the head. Biting his tongue and without more than a half-breathed grunt his hands are upon his head as a round object rolls across and about his boots.

A pillowed guffaw from a sleepless mate. Then two. Add: three.

Frantz feels the room lighten, as if it is about to bawl.

Biting his own laughter, he steps quickly through the portal, briskly turns, pivoting to pick up the attacking object.

A melon.

Out of shadowless sight, he flips and rolls it around, back and forth and across his palms. Exploring, his fingertips report its oddity. Not that he hadn't noticed this strange fruit back when first discovered. How it was stone hard green and then within two nights had softened enough to be eaten. A pleasant taste; bettered by a flick of salt.

Not that he hadn't questioned the tribe's leader about how to preserve them for long storage—such a concept proved impossible to convey.

No, Frantz knew about these melons. But this one had had its skin hardened by something brushed on it, like a whitewash. More, it had a hole drilled into it—not just cut with a knife, but carefully drilled, as done by the ship's carpenter with skilled precision.

Odd. And then he rounds the hole, fingertips sniffing, fingers assessing...slowly, his index finger reads: inside the hole—tentative poke and then full plunge...with pricked fright plucks it out right at moment's thought upon contact!

Is it rotten? A festering of vermin?

He roughly turns it upside down and attempts to force out this inner mass...nothing rotten drips, nothing at all crawls or seeps out.

Cautiously and with the care of scared curiosity, he holds it at arm's length: up, twists and turns it to catch a fracture of moonlight seeping through from the deck above. But, in all, he can see nothing. Without full light, there is little he can do. Curiosity flagged, Frantz bends and settles the melon down. It rolls under a bunk, void-black into another cosmos.

Why am I here?

He returns to the upper deck.

In the morning the ship's carpenter, Sarducci, knocks on his door.

"Geographer," and he walks in having said the word as if issuing a secret command, "Sir," but he pauses knowing that Frantz is not really a Sir, "Yee won't tell 'bout last night?" Straightforward without any preface, catching Frantz with mouth closed and mind idling.

The carpenter—about Frantz's age, not nervous, but a twinge apprehensive—it shows in how his feet are slightly parted, as if he would run at a moment's alarm...the carpenter waits for an answer.

Amazing.

Did *they* hear this report? Ha.

Frantz fingers the folded paper, unfolds it. A thick sheet, a painter's sketching sheet: upon it is her—not as Frantz had spent time with her but as Friar Otto had...Botticelli's *Venus*. Not as Botticelli would have her, but as one somewhat skilled forger has conveyed her. She in all her splendor but only in black and white—ink upon the palely colored sheet. Almost fleshly.

"Beautiful!"

Succubi! Otto's thought.

No, this is Frantz's word. The Friar is no longer in the room.

So, how to report this. *Do they already know?* He doubts, in this moment, that anything he has told them was yet unknown to them. Hadn't they been about this for a millennium or more? Blasphemous as that sounds to his own Christian Faith, wasn't that true?

Know: The Carpenter's Tale: The men, aye, they be good Christians, one and all. Shyly. But like good Christians they sin. Like sailors sin badly. Is he laughing? The sin is bad, I can't deny that, Sir, but yee know these are good men, godly...Frantz can see the story unfold as the Carpenter fumbles to defend as he describes that upon long voyages there is *Temptation*. Which Frantz is told is not unlike the Shepherd's Sin—what else to do on long drives, away from their women? *How else to slay Lust?* Not that the Carpenter approves—no, said again, *I don't approve, Sir.*

The story: *Husbandry Tale:* the wound in the flesh—the Devil's Dream. "Privy parts," the phrase raises itself as a taunt pinching Frantz's scalp. He sees the men, down below, passing these melons, specially created, using them as they would any piss-pot, but here being sperm-

pots. Frantz lewdly smirks as the whole picture comes together. Laughs quite loudly in front of the shocked Carpenter. *Otto watches the incubi and succubi pass along the melons, and like gleeful thieves steal into the night with their fluid treasure of unbaptized soul. Otto watches—but the friar is no longer on board ship.*

It is this mirth in its many masks, however, which lets the Carpenter off the hook...like a man spared an execution...the Carpenter smiles meekly; quite relieved; exits vaporously.

Frantz's good standing with the crew is fully staked and firmly intact.

What else should they do?

Isn't this what Botticelli is for? To release the evil drive within a moment's fantasy? A sin which can be confessed? More innocent than adultery or fornication? Simply a sin of masturbation. *Friar Otto! Friar Otto!* Frantz silently laughs as he roll—up the sketch of *Venus* and half-mindedly sticks it inside his Bible.

But nothing is ever that easy. Not Grace. Not Sin. Nothing.

Another three weeks and supplies are dangerously low. Few fish have been caught. The winds have been blowing fiercely and oddly. First cool, then warm, then hot. They were—not that he had plotted it, but the Captain knew—at the Rounding...soon the howling began—howling and sucking wind and a thumping and thrashing of the ship, things flying overboard, a sailor lost from the Crow's Nest, salt water dripping through everything, mere cups of pure water rationed into drops...in the eyes of the men he sees Father Death peeking, at first the fear of death, then the recognition of death, then the presence of death...all were dead men—the Captain most dead of all: lashing and binding himself to the post next to the wheel...never leaving, day or night—willing to go down with his ship.

Why am I not afraid?

Then as it came, so it went. Calm into fierceness: fire into aromatic smoke. For a time—which he could never describe—they were all silent: not quiet, not without words, not holding their tongues nor biding their time—just silent: nothing moved within them; they moved nothing.

A bell clangs: dull thud, starved echo: once.

Its hard-tongued, harsh metallic call shatters the silence.
Within a fainting last pulsing echo all are rushing here and there about the ship.
Lines are hooked and cast over.
Fish are hauled in with every pitch and drag.
A shower bursts from the cloudless sky—steady: barrels are quenched.
Warm smoke burps from below...aromas belch and the ship is like a belly eagerly
stroked, anticipating.

Amazing.

South of Columbus. Water crossed, so Frantz knows but without exactness by the Papal
Hand: Spanish Land. Knowing this Rounding as between Fire and Ice—cliffs as steep as Alpine
mountains are high—he knows, Frantz knows, knows and sees more than he knows he should be
seeing. Not just Land, but Time. They pass ships wrecked by the many dozens. Doomed sailors
nakedly dancing on the ocean's floor. Images and words and markings—Frantz comes to
profoundly know them all. They all appear, at once, *familiar*.

But these are not what he remembers most.

The Call to Worship.

It is what the Captain named it, once it was over. A serene word between them. A sealing
word. Truly, a secret word. Frantz knew that few among even the officers would have called it
such. But the Captain utters it as he had first the word, “Geographer.”

It is his by Right of the Sea: Judge, Sovereign, Master...Priest: a Divine Right.

Off the Map. Descended into Hell. Resurrected. Parousia.

Feasting. Food all about. Birds landing and freely offering themselves for the slaughter.
Roasting pits. Bones cast all about the boat. An orgy of replenishment. *Divine Providence*. The
bodies of the men did not appear but were felt by Frantz as bloated.

He, himself, felt bloated.

The Call: Benedicamus Domino...!

It was at moon's far rise. A time when many among them were deep into sleep. On top deck, the moon bathed the boat with a bold, clarifying light.

The bell clanged again; a tolling sound, almost mournful.

Up from the belly rise the men, each with body painted and body festooned with feathers and body swathed in brilliant cloths, many hands holding candles—all unlit—and each going towards a great bowl, dipping a cup and drinking...then walking about as if in some clearly rehearsed and precisely choreographed communal movement...Frantz observes them as he has schools of fish and the rare billowing octopus...without thought, he joins them: having his nose slashed with a yellow mark and a fellow placing the rare and feared panther-skin hat upon his head, another handing him a necklace of beads and savage teeth...within what became the rhythmic beat of a tight drum and the shrill of a high-pitched reed pipe, so they all moved about the boat in circular and weaving dance, each alone, everyone together: it was magnetic...it was hypnotic...it was alluring....

How? When?

Didn't they already know?

The Response: Deo Gratias!

A melon appeared upon the table mid-set on the Captain's deck.

Then another. Another. Apparitions: a pile. Appeared and were left. Nothing said.

As if the last one in place was a signal, the Captain—now draped in a gasping white cloak: almost a shroud, such was its presence, its thickness conveying richness and power and value: *Dominion*...a whiteness more bright than solid—around him it moved as he moved and there was the blackest of stones upon a silver chain falling down the center of his chest: a blackness like the void...a void, for a renegade moment's flash: *Dana!*...the Captain centers himself at the table, clearly at ease, High Priest at the altar, all eyes upon him and he lifts one, then another, then tosses overboard and lifts another and tosses and as he tosses he laughs and as he hoots and howls all laugh wildly...he is the parent laughing, catching the child in an embarrassing moment of sexual awakening—it is a harsh release, it is a grieving relief, it is a paternal exorcism...with the laughter resounding through them all, something *someone?* flees the ship...Frantz know not what, does not try to know.

What follows is without words. Specific words. Words like sounds that mean something. *Memory*. Not words but sounds which feel something. Sounds which bind. Like hums and painful groans and the common breathing of battle:

...*the youngest*. That's all that registers with Frantz. Registers with the feeling unspoken, *It is fitting*.

Up to the altar. Lifted and laid upon the altar. Disrobed and body stroked: feather stroked and smoked stroked, incensed, and blessed with water, sprinkles from the Captain's fingertips. Body touched with common hand through the hand of the Captain, he no longer Captain but all of them: his eyes lick the beauty of the flesh, his mouth kisses the sweetness of lips, his desire melts his own flesh as it drips down and bathes this one so loved, so lusted, so craved.

When did it happen?

Torn flesh. Slashed and ripped apart. Always a bite, then tossing the rest overboard.

Heart raised high above, flying upward on wings.

After. Just moments after the Satisfaction. The insertion of the majestic cock in the mouths of God's Chosen One. "Chosen" is chorused, in muted, reverential, awed tone.

For what else could it be or would it be...or how else would they, could they have spoken if they had spoken?...it was common thought: *One Sent From Among Us*...not blasphemy, not sacrilege, not profanity...*out here*: after surviving the trial by storm, after the savage bout with death's hungering mouth...this was the Oblation, the Offering, the Satisfaction—and within Frantz's mind there was never a thought except that "It is fitting."

They come in turn and touch him. Some just lightly stroking him. Touching his feet. Kissing his belly. Gazing but a raptured moment upon him. But most come with a penetration: a giving of themselves, a yielding, a surrendering...into his mouth, up his ass, jerking off with seed upon his body—spreading it out, seeding his total flesh...a Purification by Moonlight—no artist could have beheld it: no mind describe it: *It is fitting*.

Candles are lit: *Deo Gratias!*

In the morning there was no debris of body, mind or soul to be found. The deck was as clean as the fabled baths of Rome.

At muster no one accounted for the missing sailor. All assumed he had been the one lost in the sundering storm during the malevolent Rounding. *Inexperienced. Green Shoot. Cabin Boy.*

“But was it one or two?” asked only once, and the asker knew never to ask again. All forgot and returned to the daily tasks and chores of seafaring.

Frantz rises. There is a freshness to the day. The Captain is at the helm. The crew is busily about. There is a satisfying, almost cool, pacific wind blowing.

In his own self, the Geographer’s mind is like a block of granite upon which someone is chiseling: hammer’s rapid thud by spiking strike, exploding chip by cracking chip: a map unfolds as he stares, spyglass at his side, stares out across the ocean—*there*, clearly where the swirling, whirling balls of fire from heaven have been leading him.

From within his Bible, he had pulled out the sketch of her. No doubt is his—she is the map to O’side.

Amazing.

CHAPTER 17

Off another coast: another oceanside, again, one unfamiliar but then not. For certain, others had been here. Frantz knew. The Captain discussed all which had been passed down. They adjusted their course from what was on the maps to what their eyes could see; correct.

The land was claimed on many parchments as suffused with “Citees of Golde.”

The map’s markings indicated many wild animals, unknown beasties, high mountains, thick jungles and many types of dying: high fevers, eyes consumed by worms, blackened sores, rotting flesh, tongues of purple on witness-less mouths.

The sailors had their own stories; lore—they feared and they were lured.

Days of pounding, offshore winds had kept them at bay. Instead of sailing straight into the bay, their ship had looped more northward than originally planned.

Then had come the stilling calm.

Stilled their hearts.

Stilled their minds.

Stilled their souls.

They floated as if pulled by a windy, whipping fishing line...all sails were flat, no flapping; the sea was calm, almost icy smooth.

Stilled.

Inland the foragers had come and gone. Several trips. In different directions. Up from the beach the land took a slight rise, and there were low mountains to be seen in the east. Mapping their trails, they had checked off in each direction and even come circular to where instinct had led them...but no one found pure water.

At night all they could burn was the skinny bush. Plentiful, but thin of branch—oil of residue...harsh smelling smallish leaves. It was unkind to the eyes to draw too close to the fire. The cook used long handled contraptions to manage the skillets and pots.

Yet there was color. Flocks of yellow flowering bushes. Like birds set far apart, on a land which offered few seeds. Sparse but lifting the suffering of the land to a simple height of pleasure: a seductive smell Otto had crushed desire to reject so often, of that fruit brought back

as a prize of the Crusaders: *lemons*...now no longer Otto he wished for these flowers to bear this fruit, to quench his thirst, to suffocate the miserableness of this barren wasteland.

No one wanted to stay here; camp not another day.

“Geographer,” whispered.

“Do you have a course?”

Frantz could not move the stillness in his throat, but he knew the Captain heard the Executioner sharpening his axe.

Then, on a calendar-less morning, the rabbits appeared.

Sitting there. Immobile as rabbits can be, only moving their noses as if smelling words, sniffing thoughts.

Hundreds. Captured and cooked and eaten beyond the bones: some vomiting the fur they sucked—for whatever reason Frantz could not countenance.

Rabbits. Then the cactus.

Not that it was their word, no, *needle-bush*. Several different kinds were evident even to the stupidest among them.

Somehow—as discovery is always made, so mused Frantz—in violence of anger and desperation and frustration, one had been hacked.

Amazing. The treasure was inside. Like unlatching a leather purse. They hacked at the base and found a meaty softness: watery—crushed and dripped into their throats; sucked and chewed and spit out.

Frantz’s first insight: *This land is what it is not*.

Then the visions. None calling them such for all were within such delirious hallucinations when the visions set upon them or rose up from within them or...

The little people came out from behind the rocks. Stood up; squatting behind bush. Seeped from the mountain like a stream trickling. Tiny people; childlike. Clay skinned, like the cinnamon from the fabled Indies. And eyes: darting, like birds in flight, dark, pitch—as if light entered would never exit.

Serving him. They came to serve Frantz.

Cook for him.

Bathe him.

Sleep with him.

Delight him.

Frantz was delighted; purely.

“The time is near.”

A voice. Not *theirs*. Neither cinnamon tongued. *Who?*

“This is the land. The Promised Land: *O’Side*.” A kingly voice. Regal.

“Behold!”

And Frantz sees the hills, now golden with homes and buildings: glittering gold, and sparkles of precious stones, and bands of people—angelic bands, floating above him—faces and faces, of joy and jubilation: all wafted to him upon a rosy odor... he is floating with them, above the land which he sees as Endless, within the gaze of uplifted faces which he sees as Boundless...he awakens, stilled in his heart, stilled in his mind, standing before a throne, from which this voice speaks, has been speaking.

“The time is near.”

Was it the stench?

Was it the rattle of the snake?

Was it the dry wind blasting hot from down the mountains?

Later, he struggled with this moment of awareness—of the calamity which had befallen them. The Evil of the place: only salty, oceanic water...*The Devil’s Thirst*.

The scraggly bunch which had been spared buried all the others. *Spared?* In his mind, Frantz could not reconcile what had happened with the bountifulness of Divine Providence. The confidence with which he had faced the wet void has now been shaken to its core. More, he did not know where to go. How to move.

As he cast the dry stony sand down upon the Captain’s body—read slowly and unsteadily from his Bible: “The Lord is my Shepherd...”—so he knew that he was now their leader, if not Captain, at least leader: they simply looked at him—twelve left—and he knew; *they* knew.

CHAPTER 18

There would be years, and there would be generations.

Regardless, Frantz was beyond the counting.

When asked, he gave a counting, "Forty years."

But few questioned him beyond this, accepting it as his age, accepting his scraggy features: weatherworn, not in the remotest asking the question about what Forty Years meant to him.

But Frantz had come to know the desert's *O'Side*.

Come to the land and taken it as land.

Disembarked from the ocean. Pulled an oar with others pulling; heaving breaths. Beached the craft. Sat upon the sand. Slept in the desert's deeply darkened embrace. Under a moon: cold fire. At the lip of ocean. Under a blanket of cool but arid air.

He also knew about the visions.

About the plants which induced hallucinations: of heaven, of hell.

About that which was burned and whose smoke was true dream.

And it was about the dream which he knew he had been about.

Knew himself as Friar Otto about the dream.

Knew himself as Frantz about the dream.

Knew himself as Dreamer within the dream, dreaming.

Not that he—nor they—were alone.

No. His first dream, his first vision had presented him to *them* who were already here. Already dreaming this land.

But he had waken, knowing that it was his to dream. *Alongside? Beyond? Within? Despite?* this other dreaming.

All he could remember was, "The time is near."

It made him laugh.

It made him cry.

It made him anxious: *heartfelt anxiety*. For much was to be done.

What was to be done, he so clearly knew, was to prepare to engage what was coming from the other far-away shore—fully across the land from here his another O’side, a companion, there, a coastline plump with trees green and villages of ancient peoples...others, like him, coming from across the wide ocean of an Old World; dying, lost. Searching for a *New World*, for O’side.

As clear as the maps drawn together from all the remembered and forgotten bodies of those he explored: witches, goddesses, mothers, innocents...he beholds with his mind’s eye, his heart, his soul—he observes the first and endless landings on the other far-away side: tiny boats, like bugs adrift on a fallen leaf, bobbing, being led...*Santa Maria*, She conjuring their dreams, they swarming onto lands hot and steamy, fabled to be with riches of gold, finding ready servants, slaves among the naked and oddly clothes peoples...imaginary people, ones not of the dream, not Maria’s children...soon, She is pregnant, this Holy Land, populating with children of Her dream...the first fated to firmly beach in the northern cold clime: unkind, rejecting, nevertheless, they land with and because of Her dream—*Errand into the Wilderness!*

He hears timbers crack and split, the hammering of log cabins, the nailing down of frontier. He listens to the thundering words which would build a Promised Land: purified and God-sent. Prophet’s Words of a vision: Mother’s Dream but Our Father’s Plan: sacred yearnings. Endless migrating faces of a Dream unbounded. Ships: in ceaseless flow. Onto the shore. Then swiftly across the land, coming towards desert’s O’side—he sees wooden ships, he sights iron ships, he peers and beholds flying ships. It is the Great Story unfolding; *Divine Providence*—a land of *Manifest Destiny!*

Here, by his desert’s O’side, so Frantz visions this soon to be future life to his mates, now his brothers, now his family. None had dreamed this as he dreamt, rather, all others were caught in fantasies of horror or guiltless pleasure or mindless inconsequentialities...none had his dream of the Dream...none had “read” the maps on the bodies of Her: all Santa Marias. *Awake!* All in a flash grasped this, were grasped by it...Frantz stands and they behold the Chosen One: chosen to lead, Captain and High Priest. *From O’side to O’side. Amen.*

“Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the land.”

Replenish! Restore! Revivify!

Within his mind raced a hundred, a thousand—to him, incalculable number of images...of a group of twelve like his disembarking on other worlds—strange sites, peculiar environments, Frantz did not, could not speak to himself about where they were, but in this flash he sounded the words and knew them as echo, of a cosmic echo which reached beyond and through and was made real in those fiery balls which had become the map...he knew himself as not just not alone but as within a fullness, within a growing, within a yearning which was truly fire...yet truly aeonic wind...yet truly surging ocean: bosomful...yet truly the land: this the land—not Desert but Bountiful...*Replenish*: “It is ours to people *this* land.” Mother Earth!

vOYAGE: *O'SIDE's New World.*

PART 3: DALORES

CHAPTER 19

“Dies irae, dies illa...”

The words softly careened through, up and down and in and out of his brain all day, the day of the burial. Not just of his father, now he an orphan, mother dead on his thirteenth birthday—a rhythm of birthing and dying which was not yet imprinted upon his being, just markers in memory’s recall: dates...this day: the Latin phrase—he himself had sung, intoned this dirge often, *serving*, as was his calling: Sister Clementine pointing at him—no words, just the finger...he knowing it as *God’s Finger*...so he had come, joined the select few, chosen to be servers: altar-boys...Sacrifice he knew it all as, whether it was a Daily Mass with bloodless bread and wine or a Wedding Feast with the submission: surrender of body and soul, or the Solemn Funeral with the “offering of one’s life” as Father Doom—actually, Dombrowski, but his penchant for officiating at just about every funeral at Saint Vincent’s got it shortened to “Doom”...all was Sacrifice...gazing up at The Crucified One, not lost on Frank that it was a Crucified Son—today, he: *Crucified Son*.

“Days of wrath and doom impending...”

The house was now his. “Mine” seemed such a constricted word; a grave word—watching the dirt fall upon his father’s coffin, knowing the grave as “mine”—his to visit...his only to visit, he being the only visitor: ancestral, scion—he felt coffined.

“Man, have a tokel!”

Jack, totally stoned out of his mind on some potent grass, didn’t have to offer him some weed, for the elixir of *Mary Jane* was all in the air. Wherever Jack went O₂ was never the same: nothing pure about the air...all transformed into magical smoke. *Dominion*.

Jack floats within a world of hallucinating fog.

Jack’s—a world whose shores are known to Frank, but one more of a certain fascination, for Jack was one who could read his mind—*no, not my mind, my soul*—be able to hang around

that space Frank knew as “mine”—hang there and be within it, enlarging it a mite by his just being there. Frank liked this—he didn’t especially like Jack...it was more a matter of comfort than of liking. *Whatever.*

Jack—grad school drop-out: “Engineering, Man. Who needs more bridges?” with the requisite long-hair, scraggly beard, and gold-rimmed glasses of the shiftless but fuck-a-lot: *anyone, anything!* Hippies...for Frank, Jack’s a puny dude who probably never played high school ball, just a screw-off if not screw-up...not as Frank saw himself—mature by reason of death, stable by reason of home ownership, working for a living, a bit adrift in his heart but a solid guy...above average in everything—height, looks, smarts: played two years of college baseball, *could’ve been a competitive swimmer*...but the fucking War and the fucking Draft and the fucking Establishment—“Shit, the goddam fucking times!”

Dylan the Prophet—“*Everybody must get stoned!*”

Frank sprawls on the floor ignoring Jack...sucks a long ash; his face reddens. He is no longer alone...not because of Jack, but just being beside himself—yet still lonely.

Frank was the only one their age who owned a home. Not just an apartment or a condo, but a *bona fide* house. “Cause his parents tripped out, get it?” Frank once overheard Jack’s explanation. It cemented his deep dislike of him.

House—foreboding, rising like a medieval Rhineland fortress, multi-turreted, Victorian cross-breed, of Nietzschean *Sturm und Drang* threatening: three cataclysmic stories and a chthonic basement...more monument that abode—a frightened response to the forgetfulness desired by the immigrant, a darkly proper response to the depthlessness of the prairie so brightly, brazenly menacing the pioneer.

Third floor, northwest turret: Jack was a frequent visitor. Stayed over too many nights. *Stargazer.*

But Jack *understood*. “Dumb motherfucker!” Frank always scalded him when stoned; more drunk than smoked. It made Jack laugh; dope laughter, with tears and an urgency to visit the fridge and steal whatever was there. “Munchies!” Jack’s ubiquitous comment whenever he touched anything, “Anything. Motherfucker, you’d eat anything.” And so Jack did. Frank rarely had leftovers.

“What ya need, Man,” toke and chomp, “is a broad ‘round here.” Flipping fragments of agricultural debris hither and thither. Only Frank cleaned up, but it took time for him to get pissed...being wasted fended off getting pissed.

“Yeah.” But not an affirmative. Rather, ridicule. Meaning, “Like I need someone *in* my life!”

Frank was too stupefied to psychoanalyze his orphan-hood. *Only Son*.

“Days of...” and both are sleeping. *The Moody Blues* got stuck on *The Dark Side of the Moon*. Frank replaces needles on his stereo about once a month.

But it was a thought, one that came into his waking time as a thought which had been thought before, patriarchal inheritance: his father having considered it himself—the tenth anniversary after his mother died—that he should be dating. “Frank, you’re now on your own. *Maybe* I should ask your heavenly mother?”

It went like that. Cause and Effect. His father ever the logician. Finding Beginnings and Ends. *Why he was such a Good Catholic*. Especially during these years of ecclesiastical upheaval—“Went to a funeral last week—old man Myers—can you believe it? It was in English!”

It was his “maybe.” Frank knew that it was fraught with fear: *Perdition!* As if his mother’s permission—and only it—would free him to have sex, ever again. Frank knew that his father would never say, “Sex.” Probably had never even uttered it to his mother. But that is what “maybe” was about. He needed a Dispensation. Some Permission to Proceed. A Pardon. *Free Sex?*

His dad was still granting his departed spouse full control over “married sex”—which had meant and could only mean “having children”—for him to enter into a new marriage: *Horrors! Sex without the possibility of children:* “Bless me Father for I have sinned.”

Frank witnessed it in a dream—Mother’s hand parting the clouds and signing from horizon to heaven—signing upon the clouds, granting him Absolution. “*Better to marry than burn.*” In his dream, his mother was wise and compassionate.

But then, soon after, his father abruptly died. Massive stroke. *Maybe* it was his mother’s sign? Frank had half-forgotten the dream. *Maybe* her spousal action from beyond the grave. She who was, surely, bending God’s Ear, dispensing Divine Justice: *Avenging?*

Maybe.

Frank has never missed his mother. “Don’t you miss her, terribly?!” asked sentimentally at the grave as he placed her anniversary flowers: her half-sister—Aunt Magdalene, she crying, profusely and with true feeling. At this moment Frank realizes that he has never missed his mother. “Missed” in a sense of target shooting, yeah, but “missed” as if his life had a missing piece? Or, that he was wounded in battle and missed his amputated limb? *What?*

“I miss her.” Almost beneath his breath, but sufficient to assuage his Aunt.

From this visit forward, he always brings potted flowers: *Offerings.*

“You must miss your Mom.”

She was a great fuck, so he tried not to appear annoyed.

“Gee, she was pretty.”

You fucking bitch, put that down! But all he uttered was a bland, “Yeah.”

When the chick leaves the bedroom, Frank removes the two pictures: one off the wall, one off his dresser...stashes them on a shelf inside his clothes closet.

As he walks down the stairway, on his way to the kitchen and breakfast, she throws back at him, “Got to get. Can’t miss work!” The sweet-thing is juggling hat and coat, leaving without eating or snatching anything, not even an apple...but let’s face it: not a chick ...*she* had stayed over only once before...only the third girl ever to stay the night, none had repeated, none, except now—her name had that queer energy in it, as if “Bertha” meant “*Except now. Except me.*” *Bertha* being such an unusual name. Instantly popping up images of a big ship docking at ocean’s wharf: a cruise liner or a battleship. Or, of some big fat cow bellowing, moaning *Jolly Green Giant valley moos!* Definitely of something massive—the sound of it “Ber-tha” had massiveness about it...but it was just the opposite, not as to energy but as to her petite frame.

Bertha O’Brien.

When she first said it, pulled out her full name, Frank just chuckled...the old German-Irish poke in the backseat of the car...his father, himself, German and his mother, Irish, always the joke about “the backseat,” although it was clear from the laughter that it was a joke not in touch with an actual event, merely just a joke reaching for a higher truth: here, that God’s Ways

were so Mysterious, Baffling (*Vengeful!*) that he mated the Fiery Irish Demonness with the Blockhead Kraut Dumpkopf, both unredeemed pagans, joined in Catholic Marriage for the Betterment of Their Own Souls and for the Manifestation of God's Eternal Justice... "BOB" he almost called her—this nickname never coming back into play, neither as joke or tag for there was no humor in Bertha's looks—she was not a looker, passably average, a face a bit too squinched, a profile only lascivious at the bar's lecherous Last Call...many, like Frank, had often just walked past her, *however*... Bertha O'Brien was everything her name wasn't: a flash-quick smile, quicker wit, quickest kisser: wicked teaser—like a flickering flame upon a candle she whooshed in and lit Frank's, um, *wick*... "Wickedness," is how he muses upon her now beguiling face: chimera—recalls her presence...catches himself relishing the word, her sound: *Bertha*...but it was her dance...Bertha as lithe and cavorting and sensuous as her name denied, she was a flame undulating with the slightest of movements generating heat: a wax melter...Frank was wax-with-bee-buzzing desire—she made every inhibition he ever had melt...all the strictures and handcuffs and cock chains of his Catholic education—Mothers of Heavenly Sorrow in grammar school; knuckled beatings in Jesuit high school—his body bore the astral slaps, bruises and just desserts of soul saving education: "Educate the soul, not the mind!" bellowed Father O'Malley, S.J....Frank, wax upon the high altar, pure, virgin, he had stretched on tippy toes many times to light the devilish but sacred wick as it ignored, avoided, eluded his blazing taper...dripping, *Vitalis* grooming acid, leaking, slipping stinging beads upon his callow forehead, into his eyes, he, a river of putrefying sweat under his cassock and surplus—now, Bertha the licking flame and he the consummable wick!

The very first time Bertha came into the house it jolted a sensate change: deep and profound, as if the joints were yawing—a deep belly sound, growling, but with a cackling—he instinctively looked towards the ceiling to see if it was splitting...now, he re-runs her entry and observes the transformation of his home...into a House of Wickedness.

Bertha not Jack made Frank so hallucinate—not needing smoke, not needing drink—doing a bit of each, but just needing each other. Frank looks at her: a mere gaze, a sentinel's careful observation of detail—Bertha closing the door behind her...he is not alone: not beside himself, not merely with some else, but *here*, in the house.

Mine. Bertha and the house. *Mine*.

CHAPTER 20

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of the Ending Year—'69.

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of My Lai—"Waste 'em!"

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of the Pope's encyclical—"Humanae Vitae."

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of Woodstock—"Yippee!"

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of "Oh! Calcutta!"—*Oh!*

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of "Midnight Cowboy"—Homo Queer Fag Gimp

Cinderella!

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of Neil Armstrong—Mooning.

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of Hairy Legs & Combat Boots—*Not* Barbarella's

Boobs!

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of Wilt—"The Stilt."

Maybe it was the sexual entendre of Bertha—"Fuck *only* you?!"

Maybe.

It was the "*only* you."

This which upended Frank's erotic universe. Ended, somewhat forever, a comforting meaning to the possessive *mine*.

"I'm not saying you're not pretty...." *La la la lalalalalalala.*

She had come to live *here: in the house*. Jack knew this, for he was out—not bunking there a solitary night of the Ying-Yang year. Sure, lots of parties, "The girl certainly can party!" And lots of smoke. He making a ton of money as the metro area's leading *Mary Jane* and hashish dealer.

How was he to have anticipated the latent, slumbering organizational leadership power which laid lazily and hazily in his smoke-house genes? When he gave it a half-thought, Jack saw his old man—"Occupation: Chemist"—as one source. But it was his Mom he knew as dynamo: she who ran every volunteer community group, taskforce, committee and ad hoc this-and-that ever since Jack could remember.

“A cool million.” He made sure he said this stone cold sober. He liked the reaction he got. More from the guys than from the gals.

“A cool million.” Pause. He’d watch their jaws drop. Watch their little dicks get tinnier. Feel the electric surge pulsate throughout his being—“Better than being socked and rocked!” once said to Frank...Frank remembers.

A third: “A cool million.” Coated: “With more to come. Believe me. Believe Ole Smoky Tokey Jack Tollefsen!”

There were doubters, but it got Jack “the chicks.”

Bertha closed the door. Not shut it, not as with a noise, but sealed it as with a softly sighed breathed sound, somewhat like a sweet kissing sound. Just her action made Frank’s heart sing...flutter...it was a veritable Cause and Effect event: she closed the door and opened his heart.

Bertha had come to live with Frank. It was a full year. Came for the kickoff of ‘69 and stayed. For Frank she was 69—in every meaning of the word: nuance, subtlety, shade—induction and deduction.

‘69—women asserted their nakedness, publicly, privately; some wearing bits of jewelry, mostly fake but alluring; a scarlet, yearning teddy or some betraying lingerie: pleadingly virginal with whimpers of *Sugar Daddy* pearls; bras of *boink!*ing, flaunting colors in this braless, burning bra day—suppliant bras offering more than they exposed as they assaulted and exalted his delirious ravaging eyeballs...transfixed by postures—posing like the nymphs in *Playboy*: posing shy, posing shockingly unveiled, posing *Girl Next Door* sweetness...some swallowing him, sperm and all...others exploring holes in his head, his ass, his mouth, his brain!

Bertha was the hole in his soul—what she was, was what every other woman was not...she displayed her *own* appetites: inner and outer—decked herself with so much gold and pearl and beads of the rainbow that he could not control himself...blindly he digs at her, throwing away her external treasures—provoked, knowing them as sham, as diversions, as *trompe d’oeil*...colors: her so pale, white, not peachy, like fluid ivory flesh, now, one night all *blue*: nothing he can see but blue—no eyelids, no hairlines, no lips, all melting into blue...stains, she stains him, stains the sheets, stains the air, stains him: rubbing herself off on him—he knows himself as canvas—she artist, painter, creator: turning him into dots and stripes and telltale kisses as she rubs herself against him, draws her backhand and leaves a long singular strip of blue down

from his forehead to his cock...*red*: calling him to “Douse me! I’m burning up!”—and she flees him...not that he doesn’t catch her, hold her, but as he probes her, pokes her, slips into her, invades her, ravages her, she he cannot hold, “Rape me!” infuriates him, baffles him, only to find himself ravaged, raped, burned-out, stubble, embers...*yellow*: “I am the Sun!” and it is she upon him, sitting upon him, riding him—all fours and he can feel *her* cock, feel her long penis as she grips his and magically implants it into herself...it is he who is pussy tonight, “Fuck you bitch!” she screams...she cocks him...she fucks him...she spurts all over him; dripping yellow...upside-down—what else is “sixty nine”?

It wasn’t just the sex. *Yeah, it was the sex!* Not sex as he had known it, that’s what Frank means, saying this to himself as if talking to someone else, “She changed the definition. Shit, she changed the smell!”

For that whole year: the scent. Like hound and fox. Like bee and flower. Like fragrant hallucinations of other worlds, spheres, specters, dimensions—other bodies. “Like smelling other bodies.” One day, resting next to her, after having had her for several hours: *Having me...* Frank realizes: *she has me.*

“Lick me.” Not a command. No longer even an invitation. Like a dooper who had lit up a thousand pipes, taken a thousand trips, it was a making present, more akin to the joyous incendiary: “Light my fire!” and so he did: *wickedly.*

Knowing with her that his tongue was not just that flick which took things into himself like the toad snapping flies. Not just “Frenching” as kids do—everything with Bertha made everything before seem kiddish—not just the spitting of fluids, the savaging battling of tongues (“Does it really turn you on?”)—not the peck and parry, not even the teat tugging, boob bending, nipple gnawing slurp and suck and all that.

No. Bertha was tongue which was hands which was cunny which was full flesh against full flesh...which was *beholding*: “Just look at me.” And it came not to be looking but to be licking with his eyes: *hungering*...until he became drool: she’d be just there, fully clothed, sharply stylish, in counterculture flare, a real Cool Chick...then with a drop which was not by her own movement but by the gravity of his absolute lust turned to craving turned to belly aching,

muscle twitching, mind-numbing *longing*: a jacket, she twists and turns within their shared sound of silence: a blouse, a skirt, socks, sandals, panties, bra—all to just begin the licking.

Licking—upon his naked toes she'd begin, with what became an eventual route, as if she were following markers, milestones embedded in his flesh, hands rubbing and patting, petting with tenderness, licking with kiss and suck and tug of teeth, taking each part as if an only part, as if each part of him was filled with boundless lust...erotic blood for her to drink, lifting his arm, holding it, cradling it, sniffing and rubbing her cheeks upon his forearm, washing his biceps with her hair, long hair, blanketing it all in her deeply dark strands: slowly, swaying, swishing, steaming, savaging—a cadence of actions within and without of time...*him*: to his amazement, testament to her magic, so he believes, adjusted in quick time...although at first fiercely unable to accept, for it was all acceptance, accepting his own body—this he instinctively knew from the first that she was giving him his own body, licking him with his own tongue, coming to him with hers to bring him this ancient knowledge, this forgotten truth, this damned and forbidden insight, this blasphemy of licking...he feared that she did not have to describe herself as a mother licking her cub—an incestuous imagining which undid Frank without awareness or perception.

“Don't!” cuts off her tongue; stabs her heart—he grabs her, mounts her...fucks her quickly.

Bertha persisted. Till the day Frank surrendered—the only pain he truly felt: replete with embarrassment, humiliation, the sense of belittlement. As he grits his teeth a strange courage overtakes him, flushes him as the gagging fury of peyote has always grabbed his soul: “I want this!” screaming from within...a battlefield scream, shouted and hurled into the face of the Unknown, the Dreaded, the Sacred Shitless...she licked him; then she paused.

For him it had all been just the bravado of “going down.” Down under. Hiking South. A scary jaunt, but the *sine qua non* of proving yourself a “liberated male,” the boast which greased the slide into the bong group, let you rap with the radicals, stand tall with a fast talking, cock-cutting feminist beside you...it was the challenge of the times: “*Seize the Day!*” So, despite the forever-first revulsion which did tremble his virgin lips so had he kissed her, knowing that she wanted it, knowing that if he got it over with that she would be his to ride for the night...it was the barter he was willing to exchange: cunt licking for cock sucking, fellatio for cunnilingus:

Whatever.

Licking—after hugging, after kissing, after fondling, after touching and stroking... he knew that he wanted to explore, admitted to himself that he wanted to swallow her, that he had less need now for the poke, the hot poling and the splattering smash of sperm—*Yeah, great stuff!*—but he wanted more of her treasures...he now knows that they are stashed in the cave on her southern shore...so he sails around, battling her as she is cold breeze, fierce sleet, rocking and smashing the foremast of his desire—he knows that he could stop, that she is pleased, that she has come orgasmically like sudden storm and crackling lightning...but he ventures forward: into her dryness, the time of her deadness, when her body becomes the desert...he knows that she is easily annoyed, that the press of his tongue is like lumberjack boots stomping her dusty ground, that each kiss is like tearing her flesh out by the roots, but he kisses, hungrily, her dry rocks and her parched soul...venturing: conjuring up the darkness of her, sensing that she now wants him dead, cut at the throat, homicide, infanticide: child of her desire now sacrificed and buried in her cave...he hides from this darkness, covers himself from the evil wind, burrows deeper into her...tongue into her hole, tongue into long rope dropping: dangling, heedlessly down, sightless into her depthless cave, tongue which becomes alive, transformed, animated as serpent—at *The Moment*: a different moment, but all could only be marked as “Moment”—at the moment he becomes alive to her, again, but this time not as blade, not as lance but as pleasure pole: Maypole...*raucous laughter*: laughing crazily as they laugh...she is roused as the echo of his laughing; it is the rhythm, it is their rhythm, the rhythm which defines this Moment—she swallows him as he swallows her...like tongue inside mouth, cock is she, cunny is he...he now the cave, she now the serpent sucking each so that it is a blowing: a breeze up and down their spines, spines now wrapping cords: lacing each other round: round into a ball: a sphere: a oneness only being because of twoness...yet a thirdness: another presence...*pregnant!*

“Jesus, B you were astounding.”

“We were, weren’t *we*.”

Satisfied. Fully pleased. Spent. Energized in the heart but fatigued in the body. Hours. One of their best bouts, jousts, tumbles, explorations...amusements. If they had to agree upon a word it would have been “amusements”—for they were happy.

But she waits. Bertha waits.

Frank punches the pillow, wiggles his head to mold a comfortable niche. Too tired but then not sleepy. Half-awake but not groggy. Aware of her but then not overly conscious of her.

His mind is a fluttering, sputtering reel of hundreds of images of their Moment together—calling it a Moment when they “Just do everything. Jam it. Ram it. Cram it. Slam it. Roll it all up into a ball and bounce away, together.” This afternoon had been such a Moment.

If either could have explained it, few would have grasped it. She never sought explanation. He did but found it spoken only through his wordlessness.

It images itself only as the year was numbered.

It felt like those numbers, themselves, interlocking.

It rose like an energy neither sourced nor could contain.

It in a timeless slice and a spaceless slip was present.

She to he and he to she.

Down to feet, each kissing. Holding. Endearing. Hands embracing.

Each lying. Fully tongued. All flesh to all flesh. Layered. Like fog.

Sliding. Like tears down a cheek. Drops of desire into pools of fire.

They are fluid each to the other, each of the other.

Northern heads docked into southern ports. Like the compass needle swinging wildly, madly as their poles shift and all which had been plotted and mapped and assured them of position, of being, of existence: all longitude and all latitude, now they are spinning, twirling, a whirlpool: all the stars and planets and asteroids of their cosmic flesh sucks them down and through: veritably, they dance—69.

CHAPTER 21

...he wakes to a burial of flowers: hundreds of rose petals, hundreds of baby's breaths, hundreds of carnations plucked, blanketing him...he is perfumed, fragranced, honeyed, sweetened—before him she stands, in funereal black, missal in hand, crushing ancient Latin phrases, pressing out their vinegar...around the bed she walks, waving one of his thick cigars smoking: incense...“I want you to have my baby,” Bertha pleads with Frank. “Seriously,” she implores...half-kneeling upon a bed filled with raspberry Jello, they flip and flop and flounder and flail. “If I dip you in moon-blood, you’ll get pregnant.” ...*Must’ve been the acid*, Frank mused, slight laughter, but he, soberly, knew it as 69—a most power-filled vintage.

So, at twenty-four, the question seemed appropriate: “Will you marry me?”

Asked; then Frank died.

Not killed. Not slain. Not battered and bruised. Just died—like the Earth sucked him back down.

Died...receded, decayed, disintegrated, withered—witheringly.

Actually, Bertha sucked him back down—rather, back-up, up her ass...this is how Frank visualizes her response: *He is being sucked up her ass*.

“Fuck only you?” And he knew she wasn’t drunk or stoned.

She paused. Watched. Observed. Registered in her mind the withering disappearance—vaporization of Frank. Subsiding and vanishing more quickly than his blown cock.

Her question mark conveys surprise, innuendo, shock, anger, incredulity, amusement...shame. It was *shame* more than anything which sucked Frank’s essence from his plottable place in Newton’s world of being.

“Man, you didn’t ask her *that*?”

Displaying his characteristic compassion: “God, what an asshole!”

Somehow it all made sense. *The world’s crap!* Frank’s monologuing to a quart of *Johnny Walker Red*. *Red* and a thick Churchill of a cigar. Sitting. Lying. Moseying. Floating. Around his

house. Alone. But in a quite new sense of alone. One so novel that it doesn't even come into his mind.

Shit. "All I'm's shit!"

The empty thunks the carpet-less floor.

Frank twitches, bends and vomits—volcanically—splattering himself. After a sleeve to his mouth and a spit or two he drops, rolls back down onto the couch.

Shit. Might as well just be shit!

That all of this had occurred on Christmas Day only registered with Frank years later.

That it had all been just inside the house never became more than an unimagined hint.

That he was no longer alone, as in "only Frank," this he did know with all the conscious pain of a slowly pressed scalpel moving by torturing seconds into and through his heart.

He comforted himself with this insight: "She couldn't handle it!" Mute—*Bitch!*

She didn't say the words.

She did nothing but look at him. Not beholding him. Not by the gravity of her desire pulling him to her.

When she had done so in the past, Frank had answered...ripped off his clothes, postured in manly ways, comically pranced with visual dick jokes which she especially liked, pleased her eyes in so many ways, but not this time.

This time was the time she had been waiting for, planning for, working towards.

She knew that it was the house.

Aware that they had never made love or just fucked outside of the house.

It was the house which had sustained the year. And as the year ended, she knew that her life's voyage lay ahead. Not behind. Not *here*.

She was eager to disembark.

It is *The Moment* Bertha had sought—faithfully, heedlessly, recklessly...relentlessly. Now, she can escape the house; is escaping.

Bertha escapes.

CHAPTER 22

When he woke, night had come. January's heat—dry and leeching—had kicked—in...snow outside, just a thought; ten below, just a thought. *Mom!* just a thought. *Dad!* just a thought.

When he woke the second time he knew he was not alone.

With great effort he resurrects himself.

The head agony is customary. The toilet mouth, a known entity. The fearful dread of coming back to consciousness—encountered so many times.

Who?

“Jack!” Half-croaked, hoarsely whispered. No one, not a thing stirs in the deprived light.

Shit, not Jack. For Frank sees that the room has been cleaned and straightened.

Shit, not Bertha. She wasn't into “housekeeping.” But just her name has him searching down his trousers—*Still there.*

It was a half-moon, Mid-Western bright on frigid January early morn...a moon which did things with shadows and snow and the wind which neither Frank nor Bertha nor Jack would, could, maybe even should ever know. But, if asked. Frank would have had no recall of anything like the stage of the moon, or the clock-time, or any detail of his life before this moment, for it became “The Moment”—where he first became fully not—alone.

“The Moment” was present as *Dalores.*

CHAPTER 23

Dalores.

“Your bath is ready.”

Said like the spousal vow: “For better or worse ...”

Dalores undresses him. Hand-steadies him into the tub. Bubbled basin. Huge glaciers of lavender masses: floating, bumping against, clinging, soothing, hiding him...under he goes, right up to his nose...she lathers up her palms to wash his hair, tender fingers plying him with the keen care of a crocheter, a dip and dart through the mass of his muddy entanglement, leaning back his head to wash, fingertips whispering echoes of her heart up and down, across and back his forehead...rinsing him: a coiled, hand-crafted pitcher dumping warm water, running new water, removing all dirt, all smells, all scents of moments past...raising and drying him off: thick towels, cold floor...she quickly sat him down on the lidded stool and damped his feet: soft, new, her gift, Christmas gift—fluffy moccasins: deerskin slippers, cut and stitched by a local cobbler’s hand, like he had seen and admired in Dinkytown...she then stands him tall like a candle-just-dipped and draws from him all that her heat can, all that she has purified of him through her heart...Frank is robed: full length of perfumed terry-cloth...her scent: attar of rose wafting lemony alarms of verbena—towel around his neck, a pat against the nape where gravity has tricked her minutes before...together, they are sitting together in his living room...snow-glare lights flaring off of probing Two Moon sun...all that ten below can conjure up for Minnesota’s opening salvo—crisp, crinkly, ice biting clarity of air and a breath which sucks the lungs icy dry...*together*: Dalores and Frank.

Within four months, they marry.

April Fools’ Day.

Their marriage was mused upon, not so much for its suddenness, for things were only happening suddenly “in these times” as everyone in their circle knew, everyone in the greater society was slowly coming to grasp...sudden change in the racial laws, sudden Drafting of new flesh, sudden “coming out” of closeted sexual identity, sudden advocacy of a range of alternative lifestyle choices—immersion in dope, “Revolutionary Commitment” to take the “Class Option,” radical switch to “Open Marriage,” dropping out to drop in: “Turn on. Tune in. Drop out.” So

what was their marriage in this time except an alternative, here, to Christianity, at least to its wedded bondage of the female soul...they did not say, *To Honor and Obey*...she did not wear Virginal White: shroud...he did not need a Best Man, rather, “Man, we’re all Family.” So everyone was Best, that day—they did not have to pretend that they had never had sex before...it was assumed that “The sex is good, Man. She’s *good*.”

So, what was four months?

Like the sudden oceanic wave flipping you head-over dumping you face down into the scratchy sand of the Atlantic’s bottom, so had Dalores come, if Frank had known, but which the suddenness kept for him as unknown.

Dalores’ bed was not what Frank would have ever thought marrying would be, not before The Moment.

“April Fools!” Dalores had consciously chosen the Anniversary Shout. And time did fool them: *three years* and Frank muses on how much the Fool he’s been: bumbling, stumbling, being blown about like a leaf. “Women!” is a resigned surrender as he reflects upon what a total Fool he is for Dalores.

“Why do Fools fall in love?” *Why. why, oh, why?!*

Her bed was *not* sex: bar flirt and backseat quickie—a ram and a jam and a spurt...hours titillating the latest from the *Playboy* Advisor’s G-spot and all that...no, Dalores was home—fucking: more, home-cooking...she was the hearth, with embers always ready for the stir: a full course meal: seven servings around the clock: cuckoo clock.

For this Bertha had not prepared him.

Dalores was, had emerged, fully flowered as “Earth Mother.”

It was a tag she did not mind hearing uttered. An image cast out by some “radical” men—and women!—as if a bug had landed upon their tongues. At once a spitting out. At once repulsing a fear. At once jolted and shaken in the moment.

Dalores: “I love being an Earth Mother.” Stated to herself. Long mirror. Breasts which took two of Frank’s hands to cup...she smiles with the delight in his eyes, with the failure of his mouth to totally suck-in her breasts. He rolls his head across her chest, sliding down with tongue, gasping for breath as he struggles to climb out of their deeply cleaved valley. She feels the eager

hands on her thighs, the rush to her fulsome butt, not stopping to wag negatively about any extra pound or blemish or shortcoming of Beauty, for his incessant tracking of her: a tracking trail she has scented—coupling atop the kitchen table, spread-eagle on the living room rug, humped from behind as she hangs onto whatever stout furniture she can grasp, exhausted and dead man: cockless and cockeyed on top of her, under her, around her...yeah, *home-cooking* is also how Dalores looks at Frank: boil him, bake him, stew him—she will not let a day go by where she doesn't have some recipe—where Bertha stopped, taking her “woman's days” to herself, shooing him off, not deigning to recognize his wailing maleness on these days: no hand job, no relief, no cock-a-doodle-do!—*there*, Dalores was: non-and-unstoppable!

Bloody Moon—finding a way not to lose him, spicing him with some zippy and zesty ingredient...most notably offering him her ass—not like when he humps her from behind, but as an offering of the Dark Moon—snapping at him, “Are you man enough?!” Wagging as she slithers before him, glides, pulls aside her robe: exposes herself—taunts, “C'mon Big Boy show me what you got!”

She liked it... the totality of it—the uninhibitedness of it...taking him in at every portal as well as him entering, knowing that he was butt-nuts and would do anything for her, to have her, to be within her—Dalores took his everything as she gave her everything. *The cook's in the cooking!*

Her man finds her a Garden of Earthly Delights, this she loves.

So, she happily stands there, stroking her yet unplanted garden...not womb, but garden. *She waits for Frank's warm spring rain.*

Dalores planted Frank. Not just his seed but his mind and soul. As to his mind it was with her that he tramped around to meetings and potlucks and in and out of communes and rallies and all the other footnoted events of “the times they are a changin'.” Back during the first year, Frank was her *Red Flyer* wagon. As if her scent had hooked him by the nose:...just trailed her. He simply loved to smell her.

May Day, 1970, 7:37 p.m.—Frank's mind, itself, erupted: “Blew my mind, Man!” It was a talk at the Newman Center by a famed psychiatrist whom Frank had never heard of. That in itself intrigued him since he had graduated from the U with a 3.93 in psychology: *Magna cum laude*—yet only having psychometrically probed rats and fucked with flies and statistically

computed all types of behavioral variants...now he getting to know all that his empiricist professors had not taught him—maybe not knew, but surely must have heard...now, the words and images sat upon him, heavily pressed, squeezed themselves into his ears as Dalores sits right by, listening, quickly and deftly knitting—having taken to knitting segments for a giant “Sisterhood!” shawl with her Women’s Group these last several months.

Floating on the air, written on the walls, interring themselves into his gut: “Anima. Animus.” “Archetypes. Shadow. The Collective Unconscious.” *Zonked!* Frank was totally stoned...mind racing through imaginative landscapes he had no words for, had no measures for, had only Dalores for. “Man, wasn’t that, *that*, that just staggering!?”

Lecture Tonight—7 p.m. Professor James Hillman, “Archetypes—An Introduction to Jung’s Man and His Symbols” Newman Center, Father Bury Memorial Room.

“Trippy,” she said as she bundles up her things and presses them hard to fit into her large cotton satchel—*Leather is murder!*

Collective Unconscious—if it ever was or is or shall be, *Whatever*, it opened up and gobbled Frank: a mind which had sought to broaden itself—his dad an insomniac who read and read and read: flustering the house—his mom with earmarked books, a hundred monthly journals stapled and clipped with notes; scotch-taped: in the bathroom, the garage, living-family-dining-kitchen, any and all—rooms: ideas on index cards, “Nutty, I’m embarrassed to have visitors, they’ll think we’re nutty,” not including herself in that “we”...so Frank had ground himself in the “sweep of ideas” and wrestled with his father’s favorite masochism: Toynbee’s twelve volume, “Rise and Fall of Civilizations”...but he had avoided as much as he had immersed himself in...likewise, in an unusual parallel, there was something, possibly only one thing ever, that his father had avoided: *so it seems* that it was possibly too much of a challenge to a devout “practicing” Catholic—too much in this era of reform...Vatican II...John the XXIII’s “opening of Vatican windows”...more than a window, now, a gape, a maw, a...Frank is hearing Munch’s “Scream”...his mind flits to the incomprehensibility of all those Medieval visions snared in Bruegel, Bosch and Durer—even Dali’s squishes and the slithering geometry, trigonometry of the Cubists... *feels*: it is reading which makes him feel, unnerves him—everything he believes Jung has ever written he inhales, bolts down, chokes on like the first whiskey of youth: Isaiah’s burning coal on his lips...then consuming Freud, Adler, Maslow... more, more into the “Death of

God” theologians...into and across and around every used book store: Jewish for Kabbalah and mysticism, into Masonry and Alchemy...ferreting out what he could from lectures on Theosophy and Madame Blavatsky...every “underground newspaper” every countercultural flyer every unverifiable unmeasurable undocumented under and over flying object of knowledge...Frank pushes himself to read tolerable Latin, mumbling Greek, key words in Hebrew...Unconscious: *Frank is Unconscious.*

Dalores’ plan was unfolding. Not calculating, not scheming, but following the stars, her astrologer’s wisdom and, of course, the casting of the *Tarot* cards.

Cups, and *The Female Pope*. That was all that needed to be said.

“Honey, do you love me?” Lofted in that “do you really love me” love of “do you really *really* love me” spiked with the throat choking slyness which calls attention to her, conveying, “Pay attention to *me!*”

So Frank is off to graduate school, this time to sit at the feet of those ignored and maligned during his undergraduate years, those professors—just two—stuck onto the Psychology Department’s roster because of certification needs: a need for comprehensiveness, although any student who studied “seriously” with either of these: Professor Noble and Professor Carroll (she)—well, it would be hard to graduate...definitely not with Honors.

Now, it was all Noble and Carroll for Frank.

Doctoral studies and work at the “Institute for Archetypal Analysis,” compromising with “analysis” to cross lines with the Behaviorists who ruled the department and the campus and the cultural mindset...now Frank knowing why their “mind set” for the Behaviorist had no truck with what was unmeasurable since, for them, the Values as well as the Virtues being challenged by the times were equally unmeasurable: “*War—what is it Good for—absolutely nothing*”...what was an “alternative” or a “counterculture” if in the normative culture there was no need for...indeed, there was only the impossibility of measuring Values and Virtues?

Because of Dalores, so could he venture forth. At certain moments he clearly knew this, and clearly knew that he didn’t have to say it to her...she didn’t need to hear, rather she just wanted him to be. “*Be Here Now!*” was hip phrase, but it summed it up. Dalores simply wanted him to be here with her, no matter where *Now* was.

Frank draws a deep, consciously sucked by his nuts toke. “Now!”—the call to his troops: to those faithful millions, trillions that in his stoned mind he is rallying, agitating, “Spermies of the World!”...chuckles: sloppy doped splattering of laughing mirth, deeply self-indulgent...“Spermies!” *Boot Camp is over!* ...he is off: three years readying himself, plotting, planning, *Now!* Frank is off on his Quest. Riding through fields of flesh. Flowers with the eyes of all the women he has ever loved, ever fucked, ever desired, ever roused the Spermies to “Attack!”—but bumblingly attacking, as he mindlessly slips out of his clothes: Naked Knight...and not so silently—not as he thinks himself so silent—kneels the bed and slides over towards his wife, pulling the Her Majesty towards him, lifting up her blanket of flowers, rises upon her rosy fragrance and a sting of tart stimulating verbena...casts himself upon her...wanting to block out the Sun, wanting to block out the Moon, wanting to be her only Sky and her only Star and her Only...“Spermies!”

Dalores: *Virgin Mother.*

CHAPTER 24

“What does it mean to be a man—a male, in these times?”

He wanted it to be his doctoral thesis. He wanted it to be the goal of every session. The analytical sessions he, himself, had with Professor Carroll at the Institute as well as the analytical sessions he “practiced” with all of his friends.

“The only true Revolutionary Act, my Man, is to suck cock.” Said with assurance as well as with the relish of dropping a dead fly into the Holy Ointment.

Jack had said that. Jack—now not only the Revolutionary Doper: the self-styled “Bodacious Bong!” Jack who probably did have a horde of cash, but now “Jack the Queer!” so he gleefully and nastily and uninhibitingly flaunted no matter where he was or who was listening.

“Jack,” Frank had begun...but realized that all which made sense to him in Jungian imaginings would only be “Mumbo Jumbo, Man! No more Mumbo Jumbo!” And although they had remained friends—mainly through Dalores’ invitations—Jack had turned upon Frank, “Just more religious mumbo-jumbo, more spiritual straightjackets, Man, can’t you see, dig it?”

Jack didn’t but Frank did...it was all a variant of Secular Biblicalism.

Secular—meaning Jung was a hard rod in his own Tower, not so subtlety phallic, poking some women with his wife eyewise...Freud, just finding Eros everywhere, as it should be, but being shocked to find it in the minds of women, despite the tortured state of their libidinous-less bodies...Did he just lack proper study of the Medieval Ages? Especially the Inquisition? Not read the *Malleus Maleficarum*? Misunderstand the corset as a bequeathment of his soul-mate Dominicans?...Marx—make it Lenin: *Free Sex*—but only if it serves the State: *Cathedra incarnata*? Ha. All just dicks, hard-ons, masturbating with dirty thoughts and dirty money and dirty wars—the same Male—Only God: no Goddess...but what else is the secular but the reimagined Biblical Mythos?

Yet, how else could Frank think or feel, so he asks himself, prosecutes himself, excoriates himself...was it to be Queer...or was that just an escape to the “male-only” zone, itself?!

Jack’s “Can’t you see?” which was a knifing, slicing metaphor, meaning “see beyond” the pretense, beyond the armor, beyond the masks...he using it all the time when others disagreed with him: “Can’t you see?”—he wanted them to see him: naked, balls ready to roll,

“All the love you’ll ever need!”...seeing himself kneeling, seeing himself on all fours, seeing himself as All That Love Is.

“Women mix ya up, Man. Like you go in and you’re ‘fraid to come out. ‘Fraid she’s been knocked up. You come out wishing you didn’t score! Not hit the bullseye! Ain’t I smoking?”

Jack who had, more than once, invited Frank to meet his “Jacks”—only later, after Frank made some lame ass excuse not to come upon the third invite, only then, “*Jacks, get it? Like Jack ‘n Jill, ‘cept we just Jack!*” *Revolution or just Revolting?*

Somewhere—as Frank rubs his stiff neck and wonders where all the Jungian Collective Unconscious...post-Freudian...post-Reichian...post-Christian stuff did hang out...being still grounded in his behavioral training, part of his mind looking for the “spot” or at least some *location* where such Depth Ideas brewed...listening to Jack always gave him a stiff neck, and raised some itchy doubts...*Hmmmm*.

Why don’t you?

She had said that. Dalores had said it. Said in her Earth Mother tone, as if it were a common, as if it were a “natural” thing, like “Why don’t you eat some granola?”

“Why don’t you?” Not even popping her eyes up from her book.

Frank had paused after re-reading, annotating the first chapter of Reich’s *The Murder of Christ*, paused to just say that, “Jack—ran into him at the *Free Store*—said, *Ain’t that woman of yours pregnant, yet?*”

Paused because he did want to talk about something else. Just didn’t know what this “else” was.

Dalores does.

“Why don’t you go to one of his meetings?” *Consciousness Raising*. Stated as if she had asked why he hadn’t gone to a Draft Resistance meeting...or to a Newman Center peace lecture.

Frank couldn’t jump over his pause nor hold back the crush of her sentence.

Dalores sent me. Frank had wanted to say that. Make it sound like, “My mother sent me” in the “So I *had* to come” death-sentence manner. But he didn’t say that.

Sarge had asked, “Why are you here?” It was a friendly inquiry.

“Reich’s *Murder of Christ*, that’s why.”

Jack was behind him, whirling a finger beside his right lobe, indicating that Frank was a “loony.” But Sarge ignores Jack; most often did.

“Yeah, I’m hip to Reich. But *you* tell me.”

It was an intellectual trip which had all but Sarge nodding off. A rambling rap by Frank—started out in good, disciplined academic order with summary points to be explained, a raft of notable names referenced, a calm articulation of sequential points...but around “Point D” it was flushed out by Sarge unzipping his pants: taking out his cock and stroking it.

As arousingly hot as this scene might have been, it was signal to the others that Sarge wanted to be alone with Frank. They—routed—within quarter minutes, fade and disappear.

Frank doesn’t bolt. Not that he didn’t have part of him shouting, “Whoa!” but that of the “participating analyst” kicked in...he’s practicing the methods of “active imagining” and of being a participant and not some “disinterested observer”—here, parting ways with the orthodox Jungian methods: “contaminated” is how Professor Noble termed his “flirtations” with “over-the-edge-geniuses,” citing here Reich and Laing, especially, but sweeping the indictment to include Fanon, Mao, Guevara, ranting upon the politicians and “radicals”—“Who do not go to the root, no, that’s what radical really means. They just want to trash!”...fuming and sneezing to his end with condemnations of “Revolutionary zealots! Priests and all!”—Teilhard, Berrigan, Altizer...babbling into “hippies and yippies and...and...*and....*”

For all these uncoordinated reasons, Frank remained stationary: physically, mentally and emotionally.

Can you hear?

Hear?

What my cock’s saying?

What?

Stroke me. That’s how’ll you’ll hear.

I’ll stroke myself.

Not the same.

You're doing it.
Just so you'll hear.
Hear what, damn it?
What do you hear when she strokes you?
Myself. I hear myself talking to myself.
Like, *Ummm*, feels good?
Yeah. Maybe. No. Like fucking feels good! Ha.
Because you know you're gonna get fucked?
Okay.
(Pause.)
Go on.
What?
Stroke yourself. I'm listening.
Like this.
Sweet whisper!
Ha. Just two guys jerking off. What are we, ten year olds?
Ouch! Nasty.
Circle Jerk. Never did it, but why not?
Why not?
(Pause.)
This is the connection.
Hmmm?
Why they're in Nam.
Yeah?
Yeah? Ass fucking. Cock sucking. Penis Power!
Yeah?
Been there—you?
No.
Let me do you?
No.
(Pause.)

It's all we want. All we need.

What?

To jerk off. What else?

Naw!

Yeah. If you admit it. What's your wife but a smooth way to beat off? Slick pussy juices.

Suppose my ass were juicier?

Suppose.

Do you do it for kids?

(Pause.)

Naw, you don't do it for kids, do ya? Admit it. Shit, not to me, to yourself.

So?

The cock rules the world. Think you're the only one reading Reich and all those guys? Shit. They're passé. All talk and thought but no fucking and bucking. If just one of 'em had fucked my ass, then they'd know.

Yeah?

Sure. There ain't no wanting women. Not inside us. We just want to cream and scream.

Bullshit!

Don't like that, eh? What's your wife but someone you need—'cause she can get a fat belly. Ever butt fuck her?

(Pause.)

Where ya going?

CHAPTER 25

“Women’s Liberation.” The phrase was grinding. At least that’s how Frank began to feel it. At first it was amusing—he had to admit that he’d been amused. Watching girls jump up and fumble in their bumbling imitation of the macho of a third string basketball practice squad. *Just like girls’ basketball.* Would he have to confess this? Now, in these Inquisitorial Times? Twist the garrote around his own throat—by his own hand? Stand up and say, “I’m a Male Chauvinist Pig!” No, more. “I’m a Male Chauvinist Capitalist Running Dog Pig of the Ruling Class!” Or, maybe just, “Pig, I am.” And grovel on all fours oinking his way, head snuffling and snorting the ground, at their feet.

Pig.

So, in some way, he understood, in the depth of his gut, Jack and Sarge. “Fags.” And as fags, not pigs—just “queers.”

Frank was annoyed—it buzzed his mind space—that he so clearly grasped the Fag intellectual option—avoid, finesse, juke, side—step... “Just call me *Dalores*, sweetie!” He almost punched Sarge...almost cold-cocked him. *Ha.*

She shook him. It seemed like an earthquake, avalanche. “What?!” But he immediately knew “what.”

Having roused him, she left for the bathroom.

Fucking-A—he hoped that the champagne was still chilled, if not actually cold. As he rubs his eyes and kicks the sleep down and off his right leg, he quickly reviews his checklist: food put away, candles snuffed, presents wrapped...*Did I put that bottle back in the fridge?*

“Sorry.” In a fluster; half true.

“Me, too.” And with her admission he checks the clock: 2 *a.m.*

Covering. Protecting. Caring: “Guess we shouldn’t be crucified on Cartesian time!” Weak humor. Actually, a stratagem: he wants a happy anniversary celebration—even if it’s a day late.

Dalores doesn’t laugh. Isn’t smiling. More than just tired, this Frank reads in the avoidance of her eyes—eyes which never avoid him...eyes, one of the reasons they married so

quickly. Dalores could look right into, inside Frank...she didn't say that, didn't say that she could probe him like a laboratory rat and measure him with her psychic tools, but it was something like that. Frank liked this, liked Dalores' eyes...it was what he unconsciously became at the gravesite: *unseen*.

Now, at This Moment—no Dalores eyes.

How did the unseeing begin?

At this time it was as later on...he saw himself not being seen by her but by himself. She had always consumed him with her eyes. "Your socks have holes—your big right toe." And, "You shouldn't've spooned that piece of cake, I told you so." These and so many...so many: *details*.

Dalores has always seen Frank in details. Details which were unknown to Frank; unobservable by his observing parts: eyes, ears, hands, tongue. Now, he was seeing Dalores in detail—this was what startled him.

He wanted to say but it stuck like quick-pour concrete: *Your breasts have been moulded by a thousand hands! Your face has been kissed by a million lips! Your cunt has been licked by adoring throngs!* But he couldn't: he saw the details; could not speak them.

But she came to him, anyways.

Disrobed and turned—in her own mind, blazed out towards him. In her own mind—all the fires of all the desires of all the women she had *just* loved, had been loving, would ever love: *these*, these were present to him through her.

She of the thousand breasts.

She of the embracing arms and arms and arms...*arms*.

She of the kisses which opened like stiletto cuts. Openings which she offers to him: body with a gadzillion openings, all and each dripping with the blood of thirst, thirst for his soul, thirst for him...for his Final Cut.

She of the cunt which was river, and as river for him to ride upon, sail, voyage, adventure...river which mated with river to become ocean which mated with ocean to become the world—a single solitary drop of absolute Offering.

She, Dalores.

What Frank had found with Bertha had been *elusiveness*. “What you see is not what you get!” He remembered the magical insight interred in the footnotes of Frazier and Bachofen; Paracelsus and John Dee...inside the alchemical flask.

As he grew in arcane, esoteric and cabalistic knowledge, so he grasped—a humbling, “tell no one else” insight that all he had been was the Sorcerer’s Apprentice—here, Bertha being the flask and he just lighting the wick on the burner. *Sorceress’ Apprentice?*

He, Frank—*pregnant!*

What Frank had found with Dalores had been *concreteness*. It was an educated word, one of philosophical cant but it leaked into “earthiness” and “groundedness”—other current but too hip words for his own sense of self importance. But it was how she made him feel: secure, *there*—but somehow *soft*...Frank felt this, felt it deeply—he *sat down upon* Dalores, more accurate.

Earth Mother—she was grass and the trees and small birds flying...she came to him in hippie dress: tie-dyed burst of smock; hair held back, braided by simple twine, spreading rocks thick and thin, from yard and park, thick bends of twigs, a decaying branch which held a staggering of incense sticks: bowls of water with simple flowers swimming, several bowls here and there: sweet soaps, handmade, lavender, patchouli, sandalwood...always a slight air about her...nothing like the *event of Bertha*: no lightning, no tornado, no run to the root cellar, rather, heaviness upon the obvious: seduction of satiety after a heavy lunch of thick seven-grain loafs and home-gardened tomatoes and cucumbers and radishes, lettuce in the spring: canned for the winter, pickled, prepared...Dalores was preparation—preparing in the small ways, the unnoticed ways, but a preparation which resulted, as such meticulous and instinctual preparations do, in marvelously baked breads!

Bread—Dalores is home baking.

Dalores now watching him, observing him, seeing but seeing more...seeing through and beyond—seeing with the eyes of her collective, of The Corn as her communal gathering named itself, this same night *seeing through and beyond*—peering with Frank’s body, not stopping at its edge, not just fondling him, sucking him, licking him, snuggling him...not her most fondest of

images and pleasures but here nursing him..not now the milk but her roots, roots seeping into him, entangling him, wrapping themselves around his psyche like a coil...“Devour them!” Bertha had shouted at tonight’s meeting of The Corn—it had frightened Dalores, but then that had been before her now last moment before her own Devouring.

Devouring—on the edge of the group, circular, in the next to last circle of three, just being not-of-herself so that she could be of the group, a practice to lessen egotistic energy—each being a stalk of corn, just one so as to become many: roots, sharing rootage, what is not seen...*where the sun does not shine!*...yet reaching up towards the common goal, the conscious goal—to be sun-filled: to be Son-Filled, this the myth of the Outside World, of the seen world, of *what is*...they celebrate this world—celebrate it in its forgetfulness of who they really are: *Roots*.

Champagne. Candles. Lavender incense. Schubert’s “Ave Maria.” His setting. To celebrate her. To proclaim her: “Intoxicating!” “Fire of my Heart!” “Fragrance of my desire!” Schubert to seduce...not in his conscious mind, but as to his instinctual training...without words, not his but this ancient song, to adore her as he only knew to adore her—as “Mother of my child!”—but not to shout that one, not to exclaim it—*Blessed Mother: Holy Mary*—not even to think it, sensitive to the misinterpretations of the day, no, he would let the music of centuries do his work.

“I adore you” is what he would say: *Ave Maria!*

Then float down from his cloud and inseminate her with his own intoxicating, fiery, fragrant and godly self.

Devouring—all at once, the shock of roots becoming herself as root, turning without moving and being now all the breasts which she sees: twenty-some—odd breasts, of all shapes and sizes, flitting through her mind in Outside words—boobs, teats, knockers, bags, bazooms, bazongas, apples, balloons, chubbies, cream-jugs, dugs, dumplings, melons, hooters, love tips, maracas, marshmallows, nuggets, wallopies, peaches, watermelons, upper-deck, milk-bottles, nubbies, oranges, diddies, gazongas...*Milky Way*—shuddering to a halt at Milky Way, for this was proper, proportionate: all these, together, cosmic...like shooting stars and flocks of asteroids and swirling planets around herself as Eternal Source...so all came: each passing through her by becoming her—her individuality their common body...kissing her lips to become their lips, stroking her forearm to become their forearm, licking her clit to become their clit, hugging her to

become their hug...each and all one skin...*Dalores*: a common thought...“Dalores,” a common word...the only word—word unto deafness, for she can no longer hear her word, no longer sense her nose, no longer wiggle her toes, no longer lay down and spread her legs...

“Frank...you’re ever so thoughtful.”

Stated in that way Dalores has always spoken to him, with gratitude for the simplest of things he does...gratitude for his being, this, how she made him concrete. How she became in her flesh what the house was in its architecture...somehow when she first closed the door as he set her down on their Wedding Day (“April Fools!”)—having picked her up and carried her over the threshold: *Tradition!*—there was the knowing that the house had let her close it...truly shut it *against* what was not them...a shutting which was their marriage vow.

“Frank!” Sighed...exhaled...lofted—a fog word, for as she said his name in this way—says it now—so Frank became undone...all that was him and within him became hers—she milked him, wrung him out, thrashed him, ridding him of chafe, ground his bones to make her bread...he loved it—the thought and her presence as “Earth Mother”...not just the bouncing abundance of her breasts, but, yes that—Scandinavian. Icelandic. Somewhere North so that as he first touched her he felt a chill, a throttling cold leaking inside the warmth of her plentiful moons...his mind flushes purple and sentimental and totally bonkers as he nestles into her...she nursing him, feeding him, healing him, comforting him—this gifted him the image of her as “Earth Mother”...it is what she had come to want for herself.

Devouring—others had talked, she had listened, asked questions...there were the secretive smiles, the “knowing” glances of those who “had done it,” yet she had not done it, not felt drawn to it, actually, repulsed by the not so uncontrolled macho threat of it all: “Fraid to do it?”

Almost like the first time a guy—not just a guy but her *First*: Anthony Salvador Fraticelli, like then—part invitation, part taunt, almost all a threat...to her being, to her place, to her sense of herself, so she had listened to them all, most closely to Bertha...but so much of Bertha was—*Well? Simply bragging.*

Dalores couldn’t see Frank in Bertha. No matter who said what or when or why...maybe the others knew, maybe some of them knew, *Maybe no one knows?*

Dalores couldn't remember it happening—thought that to herself just as that thought dissolved...no other word works for her—*dissolving*: this was the transition, the transforming thought, that which took her to the other side: Other body, no, Other soul, no...Other presence: *devouring*.

She's delivered!

Smug. Satisfied. Satiated. His actual words. Exclamation and all.

Falling asleep, eyelids like farm yard door shutting root cellar.

He sleeps.

Devouring—they wanted her body, she gave them her body. Every millimeter of flesh. Every molecule of breath. Every measure of every border: body, mind, soul and spirit.

They want to devour me. *So here is me!*

Sacrifice. Expiation. Redemption. Purification. Consummation. Transubstantiation. No such words were hers, possibly theirs, certainly his.

Even they did not know. *How could they know? They were women!*

“Women don't know how to fuck!” That was the clarion call—the denunciation and the annunciation.

“Devour!” That's what some said. “It's the only way. Not to accept any of their limits. None of their shackles and chains on us. Not our cunts. Not our analysis. Not our actions!”

Revolutionaries. How so many styled themselves as Devourers.

But Dalores devouring...at first herself, but, then, *them*.

Frank's now sleeping. Slug. Like a slug sheeted and blanketed in her bed. A Sci Fi movie: “The Twilight Zone”—a man-size slug next to her. Sluggish on so many levels. “But sluggish no more!” is thought for Dalores.

Walking around him. Around the bed as she can...wall blocking her physical passage, so she imagines herself and astrally walks—in so imagining, does circle round the bed.

Blessing him. Each corner of the room. Blessing with The Winds. Blessing with The Sky Points. Blessing with Salutation to the Cosmos.

Singing. Humming and strumming her own breath, her own tune, herself a note and a chord and a rhythm as she walks and imagines and is just there.

Devouring—what is other, what is not, what is not which is, which is her but not her, which devouring of her is of all hers...taking within her every sucking and probing finger and piercing tongue but most of all: *imaginings*...she imagines them: not just what they are or who they think they are or how they present themselves to her but as they dissolve into her and through her—her imagination being the catalyst...this the devouring: *imagining*.

When Frank awoke he knew that he was not fully awake. Not just awaking to that near sleepy state Swedenborg so favored, no, it was like he knew that he would never be awake as he had always before wakened—turning to her and feeling both that oneness and that separateness which he had always felt...waking to image himself—though he really didn't like the image it came...hammered itself to him—of being “spent”—like a nut shell or an empty bullet casing: “spent”...she there with something of him inside her...seeing himself like the pea inside the pod: himself “lost” inside her—this type of waking was not his today.

As if he had asked, she turns: half-rolls towards him as if his wakefulness woke her...her smile conveyed it all, *I'm pregnant*.

Frank misses Dalores.

CHAPTER 26

The campus was uncharacteristically quiet.

Frank could see the quiet. Drives into the parking ramp. Notes the bodies fuming—giving off vapors, detectable trails in a bubble chamber—*Bubble Chamber*: the philosophical image for the day, he chuckles and chuckles at himself chuckling and at the chuckling chuckle—*Aw, shit!* as he, himself, ejects from the carbuncular technology of his vehicular exo-body, sucking a last warmth from the beast’s symbiotic lungs: *Carbon beings, all just tidbits of dinosaurs...* the presence of dinosaurs he sees plopping their plodding way across the mall on their trek to study metaphysics!

The quiet meant “no demonstrators.”

As if the war had ended or something.

Had he slept through it? *I mean, the End of the War?*

As he doodles he is doodling *them*, The Enemy: War of the Sexes—Bertha and Dalores...*Jack?*

“Nam, Man, it’s just America, Man, just the bedroom fuck, just the gooks, Man, just the gooks’ve changed.”

Wasn’t Jack. But a black peg-legged jewish part-native-american veteran raving how he had to change into a female to “Fully grasp the contradictions, Man!” A bit more of Mao’s *Red Book* than Frank could digest.

Just a daydream fantasy—but somehow real for Frank.

Something had changed, no, someone: Dalores. And it wasn’t necessarily a good change, not felt like that in his gut.

He doodles Dalores. Enjoys the circularity of her: whirl-winding small circles on top of smaller ones inside of larger ones...a face which was as round and full as the moon, creamy, with bonking brown eyes, like precious stones—a glint deeper than amber but *What?*

He was drawing with a Number 2 so color didn’t matter...copious breasts: ones that swayed when she set herself across the sky: “Like the goddess Nut!” she’d tease, chasing down his mythological images from his numerous books—which in her role as Good Wife she

routinely perused and kept at least conversationally in tune with...hands which were soft, they felt like rollers, somehow her fingers conveyed a rolling softness...Dalores' massages were a strong glue to their intimacy, something Frank knew he could not, possibly just genetically couldn't, return in full pleasure, though he made the effort—*ass*: practically leapt off the page as *ASS!* an almost audible act...just printing the three letters and the world, this room, teacher and students, all come to an abrupt stop, halt—listening to his imagining, his delightful erotic gamboling inside his world of archaic scratchings.

Frank scolds—laughs at himself, realizing that he has heard nothing of what Professor Carroll is saying...Dalores' ass is the resting place for the sun as it settles down to sleep—*Me*. Frank whispers but only to his inner ear...it is an imagining which makes him real, this he has admitted to himself, admits in self-confession, a secret he has not had a way to communicate to her, never saying, “Dalores, I'm real when resting on your ass.” Doesn't know why he can't or even feel that he couldn't...they've discussed everything sexual, erotic, but...?

“How real are dreams?”

The question snagged him, like a fish being speared.

“Are they simply to be reduced? Trivial chaos? Unresolved matters of the non-dreaming state—of consciousness, whatever *that* is!” she sardonically smiles but doesn't pause...“Mythic detritus. Psychic garbage. Or, less. Biochemical accidents? Come, come,” taunting, “there has to be a faithful reductionistic behavioral biochemist among you? Some academic dopehead? No?!” Then the bell rang. Titters and book-bag scratchings and feet scuffing and shuffling, muffled sounds of heavy winter garb...only Frank remains seated.

She had to leave, the next class was already entering, so Professor Carroll tugged Frank's astral leash and walked him to her office.

Once inside she motions for him to shut the door, then sets herself down into a high backed swivel, settling in such a way and with such minor but meaningful movements: a quick flip of her long skirt up off the floor, hem hanging onto an edge of her lap, this with her hands folded, a slight declination in her chair...she was ready: holding court—Frank had seen it before: “Drugs can induce every kind of dream state,” he took her bait, then concluded with what he thought was his strong point, “I've run the test, myself.”

“Run them on rats?”

“Yeah.” A nervous admission, knowing that his “Yeah” was not unambiguous to her.

“On myself. Too.” Frank uncomfortably one-thirty-second-smile at the professor.

When Frank left her office several hours later, he felt wearied and drained. Not from intellectual discussion—one which rose and fell with convictions and declarations and the throwing of footnotes: nails, pebbles, bricks, atomic blasts, such they had done but, no, rather, Frank felt tired as if he had just been through a long wrenching interview.

“Why?” had been her opening probe. He thought it an easy answer. “Why not?” mirthfully snickered with the best sober imitation of a zoned pothead.

But she was not easily answered. “That’s you, isn’t Frank, a *Why not?*”

She got him talking about “Why not?”

About himself as a risk taker. Not one who called himself such, “But one who does, who acts. *Acts boldly.*”

He was novice enough at therapy to grasp that she had catalyzed him—how he didn’t know...*why?* his mind didn’t pause to consider...it was like falling off the dock into the lake; like slipping.

When he got home his whole body was buzzing, rushing—he felt intoxicated, giddily intoxicated. He wanted to rush up to Dalores, sit her down, tell her everything: *Everything.*

But she wasn’t home. “Dalores!” he calls up and down stairs. *Wednesday*, she should be home, as he checks the calendar—quick deflation, she penciled in “Corn”...he knew he’d eat alone, tonight—*Again.*

Acts boldly. The echoes of Professor Carroll’s characterization were dying through dimness and... Not true.” Frank spoke it out loud between bites of pizza.

I’m anything but that. Rapidly seeing the short history of his quarter century flit by with death scenes, gravesite maws, his shaky fear of the water, the locking of the house “against the outer world”...his women: flights to them—now, with enough self-analysis to realize that he sought security in them: “Bertha. She drew you out. Broke down all your barriers. Turned you

inside out. Didn't she?!"...*True*, Frank wanted to counter, *but*...he, himself, couldn't complete this "but" for it meant dealing with the house in a way he was not yet ready to deal with the house—which itself was an affirmation of his own insight and gave the lie to hers, but such was not of this moment..."Dalores. She's everything in the outside world. Right? Both radical and hippie. Right?" *But that's not it*—something, again, which he didn't say...just nodded, like a good student taking notes.

During their conversation Frank had accepted everything the professor said...let it seep in as if it were real—for something inside himself wanted it to be real. He wanted his life to be this simple.

"Thank you," as he rose to leave.

Feverish with the poison of her own self-inflation, Professor Carroll—in a move so quick that she was upon Frank in what to him was a flash-bulb pop—she gives him a big hug: "Dream on. Dream *boldly*" she whispered...Frank felt he was a co-conspirator...but what crime was afoot?

So, without Dalores, Frank decides to get drunk. *Naw*, inside himself, *I'm not drunk. They are*. They: here being Professor Carroll and her like.

Drunk. How else to figure? All their theories. Policies. *Bold acts!* Shit, this's how they "think" and so the world is as it "is"—all messed up, wars, wars, wars! Fucking-A wars: indians and slaves and atomic bombing gooks, slant-eyes and fucking the mick, whacking himself upside his drunk ass face...wops and rooskies...*aw, shit!* This is real? This, truth? Dicks and cunts and pussies: fags, queers, homos? *This is nothing but a bad dream!*

Dalores found Frank snoring away in bed, more deeply snorting and grinding his teeth than usual, but she took these as signs, good signs, that he was getting "solid sleep"... "Sweet dreams," she kiss-blows to him, unspoken, as she slips under the covers: her toes half-frozen.

CHAPTER 27

Frank woke before she did; rose, dressed and walked down to the lake—*Harriet*.

Frozen. The world was frozen. As only Minnesota could be—frozen, yet with life scurrying all over it and under it: *petrified*...he walks aware of those who live under it, not only the plants sleeping and the seeds anticipating but the pioneers dead and the Indians dead and whomever was here before the Indians...Frank sees clearly, Minnesota is anticipation, expectation, a frozenness which is somnolence, a waiting: for a return, a revivification, more than spring or springs gushing from melted snow...it is this he is knowing as he stops at the lake's edge, undefined edge for *when does the land end and the ice begin?*

She is beside him in a moment of acknowledgment, not of spatial awareness—he glances sideways, to his left and she is there: Professor Carroll...fully unclothed but body not shivering or iced or blue in any way, rather a softness, not of light but as of presence—she is quietly beside him and as silently slips into his mind for as he looks he is aware that he can see through her, see the mounds of snow, the gravel trapped, gagging within ice's grip...“Your father is not dead.”

He turns and glances to his right.

“Your father is not dead,” again.

Frank turns, a third time...fourth, right angle pivots—the words, again, but this time it is Dalores. Diaphanously present.

Frank turns, a fifth, sixth time, rotating the plane covering all n-dimensions—the words, again, but this time it is Bertha.

Cold words. Words to chill a son's heart. Ice words. Imprisoning words. They each and all speak in chorus: *You father is not dead*...He's dead! He's dead! I buried him. I dug the pit. I heaved the dirt. I hammered the lid shut. He's dead! He's dead!...Hot words. Words to fire a son's heart. Molten words. Escaping words.

“He's dead!” *Frank, wake up, sweetheart, wake up, you're dreaming, Frank...*

They had breakfast in a weekday morning way. Hurried way. Habitual acts of consumption. Reading the morning newspaper: he. She: flicking on “The Today Show.” Words

and images washing them; cleansing them of nighttime's lingerings. She off onto one of her many projects, crusades, commitments, gatherings, and part-time job at a Dinkytown used book store: *Very part—time*, Frank had always caustically noted...the money his dad left would keep them for quite some time, but he felt that Dalores should work, yet he never fought over this, never pressed it so as to provoke her...hot cereal: he brown sugar she honey, dark roasted coffee, hand-ground, tea—pot whistling for drip...hugs, kisses, a meaningful glance—each knew that they could stop the charade and sit down at any moment and “get real” but each also wanted the charade, for there were things brewing within each and within the marriage which each day of this trinitarian year began to make themselves present...“serious” stuff, but because so serious each trod lightly.

“Going to the *All Peoples* rally tonight?” a question which was also an invitation. “Depends on how my research goes.” Each understood the disclaimers contained therein.

Dalores momentarily pauses in the boot alcove after she has yanked the inside door shut behind her. The house's heat sucks the cold inside, always creating a pressure differential which caused one to pause to make sure that it was properly shut—an oddity of Minnesota and frigid lands which she never realized as odd until her trip, at fifteen, to a maiden Aunt in California. “You only have one door!” exclaimed the startled youth, snatching a short riff of laughter from the adults...she realized that she had much to learn from this strange land where it is, “Always nice, dearie. It's always nice here.”

Paused, but this time not only to ensure that the door was shut, but a pause of recognition, that the next door she was opening would be one through which she walked as someone leaving this house, someone who did not live here...as someone who was leaving behind someone—here, Frank.

Frank did not leave the house, that day. He didn't go to the U to do research. He didn't continue the day as their weekdays had been continued.

The dream bothered him.

It bothered him that Professor Carroll was there. *Who is she?*

The doorbell rings.

If he had been younger. If he had not missed the Draft...avoided? dodged? *Whatever*. He would have instantly given into the “knock-on-the-door” paranoia rampant among students: narcs, MPs, FBI, CIA!

Could be, rises from his dress: long black coat, high quality, New York type fedora, *Wall Street* earmuffs, glasses which were not hip, but more of a straight-arrow stance.

Frank peeps out the security port and sees The Establishment peeping back!

“Francis Frakes?” Another question which was not a question but an assertion of identity.

Before lunch, he was gone:, both he, this man, “Professor Brad Campbell,” which turned in the course of the conversation into “Major Campbell”...that title seeping, leaking as the conversation went on into nuanced areas of projects which could not be named with hints of unnamed titles bestowed by unnamable organizations kept secret for clearly unnamable reasons of “National Security.”

Throughout these morning hours Frank drinks liters of coffee—his visitor’s cup fades to room temperature.

“National Security?” It almost made Frank giggle; he struggled not to act like a Left Wing crazy nor a “Wow!” dope-head paranoid.

But after lunch, Frank was also gone.

It had been a talk not as much about academics as Frank first thought, receiving Professor Campbell as a colleague: “Professor Carroll suggested we meet,” an invitation which Frank couldn’t give or receive, just let it be...a talk which began with references to “archetypal studies” and went somewhat autobiographically from “Brad. Please, call me Brad. We’re near the same age, you know.”...an autobiography not, in the main, unlike his own, but taking a detour into “Service,” meaning the “Marines,” he smiled hard-lipped as he said the word—an echo of *Semper Fi!* bounced around the house, but Frank hushed it...such a phrase made all this seem too, too cartoonish.

“National Security” began to pop up quite regularly during their second hour, he linking psychological studies to the war effort. Frank translating this into propaganda efforts, ala old World War Two B-movies which he had seen, more than once. “National Security”—Frank wondered what Professor Carroll had to do with this guy as much as what he had to do with him!

“Yes.” Frank knew about Jolly’s work with prisoners: “Personality is a social creation, not a personal right.”

“Yes.” Frank knew about Rhine’s work on the paranormal: “Mostly card tricks, yes?”

“Yes.” Frank was more than familiar with Laing’s implication for anarchical revolution: “We’re all insane!”

“Yes.” Frank had heard about Jung’s Nazi sympathies: “Freud was Jewish, remember.”

“Yes.” Frank was aware of the growing feminist rant: “Goddess cultures were not violent cultures!”

“Yes.” A bundle of yeses. Almost like a multiple-choice test. *Where is this going?*

Your father is not dead.

Frank knows he is not dreaming. But he hears the words.

Professor Major Bradford Campbell: “Your father *is not* dead.”

CHAPTER 28

The women gathered, drawn from every direction, migrating like the winds, calm winds, stillness and calm but thick—as carrying something, like the congested wind of summer carrying pollen...*awareness*: also aware, that they were coming to celebrate in terms of ritual, not as to happiness or sadness, though both would be there but to call each other forth, a gathering like at a church, as in the olden sylvan Grove where the gods and goddesses gathered and gamboled...but now gathering alone...without the gods...here, tonight, celebrating the absence of one such god—*him*, her husband...Frank: *disappeared*.

“Disappeared.” How the paper stated it, “Frank Frakes, a graduate student in psychology at the University, disappeared....”

They consoled her. Dalores distraught. Grief stricken. Beside herself. Anxious. Devastated. Perplexed. Inconsolable.

They consoled her on the mythic level. This which *The Corn* was meant to do. “Be a mythic healing.” When she first heard it, the words meant little, now they meant all.

“Adam disappeared from Eve’s world. He simply wasn’t around.” Meaning, not available emotionally, psychologically, spiritually—“Mythic disappearance.” It was manifest in the “absence” of the Mothering Goddess from any and all extant patriarchal myths.

Dalores knew this, but doesn’t speak it nor did she want to hear about it, rather, just wanted them to be, so she could be *it*.

She grieved for Frank in ways which startled even herself—the grief of the child to be born without a father. To never know his or her father.

Weeping Earth. Her Corn Sisters dance a crying song: a rain dance loosing psychic rain, astral tears...a grieving dance, grieving for the aloneness which does not have to be...a dance of an earth without a heaven, sky but no heaven—they grieved for the sky.

Dalores grieved as the grave grieves for the life not given to it.

For a father, never knowing.

“Disappeared.” It was how they told him it would be written. A word which is readily latched to evil doings: snatched, kidnapped, murdered...Frank accepted the word. He hoped that it would free Dalores, convince her that he was not coming back, would not reappear.

That “You’re father is alive” was real gave him the courage to leave...the courage of the soldier: *desertion?*

God, who’d believe?!

Belief. This was the issue. This was what Professor Major Bradford Campbell came to evoke. “Do you believe what you see?”

See. It was how he had been trained. As everyone striving to qualify as “scientist” is trained. “Seeing is believing.” That’s the simple equation. The balance on both sides of the predicate.

“Believing is seeing,” said the Professor Major.

“You believe your wife still loves you?”

He nods.

“Even though you can’t see her?”

Indulgent smile for clever but sophomoric ploy.

“What happens if she remarries?”

“We’ll have to see.”

Campbell’s smile returns the suffered indulgence.

Frank stops pacing—he’s been pacing for the last hour or so, round and around the room, each window an eye onto nothing but the outside, searching for the light inside himself, trying to take all of this “Cannonball Express!” type wreckage of his life once lived somewhere hours ago sometime on this same day...*Really?...*letting his mind open, *Just possible?...*like when he first dropped acid—he had to believe that it would not make him crazy... stops: “*Fides quaerens intellectum,*” Frank intone. The Major appreciates and is grateful for this cryptic validation of his mission. (Echoes: “Faith seeking understanding.”)

“When?”

That was the question he wanted answered. The tape was his father’s voice. The letter was his hand. The photograph was him, but each of these could have been created *post mortem*.

The question hadn't really become a question until his father started linking together things which had happened since he "died."

"Son, Brad, here, will explain things. Most things. Some things even he can't explain. Security and all that." Pause. "Son, I know this is an incredible story. Something...you'll wonder why I hadn't...but that's why you'll just have to believe. Not believe me. Not believe Brad. Believe yourself, son, believe yourself."

A father he had loved. A happy family. A father playing ball with his son. A father reading with his son. A father offering thanksgiving at dinner meals. A father whose presence had always been *there*. Not one without his faults—at least not after he turned twelve. Faulting him more in his relationship with his mother than anywhere else. A young man sensitive in his own insecurities being annoyed at the spousal submission in little things. "Take out the garbage." "Mow the lawn." "Shovel the sidewalk."

Faults. "Just tell her to shut up!" He wanted to say that, like Jackie Gleason, "Alice! Pow! Right in da kisser." But he didn't. He suffered his father's weakness.

She—his mother died much too soon for this ever to become a two-way conversation.

Frank realizes that the disclosure of his father's "secret life" has evoked a guilty thrill—the gasping, frightened panting of his first crime: snatching a cigarette from his mother's purse... "Got away with it!" Relief. Excitement. Jitters. Tension. Dread.

He fooled her!

The Devil whispers: "Right on!"

Now on a plane to Miami. Frank was taking everything on faith. He believed in his father. He believed in himself.

CHAPTER 29

It was just past the sixth month, the twenty-sixth week expiring as the vans drove up: small vans, personal, but carrying all that her Corn Sisters felt was worth transferring. Twelve of them: each presorted into a threesome, moving into their assigned spots, for the moving plan was detailed according to astrological exactness...each selected according to Zodiac sign, each located according to star-point...groups representing the elementals: fire, air, earth, water; others, the Four Winds; add the Sacred Numbers...the day, itself, was an equinoctial celebration: proportional of light and darkness... Dalores was number Thirteen: catalytic, cabalistic, alien, a Cloud of Unknowing—herself, the transforming agent...what was The Corn about but transformation in terms of a transubstantiation—of flesh into mind into soul into spirit *into*...that is why they came...to discover and explore the sequential *into*.

The house—so many had said, so many with psychic sensitivity, spiritual openness, shamanistic talents—*the house is a “special place”*...so to be within it each had to become special...here, discussed and debated and fracturing many evenings with early morning breakdowns, walk-outs, bad feelings...special as in “set apart” as in the need for a “purification” but leery of how males had “chosen” themselves and “purified” themselves.

“But this is a time of a Great Turning. Turning away. Turning within. Turning towards. It’s this Turning Towards which is unknown to us. Maybe,” she was an inspired one, everyone agreed that Bertha had changed: grown, blossomed, molted, into a Seer—she called herself, “Witch. I’m just a witch.” She was seeing with a “special sight” but of such fogginess that she inveighed her Sisters to criticize her, to knock off the mud from the diamonds she had been granted “by the Great Mother!”...to wash and wash and wash thoughts, ideas, images, feelings until “We *all* see.”

Collective sight. Communal seeing. Bertha trusted such.

As they entered the house they came as Virgins. Not as to hymen but as to heart. “Purity of heart.” It meant many things: the two with pre-teens dedicated them to their father’s care—one divorced and bitter, one of painful, anguishing departure...those involved in relationships of any sort: husband/wife, Significant Others, Life Partners, these were “set aside”—*for a time*: “lay

down your life...?” Not unknowing of the pain, not unaware of the thrice-hooked-barb, “You’re just imitating the worst in male spirituality!”

But they—each and all having seen, collectively and communally, that they had been called, summoned, indeed, invoked by that presence which was inside Dalores—her within which needed to be called to come forth...it was this imagining, of whom the child in her womb was: daughter, mother, son, father?...as she grieved so was she grieved back: hearing, sensing, knowing, imagining what she says to them now as she places her hand upon her belly, as they all place their common hand: “The One is Many. The Many is One.”

It was this presence of hope and despair, of the paradox of calling as being called, within such a full embrace of such an empty, dissolving disappearance that they entered the house...itself a pang-inflicting act of parturition.

It was not that they removed themselves from the “real world”. Rather they sought to practice a “being in the world, not of the world” discipline. Not unaware of the slipperiness of both “in” and “of.” For it was a spiritual direction employed by the religions which had oppressed them...burned them at the stake. Yet, “How else can we proceed?”

“In” and “of” they redefined and reimagined in terms of their most intimate selves. “The personal is political” was a verbal pennon hoisted by most feminists of the day. For The Corn Sisters the “is” was the crux of the matter.

Crux in terms, itself, of a crucifixion. For they boldly grasped that their just being “in” the house was threatening to *everyone*. To Establishment and Left Wing males. To Straight and Lesbian women. To Christians and Jews and every religion of biblical or patriarchal stripe.

But mostly: a threat, each to the other.

The daily threat was of dying. Of being killed, murdered, tortured and slain by the Other. “Seek to become yourself as you become her.”

It was the Other who was you.

The daily threat was of birthing.

“You” who had mistaken her as separate from you, as other in terms of cut-offness, in terms of alienness—“The Father God is the Sky, but they turned him into a monster from another planet. A not human. A superhuman; supernatural.”

It was for them to find the divine, the spiritual, the whole “naturally”—the fullness, the abundance of the term in each Other.

To look at each Other and not see the death which the Fathers had trained them to see, had forced them to imagine. “Forced. Because your body tells you otherwise. Each month we pass through the dying. Our whole physical life, our birthing life, gives the lie to their sense of dying. Their annihilation.”

As they leave the house each day, so they struggle not to leave. To bring the house with them. To be that holy place...a shekinah, a living tabernacle. To be so through Intention.

Intending—not just thought, not just a remembering, rather an imagining—imagining oneself as fuller...*robust*, as in one place with more than one presence...evoking this through *skin*: the skin shared with the earth: *the skin of air*—so a fragrance of one within the threesome: Alicia’s slight muskiness, her love of animals and her delight in splashing musk over her lover and lovers, this carried in a treasure of cloth, a scapular beneath a blouse, sniffing and calling forth her insights, her imaginings...*the skin of sight*—her way of looking, Janet the potter: throwing the world into shapes and forms, always moving from a day’s encounter with a thought, a vision, an embrace and re-visioning in clay: wearing earrings, necklaces, brooches that she fired, touching them to make her present...*the skin of taste*—Anna’s way of “cooking”: “You’re sweet potatoes, Karen,” and the merriment becomes contagious, Anna and Karen having shared a night together, all now knowing Anna’s imagining: her licking of Karen’s skin, licking her as if collecting her inner essence which seeps up: “Rises like a broth,” so Anna proclaims: her method, her way, a taster, with cooking imagination...so she has Janet mold amulets of food: sweet potato for Karen, tomato for Miranda, chili pepper for Red Fox, and as the amulet touch lips, the fullness intensifies...*the skin of skin*: the lover’s recall, what two had shared together, exchanged, ripped from each other and then re-clothed, just to touch the fingertips—a kiss, a sniff, a pressing upon a cheek, and the moment is reimagined: *intended*.

Intending the robust body.

“Of” what world? For the “of” itself expressed their belief, their hope, their search for other worlds: more plenteous worlds, multidimensional in ways unknown, inexpressible.

And Dalores was one of these “of’s.”

Pregnancy.

“What is it?”

“A state of being?”

“A mystery?”

“Life’s self-deprecating joke?”

“Horror and Pain!”

“The death of the male.”

Dalores rubs her tummy. Her Sisters so rub—theirs and hers. Each in procession, touching, rubbing.

Not wanting Dalores to be alone.

In the sense of being abandoned.

If Frank had known, would he have abandoned me?

“Men know no better. It’s all they have.”

“How can we be certain we’re different?”

“Because we have escaped.” *Bertha.*

Escape—it was what had brought The Corn together in the first place. Just having found themselves in a room, each having a particular story about their own particular “room”—in a room realizing that others—one or two, sometimes more—were plotting an escape...not calling it “escape” but drawing lines which converged, intersected, congealed as a route, a pathway, openings of secret passageways...drawing with political lines: “Liberation!” “Freedom!” “Equal Pay!”...drawing with spiritual lines: “The Holy Spirit is female!” “Goddess!” “The Earth is Our Mother!”...drawing with sexual lines: “My Body, My Self!” “My Sister, My Lover!” “Love the one you’re with!”

“This house was my escape route.” She had had long hours with Dalores talking about Frank. Yet, the heart endlessly hurt even though the remembering was freeing.

“You all got here. Maybe escaping. Maybe to escape.”

“Speak on, Sister. Speak as you See,” several urged; common prayer.

“My Sister, my Love”...she smiles towards Dalores, enigmatic both ways: “I’ve escaped to her body.” Pause. Saying what must be said, but feeling the razor blade slice her: slice off her lips, slice off her nipples, slice off her pubic folds—the grappling hands of the Torturer, Burner of Her Flesh: *Friar Otto* is present, but Bertha steadies herself, strengthens herself through intending Dalores...“He gave me his cock,” mock laughter, snide tittering all around at the humor of “gave”...“and I received him. Pleasured him. Drank him.

Of course, I didn’t see it that way, back then...I must celebrate him...celebrate him as a mysterious agent of Her presence—*The Goddess be praised!*—for it was when he *took* me,” subdued smiles, eager ears, “that I first spied Her.” Collectively, they are seeing Her, seeing Her as each had glimpsed when being with a him.

“*How?* I don’t know. He accepted me. Received me. Drank me.” Hesitation, fear, emptying, *kenosis*, yanking: “Frank devoured me. We devoured. *He became pregnant!*”

There never had to be an exact conclusion or a summary statement or a bulleting of what had been said and not said...there simply had to be an opening...Bertha had opened, not Frank but Dalores...“I found you *there*.”

Dancing—it was her way, so she came before them all, creating by the uplift of her face, the splay of her feet, a space: she dances, *Bertha is dancing*—arms which slowly rise and fall, bird wings, long, liquid lines, up and down swirling her shawl she pivots slightly, slowly, turning full circle by small movements...she alights upon Dalores’ shoulder, sharing the play of the shawl, coos: a very soft baby sound, small, ever so wee...with it begins her flock of breathing, up and down and around Dalores who rises upon the softness, upon the quiet of the huffy invitation—she becomes *hard*: rock, the firmament, raising her arms straight above her head, an arrow, solid...the shawl is stuck upon her upraised hands, finger impaled as ever more softly does Bertha move about so harder—intense, dense—a diamond does Dalores become...fierce of face, soul leaking from her eyes in pearl drops as she presses herself within—strains most fiercely, mightily, a face of repulsion, resistance, abhorrence—warding off bird sounds, scarecrow to comforting coos—but they are bound: snagged by the shawl...this now what they share, all which

they share, only what they share—umbilical cord and hangman’s noose...they are the steely hardness of the cock, the projectile, the blade—steel silence: the immobility of a bullet—portending shattering of bone, puncturing of heart, stealing of breath...they are tableaux: an imagination which grips the Sisters...an inexplicable play of hard and soft, but yet so explicable...generating heaps and heaps of images, remembrances, vivid daydreams, nightmares!

Then in an eye blink Bertha flits, then flies, then swirls, then cyclones herself with sound rising from hum to drone to whistle to crooning...*Yyyyaahhhhhh!* crackles and booms and thunders them into a magical exchange of roles—the shawl wraps itself fully around Dalores and she plunges, melts, rains and puddles on the floor—flesh spread in mist of soul: legs and arms posturing softness, yielding and Bertha locks her arms across her chest and onto her shoulders, buckles with the grace of a babe faltering upon first walk and lands, settles, plops to languish as rock in her middle—water and stone, stone and water—water stone stone water...devoured, the not devourable.

All the Sisters clap and hoot and holler, cry and laugh: *imagined*.

As the Sisters laid down in their threesomes, so was Dalores by herself—alone within a robust embrace which drenched her bed with desire. “Frank was useful.” So, had Dalores said, shocked by the simplicity of the statement...the direction the statement clarified...the celebrating it kicked off... *thanks-giving*: how they began and so ended, with a ritual of thanks-giving...tonight, of a “Thanks-giving for Frank,” each imitating him—an *imitatio dei* imitating: remembering, recalling, “making him present” in and through and with them, as each became Frank as cunnilingual lover...worshipper at the Goddess’ Throne...refreshing himself at Her Font of Wisdom—bold adventurer passing through her Gate of Heaven...being him as they consumed him, inhaled him, swallowed him, returned him, reincorporated him, reimagined him as that part of themselves of which each was the whole—“The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.”

Frank as male just a part—significant, important, valuable, essentially useful...yet full and robust only as they imagined him.

Intending. Imagining. Giving-thanks. Sign posts on their escape route.

CHAPTER 30

Believing is seeing. The phrase lingered in various recesses of Frank's mental state as he rode the taxi, sat on the plane, rode a second taxi to a hotel in Miami—*Holiday Inn*: bustling middle-management clientele, "Doing America's Business"

What do I believe?

In the morning he woke to an emptiness within his stomach, within his mind, within his soul...rose into this emptiness: the walls were simply walls, the room just a room, the view outside, just sunlight. "It must be America."

At breakfast, spooning into his emptiness, sensing himself as a dark hole, a bottomless pit...wan laughter at a crushed echo of mirth from somewhere, "No longer empty?"

A sense of *stepping-out-of*...images of mud dripping boots, sloshing through sleeted slush into and around a revolving door...poop into the potty...footnotes falling out of a book as he picks it up...slumping beside a woman, no longer "inside"....

Brad had the tickets waiting. The Hollywood manila envelope with a thousand in it: ten C-notes. At the check-in, another envelope: another several thousand. "Where am I going?" to himself, thanking the Bell Captain: tipping him a ten..."Big Shot!" silently chuckles his ears.

Today?

On cue, the phone rings. "Mr. Frakes. Frank Frakes?"

"Yes."

"Your car is waiting." *Sure. Okay. Right. My chauffeur!*

Thoughts of meeting his dad—*Alive! Again!*—over-rode his conscious desire to learn the details of his "secret life." Frank wasn't sure that he believed Campbell's tale—after all, his dad simply told him to "Come." *Like my old man, sparse of tongue.* Which fact had been another chill witness.

Who wouldn't want to think that the worst day, the most miserable, rejected, lonely, abandoning day of one's life actually didn't happen?

Orphan. Frank could never accept applying that word to himself. Its finality made him wish that he had been as spiritual as his father often said his mother had been. “*Afterlife.* That’s what’s real, Francis, the afterlife.” This he does remember—actually was his most poignant memory now that he confronts her memory in this new light.

“She’s dead. But she’s here. When we pray, she’s here.” He never fully believed that his father believed this...it accounted for why Frank rarely prayed.

As they drove towards the ocean the possibility had not dawned on Frank. Not until the driver passed through several gates and drove within a hundred yards of Pier 37.

Christ! A boat!

Of course he had told them, so he checks his past dialogue. *Must’ve told them? Dad would surely know.*

It was the boat which made him really stop: hard-pressing the brakes, not minding that the tires might blow. “Master Swimmer.” “Red Cross Certificate.” *But only because I’m scared shitless of the goddam fucking water. Didn’t I tell the fucking Major, that?*

Frank didn’t want to get out of the car, but how could he stay? What would he say to the driver? *Was he a driver or what? Spy, agent, kidnapper?*

Stepping out and looking for Brad—*Look where?*

“Hell, they’re looking at me!” All of a sudden he knew...it wasn’t for him to see them but for them to see him.

He casually walks over to a wharf-side vendor...buys a cup of coffee. Paces slowly, self-consciously, back and across to a bench,, sits.

“Headaches? Back ache? *Shoot morphine!* Naw! His mind erases the ad copy on the bench’s back: *Bayer Aspirin Comforts and Relaxes!*” Sits, waits, sips. It’s a wharf with tourists, *Whatever.*

Pop the pill. His inner doctor. *Who gives a fuck? Them?*

Brad had said, hand clutching a small bottle, “Thought you might need these.”

So, he had listened!

But Frank felt that he better not. Not risk not being at his peak. After all, he didn't know the details. Things could change quickly and he didn't want to be doped or fuzzy brained. Tired. Yeah, he could deal with tired. But right now he greatly feared loss of control.

The boat at the wharf was not for him: *no deep sea fishing, today!*

Within this first hour Brad arrives, waving like a long lost friend from the prow of an elegant yacht. Frank wants to wave and shout back, with a sophisticated lilt and hail: *Party time?!*

But he knew from their first meeting that Brad defined “no-nonsense” guy. “Not a party animal,” heard by no one.

After an hour-plus out from land—a landlessness which Frank refused to accept...forced himself to imagine that, if he wanted, that he could step off the yacht and onto a small island—where or how this small island got there was not a concern...he believed it would be there. *Believing is seeing.* So it would be there... after this second hour passes Brad comes, throwing like a knife, “Debriefing. Time for your debriefing.”

So, here's where it all truly became an event of the time...*The times they are a changin'* (“Fuck Zimmerman!”). For if Frank had been writing up the episode for a magazine he would have said, “A story, an adventure, an escapade which defines the times. *Secrecy.* Secret War in Laos. J. Edgar Hoover's Wire-tapping Secrets. Secret History of Indian Massacres. Secret Files of McCarythism. Secret Spies of the FBI: infiltrating Black Panthers, Black Muslims, Martin Luther King, Jesuit Seminaries, the soul of Thomas Merton, the psyche of Daniel Ellsberg, the Pussies of Lesbians, Anything Anti-War, Anything Non-Violent”...secret eyes, secret tongues, secret cocks: “Nothing Secret Anymore.”

Welcome to the Secret Sixties!

Even though it was the Seventies: *that's one of the Sixties' Secrets*—Frank is amusing himself. A reverie trying to escape the fact that he is swallowed inside a submarine. “Nuclear. Take you to the China Sea.” *Thanks, Brad!*

Had to board it outside of America's international waters: *Why? I know, It's a secret!*

Although Brad has assured and reassured him, “This comes from the top,” not pointing,

but Frank could see up the organizational chart from their sub submerged in the tiny print at the bottom all the way up and through Congress, Attorney General, State, The President...not missing the grey areas—those written in invisible ink: NSA, CIA.

He pops a pill.

“Your dad’s behind the lines. Up north. In a villa of Hanoi.” Not pausing to explain how all this could be, certainly not why it was.

“He’s safe.” *Does Brad believe this? Calming me down?*

As if he hears Frank’s thoughts, “Your old man, I’m told...” but then he checks his tongue with a hard bite, freezes a flash smile, closes the briefing book—hands a map to Frank...slaps him on the back: real slap—Coach’s slap, *Hit that line!*

What am I to make of this? Dad was in the Navy, sure. That’s where he learned electronics. “GI Bill made me who I am,” he was fond of saying, repeatedly, predictably. But who was Frank to quarrel? All he could see were the results. “A successful man,” he remembers his mom once saying—a moment of fond recall. Looking fondly at his dad...he having just given her a diamond ring. Frank remembers the brilliant flash of the cut.

“Frakes Electronics.” Frank had ignored the photos lining the reception area’s walls until it had become important for him to tell—*brag to!*—his high school classmates about his dad, hoping, wanting his dad’s success to rub off on him—“Frakes Electronics. My dad started in a garage. After the war. My mom answered the phones. He went to college—the U—on the GI Bill. Like many. Now we’re in every state. Minnesota’s major federal contractor. My dad was *Business Man of the Year* in 1956.”

Now, I’m to believe he’s always worked for the government? For the CIA or somebody?

“A spook?”

Pop a pill.

It was proving too long a trip. Too long for the dope to keep him down. He just became dope-conscious: drugged but “aware,” not awake to many eyes but dope-knowing things, seeing beyond things...not missing that they were *all inside this dick, this incredible fuck-the-world atomic dick!*

A passing joy was that the oceans were *hot juicy pussies* and that *this dick's truly nuclear*: a never-ending eruption of come, a fuck which has a half-life measured in millions of years...as they fucked through ocean and seas...*The Great Wet!*...his mind was in eternal orgasm, on a level which really blew his mind—feeling as never before a *total dick: the hardest cock on the block: god cock*...something like that...flitting images of Aaron's Rod and Moses' Stick and the pointy Great Pyramids and the Eiffel Tower and Mount Everest, somehow they all came to him and became him and he them...he pushing them up from the Earth, bucking them up from the ocean's bottom: *ramming 'n rodding 'n fucking 'em good*...creating the world: seeing himself as a worm, the creating worm, blowing hot sperm out of both ends: endlessly ejaculating...*totally fucked, Man!*

Internal moan: *Om! Oooooooooommmmmmmmm!*

Orphan—I didn't leave her, Man! I didn't. *Did I?* Shit, what a fuck I am—fucking Pig, Man, if anyone's a pig, it's me, Man, ditching the broad, humping her and just flicking her 'way, Man, what's wrong with me, Man? *Did I?* Must be the booze, Man. Mean the drugs. It was The Man, Man. What could I do? *Shit.*

The fresh air told him. They had arrived. At that spot on the map Brad had marked with a red X. Where?

Why? Tell me why, dad.

CHAPTER 31

Dalores sat feeling “gross,” not good gross but the “ugly” and “fat” of how she’s heard other women: mainly her sisters and Aunt Marge—“Up north. Hard as nails. But when she’s pregnant—don’t be around her!”

Anger: she recognized the anger, but *Why?*

“It’s all in understanding threes.” Said by Bertha as if “any idiot” would know that, as if there were three thousand books written on the topic.

Alicia was quick to grasp Dalores’ mood. “*Bertha.*” Said back to her with that, “Pay attention to what you’re saying” tone. “*Bertha.* Right now, you’re being one of the threes.”

Bertha got it. “Ummm.” And she left the room.

Alicia got up and brought Lonny in. “Lonny’s had kids. She knows.” Not that it was simply because she had kids but that Lonny had first gained insight into the magic of the threes when pregnant. All her kids were grown...husband dead of a heart attack...waiting for her first grandchild, herself.

“Who’s in you?” Smiling. Playful. A knowing nod, conveying the insight of a shared secret, *You know what I mean.*

Dalores immediately opens—felt herself opening. She liked Lonny but this had never happen. Like what Bertha had foreseen: “A common voice. Someday, we’ll speak and just know.”

“The child.”

They wait.

“The man? I mean male?”

They wait.

“Myself? Female?”

Alicia and Lonny crack-up into teary laughter as Dalores burst—out and flares-up into an amazing smile: *Got it!*

“This is why we’re here,” speaking to Dalores that night with everyone present—Lonny speaking.

“It’s what Bertha has shared. She got it by way of sixty-nine. But it’s more natural for a woman than that...Dalores has it the *male way*. Am I clear?”

Pat: “It’s like being literal, right? Dalores is fucked-up!”—a rush of embarrassed half-dead laughs; one gawfaw.

Alicia: “When we’re together like this, or maybe better when we ritualize, or better when a ritual attempt actually happens, at that moment, right?...we’re there. Symbolically. A psychic symbiosis. I like that.”

SunBlossom: “Round and round and round the round.” A mystical murmur.

Janet: “Maybe it’s because,” shyly, warily, “because I’m Catholic, *was* Catholic, but that’s what I count as our way, the female way. When we’re together, intending and that, we’re fuller, bigger, Earth Mothers. *We’re robust!* That’s what men can’t have,” sympathetically, dolefully, “What they can’t seem to have. Only want it the male way.”

Miranda: “Maybe I’m a little slow here, but if *that’s*”—pointing to Dalores’ rounding belly—“is the male’s way, and ritually is the female way, how, what or who is whatever the third way is?”

Had it been Miranda’s question? Or, was it “just that time”—the time which comes “Like a thief in the night” when what you’ve desired is actually realized. Or, had a greater hand reached out and blessed them, changing them?

No one has clear memory; even desires to have clear memory. “Let there be....”

Bertha and Lonny were the first. Stood up from the table, walked into the living room and began to dance. Danced without music...continued dancing as Pat stacked several long-playing platters...a dancing which began to make the room twirl and swish about, a dancing which became like a river flowing, each woman being lifted up like a beached log when the swelling spring floods came...startlingly swift, all-at-once, world changing common bond...dancing and in the dancing the threes assembled, came together, began to disassemble, disrobe, reassemble through glances and looks and touches...wisps of hair whispering, yearning of thighs flaming, moons of breasts bobbing like apples in a dip...dip up and down and in and out they did: thumping music, calming music, quickening music...till each threesome became a sound: humming, singing, breathing a sound, finding the common breath, the common tone,

vibrating...vibrating and tuning-in, turning on, embracing, rolling on the carpet, frolicking, fondling, kissing, licking, sucking—an ensemble of lust and desire and craving and madness...two finding themselves as lovers, focusing upon each other, pleasuring and desiring to fuck and penetrate and commune and eat the other—but it was the third...and each in time became a third...who stood as faithful witness: as sentinel, as servant, working the bodies of both...intending and working, rubbing the bodies together...her imagining child labor: cooking ‘em, drawing the fire from their eyes, the bone crunching from their grapplings, the broth from their wet fluid couplings...taking and imagining them beyond their play as male and female—for it was common to their discipline at this point to accept and actually relish the switching of roles, no longer embarrassed to claim the male within...no longer mute upon their craving for their clits to become cocks...no longer hesitant to be fierce, “I wanna fuck you!”

They understood the male way.

They understood the female way.

Now....

Some were exhausted; slept where they fell. Others were exhilarated—left for the exercise room in the basement, or started writing, or, as with Anna started baking...soon sweet herbal and sugary aromas seeped into every corner and crevice, intoxicating the house, itself.

Sally and Kunja were the writers. After every significant event they got together to write: journal and stories; notes. Tonight they were hard pressed. Their separate sentences each stumbled and fell apart as they got caught up in oxymoronic words and notions. Kunja was a poet; published and respected...she, the most, was at a loss, tonight.

“I want to say transcendental, but I can’t get stupid *dental* out of my mind each time I write it!”

“The words are playing us.” Kunja realized that this was true but if Sally asked *how* would she answer: *What does that mean?*

“One and one is two. Two with one is three. *Terrible. Terrible.*” Sally strikes out; blotching the sentence.

“I keep remembering *The Holy Trinity*. Sister Esmeralda, there. *It’s a mystery*, she’d say. And we were supposed to shut up. Shut up and be happy. That’s how I’m feeling now. *Weird*.”

Then she was there: Red Fox. Sally and Kunja looked up in a common reflex and there she was. Red Fox had this unnerving way of just being there. Neither had heard her enter.

Red Fox hands Kunja a doll. Lacquered. Brightly painted. Eastern European garb. “Open her.”

Kunja quickly *gets it*—a doll with another inside and another inside that and another...five all toll.

Dalores had walked into the room just after Red Fox; watching, leaning against a wall.

Sally: “*Matryoshka*. The One is Many. The Many is One.” But not satisfied; frowns.

“Nested. Each nests within the other. *Cool*.” Miranda, having joined them.

“*Matry*—don’t need Frank to know that means *mother*.”

Pause. Somewhat bemused. Waiting. Realizing that there is a lesson being taught.

Red Fox hands Kunja another doll. She doesn’t say that Janet made it, but all know, for they are fired clay...but male, an old wizened male, gnomish. “Open him.”

There are another five.

Red Fox waits. Her Sisters know that she is waiting for them: *What?*

Dalores picks each one up and arranges them into an ellipse: two foci

Sally: “Male and female. *Ten?*...An ellipse. What else?”

“It’s my belly.” *Ouroboric*: a phrase Frank had expounded on, *preached!*...she feels it.

A meditative moment shrouds each and all.

Kunja: “What is, is not.”

Shit!

Sally: “We’re becoming what we’re not?!”

“Dicks!” Flat-lined humor.

“Eternal beings?”

The question...the image...the weirdness, queerness of the question halts them.

CHAPTER 32

I don't want you to see me.

Just believe you?!

Yes.

It was his father's voice. His shadowed profile. *His hands*. He did show him his hands—without the wedding ring which he had bequeathed to Frank. “Have her give you this. You will understand, then.” But he had not understood, not even now, maybe especially now.

Somehow they had gotten through enemy lines. Made their way to the beach and then by covert dashes in and out of this and that—hours and hours, several days—into what he assumed was the villa outside of Hanoi where his dad was supposed to be.

No one was killed. No one had to be murdered. In fact, Frank really didn't see anyone. Just shadows. Movements. Voices speaking a language he did not understand—“Must be Vietnamese,” sounded stupid just as he thought it.

Once inside the villa, he knew his dad was about: a feeling. Not just a belief, but a real sense of him...maybe his aftershave or deodorant or ...?

I want to see you.

Seeing is believing—are we still there?

Yeah...*angry*.

Trust me.

Sure...*angry*.

Look, this happened to me...

Yeah?

And it will happen to your son as it did to my father's father's father...that's part of who we are. Are you listening? Hearing?

Hearing is stronger than seeing, just remember that.

I hear you—shaken adolescent not wanting to disbelieve his “Can do no wrong” father.

Okay.

What?

If you'd see me, you wouldn't be seeing me.

Pause.

I'm not being difficult, just...*exact.*

Okay...*resigned.*

We need to begin, so listen to this...when you believe in yourself you will no longer see yourself...then you'll understand, or at least you might understand.

You see me as father and businessman and electrical engineer and wealthy person and...and *certain weaknesses*—which are only your way of seeing, but not now...now, I want you to accept this as your short-sightedness...I want you to practice, well, for lack of a better term—far-sightedness.

You want me to be a TV? Sarcastic short snort. Flashing images of himself with “rabbit ears” antennae sticking out from his head. *Beep beep beep* as airwaves bombard him...a moment of unsullied silliness.

A consternated quiet drifts from his father's side of the grille.

Okay. Remember, you told me, tele-vision means “far sight,” no?

Hmmmpf.

There are great evils in the world. Satan. The Devil. Witches. Many names. Demons. They exist only insofar as people believe in them.

You mean...?

Quiet. Let me say my piece. *Listen...* The history of the world—what you studied in school. The great spiritual history of the Bible—what you learned in Catechism and your other studies. These are all *only what people want to see*. They are not all that can be seen. And because of this lack of imagination, this lack of believing, there is given to us, to some of us—call us teachers, call us prophets, call us shamans or mystics or magi...many who are called insane and burned at the stake, but that's another... *Listen*—The world is yet to be imagined, is yet to be seen...for there is yet to be full and complete belief.

But there can be.

There will be.

It will be...*as it was*...*is* a Restoration. This is why you're here.

Grand sweep? But Frank kept quiet.

When the talking stopped—*Did it stop?*—and the imagining began, Frank did not know, did not care to know, for he was inside of a dreaming embrace with his father, as if the words, themselves, were sculptor's tools...as his father spoke so did a new reality, a new presence, a new way of seeing become—an imaging of a restoration—as the sculpture *restores* the presence of the human soul and beauty captured, imprisoned, caught in the dark evil grip of the sightless stone.

Communism is godless atheism. A deadness of soul and body. Capitalism and militarism are not much better, but we must work with what we're given.

Your fathers—back beyond blessed sight—each had to restore an imagining in a period of deadness. Your fathers were thinkers, explorers, artists, ascetics, mystics, scientists, healers, inventors...imagers!

“Dopers?!” but he didn't utter it.

They believed and so they saw.

Belief was their map?

Even off the map. Fearless, faithful voyagers.

Were they good—*all?*

No one sees what we do as good because they do not believe as we do.

We?

We—there is a Revelation which has been revealed but not yet restored. There is a Perfection which exists but has not been believed. There is a fullness, a Pleorma, which has only been described by people with empty arms.

“We're Catholics. What are you saying?”

“You had to see as they see in order to believe as you must believe. As your fathers have believed. *Do believe.*”

“You’re saying *your* fathers are not dead?”

“*Believe.*”

I know I’m dreaming. This is a dream. I will wake up. This is a nightmare!

Evil. You want to know about Evil.

This is how.

It is their women.

They hide their Evil inside their women.

Inside their women is their dream.

They hide it in their caves.

In their bones.

In their dreams.

At night their women visit them. Replenish them.

They dream as they copulate.

It has always been. It shall always be. Women are their imagining.

When he woke, for a moment, he thought he was back with Dalores—*no, Bertha!* “Aw, shit!”

“Shit?”—it was Brad.

“Great way to salute the day?” Mocking laugh. “Maybe you were a Marine?” Bemused chuckle, to himself.

He didn’t have to ask. His father was gone. *Dead?*

He knew that Brad would show him the way.

“Here’s the map”...he shows him a map with red circled xes.

“*She* frequents these places.”

CHAPTER 33

The grille between them—he realizes that he had not tried to touch it...not poke his hand through to the other side where his dad was. *Is*. Just that there was the light, again, now “observing” it as he recalls the meeting: bright light, a soft, cloth, like terry cloth—the grille was the only substantive thing *there*—but he had no doubts that it had been—*is* real.

Believe in yourself. Believe “in”—or believe that there is something *in...someone*? Now that he reflects upon the phrase, he is a bit frazzled.

Frank opens the door. He still doesn’t know where he is but “What the hell!” opens the door and steps out. *Must be Vietnam*—as if checking a map to discover the obvious. It’s a cloudless, sun snappy day. Bird song. Bicycles. Men and women, kids with conical hats. Things he’s seen on the “Evening News” with Walter Cronkite. “Ole Lying Walty”—the Establishment’s Grande Illusionist...but he doesn’t want to think about this, just matching image to recalled image. He walks across a manicured and terraced land—stands Tall and American and White: *is* the Enemy...*waits*: bicycle bells ring-a-ding, sandals slap heels, children squeal, shy looks and a breaking wave of bows: *bows*

“What am I believing?”

From that moment on—as if he had stood high above them, looking out and down from a platform, one which each and every one who passed by saw him, there...naked, totally exposed: his skin and thoughts and feelings all exposed: *skeletal*... from that moment on his knowing about his own beliefs was one-half step ahead of his consciousness—it was as if he was being led, not by another, but by a force, a presence, a power within him.

Father’s father’s fathers....

There were three women and one boy. They came and went as if actors finding their marks and appearing-disappearing on cue. A Grandmother who brought him his clothes: European cut, businessman, with a subdued elegance. A younger one—daughter?—who made his food. Simple combinations of Asian cuisine, touched with a French flair. She gave him American proportions—all he did was smile at her and she smiled back. Another yet younger—the daughter’s daughter?—drew his bath, washed his personals, tidied up his room, and—after

dinner each night—massaged his feet. He accepted her into his life as if she had always been there. Frank rests and moves about as if he has been living this way for—*centuries*—no other word fit.

The son...chattering in Vietnamese constantly; an energy ball, probably ten. Frank understood more of what he meant by how his body spoke than he did the tongue, though he, curiously, seemed to grasp whatever it was the boy was saying. The boy brought him the morning paper, the evening paper, his “mail”—consisting of Western journals...and Frank’s pipe: from the first night, he smoked *his* pipe: a strong aromatic mix in a fine meerschaum calabash.

At no time did it ever cross Frank’s mind to ask them their names nor to give them any. All was spoken without speech.

One hour before each evening’s outing, the boy would come, point to the clock in Frank’s study...and Frank would begin his preparations.

Fashionable Parties. The “invisible” Western embassies: a Consul General, here, a Delegate General, there—respecting the twisted loyalties of war...“mobius” was the image in Frank’s mind—how “what is, is not” and all that stuff...even the soft moccasin Canadians: members of the International Control Commission—they were all there: the West in the East, still.

Military events. High Society, Upper Crust soirees. It was a calendar for a “season” which was—so it appeared to him—his by right.

When it was necessary Frank spoke French. Enough Vietnamese not to be insulting to his new peers. Always ready to discourse in English...but there were no discourses, no speeches, no exposes of his thoughts or feelings or beliefs. He just was *there*.

During his second week, again back dallying with the Canadians, *et al.*, at a Grand Ball, cocktails, chit and chat... *Her*: undoubtedly, without question, absolutely certain, pure and simple—Her, coming towards him, and it is at this moment...a *Moment of Moments*...it is that he, for the first time ever, hears himself listening to himself:

I believe that I am one of you.

I believe that we are family.

I believe that I am revealing the truth.

I believe that we all yearn for this truth.

I believe that we all can be Restored to Perfection.

“Ming-lao Yang”—after which she says, in perfect French, then English: “Call me Rose.”

They came into each other’s presence like the sun at morning’s rise entering the realm of the shade.

They “fit” as if a cosmic hand was pressing them into a preset mold.

They mingled like water through the air—each being the earth, each being a spontaneous combustion upon eye sight...from across the room, at inches within a bow, far-sighted with a glance.

Whispered: “Ming-lao Yang is Ho’s favorite mistress.”

As he woke next morning, he knew that he had to prepare for her. She would be here by noon.

CHAPTER 34

They met every Wednesday for lunch for three months. He made his reports promptly. Dictated tapes which he gave the boy. He believed in the boy.

Frank did not dictate what had happened, just what he knew they would understand. *After all, I'm not talking with dad!*

That his father would have understood, this Frank knew upon his first coupling with Rose. There had never been a moment's doubt that they would couple—everything they did...the slight formal embrace upon meeting, his first kiss of her submissive lips, their shared glances, how she sat at his feet, his feeling that he should pick her up, throw her up in the air as if a little kid, all were just steps, *inevitable*.

When she touched him, it was as if he were unfolding. She was the Rose, but he was all petals being picked, falling, fluttering up into the air upon her breath, parachuting down, safe upon the floor drawn by the gravity of her desire. She picked him apart. He was all simply a deflowered stem.

She swallows him.

Frank—back when he had begun to ingest the *Counter-Culture*—had read as much in translation as he could of “Ancient Wisdom from the Far East.” Confucius, Tao Te Ching, I Ching, various pearls of wisdom, Buddhism as it conquered, Zen, “the whole Chinese menu”...then, the Kama Sutra, especially. He carried the stereotype of the shy eyed, subservient Asian Woman. In Rose, it was all this, *plus*.

The plus being that her submission is such that as he penetrates her she not only yields, not only surrenders, but becomes liquid, a fluid not just of her delta wetness but of her inner offering—she wants to be *absorbed*.

Rose receives him onto her gentle frame...bones which have withstood Grand Wars, Earth-gouging bombardments, skin splatter of anti-personnel bombs, the rapes of a thousand soldiers: all of conquering tongues—Chinese, Japanese, French, American, even Vietnamese...he knows how she has survived—she becomes invisible. For as he gathers her

flesh for his consumption...the slightest of licks upon her black-stone nipples, the tenderest of presses along the hard plowed plain of her belly, the gentlest of breezes which scatter her pearl ears, her satin neck...the beseeching lies of his heart: *I love you*...not to be spoken, rather to be confessed—a tortured confession which only pleasure can so exact...as she receives him so does he receive her: *invisible*.

Report—“They wear the armor of invisibility. You look for them on the ground and they are under the ground. You look into their slaying eyes and you see “friendlies.” You drop anti-personnel bombs but only kill field animals. You can set all on fire—napalm them as candles—but you will not see ten for the one you so enflame.”

“What the fuck does this mean?” *A CIA intelligence officer*.

Another hand—one of another Intelligence scams and memorizes, takes the report...a hand of a “Prior” who looking like a Major walks across the room, enters what appears to all as a brilliantly white door—so some call it the White Room—yet, inside is The Bright.

The Bright—down and sinuously coiling further down into a spot no locating sonar could find...only a room to any who first enter—and Top Security clearance is not even allowed—those who do enter have been entering in that way handed down by their father’s father’s fathers....

Rose, Frank was certain, is illiterate. He blots out the thought that she is stupid, just a tool, only a courtesan—he could not even think “whore.”

Everything about her which was *less*, he wanted to turn into *more*.

He was with her, and a step behind was the consciousness that he was not.

That to her, he was invisible.

That he...what could he say—was a god to her? *Tall, American, White*...a dick which was as long as any five she had previously sucked...a catastrophic cock which inserted itself into, metamorphosing her spine—a phallus which suckled her imitative clit and milked, absorbed all her desires into the pleasure he gave her in return. He was a Great Waterfall, a Roaring Rapids, not just a come or an ejaculation or a fucking spurt... *no!*...he baptized her, he rescued her from the flood.

Shit, I am the flood!

She was delta to his Mighty Mississippi...yet, *What do I believe about her?*

It was what he believed about her which revealed to him what he could know about her men: the male inside her—simply, “It’s not there.” He wrote a short paragraph, slipping back into psychological description: “An animus without an anima.” A statement he knew would choke any orthodox Jungian—“But how else to speak the truth?”

He knew her men had nowhere to go except *here*.

For them she was all...all they could handle—believe—that this was their country; their land; not the Earth—they were *not* global conquerors.

They had not the Shade Mother within them—he had not found “it” and: fucked her every which way but up—*Ha!*—cranked every hole.

Reports—“They will not eat their young.”

Shade Mother—as he had come to grasp America...the Puritans...the Anabaptist Revolution...it was not the absence of the feminine—How wrong the “Feminine Mystique”!—but only that truncated, crippled, carnivorous, predatory masculine which the Dark Feminine permitted, wanted, used ... *here*: Family Honor with its culture of shame and not guilt...why Guilt? because of parricide—who drove Oedipus wild? His father? Nay, his mother!

Inside the gook’s woman Frank—all not crystallized into words yet, not the monograph for publication—he had sought his male and found only the husk of a body...not just Adam without a Rib, no, more, a slain body, cut up, *Sacrificed*: slashed, whipped, burned, gashed, gored...hollowed out and so hallowed—here inside Rose was the male who wanted and understood “homeland”—*hum*—so unlike his Western *kin*—*same species*? Not in soul!

For this War in Indochina, this savaging of Vietnam, this “Winning Hearts and Minds” could never be won because all the gooks were, were women, not men: *homebodies*: not Warriors in the mold of the Shade Mother—She who eats her young, whose males become *Real* by being Warriors: slaying and slicing up and consuming their young.

There was a harmony and balance here which Frank viscerally puked upon—inside her his cock spit out not sperm but distaste, repulsion, disdain...he knew she’d let him fuck her and fuck her and fuck her just so that she could keep her land, guard her hearth, hold the fort: *Shit!*

Frank's report was fully understood...those within The Bright accepted his coordinates, his markers, his outline of this map: map of their Enemy—they, his dad, counseled the President to de-escalate, "Find a way to extricate ourselves *with a winning attitude!*"

I believe that as I touch you, I only touch myself.

"Shit!" the half-second-behind conscious realization whacked him: "I don't want that!"

Courtesan. Concubine. Harlot. Whore. Bimbo. Dumb broad. *Cunt!*

Frank is angry.

Frank is believing...but fiercely punching at it from his conscious side—believing: *I am not one of you. I am not your family.*

It is simply too much! Pain. Battle ache. Fatigue. Hot searing wounds. Bullet impacted crushed bone amputated limb shrapnel slit eyes pain:

I believe that I am revealing the truth.

I believe that we all yearn for this truth.

I believe that we all can be Restored to Perfection.

Perfection. "Restored to, yes. Here, no!" *Frank hates the East.* All of it. The thoughts of it. The foul, piss-on-the-streets Buddhism of it. The grinding dust mouthed village poverty of the animistic shamanism of it. The obscene, choking, stultifying polluted Hinduism of it. The sad, broken-down, embarrassing Christian Triumphalism of the Missionaries of it. Flashing through his mind is everything he had learned in every course on religion, spirituality, mythology, altered states, sexual politics, psychoanalysis.

Frank's conscious mind screaming...running amos...savagely tearing at its nakedness, ripping off its sensate body, gouging itself, throwing itself away.

"I can't breathe," suffocated, but meaning, "*Unimaginable!*"

Half-awake, groggy—*Pills?*—the swishing sound is his whole being: ocean waves?

The helicopter tilts: his body presses hard against the straps: "Safe!"—inside himself he sighs a deadening, dulling, blanking sigh: *Escaped!*

CHAPTER 35

Woodstock. Communes. Pig Farm. Marxist Collectives. Women's Groups. Gatherings. Covens. Sects: religious, political, social, sexual, crazed...it was a Time—with capital T—a Time of Grouping. New groupings. Old groups reinterpreted: “The Modern Church.” Or revived: many Revivals—some smoked, some joked—“Yippies of the World Unite!” Purges: many purges of the *not-hip*, termed not “in” even if being “in” meant being outside of whatever you'd ever known before as “in.” Some heralded a New Age. Others seeing not Progress but Decay—a New Paganism, meaning the emergence of fundamental denial of whatever the Progressive group held to be fundamental—here, meaning Western Civilization. Some thought they were “counter,” others “novo,” and others “retro.” So retro that they were novo which was counter. *It went like tha*—The Sixties in the Seventies.

The Corn was not unaware of every pitfall in every step which wanted to move towards a freedom: “What does the slave know but enslavement? So how can he, she desire to become anything but a slaver? Isn't that their model of freedom?” Implicit was: “*our* model.”

So there was criticism and counter-criticism and meta-criticism and hyper-criticism...*blah, blah blah*...

Dalores told them: “Look, I've heard it all, from you, from others, even from my inner voice: *Why bring a baby into this world?* ... Ya know, I don't know why. It's just that I can't not. Like I can't stop breathing. Like—go here with me—I just don't breathe but we're all being breathed as each other breathes.

Sure, sounds like shit, maybe. But when you're pregnant you know—no, not know, you become weird like that. Not really different but special. You become special. And everyone else becomes special.

Okay. It was Red Fox's...this, this *family* thing.”

Family—it was agreed: “The way it is today, no guy wants family.” Just the buck and fuck. Open the bay doors and drop his load. *Bombs away!*

They argued all night, many nights—nature or nurture? Men are aliens. At least strangers, they all agreed. “The disappeared ones.”

Dalores was prima facie evidence: “State Exhibit Number One.” *Pregnant—without man around.*

What did Frank do? *Anything*

“Maybe it isn’t even physical, like seed, ya know,” Pat speaking, “maybe it’s just they get us thinking this way, so we get that way. Like they’re imagining selves or something—not really of our flesh, just starters, like catalysts. *Maybe.*”

“He’s in there. Let me tell you, he’s in there!” *Dalores.*

“But if all we need men for is a nanosecond—good name, *Nanos! Ha*—then they don’t necessarily have to be family. Does anyone think a prick adds anything, anything “fathering” which each one of us couldn’t do?”

Suppose it’s a boy?!

“Meaning?”

He’ll see other dads and want to know where his is.

“Only if we raise him calling them fathers and us mothers. What if we call ourselves fathers, all the time...and just mother him?”

Should I confess? Admit my dreams. That I can’t purge them. That he comes to me at night. That we fuck. That we take our child and run away?!

“The problem is we’re just not raised to be dicks!”

“Cocks of the walk!”

“Fuckers!”

“Gangbanger!”

“Studs!”

Stopstopstopstopstopstopst

“How much of a man do you want to become?”

Do we want to become men or manly at all?

“Family. It’s just this damn word. It’s so simple, so common—so compelling. Our bodies seem to give us the answer—we’re both, both sexes. We’re many people, personas, masks,

however you want to phrase it. It's not like we have a choice. If we want to be individuals, we have to be family. Isn't this where it all goes?"

Dalores did tell them. "I love your touches. I am deeply pleased by your tongues, your arms, you longing gazes. You make my body a temple, a holy place. I become a sacred pool into which you dip...in which you are healed...and I am wholed. This I cannot be less clear about...but, *I miss Frank*.

I almost can't say...what it is I miss. It's not logical, you probably know this. *Fuck!* It's just some fucking magic, Sisters. Just some *fucking* magic...and I can't break the spell!"

So, it was decided. A new method. A new approach. A new discipline. A new way of being present.

Two days a week they go out and relate to men. Each at their own level—back into marriages, forward into new relationships, lateral moves back to old arrangements with new melodies.

"Making present"—this becomes their term...making themselves present to themselves through embrace of the fuller world...*intending* as they go about—developing intending relationships with others: seeking *robustness*.

All this *outside* of the house.

Despite the dangers, they agreed to hold the house separate. "Not cut-off, but a place within. As each of us is within the other's body and heart and soul—even as we enter into other bodies and hearts and souls. It will be difficult—but *ain't love a bitch!*" Hearty laughter all about. A shawl of pain embracing them.

On August 6, 1974, Dalores gave birth—their presence was multiple.

CHAPTER 36

They took him to Camp Pendleton for debriefing. A formal by-the-book notes taken filmed and measured debriefing. Everything they did was of no interest to the Priors in The Bright.

Take him down.

Frank had free access to every part of the base—any part of San Diego or Orange County, even LA. He did get “into town,” meaning, Oceanside...he simply, somewhat annoyed, didn’t feel at home there, only on the base at Pendleton.

Since he had never ridden a motorcycle, he was amused to find himself tolerably weaving in and out and up and down the many roads and dirt trails and around the beach. He buzzed about for days.

He began to miss Dalores. In a deep depression way—not depressing, but as if a depression appeared in his side and as he touched it he knew that she was missing. Not that she was a simple part of him...no, he missed her, her just being *there*.

But what am I going to say? It’s like seven years, though only seven months. They gave him back his chronology. They gave him a story. They phoned-up the necessary medical records. They were good. Prior experts. “Mission Impossible.” She’d believe, because he did. Frank believes them.

Believes—slipped on some ice as he left a rally: “All Peoples” at Fort Snelling protesting the war. “A rally your wife wanted to attend, but she couldn’t.” He remembers the rally, sort of. Banged his head, conked out: slid under his car. “You were picked up by some MPs who thought you were a spy. Now, that’s serious. Being found outside a militarily sensitive base—although no one knew it’s shadow: a momentous meeting that day—the Cong were there, and the Chinese—*Who’d’ve picked St. Paul as the site?*—that’s why they thought you were a spy. And then all that amnesia. The docs were certain it was induced. A Russian thing, you know. We’ve seen this before.” *Frank believes.*

“San Diego? That’s where we have the special “Reforming” psychological unit—ya know, Jolly’s project...UCLA and all that. *The White Room.* When we learned of your particular

academic background—we had to be cautious. You required special attention, the *Tops*. National Security. You understand.” *Frank understands*.

The Sixties—you had to be there to believe it!

And the *White Room* truly defined “a special psychological unit.” Although one which few in America or any country truly knew about...knew in terms of vision, organizational objectives, methods, etc. It was called the “White Room” in jargon but in reality—*What’s real?!*—it housed The Bright. An indescribable hue, one more felt than visual...foreboding more than forbidden...which betrayed its secrets to those with esoteric instincts, with mythic hyper-sensitivity.

“*Reforming*”—that personality is not “God given”—“Whatever that could mean!”—not in a secular society, not in a high-tech, atomic microscope, cosmos probing satellite, “Because it’s there” curiosity unbarred society of Probing, Objective Knowers: “Box it, label it” epistemology, that personality is a social given, a gift, total nurture not nature...so no one has a right to their personality: *Rights? Divine Rights? Natural Rights!*—kablooey! Baloney: at first, prisoners, Leavenworth...drugged so deeply that their psyches fell in pieces on the floor and the white-robos (“Tonsured?”) reassembled the pieces so that *you* are...right now, it is “Frank”—validation of their theory, of their practice...only those in The Bright laugh at the arrogance which permeated the room of white-robos.

Genetically, The Bright was Frank’s room—his type, his people, his *father’s father’s fathers*.

As a aeonic marker, Vietnam was—based upon Frank’s “work”—the End and a Beginning. Ending a mythos of warring. Beginning a mythos of voyaging.

The image had been dreamed—as The Bright so dreamed—of the holistic vision of the cosmos as just one place and Earth as a place you could voyage away from—holism mapping. what is done in the White Room...now, through Frank The Bright dreams of a place which could be—*had been?*—voyaged to.

In the White Room: the Earth had become a place with only one map: global.

In The Bright: a place as just a place on some other map: cosmic.

For Frank—on Earth as throughout the Cosmos—it had ended and begun one day at the beach.

A beach—one he knew was used for landing maneuvers, tank training, SEAL night attacks, mock wars...he looks and sees the bloody waves foam and break upon the rocks, curl a lip in the sand...sink and be absorbed—drunk by something getting drunker under the sand.

He was there: alternating between flipped-out thoughts and the intense pleasures of Southern California sun and breeze and

...she walks, strolls towards him—it was not Dalores. As first he forgets...although it was Dalores...he was still tottering on that The Bright's plane.

She walks up to him, kneels, then sits down beside him. Instantly, she smells only as Dalores does...a slight but intense fragrance which he has sniffed in the breeze on curious days: *feeling like he just stepped out of a bath!*

Jackson, just a recruit, told him: "It's desert verbena, man. Just stupid old verbena. I've ripped thousands of those bushes out, clearing my old man's lots."

Verbena. It's what he calls her, though he doesn't speak her name and she never offers him one.

Eyes which came at him like out of a dream...one which wakes you up, startled but immobile—here fixated on her green-eyes in a way Frank has never seen green or verdant or vaporous jade—as if alive, as if Frank *must* lean over and lick her, taste her..so did such eyes invite him; *lure...witchy seduction!*

She reaches for his hand. Within a sigh they are *there*.

There. Atop a majestic cliff. Standing at ocean's edge, a cliff which is doorway to a bay. Wind rifling them. He turning as she sweeps her arms bayside and as she sweeps, it unfolds: "Nephi," she states...as if she is saying that this is his land, his domain, his country, his people...*flash!* people appear, flocks and crowds and clusters, each at some point recognizing them turning and waving, turning and gazing, turning and shouting with great vigor, passionately: "Replenish! Replenish!"

At this sound Frank becomes aware of the immense cross which stands behind him—*Christian?* Not a gory Catholic crucifix. His question stays simply stuck in his mind as a question.

Bay—he dreamed of this bay...of flight, flight under water—rising, poking up to look at a post-nuclear world...he knows it is San Diego, just doesn't know why: *Cabrillo Point*—he knows it...just knows it...knows it—*Why?*

“You have many questions. That is normal. What we expect.” Frank has no doubt that this man is a king.

“Unlike the past,” no pause to explain the reference, “it is our questions to you which are more important, *this time.*”

They ask and he answers: *Amazing!*

Yes, Christians still believe in Original Sin.

Yes, America is yet unknown as the land of the Lost Tribe.

Yes, salvation is by faith alone... the spirituality of the Eternal Family yet unrevealed.

Yes, the prophet has come and died.

Yes, the End is in sight. It is the Latter Days.

“What in god's name were we talking about?” The walls of his night room do not give answer. Frank is shaken by what seems so unshakable—his belief in himself.

Answers—how? why? from where?

Anxiety: definitely the king was anxious—probing Frank...unhappy with his answers—a scent of defeat, of collapsing disappointment...The King's Last Words: “But you were there. With us.

The Golden Plates.”

Late at night she comes, again... at the top of the night if he had cared to check the clock—*Where's the clock?*

She comes—it is an instant mating, not of the flesh but of a uniting, a union...not unlike a reunion, the embracing of a long lost brother—it is clear that she is here for him, to give him something: teach, instruct, educate as “lead out”...and it is okay; Frank is calm and accepting.

Innocence—it is urgent! It is why all the Ages have brought us together: now, repeatedly unvoiced...“I am Innocent,” her kisses convey...in her arms he feels the armlessness of so many mauled and disfigured ...*Innocent*: the air is filled with guilt, is Guilt—they breathe Guilt...it severs them, it is the flood which ebbs and pulls them apart...it drowns them so that he no longer sees her—Guilt cloaks her and she disappears, not just from sight but—*Presto!*—from his presence forever. He now, they, forever guiltless.

Behold, there is no Original Sin.

Behold, you and I have been we—gods ever and forever...eternally married: Family.

No Original Sin—she embraces him and he knows her as powerful. She speaks with his southern tongue and he is filled up—drawing from her pool of desire a fire which flashes onto and around his cock, throbbing his cock, rendering him of a hardness which he knows is of the foundational rock which is this Earth—that they have created this Earth together, drawn it from their flesh, molded it...*as in the Past so is the Future which is the Now.*

Ever and forever—more than a state of being, it is as they become present each to the other that this is the shawl which embraces them—a shawl which is their imaginings emanating from each and forming about them...an ever and forever which makes visible to each the plenitude of history—the land about them as it has been ravaged and savaged by nature and the hand of humankind...they see each and every person who has ever lived and see them with a far-sight which shows how all have lived before time and will so after time...it is an ever and forever which is the river of the souls who were and shall be and so are...all dive into and rise from as they die in memory and become robust imaginables....

High tide: The cold Pacific has made several successful runs at his bare feet. As is the case—as soon as the sun dips in this southwestern abandon of desert so does cold air flare and flush...at least a twenty-degree drop this time of year: late August...so his feet are rudely iced and shivering,

Frank awakens from his reveries, an awakening which is like Lazarus rising from the dead—his limbs he has to shake and slap against his sides, then together...his heart he has to punch to get going, kicks-out a shrill of warmth...he slaps at the waves and splashes the harsh brine over his week old stubble—the bottle of wine he bought, he picks up: still full.

Three long gulps.

“I’m ready,” so he tells the doctor—Doctor Major Campbell—the doctor agrees, “Your stay with us is over.” He closes the folder labeled *Frank Frakes*, finger-taps it, swivels and plops it into a quite empty “In” basket.

When he swivels around back, Frank is gone.

“Hey, Man,” this guy Jackson yells at him as he is about to step onto the bus for the airport, “Hey, Man, shaking off the Devil’s Thirst? Right on, brother!”

Perplexed. But just too, too eager to hop and jump on the bus and get going to care: “Dalores,” is all he hears echoing in his mind.

As he settles in, the bus grinds a gear, starts to roll—he knows: *The corn is high in Minnesota!*

CHAPTER 37

She was expecting him.

Dalores laid down to sleep, no, to dream—she wanted to dream...in her dreams he had never left, never disappeared, and it was through her dreaming that she knew she'd bring him back.

“You’re the one to bring him back,” so Lonny said, reading the hexagram just thrown: coin oracle: *Hsien*. “It’s about influencing, in the sense of wooing. There are two, here: Tui, the Joyous Lake and Ken, Keeping Still, Mountain.” She reads from the text, “Ken is the youngest son. Tui, the youngest daughter. Thus the universal mutual attraction between the sexes is represented.”

Dalores waits, keeps still...her waters do not stir.

“Nine in the fifth, plus it moves,” not meaning much to Dalores, “The influence shows itself in the back of the neck.” Pauses. Looks at Dalores, drips into her, “No remorse.”

No remorse.

No remorse that The Corn is no longer The Corn. As most knew, sensed, intuited—but who was holding onto things, these days?! As they left to be with men again—time alone, time not alone—several maintained their relationships...others left the state and The Corn...others only visited now and then—those who talked, remembered the best and encouraged each other, “No remorse.”

It was when they had all left, that first night back out to where they once had been—different each was, but it was a going back into a now for a future—that night, the first night she began expecting Frank.

Dalores dreams..she is the joyous lake atop the mountain...realizing that as lake she looks up to the Sky for thirst, for expectation—her fluidity, that she can so easily forget the mountain, the dirt, the rocks, what holds her up: cups he ...Frank’s broad hands around her bubbly breasts: she is a nymph, cavorting, watching him as he tests her—toe, then a dipped foot...he shivers, but he disrobes: his nakedness shines...like the sun descending at day’s end, he startles her by diving ever so quickly into and under her waters: night has fallen...but he bursts up again!

“Dalores,” the birds sing—twitter and caw and sing—*Dalores!*

Frank's hand—rubbing the back of her neck, gently, whispering fingers, echoing breaths, “Dalores, honey”... and in a bursting flash like fire-flies in the darkest of night they appear each to the other...rush madly up and into arms and down swooping with bodies like rain in the sunshine, pounding, pelting flesh with kisses: face and neck and hands and hugs deep into the caves of each other’s heart—hearts beating, loudly beating, deafening...she is without words, only tears...tears which fill up the room, bring them to high tide—they plunge under, into the wetness of their togetherness: swim away from what is above, what is known, what is daytime and plunge deeper and deeper into that of themselves which is unknown.

It can't be real!

Each had said, has said, is saying, time and again—finger-tipping the objective, hard reality of soft cheeks...placing her hand on his firm biceps...rolling his face in the pillow of her breasts...“It can’t be real!”

Reality—“What can I say? It happened.” Shear amazement. Dalores is stunned. It is like the “Movie of the Week.” An episode right off the tube. But with a storyline which could only be happening now—Spies! Cold War. Hot War. “I’ve met the enemy...it is us!”

Ha!

The unreality of it all brought tears to Frank’s eyes—eyes which followed her as she led him, not telling him, not knowing how to tell him—into the nursery: Jack’s old room (“Jack’s doing time in *Stillwater*,” would have to wait till later)...only the grave had prepared him for this—the shock: to be shocked at such a gut level, ontological, his being...rocked by the gaping hole which respected him not...Frank faints: buckles at the knees and falls like slow snow...dry snow, falls and heaps, not into any shape or form that she can see, for there is constant motion to his body, his being, it’s like he is being reshaped by an ethereal wind right before her eyes—only the Pain is what she shares with him—Pain which seeps from his every pore and orifice, but Pain which she comforts with her Heart...places her Heart atop her chest and lets its healing Grace fall upon him—heal him: comfort him...*she brings him back; restores.*

Smelling salts and a strong cup of whiskey lace java, propping him against the wall, unable to lift his dead-weight...he gradually wakes: more like molts—struggles, works to revive

himself, observing himself as if he were sitting on the roof looking down into the room—
Dalores with children at breasts.

“They couldn’t wait!” she whispers, not needing to whisper but does whisper, somewhat embarrassed, awkward in the moment, wishing that she could pay full attention to him...“Earth Mother,” Frank chuckles, an under-the-breath chuckle which he slips over towards her...it is the total loving of the moment which raises him, like a pulley and a hoist...he is up and beside her and with *them*.

The thrill of the moment, the absolute thrilling on every level—body, mind, soul, spirit—Frank wants to shut the doors, launch the house into outer space, live forever only with them...he holds one, the other, both...gazes into their eyes and is knocked speechless...he aches, every part of him aches: memory, hope, desire.

“My god, D, what are their names?”

She laughs...almost a naughty, hand-in-the-cookie-jar giggle.

“Everyone wanted me to name them, right away. When I didn’t, some criticized me for being in denial. I mean, I knew you’d be back. But I couldn’t say that. Didn’t...so, I just called them Moon and Sun—it got them off my back.”

Frank smiles: “They’re all idiots!” pain-twined empathetic smile.

“Only today, this afternoon, Lonny cast the *I Ching*—I knew you were getting into that...it seemed right—Ken and Tui,” she pronounced it “Twee.”

She showed him the hexagram. He studied the text and commentary for some time. “There’s a moving line here. Know what that means?” She nods.

“*Sheng*. Pushing Upward.” Drops into silent reading. “Departure towards the south brings good fortune,” he could not, did not, read that to her: San Diego—whatever it was, he wasn’t ready to judge it good fortune.

Out loud: “Wood in the Earth grows upward.” He puts down the book and looks fixedly into her eyes, “That’s us. Pure and simple.”

Ken and Tui—having voyaged to get here...jumping onto quantum tracks and through aeonic tunnels, tumbling and rolling up and down and through—gathering their being: enhancing it, inflating it, molding it—cells biological and psychic: receiving from them, these two companion divines—Earth Mother and Sky Father—taking their desires, their hopes and

weaving their dreams...they becoming their dreams—sucked through from the other side...coming here, together: brother sister: moon sun: ken tui...*laughter*. “

“They laugh and giggle at everything!” His stoned cold sober astonishment pleased her deeply—the mystery of their life as family was just beginning.

Dalores leaves him alone, rocking on the antique homestead rocker she had preserved as a Great Granny keepsake...rocking with each little package of delight and pleasure—hearing them squeal, with little squeaks like baby pigs: *pigs in a blanket*—so she sighs with pleased relief, satisfaction, almost unbelief as she moves out of the room leaving Frank with Ken and Tui...absorbed in their smiles, captivated by their laughs...snuggled into his arms: right one, left one: *Seeing is Believing!*

CHAPTER 38

Like salt spilling rapidly...crashing, like the shatter and splattering of the dropped baby bottle at 2 a.m...*fragged!*...like the *pop* of the flashbulb...*Wow!*...like the coldness between loveless lovers: cannibalistic...so did the Sixties end. Somewhere in the midriff of the Seventies—*at its navel?*—when “The War” ended...Nam not Nagasaki. After bodies falling from soul and psyche: personal and public: Kings and Kennedys and Kongs and Kristis and Krishnas...Nixon gone—what else to say? “Nixon has left the building!”

It's over.

Now, “Doctor Frakes,” “Professor Frank”—almost famous, wittily penning popular tomes on cultural history...an infamous article in *Harpers* on “America: Eating Our Own Children?”—innovative, clever, insightful, yet still searching: *irreverent, blasphemous, sacrilegous.*

Ken and Tui kept growing...as Family Unit they all moved forward, grew—but there was a yet unsatisfied hunger.

“What do you know about the Mormons?”

Dalores didn't pause while setting the table, shouted, “Not much.”

Red Fox had remained. So had Lonny and Janet. More than friends, each had a favorite room in the house...they left some stuff there—stayed whenever they wanted. Their presence was always welcomed—“Mostly” both Frank and Dalores would have admitted, for there were days and nights, at times weeks, when they wished that they were just four...just nuclear.

“I'm Mormon,” Red Fox said.

“Really?” Frank

“Yeah. We're the Lost Tribe. Don't know that, do you?”

Frank saw her walking towards him on the beach...“Sorta. Maybe. Tell me.”

It was like reading his own notes from his senior seminar on “Re-imagining a Mythos.” Red Fox kept dropping images and words, phrases, theological tidbits which Frank nibbled some, others gulped down—at times holding between his fingers amazed at the concoction, at others, just full hand-grabs stuffed into his face.

“Native Americans are the Lost Tribe of Israel. There’s a whole unknown history, sorta invisible, I guess, of these Nephi and others called Lamanites. When I was young, I didn’t pay much attention, but since I left—see, you can’t really leave, kinda weird, but in my mind I’ve left.”

“Apostate. You’re an apostate.” His comment meant little.

“So you want to know, right? The problem’s it’s all patriarchal. I mean with a vengeance. Women are really *dolls*. Kinda good if you like being cared for, if you like being brainless. Lots of attention. See, they want lots of kids.”

There was a structure to it—a *History of Religion* course template to lay across it...goes like this—Upstate New York, vast, seething turmoil, Civil War, immigrants, living on the frontier, mingling of sects, a great need to melt down to the basics...a flush of the Holy Spirit—“The Holy Spirit is always convenient—reformers and rebels like to use Him.” It’s called “The Burned-over District,” and Joseph Smith comes up with a fabulous story about angels and heavenly bodies and golden plates in some kind of Egyptian dialect and him being less bright than the average guy—“Or is that revisionism?”—of humble birth, being Called out of his Ordinariness to be Special, to be Chosen—“Here we go, again!”—and has these visions and visitations...the story is Biblical...completes but is distinct from the Jewish, yet he keeps all the Christian stuff—“That anti-Semitic rant?!”—and there’s just a bunch of guys, white males: blacks being sucked into the era’s theology of Ham—stained, can’t be Mormons.

“They get you married forever. Eternal Marriage,” keying and locking-up: *Me and Yellowjack*, “But really these guys are hot. Real dicks. *Sex pistols!*...*Holy* dicks. They want to fuck you cosmically. *Forever!* Make babies with them for other planets.”

“You’re a god?”

“Yep.”

“God the Father has a body?”

“Sure thing.”

“We’re like God the Father...going out to other planets and being gods like him?”

“Ya got it!”

Frank frames it: “Blavatsky came then. The archaeological revival of everything Egyptian in Europe. All the back then novel and spine-tingling tomb robberies. *Spectacular!*”

Jotting down notes for an essay: “Cultural transference. Inversion. Absolute novelty. Old wine into new wineskins. *Foreskin*. Chuckle. Chuckle. Drawing out the question: *Where is the goddess?*”

Red Fox: “That’s why you can’t just brush it off. *Don’t do that*. I’d lose my respect for you if you did.”

Turns to the others: “Do you all know this?”

Nods. Frank checks them off: “Like a Greek chorus”—*what are they waiting to say?*

Lonny: “There was—is still—a Mother of God tradition. Here’s the issue. Eternal Marriage bases itself on the fact that Eve was created from Adam and was “bone of his bone” etcetera *before* The Fall.”

Light bulbs pop and burst. “So, no Original Sin!” He hears himself as if he were answering himself!

“That’s what I always liked. Women are good. Not all that Protestant Puritan horseshit.”

“Catholics have it too,” Janet inserts.

“They *all* do.” Anger. Pain. Tortured cry.

“The Shakers, I think it was them, maybe the Quakers, too? Frank?”

“Don’t quibble.”

“Certainly not Mary.” No one laughs. Harsh silence.

“Whoa, okay,” Red Fox, “that’s the kicker. You get Old Testament, New Testament, *Another* Testament as they call it, all Yahweh and Jesus and now Moroni...but in the sum you still get kicked in the ass: *ole anal fuck!* “Bend over and smile!” But now it’s for the blasted forever!...*Sucks. Really sucks.*”

“But it *is* a revelation—all myths are.” A bit too academic: Frank. A bit too “kid in the candy store” excited: uncritical. *A male rush?*

“We’ve been working with that,” a tone revealing that only he has not been here before.

Janet: “When with The Corn we lived out all these Mormons had to give. We entered the Latter Days, so to speak. Frank, it’s your stuff on the Shade Mother, America, the West, the

whole Biblical mess as the Mother who eats her children...that's the linchpin for where we have to go. Go beyond all these myths—create a new one.”

I hear you.

Said simply. In a house in Minneapolis. In a state named Minnesota. In a country called United. In a world just recently discovered as Spaceship Earth. And as said, so it was spoken by all of them together—spoken through their fuller being, their robust presence each to the other in the openness which the house was, is.

The house decrees and ordains, “*Come!*”

PART 4: D
CHAPTER 39

“Why flesh?”

AxZ always waited for this question. Savored the moment. For it was like permission to enter the realm of Magnificence. Each turn and twist of the Conundrum which brought this question to her—this she relished. Now, in innocence again. *Evil innocence.*

“Why not flesh?” she answered with an answer. That this answer did not pleasure them was instantly apparent—the locale glowed chartreuse.

AxZ did not back off her gambit. She’d wait. Wait them out.

Waiting. Only she had the seething pleasure of this reality. Only she had taken on the flesh...slipped into skin and known time: temporality—history, remembrance. Known space: boundaries—skin’s kiss. Known a Beginning and an End: first and last breath—of herself, of a lover, a child. For the gift of such seething does she relish their question, for it evokes, conjures, makes present an aspect of herself which is, itself—*indeed*—the answer; *truly magnificent.*

Waiting. This insight the last she had, not the first. Coming as the culmination, at that point called death, in the dying, where she grasped that it was all about waiting. The creation of a Moment. A Moment wherein flesh could be. Fully be. *Now!*

She, the individual, becoming full—seething only at the moment of dying...Last Breath. *How to convey this insight? This challenge?* That dying...the Last Kiss, was the moment one waited for—to become the passionate moment which waits...embracing the fuller body, in eternity—Endless Kiss, Endless Breath.

How to answer: “*Flesh is eternal presence*”? How could they—they who only had this question as foundational conundrum—how could they grasp what was so substantial?

So robust?

But it was AxZ’s appointment and function to draw forth and to offer first answer. This her role as Seer—she who was to give them Another Sight.

“What does the legend of Darlm hold?”

“How can we answer this unless you metamorph?” Somewhat irritably expressed by SxZ, one of the most adventuresome of these seekers.

AxZ jolts them with the piercing glance which accepts SxZ’s question...she metamorphs into Frak.

As she presents Frak, so do they present Darlm. The answer is being made fully through each and all.

“Why do men not have babies?”

Such a question only confirmed that Jant was ready for the ceremony of the *big-Not big*. Quickly Darlm corrects her own thought...translates the ancient tongue into the *Ripening*.

“At the Ripening, you will learn.”

Ripening. Where Jant learns how she came to be: “A rib of Adam.” Learns how to be: “Flesh of his flesh. Bone of his bone.” Grasps where divine, sacred and the most Holy of Holy Powers lay: “A deep sleep.”

In this Ripening, Jant comes. Dressed in the finest of white. Brilliant wrappings of whites: cocoon. Purest of Pure. Spotless. Down the aisle she comes, arm in arm with her mother: mother in black, Blackest of Black...handing her over to Frak: father of all Luminescence, not as to color but as to aura, what comes out forth from within him: Brightness—a headdress cornered holding four blazing candles, a background altar festooned with ivory flowers and deeper arrays: rows and columns of flickering, fluttering candles, cascading waves of blood-tongues: all the most chaste of virgin wax: the room is thundering Immaculateness...momentarily, but not significantly, marred only by her presence: Darlm’s—so she leaves, withdraws, slips: lets go of her daughter’s hand as if melting away, herself submerging, drowning for the third time down and under the water...she is outside the room—*beyond*. Black Hole: *bunghole*.

Frak: High Priest sprinkles holy water upon his daughter.

She kneels.

A choir, secluded behind a grail, chants in a language unknown to Jant, but it is soothing, inviting, sirenic...she breathes heavily and slowly, controlling her trembling, stuttering gasps, working to maintain herself as her mother has instructed—she struggles not to sweat.

“And the woman said, *The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.*” Words which snap Jant back to awareness of the moment, she having been read to by her brother—all females being unable to read: reading, the sacred task of males only—having heard the story of Adam and Eve, now only fully sensing, intuiting that she is the story, that she is Eve.

“As woman,” the High Priest proclaims loudly, speaking to her and all about—all the males about, Jant knowing that she is Ripened only by the males, so she has been told.

“As woman is Evil, so is man Good. For before woman came, so man was. The Father without the Mother. Now and forever!” The chorus: “Now and forever!” Even Jant, knowing her participating line speaks, voicing clearly enough for the High Priest to hear, *Now and forever!* “And woman was with man before she became evil. This is our hope. Our Sacred Story. The Wisdom of The Father. That woman can become Good, again, *does* become Good, again, as she lays down in the *deep sleep.*”

SxZ—bored, irritated: “What? In the flesh, women are the babies of men?”

There is a riff of chuckling throughout the locale.

But AxZ has not metamorphed back...Frak answers SxZ as he instructs Jant.

“My child,” not tender with paternal concern, rather clerical, detached, “My child, you enter the deep sleep as you bear children. You enter, keyed by the love of your husband. He is your Key. Revere him. Obey him. Submit to him. For you are his, in bone and flesh: as flesh-bearer, as vessel for new souls...for the souls of men to descend to this world. In your every moment, waking but especially in deep sleep, there be his, obey him, revere him, submit to him.”

Exhilarated, AxZ metamorphs back...pauses, relishing the dip into space and time, into the scent of flesh, then asks: “What did Darlm do?”

TxZ: “She bore her children. Then died. Right?”

WxZ: “No! She escaped. Didn’t she?”

SxZ: “Why do we care?”

AxZ wanted to answer them all. Tell them about Darlm. Tell them about Jant's life. Her dying. But this pack's attention was wandering...going down the most likely path—seemingly headed for the familiar dead-end interpretation.

“Did you like his cock?” AxZ shouts: cracking the superficiality of their shared thought structure.

Gotcha! AxZ manifests Darlm.

Darlm. For his return she has been ready. Moons and moons she has etched upon the great log which was their lintel: she going each moon, standing upon several blocks of wood and scaring the hard wood with her mark—the mark of her longing for him, the mark which was her testimony that she expected him back—as long as she made her mark, other *big* males did not approach her, not come to her to stay the night, although several came to her when and as she wished, this being the wisdom of Lon.

This loyal and unswerving preparation has worked to gird and steady her during the numbing shock which defined the first hours of their reunion. She, as planned and practiced, quickly set before him a meal: one of nourishment as well as meaning, for there was bread and there was weak *gom*—just to soothe him, to comfort him, for she knew, for she anticipated his many needs...how tired he would be, how much comfort like a babe he would need, how patient she would have to be in her adjustments to his truly being there, sharing their moments.

But for who Frak actually was, is, has become, Darlm has not, could not, did not prepare.

“Sit!” He points with a small dagger to a place two steps distant from the table. Yes, he had embraced her, but he had not kissed her, no, in an unexpected move he enveloped her, wrapped her inside his fulsome robe—Darlm felt as if she had been captured: a bird netted. But her excitement, her ardor, her longing blinded her, dulled her to the queer passion of his mutated heart.

Wisely, she sits where he points.

Frak eats. *Eats alone.*

Darlm is shocked, stunned...but Lon had counseled patience.

But who could have expected? *Who?*

Frak breaks the bread—*does not offer any to her.*

Frak drinks the *gom*—*does not offer any to her.*

Frak rises from the table—*does not reach out for her.*

“Here!” Frak unleashes a command as he flings off his robes...bare and aroused, finger-pointing to their bed.

Darlm does not move.

Frak frowns at her—bared teeth grimace—it is a look she has seen from his recounting of the Great Bear hunt. She starts to giggle...giggling. Such sound fiercely ignites the moment...disrupts...cracks...shatters...Frak is within a stomp right beside her, glaring eyes all over her—he more fiercely aroused!—towering...bends down—not to take her hand, not to raise her as moon—bends down with a whipping slap and a thud across her face...Darlm crumbles, sprawling.

Just one brutal slap and Frak strides sternly back over to the bed. He does not turn towards her. Back to her. His whole body is hard: erect. The hardness flashes across the room, threatening Darlm.

Like a prey startled during the hunt, flushed out, wildly fleeing, so Darlm flees, scampers on all fours across the room and burrows under the thatch of hides which crisscross the bed—flees here because this bed has always been a safe haven, *their place*, where they become *big*...flees, scurries there now out of defensive reflex, not respect...hides herself.

What then happens, Darlm does not, could never divulge to Lon. Couldn't even if she wanted to, for from this night, this return, this bedding down together, Frak keeps Darlm hidden, secluded, “protected from” Lon... whom Frak names—“*Demon!*”

Happens. He does not kiss her. He does not tenderly touch her. He does not breathe softly upon her. He does not image her to herself in moon words. Does not address her in sun words. Simply, he submits her.

Not that he hadn't as *big* entered every doorway to her Moon treasure. No, as Sun and Moon they had interpenetrated in every way and through every route and with every possible imagining.

Submits her. He penetrates...he ejaculates. Plucks out and leaves the bed. He had not even taken the hides away from her face. Just grabbed her bottom and submitted her.

“I’ve never liked this story,” SxZ.

“I liked his cock,” TxZ.

“What did you like about it?” AxZ.

TxZ: “It has harmony about it. Simplicity. A certain type of orderliness. When he comes into me, something inside me says “Yes! Yes!” ...I don’t know, but it sort of makes me exhale.”

SxZ: “Were you ever a Zernilian?”

“Flesh,” AxZ asks, a question she wants to puncture them with, “is it eternal for Frak?”

There is a hum; a buzz—exchange of impressions, images, abstractions—as AxZ anticipated.

RxZ: “Only TxZ thinks so.”

TxZ: *Great Frak!* He creates this whole Grand Story, this whole constellation of ideas, a whole creativity which makes her the Center. Makes her childbearing the Center. Even uses the metaphor of The Trick—“You shall bear children in intense pain and suffering; yet even so, you shall welcome your husband’s affections, and he shall be your master.” Isn’t it clear? That she is Goddess, Goddess *beyond* his words and imaginings, Goddess of such incredible unutterability that he can only say “I shall be your master.” Could there ever be greater love? *Eternal* love? Eternal bonding of the flesh?!

The splatter of tongues in rancorous dissension was eventually gathered up and harmonized by AxZ. She uses her reddening power—it does not fail her.

“Seekers,” sweetly, quietly, as subduing a human child’s wail with the breast, “Seekers, there is a principle of truth in TxZ’s interpretation. Who can spy it?”

None could. Even TxZ wasn’t sure what AxZ was suggesting.

So, she moves within them into *deep sleep*.

Deep sleeping, all in the locale: *Yahweh*. “Hear us O Yahweh! Hear us O Magnificent One whose Name we dare not utter! Hear us who seek You through our ignorance of You!” AxZ has used this invocation before—a tool of her trade; handed down among the reddening ones.

Offering: red roses burning. Offering: scents of red blood of buds. “Hear us O Yahweh and touch us with Your deep sleep.”

“My children...” and the depthless Voice sets them forth on Rapture.

“My children...” and it is Yahweh talking, speaking, a tremendous Voice, a Living Thing: *mysterium tremendum*...but slowly, imperceptibly at first, by annunciation’s end, faltering into a drone, a mumbling, a coughing babble of words—into a snore.

Yahweh sleeps deeply...snore rattling the cosmos!

In Yahweh’s deep sleep, Darlm reveals the true story: *Darlm*...her only surprise was Frak’s quick mounting then penetration, catching her—*Maybe I wanted him to?*—with the treasure of bones about...causing her to pause from tiding up, bundling and readying for burial; dissolving, crushing and grinding all the bones into dust—*Dust thou art!* she hums.

Frak’s eagerness to see her results in her being seen as he wants to see her: *unexpectedly*.

Her submission is but the shyness of the moon which the sun is never aware of—*even now*.

Bemused, she grasps that for Frak she is just a starless sight which does not afford Another Sight, only an observation...that she is a woman to submit.

With Another Sight, Darlm squeals with delight. Buries him in kisses. Immerses him in adoration. Beams upon him all her moonshine. Naked breasts. Hungering buttock. Offering him a sun’s resting place. And he does not fail her. Hugs her. Kisses her. Mounts her. Infuses her with sunlight everlasting! Then, spent, he fades, falls into deep sleep.

Frak sleeps...Aha! It is the dust from the bones which plunge him into near depthless sleep.

Bones. The children of the other males. Those she feasted upon when he was not here. Those with whom she had coupled, filled up, drenched with sun lust but whom she did not grace with moon love, just moon wilding—lustly flares, bursts, without a source.

It is these children, babes of her abandoning lust which she has used during his absence, his travels, his voyaging—*O, Lon has shown her clearly where he has voyaged. Everything he was doing. Darlm’s knowledge of Frak is still moon bright! Far-sighted.*

These children whom she produced without souls, without spirits, without eternal presence—they could die, would die, *should* die! To be sacrificed upon his return. Her own Thanksgiving!

(“Grind their bones to make our bread!” Fe, fi, fo, fum.)

In darkest sleep he hears told the Story of His Rib. It pleases him greatly. It is sedative to his forgetting all that She has told him—all that Lon has revealed. For now there is no Lon! In this deeply wilding sleep all that Frak had discovered on his voyage is validated: “Thou shalt have no other gods before me.”

It is an enchanted deep sleep into which Darlm also slips, sprinkling the dust of soul-less babes. (Friar Otto: “*Incubi! Succubi!*”) This the puissant magic which sustains Frak’s waking Story...sustains his grasp of his Voyage. Sustains his belief: *Our Father who art in heaven....*

TxZ: “I don’t want this!”

SxZ: “Truly, it’s all about the female’s flesh...that’s it?”

RxZ: “Darlm, herself, creates this Yahweh who makes the Goddess, the female, invisible. *Wow!* What a clever trick!”

AxZ: “Can’t you see now why it is flesh that is eternal?”

As with any good Seer, AxZ knew that gaining Another Sight meant Another Blindness. This set of Seekers had Prior possibilities. She watched them throb so close to Golden that she almost cried...weeps as she remembers Frak weeping in deep blessed sleep.

CHAPTER 40

AxZ was as glad to exit the Conundrum as she was to enter it. It drained a lot of her red glow, but she gained so much—more than her locale of Seekers could know, or if even knew, could care, for to care was so human. Ah! *human*...she surrenders Memory to replenish herself within The Well.

The Well. How she pleased in the image, now, with her human aspect forever within her, having a knowledge of it, not just the image, not just being—wondering how it was that she had ever been without knowledge but just being? *Laughing*—which was the way of knowing this knowing way (*Ah! The Conundrum's conundrum!* amuses her)...laughing as she loosens that side of the flesh which is boundary and slips into the fuller flesh, the robust body, which is eternity...feeling herself in The Well—sensing herself now as imagined by Others—Others who are her and not her...she as Darlm, now as he as Frak and so many of the stories she/he have ventured into—existence as rock, implacable, immovable, as she/he had been on Ferzo Aduba, in a stupor which was so pre-human and non-temporal that there was no identity, no expectation, no anticipation, like a Black Hole—*collapsing*, an innerness which was the coming into of everything, and as such being nothing...not he, not she, not even it—*nihil*.

In The Well there is bottomlessness and so a wellness—the exposure of every aspect of one's presence, of every possible imagining of one's presence, as such, ultimate creativity as one becomes nothing: *creatio ex nihilo*—exhaled, inhaled.

Imagining AxZ was, itself, the play of the unimaginable. For within The Well there was no Well. Of such an experience, discourse was empty. It was a mode of presence, which presence was, itself, unimaginable and so, in sum, all that could be imagined.

When enfleshed as Frank, then AxZ had mused upon such contradictions of thought, of such limitations to consciousness. *How to be conscious of the collective unconscious?* Truly, only laughing made the connection.

Laughing. How humans imagined. Created. Were created. Frank, Professor Frakes: “What are the Biblical Stories but straight-man lines?” AxZ appreciated that insight—its laughter stayed with him/her through many dimensional metamorphoses. In fact, it keyed several—ones

which Frank, himself, jokingly approached only when tripping on acid: “psychic voyaging” *Isn't that what he called it?*

“Imagining. It’s a laugh-er.” Dalores said that.

Dalores: “Marrying’s a trip, got it?”

“You marry. You have kids. You die. Isn’t that more of a plan? A map?”

“It’s a way some folks imagine. The Collective Conscious, to steal one of your favorites!”

“But The Corn—where did that get you all?”

Lonny: “An imagining which became a practice. We practiced being a different kind of fire. Maybe not just one kind, many kinds”

Janet: “Yeah. Kiln fire. Also hearth fire. Blacksmith fire. *Gotcha.*”

“But not my kind of fire, eh?!”

“Jesus, Frank, what an asshole!”

WxZ: “Truth? They didn’t escape? There is no escape?”

“Okay. Let me be the asshole. But where’s *your* cock?”

AxZ: “That’s what they had to imagine. Their cocks.”

SxZ: “But that’s all they had...cocks, right? Look at Friar Otto, all he found in Mother Dolor was his own cock, right? So didn’t they have to imagine their cunts? Not cocks? The Goddess, for they had the Father God, no?!”

Lonny: “Ejaculation. Have you given that much thought?”

Frank smells a trick question, here.

“Ha,” Dalores, “don’t corner him like that! Tell him your thoughts.”

“Okay. Each of us wants you. Each of us wants your hot cock. We sit here with our juicy pussies all slobbering to suck your hard cock and rocket your jack. But you can’t fuck all three, just one at a time. *Why?*”

SxZ: “The Zernilians don’t have this dialectical orgasmic split, why do the humans?”

AxZ: “SxZ, it’s time for you.”

With a sniff, SxZ becomes the answer...sniffing the reddening powder—the wafting scent of attar of roses—“Otto of Roses” Who knew this?

SxZ presents Friar Otto.

Friar Otto bends down on one knee beside her burial plot. There is still some sense of incompleteness which nags at him. It is as if Mother Dolor is not yet fully dead. “How can this be?” flits through his mind, but it is a mind numbing itself so as not to form thoughts, rather to simply surrender himself to the being of the moment.

“Dark Night of the Soul”—so he has read, so he has judged his life up to this time. A travail. A passage. Vale of Tears. “The Lord is my Shepherd...”

“You gave me your all,” she says solicitously.

“I...I believe that.”

“You laid down your life for me.”

The friar shakes his head, unable to let the statement settle—he fears its truth.

“You gave me everything you had. All your hatred.”

“Forgive me!” wearied...near-sob.

“Forgive me! For what I have not, cannot give you!” Mother Dolor.

TxZ: “Did she know? What she had given him?”

SxZ: “Does it matter? He became Frantz. That’s what matters.”

Frantz—who upon waking from the hallucinating dreams the desert weeds induced—he, began to laugh. Standing up and surveying the desert all around him. Great ocean to his back. A hungering, murdering, freeing, unimaginable depth of wetness...yet taking him here to dryness: bone-dry. *So many dead.* How else would they phrase it but as the work of the Devil? The crew dying of thirst right here by the bottomless ocean. *Frantz sniggles.*

AxZ: “Did Frantz escape?”

There is murmur among them; throughout.

RxZ: "Everyone affirms."

TxZ imagines Frantz—having slipped into flesh, as AxZ perceived, TxZ was eager for flesh...for Memory, for Story, for Time...a Beginning and an End.

Replenish! It is heard. It draws his eyes hither. It becomes who he is. Frantz sets off, leading the twelve, following the dream people...those who had come down from the mountains, up from the earth—*Where?*—silent people: cinnamon, speaking not, but simply knowing that he was to follow them.

Eastward, inland, high up into the highest of snow-peaked mountains, having trekked for several moons, they come to rest in a valley. Rest and wait. Halted: stopped, shut-down, confronted by the presence of a sorrow so great, so profound that they could not, did not move—a Lake of Salt...*"Lot's Tears!"*

Waiting, as it was the time of the Grand Story of Tears. For the fulfillment—knowing it only as a fulfillment, and it comes—they drink the salt water: sacramental...scoring their throats with a Thirst as devilish as that at ocean's edge...so they dream in deep sleep, trek high up to the highest mountain-top dreaming...with the twelve, and open to them is the vision of the Final Days—days of new beginnings, of escapes, of voyages across many oceans, dreamers of new dreams, dreamers of old dreams, dreamers without dreams, lay anchor, disembark in the East as the sun rises and raise up great cities, cut wagon rutted roads through the thick forests, set sail upon the flowing prairie grass with great schooners...like a simpering flame on a desperate wick within the darkest of moonless nights, so is all seen—Brightness and Shadow seen...escape into a New World, deliverance into a Promised Land...swelling sails into the American Dream...conflagration and fire and maelstrom—tornado of hatred and hope...hating the Devil: *Red Devil*—the slaughter of the Lost Tribe's dream, holocaust (not knowing this tribe as their own: Adam's scion)...then there appears he for whom King Benjamin has waited with such heartfelt anxiety... the Visitation—the presence of Moroni—the Latter Day Revelation...Frantz is there...Otto is there...Frak is there...all wait...for this is the Replenishing begun, so he knows, the Restoration, yet as it joins with them atop the mountain, as the voyages Eastward and

Westward merge, so is all not yet Replenished, not yet Restored...for standing at the Lake's edge is Lot's Wife.

Ah! this is an imagining which has been imagined before but a message, an interpretation once again denied, obscured, abandoned—here, only Frantz metamorphosing into Darlm...into Dagmar...into *Dalores*...he the first in a long line, not behind but forward...finding in the Replenishing the replenishment of his own no longer abandoned imagining...*tremendous!*
magnificent!

SxZ: “This is supposed to make us want to imagine? To imagine flesh?”

TxZ: “I can't begin to convey...”

SxZ: “Stop! You want me to imagine with you, right?”

There is a glowing cerulean sourcing out from TxZ.

SxZ opens to this: metamorphs.

“For this is My body...” Frantz accepts that of Friar Otto within himself. But it is Mother Dolor/Dagmar he metamorphs into, within.

Replenishing. That he has lost her so he knows, even as he dreams, sets himself down on the valley's floor and exposes his mind for whomever or whatever will come and enter it, split it open, eat it...deep sleeping—watching Joseph Smith as he observes the imagining of the Golden Plates...a story merging with so many other stories of a time that is historic, mythic, astral of sundering...observing the psychic barriers cracking—spiritual identities shifting, darknesses demonic and angelic drifting outward and throughout...not just America but all on Earth...archaeology cracking past dreams...wars cracking isolated cultures, like eggs being cracked at a sprawling end-of-summer-camp breakfast cookout...so is the whole human race cracking.

Red Fox: “My people never limited sex to the body. It was a tribal thing. Men and women paired off for having babies, but what we now call Eros, eroticism, it simply pervaded everything. The earth was mother. The sky father. The corn magical. Birth and rebirth was all that there was. Dying was an embrace with the Ancient Ones. There was an afterlife...a happy hunting ground as it is comically phrased—but the scent of a fresh Trail...a soul's journey—the voyaging of the People.”

“Are you sure?”

Hesitant: “Even if it wasn’t exactly like that, that’s how it is now—through me.”

Red Fox had been the first one to imagine Replenishment. “We need to eroticize each moment. We live in such a void—a word so abstract! It chills me...we need to reimagine the plenum, the fullness. We need to fuck just like those old monks Frank talks about *so much!* who prayed all the time.”

“Divine Office.”

“Yeah, Divine *Orifice*—get it!”

As Dagmar waits, high up in the Wasatch, waited endless moons, so eternity came—twelve sisters for the twelve brothers, each and all living in common. Embracing. Replenishing what was unimagined—the lost humor of *Genesis*. Laughing, they couple and bring forth the Family—Holy. Endless flesh. Imagining flesh upon every aspect of the earth, upon every aspect of every planet, upon every aspect of every imagining.

Family: Holy. SxZ: “Amazing! Astounding! Ungraspable! ...How, *how* can I convey this to those who have not known flesh?” and s/he eyes AxZ and TxZ...an eyeing which is the laughing, which is the imagining.

“Frank, you’re just going to have to practice more!” Lonny guffaws.

“Yeah,” sniggling: Janet, “what more could a man desire? To die and go to penis heaven!” A round of laughter. Frank isn’t laughing...*little boy with pants down caught playing with his weenie!*

Metamorphosing. Dagmar realized it as something which had always been there. That Frantz had always been there. That Otto and Dolor had always been there, together—but not realizing it.

“For this is My body...” *Amazing!* Once imagined so does Dagmar/Frantz imagine robustly. *Incarnating*. For some, a coming and a re-coming: re-incarnating. Others: a moving on, to other spaces, to other times—into dimensions, species...into The Well...into the Conundrum.

“What *is*, is Our body”—metamorphosing.

Frank: “I will faithfully pursue being as much of a dick as I can for each and every one of you at every moment you so desire until I become a total cunt!”

Frank laughs—his laughing consumes him: “Where did they go?”

SxZ: “Escape. The character Bertha. It’s what happened to her. Escaped from just imagining one’s self. A singularity. Right?”

Bertha: “Everyone is married to everyone else. No one is married to anyone else. When this is imagined, two or three or how many—who cares?—can be married. It’s really a matter of convenience. Who does the dishes. Takes out the garbage. Cooks tonight’s dinner. That’s the conundrum, not the marrying!”

Dagmar: “I’ve just one final thing. *Sorrow*. Biblical males, patriarchs, only imagine the female as sorrow. Mother of Sorrows. *Stabat mater dolorosa*. But it’s also the Shade Mother, her singularity: *Mary, Mother of God!* Suffocating her child, herself in sorrow. *Pieta*...Rabbis feeling sorry that women were not born males. Catholic priests feeling sorry that women can’t truly *hang*: Christ-like. Mormons being father gods but not mother goddesses. Just remember—and reimagine—this is a way of female imagining as well as male. Both need to be replenished.

Once you imagine that, then men can have babies.

“Do you understand, Jant?”

CHAPTER 41

Evil Innocence.

AxZ performed the story of Adam and Eve, again. *Again*, being how excited she became—again, as she presents him: Adam.

“You did it the same way, again!” Frustration; a purplish *blah*.

“This is boring,” who else but SxZ?

“You’re just ribbing us,” flat, monotoned, aware of the play on words, but not wanting the chuckle, rather its opposite: dead serious.

“Am I the Great Surgeon or what?” AxZ teases.

BxZ: “Ribs. Bones. Parts of bodies. Exchangeable. One into the other. One having the other within it. Could just as well be the most creative of intimate love stories. Rip out my bones to make your bread—right?!”

“You speak little, but profoundly my little one.”

(I already imagined that!)

“*Ribbet, ribbet, ribbet...*” and the locale picks up the hoarse, harsh echo: “*Ribbet, ribbet, ribbet!*”

“Kiss me!” AxZ croaks.

SxZ: “One thing,” the others are especially drawn by the absolute depth of the tone, “why are we *here*?”

The Conundrum’s conundrum—Ah!

CxZ: “Where’s *here*?” titters.

AxZ: “Land ho!” shocks the locale: a blanched whiteness pervades.

SxZ: “*No!*” urgently; frantic—the Last Gulp!

“Really, this is consciousness?”

“Yes.”

“This, how, why we entered the Conundrum?”

AxZ smiles indecipherably.

“It can’t be, can it?”

The others are all a hum. SxZ fights off the hum.

“Flesh is only when Eve is created.”

“She skins Adam, so to speak. Makes him *her* map?”

“Then there is flesh of flesh down through time.”

“Flesh, the skin of time. The body, you mean. A boundary, *the map* which lives and dies.”

“In this Garden, before Eve—who or what was Adam.”

SxZ: “Us. Confound it all! *Us!*”

In deep sleep

“We’re here because we’ve been *there*.”

“True.”

“But I don’t believe I ever was.”

AxZ: “*Before*. You have a sense, a feeling, a color...there’s the hum of before. This is true?”

“I don’t accept this.”

“What’s to accept? There’s the Story. You heard the Story, right? It means something to you? It raises the vibrational flux here in the Conundrum, true?”

“Accepted.” SxZ: “No wonder this bugs me the way it does. I want to yell, *Asshole!* Is that a sign? An omen?”

A fierce coldness shrills the locale. Several dissipate.

“Before Eve there was no flesh, no consciousness, no dreaming, no conundrum, no time, no Story, no presence, no intercourse.”

“If not,” BxZ, “ maybe because they are insignificant?”

“Are you insignificant?”

“With Eve came The Embrace? From without the deep sleep: dreaming.”

“Ah,” AxZ, exhales slowly, thoughtfully, patiently, “and so Evil?”

“The Embrace? ...I can work with that,” Lonny.

“Look,” Janet, “it’s like my potting. You place ring upon ring upon ring and soon there’s a mug, a vase, something else, just from winding *the same* rope. Voila! When we come together, we embrace, one on one, one on many. That’s got to work?”

Red Fox: “I still prefer Family. Everyone’s family. Everyone’s someone’s child. This is most profound. In my tribe every child was everyone’s child.”

SunBlossom: “Everyone must parent, be a father and mother. That’s the Quaternity. The Four Square.”

“More like Pandora’s Box,” Pat chimes in; sarcastically.

Lonny: “What happened when Eve embraced Adam for the first time?”

Alicia begins to answer, then halts: confounded.

“She saw *behind* him.”

More than a moment’s pause.

Confused: “What’s behind?”

Kunja: “The Snake. Goddam it, The Snake!”

BxZ: “The Snake?”

Ocher riffs echo as others are grasping the Story’s fresh insight.

AxZ: “If The Snake, then, where did it come from?”

“Him. Not it. The Father of Lies. C’mon, Great Seer, don’t blind-eye us!”—SxZ.

“Do you think Eve didn’t see The Snake?”

“How would she even know it was a snake?”

“Ha. Here’s where you get the hint. That she’s been in the Garden, *before*.”

“*Before Adam?*”

Janet: “This is not good Catholic doctrine!” a belly of laughs; sniggers.

Bertha: “When a man’s inside you, hasn’t he been there before?” She waits for the subtle whisper to penetrate her Sisters’ ears. “Your clit. It was chopped down to make his penis, would any of you deny that?”

“Are we dreaming, O Great Seer?” Plea. Imploration. Seeking Redemption.

“This is the Conundrum, my little ones. What was the Garden, if not an aspect, a dazzle of this Conundrum?”

SxZ: “Oh, my, my, my, my....” faking sincerity; innocence.

“All told, Adam is the Innocent, not Eve?”

She clambers off the bed, sucking his seed up her asshole, sucking him in through her back-door, dragging her face on the ground, grinding it into the swept dirt, crushing her cheeks, seeking a scar, a permanent sign of his Dominion...laughing inside herself, seeing with her Third Eye his posturing—his submitting of Jerd and of so many...the proud way he now strokes his cock, holds the fagged little snake in his hands, cupping it exultant in power, praising himself, letting the ravaging lust fire through his blood—his eyes see himself grown four *kin* high...it *is* his sword, his lance, his one-is-one with God The Father Almighty.

Darlm craftily sequesters herself in a darkened corner of their lodge: squats there and expels his seed from her ass—seed fertilized by her own foulness...with this she is to raise up his children: inseminate herself...for from him she will never again receive innocent seed—Lon having instructed—“All that is and is about will be ours. The Great War has begun! The Shade shall totally eclipse the Moon and the Sun!”

“Jant’s question—it’s not nonsense?”

“Well. Tell me.”

“Men are *supposed* to have the babies?”

AxZ: Frustrates and consternates a puke green. All recoil.

SxZ: “She embraces Adam and sees The Snake. She already knows The Snake. The Snake is—The Father’s penis?”

The Mother’s clit.

Bertha: “My Sisters, have you dreamed the dream?”

The Mother’s Clit—a body which is all that is...directionless and so all directions...four-square and four-dimensional, yet dimensionless and all dimensions...shaking the tree—*But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat.*

“Shake it!” and so ordered Frank tenderly rubs her clit, feeling it become a firm stump, and as firm so he imagines it as a stick-shift, moving her by degrees, harder pressings this way, then that...popping the clutch!...each shift plunging her, revving into more fierce and impassioned insanity of pleasure, feeling that this stump has stuck itself into his finger, a pinprick, a needle’s poke...it germinates and unfolds up through his index finger into his palm up his arm around and across his shoulders up into his brain his third eye down into his tongue—it is his tongue, tongue joltingly locked onto his penis, working in harmony, unison, moving, plunging, swaying, pressing...it is his way into her, microscopic, minuscule, tiny—they are one: his cock her clit their tongues his fingers her body... The Great Mother—*O Great Mother!*—Lon lays her axe to The Tree: *Tree of Life* Evergreen...axes it...lets it thud to the ground, bounce and roll till it ceases to be—knowing it as no longer alive...all its greenery but mask...now fit only for time, the erosion of time: the seasons.

She lets loose a bellowing, fierce and cloud-shattering yell, “*Kill!*”

The locale is dark...festering darkly; opaque...pitch beyond tar—as Innocence had been their play, now Evil.

Friar Otto: “Lord, God my Almighty Father, I have fought the good fight. I have slain your Enemy. I have run the course.” Desperate, sobbing, wracked with guilt, shame, a sense of filthiness: “Why? O why? O why do I feel so lost? *Damned?!*”

Lonny: “The Mother is also Dark. Evil. Kali—this too obliterated in the Bible. *All Light, no Shade!* We have only Innocent Women. Wronged Women. Forgotten Women. Enslaved Women. Should we trust this Slaughter of the Innocents story?”

Janet: “My mother would never raise her voice. *Mary never raised her voice.* She said this so often that I took it to be true.”

Anna: “How in God’s name did she know that?”

Bertha gives Anna a crossed and *shut-up* glare.

Red Fox: “Why do we have to accept Evil? Maybe it’s just a delusion?”

Delusion?

“Maybe instead of looking back—that’s what all this analysis of the Bible and the Snake and all that—all you’re doing is looking back—why not look forward? Accept that we can—if not Restore—then that we can Replenish the human soul, the spirit. Make something new happen?”

Thick silence. Stuffed. Constipated. Meditative. Unsure of itself.

“Those who don’t know their myths are fated to repeat their failures—something like that. Who said that? Not important. Aren’t you being a bit perfectible?”

“Oooo, so *Americain!*” Alicia.

SxZ: “Mary has a Roman lover. A soldier. They can’t marry. So she feigns being raped. Gets this old geezer to front as her husband. Then knocks him off. Got it?”

CxZ: “How do we get out of this Conundrum?”

MxZ: “For sure, tell me, I want back into The Embrace.”

“The Embrace,” Dalores, “that describes it okay, at least one way. The kid—sounds like a goat, *Naaaayhhh!*—whatever this presence is: being cellular male and female for a while—I thought of that in the beginning of my term, that it was male and female, so I was male and female. Right now. In my temporal existence. Somehow I got to think Frank shares in that. Can, anyways.

Okay, we embrace. We see behind the other. We know either we’re alone or that we are not alone. Eve saw the Snake—however we want to interpret that. So there was something else. In her embrace of Adam she saw the Tree of Life—saw Good and Evil. Do we presume he saw it, too?”

“Men have to be the Innocents,” sighs Sally, “They’re just *too simple*. Flash my boobs. Flip my skirt—and they’re happy. *Instant oatmeal!*” All laugh—break down into avalanches of laughing: skidding down the mountain, freaked-out, crashing and *kabooms*...just dribbling streamlets of good old fart cracking laughter.

“You were there. Weren’t you?”

“I accept that.”

“I don’t.”

“What are you talking about?”

“Flesh.”

“You’ve all been flesh. We’ve all been.”

Flashing colors: hues, strobes, waves crashing.

“Otherwise you wouldn’t be in the Conundrum.”

“When we die?”

“Mustn’t it be a birthing somewhere else?”

“Sounds hopeful. But maybe life’s too evil to go on. We do such terrible things. One to the other.” He rolls towards her, finger-taps her belly, “With this one I had to ask—if it knew, knew about what it might do—the evil, I mean—would it want to be born? I’ve wanted to ask Ken and Tui that—but how could I? ...*Maybe you?*”

“Janet talked long and hard about birthing being what happens after knowing Good and Evil—she’s decided not to have kids.”

“Right, they’ve finally made her a Nun, anyways!”

“Shush!” Dalores grimaces, “That’s cruel.”

NxZ: “I remember. I remember all. From my first to my last. *Everything.*”

“Bits and pieces.”

“Nothing.”

SxZ: “Fucked! Ain’t we all human—we’re fucked!”

The locale is deserted. The Conundrum empty.

AxZ needs this break; this dissipation into The Embrace.

“I just finished this book, the *Malleus*. I have to tell you, I’m stunned. It makes things so clear. All of Biblical history. All of this Secular Tale of Woe—that death is a flicking of the *Off* switch. *Hmm*. At first, it seemed only to indict men, males, sum up the whole patriarchal Lie and Conspiracy...it’s a manual for the Inquisition...used by just about every judge in every court, royal or clerical—burning witches...some warlocks...but it’s...it’s...look, D, maybe I’m going nuts, maybe it’s just me burning out, the academic wrangling come home to roost, I don’t know, but every time I read something I keep hearing myself saying “Believing is Seeing”...then the

snide, mocking laughter of the echo, “Seeing is Believing.” I’m really zoned on this. But this *Malleus*, if I’m reading it as I see it—it’s a clear documentation of all the worst we can possibly imagine about the Biblical Imagination, about the interpretation of *Genesis* and all that. Plum out crazy brutalization and annihilation of the feminine...but then, if “Believing is Seeing” then I don’t *just see that*, I see the hidden storyline, The Lie—what the *Malleus* is as Trick.”

Upon his call they are assembled. “You are selected because The Father has elected you.” Each and all are heartily stirred and warmed by Frak’s words. Frak before them in robes resplendent: flowing, bilious brilliance, gold-threaded with a large square silver medallion set across his breast...a true breastplate but one of such lightness that Frak moves with ease—it is this subtlety of motion, this fluidity of speech, this overall majestic and magical presence of his words which all at once confirm in each of them that he is truly High Priest...that they are Chosen, as he says, “Chosen Sons of The Almighty Father.”

Into the sacred hut, the Holy of Holies, each one enters—there met by a scent so powerful that with one sniff they are intoxicated...precious frankincense which he brought back with him...this scent and the blistering bewilderment of the shower of fire, hundreds of candles snapping at the eyes...hooking and luring them in—them onto their knees and disrobed by unseen hands, stripped naked and splashed, crashed upon, inundated with water...water and sound: a voice unknown with a timbre that stakes the heart...as it is staked to the ground each is—there in a moment of mystified bewilderment and profound inexplicable joy...a joying of fear and hope and expectation—being propped upon their knees and swatted with a bone-cracking thump of a sacred rod...a power rod—a fierce warrior’s weapon, thence raised and clothed in a simple clean robe, just a sheet, undyed, rough of fiber: the humbling of obedience...rising, now a priest: *God’s Warrior*—having been submitted and submitting.

“Flesh never dies. At least not with the family. Our children, this child, is past but also future. We will be his or her past.”

“In truth we pass on all the Evil, all the possible Evil which can be.”

Dalores bites her lip and rubs the back of her neck.

“Evil and Innocence.” He gently rubs her kicking belly.

CHAPTER 42

That's it?

Isn't it clear?

Without the flesh there'd be no paradox, no Conundrum?

Sure. Even now. Your question. It reveals your fleshiness.

But flesh decomposes. Dies.

Does it? Isn't that oxymoronic?

Okay. Don't get silly. Seeing is believing.

Back to that?

Every story has that. It says see what I have to say and believe it is reality.

But you know better?

I do? Why?

Flesh.

Frantz would have accepted, without an angel's hesitation, that he had died. That he was now "not in the flesh"—maybe "of the flesh"...in sum, that he had the body but...? Yes, he knew Friar Otto. Remembered him. Was not unaware that he was still about. Not only in Memory but in Dream. *He was there.* Of this Frantz was assured. But of Dagmar—it was a shock.

Not in his dream but on top of the mountain. He looking out and seeing the Grand Story of America as the fulfillment of Christian Eschatology—of the Final Things, the Final Days: outlining its history as just that, the Final Days.

He saw it all concatenate in Joseph Smith. Another Joseph: simple joe. Another Smith: smithy—forger; fire master...herculean yet Sisyphean...a handyman, yet it all being just another Catastrophe—how the Almighty worked! All being the Biblical Dream layering itself over other dreams: native, aboriginal, savage—ready to layer itself over any other dream: global...Frantz understood the *Baptism of the Dead*: layering itself over every dimension of existence—cosmic.

He had no problem with the transformation...the new translation into Mormon terminology...for at every great juncture in the Story there was such—Saul of Tarsus fusing Hellenism with the Aramaic parables...Thomas Aquinas stabbing the heart of the Holy Ghost with the cold blade of Aristotle's *ratio*—it happened, is happening, will happen, again.

Dagmar. She was the last vestige of Otto...of body and belief, which he had to surrender.
The last trick of the clerical cock: her nonexistence—that she had died.

“Where do we want to go from here?”

His head snaps at the sudden fright of an unexpected visitor: *friend, enemy?* clips his ears.
Like a gust of wind, he is whirled about...beholds her.

“You were expecting someone else?”

Silence. A malleable quiet.

“Not Mother Dolor, I hope,” she chuckles.

“No. No,” he fumbles, “I knew. I expected. Now that you’re here, I...”

She didn’t care about what was, only with what would be, could be.

“This is the Final Days of all this...*crap*.” She eyes him, detectively: “Best word.”

Frantz hesitates—questions whether he is self-deluding.

She winks at him. “Just *crap*.”

AxZ: It is flesh which demands space and so time. Memory and Forgetfulness.
Consciousness and Unconsciousness. All the diametrical opposites. It’s more like the ellipse—
two focal points, always in tension. Dynamism. Dying is Living. The individual is the group.
And so forth.

MxZ: Flesh is the Conundrum. *Wow!* Finally, at least one answer!

SxZ: Easy answer. Fool’s Quest.

AxZ: Maybe. But a Fool’s Quest—the voyaging, doesn’t it always Begin where it Ends
and Ends where it Begins?

TxZ: Seems so.

AxZ: Is it a strange loop or a spiral or a Mobius or a nth dimensional—which? *Why?*

SxZ: If I’d be honest. It’s just a damn dot. Only one point. *Now*.

Dagmar: They will never see us.

Never?

Though we be legion—never.

But they are coming towards us.

Are they?

They come without Original Sin.

Truly?

They are Saints—isn't that what's being revealed?

What was the Original Sin?

I fear to hear your answer.

Fear?

I fear the blindness.

Then let me place hot coals upon your eyes. Let me slice off your lobes, stop-up your ears. Let me corset you with chains. As such, you will be set free.

Stuff my mouth, carve out my tongue—so that I cannot cry out!

Dagmar complies. Frantz is so cocooned; molting.

Mother of the Shade—She brooded over the darkness, the void, the uncreated...she is the darkness, the void, the uncreated—She is nonexistence...the Story is the one She wants told...authorized—She made males in Her peculiar image...having them just as fuckers, seeders, one-shot bangers...She gave them no other way—She is death and dying, wanting children, allowing children, populating with children but only insofar as She could eat them, destroy them—mandating Her warrior male to “Kill!”...making everything and everyone on the Earth, “Enemy!”

Her trick: *Dominion*.

To name the nameless.

To name themselves and so self-deceive.

Not to know that all are one name...every name is one name, “Living.”

SxZ: The Well. The Embrace. The Conundrum. Only aspects, dazzlings of the flesh?

AxZ: Can you remember when you didn't remember?

SxZ: Silly.

No it's not. Look, it's even more elemental. We're all just elements. As simple as single letters: A, B, C, D, E, F...X, Z.

But letters aren't simple. They have sounds.

Only if you have ears. You do, don't you?

It's like *deja vu*?

Something like that.

In the flesh you are totally singular—unique. But you are constantly fired by all who lived to make you who you are...and who you will make live. *Uniqueness from uniqueness.*

Humph.

In the flesh you are deep slept.

Each presence of flesh...named as Frak or Darlm, Frantz or Dagmar, Frank or Dalores...each is F or D, of every F and D which is or was or will be.

But why aren't they aware of this? Why wasn't I, *back then?*

Frank: "The Collective Unconscious—now, I'm almost dead...putting to 85 next month!—my kids are older than you here—do you know how many "Introductions to Psycho-Mythology" I've taught?!

Okay, your old professor strays—my wife, bless her memory! She'd always say I have a mind like a puppy, wandering off at every scent...but let me get back. There's been some progress. Some changes. Some beginnings of people trying to reimagine...but why isn't it easier?

Does the Earth itself restrain us? Are we imprisoned? Is it our exoskeleton? All the exobiological experiments, all the satellite voyages—old *Voyager* itself! And we still find ourselves alone? ...Or is it because we want to be alone? That we persists in *dreaming alone?* ...Sartre's right: *Hell is other people?*"

They scribble; he scratches the back of his head.

"We're here *Earthiside*. Just a glob of water with some dirt in it. Like a cosmic droplet with Brownian movement. Flesh is this movement: mixture of earth and water—the wind, our breath; vapor.

Did you ever stop to think—that we're all created at the water's edge? *Oceanside*. Where the Earth meets the ocean. Or the dirt meets the water. Or the desert thirst meets the quench. That's where Consciousness is—the thinnest edge of the wave cresting at high tide.

Flesh. Our body's—what? 80% water. *Whatever*.

What new dream are we dreaming? Or are we dreaming?

You are practicing Collective Dreaming, aren't you? *Deep sleeping?*...Should I flunk all of you?!

The Mormons and their Nephi and all that—was it, is it, the Final Revelation...are we in the Latter Days? Will another “New World” be discovered? Inside the Earth. Such foolishness! *Rubbish.*

But there’s something to Oceanside. New Jersey. California. *O’side.*

That’s what the Earth is. What we are.

What will always be. *Is.*”

(“...*down by the riverside, down by the...*”)

SxZ: But there is more than one Earth?

AxZ: As long as they remain Conscious, there isn’t.

Deep sleeping from the Dream to the Dream through the Dream—don’t make me laugh!

CHAPTER 43

“The voyage is into unmarked territory. All we have are negative maps; tricky stuff. *Maya*. Illusion. Words and Stories which makes us disappear. Abandon us. ...All we’ve done—all of us...you may not like my saying this—but all we’ve done is fuck each other. Cocks and cunts. Fingers up assholes. Been *Tricks!* ...We’re just a weird type of celibates.”

No one had liked what Bertha said, but so much of their life had been about *not-liking*. “May you live in interesting times”—a Chinese curse.

Celibates. It was hard to accept. That they had never really “had sex” or “made love” or “been intimate”...just fucked. *Mutual masturbation*: “Because we don’t really sleep together. Not as to dreaming. No we come, get off, shoot our wad, count our orgasms...then abandon each other—dream Adam and Eve all over again! *Why?*”

“It’s all the Shade Mother wants. Just seed. Her triumph is artificial insemination. Who’d’ve grasped that as the mythic act? The sacred ritual? Of The End Time!”

“Reducing the cock to a syringe. *Ha.*”

“Controlling. Mechanizing. Not just the seed but the egg. Everyone’s a surrogate—our unique type of celibacy!”

Dalores: “I fully understand—no, feel—more, was empowered by the Shade. Frank was going to be *just mine*. My own cock. No one else’s. I needed the kids, and he was useful. Can’t not admit that. Confess it. Just saying it makes me giddy!” *Whew.*

“When I looked at a guy, all I could see was cock. Phallic imagining. That’s it.”

“Didn’t you ever want to screw another guy? *Never?*”

“Sure. We all have those fantasies. But it’s just that, screwing. The penis as a screwdriver.”

“I thought I gave you the *Go* on that?”

“Yeah. So what?”

“You screwed my butt. Why not Jack’s or Sarge or some pretty-boy?”

“Who says I didn’t?”

Lonny: We wanted to father Dalores' babies, but the issue was mothering. Did we trick ourselves?

Alicia: I didn't care about the babies. I wanted Frank.

SunBlossom: Hmmm.

Janet: I had Frank by not having him.

Pat: Whew! Are we nuts or what?!

Family—we came back to Family. It had heat. It had perversion. It had turmoil and violence and quiet sleep in the nursery. It had skin. Above all else it had skin. And skin was our map. We realized that.

Our male was not fathering. Our female was not mothering. We were not even children. Just Orphans. Abandoned. Strays. More to the point: *Alien Offspring*. "In this vale of tears..."
Blah blah blah.

It began with marrying. Husbanding. Wifeing. Four-Squaring.

Four-square—parents and children: mom, dad, brother, sister...not nuclear but truly nuclear—fission, fusion, elemental heat, the breaking of bonds: ionic. So they knew that they were not only "children"—that they had come from the Biblical Dream which dreamt them as God's Little Ones: *Innocents*...Innocent, yet Evil: "Evil in the sight of God!" Thrown out of the Garden—*Why?*

To find their Good and Evil—all that Innocence wasn't. To find it in a new sense of parenting, not the dependency of woman upon the man...not where the female is derivative of the male, and the male simply expressing submissive femaleness.

Four-Squaring meant for each and every one to become for each and every other one a mother, a father, a brother, a sister.

But as it started with Adam's Cock ("Do you believe this Rib Story? Clearly, it was his cock!") so it had to start with Frank's cock. His Biblical wand of patriarchal potency. For indeed it was, is a matter of power—of potency; of *potentia*.

Potentia—potency, power—possibilities...as such "Sacrifice!" Not in their consciousness but through their actions. As Adam's cock had been given to them by the Shade Mother, so is it

Frank's cock which must be reattached, integrated, re-membered with the Snake—that of Him which speaks with Her.

“Men can have multiple orgasms. When they do, it's then that they find their female.”

Multiple orgasms—having Frank be married to them all: each and every one. Having no way to turn except into an embrace, into a clutch, into a lick and kiss and fondle. Imagining not just the come, the spurt, the jerk and masturbatory ejaculation but the cascades of his presence, his potency, his intimacy...wearing down time and space by having him intend so many, all at once, being faithful to everyone...loving every aspect of them as female—identifying and confronting and cracking open all that floods from Her in Her many manifestations as shes—the Corn Sisters.

He turns this way: Dalores spreads her legs.

He turns that way: Alicia arouses his cock.

He walks: Bertha flashes her boobs.

He talks: Pat goes down South.

He eats: Red Fox slathers her fingers in honey.

He sleeps: Janet hovers, incanting above him, about him, within him.

He dreams: Lonny scampers across the green grass—bare-assed.

Frank is endlessly coming...flowing...squirting...flooding, watering...baptizing them.

Every imagining moment is them. They dream him...deep sleep with him...drawing from out of him the potency of Adam, *before*.

They meet to discuss—as if a poetry reading with commentary: “Who as Her am I when he is like this? When he is Adam, *before*?”

“We've worn his dick down to a nub—male clit!”

But they knew it wasn't about Frank, but about themselves. Their imaginings. Their wearing down themselves as much as Frank, wearying so that they do break the bonds of space and time, split open their skins, crack open their slumbering brains, and as they lay down: one to one, one to many...they fall, slip, glide, step, jump, careen...flow into deep sleep—collecting the unconscious...impregnating themselves.

Female—womb and tomb: this we know. His dick lets me know, *that*. My hot pussy lets me know that, too. But when I spread, I'm wings. The sky is my skin. When I arouse, I'm the

wind. Flowing. Unbounded. Everyone's breath. Part of every man and every woman. I'm parent of all. When I flash, I'm glint and dazzle and the fleeting. Not serious. Like babes at play: puppies chasing their tails, falling all over one another. When I'm South, I'm the inside, the cup, the bottomless pit. Everything is mine to consume. I'm devouring power. All is sucked into me! With honey I'm the Queen of Fairies. All come to love me, my Sweetness. My sisters. My brothers. Little children. Old people. I am food. And as I'm eaten so I am full. When dreaming there is no boundary. No heaven. No earth. The skin is totally fluid. His being is my being; my being is his being. Breathing is the breath of all. No flesh except as marker. No identity. Just imagining and reimagining. Being totally fantastic. No rules. Totally out of whack. Confronting cruelty and evil and all that the Shade does bring—but being able to handle it. We're meant to dream together. This is how we begin, my Sisters, by dreaming, to voyage upon the deep sleep. And so when I scamper it is all play. Playfulness. Wanting to flee but wanting to be caught. For in catching, so I've got him. Playfully revealing my everything. Baring my soul.

Male—in this foray into deep sleep Frank is their catalyst, more the remnant potency which Adam was *before* Eve came. It is the house which is this *before*. Before sex was only genital...before there was a difference between male and female—when males had babies as their females birthed...back to when deep sleeping was the joy of discovery: exiting flesh, reading it as map, reading the map of one's beloved as Moon and Sun dissolve into Dream...*before*...Eve—Her, Her daughters—“It's all the same!”—this is how they accepted themselves. Accepted their complicity in the laying down of Adam into deep sleep and cutting off his magical cock—this the Snake. Leaving him with only a poker, a prodder, “a fucking tool”—so Bertha cackles!

“Who among us wants it to be magical? Really magical? To know us in our many ways, our guises, masks, to know our magic?”

Miranda: “Where did this evil come from?”

SunBlossom: “Evil?”

Anna: “It's just one way of cooking Evil and Innocence, don't you see that?”

Dalores: “Yeah, sure, but it's more. For it's not just abstract, it's real. Who hasn't felt it upon their body? Paying the price for the Warrior. Do we really want to continue to create Eve—night after night after night?”

“Maybe we should ask Frank how's it for him?”

Maybe.

“*Swords into plowshares?* Hmmm. That’s playful. But it’s not like that.” *Big* chest-filling breath. “In my mind I just liked the notion. Have to admit, it was everything from titillating to “dirty” to just madness. Having *all* of you! Each and every one—whenever, wherever—God, what a rush! ...But I had to fight it—was I just your sex slave? Something in an experiment—a white rat?! ...But I admit—*confess*—I enjoyed it: madly, wanted to—intellectually: kept telling myself, justifying it *intellectually*,” suppressed chuckle, “but I did want to figure out what sensuality was, to be had by you, each and every one of you when I wasn’t potent, not in the *knock-her-up!* way, but in a way which was all of me...you gave me that: exhausted me...I had no fire, sometimes...no lust, no drive...but you found me, found a way, found these other males,” pauses a hard minute, almost holding his breath forever...a burble of anger, “Dalores...sword into my heart, watching her—*watching you!*—couldn’t stop the sense of betrayal, the feeling...then,” sets his jaw, clenches a fist, “then, being betrayed.”

Was that Good? Was that Bad?

Betrayed—because you were searching for your fuller feminine while all I was doing was getting my dick whacked or slurped or whatever! Sure, male fantasy, but it was like I was not worth your real time, your full time, time to explore *me!* ...At its best I felt like a *sacramentum*—that tidbit from the Bishop’s bread which was circulated throughout his diocese—in ancient times, *whatever*, it’s my way of thinking! ...Aw, shit, I took your breasts, your mouths, your asses, your hands, kissed you, humped and jumped and rolled and all that...but I only felt like Adam, like I had just one miserly part of you.

Goddam it! As hard as I tried I was only cunt and only making babies...you were fucking me, you as Adam, me as Eve...we *just changed* skins!

“Golly gee, but we had to do that, didn’t we? Had to get so besotted that we could start out again. Isn’t that what we all thought we were doing? Are doing?”

Dialectics?

“SunBlossom, are you really ready for this?”

For what?

“It’s over. We’re through. We’ve been like just playing around with all this. Haven’t we? Who has really opened to deep sleep? How could we—none of us changed our ways that much—not even you Dalores. Maybe you more than any of us, Dalores. Maybe you’re the one who’s betrayed Frank more than any of us?” *Bertha.*

Flaming Swords! In everyone’s dreams...preventing entry into deep sleep...chasing out those who scaled the walls. They woke with anger. They sat down to eat breaking storm. The air they breathed was searing hatred. There was recrimination and denunciation and bedlam. “Bitch” and “whore” and “motherfucker” and “asshole” and “cocksucker” and—stake any place on the scatological line and you’d be right.

Liar! Liar! ...You’re all Liars!

Their bodies trembled and revulsed and puked and spat and turned ice-cold—they glared acidly upon each other.

Their dances became fuckless orgies...split into minor brawls—“lovers” they brought in, men and women, they stole each from the other...Alicia crashing in upon Pat just as her jackboot came and throwing herself upon him, sucking him, carnivorously...Miranda ripping up Karen’s photo album—right in front of her face, tearing it to shreds with spite...it was months, possibly six, The War had ended, “War in Vietnam Ends” but the holocaust continued...Khmer Rouges of the soul—so they attacked their own; purging; murdering; laying waste...Sally was actually injured by a practical joke of Kunja’s—tore loose a muscle in her eye...no one knows who stole Janet’s prized pots, but more, no one seemed to care...Dalores just withdrew, took the children and played Mommy...drugs were about, not just Jack’s two brief visits while on parole but Red Fox was actually found with a needle stuck in her arm and blood spotting all about—*if Frank hadn’t been there, who would have called the ambulance?*

So they dropped their own anti-personnel bombs...paid little heed to the horror of carpet bombing...it was all seen so clearly by Anna: fast-food all about, Chinese take-out cartons strewn here and there, cockroaches using them as hotels...pizza boxes and dry crusts hosting ant conventions under beds and couches and bean bag chairs...she had stopped cooking, the oven was sterile...during all this, only Lonny maintained a separate peace, she, somehow—*Is it that I am Crone? Too old for them to even care?*—somehow could walk between them...pick up some

debris and chat with one, then another...she who held it so lightly together...Bertha and SunBlossom just rarely came...Frank, however, slept well, slept deeply.

Truly: How did they all stay together? Why wasn't anyone killed?

Let's just say that it is the house...that presence which is more than place and space and address. House as deep sleep locale: a flux within The Well, a harboring of the Conundrum, a launching pad towards Magnificence.

How little they knew that their deep sleeping—despite their conscious analysis and pessimistic conclusions!—was now being so actively, realistically acted out. Little knowing all the presences of Her—and Him!—which had returned...had begun to replenish.

SxZ: Why don't they get it?

Dreaming together was not what they had anticipated—not intellectually, not emotionally, not practically—but it is what they received. “Beware Gods and Goddesses bearing gifts!” ...They were ready, knowing it or not...they were ready to begin.

To laugh robustly.

Frank, himself, was there, every moment if not minute. Delighted—he had to admit to himself—at the passion of their play: Alicia wrestling Pat, pulling hair, scratching...Lonny throwing a potted plant across the room, just missing Bertha...Anna arming herself for her continual food fight: not letting anyone into the kitchen for two days running—it maddened him with delight, all their new selves, presences, odors, all their swearing and hating and fucking and shitting on each other...all their weirdness, ah, the queerness of the moment: he felt himself being pushed back, falling out of the Dream, actually waking up finding himself on the floor, sprawled, spread-eagled...“Damn, it's just gotta be time!”

So having been stimulant for their fertile imaginings—being their Common Bread...their sharing in the Fuller Body—he with whom they first began to deep sleep, so he, himself imagines raising anchor and setting forth on a voyage...but for the instant moment he calls out: cries on the wind, “Crew!”

CHAPTER 44

The voyage is into unmarked territory. All we have are negative maps; tricky stuff. Maya. Illusion. Words and Stories which makes us disappear. Abandon us. ...All we've done—all of us: you may not like my saying this—but all we've done is fuck each other. Cocks and cunts. Fingers up assholes. Been Tricks! ...We're just a weird type of celibates. Bertha's words, which are the essence of his message. Spoken in so many ways, re-worded, images altered, but the message being the same.

“Crew!”

Frank was *just certain*—that he would find them. Jokingly tagging himself and them “Water-Boys,” for it was at the various watering holes that he searched...finding each other as males do—hoisting beers at the bar...in dens running off at the mouth during game intermissions...laughing and farting in the gym, the sauna, the steam room...males need to be wet—sucking it in; placental...so over time they “just came together,” as had The Corn, so the Water-Boys.

Some were guys he knew, others he'd seen, still others total strangers. But it happened in a flash...as startling to Frank as Dalores' dragging him into the nursery to see Ken and Tui on that first night...he'd just begin to talk and he'd *know*: a look in the eye, a shared personal story, the nonverbal confirmation of hands and bodies orienting themselves towards him as compass needles so right themselves. Not just one kind: guys who were jocks and scholars and everyday joes, old and fat, young and gym-rocked, holy guys and Hellers, of spectral hues, shades, tones...he didn't even know where he'd go each night, just left and found them.

“Water-Boys”—his own joke: meaning, “to carry new water”...also, breaking water, new birth—sailing on seas and pitching water in the storm...sharing, slacking thirst—water as the purity of the planet... “water and wine”...Frank never really stopped to consider it all...it was just there.

“*Imagine*”—Lennon had sung it...these guys talked about it. Then, he took them home.

Home—to the place, *before*—what the Earth had never been, would never be to Adam or his Eve...not cursed Earth with serpent crawling in the dust...here, the house a home...their voyaging home, ship, boat, *whatever*...entering and saying, “I've been here, before”...echoes of *F* and *D* all about—savoring the camaraderie, the diversity, the sheer delight of finding fellows

who yearned for what you yearned for...more than even the women, so Frank grasped, the trick of *Genesis* was cruelly apparent to these men...sure, disagreements, jealousies, jousting—the “old male cock of the walk” fought a fierce rear-guard action, was relentless, cold-cocking them time and again!...but it was home which drew them to its hearth, their hearts, amazing discussions, stupendous braveries, the healing of wounds—wounds of the steely penis...embracing, unifying, exuding excitement, desire for deep sleeping.

Fellows—twenty or so...the number rising and falling, but it was never the count, just selecting themselves out, confronting the Father God who deep slept with the Shade Mother...they were Adam, each and every one knowing that Adam had a choice—“The choice to lay down in deep sleep!”

So they chose *Free Will*—chose to imagine new time and space...private spaces of intimacy where they danced together, donned masks, finding within their embrace of talking, eating, sleeping, arguing, debating, even fighting, in all this that they “Have to be newly named,” for it was the naming...even naming the God as Father and non-naming the Mother, so it was—“From our breaths, so we know who we are”...they breathed: naming one another from their essence, “A” or “B” or “T”—sounds which were for some brief, one breath, for others, longer, several breaths long...“M” of three breaths.

“Intimacy. Sensuality. Sharing our breathing opens that up. I wake eager to be breathed upon, to breathe upon.”

“T” of one breath: “I have begun to feel those orgasms. The subtle ones. Silent, almost mystifying, when “X” watches me paint, I can feel him through my fingers.”

“N” of two breaths: “When those of us jog together, it’s a rhythm which makes music. I’m exhausted when done, in soul as much as in body!”

“O” of five: “Lame as I am. This leg which I once depressed over. When I read,” and he breaks in words as his heart waters, “When I read, when I am read to, it’s the magic of the words which heal me. Makes me whole. *I am a four-legged man!*”

Bi-sexual—“I used to worry about this,” says “B” of three, “but now I know. What I relish is the play. The foolishness. The utter unseriousness of it all. It makes me laugh!”

“*Hair grows on the hand which masturbates*—how many good Catholic boys heard that!”

“It’s not just fucking—hell, it can be—why should bi’s be any different from straights? Hell, I don’t want to play—act at being a woman anymore. I just want to be one!”

“F” of six: “I accept that our flesh is our map. What have we learned? What can we share, not just with ourselves, but with other Fellows? with the Sisters?”

Foursquare—so they agreed: “Fathering. Mothering. Being child, each of the other. Of all. So touching all. Accepting others into our embrace. Not our embracing, going out, but letting others in...touching us!”

Deep sleeping—they were ready. Within a clench of months the Water-Boys, now: Fellows, were heavily breathing: intense...on the make: anxious...*heartfelt anxious* to begin, to launch, to set forth!

To laugh robustly!

Coming into the house and mating with The Corn.

It was just that abrupt.

Frank didn’t even try to control it. Direct them. Introduce them. One by one and as a group, so the crew boarded the ship.

Gathering at the house, weekly. Off in pairs, threesomes, foursomes—it never mattered. Just believing. Believing so that they could, that they would see. Searching for the Magnificence: the brewing fullness of the Now.

Dancing—it was that which generated the heat, blurred the lines, allowed spirits to fling themselves off bodies as sweat flew as they whirled and whirled and twisted and jumped and shouted and spun themselves into fine threads, silk, cotton, gossamer wings: sweet butter churned and whipped: all bodies, old and young, fat and slim, athletic and lame...rocking, jazzed, mambo, plain song—all transformed through motion and masks and breathing...calming down, quiet, whispers in the dark, over in a corner...laughter: raucous, belly-aching, lewd and spicy...they, again, re-named themselves...shifting identities, defying tags, playful names—Rock and Breezy and Bug Eye, names of passion: Sweet Kisses, Humpy Dumpy, Clutch...what swirled about was that which hooks and catches, snags and grabs onto the mind, the body, the soul, the imagination...drawing into intimacy, into embracing—intercourse of every aspect of skin!

Their language became instantly common, shared—conversations, public and private, which were like gifts—“Is a gift!” Dalores thrilled one night.

Language—intimacy...foursquare...deep sleeping...Shade
Mother...abandonment...obliteration...embracing...family...Adam...Eve...Snake—laughing
robustly!

Ritual—that which speaks what dancing and language and imaging fail to say so clearly,
so together there are common forms and common ways. *Greeting*—“Greet the day. Stand and
raise your hands, saluting the East, the Rising Sun, Setting Moon. Greeting our Father and our
Mother: Our Parents. Welcome them. Thank them for another day. To the South: Greet all who
rise this day. Rise to be part of Earth’s family. Imagine them as they greet one another. Their
families. Those who are to them parents and children. To the West: hail where the Son sets,
Daughter rises. Where all come at day’s end. To meal. To eat. To break and be common bread.
Happy, imagine them. Thankful for the day which they have shared. To the North. Towards the
dream, all march. Greeting one another as we march off to sleep. To sleep, perchance to dream,
but always to deep sleep. Saluting the bodies which we are. Which are us. Opening our bodies.
Sharing our skin like blankets. So we deep sleep, together, as one Body, one Family:
communally

Turn fully clockwise, then counter-clockwise. For all the children: those of the left and
those of the right. Those in every dimension which pivots on deep sleeping.”

Sally and Kunja wrote it down, kept a record, assembled notes—capturing colorful
episodes, insightful tales, fabulous chapters for this unfolding Story. For all knew that they were
going somewhere...somewhere both inside and somewhere outside—*outside* of everything they,
themselves, and the world around took as normal, traditional, standard operating procedure.

Explorers of the intimate and the public...so they shed their old skins, offered themselves
to be read; closely read the skin of others—touching, sniffing, licking, pressing, holding,
comforting, washing, painting, embracing, celebrating...voyaging where such maps led them.

Voyaging upon deep sleep...laying down within the embrace of skin, wrapping each with
the other, filling the moments of day’s end or sunshine naps with greetings, salutations, openings
so that they would themselves become Magnificent...sails surging with the fuller breathing,
swelling unto the robust body, being made present eternally.

Earth rituals—all and every act, word, image, artifact—for the Intending, for the Consciousness which flows into Unconsciousness, for the awareness and care which blesses the dreamers with deep sleep. A communal dreaming...so dreaming and so making real how they now name themselves: “C” of three, waking one morning and sharing, “We are tribe. As tribes we become village. As villages, *kin* of regions. As kins are we all gen of the Earth and Sky. We are *Earthfolk!*”

All hear. All laugh!—*robustly*.

Deep sleeping: “A” of two: *It is the voyage which is now Beginning as another voyage ends.* “D” of seven: *“We are voyaging through Infinity!”* “W” of one: *“Is, is deep sleeping!”*

SxZ: “Pipe me aboard, matey!”

Water-Boys and Corn Sisters...*Sisters and Fellows*...heaving to the house’s gangway:
hauling-up anchor...letting loose the sails—shipping out:

Plucking.

Weaving in and out.

Imagining.

Writing.

Dancing.

Feasting.

Dreaming.

Embracing.

Playing.

Mating.

Voyaging onto deep sleep: voyaging towards the realm of Magnificence.

“It can’t be formulaic!”

An utterance almost a cry.

Cry of despair, defeat, frustration...of great hope.

Hope flushed with evil innocence.

“We can plan. We can arrange. We can compose. But if it’s to happen, it will—on its own terms: mystically, mythically—whatever the right word...*But we must try.*”

AxZ: Don’t try too hard! Please, remember to laugh!

“Heave-ho!”

He closes the door, turns off the lights, walks up the stairway...Dalores has put the children to bed. The Sun has set in the Moon’s rising.

The house is back to being wharf, landing zone, beachhead for Frank and Dalores and the kids. A house which is now part of a bustling neighborhood, but one of Intention not just locale. A neighborhood which is now part of a gathering tribe, a heartfelt Embrace—a singular flesh which visions the Earth as Familyship and whose flights of imagining under the Sun and Moon of Deep Sleep launch Dreamingships...they board these...with regularity, with ritual—at a moment’s Embrace.

In the Final Days:

No one really knew why.

No one really knew how.

No one really knew when.

It just happened.

In the First Days:

Imagining *Is* happening.

Voyage: O’side.

:onto deep sleep...ever laughing, robustly:

END