

A Renaissance In Paradise



A Place Of
Opening

Few Regrets
Conjecture

Your author, having recently finished, more or less (editorial excursions excepted), with his latest, a septuagenarian effort, entitled *Catherine*, asked: *Where Will It End?* Now, he is casting about for something to occupy him in the way of 'creative' mental activity; not content to rest upon any future laurels; and most eager to avoid any regrets for not having become so engaged; the question remains unanswered.

Where Will It End? has special significance, if we, in any way, begin to interpret what is happening beneath the surface to overwhelm our assumptions about the life we lead, and how we lead it. The hewers and criers are trying to alert us to certain inevitabilities that we scantily consider within our realm of assumptions. If they are correct in their assessments we might be in for a step backwards, perhaps a dire step backwards.

This one author is at the end of his run; what he envisions, he may absorb from others who like to predict things, 'if' and 'then' people; drawing conclusions variously, depending on how concrete the evidence they are studying, and evaluating.

What they are saying does not bode well. Because it does not, should one allow himself to imagine the worst, about which he feels powerless to do anything, or should he forget it all, continuing with his own little world; as does your author with his thoughts about A Renaissance In

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Paradise, when Paradise is about to become a hell hole full of the most unimaginable suffering for all of life? A bleary-eyed distraction as we slide over the precipice.

It is unlikely your author will be able to ignore certain truths; they will continually arise to haunt this manuscript, perhaps with a different emphasis than in *Catherine*.

The author had wondered whether the character of the young, lovely, enchanting, astute, Catherine might be included in his newer confabulations. Initially he has decided that his work, henceforth requires, at least, an 'antagonist', one, with whom he may carry on some 'meaningful' dialogue, lacking such ready-made conversant in his daily life (that is not to demean those conversations he has with his wife, who might tolerate them for other reasons).

Catherine would not be so much an 'antagonist', as an accomplice, a sounding board, without an echo, only somewhat representing the opposite; the opposite side of our natures, not necessarily antagonistic; more an apposite, an unresolved juxtaposition, to whom we think we are; seeking some resolution or accommodation within ourselves. It is, conjecturally, through that appositeness, we may reveal, to ourselves, who we are, what we are: and (*PAUL XXX*) why we are here, where we come from, and where we are going.

Solitary, each of us is, unmistakably, more or less condemned to solve it all, by ourselves; before the curtain falls, without regrets.

However, lets not be lonely and glum with our life sentence. There is much to enliven the spirit. There is much to be sensed and imagined. Hence Catherine, as one might surmise. More still, is the 'animus' or 'anima', that seeks wholeness through the engagement of another, who might also be traveling upon the same road. Hence Catherine, once again. To further enliven the discussion he anticipates that Theresa and Lydia, her sisters, somehow inseparable, will be found along the same byway.

The older generation, and the younger generation, often seem at odds, the older, more rigid (inflexible), living with fixed ideas, more certain of their prerogatives with regard to knowledge, perhaps pedantic on the one hand, cynical and faithless on the other; the younger, by nature, eager, flexible, full of faith in themselves; wanting to pry open the status quo, seeking an admittance, on its own terms, which the older instinctively resists, feeling threatened by a takeover; or, because of its irrelevance, no



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admittance at all. While Catherine and William may not symbolize and fulfill this latter pronouncement, it is to be understood their differences often do proceed from their generational élan, or lack thereof.

There is only one world in which both must coexist; in which all must coexist, if life is to continue for all.

What is that only world in which all must coexist?

Lest we forget, or fail to recognize the fact; but needless to remind one with any sense of things, that world is to be found upon and within **this** planet, Earth; not some extraterrestrial abode. One may choose to regard that oblate spheroid as his (hers, perhaps) and his (hers) alone. Those who so regard, are in for a tough go, without armaments, razor wire, and guard dogs. Because there is not any other world, those who so regard this one and only planet as theirs and theirs alone, doubtlessly will cause havoc and misery for the rest of those who also reside here, also theirs, equally, during their very brief, and often painful, sojourn through life; life, as opposed to non-existence. Not their sojourn through non-existence, then, although it may appear to be so, but their infinitesimal, however so seeming unendurably long, sojourn through life; their one and only life.



What is life beyond a rise and fall, an excursion between anabolic and catabolic states? Supposing we know the answer to that, what is life to become on the planet earth? Which some have characterized as Paradise; which the others, who haunt us, tell of dire things upon the horizon.

What is Paradise?

Each of us might define Paradise as a dreamy place, wholly dedicated to various kinds of fulfillments. A series of happinesses without end, as we often imagine that other place so often referred, but left undeclared in this opus. In the author's early life there was such a place, variously known as the United States of America, mostly a fairy-tale place. A relatively long life, at this point in time, 75 years, has proven such a place a doubtful Paradise, lacking something vital to such a non-utopian conceptualization.

The author wishes to focus upon that oblate spheroid, referred earlier; undivided, unfenced, without borders. Alluding to that other place, which we also imagine, but about which we can know nothing, absolutely nothing, that is, a lot less than we know about this place, and which we cannot shape or alter or influence, does not seem a proper consideration in these cogitations. It is the immediate that requires his attention; the ground upon which he imagines he stands, whether he view it as Paradise, as a desolate place, or, as a Hell Hole.

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The author refuses to acknowledge a deity, and will only refer to the deity as so many of us do, out of habit, and reflexively, when we swear, whether we are swearing upon a *bible* (imagine that, will you) in the courtroom, or swearing when we strike our *thumb* with a hammer; both are in vain; hence the invocation to not utter His (or Her, or Its) name in vain, on the pain of perjury. The deity thing was another of those phenomena that came, part and parcel, with his early life, much in the same way as did The United States Of America, as a hopeful whitewash of things little understood.

The author does not presume to know how or why it is he stands upon that oblate spheroid. His life and living have not revealed to him any reason for his existence, or anyone's existence; or *his* planet's existence.

He tentatively believes it is for each of us to assign a purpose to a life, that otherwise seems purposeless; objectively speaking. It is not his particular desire to own a SUV, and to obtain his petrol from Iraq to get to go from here to there. But he is a *homo sapiens* male nonetheless, whose level of testosterone has gravitated to *homo sapiens* male things. One of his male things has become a Dodge pickup with a Cummins, which requires petrol from Iraq to get it from here to there. Iraq is symbolic as well as it is real. In The United States Of America there isn't enough petrol for everybody who owns a vehicle, wanting to get from here to there, to actually get from here to there. One of the great lacks in Paradise. As in Mycenea of old, consuming its forests in the manufacture of armor, we are consumers, without conscience, or foresight. In more modern times, many places on the divided planet still consume its wooded soul in the making of fortunes; take heed! (Be forewarned!) What happens to the forest, happens to us all.

Reproduction of the beast, *homo sapiens*, is the least of the purposeful activities in which one might engage, so the author conceives. His reasoning in this matter is rather simple; and might even be obvious to many, who are aware of the redundancy of an aimless occupancy. Out Of Balance with the available wood supply. A thought! A sojourn to Haiti for all to see.

Continuance without aim has so often, more often than not, resulted in razing and ruination of our fondest wishes. It is resulting in an ironical (heavy stuff [476 lbs./cu.ft.]) juxtaposition, wherein the continuance seems to require the utter destruction of the planet; so assumed as Paradise; our only one. Must one thus assume this is not Paradise? Or, because it so abused and so little revered, assume the irrelevance of the place?

The author seems to have resolved upon what he terms, in a self-evident fashion, A Holding Action. A stopgap intellectualizing of what seems the case; that might offer the slimmest measure of hope. Because, without hope, it is even more dire than the whole prospect of life truly

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seems. His life in The United States Of America has brought him to these conclusions.

The author does not wish to foreclose upon that which might occur if the whole of humanity would 'get its act together', reaching beyond the mere inanity of surviving in a heap, toward some professed goal for the whole, in which each life does indeed share with hope and enthusiasm, all that is to be found in living a life upon this one and only viable planet; and, of course, with emphasis, living life to its fullest potential. He would not want to foreclose that possibility in The United States Of America, however much he despairs of it ever happening; despite the dedication of Catherine and her sisters and their friends. The author is still mindful of Alfred North Whitehead's conjecture, that we had missed the boat (we passed up the opportunity to become a truly great nation).

This whole confabulation must begin with a reverence for life. Without reverence, there isn't any possibility of the human prospect ever succeeding. Each life is precious, and the more precious it conceives itself to be, the more precious it will become. Study yourself in a mirror, how you are put together, how each part of you functions; marvel at yourself; and others; and other forms of life, as whole functioning units. Study that buck whose horns you want to put upon the wall of your den, BEFORE you shoot it, fat slob that you are; because you might be skinny; well, what can you say? There is, without question, some kind of imperative assigned to this manner of observation, with accompanying conjecture. We must. We must. We must.

It truly does go without saying that all conflict must cease; all of man's inhumanity to man must cease, man must bring under control his 'capital sins', the aggregate of all those aggressive creeds must cease, all prejudice must cease, all resistance to assimilation must cease, because these are mostly incompatible with the basic reverence for life; reverence for all forms of life. They interfere with the establishment of any lasting civilization.

The author might argue more in this vein, at this time, but, since he has already done so upon so many other occasions, most recently in *Catherine*, the repetition would only dull the response to his latest approach to the dilemma facing mankind; facing humanity; facing all other forms of life (those affected by the presence of man, insensitive and uncaring, as the author perceives the ho ho macho hunter with his death dealing weapons, [as the author often regards the macho Ernest Hemmingway]), and, with emphasis, to be found upon and within this one and only viable planet, Earth. One ravaged and destroyed planet is enough.

The newer approach involves dialogue that, through its aegis, would hope to elicit certain truths revealed through their self-evident nature, as they emerge and develop through the ensuing dialogue.

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There will be no attempt to achieve absolutes; only what seems feasible in the realm of possibilities, and probabilities, as was the case in *Catherine*.

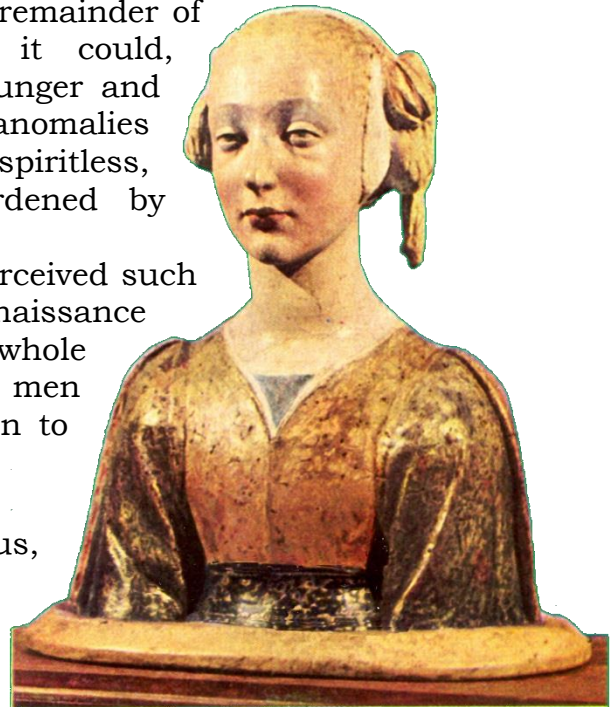
The notion of *A Renaissance In Paradise* borrows something from another age, perhaps truly imaginary, wherein much cultural activity and artistic ferment, occurred through the influence of the 'Church', and with the aid of the wealthy who wanted to propitiate certain of the deities, all occurring within a few provinces of central Italy.

However, only a very limited number were involved in the actual participation of this activity, while the remainder of mankind struggled along as best it could, contending with the elements, with hunger and disease, the slings and the arrows, the anomalies and the vicissitudes, often spiritless, overwrought with apprehension, burdened by poverty and unrequited desires.

It is how we, of a later age, have perceived such activity. And how we perceived the Renaissance man, as some kind of complete and whole individual; to repeat, only a very few men (even fewer women) were in a position to partake of such high-minded activity. The *Renaissance Man (Woman)* was, and is, a rare, anomalous, individual.

Renaissance. What does that term signify? Does it signify, rebirth, renewed vigor, and renewed interest, revival? In what way? The revisiting of antiquity, embellishing the now with antiquity; the best of antiquity? Part (only part) of the older activity (the best) from which we have derived a concept of *The Renaissance*? Be mindful of what Frank Lloyd Wright has had to say regarding imitators of imitators of imitation. The abuse (exploitation) of antiquity.

What was it about antiquity that so impressed itself upon us? Imagining, and desiring, a better day; a more replete way? Imbued with something that was then, and is now, missing? A mysterious missingness, if imitated, would bring us back to life, resuscitate our dead and dying civilization? All those grand architectural remains from ancient Greece, imitated by the Romans, and so many others, and reborn during the Renaissance? Something was absent from the daily trudge of mankind, that seemed to exist in a prior time? An intellectual something, a very defined order, rational order, to the concept of man, an intimacy with Gods that lived on Mount Olympus, not to be found in Ta Biblia? Perhaps the status quo of those days had become as worn and listless as



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is the status quo of today. Not so much a renaissance as a need to fill the one and only unremitting timeless void with meaning.

The author is not unaware, as he scribbles along, that there are other cultures who view Mount Olympus as anything but what it is; as mythological, a place of scattered ruins, like those in the Yucatan. The Greeks did leave behind Herodotus, Thucydides, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Plato, Socrates. Homer and Pindar. Myron and Praxiteles, and Nikos Kazantzakis.

Other cultures are imbued with their own mythology. It will be imagined by the author that other cultures are also staffed with his look-a-likes, however shaped and hued. He imagines they also resurrect, and enshrine, their ancients in some mystically relevant manner.

Have we grown beyond such conceptualizing? Do we need to create something entirely new? Imagine a new kind of social agitation that metamorphosis into a structure that contains the elegance and grace of some of the finest cathedrals,



temples, mosques, decorated with the flora and fauna that is so much a part of our daily existence; that invites all to revere life, to worship it as sacrosanct, without any

attribution to Gods. No great loss, the square phallic Twin Towers; open space regained momentarily; time to rethink who we are, why we are here, and where we are going. Something else that will still celebrate life, will engage the masses with a new enthusiasm, a new purposeful dedication to an overriding concern for a sharing togetherness? For once and for all. No more lip service. No more garish towers for worshipping the Golden Calf. Yes!, I have heard in the background the denigration of Utopian schemes, as unrealistic and impractical. Not so, not so. Regard the emptiness of what we have so far promulgated. The most bang for the buck, the sheer occupancy of the place.

You have heard most of this before; it bears repeating. I heard someone say: 'So, they got the Twin Towers; let's move on.' He was a Wall Street Currency Trader for Goldman Sachs. He should know; a modern-day soothsayer?

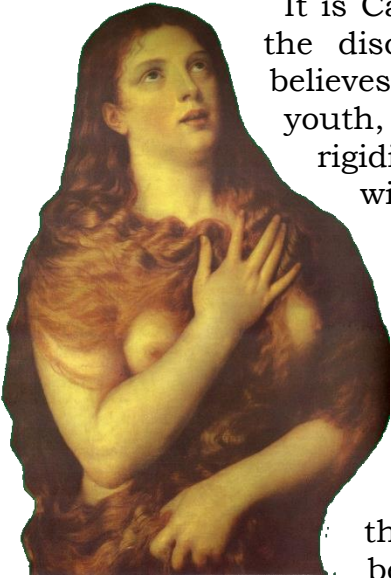
Your author is divided in his perception of possibilities. What he esteems his knowledge of modern, self-centered man to be, convinces him the aforementioned aimed purposeful activity is not possible. He has become mired, perhaps anchored in his cynicism, almost without relief, seeking confirmation of his attitude, rather than remaining open to hopeful possibilities. Yes!, the possibilities do exist, as Catherine and her



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sisters insistently emphasized and demonstrated through their studies and activities, but he believes the probabilities do not, because mankind, besides being selfish, is largely listless and acquiescent; and in these times, if not, in all others, paranoid and fearful; suspicious of his fellow man, and fearful that *man* will bring about his demise. It is only *man* who will violate all of his own commandments, laws, tenets, and yes, dreams, sacrificing all he knows for his short-term gratifications. Whether he isn't doing, or is doing, these things, he is often hostile aggressive and destructive (in case you haven't noticed lately).



It is Catherine, and her sisters, that have entered into the discussion (the Lists), only because the author believes any real hope exists in fresh faced idealistic youth, those full of energy and eagerness, those not rigidified, ossified, in their thought, and habits; without something to lose, something material. Not resigned to introspection and defeat; and cynicism. Naïve? An unfair assessment of earnest bright young people? While there are Delilahs, Mata Haris, and Lucretia Borgias, the author prefers and chooses the female over the male as the emissary of his highest hopes, hence Catherine, and her sisters.

Are there no suitable male counterparts? Is the author prejudiced toward the other sex? He believes the latter happen to be more acutely sensitive to the living; and he finds them more attractive, especially when he gets to say who they are, what they are, and how they are made.

In *Catherine*, youth, a particular youth, engaged itself in dealing with human suffering, human want, human need. Theirs was a choice made from a feeling of compassion (identification with another's suffering), a sense of idealism; realizing, knowing they had to begin somewhere.

As must we all, if we ever expect to arrive at this needful destination, a more or less predictable, dependable, and lasting civilization.

For Catherine, and her sisters, some things were self-evident.

In their view, there are many things we must do in order to accord our better sense, to get with, and fulfill the program.

The author is a writer (scribbler) situated in the 'West'. The shift of influence in world affairs is occurring in the 'East'; speaking of antiquity; the Orient. What can these new imitators bring to 'civilization', after millennia of upheavals and quiescences, and upheavals; now overburdened with rampant number; somehow proving that unbridled reproduction is a questionable practice (short-term gratification?). Only a selfish insistence that number helps to gain the highest point, but not the establishment of sensibility; and somehow demonstrates lack of

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restraint, and profound ignorance (simply put, some people can outfuck some other people, exponentially; the gratifuckation principle?).

It seems easy enough for the author to criticize. It is not that he would not hope that that ancient culture would bring to us all some semblance of the grander improvement of things; those that we attest we so desire. However, it is a place where the female, no matter how brilliant or beautiful, is only an adornment, remaining a second class citizen. If, in their great number, they succeed in their dominion, without the accouterments of an imaginative, newly infused, all inclusive, egalitarian, lasting humane 'civilization', but only those of all ancient, even more recent, dominating, uncaring regimes; well, the author ceases here, instead, predicts, they will fall, like all the others, thereby affirming that life is mostly a pointless repetition of unlearned lessons. A wasteland of broken dreams; indeed, a Hell Hole, and not a Paradise.

Yes!, your author is engaged in lamentations over the abject failure of our own civilization, and the desecration of Paradise by a befouling animal. He looks elsewhere out of desperation. He does not wish to leave this domain believing there is not any hope.

He is seeking A Class Act.

He cannot do it alone. Don Quixote could not do it alone; that 'other guy' couldn't do it alone, invoking an unseen deity; Catherine can not do it alone. There isn't anyone alive, or dead, who could do it alone. As Theresa would say: **"We are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution"**

In *Catherine*, the author asked the reader, as well as the characters, how he or she, or they, would like that opus to end; also, he thought such inquiry might apply to the beginning.

If the author is to allow all those to take charge of his work, what remains for him to do?

If only. If only. He would gladly retire from the field, if others were so engaged. A Happier Place? Would he notice?

The author, being who he is, on the road to nowhere, dares to raise the subject of *Regrets*. He does not possess the means to fall back upon Philanthropy, as a last resort, (that inglorious safety net for all of suffering humanity) to appease a dubious conscience. To emblazon his name grandiosely as benefactor on the Pearly Gates.

This very act of scribbling is an attempt to circumvent such concerns, to which many of us must answer. A *final accounting*. Writing off into the sunset. A Gift of Ideas.

It matters not how we began this journey, or who placed us upon the road which we have followed. It is what we have outlined for ourselves to do. Illusory, tentative, and amorphous may have been the goal, but it is

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our involvement in the pursuit of that goal that somehow has lured us beyond into realms unknown, ones which, abiding notions of our own personal integrity, we feel we cannot abandon, as part of our bargain with the fates.

We have used up our life in this illusory manner; following one trail or another. Was there a right one?

Each one of us has had to deal with the Human Condition, the anomalies and vicissitudes, the slings and arrows, kicking against the pricks, foundering in the slough of Despond, in the cave of Despair, the pitfalls; often desperate and heartbroken; with hope deferred, followed by dashed hopes; and vain expectations. Abandoned to the Golden Rule; to trickle down, to the private sector, to 'God helps Those Who help Themselves', rejected by the last resort; the worst come to the worst, as well, a victim of indifference; that of both the creator and man alike.

At the very end of the road we have arrived at some kind of understanding of things; perhaps, that we had taken the wrong road, being amongst them.

All roads may be said to lead to the same place. Why all the fuss?

The author has attempted to deal with *Regrets* in another writing, after he was diagnosed with the dreaded **C**. He has lived with the dreaded **H** and the dreaded **C** for a number of years. Somehow these seem minor in comparison to the dreaded **R**. The dreaded **R**, which is part and parcel of the dreaded **D**, and before the dreaded **D**, the dreaded **P**, or **A**, or **S**. The author knows a lovely lady stricken by **MS**.

His was to somehow epitomize his **R** through recalling something his dreamy youth had only imagined. Sailing around Cape Horn. Sailing around Cape Horn is not only symbolic, but real. This is how he posed the quandary to himself:

Grandiose Imaginings?

The things I have not done. The things I have not done. The things I have not done will become the things I will never do. The things I will never do are things that weigh upon my conscience. They make mockery of my life, because they are things I imagine I could have done, if I had had more self-discipline, and perhaps more courage, or more zeal, or megalomania. Don't ask, 'How many things it is one can do?'

I had wanted to sail around Cape Horn; I had wanted to sail to Romantic climes. More nearby I wanted to sail to and throughout the Queen Charlotte Islands. So steeped was I with tales of nautical adventures.

I have wanted to travel to Chile, perhaps ever since my sixth

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grade Geography class. To the Straits of Magellan, and that southern region ever since reading Joshua Slocum and Rockwell Kent.

My storehouse of doings and not doings, of imperfect doings, one's that I know could have been better done, are accompanied by a litany of rationalizations. Even though I am aware of them as excuses, I use them anyway; one needs to move on; perfection becomes an impossible task in the face of all the other tasks that serve our vanities.

Don't ask, 'How many things it is one can do?'

*Such a plaintive refrain. Echoed again in *Knotted Twine*, more lengthily, and more whimsically, in a chapter entitled *Cabin Fever*:*

If you happen to be confined within a small sailing vessel and your propensities urge you about as though your pantaloons contained undiscoverable burrs or creepy crawly creatures, then, when the weather persists in waves of adversity, in a stormy wetness, and for long periods of time, sequestered in a small confining cabin, it may be conjectured you are ready for the try-works.

A symptomatology: The ingestion of copious quantities of caffeinated elixirs; an intense and prolonged fidgetiness; a staring out-of-doors at the inclemency absorbing the gloom; the onset of extreme irritableness; an inability to concentrate; incipient claustrophobic alarm; extreme sensitivity to sound and the almost uncontrollable urge to stick pins into your companion(s).

Aye!, then, 'tis one's home upon the sea becomes a veritable try-pot. True enough it is, if your temperament is such ye canna calm your inner workings, or provide sufficient unto yourself some entertainments as to endure the waking hours in a most composed manner, being obliged to endure these activities for a week or more at a time, 'tis probably something you ought begin to train for, that is, if ye should desire to make passage into the higher latitudes. If ye are so fond of the sea and imagine ye desire such wondrous adventures as your imaginings devise and should these encompass a lengthy 'spanse of time in a small vessel, and if a far greater impatience loom as expression of your character, perhaps an excursion in the Caribbean would exist as the wiser choice of places to sojourn in order to conduct

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some experiments with this dreamier stuff.

One might reflect upon the lot of incarcerated unfortunates 'doing time', pondering the condition of their sanity, and wonder at barred concrete cubicles as proper sustenance for the soul, and as corrective device for the errant and ailing scoundrels amongst us. One might also consider that if he was to slay his companion in a fit of cabin fever, what would await him in the way of rebuke. The Ministers of Death claim Capital Punishment is not cruel and unusual.

One often hears tell of the indifferent persuasion of 'four walls' and how it is these are often 'climbed'. Ah Yes!, if one but had available to him such a cliff to traverse within the chambered nautilus that wears him upon the sea.

Nay!, oddly enough, one finds his own self the sole companion in these affairs - should he be a conscionable mate. Now 'tis I invoke once again, as some intoning clapper hinged inside thy bony crypt, Herman's: 'We demand eternity for a lifetime; when our mortal half-hours too often prove tedious'.

Truly, sometimes 'tis not Paradise welcomes us. 'Tis said the old and sickly, in contention with their infirmities, often cede the battle.

'Tis no longer the inclement weather, or the four walls, or the bit of a cabin aboard ship, but the persuasion of the life within this sack of flesh propped aright in some arrangement of bone and tendon; therein lie the nave of thy sailings hither and yon; therein ye elect to draw the very breath that sustains ye.

But, oh!, there are times when the very limbs ache for locomotion, their cells clamoring for the discharge of some involuntary command; perhaps 'tis then one ought suit up, brave the elements to pace the deck, however incommodious, beating upon his chest, wailing out the phlegm, demanding of the heavens just cause for this Sturm and Drang.

What one would give to hoe a field of potatoes? And what caged animal might not wish to do the same, or perhaps pull upon a plow until struck by a thunderbolt?

In actuality, there are milestones during the day; 'stations of the cross' as one might allude, as he observes some ritual approach to the unfolding hours. Surely we may labor in service to the alimentary canal; even the sage ensconced in his Ivory Tower

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cannot provide succor from goose quills, ink and parchment.

Prepare the table!!! Then 'tis, one may ply his sack of bones with enticements from the ship's stores giving employment to the ship's cook, and perhaps 'tis she or he may then provide a subtle admixture of patience to the brew. One might wish it so. In between the grosser repasts, nibblings might sate imaginary appetites while dissolving the hours. Then again, one might nibble with his eyes some special volume he had reserved for occasions such as these. Often enough such a compromise is painless, and often enough this fever is only a manifestation of one's very own unfamiliarity with himself - a confrontation, as it were, with oneself.

Solitaire - blessed solitaire!

'Oh Gud!, are you that person I have betrayed so often, to whom I have promised feats of glory, whom I have postponed time and time again. 'Tis now you hunt me down, 'tis now when I am least able to pay, you choose to collect your debts'.

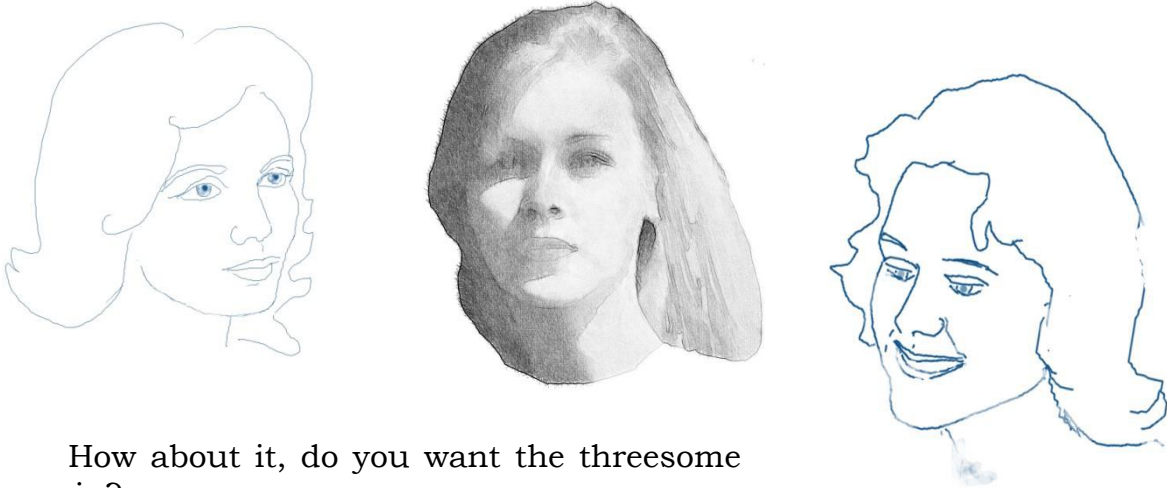
Perhaps 'tis then, from out the depths of these doleful moments, we become reinspired; we envision making amends, reawaken and renew those stale promises; 'tis then we anticipate the glorious rewards -Ah Alas! "When I return I shall make thee into an epic - wait and see!"

The storm fades; the confining quarters loosen their grip; the eyes glaze; one projects a vision, a grand scheme upon the blurring outside world. One has finally triumphed; he has labored long; he has tapped his utter core; he has produced a masterpiece; he has evoked the WORD; he is lauded far and wide, the world over, with laurels heaped upon him; they have awarded him the Nobbledegook Prize!

One begins to yawn (RCWD).

The road seems long one day, while upon another, one wonders where it had gone. One tires of living the good life. One tires of living the bad life. Each harbors its own consequences. Regrets seem to be part of the equation. Above the door he had posted a sign: *Perseverance*. One does such things. Does one need to be reminded?

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How about it, do you want the threesome again?

Some nice lookers anyway. Gotta have nice lookers to get the ball rolling; to get the author's ball rolling; that doesn't infer 'balling a chick'. Yes! to return to matters of import.

Where To Begin? It cannot be at the beginning. We have already departed into the unknown. Our sages have informed us this is the best of all possible worlds, even though they have known of the substance of things, have been aware of the Human Condition, aware of the anomalies and vicissitudes, the slings and arrows, kicking against the pricks, foundering in the slough of Despond, in the cave of Despair, the pitfalls, losing a piece of your derriere in Crimea; disease, decay and **D**; and loss of youthful allure, waning of desire; often desperate and heartbroken; with hope deferred, followed by dashed hopes; and vain expectations. Abandoned to the Golden Rule; to trickle down, to the private sector, to 'God helps Those Who help Themselves'; having fallen out of the safety net, rejected by the last resort; the worst come to the worst, as well, a victim of indifference; that of both the creator and man alike. Hasn't the author aired this already? It bears repeating; so expect to hear from him again. He promises to haunt you with his admonitions.

It is still, sardonically, the best of all possible worlds.

Truly, we cannot go back. We do not like where we are. (The author realizes some of you are smugly content in your own little worlds.)

It is **not** the best of all possible worlds.

Is there a **how** to this *lasting* civilizing thing?

It will not be found in a Crackerjack box; it will not be found in a Fortune Cookie, or in your daily Horoscope (Horror Scope) It will not be found in the Homeland Security Office. It will not be found in the quibblings of the UN (United Nations).

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The author does not know **how** to rid ourselves of the bad people, those who are brutal and dictatorial rulers, enslavers of others. Those selfish baronial possessors and unconscionable befoulers, defilers, exploiters, controllers, fortune hunters; subduers, and subdividers, of this planet.

The author does not know **how** to rid ourselves of the more common indifference, and ineffectuality, of government, or bureaucracy.

Perhaps each of these require some violent upheaval, or revolution. We must rid ourselves of them in some manner. We cannot rely upon the individual social conscience. Abdication is preferred; or a voluntary resignation from the human race.

We must find some common goals which will give us heart and enlist our energies.

To relieve you of total depression, the author scribbles his little tome for you to read while you wait in line for your very last tankful, yielding your very last wherewithal in homage to a passing way of life, with nothing remaining with which to replace it. Back to basics; learning to walk again.

The author does not believe he can effectively argue for brotherly love in all instances; or perhaps even love itself. Some people smell bad; are offensive in themselves; that is, we do not warm up to them; nor they to us, unless we are useful to them. That is to say, he realizes we will be asked to accept certain limitations.

He would not ask then for 'brotherly love', per se, rather a kind of tolerance of the other, to a high degree. Maybe not so up-close and personal. This means we must have some breathing room, some individual space; not all live in heap. At least, we must have retreats; nice places with quiescent space; filled with natural things, as opposed to manmade things.

Importantly, we need to raise the threshold of agitation, of conflict. We accomplish this before we begin to plan anything that we intend to be lasting. It is such that the author believes we must come into this prospect with good feelings, rather than reeling from bad ones.

Public servants must remain 'public servants', not becoming little protected worlds unto themselves; not in the pockets of wheelers and dealers. Public servants are intended to respond to the needs of others, pleasantly, without a lot of haggling, and hassling, acting superior. They must be able to listen, and learn not to dictate and put down. All people who interact with the public must remain civil, even when it seems the public is uncivil; combating incivility with incivility often leads to dire conflict. Somebody needs to remain cool; a little understanding and compassion will go a long way..

'Reverence For Life' has been mentioned as a necessary attitude adjustment. It might begin by regarding, and studying oneself in the

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mirror. Not so much to study ones imperfections, to pancake them over, but to marvel at the eye, or the nose, or the mobility of the mouth, and the thousands of expressions that one might produce, from the smiling of a Theresa, to the very frown of the devil himself. Too much pancake and eye-shadow is uglier than warts and moles. Too much of a make-over; like our phony lives. Like our body is offensive to us. In a reversal of the anomalies, the surgeon reduced her breasts; she died from the complications (a blood clot). Vanitas! Vanitas!

If only we were not all creators at heart, imbued with some kind of inborn aesthetic, that is, keenness of eye with regard to a non-specific kind of perfection. This notion might be better understood if one had been blind from birth. As a blind person, one accepts much about the physical world in other ways. Spiritual things, interior things, might take precedence over the appearance of things. There isn't any assurance that a blind person would be anything other than a human like the rest of us. The author thought the comparison worth mentioning.

Is the blind person more reverent? Perhaps not. Perhaps gifted with a heightened sense of awareness; perhaps acute in some ways. Awareness is key to the argument. We need to get there somehow. We need to appreciate something for what it is. There isn't any single life form, good or bad, in our estimation, that any one of us could 'create'. Yet, in our proud indifferent disregard, we can tread upon that life as an annoyance, and as inconsequential. This whole perception of things might be brought into better perspective if we were to imagine ourselves in Jurassic Park, living amongst not very tender beasts; somewhat mimicking ourselves; perceiving ourselves as the bad beast.

Enough said, for the moment? Another rant is in the making. One more thing; if, by looking in the mirror, studying yourself, trying to find something to revere, you cannot, shoot yourself; or when you do find that something, extend that to other lives, other life; marvel!

He will tender a promise of a return soon to Catherine and her sisters as relief from this monologue. He will thus, with their assistance, reveal what it is that is unknown to him at present.

More to be said about the vagaries of human activity that seem pointless to the author; and lead to things that seem not congruous with the purpose of things, however unknown those things will remain.

It might have begun near Mount Olympus many a year ago. Of Olde, there were armies, as there is now, but without the (benefit -HO HO)) of the sophisticated weaponry of today. A Wooden Horse as a gift! A Wooden Nuclear Device as a gift?

When the bad guys showed up, whether Persians, or Trojans, one needed to be prepared. Effectiveness resided in physical strength and in agility; perhaps some effectiveness resided in one's ability to use his

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brain. We of today do not know of any particular body enhancers (steroids) in use during ancient times, although Achilles was on some kind of STYX that provided him with an advantage, so he could get on with hectoring.

Even before the doings beneath Mount Olympus, where, mainly youths (males – them again) would **compete** with their strength and agility against each other, there most likely existed other cultures and other times when one engaged in games that provided both amusement, and trials of one strength and skill.

In times ancient, perhaps also existed more untamed and unconquered beasts than in these times, which might have posed a threat to life or limb, for which one needed to be prepared to defend, lacking our modern equalizers.

Hence the various events that became part of the Olympic tradition, which form the basis for a rather elaborate venue for entertainment, and other related or unrelated activities, like Tanya Harding beating her way to the top, unswanlike.

Somewhere the author has read, ‘comparisons are odious’.

What the author is attempting to do, may be obvious to the reader in this case. In order to relieve the reader of any responsibility in this matter, the author feels obliged to reveal his goal. He wishes to broach the subject of ‘**competition**’, about which he feels mostly negative, at least in terms of its negative aspects. One should be awarded a Gold Medal for taking his defeats gracefully, for having lived a life in poverty, for having endured all those things referred previously, to be repeated as often as necessary: dealing with Human Condition, the anomalies and vicissitudes, the slings and arrows, kicking against the pricks, foundering in the slough of Despond, in the cave of Despair, the pitfalls; often desperate and heartbroken; with hope deferred, followed by dashed hopes; and vain expectations. Abandoned to the Golden Rule; to trickle down, to the private sector, to ‘God helps Those Who help Themselves’, rejected by the last resort; the worst come to the worst, as well, a victim of indifference; that of both the creator and man alike. A Gold Medal for that!?

Amidst this latter whirl of the windmill, we compete for the highest rung, and the merest scrap; animals all; a protoplasmic squirming. Its as though something is out of kilter, as well as ‘missing’; although to function as designed; or designed to function; only in this primitive manner.

We only imagine we are civilized.

Further, your author has had occasion to muse upon an expression he has had heard for as long as he can remember; perhaps his father spoke the phrase as a regurgitated judgment of what he found in this great land. The Least Common Denominator.

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He was perusing a Newspaper with his prejudicially jaundiced eye. Some eye!

He thought that every day the purveyors of what 'it is our right to know' manage to find fomenting copy to put in the 'rag'. He thought how-out-of-touch one might feel if he did not subscribe. Then he remembered Mark Twain's assessment of such media, that all one needed to do was read the headlines once a year, they would be same as the last time one had read them, in the previous.

How much of what was appearing in that tabloid world, passed off as momentous, with bold print, was relevant or irrelevant to oneself.

Another world to be sure.

That Least Common Denominator World.

It was all happening as if the author did not exist at all, yet it assumed he was, as it assumed a vast audience for its rattlings.

Imagine, every day, enough circulation to maintain its existence as a true exponent of the First Amendment; how well we are served in our right to know.

He recalled another author's condemning statement with regard to his brethren, 'all people do is read newspapers and fornicate'. Would this author venture so strong an opinion? He realizes that 'people' obtain the rag, maybe absentmindedly, or purposely, which may be adduced the same thing, for the crossword, the funnies, horoscope, love lorns, the sports page, obituaries, classifieds, even G. forbid, the editorial page; and as hard copy of what appeared on the flat screen in the family entertainment center (wired, so to speak; also weird).

However, he felt emptied after trashing through the verbiage; he felt a need to fill himself up again after the 'draining'; the draining that had only half-intended to be momentous, and space-filling.

It was there, just there, as part of what it was to be part of the scene, the mob, the Common Denominator, all of whom were completely irrelevant to him, or, if truth were truly known, irrelevant to itself. Fire Starter.

He recalled the impression the world had made, after his six month journey in his boat to the hinterland, and how, upon his return, that world seemed no better for his absence, perhaps only worse. It left him with a duality of feeling, that it had gotten worse because he had deserted his post, but also that the worsening, in fact, could not be lain at his feet.

Absent-minded space-filler.

He didn't feel like he was missing anything. However he was discomfited by how much he sounded like them; they had sucked him dry, replacing him with them. Before he succumbed to what he had been missing, he was sufficiently filled with himself, what he was feeling in his surroundings, assessed by some as 'utterly boring'. He worked away at things, growing weary in the process. He sat in his La-Zy-Boy, to absorb

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his surroundings, staring into a stasis, or something more dynamic, the stasis of movement. He seemed filled. The water rippled, the sky was grey, a deer walked by. Off in the distance a boat appeared, a reminder, like the 'rag'; disquieting; there are so many others, not deer; humans; Gawd-awful humans. Unlike him.

The appearance of the deer made him feel that 'life' was possible. Whereas the appearance of the boat stirred disturbing thoughts, those haunting thoughts again, of the diminishment of the life beneath the surface of the waters, not very often a Headline issue. A headline might read, '*As we have assumed to be the case, man is using up the planet*'.

He realized the boat was part of the symbiosis developed by the higher organism, not as way of sustaining life, but as a way of sustaining greed and rape. However, he knew he was seeing the last of a breed; the shrimper, a strange looking craft, broad in the ass; somehow as ridiculous as its inventor. Alas!, the sea-bottom, the last resource available to the self-made man.

What food chain!? Systematically, the food chain is being reduced to cannibalism; self-made men eating self-made men.

Occasionally a Cassandra will cry out. But man, that clever beast, heeding naught, is taking over nature, the environment, making it after his own image, a self-sustaining conveyor belt, that doesn't require much from mn, just a few raw ingredients, a species, and a pen to raise them in. When people become hungry, their palate becomes less discriminating. Pretty soon, the least common denominator will be consuming nothing but shit, as well as self-made men.

Mr. D. Searches For Catherine; Theresa And Mr. D.

Mr. D., bruised and confused, stirred himself after being unhorsed for the hundredth time. He was nearly desperate for some word from Catherine. She was not returning his calls, answering his E-mails, his letters. She, who had always surprised him with her visits, was a silent as the proverbial tomb.

Even when she had found a young male friend at Stanford, she communicated more. It caused him to wonder if she had not found the real one this time. But why silence? Had they not established some frank openness in these matters of the heart?

In order to relieve the turgid tension and tormenting doubts, he had decided upon a sojourn to the Huge City.

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When he arrived, anxiously, rather early in the morning, at Catherine's domicile, an apartment partitioned off in the warehouse-like building where she and Theresa were operating their hostel for the needy, an apartment which she shared with Theresa, the knock upon the door brought forth Theresa.

"Mr. D.!!!! Mr. D.!!!! What a surprise!

Warm and lovely as ever, she embraced him with much vigor.

"What brings you out of your hidey-hole?"

"I haven't heard from Catherine for some time. She isn't responding to any of my communications."



"Catherine isn't here, she hasn't been here for three months. She has taken off for the African Continent. A Mission, Mr. D.

"She has asked me not to say anything to anyone; but obviously I cannot keep this from you. I must apologize for my part in the conspiracy of silence.

"She suspected how you would feel if she mentioned Africa to you. Unfortunately it has had consequences for her. She contracted one of those mysterious, presumably insect-borne, African diseases. She has only recently been released from hospital care, hoping to recover enough to continue with what she had set out to do.

"Mr. D., I argued with her, as we have done in the past.

"I suspect it has been an overriding curiosity with her for a very long time.

"She has only said that she will continue for the while.

"I got the impression she has been sobered by the experience; and I gather she is not that well."

"How terrible, terrible, terrible, Theresa. Such foolishness! The cat lost a life.

"I thought she had found the real one this time. I should have guessed again."

"Mr. D., she did take off with someone who was working with us, who had been on the African Continent.

"She has not confided any relationship to me, so I do not know the extent of their involvement.

"Her communications have not mentioned him.

"I intuit that she is trying to prove something, to salvage something from a mistake.

"I have been running on the edge myself lately; I miss her in so many ways.

"I know this is the right thing to be doing, but it takes everything one is, everything one has to give."

"Such dedication, Theresa.

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“Do you feel any kind of doubts, as you witness the same unending supply of misery passing through these portals?”

“Mr. D., today I cannot answer that question truthfully. I would have to acknowledge the doubts, uncertain of what to say next.

“Mr. D., Mr. D., we cannot stand here as though I am about to have only a brief conversation, only to turn you away.

“You must come in. Have you eaten anything? I am in the midst of preparing a breakfast; my big meal of the day. You must join me.”

“Déjà Vu, Theresa.”

“You mean, with Catherine, when you first met?”

“Yes!”

“Not the same, Mr. D. Not exactly, anyway.

“Next to my family, you are my favorite person. I feel awful about the silence; especially after I learned of Cate’s illness. I could feel you berating me with harsh words. My loyalties were with her. I must endure the harsh words.”

“There are no harsh words, Theresa. I do return the sentiment and the compliment; you are a most special young lady.

“In the realm of expectations and predictions, I suppose what has happened was fated to happen; the disappearance over the horizon on some mission with someone else. She might have stayed here, only to do the same.”

“Mr. D., as I have said, I do not know the nature of her relationship with him, whether or not they share intimacies. I think it would be obvious why she might not share that aspect of the relationship with me, if it was so. She knows how I feel about you.

“Yes!, I know him, he seems very dedicated. In our conversations he has spoken much, and movingly, about the African scene. More I cannot say.”

“How about you Theresa, any romantic interests?”

“I meet so many people here, especially when I am out on the boards soliciting. There have been courtships which end in fizzles because I cannot give to any relationship what it requires. Maybe that’s because ‘Mr. Right’ has not happened along. Sometimes I fret over it, but the fretting passes.

“Lets’ not talk of that. Will you join me for the while?”

“Most assuredly, gladly; gratefully.”

“What have you been doing lately?”

“You might guess, but there is no guessing, because I am the same person still, who grapples with the impossible and the improbable. Still tilting at the windmills.”

“Ah!, but still by the seaside.”

“Yes!, with very fond memories of our brief times there together. Wishing they could happen again.”

“Probably not to be, Mr. D.

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"I will inform Catherine of your anxious visit here. She needs to be reminded of this something important. I may be loyal to her; but I need to be fair to you. She needs to communicate with you because it is the right thing to do.

"My guess is, she wants to do that very thing, but feels she has betrayed someone whom I know she loves almost as much as life itself. That would be hard for her to address. I suspect she would want to pour her heart and soul out to you, but doesn't know how to begin, now.

"I suspect she has many misgivings about this African thing. Not only because of her sickness. She has indicated the problems are immense; that all one can do is function on a very small scale, a single drop of moisture in a very huge lake. She feels the problems we face in the inner city are much more manageable. The problems there are so much more pervasive; greatly aggravated by politics and brutal power struggles. The people suffer greatly because their governments do not care; and there are so many living in abject, nearly, incontrovertible, poverty, with a host of illnesses, all exacerbated by malnutrition; the bane of overpopulation ravaging and outstripping resources.

"Perhaps now she will be forced to retreat, to conserve her energies; and to resume her writing."

"One might hope she has sobered in this ...er... misadventure.

"Has she given any indication when she might return?"

"No."

"Saint Catherine!"

"Oh!, Mr. D., you must never say that aloud again. The world has ears. From you, that would be a blasphemous mockery. I know you know it would hurt her deeply to hear you, of all people, say such a thing."

"But, Theresa, it is true.

"Don't take me amiss. I know the value of activism, getting involved, putting one's energies where one's mouth is. One needs to do the hands-on thing to fully understand.

"But for someone like Catherine, what she has done and is doing should be enough. She cannot save the world by sacrificing, throwing away her life.

"I would say the same should apply to you."

"Mr. D., sometimes there are no alternatives."

"You two have chosen to be social healers, like your father has chosen to be another kind of healer. Yes! it is a noble thing to do, and the need is ever present, unrelenting.

"I feel certain your father would counsel each of you to save something for yourselves, as he has done in his own life. He could not be a whole sufficient healer if he came to his patients exhausted each day."

"I know what you are saying is true. He has mother to look after him, though. She fends off a lot of intrusions into his life. She does her thing

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to address concerns of his, and hers, that reach beyond what he does on a daily basis. Her involvements in environmental issues, in charitable causes, the league of women voters, and her support for women's rights, working through established political channels, have helped relieve father beyond measure.

"I know what we are doing pleases father beyond praise. It is what he would have wanted from his children."

"But he wants you healthy and happy too."

"Yes, I know that to be the case also. We cannot be sometime things, can we? Here today, gone tomorrow. We give what we can while we can, wholeheartedly, with compassion. We cannot limit ourselves in a situation that is limitless; at least that is the way it seems.

"Before you chide me in this, I need to say I realize there are limits to what each of us may give to a situation.

"Perhaps, of the three of us, Lydia has the best instincts. She borrows from mother's approach, working through channels. Lobbying, and preparing legal briefs for sympathetic congressman and senators. I feel certain she is unstinting with her time. But I feel underneath it all, she does not want to get her hands dirty. She is above a certain kind of involvement. I do not fault her for that. All of her explanations for her own level of involvement are very plausible. She is disciplined person with a trained mind. She is aware of all the arguments. She is satisfied with little gains.

"She is becoming an expert witness in certain areas of environmental law, and in drafting legislation that pushes the issue of health care for the masses to the forefront. I admire her dedication and her tenacity in these matters.

"Of the three of us, I would say that I may be in the right place doing the right thing, as abides my upbringing, my training and my proclivities. I am being true to my own dictum with which I berate others: **"We are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution"**

"I believe Lydia has found her niche, whereas I believe Cate has not. Although Catherine and I are more alike in how we perceive a problem and how we address it, by pitching in, I mean; I know she has abilities that would serve her cause, our cause, better, if she would follow that route.

"Perhaps now, she will be more inclined to do so; with our very insistent encouragement."

"I doubt I would be able to influence her in the least. In the past she has looked to me for mostly uncritical support in whatever she chooses to do; mostly because we have agreed that the humanitarian thing is somehow a nonspecific thing; a host of feelings about life, to which we must remain ever responsive. That we will not allow ourselves the luxury of doing nothing. Doing something helps us. That missionary zeal.

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“Would she serve more if she wrote eloquently upon “Civilization And Its Discontents”? I believe she would. There is also the other side of the coin; The Imperatives Of Civilization.

“Tired, worn out saws, in the affairs of men. Things that bear repeating, that require the earnestness, elegance, and enthusiasm, besides the humanitarianism, and the logic, of Catherine. Yes! she could do that, she should do that.

“However, she is uncertain of the word, perhaps my influence has been hurtful to this process. If I had not come along with all my cynical stuff, she might have more naturally followed with the word, believing it was the way.”

“Mr. D., we all need a dose of Mr. D.. You are a sobering reality. Hard to ignore, and sometimes harder to refute.

“Despite all your withdrawal, and bitter cynicism, you do hack away in your garret, trying to provide self-evident solutions to the problems of mankind. Catherine admires this dogged idealism in you; she knows you will come up with the right solution; even though all agree with its plausibility, all too many are distracted in their own living to act upon any part of it. You are not willing to quit in the face of this ‘fatefully inevitable’ truth.”

“Alas, Theresa, where is our Catherine now? Is she in his arms, seeking refuge and comfort?”

“Mr. D., you must not torture yourself with such thoughts.

“I know she loves you more than words will ever say, and that when she returns, for, return she will, she will want to find you, to tell you all; and to reaffirm her love. I believe that to be true.

“Meanwhile she does what she does, you do what you do, and I do what I do.

“Mr. D., I care so much for you, as more than a friend, as a very special person, I want to comfort you with hugs, perhaps even hold you in my arms, knowing how this will make you feel.

“I cannot go further in my expression of affection toward you. Unlike Catherine, I do not desire to enter into a more intimate physical relationship with you.

“You are my beloved sister’s love and lover, a very sacrosanct, inviolable relationship to me; even if she has transgressed upon it. I want to believe she has not, as do you. I will hold faith until I know differently.

“Should I learn she is otherwise than I had thought, I imagine I will not think less of her. I know she will not attempt to rationalize any apparent transgression. She will apologize profusely to you for the betrayal and the pain she causes you; and will ask your forgiveness. Her arms will not embrace you with less heart-felt warmth than before.”

“Yes Yes Theresa, I want to believe in what you say; and should.

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“I wonder if mankind will ever grow beyond his limited scruples in these matters. We seem to expect so much of ourselves; and ask it of others. But from where did all this circumspection come?”

“Some might speculate that it is nature’s way.

“Jealousy. Is that a closely guarded natural phenomenon? What purpose does it serve?”

“As you say, Catherine will still be the same person; you would not think less of her if she found another lover. If anything, it would compromise your feelings toward me. You would feel supportive of your sister.

“How do we get there? Why can we not shrug it off? Why must it involve so many dire feelings?”

“It reminds me of what my wife had said to me before we were married; and were in the throes of separating from our existing partners; she was anticipating that we might not be able to get together because of these ‘scruples’, the ones that became part of her ethical self: ‘Do you want to give a poet’s romantic ending of sweet parting of lovers? That would give relief - be noble – you would have the memory and your ego would feel good because I do love you, and I gave myself to you.’

“I know this was intended to soothe something in me; but it was not a matter of a shallow ego, it was a whole me that was involved.

“Obviously she was rationalizing something that had gone beyond rationalizing. Something dire; perhaps incapable of finding her ‘noble’ resolution.”

“Interesting Mr. D.. I realize, as we discuss these things, that so much of our civilized behavior is anchored in a system of ethics, of taboos, of mores, of inculcations, of mimickings; and Moses edicts: ‘Thou shalt nots’. But, acutely enough, we pose the question: ‘How did we get there, and what purpose does it serve?’

“In attempting to answer such questions, one might imagine a safe and secure, impregnable family unit, perhaps an inviolable, sacrosanct, without being sanctimonious, relationship, a basic unit that gains unity and strength through a kind of ‘trust’, a reliance upon the other’s integrity, not as espoused with vows before the magistrate or the cleric, but in other ways. We might be thought to be serving some imperative of nature, without any conscious affirmations.

“Having doubts concerning the other’s loyalty, fidelity, integrity, seems corrosive of that basic unit. Jealousy; a most destructive emotion. Do you see yourself as being ‘jealous?’”

“It would seem I do harbor such feelings. Not without some qualifications. In the case of my wife, before we got together; we were equals in our situations; each came encumbered into the relationship; each had to resolve, rationalize, or violate tenets that mankind has developed over the millennia; ones that we do not casually transgress in spirit. Catherine and I came into our relationship, not as equals. For one

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thing, I am technically still married. I am also old enough to be Catherine's grandfather. A most improbable relationship, perhaps the most vulnerable kind, despite any amount of professed 'love'. Any jealousy I might experience must be tempered with many considerations which might actually define that 'love'. If I love Catherine, I must allow her what is natural to her; I cannot insist upon any prerogatives that are not mine; not that one can, in any case.

"What my wife and I did in the beginning of our relationship was far more predictable and 'ordinary' than that of Catherine and I. True enough, all the things that you have mentioned about 'conventional' behavior applied, once we did get together. All the concerns about loyalty, fidelity and integrity, and 'trust', were expected to apply to the new relationship, whereas they might not apply so strictly, observing only the tenets of some unusual form agreed to, (certain 'vows'), by the parties involved, to Catherine and I.

"I would think it would be appropriate for Catherine to explore something beyond what she has experienced with me, whereas I would not be allowed the same liberty; which has more to do with loving than ethical behavior. She might also love me to the same degree, but unable to resist temptations that are more appropriate to her age.

"We know none of these things with any kind of certainty.

"We authors dabble in improbables like Faust and Gretchen/Marguerite; perhaps as matter of luxury in the garret; or a desire for a sweet young thing that catches our fancy; again the product of idle hours. The animus within us; or an 'itch'."

"We'll know more soon, Mr. D.. I don't want to be put in a position of judging my sister. I will support her unreservedly, and know I will feel very sympathetic toward you if things take an adverse turn."

"If Catherine is happy, what will any of it matter? 'No fool like an old fool.'"

"Mr. D., Cate will not regard you as an old fool, nor would I. Each of us has been enriched in meeting you; whatever Catherine's 'new' circumstances, she would not want to sever her relationship with you; certainly, not upon demand. Should she take the worst course, I would not want to sever yours and my relationship as a way of showing support for her.

"I suspect, as intelligent adults we will rise above the more petty concerns; but how to handle jealousy, I cannot imagine how best.

"I am intrigued by the tenor of our conversation regarding the delicacies that lead us into such a dilemma. I can only imagine what it would mean to share a lover with another woman. I can only imagine a withholding of something vital to myself; as a way of protecting myself from something I imagine to be very hurtful.

"As I imagine it, in a loving intimate relationship, one is making oneself vulnerable; that is, one is yielding all that one is to another

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person; entrusting that other person to reciprocate, to acknowledge the situation for what it is; an inviolable union between two people that cannot be breached even by the most lurid temptation.

“We might call such a relationship ‘unconditional’ love. But, somehow the notion of ‘possession’ creeps in. The expectation, from whence ever it comes, leads us into something corrosive; possession. He is ours, or she is ours; with or without the recital of vows, that is the expectation. So we ask, ‘How did we get there; what purpose is being served?’

“Expectations lead us into irrational assumptions. After all is said, what can we truly expect of another person? Are we not fortunate to get anything at all from another being that is actually not us, is outside of us, is free to move away from us? What rights do we really have with respect to that other person? Is the adherence to conventional behavior a stricture we apply to the situation, to ‘hopefully’ guarantee a certain result?

“I would say we have failed to devise a successful method. ‘Love’ is not what it is cracked up to be. Smart people enter relationships cynically, no!?”

“I doubt you will do so, Theresa. As a smart person, you will proceed cautiously; but also with expectations.

“It is others who will wish you well, and perhaps others who will envy your happiness.”

“Mr. D., jealousy, and now envy. That one should come so treacherously close to others as to suffer such taints.”

“Theresa, we are made of base materials, oft’ referred as the human clay. Even such as I, but I doubt I would envy your happiness. In knowing you, as I imagine I do now, as a confidante, as someone with whom I have shared thoughts and feelings, only shared previously with my wife, and more recently with your sister, I feel closer, more proprietary with regard to you, reluctant to share that you with someone else, if it meant losing what we have shared. As a selfish concern, fed with a jealous regard. Which you would abhor, perhaps rightly so.”

“Mr. D., we are getting ahead of ourselves in all of this. Lets let it lie. I feel I am being pushed into a corner where it will be required of me to promise something, or deny something.”

“I ask none, and consider myself fortunate to know you as I do. How like your sister are you, in the way you think and the way you put things. Both from the same pod. Remarkable!”

The telephone sounded. Theresa responded before the message machine kicked in. Suddenly a look of apprehension dominated her countenance. Something about Catherine being back in the hospital. About the medication not working this time, condition very serious.

When she was through, she hesitated for a few moments with out saying anything; then went to her desk to consult her files; looking at the

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clock above. She picked up the phone, dialing. When the other end responded, she asked for some individual she seemed to know.

“Dr. Lowenstein, this is Theresa Tellerman; Catherine is in the hospital in Nairobi, this is her second hospitalization for what appeared to be an insect-borne (perhaps a tick), viral infection, identified as Boola-Boola, detected and confirmed through PCR, ELISA and Western Blot, that seemed to respond to a broad-spectrum anti viral medication. She is not responding to the medication this time.”

William gathered that she had called the CDC in Atlanta, and the scientist on the other end of the line had speculated that perhaps her immune system had fought off the initial foray; that the anti-viral was not the successful agent. Theresa was nodding her head, and writing down a phone number and the name of someone.

Without a word to William she dialed the new number, which, when it answered she asked for a Dr. Norman Klein, mentioning that a Dr. Lowenstein at the CDC suggested his name.

Soon the Dr. came on the line.

“Hello Dr. Klein, Dr. Aaron Lowenstein at the CDC suggested I call you regarding my ailing sister who is in a Nairobi hospital with her second hospitalization for a disease diagnosed as Boola-Boola. She has been placed on a broad spectrum antiviral which is not working, a medication which seemed to work the first time. Dr. Lowenstein believes her immune system was able to beat off the virus the first time around. He mentioned you are working with the virus for strategic purposes, but that you might know of some kind of antidote.”

Theresa listened for a minute.

Then answered. “I cannot say how sick she is. Except that it seems serious. No, there wasn’t any mention of bleeding. She is 25 years of age; and has only rarely been ill.”

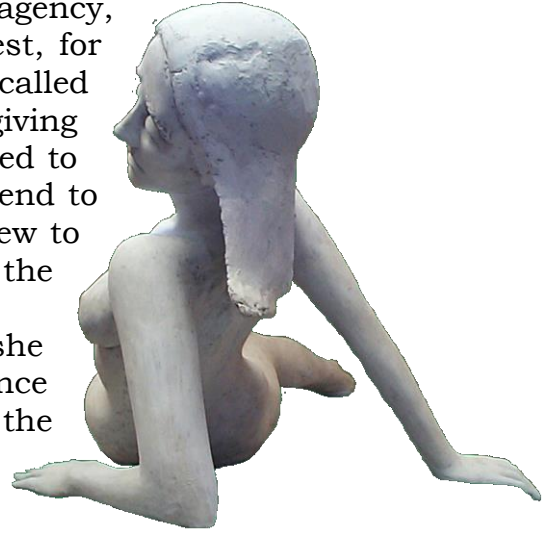
She listened some more. Then nodded several times, and placed the receiver in its cradle.

Followed by this, she called information for the Nairobi hospital, allowing the operator to dial the number. When the connection was made, she asked for the patient Catherine Tellerman. Being unable to reach her sister, she asked for the nurse’s station. A nurse came on the line. Theresa informed her that she was Catherine’s sister, that she was following the directions of a physician who was studying Boola-Boola; and instructed her to discontinue any medications to her sister; that she intended to book a flight to Nairobi, and book a flight to leave with Catherine soonest after arrival to take her to a US government facility that would treat her expeditiously. The nurse advised not coming to Nairobi; that it would speed things up if she simply made arrangements to get Catherine a flight from Nairobi to the US without delay.

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Without any hesitation, or look in Williams' direction she placed another call; this time obviously to a travel agency, attempting to book a flight out of Nairobi, soonest, for Catherine. Once she gained the information, she called the Hospital again to speak to the same nurse, giving her the flight information. The flight was scheduled to leave in two hours. The nurse said she would attend to all the details, and get her on the flight, which flew to London, to resume, in one hour after landing, the flight to New York.

Theresa made another call to someone she seemed to know very well, requesting an ambulance meet Flight 777 from London at Kennedy in the morning, to receive Catherine, who needed to be transported to Fort Dietrick in Fredrick, Maryland, where they will be expecting her.



News of Catherine

Finally satisfied the situation was under control, she looked at William.

“Catherine is in the hospital again, in Nairobi. Apparently very ill. The CDC believes she fought off the original viral infection with her own immune system, which was confirmed by the second physician at Fort Dietrick. The second one recommended getting her off the antiviral, which he believed will only amplify her condition at this point in time. He also recommended she be brought expeditiously to Fort Dietrick for treatment. With a nurse’s help in Nairobi, Catherine will be placed on a flight out of Kenya in two hours, with a one hour layover in London, before resuming to New York. She should be at Kennedy in twelve hours, where she will be ambulated to Fort Dietrick.

“The viral infection is known as Boola-Boola; suspected as an insect borne disease, sometimes fatal, that is being studied by the US Government at their facility in Maryland. A physician by the name of Klein has strongly recommended she be sent there as expeditiously as possible. She should be at the Fort in sixteen hours.

“The Nairobi nurse said she would explain everything to Catherine, and let her know that everyone was pulling for her back home.

“Her best chance!?? The Dr. seems to believe so. He could not tell me anything specific, for security reasons, I assume.”

“Wow!, Theresa you are a whirlwind. Cool! I must say. If there is a chance for Catherine, you will have made it possible.”

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“Perhaps Mr. D.. A lot must happen. The nurse felt Catherine was losing ground. Not in immediate peril, but a lot of unknowns. She felt Catherine’s best asset was her very strong constitution, and the fact that her body might have fought off the original attack. She agreed with the Dr. who recommended taking her off the medication. It’s as much a placebo for the physicians as it is a dubious remedy for such a virulent disease. So many people there are vulnerable because of ill health and poor nutrition. Its hard to qualify the success of those who do survive; perhaps a hope for a vaccine. Although insect-borne, the virus flourishes in the sapien host; origins unknown; as is the case with a lot of diseases on the Continent; carried by what is identified as ‘natural’ hosts.”

“She will be with us soon.”

“My guess, we will not be admitted into the Fort, not without a lot of red tape.”

“You must really thank that nurse in Nairobi.”

“It would seem so, especially if she follows through.”

“Hopefully she is strong enough to endure the flight, and still have something left over for the Doctor to treat. Hopefully we will be able to see her, to give her our support.

“Mr. D., it seems our meal preparations were interrupted; so a bit of reheating, and more cooking. But somehow, my appetite has flown the coup.”

“As has mine, Theresa. But being a good girl, you will not neglect your health.”

“Anxious moments, Mr. D. I so want her to recover, to be well, to be herself again. I love her so much; perhaps too selfishly.”

Theresa suddenly became very emotional; tears welled up; she began to cry in earnest. William moved toward her, putting his arms around her with a gentle hug, holding her close. She let go a little in this embrace, sobbing some, then recovering her composure, withdrawing only a little from the closeness of William.

Slowly, silently, Theresa returned to the meal preparations. She felt slightly awkward in William’s arms. His closeness in that moment seemed to repel her. She was aware of the feeling, wondering why she felt such a thing. She realized she must conceal what she felt. It would horrify William to know his gesture offended her in some unknown unrealized way.

Theresa, being who she was, honest, earnest, open, would not conceal such a thing from him.

“Mr. D., some feeling of awkwardness came over me, as you held me, only trying to comfort me. I so appreciate the gesture. I do not consider it inappropriate, but I did feel awkward. Perhaps it is because we are alone here. If Catherine had been present, it would have seemed less complicated.

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“Perhaps it is me, Mr. D.. I trust your motives; so it must be me. It seemed I crossed some threshold for a moment, letting myself feel your warmth. It was comforting; also pleasurable.

“I do not want you to misconstrue what I am saying here. The awkwardness I began to feel, almost seemed to contain an element of repulsion, which is terribly wrong, and unfair. This admission says more about me than it does you.

“I’m sorry Mr. D., I wanted you to know.”

“I too felt awkward, naturally enough. It is only because I do not spend a lot of time ‘comforting’ young women; I am inexperienced. I’m sure there are conflicting waves of feeling as one engages in such behavior.

“You must know, you are not any young woman; you are so very special, and to me, as close as I might expect to come to another human being, excepting, previously my wife, and now, your sister. I like to believe this is based on a mutuality of feelings and of trust in the other person. Perhaps I am mistaken in according and extending to you the same feelings as though they were reciprocal.”

“Oh!, Mr. D., I have said too much. Please forgive me. It is me who has said something wrong here.”

Theresa, very like her sister, quickly embraced him, looking at him warmly and beseechingly, seeking an indulgent forgiveness. As was with Catherine, when she took the initiative in these matters of heart, William was the one who felt awkward.

“Theresa, I am so grateful you are willing to be open and honest with me. That means more to me than anything I can say at this very moment. You must trust that you can say anything to me. You must.”

“Let it pass for now. I feel a tinge of appetite returning; perhaps I am hungry after all; the food is beginning to excite my olfactory sense. How about you Mr. D.”

So like her sister in gently putting aside matters that will not resolve themselves through more discussion in the moment.

William, relieved, nodded his assent to all things suggested.

They dined quietly, each absorbed in their own thoughts, mostly regarding their concern for Catherine.

“I take it you will be heading for Detrick in the morning.”

“I was hoping you would accompany me, Mr. D.. You could stay here in one of the spare rooms tonight. We can breakfast here, and set off early for Detrick. She should be arriving at Kennedy around 9 PM, and at Detrick around 1 AM. Actual flight time is ten hours, departure from Nairobi should be happening soon, with the hour layover in London, making it eleven hours. It is a bit confusing because it is now 6 PM in Nairobi; eight hours difference.”

The phone sounded again. It was the nurse in Nairobi confirming that Catherine was aboard the flight, which was leaving that very moment.

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Theresa thanked her profusely for all she had done. The nurse wished only the best for Catherine.

“She’s on the way.

“If we left here around 6 AM we would avoid a lot of the early morning rush around the city; after that, we should still arrive at a decent morning hour at Detrick.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

“Meanwhile we ‘pray’ for the best. Its times like these, I might even resort to ‘prayer’.”

“Voodoo, dear lady!. Its people like you and that nurse in Nairobi, and hopefully that Doctor at Detrick, that Catherine really needs.”

“Don’t discount yourself, Mr. D.. Chances are, if Catherine is not delirious, she is thinking of you; anxious to see you.”

“One might wonder about that.”

“Meanwhile, Mr. D., I can show you around our facility here. A thriving place really; lots of needy people out there.

“Catherine has put a lot of thought and effort in making the place cheerie; bright colors, restful prints of the impressionists, and of course, her favorite Gauguin, about which you and she have spent much time discussing. Nothing drab here. Very clean, very circumspect. Thoughtful and indulgent of others. Upbeat. Soft music in the background. Well-mannered people on the ramparts, treating people with respect. Catherine insists upon these conditions, as essential.”

As they walked from the rectitude of Theresa and Catherine’s apartment, a noticeable hubbub greeted them. Theresa headed for hers and Catherine’s office to consult with the office person regarding any impending crises. Nothing out of the ordinary. Two women from the Pro-Choice group were waiting to talk to her about what was happening in South Dakota with regard to the Anti-Abortion issue. It seemed serious. The religious Right maintains its vigil, looking for cracks in the system. Hell hath no fury like a fat Christian thumping the tome, unless it’s a Muslim thumping the Koran. The first ones on the front line to deny this life for the next one. ABSURD!

The supplicants. This lovely young woman, donning her humanity, smiling, succoring; giving of herself. Not spouting any thing. Not proselytizing. Theresa, a miracle; like her sister who started this whole thing. A commitment? He wondered about Catherine, if she should survive, would she return to this place?

Theresa asked William to accompany her ‘on her rounds’ as she put it. All the overnight beds had been occupied, their occupants now expected to restore order to the dorm, to clean themselves up, to feed themselves, to meet with the counselors. To make an effort to get on with their part of surviving. Those who could, did, and those who couldn’t were counseled, and would hopefully be located in a proper facility.

Theresa pointed to the sign that Catherine had printed for all to see.

To Civilization On The Road

For Those Who Enter These Portals. Be Mindful That There Are Many Others In A Predicament Similar To Yours. Saying This Does Not Mean That We Do Not Care For Each Of You Equally.

Everything In This Establishment Is Limited. We Are Here To Help You Within Those Limits. We Will Do Our Part To The Best Of Our Abilities; We Expect You Will Do Your Part As Well, To The Best Of Your Abilities.

We Began This Establishment Without Knowing What We Could Really Do To Alleviate The Pain And Suffering Of Our Fellow Man; Particularly Those Desperately In Need.

We Have Learned Much Since We Have Opened Our Doors. We Welcome Your Suggestions. We Have Learned Not To Encourage False Expectations. Instead We Expect You To Make The Supreme Effort To Make The Most Of Your Situation. We Will Aid You In Whatever Way We Are Able.

We Will Feed You On A Temporary Basis, We Will Bed You On A Temporary Basis, With Space Available. We Will Provide Medical Assistance When Feasible, And With Counseling, We Will Refer You To Other Appropriate Organizations Or Facilities. We Will Offer Legal Services When Necessary. We Will Follow Up On All Referrals.

Ours Is A Partnership With You. Your Humanity Is A Very Great Concern Of Ours.

We Will Not Preach To You.

A sobering sign for the supplicant, William thought. But very human. A near monumental commitment. Theresa was the go-getter who made so much of it possible, while Catherine worked in the trenches; that is, until she chose another venue. Theresa had filled in for Catherine, along with all of her other self-imposed tasks. She was forced to call upon others to help her. There seemed enough volunteers at this point in time to relieve Theresa of some of the most grueling, time-consuming labors. The responsibility was beginning to weigh her down. She could not be a hard-liner. She needed that something that Catherine was able to manage, that special ability to help and to get those she was helping to assume some part of the burden for their condition, regardless of the direness of their situation.

Theresa remembered overhearing Catherine, confronted with the lonely, dejected, poverty ridden, ailing elderly lady who continually appeared with her plaint of wanting to die. Catherine frustrated by the hopelessness of her situation finally spoke to her almost unsympathetically; 'You want to die, I'll help you to die.' The old lady (Lazarus Lady, Catherine called her) appeared less frequently, never complaining to Catherine again. Doubtlessly a difficult moment for Catherine; her own humanity called into question.

William watched for some time, the comings and goings of the needy ones, and how they were treated by the staff. Most kindly, never a harsh

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word; only gentle reminders, even when the supplicant wanted to rage at the all too apparent injustice of the world. Many people with all sense of pride battered beyond reclaim; some bitter; some completely humiliated beyond any belief in their basic humanity. Some in trouble with the law, with drug and alcohol related problems, others with glaring health problems, suffering from both hunger and malnutrition. Others in trouble with their parents, with loved ones, some physically battered, some molested, some young pregnancies seeking an out. To any man or woman who entered the premises, the unmistakable mark of poverty; and totally down-trodden; those whom the Gip referred as 'social retards'; why not simply 'social rejects'? If the author was not so immersed in this tale, he would ask, "How does that grab yuh?" From the leader of the free world.

He marveled at Catherine and Theresa, and began to marvel at the patience of the staff; each member perhaps personally interviewed and chosen by one of the two sisters.

William sensed he could not do as they do; his humanity more a invention, or concoction, of the ivory tower. He would only rail against the 'fatefully inevitable' without being able to help anyone, perhaps unwilling to do so.

Still, he pondered what was before him. This unstinting service to humanity these remarkable girls were providing. His new perceptions of the human condition at this level. This was but a 'microcosm' of the larger world. The unseen. Why should all this be necessary? Such an excess of humanity to suffer this fate. Inconsequential life. How can this be?

No answer was forthcoming. Lucky not to be one of them!! Enough of a dribble coming in with Social Security; Medicare, with Supplemental Insurance, a home he built to live in until he walked no more. How precarious any of it, all subject to the whims and vagaries of the class of beasts to which he belonged. (There but for the grace of You Know Who, go I.)

The day wore on. He hadn't seen much of Theresa. She sought him out briefly to take him to the kitchen area for some lunch, of which she herself did not partake; on the run.

"I called Lydia, who will join us tomorrow at Detrick."

It was now late afternoon; time to switch to the evening and night schedule.

Theresa came to find him again to return to her apartment.

"I need not ask what you think. I can see much written upon your face. Not a pretty picture at all, is it? We are a drop in the bucket.

"Catherine thought she was going after bigger game in Africa. A grandiose wild goose chase. Why not Bangladesh or Calcutta? Seething humanity."

To Civilization On The Road

“A bit of harsh judgment of your sister, no!?”

“I am frustrated by what she has done, what she has done to herself. If she survives this illness, I will personally curtail her activities. She will be confronted by a different sister. Not so sweet and compliant.”

“You can count on me to help.”

“I’d like to give that asshole she ran off with a piece of my mind.”

“Why an asshole?”

“He has essentially abandoned her, after luring her there. Catherine, another expendable in the long line of expendables. A throwaway.”

“That is an even more harsh judgment.”

“What would you like to drink? I’m having a glass of wine. I need to relax a bit, switch gears. You like beer, right. I have some Lowenbrau.”

“That would suit me fine.

“You look bushed. Can I order some takeout nearby?”

“I’ll be OK after a bit; things cost a lot around here.”

“My treat, Theresa!”

“Hold off for a while. I have some good left-overs in the fridge. I also have some munchies to go with your beer.”

She opened the beer, pouring it into a tall glass, and poured herself a glass of white wine. She handed the beer to William, and raised her glass of wine, “Cheers!, Mr. D.; and to Catherine’s good health!”

Opposite him, she sat on the cushy couch that might have come from the Sally Ann, as he sat upon a swivelly padded thing with arm rests, that passed as an executive chair, once removed.

“Lydia is in DC, so she will drive up tomorrow morning to Detrick. She plans to meet us there.

“I would have called my parents, but since you were along, I thought better of it. I imagine father might not have been able to get away anyway. Mother would prove a disaster under the circumstances.”

“Thank You for that.”

“Mr. D., what were your impressions of our establishment here?”

“Impressions!?”

“A smooth running place.”

“It wasn’t so smooth in the beginning. We really didn’t know what we were doing.”

“Otherwise, I am forced to take an even harder look at the human condition. Of so much redundantly inconsequential life; do I dare use the word ‘human’?”

“You may use the word. When you relate on the individual level, they become human; not a mass of redundantly inconsequential life.

“I must add, only for so many hours a day. I could not do this 24/7, as they say, these days. Ten hours a day, with days off, is approaching the breaking point. My tank of empathy runs on empty sometimes. Then its time to take a break. Because you arrived, I started later than usual,

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but still I began to feel drained in the last hour. Its been a difficult week so far.

"The staff will need to manage without me tomorrow. There are some very committed and dedicated people working here, so I feel confident they can handle anything.

"The staff is fairly well paid from the steady stream of donations that we receive. You probably noticed the attitude of the staff; very patient; and indulgent."

"Yes I did notice; and I imagined you and Catherine conducting lengthy interviews to select the best people."

"I do not know what we would do if it was not for the steady stream of donations. There is a fair amount of volunteer help; but the latter is unpredictable; sometimes too little and sometimes too much; very difficult to schedule.

"We are still learning; the single most important consideration is setting limits; or at least recognizing what those limits are. We can only do so much. We know we cannot save mankind. At least, I cannot."

"I imagine, if Catherine is able to think of things objectively at this time, she realizes she has suffered a defeat in this saving business."

"Yes, I imagine she feels a lot of things; but I imagine also she is frightened. She could use a lot of loving herself."

"A step backwards, Theresa."

"Yes Mr. D., it would seem so!

"Like you, I can imagine the four of us lying upon your bluff as we were that day, so happy, full of wonder, somewhat oblivious to a lot of things. Getting to know you.

"Now, to reflect upon how you have affected our lives.

"How Cate resisted your pleas to not go overboard.

"You must be very kind and loving toward her now Mr. D.

"Of course, we do not know how she will respond; but love her all the same, even if she should seem strange, and perhaps unresponsive.

"She will be carrying a heavy load of guilt, I imagine; and will feel very humiliated by her whole experience, as seen through the eyes of others. A huge price to pay. If she has any presence of mind, she must be in a torment."

"She is probably saying to herself, 'If only I can get well, if only I can get well.'"

"Soon, maybe we will be able to help her."

"Mr. D., I am hungry enough to dig into leftovers; how about you."

"Fine with me."

"Let me get busy then.

"We will need to get up around five so we can have a good breakfast. I'd like to get on the road by six.

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“So I will be hitting the sack around nine. You can use Catherine’s room. It will be OK for tonight.

“We’ll see what happens at Detrick before we try to make any other plans.”

“If I can be of any help to her, I might find a place near Detrick, until something happens one way or the other.”

“Doubtlessly, you will be a help to her.

“I will not be able to stay unless it looks (God forbid) like she is not going to make it. Then I will stay. Otherwise, I imagine I would be shuttling back and forth until she is released.”

“Another Tellerman running on the edge.”

“Perhaps Mr. D.; what can one do? One does what one can until he can do no longer.”

“Seems unintelligent to me. It sounds like Catherine.”

“Oh!, come on Mr. D., tell me you haven’t been there. I happen to know you have busted your ass on many occasions, for good or glory. Catherine tells all.”

“Because I have pushed hard, like some obdurate thing, might earn me a choice epithet ‘stupid’; ‘dumb as a post’. It would be appropriate. One must do in order to learn his limits; even though he might rationalize them before hand. Even at my advanced age, I am learning that what I could do yesterday, I cannot do today.”

It was seven thirty as Theresa placed things on the table.

They dined in silence, each with their own thoughts.

Theresa rose from the table, gathered the dishes, proceeding to wash them.

“Mr. D., I’m going spend some time logging the day, then pack a few things, take a shower, set the alarm, and hit the hay.

“Think of Catherine, all warm and friendly, as you sleep in her bed.”

“Thanks for that Theresa. We’ll see what the morrow brings.”

They did get under way by six in the morning. Although it was still a warm September, the air seemed tempered by the changing seasons, cool, as though the autumn had already arrived. The city was stirring, but soon they had crossed the bridge to Jersey and were on the turnpike heading south. Once on the pike Theresa adjusted her seat to a more relaxed position. The dawn had arisen, soon to be greeted by the sun.

The traffic began to increase to a steady thick flow as people headed for the workplace.

The two occupants of the car were silent as though they might be total strangers, one perhaps a hitchhiker.

Until Theresa spoke, changing the whole tenor of the aphony.

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“Mr. D., can you imagine you and Catherine sticking it out; getting together again. I imagine you will be a key to her recovery; your indulgence and forgiveness.”

“Perhaps you imagine too much.

“Maybe this Doctor will prove her savior and new lover.”

“Mr. D., you have no faith. Catherine is not that insensitive, or that shallow.”

“But she may be seriously affected by her illness.

“Suppose he is a young good-looking fellow?”

“If he is, don’t count me out of the running.

“I’m being silly of course, as are you.

“Lets not get ahead of ourselves here.”

“I am in the position of the guy in the wings, as I have been from the beginning, with your sister. I must stand back, perhaps waiting for my cue, to pick up the leavings.”

“Have you always felt that with her?”

“Not always; she tried very hard not to let me feel that way, but I’m sure she knew I felt that way.

“I would forget once in while who I was, what I was. She made that possible, but it was a lot of concern for her. She thought my attitude too influenced by extraneous considerations, and damaging to our relationship. Not equals in the situation.”

“She never spoke that way about your relationship. She mostly spoke of missing you. We both did.

“She was very much under the sway of your thinking in all things; your perspective, your years of experience, of searching for the truth, was like a beacon to her.”

“Her mistake was falling in love with her mentor.”

“I don’t happen to believe that. One loves, that’s all. She loves you, and you love her.”

“May it always be so.”

Fort Detrick

They arrived at the Fort at ten; as anticipated, there was a very restrictive security at the entrance.

Theresa explained our presence there, naming Dr. Klein as their contact person. She was asked to wait in the designated area until Dr. Klein could be contacted.

Soon, a young woman, very circumspect in manner and dress, came to their car identifying herself as Dr. Klein’s administrative assistant. She informed them that the Doctor was with Catherine now, that she was conscious, coherent, and stable, but with an elevated temperature.

“Your sister has been informed that you were on your way here. Your other sister Lydia is already here. When the Doctor thinks it appropriate

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he will allow visitors. He seemed especially anxious to speak with you Theresa.

“Who is this gentleman?”

“This is Mr. Duranachek, a very close friend of Catherine’s, and a friend of mine and Lydia’s. We believe she would be very desirous of seeing Mr. D.”

“There may be a security problem with Mr. Duranachek. It will depend on an assessment by the Doctor, whether he will be admitted. I can give you, Theresa, a clearance, if you should desire to meet with your other sister, or I can let her know you are out here.”

“I’d choose not to abandon Mr. D. at this time.”

“Don’t worry about me; just as long as they don’t grab a hold of me as a suspicious character, I’ll be OK on my own.”

“I think I’ll wait here for now; and Yes!, please let Lydia know we are here.”

“OK, and I suspect the Doctor will be available before too long.”

The waiting scene, always dreaded by William. So arbitrary; always hinged upon the importance of someone else’s manufactured bullshit. Fort Detrick; the Fort of Death, where Catherine will hope to be reborn. That ought to put a spin on things. Strange bedfellows. One wonders how diabolical the Doctor.

Lydia soon appeared, all aglow, hugging her sister with such enthusiasm; and even hugging Mr. D., however briefly, but genuinely enough.

“I haven’t spoken to anyone yet, so I haven’t any news, other than what the Administrative Assistant has been allowed to pass on.

“That was quick thinking on your part Tess. Imagine, from Nairobi to Fort Detrick in fifteen hours.”

“Actually seventeen, counting the two hour wait in Nairobi., but quite an achievement, Yes!; and a debt of gratitude to the nurse who handled everything in Nairobi, and shortened the time by a couple of days.

“We shall see about the wisdom of it all.”

“Oh!, there’s wisdom alright; and good instincts. Along with father’s good friend, Doctor Lowenstein, making the savvy suggestion.”

“All these doctors with their noses connected to some pretty harmful stuff, some on each side of the aisle.”

“Be careful Mr. D., someone might be listening. Catherine’s life might be at stake.”

“Lydia, we could discuss that conundrum on another level, but without much better accord, I suspect.”

“Water over the dam now, Mr. D.; she’s in trouble, and we have to help her.”

“Lyd, don’t jump on Mr. D.; he’s with us.”

“OK, sweetheart. My apologies, Mr. D.”

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A tallish, trim looking man, was coming through the gate, and headed in their direction. It was Doctor Klein. Introductions were passed around.

“I want to commend you Theresa on the actions you have taken. Your sister’s condition is serious, and time was of essence. We will, I will, do my very best for her.

“I may need some permissions to infiltrate a serum that has shown great promise in the lab. Her blood shows a medium titer of a very tenacious viral infestation. Her immune system is putting out a good effort, but I don’t want her to get any weaker than she is, so will monitor very closely the titer. At any time she may need some help. If her temperature should rise any higher, without any noticeable diminishment of the titer, I feel I will need to intervene to help her.

“The serum is obviously very experimental, and a closely guarded secret; I cannot reveal any more detail than that. But I have confidence in our experimental parameters.

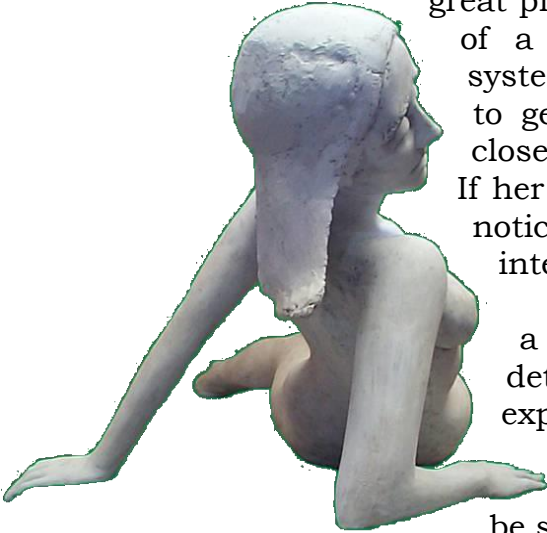
“In a way, your sister would be a guinea pig; not regrettably, but realistically speaking, it may be so characterized.

“I will say, even though we feel she is licking it again this time, the virus may yield, only to return from its hidey-hole with greater virility next time. She will eventually need to deal with the latent aspect of this beastie. I would like to deal with that part of the equation when she is healthy. So at this time I am in favor of her immune system winning this battle, with sundry aids to it.

“It is most unfortunate that the broad spectrum anti-viral she was given only exacerbated her condition. A flukey situation where her immune system was shutting down because there was something else out there seemingly taking over part of the job; only the job was not getting done. Most of these anti-virals are still experimental; on the African continent, they are so desperate they give the green light early, and often prematurely. There are so many emerging diseases there, many of them transmittable. Boola Boola is one amongst many; not the worst, but still with a great potential for fatality, by simply overwhelming the immune system. At least it is not of the hemorrhagic kind; and so far, apparently not transmissible from human to human. Unfortunately this ‘bug’ gets more than one chance to get the infected; it does lie low, somewhat latent; then strikes again.

“If you had not called when you did, I would not care to speculate what might have happened.

“Your sister is alert and coherent, although feverish. She knows you are here. I will allow each of you to visit her for a short time, as a kind of



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boost to her moral; but until she passes through this phase, or into a new one, I want her to rest as much as possible; let her body have a go at it. Can we settle on that?"

"Of course, Doctor Klein, Of course."

"I will obtain a clearance, for you, Mr. Duranachek.

"At this point in time, I'll let the two girls visit her for ten minutes, and that will be it for the interim; regardless of what Catherine wants. She has had a long tiring journey from Nairobi; I must say her condition is better than I had expected; grateful for the condition of the patient.

"However, I'm afraid I will be, excuse the expression, the hard-assed doctor.

"Suspecting your importance to the young lady in question, I'll get you in there Mr. Duranachek, I promise."

"Thank you, Doctor Klein."

Theresa and Lydia accompanied the Doctor on his return through the gate. Theresa seemed to study the youngish, nice-looking physician with some interest. Lydia conducted her own sidelong scrutiny of this man. Perhaps another challenge for Catherine? AH SO! The mysterious workings of Fate, and silly ponderings of the author, who may be indulging in another soap opera.

The girls returned with moderately worried expressions upon their faces. Theresa was the first to speak. "Mr. D., she knows you are here, and wants to see you. The Doctor knows also. She asked me to tell you she is sorry for everything.

"Catherine seems quite listless, but was definitely glad to see us, and wanted us to stay longer, but was aware enough of her situation to know that she must yield for the time.

"The doc said if she continues to hold her own, he would allow us another visit in the afternoon. He knows of our commitments. I told him you planned to stay nearby, and informed him that you and Catherine have been very close, but that none of the three of us has seen her since she traveled to Africa. We told him of the circumstances of her going to that continent, but do not know much in the way of details of her life there.

"I think the doctor will work with us. If he feels visits are helpful, he will encourage them for short periods. I guess I am saying he does not expect a quick recovery; more like her body getting back in balance, and building up her strength for a more radical treatment.

"Anyway Mr. D.; a siege. You may not want to stay here. It's not a very pretty place."

"We'll see what happens."

"Shall we try to find a reasonable looking place for lunch?"

"Yes, of course; this parking lot is a most depressing place."

Lydia

“Mr. D. I realize I have completely lost all contact with you. I have had been pretty much out of contact with my sisters for the last nine months that I don’t know much about what has been happening in your life.”

“Nothing more nor less than usual. I hadn’t heard from Catherine for three months; my calls, e-mails, letters, to the city were not answered. Anxious for some news, I drove to the city yesterday. Theresa apologized for the conspiracy of silence; but once I had arrived, didn’t hold back anything she knew or suspected. And Lo! While I was there chatting with Theresa, the miracle nurse called from Nairobi.

“It seems much has been happening in your life, as has been happening with both Theresa and Catherine. Dedicated public servants.

“Mr. D. I do not view myself as a public servant. I’m in it for what I believe is right, for myself, then others. Perhaps the public benefits in the long run, but I do not regard myself as a benefactor. Law, per se, is a construct, one way of trying to impose order upon and within the chaos of the milling multitudes, a way of trying to avoid collisions of conflicting interests, and accounting the basic contradictions found in human nature. Most of what I do has been tried before in various ways. Sometimes a thing is in, then it is out, depending on what particular party or special interest prevails at the moment. There, in the Capital, some people imagine they are above the Law. Attempting to obtain a consistency in the creation and the application of law is an elusive goal. It is another kind of labor in the trenches, like what Tess and Cate have been doing in the Big City. To me, it is, personally, more rewarding than doing what they are doing.

“I know Theresa believes I don’t like getting my hands dirty, or spills on my clothes. There is some truth to that.”

“Lydia, I thought we had already been through that discussion, and had resolved our differences. You are holding a grudge somewhere in there.”

“I know you and Cate were disappointed when I decided to leave Hell’s Kitchen. The triumvirate became dismembered. One day you may learn to appreciate my path.”

“Please, Lyd, this is not necessary. Neither Cate nor I judged your decision; yes!, we were disappointed; you were a loss to us. We were a fledgling thing; we are still, by most standards. We felt we needed that invincible solidarity of three of us; or, so we thought at the time.

“So, nobody is indispensable. The place even runs well without Catherine. Most likely it would do so without me; and so on, until perhaps it would become a different place, under different management. As it is, we still remain focused on what we had set out to do; I am not the one to change that.

To Civilization On The Road

“So you make too much of your departure, as a negative that we hold against you. Not so, not at all.”

William could do little more than silently listen to this conversation. He was a shirker, a disbeliever; no help to them at all. What he had seen on the previous day did little to change his mind. Yes! some of the downtrodden were given a momentary lift. Hoorah! Hoorah! Perhaps Lydia was on the right track. Who knows!

A new edifice was needed, but ever hopeless of ever being built. One needed to raze the old; begin anew, with new ideas, new energy, new commitment to first principles, unwaveringly. No more lip service. Everybody turn to, everybody; **'we are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution'**, so the youthful beauty and prescient Theresa admonishes us.

This place in which we find ourselves, this oblate spheroid upon which we find ourselves, or about which we have been told from our earliest days since we were an incubus, has been variously referred as paradise; as it must be, because it is the only place where we can live, can survive. It's a leap of faith to think of this place as paradise, when in fact it might be the opposite, an infernal region, a sorry-assed place, where one life form devours another life form, where human beings wear themselves out against one another. A place of 'civilized violence'.



They stopped at a building situated in some trees, landscaped; appearing expensive, but probably worth the cover charge, under the circumstances. At eleven thirty it was not yet crowded with the noontime influx. They found what appeared a restful corner, looking out upon some vegetation.

“I'll need to find a place to stay until I can work something out with Catherine. Most likely I will not return to the city, Theresa.”

“That's understood, Mr. D..”

“What I am hoping is that Catherine will be in for a long rest, that maybe she will consent to go with you to the island. I believe that would be best for her.”

“Its not clear how it is the doctor wishes to proceed, whether he feels she should stay here until she regains enough strength for his treatment, or whether she could or should leave to accomplish the same.”

“We need to ask him about a time line.”

“Of course, I would love to have her come to the island, but, I suspect she would rather be elsewhere.”

“We can't know in advance Mr. D.”

Lydia and Theresa visited Catherine again mid-afternoon. Her fever had receded a degree, the titer was down from the morning. Good sign.

To Civilization On The Road

The doctor felt a quiet remove from all responsibilities, and from his facility would be reasonable, if she progressed as expected. However he would want her monitored. The object was to regain her strength for the eventual treatment. She must not relapse. Even the slightest sign of relapse would require the intervention he proposed. Careful monitoring was a necessity. Temperature taken at least three times a day. A titer at least twice a week. Anything unusual, she needed to be brought back immediately.

William was hesitant. He wanted to know if any of the titering could be accomplished without going to a lab. Yes! Twice a week. Would it be possible to place a catheter in a blood vessel for obtaining blood samples? Not a good idea; risk of infection too great. Find someone who can draw blood properly. A nurse comes to the island once a week for starters. Once a week would not be good enough. Some stuff can be provided from his facility; an optical density measuring device, antibodies, reagents, the sterile needles, tubes, alcohol etc. can be obtained from his lab. Find someone to draw blood; maybe one draw from the nurse, the other from a lab, if necessary. Logistics to be worked out. This procedure to be followed rigorously (religiously) into the foreseeable future.

Mr. D. wanted to talk to Catherine about all of it.

Maybe when she is stronger.

What does Catherine have to say?

Catherine wants to see Mr. D. soonest.

Mr. D. was granted a half hour for starters.

Catherine And Mr. D.

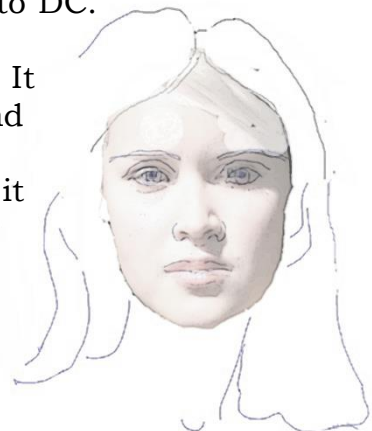
Mr. D. found a place five blocks away in a relatively quiet neighborhood; a 'garage' apartment in old neighborhood with lots of 'heritage' trees. Pleasant enough compared to what else was available. But the waiting seemed interminably long. The nights as nearly as long. It wasn't until the fifth day that he was allowed his first half hour visit. By that time Catherine's temperature was nearly normal and her titer reduced considerably.

Theresa had returned to the Big City and Lydia to DC. William called them every day with the latest.

The doctor really didn't want William to visit her. It was only at her insistence that the visit, and subsequent visits, were allowed.

When Mr. D. knocked at her door, she knew it was him; that she had had her way with the doctor.

"Come in, Mr. D.; don't be shy. I won't bite."



To Civilization On The Road

He entered with some trepidation; he did not want anything to happen that would upset the proverbial apple cart. But she had insisted upon this visit.

“Oh! there you are, my tentative one. I promise I will not break.

“Come here, give me a hug.”

She was sitting in a chair, in one of her favorite dresses, her hair combed in sinuous waves down to her shoulders, a smidge of color applied to her lips, and cheeks, looking directly at him with a welcoming smile.

He walked over to her, leaned over, placed his arms around her shoulders, encircled her, placed his cheek next to hers, felt the softness and smell of her hair.

She in turn placed her arms around his neck, holding him close, tightly. “Mr. D., I am terribly sorry for what I have done to you.” Once said, she relaxed somewhat, letting him straighten up.

He looked intently, meaningfully, into her lovely, troubled, searching, blue eyes.

“Maybe we will find a way to get past it all, Catherine.”

“Thank you for that, Mr. D.; I know we will.

“I want to tell you every detail, I want to leave nothing out; if you hear it from me, and believe in me, and what I tell you, all the gossip and stories that come your way can be dismissed. I owe you that much.”

“Catherine, you owe me nothing. If we are meant to be something to each other, let it happen.”

“Mr. D., it cannot happen without a full revelation on my part. I seek the complete expiation of my betrayal of you. Nothing else will make it possible for me to want to go on. I have wronged the one person who has meant the most to me in my life. Let us not debate the subtle points of language. Betrayal encompasses what I know to be the truth of the matter.

“I should have told you what I was doing and where I was going. I sneaked off like a mangy cur; as a result, I feel like a mangy cur.

“Like a mangy cur I got the kick I deserved; two kicks; the one I deserved, the other, a gratuitous addition, to get the message across.”

“A bit overdramatized, don’t you think?”

“No, I deserved worse. Like you never wanting to speak to me again. But here you are, that same wonderful person you have always been. ‘God knows’, I do not ever want to hurt you again. I still want your trust. I know I am asking a great deal, and realize it may take time for us to be close comfortable friends again.”

“Has the doctor talked to you concerning leaving this spooky place for a quiet restful place, pending the satisfaction of his monitoring scheme?”

“Yes!, we have talked about it before my sisters left; and going to the island was seriously mentioned by Theresa. What she says carries a lot of weight with the doctor. I think he has a thing for the three of us.

To Civilization On The Road

"I do want out of here; and I am prepared to follow the regimen. I think it could be accomplished on the island. That is where I imagine I want to be. I drive the doctor to distraction with my requests. I suspect he is getting fed up with my ingratitude."

"Surely, Catherine, I would selfishly want to have your companionship on the island. It would be a big responsibility for me, keeping you in line and keeping you fit. You might do better in your father's care."

"Perhaps, being with you is important to me right now. I need to come clean; besides I have so much else to say to you."

"I have a heavy heart; also my mind races. This illness has intensified a desperation I feel."

"Better not let the doc hear you say that."

"Mr. D., I am prepared to be a good girl. I know I cannot return to the Big City until I am well. However I could spend many hours writing."

"Good girls do not spend many hours wearing themselves out writing."

"Alright, within reason. I need to be doing something with myself."

"Catherine, I do not have much of an idea of how serious is your illness. I want you well; I don't want you fading on me. To me it is scary."

"I can't stay here; I feel that is counterproductive. If I submit to my father's care because you do not want the responsibility, I would be estranged from you. I NEED you. It is I who is being selfish."

"OK Catherine, we each of us wants something here. Based on something we have had in the past. Can it happen again?"

"As far as I am concerned, it can happen again; it is happening again; in fact, it never ceased; my feelings for you have not changed."

"After I tell you of my wanderings, I believe you will see me in a favorable light; I will be completely honest with you."

"I'm willing."

"That's what I want to hear. Now, I need to pester the doctor for a release."

"Catherine, please don't rush things."

"Mr. D., I know I will do better away from here. I will be happier in a happy place; happy in myself, happy with you. Mr. D., all the signs point in the right direction."

"My time is almost up. I don't know when the doc will let me see you again."

"Soon, I know, because I will insist."

"I suspect he does not like my presence here, or what part I seem to play in your life."

"I do not feel inclined to explain anything to him. Because he has agreed to treat me doesn't give him any rights with regard to me. Even if I wanted to throw my life away, it is none of his business."

"I realize that seems like a bad attitude; I am not out to destroy myself. I feel I still have some say in what is best for me. Interminably long days and nights does not seem a good environment for my recovery."

To Civilization On The Road

"I know where I am; this place; what it is, its darker purpose. Here I am, its captive; somewhat of a guinea pig, although the doctor will deny such a thing. What this place is, it is antithetic to who and what I am. Its larger purpose contravenes everything in which I believe.

"Am I being ungrateful? It would seem so."

A knock is heard; a nurse opens the door. "Sir, your time is up."

"Please, a moment longer" Catherine requests.

"Mr. D., I will go over a protocol with the doctor; perhaps we will have to run through it here a few times to satisfy him that we will be OK with it. I want to reassure him. I want this to be a reasonable affair, and not a battle, which will definitely wear me down. I don't think he wants that.

"I will ask the nurse to call you when we can visit again. Be patient with me; and with them."

"I'll do my best. Get well."

"Soon, Mr. D."

"Soon."

As he departed the Fort, he felt both hopeful and despondent. He felt he and Catherine would find accord, but he knew he would grow very impatient with the waiting, and with the controlled visits, not liking the whole setup. Catherine had assessed it aright with 'interminably long'. He could imagine her frustration. He hoped it would not wear her down; 'counterproductive' is how she put it. She needs to convince the doctor that there are better ways to convalesce. He was worried she might relapse; a purgatory for all.

Your author has dodged his denouement by interposing an earlier one. A Renaissance for William and Catherine? In Paradise? A Place Of Few Regrets? Our Boola-Boola girl with the sword of Damocles suspended above her lovely head. Sad-case William, longing for happier times. Doubtlessly a soapy situation, but mercifully, without commercials, or pop-ups.

We assume they will soon be headed for Paradise; the place of few regrets. Will we learn the truth and nothing but the truth from Catherine? A salacious interest in this whole enterprise?

Do we go along with the human condition in the meantime?

There is little that can be done with the human condition at any time.

We can push our little drama to the extreme of credulousness, to the limits of probability, only to die on the vine of relevance.

Can we hold the reader's interest? Must we bare a thigh? Must we expose the human condition in all its ugly rawness; raw ugliness?

We surmise a disease emerging from the dark continent. Not only these. Where number are even more insistent upon claiming the landscape, in China, new global threats, carried by fowl, and pollutions all too familiar, are emerging; even in the most civilized and controlled

To Civilization On The Road

societies, the persistent hangers-on 'plague' us. We are vulnerable. More so than ever, because we are everywhere at once with our globalization, of fortune hunting; we are not confined in our pestilences. Are we not ourselves, a pestilence; a persistent pestilence? Such a Malthusian interposition in this diminishing Paradise. We are inundated, overwhelmed by our own redundancy; face it, man; as the dubiously hypocritical man has characterized it, an *Inconvenient Truth*. It's a dark world.

Thus William and Catherine are provided with their entitlements. While the world is construed to suffer with its constraints, William and Catherine will be permitted to fritter with happiness. How do they rate?

They rate because we all need this distraction; a promising near-salvation from boredom; however ridiculously asymmetrical. Life was not intended as a form of entertainment.

During the next visit to the Fort, he consulted with the doctor concerning a protocol for monitoring Catherine's condition, as he had requested.

He informed William the materials they would be using for assaying the titer would require refrigeration throughout their lifetime. That the materials were not unusual, and their method of use was a not a top secret matter. However, the protocol for their particular use must not be revealed to anyone, or discussed with anyone. It involved the use of proprietary antibodies and specially designed reagents that would produce a reliably qualitative number through a modified ELISA test. Samples would be obtained from blood that had been spun in table-top microfuge, treated with a timed introduction of antibodies suspended in a substrate of special reagents. Samples would be placed in specially designed vials that fit into the photometric device used for determining optical density. Careful attention to detail in following the protocol should be all that is required. Soon he would take the two of us through the protocol in the lab.

He was prepared to loan the necessary lab equipment, the paraphernalia for obtaining the blood sample, the microfuge with its special tubes, the photometric measuring device, providing the antibodies and reagents; and sundry paraphernalia. Mr. D's familiarity with lab instruments would serve this purpose well.

Body temperature was a reasonably good monitor of viral activity, except during the menstrual cycle; that effect eliminated by the assay.

If any readings were obtained outside the set parameters, a repeat of the tests must be done. If they remained outside the parameters, but only moderately, and consistently so, a second set of tests must be performed using another technique which would need to be preformed by a pathology lab.

To Civilization On The Road

If they had any doubts about the procedure, the doctor advised that Catherine remain nearby.

When William visited Catherine the next day, after his conversation with the doctor, he had mentioned the whole prospect to her. She had already heard most of it from the doctor, blithely assuring him we could do as he requested.

“Are you that sure, Catherine?”

“He will show us, and we will practice, probably several times in the next few days.”

“Has he mentioned a release date?”

“When I press him for an answer, he merely says, ‘We’ll see’.

“He tells me the titer is down significantly, and the temp. very near normal, but wants to monitor things for at least another full week before he will even consider a release. I told him that seemed awfully long. To which he replied, ‘Ms. Tellerman, this may seem to you an overdramatization, but the eternity that awaits you is awfully long.’”

“Guess he got you with that one.”

“Not so, Mr. D.. I argued further, to let him know I am feeling better. I walked the halls this morning; it felt good to move around.

“I realize that convalescence is a tricky business, but I do know the value of environment in boosting a person’s attitude and morale, with its salutary effects.

“It is my decision to make.”

“True enough, but you might lose your doctoring in the process.”

“I don’t think so; we are all reasonable people here. He wants something from me; I am someone who fell into his lap. He knows he will get me sooner or later as a test subject. I need to get away into that environment where I can clear my head, and begin to feel myself again. If I can get that much return, then I might be more receptive to the doctoring.

“More than anything I want time with you; that is my most important objective right now; the other will follow, in my opinion. As long as I am happy, and reasonably attentive to resting my body, perhaps I can maintain a remission as well as regain my strength.”

“Pretty ambitious for someone who has been there and back.”

“Mr. D., I want to tell you so many things, a lot about the Africa thing, where I would really like to return, for so many reasons, quite different from my first glassy-eyed sojourn. I want to tell you about the Big City experience, my thoughts about it all.

“More urgently, I want to tell you about my involvement with another person, what I have learned from that experience, how it has affected me; and how much it has enabled me to appreciate you.

“I want to do these things when we are alone together in that special environment. This is so very important to me right now. I can’t tell the

To Civilization On The Road

doctor these things, because he would not understand their importance to me, even should I tell him in greater detail. Like everyone else, he would be judgmental.

“Sooooo, Its best I get out of here, very soooonnnnnn!”

Catherine rose from her chair, approached him with open arms, embracing him with such warmth, snuggling, as she had so often done in the past, letting him feel her, smell her, and hopefully communicate her intense desire to be close; and to make amends.

“Mr. D., I realize I want so much right now. So very much. A desperate need to be held by you; and to hold you.”

A knock upon the door again, the nurse entered, as they were separating, to prompt Mr. D. to get on with it.

“Nurse, it is not necessary to be so abrupt with Mr. D.”

“From where I stand, I have been issued instructions to keep you away from any kind of excitement.

“Let me assure you, I am not ignorant of what you might feel in this place. This is not a hospital, by any stretch. You are being given exceptional treatment in a highly secret laboratory, all at the discretion of Doctor Klein; who has had to assume a lot of responsibility in your case. He wants to be safe rather than sorry, hence the regimen. He does want to help you. He is a compassionate man; he values your young life.”

“I spoke out of turn, please forgive me. I realize what you are saying; but it is also true that I do not feel comfortable here. I cannot alter that feeling. As I begin to feel better I seem less willing to submit to restraints to my liberty. This is said with all consideration given to the precariousness of my situation.

“I have not ceded any rights by coming here. My sister did her very best to help me; I know that. I know many other things as well. Objectively speaking, I am not the least bit unappreciative of the interest and care that I have received.

“This whole kind of situation is new to me, as I know it must be for the doctor. Because he is helping me, I would like to reciprocate; and will most likely do so when the time seems right.

“I have been on the threshold of eternity; I have been given an opportunity to address the demons that have appeared, as I became conscious of my predicament; amongst them the demon of regret. I live to confront those demons; the sooner the better.”

As Catherine spoke these words, Mr. D. swelled with admiration for her, that sharp spark of acute awareness and intelligence that has characterized her in his mind.

Yes!, he wanted her back in his life. Hopefully it would soon be so.

Ponderings

Catherine and Mr. D. reconnecting serves the same purpose it did in *Catherine*. The author needs to keep at his task. All other tasks he has set for himself have become secondary. He has become a hunt and peck junky; a word junky.

He has not lost his way by reviving Catherine. He is aware of the assumptive title of this new endeavor. Dealing with regrets are a very large part of this effort. Also in the background, a desire for a resolution to the problem of man. A taunt, if you will. A haunt?

As he writes, he is aware that he might be doing so in a vacuum; Yes!, in a Bell Jar, as Sylvia so clearly saw our predicament; her predicament. We are locked within this vulnerable protoplasmic envelope. Even young, healthy, even good, noble, self-sacrificing individuals, have no armor against some things; not necessarily evil, as we might perceive them.

Our immune systems have evolved with us to thwart that which would inadvertently eliminate us. The body becomes a host to others; that seems the way; all supplications and prayers to the contrary.

We speak of opportunistic microbes as our enemies; as perhaps we are ourselves an opportunistic life form; and a threat to all other forms of life.

A certain number of us perish because our immunities to those that would invade us upset the balance, after enjoying a brief cycle of life before expiring with the demise of the host. It seems that mn (Mother Nature) has not completely mastered the equation, invader and host both surviving on equal terms; in balance. It is not a matter of intelligence; mother nature has not being invested with intelligence; it is something else to which we apply a variety of terms. Amongst them, as do William and Catherine, it is 'fatefully inevitable', one might say 'blindly, stupidly' so, that our life is this way, and will remain this way. Inadvertently, fatefully, we have become the harbingers and promoters, abettors, accelerators, of this 'fatefully inevitable' state of affairs.

We seem unable to change our ways, even in the face of a knowledge that clearly makes it appear imperative that we do so. We persist in draining the lees, the very dregs of life, from the sacred vessel, without conserving a drop for the morrow; not even a bitter drop for the morrow.

One might rightly dare to dream of a Renaissance that does not terminate in Regrets.

The wick flares up as it nears the end of its quiet burn, suddenly flopping into a puddle of the hot vaporizing wax, to burn more brilliantly for the few moments remaining in its life. It did not wish to go gentle into this good night.

To Civilization On The Road

The Rockets Red Glare; Bombs Bursting In The Air; The Road To Civilization Is Accompanied By Much Fanfare.

To The Island

Catherine is released with the constraining concerns of the indulgent doctor; but with a clear understanding of the necessity to follow instructions without delay. When she returns to good health, he has advised the injection of the serum which he has thoroughly tested, and continues to test, using the rhesus monkey as his subject life form. He also placed a lot of heads-up responsibility upon Mr. D.'s shoulders: 'Don't let her talk you out of anything!'

All necessary precautions taken with the materials and equipment provided by the facility were handled personally with great care by Mr. D., also by gaining all kinds of assurances from the airlines and their baggage and freight handlers.

Eventually the two found themselves upon the island again, after flying most of the way. Catherine seemed upbeat, and unwearied by the travel. Mr. D. regarded her apprehensively. It would take time to establish a routine. He did not like the idea of being her supervisor; it put to great an onus of 'bad guy' on him. She tried to assure him that she would not overdue anything, realizing the state of his concern. She also reassured him that she did wish to live, that she did not wish to return to Fort Detrick right away.

Although she insisted that she needed a certain amount of exercise in order to regain some semblance of physical strength, Mr. D. encouraged her to do everything in a measured way, not to overdo things simply because she felt good. Lets see if we can get through a month with good readings.

She did assist in meal preparation, and simple household chores, but was not allowed to exert herself with other household chores. They went for daily walks, increasing the distance incrementally. Catherine seemed to be doing well. The tests did not reveal any change in her condition. She was mostly cheerful, and projected a good attitude when Mr. D. announced times for resting.

Catherine had begun to read some journals and to do some writing; under the watchful eye of Mr. D.. Catherine wanted to relieve him of worry, considerably limiting her length of stays with the computer.

Mr. D. purposely avoided too much intimacy with Catherine, perhaps fearing too much excitement, even though she seemed to encourage a return to a friendlier relationship. Catherine wondered if he was put off by the fact she had had a physical relationship with another.

To Civilization On The Road

She was beginning to feel it was time to clear the air, lest this whole affair abort in an untimely manner, full of silence, pain, and recrimination.

“Mr. D., are you purposefully avoiding me in some way, for some reason?”

“What do you mean?”

“Come now, Mr. D., I think we know each other well enough, that I need not explain.”

“I still do not get your drift.”

“Alright Mr. D.. To tell it like it is. Although you do seem to respond to me, you deliberately avoid any real physicality with me. If I kiss you with a little passion, you withdraw. If I place my hand on your thigh, you withdraw. If I say loving, inviting things to you, you avoid any meaningful response.

“Do you believe I need to avoid all levels of excitement? Are you afraid I might break? Might relapse? Or is there something else that concerns you; or to put it another way, that ‘bothers’ you?”

“I was not aware that I was avoiding physicality to such a degree. Yes!, I am hesitant for obvious reasons. Given your condition I am quite naturally cautious. I am afraid you might break, even without any physical excitement.”

“OK. Mr. D.. I happen to believe that is not the whole story. I gave you an opening, which you also seem to be avoiding.

“We came here together, not as enemies, not as newly acquainted, getting to know each other. We have been intimates.

“Perhaps now is the time to clear the air regarding my African experience. To clear the air with regard to my ‘affair’.

“Am I unclean to you, a soiled article, Mr. D.?”

“Catherine, you are not unclean, or a soiled article to me.”

“Do you imagine you can never feel the same way about me again, that I have had some kind of experience that you could never provide, or equal?”

“That’s a hell of a question Catherine?”

“Well, Mr. D. It’s a bit of hell for me to expectantly desire something from you that you seem intent upon avoiding. If you are concerned about exciting me, perhaps you ought also be concerned about creating anxiety in me, especially when it is not warranted.

“Mr. D., what ever I have done, which I will tell to you in great detail, although, I suspect you will pretend to not want to hear, I have never stopped loving you. Remember our conversation about the girl who said it is not about sex, it is you.

“Yes! maybe I did get horny with someone. What does that mean? Yes!, to me, it is a betrayal of something, the same as if you traipsed off with another. But it never changed how I feel about you, or how I felt about our physical relationship.

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“If you must know, at this juncture, it was not a very satisfying experience; as a matter of fact it was a terrible experience, for several reasons. Does that mean I want back in your good graces because the other proved a failure? Am I rebounding, attempting to get the good where the getting was good? Will I do this again?”

“Suppose the experience turned out to be the opposite of a failure; that it was a great high point in my life, taking me away from you completely? Could that have happened? Would I have loved you less as a result, deserted you, cared less about you?”

“I cannot answer those questions, ‘it did not happen’, is all I am able to say. When I do get into the details, you might be able to understand why it might never have happened.

“Mr. D. I would like to be able to say I wish none of it had ever happened. But, would that be completely true? The part that caused you pain? Emphatically Yes!

“If I had been a person of trustworthy character, it should never have happened; simply because it was so unfair to you; thoughtless, selfish; whatever other bad thing it was.

“It may have seemed too late for such a compromised confession. I realized how deeply hurt you must be. I so wanted this chance to express my sorrow; how much I have wanted to crawl out of this hole I have dug for myself. Mr. D., you must tell me how you have been hurt; leave nothing out; don’t let me guess anything, don’t let me assume anything. I want to be your favorite concubine once again.”

“Catherine, I feel partly responsible for what happened. I had been unwilling to travel to the Big City. I knew enough through my relationship to my wife, how separations work on a person. I allowed myself to be fooled by our constant effort at communication, and our avowals of love. ‘No fool like and old fool’ comes to mind.

“When the avenues of communication were met with silence, I began to imagine all sorts of things. ‘She has finally found someone’. I remembered my feelings when you found a friend at Stanford. At that time, it was not unexpected; it was early in our relationship; I had not real faith all the things that you had said to me were inviolable.

“However, as time passed, I felt good about our relationship, it felt solid, we were in what seemed close communication on all levels; I let myself believe that we were betrothed in spirit.

“Always nagging in the background was doubts about my being able to answer your needs; however you might reassure me otherwise. So, again, it was not without expectation that you might find another; something that I would need to face eventually.

“After the three months of complete silence, I did travel to the Big City to seek you out. I was met by your lovely understanding sister, who revealed to me all she knew.

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“What she told me had not had much of an opportunity to sink in beyond its ‘shock’ value, when the call came from Nairobi.

“I might have said, ‘she got what she deserved’, ‘it all comes out in the wash’; but no, I became involved; your sweet sister kept me involved, by telling me how much you would want to see me, that you would want to tell me everything. She earnestly believed you loved me still and have felt nothing but guilt since abandoning me.

“Thank your sister that we are here; she has great faith in you.”

“Ah! Yes!, Mr. D., but she told me that she would not act as intermediary between you and I; that I was on my own.”

“Don’t say unfair things about her. She did not want to take sides against either one of us.”

“Mr. D., I know I have done you a great wrong. However, I believe enough in the honesty that has passed between us previously to be still favorable to our circumstance now.

“Mr. D., I do not love you any less now than I have before; I love you as much or more now. I am fully prepared to express that love in any way you will allow.

“I know I cannot ask immediately for trust in me, although that is very much what I want to establish again. I want to be able to say again to you ‘I would never do anything to hurt you’ with all the meaning that is in my heart and soul. I do not want to say it as an act of contrition, but freely, and heart felt. With love from my very depths, such as we might both understand those depths.

“What has happened with another must be divulged, for my peace of mind, because it bears upon so many things that we have assumed throughout our lives with regard to fidelity; and/or betrayal. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

“I love you Mr. D.. It is not an adulterated love; it is not some leftover, something dirtier for the wear.

“I do feel shame. For several reasons. Also I feel very naïve, and very stupid.

“I ‘crawled into the sack’ with a guy who really didn’t give a shit about me, or how I felt. In hindsight I must have been another conquest; another notch on his belt. He imagined his manliness was all I needed, that he could fuck me into a happy place. By the time I got him around to realizing this could not happen, I was already beginning to miss you, your tenderness, intensely. The guilt I began to feel was mounting to incredible heights. Rather than respond to me, he more or less dumped me. Then I became ill. He came to see me once; then never again, until I saw him in the field one day. A pretty cool customer; pretending the world had not changed; wasn’t Africa a great place to get involved.

“I was humiliated; I was sick; I let this guy talk me into this adventure; I got what I deserved. I did still want to continue with the

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African 'mission'. I was getting involved on a meaningful level when I became ill again.

"Mr. D., I know I have deeply hurt the person who has meant more to me than any other, the person I have loved more than any other, whom I still love more than any other, and whom I want to go on loving more than any other."

William looked at her intently as she fervently declared herself, looking at him directly and earnestly. It was the Catherine he knew who was speaking.

He smiled warmly at her, indulgently. He could not resist this woman; he did love her; he believed in her. She could persuade him, convince him. He placed his hand on hers.

"Catherine, I believe you in this moment; as I have of old believed. I want to and need to believe. I want to trust in your words, both out of need and desire.

"What you tell me of your experience seems incomplete. Why did you not end your tryst when he failed to show any concern for how you felt?"

"I cannot answer that question; I suppose I had hoped something would change. I did like the guy, I felt attracted to him; Yes! I desired him. I believed he desired me, expecting him to be caring, loving.

"It didn't take long to feel disgust, with him, and especially with myself. As I began to feel disgust with myself; I mean, like soiled and dirty, used, even violated, maybe even allowing myself to be brutalized; and guilty with a big G. Yes!, it should have ended right then, but it dragged on for another several days before he got the message; then I became ill.

"In one sense, I was saved by the illness."

"About the guilt with the big G, Catherine, what was that all about."

"Much of it involved judgments from the outside; from you particularly. What you would think of me, how much that would affect my self-esteem. Beside that, I had set some kind of moral and ethical standard for myself that I simply violated, in spades. There isn't any way I could avoid self-condemnation. I was a dumb broad. Guilt and shame mixed together.

"Mary Magdalene! I will wash your feet with my hair, Mr. D."

"I might like that in a sensual sort of way, but would never permit you to do so. I will not allow you to humiliate yourself. We will come out of this squarely, or not at all.

"I hear what you are saying Catherine. You are trying to as honestly as you know how to tell me the truth, without glossing it over, without justification.

"To me, you are as beautiful as you ever were, your lovely blue eyes still fascinate and grip me, your expression conceals nothing. I want so much for you to be healthy and to live a long, productive, hopefully happy, life. I do love you so very much. My feelings for you remain

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unchanged; in that I am still the hopeless helpless captive; I make myself vulnerable to you and your whims. I care not even to judge the wisdom of such a declaration; lest it be 'no fool like an old fool' “.

“May I be worthy of that love, in every way. May you have cause not to think of yourself as a fool, but only the luckiest guy in the world.”

“Catherine, let us not delude ourselves with blurry eyed declarations. We must walk you through some trials ahead. We must be careful always. I realize that your happiness in this place with me could be key to a successful convalescence; one that only prepares you for the next step. I will be the task master; not an enviable position.”

“Mr. D., I do not delude myself concerning how I feel. I must stand up to be counted; this is not a shabby affair. This is where its at. As far as you being the tough guy, the head honcho, I am quite willing to stay on your good side. I now know you will stay on my good side; I am confident.”

“Brazen hussy, are you?”

“Perhaps Mr. D.. I am willing to risk a great deal for you.”

On The Road

Thus, the author has written Version 1 of the reunion Of Catherine and William. Its relevance to the Renaissance In Paradise and the Road To Civilization may prove dubious. The Regrets are mounting; soon to become obvious?



Will their reunion prove germinal in the affairs of mankind? Will Catherine become restored to a former self wherein she will be engaged in dealing with the human condition through her writing. It seems her only option in her present condition.

She has expressed a desire to return to Africa, but would only do so, if Mr. D. would accompany her. She feels her life is meant to be dedicated to the betterment of the human condition. Of that she is certain. As long as she lives she will be at his side, and thereafter, as long as he lives she will be at his side.

She has confessed to Mr. D., that Africa is not the place as much as it is the symbol. She has said that The Big City is a place, but a different kind of symbol. The latter is a place where civilization found itself in dire need, and where humanity fell flat on its face, and where civilization petered out.

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She feels beginning again somewhere else, exposed to the dire in its early stages, may provide incentive to do something different, assuring for a better model.

Mr. D. thinks her incorrigible, and questions her sanity. She laughs. She forgives him his low opinion of her.

They will argue the pros and cons as the sun sets on the human condition. It is not only the human condition, but the condition of everything associated with existence on planet earth.

Her illness has caused both of them to contemplate the blind operatives of mother nature. She has been lucky in a certain sense not to have been infected by a filovirus like Ebola, where the mortality is near 90%. Where also the survivors have suffered debilitating necrosis to most of their viscera. The purpose of Ebola escapes them, as does Boola-Boola. They see mother nature as a very arbitrary and criminal usurper and betrayer, that bears close watching. They cannot trust in her as protector, but more as an opportunistic low-life villain.

Catherine should have stayed home. That is Mr. D.'s opinion. He feels she did not take enough precautions; that she went off on a lark, a toot. He does not criticize her sexual adventurism as much as he does her incautiousness. She entered an environment where she was at a disadvantage. In this matter, he must conceal his anger from her. To him, it is not water over the dam, but a clear error on her part. He knows how badly she feels, but would like to cure her of her Africa fixation. Such an intelligent person sucked in by such unrealistic idealism. How can that be?

Some things defy explanation. His father would attribute the whole episode to the itch.

It is true that Catherine is the confirmed tilter at windmills. Her desire for involvement in Bedlam is a form of madness. This thing about 'man' in the landscape. A self-centered ego thing; as a higher form of life. She has burdened herself with the proverbial cross, beneath which she will eventually perish; or will receive a fatal knock from a blade of the mill; that is what Mr. D. envisions. As she would save the world he would save her; the world be damned. She is life. Still the blue-eyed beauty that enchants him beyond his sensibilities.

We find Catherine writing again. She seems content. She rests often, to please Mr. D.. Her titer remains stable, almost undetectable.

She and William have been guardedly chummy; she is happy that she has been able to tell of her love, and he, his. They seem to have put aside any discussion of the other one. A reaffirmation of them has taken precedence over everything else. They seem comfortable with each other.

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He told her that he had slept in her bed when he stayed overnight in New York. A delicate touch of Theresa's. That pleases her immensely; a sign; an omen.

Catherine adds impetus to this incipient rescue operation, the rescuing of man from himself.

She contemplates beginning an essay by adopting some of Mr. D.'s attitude concerning the incorrigible nature of man, that one does not deal with him through reason; or through inspiration. But through edict. Like Moses of old. Or Zeus, with his lightening bolts. The heavy hand, but with love, not fear. Giving man responsibility for himself is like giving the child a loaded gun.

Then she feels that is not her real take on things. In her Big City experience, the Stick and Carrot approach, or Carrot and Stick approach, as the case more often developed, seemed appropriate to that situation. One needed to discourage dependency because of their facilities' limited resources.

The larger government used the same tactic, by weaning the 'people', the 'social retards' off welfare, turning welfare into workfare, 'social retreads'; to discourage dependency, but also to conserve resources for other purposes, like SDI. The furtherance, and protection of 'our way of life'; and to make possible the tax breaks for the wealthy, those benefactor's of 'our way of life'.

In all the juggling of words, welfare to workfare, humanity, the 'heap', suffered another defeat at the hands of the inhuman, of those in high places who abrogated one inherent and implicit responsibility for the camaraderie of the backyard barbeque; the old boys club, the status quo club, the caste; 'social retards', and 'social retreads' not allowed.

This kind of thinking was heavily influenced by her exposure to Mr. D.. It tended to sour her on any concerted effort to deal with the problem of man. That 'fatefully inevitable' crept into her thoughts, almost nullifying them; making her feel powerless to deal with any aspect of something so driven by not caring, by indifference.

She could not allow this way of thinking to overwhelm her, to dissuade her. She must come out the other side of this dilemma with a solution, a workable solution.

However, she definitely did want to proceed from the truths as she understood them. No glossing, no bleary-eyed stuff. She still believed there was a place for loving and caring, that it had not grown into disuse as a matter of convenience, and natural disposition.

She recalled their recent discussion concerning mn (mother nature) as some kind of villain. An obstacle to pie in the sky. MN was the real dictator, the real Moses, the hurler of lightening bolts. She dealt a tough hand which we are all obliged to play, like it or not. We might dreamily let ourselves believe that mn is something to be worshipped because she

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doles out our life, and doles out the grub that sustains us, provides the air we breath, and the water we drink, the heat we need, the cold we need, the fire we need. Our pathetic little lives. We sing songs of her, eulogize her, fear she will abandon us if we do not clean up our act, will inveigh against us with an array of deadly mutants if we do not become more appreciative of her, and her ultimate powers.

The truth; mn doesn't give a shit about any form of life. Neither does that fffing creator. We are on our own to mess around, to mess it up, to climb over each other in the heap. To not care, but for self. Regard! The testimonials are rife and ample. From one point on the globe to another, mankind is found heaping and milling, aimlessly, lining his pockets, and emptying his pockets, starving, and consuming, with no clear objective; putting in his time in a haphazard continuum; now, to Catherine, not even a Holding Action, as Mr. D. dreamily hypothesized. The truths are hard realities to reconcile with any concept of civilization, which in her mind, seems now so remote.

MN knocked her down. She cannot be engaged without eminent peril to her life. She frets in Mr. D.'s little Paradise. Hands-on is denied to her; only the words remain, the ineffectual little things they are. Flat, mute, way-stations between here and there. Mere scratchings in the sand.

Mr. D. senses things are not going well with his blue-eyed friend. He tries to lure her into the boat for some time, even a little time, on the water. She resists, but will sit with him on the bluff overlooking the sea. Where she leans against him, then slides her head onto his lap; where he contentedly, sensually runs his hands through her soft silky hair. Then rests a palm upon her chest; feeling her breathing as her breast rises and falls seductively. She sleeps. He feels only love for her. A love haunted by trepidation, fearing her loss for whatever reason. So precious a life slumbering so close.

How to relieve her of this desire to save mankind from itself. He fears she will die trying. A martyr? Would she think also, 'Forgive them, for they know not what they do'? It could not be a broadly applied forgiveness, because there are many who do know what they are doing. Which is mostly nothing. She knows this. She frets over this. Mn invested more in the individual than in the species as a whole, a conscious whole; whereas the individual consciousness accumulates power and control, and deniability. 'I am not my brother's keeper'.

He recalls Theresa's dictum once again 'we are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution'. Thinking of Theresa, fond feelings rise up in him. He wishes she could be here with them. He feels inclined to call her, to invite her to come, even for a short time. But Theresa already felt those days are gone. The world has taken upon a new shape and new color since those wonderful days on the bluff, all lying about like a Seurat painting, a maze of colored dots creating a beautiful

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impressionistic stasis, as though that stasis had existed placidly for ever. Her head upon his lap; that sparkle of recognition; and trust. To be friends for life. It all happened in a flash.

As though Catherine could divine his thoughts, she stirred, awakening with, "Mr. D., I was dreaming of Tess just now, of the day we all four reclined under the arbutus, all lying upon one another. Was I dreaming, or were you invading my thoughts; I sense someone else was in the dream."

"Yes, remarkable it is, I was indeed thinking of only Theresa, and that day, and how she looked at me as she rested her head upon my lap; her look told me I had made a friend for life.

"This was confirmed when I made it into the Big City, knocking upon a door from behind which I had expected to see you appear. Instead she appeared, only moderately surprised, not alarmed, not apprehensive, not defensive, not in any way, but welcoming, welcoming her old friend, with such warmth; unrehearsed, almost as though she was expecting me.

"She had been preparing a morning meal; she invited me in to share it with her. I mentioned to her the invitation seemed a bit of *Déjà Vu*. She knew immediately the reason for my comment. Then she said a very nice thing to me, first qualifying her understanding of the comment, by saying not exactly the same kind of response as her sister's, but she revealed that I was, next to her family, her favorite person.

"I really needed to hear that. Then she apologized for her part in the conspiracy of silence, saying her loyalty to you interfered with her loyalty to me, that under the circumstances she could no longer keep anything from me."

"Yes!, Mr. D., she is a gem and a wonder."

"She also said something else which troubled me; that the bluff days were days gone by, that they could never be again. Some new reality has awakened in her as she has come of age; her schooling, her exposure in the Big City.

"Why can those days not belong to us, why can they not become something of an annual pilgrimage? Are we not all entitled to some quiet time away from that milieu, or melee, whence we can renew our love, and loves? Touch each other, reaffirm something?"

"One thing at a time Mr. D.. We have returned. We must invite them to return for, like you say, a pilgrimage. Oh!, Mr. D. I like the idea. We must try."

William once again began to glide his hands through her hair. She looked up so very intently at him, searching his countenance, his eyes; speaking volumes with her eyes.

"Yes!, as soon as we return to the house we will set things in motion."

"Not yet, Mr. D.. I am floating right now; submerged I am, in this loving mode, feeling your caresses, which enliven me so.

"Do you not love Theresa too much?"

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“Catherine, she is my friend. ‘Love!?’ Yes! that aptly describes some of what I might feel for her. Too much? I cannot imagine ‘too much’. Many feelings, Yes!, which I do not wish to characterize as Platonic, because there is more. There is a sensuality, her young healthy supple body, so alive; yes! I do wish to encircle her in my arms as a flesh and blood creature, feeling that life within her, as it gives what she is to me, and I to her, without crossing over lines, which neither of us has ever thought or attempted. She is such a special life to me, without qualification.”

“I think I understand, Mr. D.; perhaps it is also how I feel about her. She is entirely loveable; as you say, giving what she is to us, and we to her, a most natural affirmation of life; of lives.

“I need to distinguish that from the huggy types, the love children who give very little of themselves. Like the guy who gives you the handshake of homo steroiderectus. Touches that do not endear, but cloy, repel. I still recall the embraces of father’s friends and associates with their lascivious hugs.”

“I have never embraced Theresa lasciviously.”

“I know Mr. D.. I know how unthinkable in any case. You do not even embrace me lasciviously; even in fun.”

“There are times when I could die an exquisite death while gliding my hands over your body.”

“Mr. D., I doubt you will die in such a manner, but you are welcome to try; I believe you would only be enlivened.”

“Am I to assume you are alright with us, that we will be together as we were before?”

“Mr. D., my only misgivings come from what you might feel toward me, as a fallen woman, an untrustworthy wench.”

“You might imagine I have some advantage over you as I might over a stray cat; only here because of my good graces.

“I cannot tell you how wrong that perception would be. It recalls the many conversations we had in the beginning of our relationship, where I felt inadequate; and where you reassured me; relieved me of my concerns.

“The situation is not any different. I still feel the same way; perhaps even more so. That’s how precarious I view my situation. I love you beyond the words that would tell you so. Because I do, I am out there somewhere; I cannot pull back into my shell. Trust is only a word in this situation. Love is only a word. A state of being that makes me want to possess you, lock you up, never let you out of my sight, for fear of losing this person who so captivates me.”

“Mr. D., I do now realize more fully how I have wronged you. You have blamed yourself for something that ‘Lulu’ (Ephie) has done.”

“You think so; I’ll not let you off that easy. Even though there is an element of truth in what you suggest, you are a far more ethical person than she would ever be. She would have it she is innocent of real

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culpability because whatever she does is done without malice, and without forsaking others; but mostly because she hasn't any knowledge at all, why she does what she does. You might claim the same, if you were anybody but who you are; an ethical person, a fair person, a person conscious of other's hurts.

"Are you more culpable? In principle, No. But In fact Yes! because you have acknowledged your possible affect on another, to the extent you were willing to go on record saying things that led someone to believe things about you, and about a relationship.

"You have said you did not wish to hurt; you have also done your best to heal wounds. A good word from Lulu is as good as a promise not to hurt."

"Mr. D., with your every word do I realize more fully my wrong, and how much I regret doing something that would make you think less of me. Your reference to Lulu is unwarranted; I will not claim innocence."

"I maintain I do not think less of you, regardless of how I hypothesize. Do you not also heal wounds? "Cioran invented an expression that might apply to this situation 'orgasm of repentance'. Although he wrote that about Christians who are always in the throes dealing with their venialities; they can come clean. You have come clean, not by apologizing, but by 'washing my feet with your hair'. You indulge me with yourself, which is both a palliative and an intoxicant."

"Whew, Mr. D. that's laying it on pretty thick."

"Not at all, what I need is a big dose of you to make me forget all things."

"I am not far away."

Not too bad, huh!?

They're working on it.

Immortality In The 'News'

We must turn the page. Things press in upon us, the airways are full of things happening. We are earnestly seeking a solution to this usurpatious horror of W. and his cronies. The candidates are moving in for the kill. Hillary, Barack, Condolezza? (if she can swing the Palestine deal) McCain, Guiliani; and Harry, the Jade, a flicker in the dark. Eternally hopeful.

Holloway is still missing in Aruba. OJ lives.

The author had 'downloaded' (such a word) some blogged (such a word) stuff from the Internet concerning the saving of human society through the person of a Harry Braun. Mr. Braun, the Oracle Of The Phoenix, proposed a number of things, more to do with his country of origin, the US of A; which is badly in need of something corrective, than the world as a whole, which may say the whole is in need of a corrective.

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We may have to do it as whole, or it ain't gonna work. On the home front, he did suggest issues that any of us might agree upon, like no secrecy in government, presenting any legislation to a direct vote of the people, shutting down the connection between corporations and government, balancing the budget, and a few other sensible housecleaning things, but other more controversial issues presented in a calculated way to gather in certain extreme elements, matters to do with abortion, the death penalty, gun ownership, decriminalization of drugs, religion vs. science. In matters of foreign policy, he thought the Golden Rule might work best; but it gets complicated when we attempt to mind other people's business, when we take sides. So much for foreign policy.

A most novel part of his Jade is the proposed use of hydrogen as a fuel for all of our internal combustion engines, and perhaps to fuel a portion of our other energy needs, in order to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, and to use a fuel that does not fuck up the environment. Most of those who work in the oil industry, as well as others (job creation), could be retrained and reused in the hydrogen industry.

The most novel part of the Jade (hodge podge) is promoting the notion of life-everlasting (*homo immortalis*).

Something for everybody? Frozen parts for the new Frankensteins. Saving the planet for another day? A lot of wind?

Yes! we should be discussing some of these things openly; we should be involved at all levels in debating all issues; and voting upon them, especially immortality, the right to fuck up the planet for eternity. It is both our need and our responsibility.

Enough said on the subject? Braun For President? Why Not? Personally, I believe, the sooner we get rid of the species the better for the planet.

Catherine For President? Never see her again.

Theresa For President? Never see her again.

Lydia For President? Don't see much of her anyway.

Mr. D. For President? Soon to Expire.

Hillary?! Obama?! Jesus Christ!?

What would you do to improve life on the planet? Do you do this incrementally, over many years, or right all the glaring wrongs immediately? Yes! Both!, But, do something!

Should we follow Mr. Braun's suggestions? Some of them, Yes!, the Housecleaning ones; Yes! The controversial ones?; equivocating; no pandering. No Jade.

The author's thumbnail review. Get involved, even though it seems nobody is listening. Stay involved, even though nobody seems to be listening. Stay Tuned For Further Developments.

For a small consideration, the author would settle for having access to Sylvia Plath's sequestered journals (before he has to walk the plank); that

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might get the ball rolling. It might restore his faith in the sensibility of things. You gotta admit, it's a big leap to immortality; to any kind of insensibility.

We are not going to make it. The bugs are gonna get us. A doozy of a flu, some kind of pox or one of those bloody ones. The White Pestilence has it coming for what he did to the native Americans.

Do you believe in Justice? Do you believe the White Pestilence was a superior being that had every right to take over the joint, even if it meant annihilating the very last Native (excuse ... savage)? Then you do not believe in Justice, even though you are entitled to it.

When a conceited philandering SOB laureate like Teddy gets to go on living, while his wife gets to perish from suffering and want, then something is out of whack. When the conceited philandering SOB destroys the truth to save face, then something is out of whack. Three whacks and your in for life. He died before we could make him pay. Oh! he paid alright. My very words are a kind of payment; a crude justice. He tried to elude the fates with his regrets, a Birthday Letter. I'm a holdout for another kind of equalization.

Like animals, they fell on the floor groping. Hubba hubba. She had thrown caution to the proverbials. Then life became a grunt. A wasteland of failed assumptions. She struck back at the failures through martyrdom. GP got to take the kinks out of her hair, still kind of slinky, with a hint of musk. With flair and no substance, she became a matinee idol. DOA.

When Catherine strayed, the wielder took note; or so it would seem. Boola Boola on you.

Mr. D., being who he was, more smitten than vindictive, could do no less than put up with her aberration of the flesh.

He still believed in her, however unwisely one puts his faith in a luscious wench. By her own assessment, a concubine, while objecting to the inference of Lulu.

Surely the author jests; 'a luscious wench'!?

Alas! A nubile presence. To be admired by one and all. It's the 'all' part that disturbs; we all become fools.

Lest we forget the matter at hand. Civilization. When it is convenient, we put on a good show, but the remainder of the time, we can't be bothered.

Those who buck the trend get into serious trouble. Their bones get broken, they suffer bruises, contusions, concussions.

Something is wrong in Paradise.

A Threesome

To Civilization On The Road

Catherine was stunned; she became ill, and was cast off at the same time.

William had never seen her on the courts; but the other guy did; he liked what he saw. Like the guy who watched her mowing the lawn in her halter and shorts. Of course, at first, Mr. D., was privileged to see. But the other guy got to see too. That's life. No concealment.

At this time the principles are enjoying a renewed connection.

A conversation between them regarding these important matters is still pending. Mr. D. will not feel that their renewed friendship will endure without a fuller revelation of the gory details; perhaps pushing the envelope.

Theresa came to visit her sister (and the other guy).

To Catherine it seemed that something had passed between her sister and the other guy; they seemed more familiar. A warmer closer something between them. Something happened in the Big City. Perhaps her aberration opened a door for them.

However, Theresa had much to say regarding their hostelry in the Big City. That she was beginning to burn out; flame out. She felt she had no source of renewal. Each day drained her to the dregs. It seemed there were fewer and fewer happy faces.

"What am I attempting to do?" she asked.

"When you were there Catherine, it was a shared endeavor. Upon reflection, I realized it was mostly your idea in the beginning. I had not made up my mind what I had wanted to do with my life, so I followed my big sister, who seemed to know where it was at.

"After five months without you there, I seem to sense this is not me. Even though I realize the necessity; it is not my thing to be drained to the lees by something that seems endless, and ever needful of solution in a larger way. I don't want to be a Band Aid.

"I sense you will never return Cate; it would kill you. Already your zeal has cost you direly.

"I don't think I can fill your shoes."

"Tess, I'm truly sorry everything has fallen upon you. It was derelict of me, and very selfish of me to have deserted you there. To have deserted Mr. D.

"Yes!, it seems I must fight for any kind of life now.

"Mr. D. has been kind and gentle toward me. He does not pressure me at all. He wants me well.

"I suspect I would not be able to return in the same capacity. I still harbor the desire to return to Africa. Perhaps, to you, unbelievably.

"It would seem I am now an idle dreamer. I have spent most of my capital. However, it has not been entirely a bust. I will not trivialize what has happened with 'nothing ventured, nothing gained'. I have learned something over the last two years, that bears upon what it is I am, and who I have tried to be.

To Civilization On The Road

"I'm sorry to have dragged you and Mr. D. into my quagmire.

"Hopefully I have begun to extract something from the experience that will do justice to what both of you have sacrificed."

"Dearest Kitty, you must not think of my efforts as a sacrifice. I believe the necessity is there. I am simply not Mother Theresa.

"I am a young vibrant woman, who has a desire for more in her life, or something else at least, something that makes me feel good in other ways. What I have done, and what I am doing has somehow become more important than my self; a displacing of self, a using up a self.

"Yes!, that is part of me, but not all of me. The part of me that is not all of me is beginning to resent the other part of me. I'm sure it is because I am weary from endeavoring to do something on reserves that can do nothing but weary one; even Mother Teresa.

"Truthfully I want something else from life.

"A smile on the face of someone helped; or a simple sigh of relief, is sometimes enough to get me through a day. However, I would hardly feel fulfilled in that moment.

"I have been unable to continue with solicitations because there isn't enough time in a day to do everything that needs doing. I can't get by with my old saw without making a personal appearance that exudes smiles, enthusiasm, entreaty, and whatever else seems to work.

"I'm sorry to be complaining, to dump this on you now. It is the reality of my situation. I need to withdraw. Without you Catherine, I will be unable to continue with an all out effort, I know that now. Others will have to pick up the slack, or take over.

"I have no desire to go to Africa, or any other place, in order to attempt to remedy the colossal failures of mankind.

"Am I seeking to shirk the part I must play?"

"It would seem each and every one of us should be sharing the load in a conscripted way; putting in time on the front lines. After that time is served, one ought to be able to live his or her own life; or should be able to move on to serve in another capacity while getting on with one's own life, trusting that others will carry on.

"If one could believe in a human dedication to a human problem, then it would simply be a matter of putting in one's time, as a matter of course; anticipating an end of some kind.

"In the Big City, I see no end anywhere in sight; and frankly, it depresses me; smiles, sighs of relief, or no smiles or sighs of relief, it depresses me; because humanity is dumped upon the street, without care or concern."

"It would seem to me that you and your sister have done more than most would ever consider doing. Speaking of old saws. In our Christian west, it has been put to the real test with:

Help us to help each other, Lord,

To Civilization On The Road

*Each others, cross to bear'
Let each his friendly aid afford,
And feel his brother's care.*

"I like your new saw better Theresa. *'We are all part of the problem, we are all part of the solution'*."

"I like your idea of conscription. Don't allow it to be a matter of personal choice. It is clear that it doesn't work. Lip service doesn't work."

"I think you have hit upon a new tack, a new advocacy. I think Catherine might get behind such an idea."

"Does that mean I have changed my cynical outlook on things?"

"Not at all. Even though I would support wholeheartedly the mechanics of what you suggest (like a stint in the Army); without any exceptions; everyone has to serve in some capacity. It seems not only humane, but practical."

"Yes, it does, Tess."

"Just an idea, you guys. I have developed a little bit of Mr. D.'s cynicism from my experience with seeking our 'brother's aid'. I'd say half of the donations come from people and institutions that realize the problem, and want to help; but a lot of it is on my say so; it depends upon my personal appearance, a selling job, charms and all, as much as it does on wanting to help; both people and institutions do not go out of their way to pour money down a rat hole. The other half are made up of people and institutions that want to be counted by the Lord. In my more cynical moments I look at both halves with a jaundiced eye. Nobody is really going out of their way to understand the full dimension of the human condition. It is seldom in the forefront of their consciousness. OH! Yes!, when there is shooting in a school, student upon student, or co-workers by a disgruntled postal employee, or even when somebody gets in a lick, McVeigh, or Kazinsky, or like 9/11, not to mention the daily round of inner city violence, we ask questions about the make-up of the larger world outside of ourselves. Perhaps we sense our own vulnerability to random acts of violence. A volatile violent ambience is only part of the equation; the books have to balance; when the market falls, or interest rates fluctuate, the aid dries up."

"I realize in this moment that I cannot fault others because I do not take the time to have some joy in my life. Most of what I feel might seem less critical if I was to allow for some romance, to even get in a good game of tennis, or go for a ride in the country, any kind of ride, and to read some novel, or escapist literature, or even feel relaxed enough to allow myself the luxury of these few things that are part of everyone else's life; all but those that come through our doors every day."

"Then I begin to feel selfish about my little desires. Why!?"

"Because you are a good little girl, that's why."

To Civilization On The Road

“Mr. D., I am being serious; I would not take that comment from anyone but you. I am not a good little girl.”

“You are, you are, in the fullest sense. You may equivocate when you feel you are running out of gas, because you question what it is you are doing. Theresa, you are doing. You are doing so from a heightened consciousness, a heightened human consciousness. I suspect we all need to realize the problem; that’s a good part of what enlists our concern; we cannot deny our own humanity when we realize that our look-a-likes are suffering. Implicitly, we are suffering. We cannot escape with, ‘There but for the grace of God, go I’.

“What a hypocritical outlook.

“Compared to me, you are more than a good little girl; you are a saint. I talk a good game, in case you haven’t already noticed. I sit in my gilded tower musing at the foibles. True, I do not say things like ‘there but for the grace of God, go I’. But in a certain sense, in placing myself above the fray puts me in that category.

“So I am a bad little boy.”

“Mr. D., you could never be a bad little boy.” Catherine offers.

“I have not joined you in the Big City. True, I have had a glimpse, but I am not moved to do as you do. Why is that?”

Theresa answers again, “I don’t want to guess, and I don’t want to speculate Mr. D.. I am already questioning my own involvement. The good little girl thing is becoming tainted with time.”

Catherine speaks again, “If I may lend my perspective, which is only beginning to emerge, as I do a review of what has been accomplished by doing as we have done, very little influenced by my Africa junket, which proved nothing, or accomplished nothing beyond a certain exposure and personal edification, I think we have given, and continue to give, something of our selves to those who have needed some caring humanity in their lives. It’s not a big thing in the total summation, but to those individuals, it may be all they are going to get. Have we encouraged some false illusion? How objective can those in need become with regard to what it is we are trying to do, or why we are doing it? What do they know of us? Have we uplifted them? Do they not lapse into the wretchedness again and again without hardly any succor; only what we might provide for a brief moment in time?”

“The thought occurred to me that you examine yourselves too closely, we examine ourselves too closely. Not that self-awareness and self-examination is not an essential thing. It is. But you seem afraid someone is looking at your motivation as you, or we, are now looking at it; self-critically. That seems unfair.

“Whether or not you might be the only ones providing relief to some few people should not even be a consideration. You know what you are giving of yourself, something that cannot fail to be welcomed; also, it is because of who you are.

To Civilization On The Road

“Theresa showed me the sign you had made for all to read as they entered your premises. It is so straightforward, it would seem that no one can misconstrue what it says; and what it does not say. You have clearly declared both theirs and your humanity. The pragmatism of your sign sets the tone of expectations, which is eminently practical; it does not offend, or turn away. It apologizes for not being the be all and end all. However, it declares itself to be something.”

“I suppose that in itself should be all that is necessary; at the end of the day, it is all too little; we feel we have failed in some way. We feel we have not given enough.”

“I concur with that Cate.”

“Theresa, you have hit upon the thing; conscription, perhaps as a mandate. That would be only on an interim basis, until something was more fully established as part of our upbringing. Along with the ‘compulsory community service’, lets say, for two or three years, there must be the funding from government; the larger commitment; we must tax ourselves to provide the wherewithal. Restore that yammer about the ‘safety net’.

“Pie in the sky?”

“Mr. D., excuse the expression, but ‘I shudder to think’ one would think it so.

“Along with the inculcation to accept the burden of the human condition, there ought be a way of presenting the human condition as not a thing merely to account, as much as to encourage a deeper feeling for life, the preciousness of life, not only as a property of matter, but rather a ‘miraculous’, happening. Mankind has the peculiar ability to be aware of so much of this ‘miracle’, how complex a thing it is, and how each life, even on the more microscopic level, is non-duplicable by us, who are so aware of it, who play ‘God’ with it.

“It ought be presented to stir awe in us, not ‘awesome’ awe, but an appreciation of something truly remarkable, ‘life’; our life. The more we know of it, the more we can marvel. The more we need to know, the more we need to appreciate, the more we need to marvel. We cannot leave this to chance. We have left so much of it to chance. We know better, now, do we not? It has to be more than a trick of the mind; it must be ingrained.

“Are we not more apprised of a something that is more than hypothetical? Does our experience qualify as demonstrating the doableness of something that only seems impossible?”

“It goes beyond what you and Theresa have done, Catherine. Mankind has been involved in charitable endeavors for centuries. These seem a drop in the proverbial, what ‘bucket’, or ‘ocean’. Yes, it must begin at an early age, the awareness of the complexity and the marvel, more than accounting something, but marveling at something, that is, us. We are enlivened matter. That is not hypothetical. Once we make that transition to marveling at our own being, then perhaps we can begin to marvel at

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the other forms of life. Or, is the opposite more true, that by studying and reflecting upon the outside, we can better appreciate what we are?

“Is it possible for mass man to learn a new way of regarding life, that to do any violence to the living would be unthinkable?”

“Parts of the equation seem inevitable. We do not need to kill wildlife for sustenance, certainly not for pleasure, or for trophies. That we might domesticate certain species for sustenance may be part of the equation; but the animal, flesh, must still be revered for what it is; in some cultures, as sustenance it has become something to be worshipped. Alternatively we might all become vegetarians. At this point in time this latter may not seem possible.

“So much of what we are involves our peculiar awareness of mortality; of other animal life as well as our own. I cannot imagine us thinking less of other life than we do our own. However, there is 'a fly in this ointment'; there are many who do not care enough for even their own; inadvertently, that spells doom for all the others.”

“Catherine, it would seem some heavy-handedness might be required. We cannot leave some things to chance.”

“It seems a helluva way to begin our enterprise.”

“Paradise comes with strings attached.”

“I want to believe in education; in the educableness of man; not so much facts and figures, but the stimulation of awareness, and encouraging a sensitivity to life, a true appreciation of life; an acute appreciation, if you will. All else will follow”

“It seems like a tall order these days with all the yak concerning prayer in the classroom, intelligent design versus evolution, right-to-life issues, abstinence as a thwart to teen pregnancy. How does one insert the more vital consideration into the equation”

“Yes!, Tess, it all seems insurmountable, doesn't it?”

“Mr. D., is there any kind of logic that we can apply to this conundrum?”

“I think a lot of the logic becomes self-evident when we get around to recognizing the 'other'. The 'other' might represent our general interest in the opposite sex. We modify our behavior in the presence of the opposite sex; at least to the degree we wish to make a favorable impression. The 'other' 'others' might exist as our neighbor(s). Somewhat like the opposite sex in our awareness; they are there; we cannot ignore them. Both involve modified behavior in order to establish and maintain some equanimity, where each party is acknowledged as unique and equal in all respects to ourselves. This becomes 'self-evident' when we are wronged by the other. In order to establish and maintain peaceful coexistence we tacitly and implicitly, perhaps explicitly, acknowledge the 'Golden Rule'; which contains its own clear logic. Any idiot might be said to understand the basic rule; its logic being the most primitive and elementary; so akin to self-interest.

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“How does that fit into our grander scheme, 7,000,000,000 +?”

“Half of whom are comprised of the opposite sex.”

“Could you handle 3,500,000,00 of the opposite sex for neighbors?”

“Not if I was a minority of one.”

“Mr. D., we are wandering afar; rather, we are becoming extreme; hence straining the logic of our logical concern; we are trumpeting illogicality.

“I want to follow upon that more relevant logic that we apply everyday to the ‘other’. It may not be obvious that we modify our behavior, but it is logical that we do.

“If we live alone, away from any contact with the ‘other’, we behave in a certain way; not requiring an awareness of the ‘other’. We might be said to behave strangely; we might walk about disheveled, we might be talking to, or arguing with ourselves, all day long, we might openly masturbate; our eating habits might be sporadic. Details of circumspection that we observe in the presence of others would be completely lacking. The necessity for logic might apply to the making of the stone ax, or the primitive spear, or something more complex, like a trap, in order to eat of flesh. We might have discovered fire, perhaps something of the erotic.

“Alternatively, we might be a modern with a full library, living in a comfortable house, with all kinds of tools and conveniences at our disposal.

“Pleasure does not only exist in achieving peace and harmony. It seems logical that one must gratify certain urges.”

“It seems that we do, whether, logical or not. On one level it is logical, or it follows from our construction. If one does not trust mankind, it may seem logical to live alone.

“Hence, it seems logical that we would live both alone, and in the company of others.

“So the clearly logical existence is open to question.”

“The chances that we will live alone in an isolated, never violated circumstance are very unlikely. Upon Antarctica, we might not be able to survive; upon the Sahara, we might not be able to survive. Upon the Greenbelt, we cannot escape the ‘other’, which might also result in a low survival potential. All the in-betweens, if they involve mankind, may have a dubious outcome in terms of survival.”

“You seem to be reaching for something basic, also something underlying.”

“In a way; I am beginning at the beginning, before Moses came along, where any two individuals come to an understanding, to assure the survival of both. Where there is plenty, where it is not at all necessary to hog the whole thing; to kill off the other in order to protect and assure for the self.

“The rams foraged together; assumed as safety in numbers; until the ewe came along; much violent head-knocking occurred, until a kind of

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sensibility, or senselessness prevailed, or hormones began to wane. Our melodramas are full of headknockings. The Golden Rule be damned. The logic is not clear. Nature does not reveal her purpose in headknocking. We of the higher animals, esteeming ourselves above nature, observe that Justice is in the interest of the stronger. Although Justice is purported to be blind, she ought afford each his due; but it is true, with yet another ewe; not you. Ha Ha Ho HO Hee Hee.

“When it comes to rationalizations as an extension of logic, we, of the highers, intuit that mn is assuring that the biggest headknocker impregnates the other with his virility, thus genetically assuring for a more virile offspring (assumed law of averages, and a law of n), which in turn assures for a ‘better’ individual to carry forth the seed or egg of the species (assumption, ad infinitum). Macho virility seems to be an important factor for certain animals. Is that also true of the higher animal? One would not want the species to degenerate into impuissance.

“Being obedient to that dictum, are we ‘fatefully inevitably’ destined for a sore head? You have heard the expression, ‘sore loser’. ‘Do unto others as you would be done by’?”

“The ‘self-evident’, as you cast it, suffers some taint.”

“The other self-evident aspect of this juxtaposition is to ‘take turns’.”

“Is it as I have heard, that amongst certain species, males will screw away to such an extent to cause a female to abort a fetus brought about through insemination by another male?”

“I have heard it said with regard to horses.”

“I can imagine humans consciously trying to do such a thing out of jealousy, or the overwhelming desire to ‘conquer’ the female. Is it really done? Can it be accomplished? Why?”

“Hmn, doubtful areas of conjecture, sufficient to give rise to questions that lurk in the background. Can we understand mother nature in this regard?”

“It is my opinion mother nature is not to be understood, only appreciated.”

“When your head hurts!!??”

“Very much off the subject here.”

“There may not be a subject.”

“We could discuss the weather.”

“Its clouding up.”

