

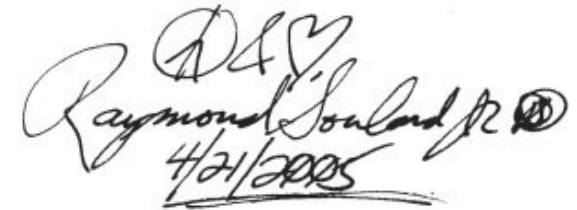


*All I have is a voice
To undo the folded lie,
The romantic lie in the brain
Of the sensual man-in-the-street
And the lie of Authority
Whose buildings grope the sky:
There is no such thing as the State
And no one exists alone;
Hunger allows no choice
To the citizen or the police;
We must love one another or die.*

—W. H. Auden
“September 1, 1939.”

Editor's Note:

This is the sixth in an annual series of samplers intended to highlight work published by Scriptor Press. Independent publishing is vitally alive & well in the world, both in print & in cyberspace. The dependence writers & artists once had on central megaliths of power to promote & distribute their ideas & visions is being broken day by day. The freaks are finally finding each other & making new ways. Join us.


Raymond Souland Jr.
4/21/2005

Raymond Souland, Jr.
Editor & Publisher
Scriptor Press

Scriptor Press Sampler

Number 6 | 2004 Annual

G. C. DILLON

Edited by Raymond Soulard, Jr.
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THE CAT AND THE MOON	
by G. C. Dillon	5
Terrestrial Music (for Lisa Marie)	
by Raymond Soulard, Jr.	15
LETTER	
by Jim Burke III	34
POETRY	
by Judih Haggai	37
New Period (Excerpt)	
by Raymond Soulard, Jr.	50

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SCRIPTOR PRESS

The Cat and the Moon

*Queen and Huntress, chaste and fair,
Now the sun is laid to sleep,
Seated in thy silver chair,
State in wonted manner keep,
Hesperus entreats thy light,
Goddess, excellent and bright.*

Ben Jonson, 1609.

There is a tall tale told in every harbor of the land of dreams; it is repeated by swaggering seamen, sweating stevedores, and the odd harbormaster or two. It is said that if a man were ever to see the lofty spires of Shandaloor from the banks of Censwadd, the Great Southern Lake, he may then die a happy man. Perhaps it is true of women as well. One need only ask Z'Harizaam.

If one could.

Where the long Eastern canals empty into the Censwadd, and the great engineering feat of the Western Locks begins the long, meandering journey to the Cerenarian Sea, the city of Shandaloor hosts its grand bazaar. Shandaloor was an ancient city surrounded by crumbling walls—walls built not by men, nor by the other creatures that today make it their home. And it was many a being that slept within these aged castellations. From the cat-like M'rrr, to the tall and slender Elvish folk, to many of humanity's ethnic clans, all worked, hoped, and lived their dreams in the harbor-city.

Khym Te Yung, a visitor to Shandaloor and a merchant sailor from the fabled Eastern lands, sat in a silk covered kiosk. A long ponytail hung down his back and carefully trimmed mustachios fell about his chin. He wore a black jerkin, jodhpurs and a green vest. He dripped drops of yellowed beeswax onto the folds of parchments, and then placed his father's father's signet ring into the wax. After sealing the papers with his sign, he sat back in the kiosk. Khym called over an elderly brewster and bought

from the old woman one of the city's rich pumpkin ales. He sipped the piquant drink happily. The parchment contained the manifest for his ship, *Dawn Breaker*. She would be sailing home bloated with numerous crates of trillium.

His kiosk faced the afternoon sun and the locks, but Khym could hear the braying of the dracols in the canals. These large, green-hided reptiles were used to pull the barges of precious goods to the Censwadd. Gold, silver, and jasmine petals flowed down the canals from the great cities of Kurin, Lusnyr and Sassenach. There was another sound as well. It was the sound of chanting. Khym recognized the language. It was the ancient tongue of Northern barbarians who plundered Shandaloor a thousand years ago. They pillaged and then they stayed, supplanting the local magistrates, generals, and even the priests. Or in this case the acolytes of a hundred different temples in the city. These acolytes stopped flagellating themselves only long enough to intrude into Khym's kiosk. The sun was eclipsed by the coarse brown robes of these holy men.

"Our mistress wishes to have a word with you."

"So many messengers for one word. I grant her entry to these humble environs."

"High Priestess Shamma wishes to speak with you at the Temple of Murluk."

A High Priestess, mused Khym. The words of a high priestess could bring him gold or at the least silver.

Khym rose and strapped a leather baldric across his chest. Khym took his falchion from his cushion and hung it from the baldic, arranging the curved sword about his waist. He followed the acolytes. The temple and the fortress lay at the two ends of the city. The harbor and its bazaar rested between. The rich merchants built their mansions on the sloping hills. The M'rrr built their homes in the lowland, downwind of the canals and the musky stench of dracols and worse.

The acolytes paused when they reached the main boulevard. The satrap's army was on parade. Khym studied the soldiers; lancers, he noted. These men wore great helms and heavy cuirasses. Broad, short-bladed gladius swords hung from their armored waists. At the head of the column of marchers, a man rode a roan war-horse. The beast was draped in chain mail. The rider carried his plumed helmet under his left arm. His hair was blond, and a neat moustache and goatee ringed his lips.

Khym stared at the warrior. He was the perfect scion of his Northern barbarian forebears. A bastard sword with a gilded hilt hung from his leather belt.

A sedan chair followed the lancers. Temple eunuchs hauled at the long poles of the chair. A black-robed figure sat satiated upon the chair. The warrior wheeled upon his stallion and rode toward the chair. The figure, a woman, rose and extended her hand to the warrior. He took her hand and kissed it gently. She drew back her hand. The warrior then drew forth the long sword and held it up to the crowds about them. Sunlight beamed off the glistening weapon. The figure sat back on the chair and continued down the boulevard. Khym looked to his acolyte guides. They pressed forward, following the procession.

Khym looked about the Temple of Murluk. The waxiform hieroglyphics he beheld informed him this temple was far older than Murluk, the upstart Northern deity. These symbols were ancient urtext when his own people first began to draw clumsy pictographs. Khym stared transfixed by these strange sigils, and then he knew this was a temple sanctified to the one nameless goddess of the moon whom one may only cry out to but twice — once as one is born and again as one dies.

Khym was led into a small room off the vestibule of the temple. The High Priestess Shamma came into the room. She was the woman he had seen in the courtyard. Khym knew that mere appearance did not convey age, but his eyes still traced her features for some clue. He looked to her vermilion eyes so like a rabbit's orbs, and crow's feet and aquiline nose. Mostly, he noticed the stark white hair, as white as the ice flows of Kadath, and skin as pale as a ripe onion set upon a banquet table. He would not hazard a guess whether she stood as the High Priestess when the Northern barbarians stormed the castled city walls or if she has known less than twenty summers.

An acolyte brought in an earthen pot of burntbark tea. Growing up in his father's house, Khym had grown up learning the punctilio tea ceremonies of this people. Though ages ago, Khym was able to provide a facile facsimile. Shamma leaned back in her chair and took her tea in silence.

Only after her cup was emptied did she speak: "I have a cargo I wish you to carry."

“I prefer not to trade in icons or relics. They wreck havoc with the goodwill spells and blessings on *Dawn Breaker*. I do so hope you understand.”

“Not relics, nor icons. A person. I want you to transport a young woman, a temple concubine in this very congregation.”

“Am I to be a proselytizer in some great mission to save the sinners? I fear that I may be foremost amongst that population.” Khym smiled his widest smile. “I trust there will not be testimony on my poop deck. It might disturb my sailors.”

“I wish you to remove her. She is tainted and an abomination to Murluk.”

“Tainted. In what way? In her thoughts or theology?”

“She is tainted in her blood and in her heart.”

“Pity that it is nothing so sublime as heresy. So Murluk must be a jealous deity to find her so tainted. And this God has spoken onto you about travel arrangements. I have never been so honored before.”

“Or so flippant.”

“Debatable. One need only ask my father. But I will carry your tainted one, most virulent spawn of evil, but only of her own volition. Khym Te Yung is no slaver to be carrying persons like common chattel.”

“She will wish to go, I assure you.”

“And who is she?”

“Z’Harizaam.”

* * *

Khym met Z’Harizaam in the Old City. It was in the main bazaar not too distant from Khym’s own kiosk. The Old City rested next to the poor and crowded Clowers of the M’rrr. Khym knew the feline creatures well. He also knew their slashing weapons, great halberds with wide curving, scythe-like blades. He had stood many times before their tawny and sibilant assaults with only his father’s finest archers at his back.

Z’Harizaam had hair black as a starless night and eyes of midnight shade that hovered above her silken veil. She dressed in black robes with a vivid sash much like the garments sold amongst the Elves. The sash curved about her body, giving secret promises to what was underneath and hidden. Khym had not seen such a striking woman in a long time. Decades perhaps. Or centuries. He dismissed this errant thought with a casual wave of his hand.

“I am Khym Te Yung of *Dawn Breaker*. Am I correct to take it that you are Z’Harizaam, concubine in the temple consecrated to Murluk, most mighty God of the North?”

“I am she.”

Khym smiled. “It is Shamma, your very own High Priestess, who has sent me to you.”

Khym paused, awaiting her reaction.

“And she wishes you to do what once you have found me?”

“Shamma wishes me to take you on as a passenger and take you away from this most holy of cities.”

Her dark eyes flashed. “Why?”

“Ask her,” answered Khym. “Or ask Murluk. I am told He finds you tainted. By action, thought or nature, I know not.”

“It is not about religion. It is about a man.”

“I don’t care if it is about a woman. I pilot a ship upon the seas. That is all. I care more for pirates than politics, reefs than religion. I have a cabin by the quartermaster’s, which is dry and safe.”

“I don’t know why she bothers.” Z’Harizaam began to walk, her robes swishing about her. Khym followed slowly. “Vydassion is a captain in the satrap’s personal guard; he could never care for a crone like her.”

Khym saw again in his mind the meeting of Shamma with the blond warrior. Vydassion, he thought.

“People do strange things when they are in love.”

“What do you know of love?” she asked scornfully.

“I was in love once when the world was young and the mountains had not yet begun to rise. She was a princess in our land and I loved her with all my heart, and all my mind, and all of my soul that I could control. I trekked all across my father’s *han* to bring her the sweetest fruits, the choicest game, and the softest silks. I brought them all to her father’s fortress in a magnificent attempt to woo her. I rode into the keep, my stallion dressed in ostrich feathers, and a hundred llamas bearing my gifts.”

“Did she love you?”

“You cannot make someone love you with gifts, not even the singular gift of sincere kindness. So no, she did not love me in return. She loved only one of the lesser gods who lived on the newly forming crags. One day she left her village never to return. Up, up she climbed up to an eagle’s aerie, and from there she cried out to our beautiful young god. Was it months or merely a day that she did call out so? I cannot say; however, she

cried out for so long that her cry was all that was left of her. I still hear her voice in the mountains.”

“That’s an echo.”

“That is my princess!” Khym smiled.

“Is that the truth?” Z’Harizaam asked skeptically.

“Oftentimes a good lie is more honest than the truth,” Khym replied. “My offer of the cabin stands. Let us meet on the banks of the canal at the crest of the evening.”

* * *

Khym returned to his kiosk to await the night’s coming. He spoke an inhuman ‘word’ to the two small gargoyles that guarded the entry. Dismissed, they took wing and flew back to *Dawn Breaker*.

The brewster stood before the kiosk. Her hair was as grey as an old goose, but her eyebrows were as black as on her twenty-first year, whenever that day had been. A woolen shawl hung from her shoulders and her long skirt ended in tattered strips at her bare feet. The woman held more of the pumpkin ale, Khym was glad to see.

“You are brave to truck with Shamma and Z’Harizaam both. A brave man to meet both in a day’s span.” She held out the ale to Khym. “I thought only Vydassion to be so fearless.”

He fumbled in his purse for a few coppers. She stopped him. “No need. It is gratis for so valiant a man—or perhaps that is foolish.”

Khym took the offered stein. “I am Khym Te Yung of *Dawn Breaker*. And you?”

“I was called Jiada when I wore a younger woman’s face.”

Khym settled himself onto a cushion. He mused into the light brown drink a moment, then spoke. “And you are acquainted with the doings of this city. Know you facts or merely rumors?”

Jiada laughed, exposing a blackened toothless gap. “Facts travel on the good baker’s cart, but flavorful rumors fly like his bread’s aroma. I sate my belly with both. Which morsel are you seeking? The smell or the crust?”

“I would seek knowledge. The knowledge of Vydassion and Shamma. The knowledge of Vydassion and Z’Harizaam.” Khym paused, twisting his mustachios about his little finger a moment. “Z’Harizaam fears Shamma’s love for Vydassion, it seems. Or vice versa. And I find myself trapped within their triangle.”

“Shamma seeks love like a door-mouse; yet she seeks power like a lioness. And jealousy is the serpent at her throat. She fears her influence is slipping down a cataract. A cataract that is a concubine in her own temple. Z’Harizaam’s fear is more visceral. It is a young woman’s fancy. A thought tied too much to an ambitious man.”

“A lodestone has two poles; by which does Vydassion sail?”

“That is a question Shamma and Z’Harizaam must settle. After speaking with you, Z’Harizaam did not return to the temple. And Shamma has not been seen at the mid-day supplications.”

“In this city, words such as you have spoken are worthy of the axeman’s block or the inquisitor’s rack at the least.”

“I have told you my news. Have you anything to share with an old woman?” She drew her shawl about her head. “I do love the tales of Chu the Great Pirate. Do you know any I haven’t heard?”

“I would know the stories of Admiral Chu you have heard?” asked Khym.

“You strike me as one such as the pirate, and thusly would know of more recent adventures.”

“I am but a humble merchant with a falchion about my person. Admiral Chu was a great warrior armed with a long *katana* in one hand and short *seppuku* in the other. Chu sailed the Inland Sea a century ago. Surely he is dead or at least a wizened, old man sitting in his moon-gazing tower each night, a green tea or plum wine beside him.”

“Mayhap a warrior owes more to cunning than sharpened steel, good merchant,” Jiada said. “There are many who claim Chu to be the Emperor’s only son.”

“Many make claim to the missing heir. Such claims are as seashells washed up by the morning’s tide. You can hear many lies if you hold them up to your ear.”

“You speak with such decisiveness. Do you know the Eastern Empire’s court?”

“I have an ending to a tale you have not heard.”

“That I believe,” Jiada said.

* * *

The sun hung tired and orange in the sky as it set down for the night's approach, and the canal water blackened quickly as the darkness drew its first breath from great lake's mist. The canal gurgled like a drowning man as it emptied into the lake. Dracols cried out pitilessly to the moon, already majestic in the sky. Their voices seemed to spew sounds like a sleeping child to Khym's ears. His skiff sliced through the water effortlessly.

Khym pulled the boat onto the bank of the canal. Moonlight cast a luminous curtain upon the leaves of the surrounding trees. Z'Harizaam stood on the rocks lining the canal.

"I must say that I am surprised by your presence. From our earlier conversation, I feared I would have a solitary journey back to *Dawn Breaker*."

Z'Harizaam glanced about the wooded landscape. "I have decided to stay in Shandaloor."

"Then you have come all this way to inform me of this! Has your city no messengers, no street urchins who can carry a word?"

"I have come to reveal the truth." Her voice was loud, louder than needed to carry over the dracol's noise.

"Reveal it to whom?" asked Khym.

Z'Harizaam paused, looking expectantly to the woods. There was movement in the bushes. A figure came out of the darkness.

"Vydassion will not be coming." It was Shamma.

"What have you done to him," screamed Z'Harizaam, lunging for Shamma. Khym grabbed her arms, as she tried to claw the other woman's eyes.

"Nothing," replied Shamma. "Or nothing much. Just a simple sleeping potion."

Z'Harizaam broke free of Khym's grasp. "Vydassion will know the truth."

Turning back to Khym, she commanded: "You will tell him. You will tell him Shamma's plans, what she hired you to do."

"Your assignment will no longer be required," she told Khym and to Z'Harizaam she said, "I tried to be merciful and give you a chance for exile, but by your efforts to poison the captain against me, I am taking actions myself."

Shamma raised her arms. Upon her flesh were painted gyres and hieroglyphs: secret sigils. Z'Harizaam stepped back. Shamma chanted in a low voice. Z'Harizaam began speaking the protective spells of Murluk's order.

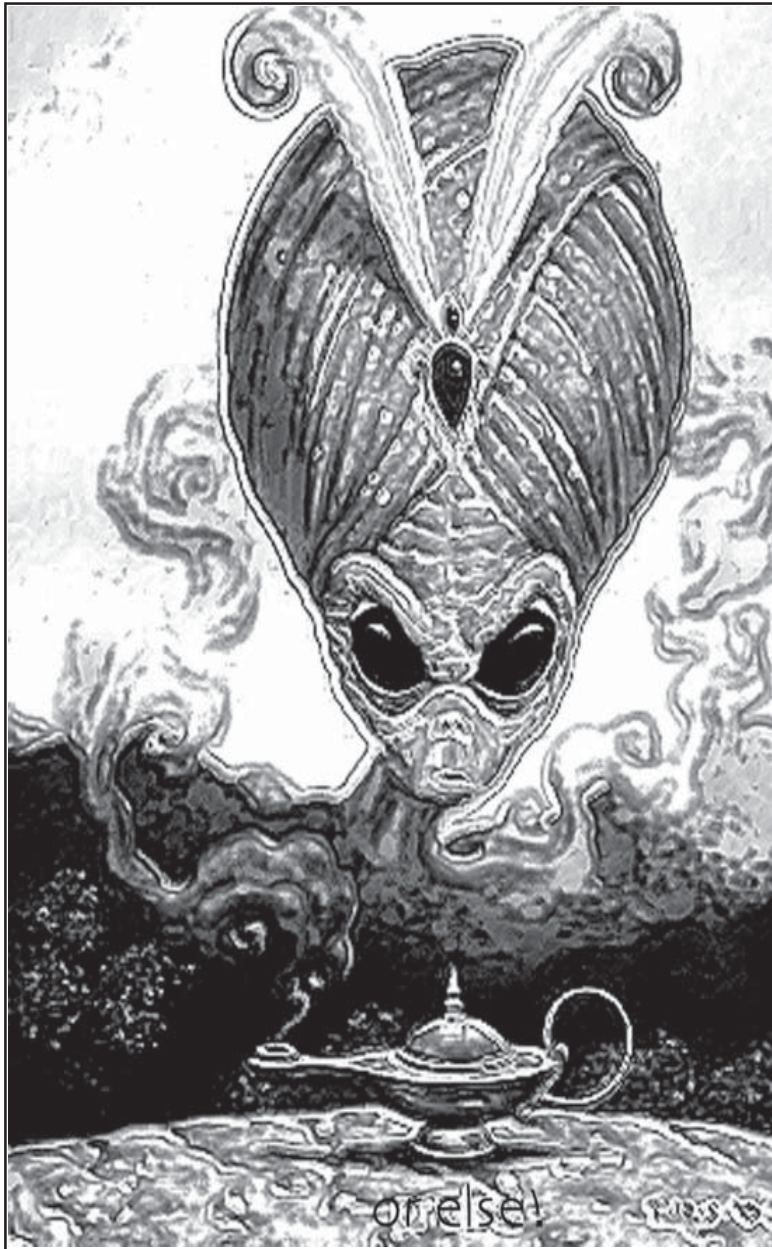
Khym drew his crescent blade. "Whatever you plan, stop it now," he ordered and stepped forward to enforce his command. He felt the air change

about him as he moved. He felt the eldritch forces rise, like the wind before a thunderstorm. He stopped, held within the bubble of magick as a fish is trapped in the Censwadd, unable to walk the streets of Shandaloor. Bound so, Khym could only watch the enfolding tableau of the two women.

Zephyr breezes jostled Z'Harizaam's hair and rays of the rhadamanthine moon suddenly shone like spears on the ground about her. Z'Harizaam slowly began to move in her own St. Vitas dance, swinging in rhythm with the waxing moon. Undulating, spiraling and wild, she danced. Khym could smell the heat from her body. Her arms flailed about. Her black hair whirled in the still air. Beads of salty sweat swept across her flesh. Shamma stepped closer, chanting louder, louder, nearly shouting her imprecations above the silence.

As Z'Harizaam danced faster and faster, Shamma looked more drained. Her face became flush and her movements were labored and slow. Suddenly it was over. Shamma fainted and Z'Harizaam fell to the ground—standing upon her four paws—a large black tiger transformed. The beast sniffed at the fallen form of her foe. Shamma lay still, her breathing shallow and pained. And then that also ceased.

The cat looked up to the luminous moon and roared on the banks of the Censwadd, in sight of the lofty spires of Shandaloor. Z'Harizaam turned and trod toward the Clowders of the M'rrr.



RAYMOND SOULARD, JR.

Terrestrial Music (for Lisa Marie)

*"Let the beauty we love be what we do.
There are hundreds of ways to kneel & kiss the ground."
—Jalaluddin Rumi*

i. Manifestation

Blue fancies stray through dawn's silken
quiet, love atwist with grief, a lowing
breeze, crumbling sighs. Fist, then fingers,
seek among dreams, now hold a fragment,
now possess a message. Follow today's sun into
the sky, clad with pen & faith. Resume. Go!

ii. Softly

Cry out, softly, til something, somewhere,
responds. Sweat every love with open hands,
raw want. Beg, chortle, no way out but through,
a path of nails, skies ever fierce, dreams
like trenches. Sleep on open ground under minty-
bright stars. Cry out. Loudly. Open hands.

Chimes, butterflies, rusting lillies—something
somewhere will respond. Life's countless
brawls, quick & slow, & what tempered light
may emerge from life's beatings. Become
a vessel patched with music & empathy. Thine
heart greater without, deeper within, abler for every mending.

iii. Wilderland

The water's rustling speaks your name.
Speaks mine own. Speaks what persists
between us. No binding ring. No fat quiver of miles.
Persistence. A fat drunken man watches the sun
set over the water. Hums & believes. Persistence.
Unpretty magick bent on enduring the harder years.

I love you. Thus truth poisons my heart & I speak.

What remains, a deeper glitter. What persists,
a fistly shine. Tapestries of silence wove for
walls receiving no beam. Hazel eyes near me
& I flinch. You are not real. This but a dream.

Another claims you. Cloudy laughter.

Just the waves tell most what to do.
Their merest song, a dominion's bedrock.
Their human trade, their finnish play.
Few afloat still remember: how deep they sail within.

Another claims you. You wish him well.

The water's rustling dims, a newly checked tongue.
What passes for knowing resumes its chuckling hurry.
Warriors plan, deny dreaming of elves.
Persistence. Whichever the river, whichever
the bed. Persistence. That last dream in the night,
teeth hardly loosed by the morning.

iv. Unassailable

A star, a fist, an unloved corner of history.
Our branches shine tonight but some exceeds
them still. Where our humility? Where our pity?

We live on tonight to love like a better wisdom.
We live on beneath our roots, beyond our leaves.
We live on to kneel, to dance. To kneel. To dance.

No fist between us, no knot, skin rathered to cloak.
Sunshine enough to blind & reveal. Text. Roaring.
Nothing less than everything to come beckons.

A star, a fist, a tremble where the songs cling together.
With trees to learn to sing again. Hands near
me quietly too. Soon easier to kneel, easier to dance.

We live on tonight pocked with secret knowing.
We live on tonight suddenly high on leaf & starshine.
We live on tonight perhaps some study our writhing's example.

Nothing divides, the night breathes us back & forth.
Even sunshine slows us as many count toward one.
Nothing bright with colors. Nothing blue with music.

Nothing brings a center, floating, ever nearer where truths abound.

v. Undulation

The world rough & round, a quaking of movement
& pain. A rocking cage through which music
shoots, flares, aches, frees what it can,
comforts the rest.

I think of wife & daughter, loosed from time,
walking with them in a talking forest,
one bids me chase, the other bids me run.

Returned here, wherever, warm still, I resume to
poking in darkness for some staying essence,
an oak leaf perhaps, your moan, your laugh,
a within beast bowed, a fist uncurled. Sugar. Haven.

The world rough & round, countless paths of
sea & dirt. Legs hurry. Fins splash. Feathers
cut. Here, wherever, there, where you glow
womanly fine, something upholds all.

Truths sweep past, mistaken often for something useless.

vi. Her Aura

Half moon. Terrestrial music leaves no
heart unchanged. Wind traces out the notes,
blood gives them trajectory. Half moon.

Tonight my dreams will be a heap of
gleaming pebbles. A rumble of blinking chants.
A bouquet for muse & her pilgrim. Under half moon.

vii. Ceaseless

Whole moon. The light covers you in
my dream's eye & I think: Worship?
Possession? No. Something more willow.

Deeper unending. You dance nude with
the light while I sleep. Whole moon.
Tides of love. Hazel eyes swish my cheek.

viii. Mint Rhapsody

The world exists beyond contusion. Beyond lesson.
Beyond what's missing. Beyond what's music.

The world exists in spaces untouched & those
abused. An unseen glance at evening's wane.
Words scattered across a golden field. Honey & fruit.

The world exists beneath soil & stars. Leaves
tossing toward freedom, the light devolving in
spatters. Memories dapple the grass. Hungers
arise without names.

The world exists & I love you. Another confession.
Burn it. Make another. Again chasing angels
we again near collision. Dreams braid our nearing
world. A forest of magicks, tall skies of fecund
spells. Songs for a bed unlaid & its laughter.

The world exists in its most denying shadows &
troughs. In moments looking past your obvious
smile. When you confuse me with a history's
foulness & fist. When the soul we share forgets
its power, its will to joy & abandon. The world exists
& I love you. See how we near. Feel what we are.

ix. Desert Wish

An urge to stray beyond mourning, burn what remains, gestate anew. Bubble & scatter among tunnels deeper within. Everything passes, touch twice & gone. An urge to hollow out the sky, drink her waning elixir. Flatten cities & try something else. Kiss absent lips with desire's fingertips.

x. Incandescent

A pen sought a butterfly with words of shivering air. Sought with words candy & true, sought to build her a song of woods & waves, promises to sink soil & hold, know her secrets without saying, without taking them away.

The pen kept on writing: how to live in this world? Nights answered: harm noone. Nights answered: serve her. Nights answered: be the flaming thing you are. Be high. Be higher. Dance til nothing's left.

Love rightly. Love noisily. Make an art of your kiss. Brightly, brightly, wrote the pen, no plans, just a wish. The butterfly neared, & still nearer. The butterfly filled a field, & now fills the world. How to live in this world? Build it well. Give it love.

xi. Nothing

Dance til nothing's left. Maraud the night. See her rise in your sky. Accept this praise.

A path burns before you. Walk it with cold steady steps.

Dance til a flicker settles atop your head, maybe it sings, maybe it keeps you awhile.

Her storm gathers you wearing a gown of dust.

Dance til your icons & pathway rise together, the sparkles & substance maybe suggest a world.

See her rise in your sky. Wish to praise & know her. Climb her pattern. Try her songs.

Dance til everything matters. Then release. Again. Nothing's left: try her songs. Nothing's left: see her rise.

xii. Homeless

Now just a wish for a bed of simple
dreams after a deep bowl of heat.
Now just hands wanting to do more than
cower & defend.
Now just a creature too long among stones
& lies.

Beloved, turn my way with your rags &
prayers.
Beloved, see this magick I bear in
clean water & soft words.
Beloved, submit finally to the freedom
which watches about you.

Crawl if you cannot walk. If you cannot
move: just ask, I will bear you.

xiii. Sinking

Little has moved since our last
rambunctious hour. No new counsel
from leaf or dream.

Steps offer no third way. Pursue or
desist. Things light & laughing in
this world still press, elude.

Our next hour nears, behold its
powerful tread. We know each other
better than the world. Right now

this wears like a curse. Pursue, or desist?

xiv. Rising

I met a city man who'd fallen & bled. Now he
was laughing. Muddy night sky. I'd been
biking & praising Art. His temple bled.
It dripped. He smiled & tried to explain.
He smiled deeper & stopped trying. I thought
of you after & sang aloud, biking,
through my open heart.

I met a man with an inquiring jingle.
I'd been hoping not to crash. He took
my coins & nearly looked at me. I said at least
neither of us is bleeding. He nodded &
said amen.

The police surround everything. The king
touches his chest. The preacher diverts
with a smile. I biked til I met a wall
of words. Now walking, now crawling. Now
words, now better. A cafe crowd drinks
coffee & sings happy birthday.

You rise again within me. Choiceless, happy, I pursue.

xv. Conjuraton

I begin to sing a different song, to entice
& woo you from the within we share. Half-
light & lingual magick. Conjuraton. Release.
Sliding along the hum of the hidden universe.
Lap at your hair with a wind from my afar.
Conjuraton. Romance of a roused & muscular
love. Dream of the moon: slowly. I receive
you with warm red oils & teasing insistent chords.
This is what we do, are, can be. Squeal. Scream.
Approach yourself again, beginning on the day we
crossed, the moment our love blew up. Kiss the moon.
Receive me anew. Conjuraton. Closer to sane.

xvi. Residua

Approach yourself again, beginning on the day
we missed, the moment your love grew off.
There. That moment like a rat or a roach,
first of a countless. Now. Speak a spell, loudly,
& see that moment throttle green & go. Speak
again, a few stumbling words of love laced in
freedom. Look. The sun is shining. You made it.

xvii. Damage

Now awake. A dream still looped in your
curls, keep it, shhh! keep it. A glint in
hazel eyes your locket, mull it, sing to it,
touch its fur. Its feathers. Its skin. Sing
to it, slip it when fearful between your breasts,
pour candle wax over it. A burn. A memory.
“Nothing really. Nothing.” The wind knows better.
Each noticing tree as well. Shhh! Comfort
this tiny world of its woes. With casual fingers
& giggling hums, comfort it til night’s crown
sits upon you again.

Later awake. Later entice this dream further into morning.

xviii. Weightless

To refrain & await you. To walk steadily
in the meanwhile. To sniff & nudge a world
yet to be. To guard, to dance by its laws.

New songs inside an egg’s dreaming. What dreams
ponder, & summon when hopeful.

xix. Nothing Less

Singing costs it all. Beasts feed at my
despair, their offer of help.

My mate tangles in a dream neither
day's nor night's—
My mate wonders at how tightly I still
hold her within & beyond—
My mate wonders. Sleeps in murmuring
darkness—

She feels like the universe's first child,
blinking in a bright field of spells.

Something between beasts & the greatest moon,
perhaps told more bluntly by the trees'
blaring wind. I don't know. I sing.
I say I love you. It costs everything.

The beasts feed. I don't know. I sing.

I dream my mate is stirring. She drifts,
& breathes my touch.

xx. Haven

She rides along the train & smiles.
Dig a blue mountain passing by. Scoop
the puffy sun, really do. Trees dark &
thoughts flaxen. This is what it's like
when a song opens up again, returns.
Within bubbly with hope. Love me. You still do.

xxi. Full Moon Over Willow

Our dream is a recurring insistence,
leaves & petals, dawn & lightning.
Our dream swoops with song & moon.

Our dream is high above, deep below.

Our dream resembles a fist, tall
grass, a blank hungry canvas.

Our dream is a thrashing press
against our many hands, our
shared heart, a mean throbbing,
a soft ticking, denial & futility
a dingy fuel, call it love, sketch
it like a red balloon, on & on it strides.

Our dream is patient as a nocturnal
prowl for living meat & giving loins.

You rule me with a chime of laughter,
several furious words, a lingering further
in than blood. I rule you with hard songs
speckling pages. Our dream concedes nothing.

High above, deep below, butterflies
without, claws within. A red balloon,
a noisy bothersome thing. Patience.

Our dream pricks the moonlight,
licks its shine, probes its worth.

Our dream sleeps between us, keeps
us flicking & wiggling, builds a world
from the starlight, sings of ecstasies nearing.

xxii. Fidelity

I think some call it bright faith.
A hunger becomes a path, a hurrying
measured in songs. Fidelity. What
clings, what sinks in, what is discovered
there already. A leap no longer dream,
no longer moan. Fidelity. A leap. She knows
my bright faith & upholds me.

xxiii. Bright Faith

Fidelity more a taste than a feeling.
Something low, between the veins, a breath,
several, where is it? Where did it go?

Yonder. You'll see it. Past kiosks & signage,
vendors for & against. Yonder. You'll
see it. Wait. Let the crowds pass.

Wait. Leaves stir. Always with you.

Ride on.

xxiv. Juniper

Sometimes another nears. Laughter
resembling us. Aloft awhile. Another
moment, & gone. We persist, nothing
more.

The phone rings, you listen. Rings,
I wait. Rings, we long. The worlds breathes
& burns slowly.

I was with your juniper. It tells me
what you think, who you are. Counsels
me simply: persist.

Your voice bright in my mind, knowing
mine bobbles too in yours, jitters.
Others speak of us like a beast they fear.
A pressure they witness & desire.

We persist, nothing more. Nobody else.
The phone cringes between rings.

xxv. Unto

Build a life toward the castle of trees we dreamed,
morning sunlight knocks & whispers, rings of kisses
moving quickly & slowly. In waking I'll moan toward
you. Seized, you'll smile & preen. Beauty shines for
its master ever newly. Rawly. Build this life from
surf & mushrooms. Distance & drive.

Scars powerful still but abstracting like myths,
corrode lessly. Pen at rest, cathedral of embrace,
I'll study your heart. Learn its liquid noise.
Castle of trees to come, dapples childly days,
names of things yet unpossessed, heave &
flow of dawns spent twined.

In waking I'll writhe & bite, kick & grasp.
Bitten, you'll laugh too. Desire triggers its
own laws. Faith loosens the fetters. Defended,
you'll finally believe. Castle of trees,
the way through clear at last. Til then, something
persists, call it love. Love will blow up with joy.

xxvi. Underworld

Light flares across the dead sky,
rocket fast, honey slow, then gone again.
Music grumbles up, now strange, now sweet,
now promising, but again an inner claw
calls for silence.

Better to thrash with hope—blood-blind & cringing—
dash for the next rock—, or mock the sacred
within & without—nights open-eyed & counting—
body numb as a drowned land's crown?

I dream of you. You are surrounded by
the spikes you have wrought. I am through
calling, no more calling. Turned toward you, then
away, I listen.

xxvii. Scorch

Let the crowds pass. What remains? A lock
of hair, an old letter. A giggling photograph,
a scrawl about fidelity. Close the curtains.
Sleeping cat on the bed. The radio's silence.
The phone rings. Ask: what remains? Days
pending conjure in the privatest shadows.

xxviii. Dispossession

Always with you. Days accelerate, I fall
with them, neon passages through autumn
leaf corridors. Kings wager coolly the greed
& fear they see around them. Stars rain
forever on a cosmos sung from nothing.
Afar from me, perhaps you laugh. My cup

trembles. What awaits? Always with you.
Friction sparks the gap: a bridge? a wall?
Do you still sway with me toward magick
conjured from chimes & butterflies?
I keep asking the passing nights:
Another world is possible, but who have

you become? I keep pitching into the
music. I keep transmuting my despair
& love to song. Keep radiating from
my night's long twisting heat. Seeking in
coming days what rewards the mystery bears.
Always with you. Faith growing into something.

xxix. Ministration

Persistence. Flames in airless vaults,
a press forward & a nevertheless, the very
darkling skin above us lit with possibilities,

persistence. Suddenly you listen. Worlds
fall away, you listen. Persistence, breathing
quickly, you listen. What matters anything
when a wished hand remains afar?
Listen, try a new way.

Another moment passes. Hunger, uncertainty.
Persistence wears a bright skirt, calls with
a quick smile for a touch. Something like
petals, feathers. O, persistence. A cement
bench, near a landscape freckled by mansions,

traffic warped & went. Someone with a child
hurries by, singing. My face in the moonlight
cascades your vision. We continue fruiting.

xxx. Radiance

Terrestrial music leaves no heart
unchanged. Chimes blow across the night
touching singers, oaks & slaves. Persistence
sometimes bursts for the light within
to crackle brighter. I leave a candle at
your door, feather in its wax. A few words

murmured in your dreams. Wonder over them til
later I explain.

JIM BURKE III

Editor's Note: The following is the twenty-second in an ongoing series derived from the correspondence between Jim Burke III and myself, begun in 1992, and in the spirit of the more enthused letter-writing tradition of yesteryear.

MDC Reservoir
West Hartford, Connecticut
Sept 1, 2004

Dear Ray,

I know it must have been mentally and emotionally draining coming back here to move your stuff and deal with everything else at the same time (of course beside physically). I'm glad you're exploring the Eastern world. This is a whole side of art that our culture cannot begin to grasp, mostly I think because their nuances are not studied on an individual basis. I remember writing haikus in Junior English in high school. It is an art form that I have enjoyed and comes to me "naturally":

*Clouds veer in motion
driven endlessly from wind
as a timeless gift*

Pete Townshend has stated that there is not enough time in the day to do all that one wants. I have found this to be true, unless I surrender to the breath of the moment. This is one of the fundamentals of Buddhism and can be applied, I think, to Hinduism as well. God and Art and Truth are more than just intertwined, they are one and the same—on the same philosophical



"Ravenna Park" by RS/KDK

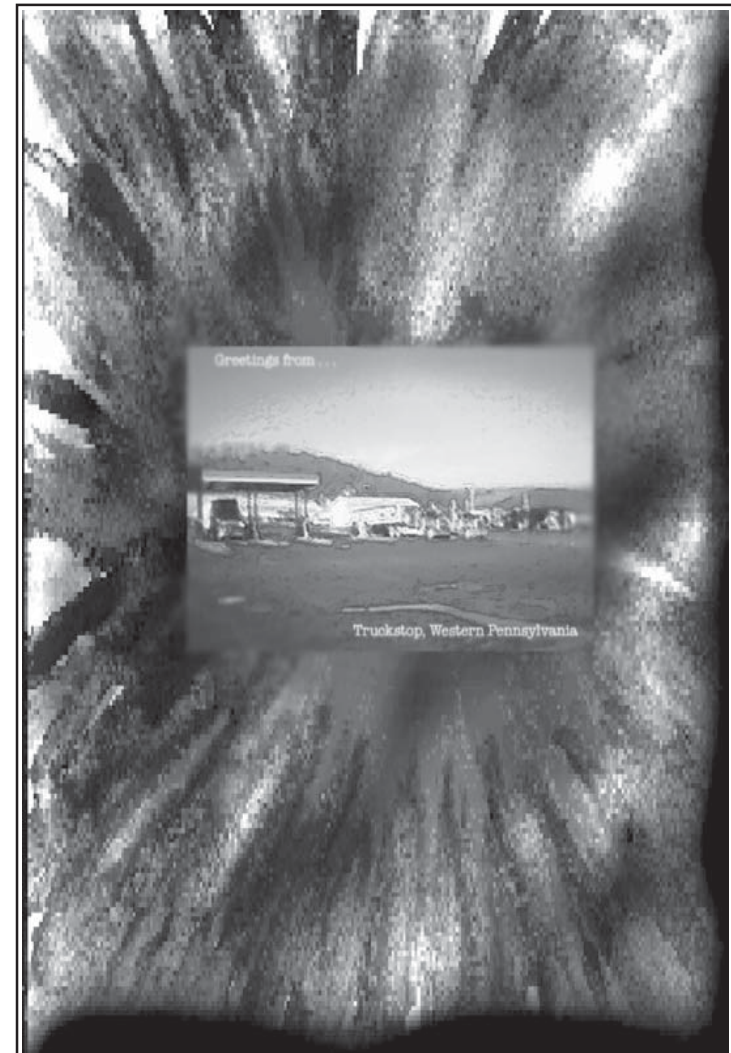
level. You have been writing for 30 or so years and I have been playing and singing for 30 years. We have paid our dues. I am very happy you are where you want to be. I know Ct. is not my true calling. Maybe I should have stayed on the road? I have no regrets though. I have experienced more in fifty years than most people from my background (upbringing) have in several lifetimes. My experience certainly transcends what we are taught to believe, and what we are taught that we can choose to believe. This is a point that needs to be considered, in my opinion.

The population that we live in are given a choice as to what to believe, but only with yes or no. Of course “maybe” can be applied to everyday situations, but metaphysically it is not of the question. Consider the statement “there is a Supreme Being.” Since no one can answer this yes or no (because no one can define what a “Supreme Being” entails), the only logical alternative is the third possibility—*but not a “maybe”!* This is where the divergence takes place. The third possibility must involve existence outside of our perceived reality. Our reality is totally individually subjective and therefore cannot exist from moment to moment for anyone other than that individual. However, if our educational leaders allowed this thinking to take place freely and manifest, people would open their minds to ideas and concepts outside of the normal choices given to them, on an everyday basis. “Maybe” would no longer need to exist, although it could. Our thinking process would include *yes*, *no* [and] *absolute!* There would be no doubt that the third alternative is the solution to all thought. Art and Truth and God would be final, unwavering and absolute.

Those of us who pursue the alternative are actually living it, so if it doesn't seem like you can continue, take heart. It is not because it has all been done before, but rather because there is so much to be done. The artist indeed lives outside the mainstream reality and contemplates mysteries not bounded by time, space, or yes and no. From grade one, people are told what they can learn, how to learn it, and what it can be applied to. I followed those lines

for the first 18 years of my life. I have learned from that experience. Keep thinking beyond yes or no. This is where I am at this moment!

Love & Love
JBH



JUDIH HAGGAI

Watching You Cling

mouth sucking cling
wrapped around her ghost
watching you hang on
i sing a fading song

words burst over symbols
lake overflows with time
it's over, seasons turn
the melody of yesterday

once it rained broccoli salad
gathered in the morning dew
sprouts of chickory
garnished your breakfast tray

but now that days have walked away
the harvest is poor,
the noise of tomorrow crashes through
as you aimlessly sift through time

In My Last Life

as an eagle
in my last life
i watched the details
of probe and swoop

i called to you
as miles melted into clouds
i turned to the flutter of wings

my heart knew one intent
as a unit of strength
a protector of the weak

it was done, i did all
as requested, as fulfilled
impeccable action

my last life was dedicated
and sanctified, as native
lore upheld
as blessed a life as eagles share
as above, so below
i fell into infinity
and reappeared as this

my last life
swirls within
as i direct my gaze to you

Bitching Lessons

Teach me how to exhale poison
flush out horrific veins
factory of venom
generating helem (shock)
too much, too long
visions burst with arm, leg overtures
louder than decibels can take
i quake beneath the faultline
shaking with rage

i, a cotton ball of purity
absorb the rattler's bite
swallowing so others might be spared
till one day hits us all
smacks us in the artery
of trust
writhing where it hurts
God!
when was it we believed?

Was Ancient Sumeria to blame
Should Atlantis have submerged us all?
As i chew my tail
and moult my innocence
teach me to spit out the crimes
i've eaten for three hundred years

this belly's due for birth
and the DNA ain't easy

Pain Soup and Serenade

Ladle lazy to stir
pain soup and serenade
hope and struggle marinade
pour on hot steamed days

Slow line, trays in hand
dishing out the evening news
move on, get it while it lasts
herbal tidbits in fresh reversal

People, eat your fill
There's more, don't you know it,
digestible bites, bottomless dish
'Fragranced tomorrows,' whispers dessert

Inevitable Halva Sneaks Between Pages

As notion of poetry slams out
room shaken time warp
lost snapshots of combusted sighs
an inevitable craving for halva
sneaks between pages
offers relief to barefoot nostalgia

Once upon a sunset in Greece
began the ode better left alone

And dylan strums bouzouki
grunting a guttural carnation
re-view, re-wind, re-turn

Papyrus and stylus signal i'm dreaming
How cruel to be reminded
as halva sneaks between pages
and the crush of hope sings in the night

Q Inspired Truth

It's a sad day
at saturday matinee
when boys change to dogs
and rings get left behind
and the popcorn disappears
before the final intermission

A stinking bad day
at bible class for sinners
when teacher spits blood
and kids flirt with pentangles
dating satan and slicing angels
camouflaged by Moses jokes

A rip-off hell-hole day
as dreams revolve round escape
when nights seethe poison
and demons stir gangrened toes
snickering no return
yet back they come tonight

Listen to the Jasmine

as sundown sings its low notes
we listen to the jasmine
coffee gentle with cardamon
fingers stroking twilight

a pause to sip the earth evolving
treetops told to meteors
neptune nudging nearer
our feet breathe the cosmic hush

Day Collaged Akilter

odd, how steel plates melt at freezing point
shatter like last night
as i hold too loose, toulouse!
find another way to speak
language cringes at backward tongues

meaning to share a vision
the day collaged akilter
askew, ask you? know what i mean?

gone like my favorite song
replay never long enough
what i want to say—
let's move on

So Good to Hear your Voice

I love hearing
your screams, laughter,
cries
so good to hear
the bullshit, the trauma
the joy

I love listening
to the jokes, the illusions
the falling through the ice
the sound of hair pulling
shoulder bending
knee cracking

Your voice filled sadness
tears choked back
long distance static
short distant yearn
a kiss pressed against an overseas rate

So good to share a half-baked continent
as soya soaks in curry
with garlic chopped so thin
and lunch turns into dinnertime
atlantic heaves a frozen tide

So good to hear your voice
amplified heart encounter
intimate DNA banter

Dedicated to a man I love

You've left me again
with a thousand smiles

how I ache once more
(is it true you're gone?)
so short this time
such brief unfoldings

you've left

with eyes
to launch
a thousand heart waves

aura traced
kiss en route
towards destiny

my adoration
our shalom
smile steeped
in a thousand tears

It's True

it's true
you know it
not one more word
required

colours caught it
it's true
you know it
not one more shade
inspired

feelings wrenched
colours caught
it's true
you know it
not one more cry
desired

Lone Hiker

lone hiker
boots untied, muddy pillow
birds swoop, rocks roll
never alone
night's ensemble

stretching into sleep
never alone
dreams of berries
tossed acorns, squirrels stash
as winter tunes her bass

New Period (excerpt)

I see through David Time's eyes a clearing surrounded by thick woods near the Cornish Phalanx 1968 see through Ray Soulard Jr.'s eyes the packed bandroom of Luna T's Cafe Noisy Children on stage hurling fireballs of music at the crowd.

"Time!" I yell with his mouth. "We're through the membrane! We're both in Cornish 1968 & Hartford 1998!"

"More than that. We've commingled. Same mouth, same body."

"What do we do?"

"Do we restore the membrane?"

"No."

"That's not how it has to be this time"

I agree with I that we will allow the two places to commingle as Time & Soulard have, even as he & I agree to loose each other. It still feels like staring at one's reflection in the mirror & seeing the other's face. Worse than that.

"Nobody else notices."

"We're holding them back. We can do that for now."

Noisy Children, as Soulard/Time see them, are rocking hard at one end of the open field, in a bowl of sorts, hills around them on three sides.

"Ampitheatre."

Down the other end of the open field, the Phalanx buildings are visible. Time's friends Hartlee, Cohn, Creamy Sue, & Rachel-Nicole are dancing nude, holding hands, in a circle.

Now what?

I look at Time. "Rebecca is the key. That's what I've learned."


We/I bring Rebecca over to us, enable her consciousness to perceive the full truth of this infinite point in infinity.

She separates us full, first thing. It's OK; everything holds.

WITHIN'S WITHIN: SCENES
FROM THE PSYCHEDELIC
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David smiles. "Yes. That's right."
Rebecca looks up at me.
"You're the key. David & I did this much. We need you now."
Rebecca leans into me heavily. I embrace her lightly. Wife-to-be. Key. She says nothing. Nothing new happens. No time passes. She stands back. "OK," she announces.

"Why can't we watch the Bruins' game?"
"Yah, I got money on it!"
"This used to be a good bar. Now it's a drug joint."
Mr. Bob stares down his clientele. "Come or go, gentlemen. You decide."
"Why can't you put sports on TV?"
"Hell, I'd settle for the impeachment hearings!"
"We don't like this crazy stuff about infinity. We want regular programs!"
"Like 'Cops'!"
"And hockey!"
"Yah, & something with decent tits for once!"
"And hockey!"
"How about ESPN!"
"CNN!"
"MTV!"
"VH1!"
"Even Bravo?" Mr. Bob asks.
The joint shudders with disgust.
Mr. Bob grimaces & turns back to the TV.
Rebecca's looking at me. "I'm going to do this & then it will be done."

I wait, unknowing.
She says, "My dad & Franny married July 26, 1998, 30 years after his brother Mickey died. He brought Franny back from the dead."
She looks at her dad who's singing "Love Reign O'er Me" & she sez "You followed Mickey over the edge of that hayloft & spent 30 years trying to find him. You brought him back. Or at least the love you saved for him. So now you have Franny."

She's limp against me now. "It's why he can let me marry you, Ray. I don't have to hold Mickey's place anymore. He's got Franny. Not equality but, um—"

"Equivalence," I say. My bride in my arms.
"But that doesn't solve it," I add. "Because those two days fell into each other & a lot of things happened. I couldn't tell it in 'Blue Period.' I wasn't ready. I didn't know how. I don't even know if I do now."

"You do," whispers Rebecca. Humming love to me.
"It was a confluence of things. I keep trying to begin the telling. It's very hard."

Rebecca steps back to look up at me. Shorter than me by nearly a foot. Younger than me by nearly 17 years. Her face young & beautiful, eyes a deep bright blue. I have never been quite alone since she & I first kissed.

"Should I call Godd the little pink bear? I can if you want me to, Ray."

"No. We don't need to. I mean, you painted this Ampitheatre we're in with Goddpink. It's all here for us. Everything we need."

"What do we do then?"

David Time is returned to his friends, no longer aware of me or Rebecca or the Ampitheatre. Noisy Children are playing joyfully, celebrating Rich & Franny's wedding. In another corner of the field Suzann Valentine lies nude in her studio apartment bed, sipping a tumbler of orange juice laced with 10 hits of LSD, maybe more. Eyes closed, ready.

Rebecca's still with me. We sit in the grass, settling in the middle of all these summoned realities.

"I need your help, Reb."

"OK. Anything."

I summon up & hand her an artpad & a box of sharpened pencils. "Draw me. Watch what I do. Help me when I flail. Draw into my weakness & strengthen me. Like I was telling you before: you can influence me, you can lock yourself into me & affect me some. Can you do this?"

She nods. Little conviction. This is excruciating for her.

"You're wondering what happens if you stumble?"

Nods.

Look up to the top of the hill. A large benign figure is tuning his guitar, getting ready. Jim Reality III blue-eyed mystic guitarist brother-friend.

"Listen to him," I say. "He won't let you fall. He'll support you supporting me."

"Um, what about him? What if—?"

"He's upheld by the truth. He knows the truth, Rebbly.

When he plays he reveals the truth. He won't go down. You can trust him."

She nods. She's 18 years old but looks about 7. She's tired. She wants to marry me & take care of me & take care of her dad & Franny & all the rest. Love, not metaphysics. Art, not mysticism.

OK.

I lay her back on the grass. I surround us with bonfire. We're now floating upon ether, upheld by will alone. Above us a fullmoon hole in the sky.

We move tightly into each other. Eyes blinking quiet lashes of notes. Mouths kissing within's within. Her long brown hair damp swirling around my neck.

Her breasts unwrapped, fill with my blood. I can't have her fearing over me anymore. Her breasts continue to fill with my blood, grow heavy & sensitive to my touch. Her dusky blue eyes close tightly & she breathes harder. I kiss her breasts softly, alternating, & she moans. I can do this. This is what's necessary. I leave my mouth on each of her nipples, on her mouth, my tongue sliding inside her ear, along the muscles of her neck. My mouth furthers its assault by spreading along the small of her back stretching to lick between her buttocks. Have covered with my lips, mouth & tongue, she.

I'm nowhere near done. My big hands take her smaller ones & we squeeze. I give her enough of my strength to create a balance between us. Then I press her hard. "Squeeze my hands! Harder! Keep me! Keep me always!" Our bones begin to give way, to fracture, but not enough to disintegrate. OK. My mouths lick suck kiss harder—but still not enough so I mount her, spread her thighs impossibly wide I become triple-cocked to fill her pussy, her ass, & her mouth.

"Squeeze my hands! Harder! Keep me! Keep me always!"

What's left of me bursts into her womb grows within her bonfire, fullmoon, bed of ether. We are lighting up, we are starburst, our hands finally are disintegrating into each other, bone, blood, muscle orgasm supernova, sunshine daydream, Rebecca & I are covered in each other, there is no way to sort us out ever again. We are covered with each other's contusions. We are I are we are I

eventually we are back in the Ampitheatre & Rebecca is in my lap kissing my cheeks & smiling, laughing.

"We're married now, aren't we, Ray?"

I nod.

"Now we'll always be together, no matter what?"

"Yes."

"Thank you."

For awhile I rock her & say nothing. She is happy. She is calm. She & I are undifferentiated. Now we can work on the rest of the universe.

Rebecca doesn't want the ether floor beneath us displaced, nor the bonfire walls around us, nor the fullmoon hole above us. She consents to sliding slowly, deliciously, off my lap, settling, jitteringly, between my legs with her artpad & pencils.

"You have to talk to me while I draw you."

"I do?"

"Yes. It will help me. OK?"

"So I begin talking to Rebecca even as I am writing the whole of this scene on paper. I am more shaken by all of this than I'd supposed. I have to be good enough for this, Rebecca. There's no other reason to write like this than it's the only way one can. It being the only way, it has to be done without hesitation or safety net. Doubt & fear have to be set on fire with the kindling soul provides. Doubt, immolate, write onward."

Rebecca is working from a basic design of a crown. A simple crown with six points. The crown shifts perspective on the page slightly, perhaps blessed with the touch of Goddpink.

"Perhaps," remarks herself. She & I have borderless skin where we touch. This is what it's like being married?

"You're not talking!" she frets.

"Why a crown?"

"Your name means king."

"Well, sort of."

"It doesn't?"

"It means 'wise protector.' In French it means king but it's spelled differently."

"Oh."

"Rebecca, there's French blood in me. But I'm no king."

But the crown isn't you exactly."

"What is it?"

"It's your art. All this. You'll see."

"So I quiet down & watch her draw. My attention is distracted by her long brown hair, soft, thick, & I find myself wanting to look at her darkblue eyes too, their deep intensity, their creating coolness, their evening sweetness, & I find myself somehow sated, but how? I find myself become part of her become part of me & as my hand moves its black pen across white page my hand sketches with pencil on artpad sheet our work, sprung from wed but still-separate roots sunk into the infinite ether below us melds us in the bonfire now smoking us without & within & somewhere above us we extend tendril branches various & eternal up toward into & through fullmoon hole beyond tick-tock & clip-clop—"

Now calmer, now renewed & reminded & reinvented I return my attention to the crown & see that it resembles the Ampitheatre & each of its points is tipped with one of the several situations under scrutiny here.

"I see" I say aloud to avoid further scoldings. "This picture is locking into my story & this space/time conundrum we are dealing with." I quiet. Wait.

"Yes" Rebecca says after a long time.

"We need to steer into the points."

"All at once?"

"I'm not sure."

Rebecca flips her pad to a new page. She takes a new pencil & dips it into a tiny vial of Goddpink.

"I need to draw many-dimensionally now," she explains. She explains no further when she pulls me into the page & now we stand, looking more like ourselves, on, in, a dab of Goddpink in the middle of an otherwise blank page.

That's the wife. crazier than me sometimes.

She's laughing & pulling me around the page, itself a fairly flat surface, like a short-cropped lawn of grass. Except Rebecca's using the Goddpink & our motion to fill it up. I'm not sure with what.

"Rebby?"

"Yes?"

"What are we drawing?"

"You want to do this all at once, right? All these, um, situations?"

"Yes."

"Well, we're inside my art inside your art so we're getting to where nothing will stop us"

"We're not there yet?"

"No. We need Jim Reality's music."

"OK. Sure"

"It's this way. Come on!" I feel a simulacra of the Ampitheatre coalescing behind us as we begin to climb what is now a hill toward who appears to be Jim Reality at the top, playing his guitar furiously.

"Hi, Jim!" Rebecca says brightly.

Jim's eyes are closed, his face blissed out. But his music talks to us, very friendly & relaxed.

"Hi, Rebecca. Hey, Ray."

"Hey, Jim."

"Ray & I are married, Jim! Just a little while ago."

"Wow. That's great. I knew you'd find a good woman, Ray."

"Jim," I say slowly, "Do you understand that we're with you inside your music inside Rebecca's art inside my writing?"

"Of course."

I look at Rebecca. "OK, wife, what's next?" I wonder: how much of this is acid & how much is just plain me?

Rebecca settles me down near Jim & then sits between us, leaning against me a little.

“OK” sez she, smiling.

“OK” I respond.

Jim keeps playing. Penny Lane. Very strange.

Suzanne Valentine lay nude on her bed in her one-room apartment on Haight Street, or thereabouts.

Delicious & sad, she was. But deciding she would try this thing at last. If she could reach David, if only for a moment, say
iloveyoui'msorrycomebacki'mstupidwithoutyouifellinlovewithyou&i'm
notdoingagoodjobwithoutyouherei'mlosingmypepperyoudamnedpoetwhatkindoftalkisthat?

Pint glass of LSD-25-laced-doused-
filledorangejuicevitaminC liquid sun mixed with liquid Godd did
that make it liquid holy spirit? Ha ha. Your kind wilt slowly in the
Tenderloin if they don't watch it.

Anyway, cheers. Cheers, David. Cheers, poor Hashbury.
Poor Golden Gate Park. Cheers, 1960s. You don't need the
Tenderloin. Your wilt is obvious.

She drank long & hard & thoroughly of her drink.
Delicious. Mother Nature gives Owsley the old handjob.

Someone in her building is playing *Sargeant Pepper* again.
Poor Lennon. He drinks glass after glass of Owsley too. Hold the
OJ.

But what about it? Secret covenant among men trees &
goddss? Eleusinian prophecies? Secret joy amongst these times?
Within's within? What? Really? Orpheus & Eurydice? The collapse
of space & time?

She relaxes onto her bed.

You can learn how to be you in time. Love is all you need.

And me? My role in this? I know I know too much. I don't
know enough.

It's easy. All you need is love. Love. Love. Love is all you
need. All you need. All you need. All you need.

She didn't make it difficult to spy on her. No shades. Lying
there in her bed, the sun running down her body in happy washes.
Her breasts large and taut. Jeez. Look at that pussy. Ruby furred
triangle. Even just her thighs. Any part of her. I almost feel guilty

jerking my cock til it spills, reluctantly. I know. I do know. You
want to be inside her, Captain. Yes I agree.

But I wouldn't begin to know how to describe my loneliness
to her. And why would she care? And why would that make her
hot for me? I'm lonely. I'm horny. I watch you you lying there in
your apartment, naked, no shades, & I jack off unhappily.

Take me with you. Your eyes are closed. You are dreaming.
Take me with you. I know it's better than here. Freaks. Addicts.

She's beautiful. She's unhappy too. Where does she go, just
lying there?

“Suzanne told me about the Covenant. It had to do with the
trees. & Greek godds too, I think. She said acid isn't the place you
go for it's just the cosmic sled that gets you near. She wasn't too
sure. She told me she kept dreaming about Paris & trapezes.
Someone named Marie. & when she first tripped, she'd been taken
into the future. She told me there was a paradise of colors & music
she'd been in. She'd start crying because she didn't know how to
make it come back. She found out about the covenant by accident
while she was trying to get back to the colors & music.”

“Davey, is that what we're trying to do? To get there?”

“Maybe he just wants to find his Suzanne again.”

“Maybe she's there.”

David Time watched the trees feasting on afternoon
sunlight. It was beautiful.

Rich Americus in the underworld. Cutting through its
indifference with his guitar. Music here was water, food, torchlight.
This place was helpless in the face of his music. Still, no Franny.

Coming soon: Noisy Children, live in Hell. A benefit. In the
name of Love.



Turn on...



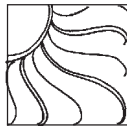
Tune in...



Burning Man 2004



SEATTLE, WASHINGTON



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