

## *The Week Before*

### *Eighth Day, (Monday) After Classes.*

William was already at the restaurant when Catherine arrived. As she anxiously watched for him, spotting him, she smiled her warmest greeting. William for his part 'leapt' for joy, but contained his expression behind a blushing smile, and a wordless greeting.

"Mr. D., so very good to see you. You are real and believable, after all. I had wondered a few times during the day whether you might have escaped my clutches; that is, I had hoped I hadn't scared you away."

"Not much chance of that Catherine; besides I try to be a 'man of my word'. I would never allow you to arrive at meeting place without my being there, as agreed. Even if it was to tell you outright that ours cannot continue."

"More doubts, Mr. D.?"

"None at the moment Catherine. I am a hopeless captive."

"That's very reassuring."

"Have you seen the author again?"

"Not to speak to, but I have certainly thought of him and have written about him."

"Oh!, what, do tell?"

"Analyzing his purposeless existence."

"How so? We are not purposeless. We may not be enduring, but we are not purposeless."



"I know, Catherine, but there are times when both of us, he and I, are at a loss for words. because we both realize the reader can stomach only so much of the lingering intrigue and vacillation, as well as the lack of plausibility."

"Well, then, don't beleaguer the reader with it now."

"Even as unlikely as things seem, readers have indulged in fairy tales, science fiction, mysteries, gothic tales, harlequin romances, even comic and cartoon characters, not to mention the dailies, tabloids, and the magazines and journals

of all kinds, much of it packed with nonsense and propaganda, whether derived from pure fantasy, or the intention to inform, control or deceive. Man is inclined to process a lot of information, both useful and useless, through his underutilized, oversized brain. Like Albert Camus sarcastically observed, 'All men want to do is fornicate, and read newspapers. Adding what another man conjectures, 'Then he dies' for the want of anything better to do.'

"So, one more fairy tale upon rag for the omnivorous reader?"

"Perhaps.

"I like your story of your farmer friend who would discover something to read as he was about to use the long neglected prestigious newspaper to start his morning fire. Perhaps some individual will come upon this opus in a like manner, perhaps as it has been remaindered or donated to a library fund-raiser. Once it is in print, even a grand, or great grandchild, might lovingly, belatedly discover it in some proverbial attic, or cellar, only to form some unaccountable, seductively mysterious attachment to people long gone, who brought something of themselves forward through their words. Significances, who knows about these things? One thing for sure, it needs to be put into print for this other to happen."

"As you mention it, I am mindful that some of what I write is critical of the grandchildren and their parents; not at all flattering; and rather bereft of understanding."

"Oh! well, a nice thought. There are still many eyes seeking out all kinds of things to enlighten, to amuse, to titillate; and to fill the vast human void. I'm counting on it myself. My cherished hope is to leave behind a rewarding experience for the reader."

"But on another subject, where it has been remiss of me not to inquire. Please tell me about your island."

"You have not been remiss, in any way.

"The island is not my island.

"But I have invested much labor there, I have felt comfortable there. But I am also beginning to feel the effects of the physical effort of keeping myself there, and feeling less inclined to engage in the physical effort.

"Islands are psychological havens, surrounded by water. They are in high demand as such. Those with the means buy up chunks of them for retreats.

"I wasn't any different than they; I wanted a chunk for a retreat. But I couldn't buy a big enough chunk. But what I do have is better than not having any, and not having had the experience.

"The island experience began upon the water, as we would sail or motor by the seductive humanoid perches situated along the

shore. Why so? They looked impossibly expensive, packed too close together, often enough, not actually on the water, but above it on some rocky slope or bluff. What were we imagining for ourselves? Something illusory on the one hand, but eventually something special; also involving, and requiring, as it turned out, a great deal of labor.

“I could recite something that I had written as an attempt at an introduction to a work I had proposed to title, *The Island*. But the last time I ran too many words together you raised your hands to fend off the barrage.”

“Try me.”

“I might eventually rewrite some of this, but the gist would remain.

### *RADICAL SOLITUDE*

*What had served as a symbol of rectitude in this long flight across the mystic oceans; as well, a dream designed to frustrate the conscious life; finally had become a tangible reality; a place where an awkward featherless pair of ceaselessly beating and droning wings would flail no more. The fear of drowning in the murky bloody sea of homo erectus hast driven one thus; where one could stand alone on the unspoiled, unstained, pristine shore; no longer feeling those unholy compulsions to survive; able now to indulge and revel in the other less obvious persuasions of the Great Mother. We would now station ourselves above the sea, upon our bridge deck constructed of granite, beyond time and illusion, unassailable, invulnerable to all but Omega. There, beneath us, breathed the timeless element, overwhelming us with something we could neither identify, nor quantify.*

*With precious hours squandered; auguring, dredging and earthing this Beforeddeath repose. For which they had demanded that artless, indifferent medium of exchange; our signatures attested to our before-rapture three-dimensionality, our gross validity; spirits bounded in an ugly and mortal flesh.*

*We had requested an injunction against mankind. We had demanded that he not be allowed into the Temple ever again; the place, perhaps permanently, reeking of some foul smelling and obdurate animal.*

*Aye, we resideth in our ivory towers playing endless rounds of solitaire, when we could be preparing for the afterlife, or writing the long overdue treatise on the Rise and Fall of Bullshit.*

*On the mystical horizon one believed he could see a fleet of ships without flags, headed his way..*

*Leaving Port  
Saving The World*

*Setting Sail  
Requires Courage*

*In the silent wood, the Pestilence stirred; sharp little piranha-like, steel teeth, driven with motorized vengeance into the defenseless trunks. No anesthetic.*

*Shots echo throughout the forest. Death walks everywhere; the price and imperative of Survival; somehow an inelegant, undainty, unfrivolous thrust.*

*Another refrain omitted from Mother Goose and Beatrix Potter. Spare them in their innocence.*

*There is little wisdom in poetry. "Useless as tits on a boar", as one of the Islanders would paraphrase the elegant, refined sensibilities.*

*That symbol of rectitude, lofted upon the metaphysics of escape, of longing, yearning, for the security for that innerness, that had discovered mostly malicious thorns, always diverting, and directing one's attention, morbidly, toward the inevitable escarpment. Yes!, this ship of an Island, does it too fail to fulfill its scantlings as the successful repository of buoyant dreams?*

*The decision having taken its final form in this concrete three dimensionality, now too acquires the epitaph of "Reality". Now what?*

*Confinement? Confinement; another leap that has found one landing hard upon the planetary integument.*

*"Tis all too true, a patch of dream, of Paradise, had become something else, a still-life, a fait accompli.*

*What Rub doth lie therein?*

*Funnygin might utter, "What feels these muddles be!"*

*The EPITAPH: I had dreamt, therefore I had been.*

"Mr. D. you are, without a doubt, the somber realist. Also a very fine poet-philosopher. I note your reference to Beforedeath, once again."

"Compliments noted. There are times I have wondered why I return. Why not try to find a larger less expensive chunk, somewhere near a desert, in some more formidable place, where few would care to travel, where few would obtain solace from bleakness, barrenness. But I cannot begin again.

"I am too poor to afford such luxury as I might seek; and now with age fast overtaking me, I will require other's labor if I am to stay out of what my mother called the 'pest house'."

"Are you considering other options to the island?"

"It would only be to avoid the negatives. But everywhere one might alight, there will be negatives. I am not equipped, nor am I disposed, to deal with another whole new set of negatives.

“So I will return to the bridge deck atop the piece of crumbling rock, because it is there, my own hand has formed part of the intrusion; it is familiar, not requiring new energies to wreak unwanted transformations, marks of man. I will wield my decimating piranha against the defenseless trunks to obtain the fuel to provide heat in the midst of the cold. I will become that which I abhor in others, the survivor, lasting it out until the world will not have any more of me.”

“I love your imagery, your descriptions. But I feel you are overdramatizing something for my benefit.”

“Yes!, Catherine it is likely I want you to know this part of me, this black interior that wells up, all too often. It is not how I view myself apart, but as a life, a sentient life, that sees other life as both a poetic marvel, and also as a victim of forces; and also as a kind of maggoty thing. Things are simply not pastoral, life is not, deceptively, alluringly, a supine nonchalantly pastoral grazing thing. It is something that must graze, must keep moving to where the lush blade grows, and where the carrion resides.”

“But now you are not answering my specific questions about the island.

“I gather you will return, that other options are not being seriously considered.

“I am not unsympathetic to what calls you there. I would love to go there, to feel the surroundings, to know what I cannot know without going there.

“Would I be a positive?”

“Needless to ask. But you shouldn’t have any expectations. I will be me wherever I am.

“As I imagine us being there, as I imagine us being other places, I need to heed my own sensibilities in the matter.

“Yes!, as it is now, we are doing well together. Upon the island, we may do well together for a time, or in the some other place we might do well together, until the time I begin to slow you down, become too much of an extra consideration for you.”

“Of course, we cannot predict anything Mr. D.; probably foolish to try. I do not want to speculate.

“But what do you imagine; what do you foresee that troubles you?”

“Nothing specific, your needs, mostly. There would be an incredible stasis. Yes! we could be together sitting near the water, discussing everything under the sun. Then silence, steeping oneself in the ambience, maybe for lengthy periods. We might snuggle together in meaningful ways, hopefully sharing in a mutuality of feelings. I suspect this latter consideration had better succeed because there is no room for tension, unspoken feelings,

unsatisfied emotions. All must be out in the open, fluid, with complete understanding of the other person. I suspect this does not happen over night.

“We are untested in our proposed roles.

“So, all I might imagine concerning an idyllic setting being also a natural setting, where two people, albeit, a woman and a man, if that is what they be, will share in all they are in affirmation of each other, in peace and harmony.”

“Is that how it was with you and your wife.”

“For the most part, Yes! It could not have endured otherwise.

“As much as she professed the desire to be with me, she was also more of this world than I, with a desire for a closeness with family and friends, and other activities, and interests. Her lifelong interest in science called her from her seclusion with the grumbling geezur. Without expressing it, she probably welcomed the chance to escape this terrible presence and sameness of me.

“She thought me negative, often without good reason. She rankled at my assessments of her family friends and coworkers. Often these assessments would follow upon her complaints about them.

“Often she was annoyingly busy, sort of a compulsive cleaner upper, organizer, often grumbling about my messes and disorder. She may have had reason to be concerned, thinking I didn’t care, maybe care enough about her.

“It was true, I didn’t care, as a matter of course, and I still do not care. But I did care about her, but apparently, not enough to do as she wished, doing what made her feel comfortable.

“People are different. I do not see myself as a slob, and eventually I am bothered by too much of what seems out of control, what she called ‘clutter’, but I do not feel insecure, as long as my intentions are to keep a watchful eye over my burgeoning transgressions.

“This is all pretty mundane, pretty innocuous stuff. I was short with her on occasions, but she could reciprocate. I suspect my tendency was to put her down; a kind of learned thing, about which I would feel contrite, when I became aware of my gambit. But I was who I was, despite any or all good intentions. I guess I didn’t care if she was who she was; we either got along or we didn’t. For the most part we got along; there were no long standing tensions; no desire to get revenge for slights; actually the tensions grew the more we were apart.”

“But that is not true now, is it?”

“I do not know how to explain the now. I am resigned to never seeing her again because it is more comfortable, that is, the

resignation represents a release from having to deal with another person.

“So when I tell you not to have any expectations, I am speaking from experience.”

“I guess I hear what you are saying; and I do not dismiss the cautionary words.

“I imagine I might be like her, not wanting to live alone, or with something that casts a spell, that affects me, that cannot be different than it is, because for two to be together, the compromise must be made. One cannot stubbornly insist upon his difference to the exclusion of the other. That’s basic.

“Recall your dictum about one person not having dominion over the other.”

“Yes!, and does that make of me a hypocrite?”

“If the shoe fits, Mr. D.

“I think you would find me chiding you if I felt you were being an asshole. Would you be up for that?”

“You are essentially asking me if I would be willing to crawl into another pair of ill-fitting shoes?”

“Well, not exactly.

“I do not feel inclined to prejudge anything.

“Some things cannot be known in advance.

“I do not anticipate what I feel about you now will substantially change. Perhaps it’s a matter of how close we will become, and how that affects me.

“I believe a person can be a thinker, a poet, a philosopher without being a model citizen; and without being a testament to his own thesis, that is, in absolute terms. I believe a lot of what we think, and even postulate, is in the nature of something formative, a way station, a work in progress; hypothetical, not absolute.

“I see both you and myself as a work in progress.”

“You, maybe.”

“Both, simply because you do not think in terms of absolutes, you have not ossified upstairs. The most important ingredient of your mental makeup is the yardstick by which you measure everything: the ‘truth’, as best as you can know it.”

“That I desire, also, and have grown more acutely aware of certain things, since meeting you.

“I believe we all tend to become lazy thinkers, that is, we accept half-truths when we should strive for the whole. We, you and I definitely choose not to be acting from an equivocal, ambivalent, position, even as a temporary measure.

“If we should continue on the island as we are now, things should go along nicely enough.”

*Leaving Port  
Saving The World*

*Setting Sail  
Requires Courage*

“I would not want you to become ‘collateral damage’ on the island; despite the ‘risk benefit.’”

“Very funny, Mr. D.

“We skirt the serious matters, then we laugh.”

“I suppose that is best.”

“I want you to know I am not forgetting yesterday, any of it, including our budding closeness. More than a ‘risk benefit’. Enchantment, Mr. D.’ ; no damage.”

“You are a romantic.”

“Is there a better way to be?”

“A realist, maybe.”

“You are a wet blanket.”

“OK, I’m willing to let you lead me astray.”

“Its settled then!?”

This friendly banter continued throughout the lengthy evening repast, time simply evaporating, almost oblivious to the surroundings. An hour and a half before curfew.

“We might spend a few minutes some place else, Mr. D.”

“Agreed.”

They departed to sit in Catherine’s car, which she had parked behind the building, out of sight of other passing automobiles. Bright moonlight illuminated everything with an eerie shadowy glow. The land behind the restaurant rose above the embankment and retaining wall into an evergreen hillside, fringed with arbutus, and a bramble of blackberries. The highway was muted in their location, but with the car windows opened one could smell the restaurant smells that tended to make one ill, especially when one had reflected upon having eaten in the establishment.

William recalled the evenings sharing dinner with Catherine in her dorm; now fully appreciated.

“You know, Catherine If I did not like being with you so much, I would encourage you to take your meals at the dorm; I can imagine them more wholesome for your health. I should insist upon it.”

“Mr. D., after my sisters leave, and you are on your way to the island, will be soon enough.

“In the meantime, we might try other places. Lets look in the yellow pages for possibilities, maybe out of town. We can meet here as usual, but go off together to some other place. More aromatic!

“So sorry, but it is time.”

Catherine put arms arm William’s neck, and snuggled her face against the crook of his neck, brushing her hair upon his cheek. As has been her habit in these evening partings, she did not linger,



but pulled away with a, “See you on the morrow; same time same place.”

William opened the door to her car; in leaving, looking back at her with “OK, we’ll see what happens. Good Night Catherine.”

“Good Night Mr. D.”

William departed awkwardly, too abruptly, he thought. But that’s the way of these partings, going full bore right up to the moment, then whoosh!

As Catherine diffidently entered her dorm, she had hoped few eyes would be upon her. There were none except for Mrs. Watson who was in the lounge reading. She looked up to see Catherine, whose appearance had suddenly reawakened her interest. Although she was concerned about how Catherine might be screwing up her life, she thought Catherine might be distracted enough to forget the quarterly How We Are Doing Meeting of the Sorority, to take place on Wednesday evening.

“Good Evening, Mrs. Watson.”

“Hello Catherine. Might I have a word?”

“Of course, Mrs. Watson.”

Catherine was not alarmed for she had not broken any rules, but she was still apprehensive; although she considered Mrs. Watson a mind-your-own-business person.

“Don’t be alarmed Catherine, my curiosity will not endanger you at this juncture, but I might need to remind you that our quarterly meeting takes place Wednesday evening.”

“OH!, indeed I had forgotten. Thank You for reminding me.”

“You are very welcome, Catherine.”

Mrs. Watson was reluctant to let Catherine go without letting her know how highly she regarded Catherine, and that she hoped she was being careful in her extracurricular activities.

“If you would like to talk; we can adjourn to my quarters.”

“Thank you for offering Mrs. Watson. I would like to assure you that I would not do anything to bring disrepute to or disgrace upon you, the Sorority, the University, or to my family.

“Which reminds me of something else which I can mention in the Wednesday meeting. My sisters will be coming for a visit the weekend after next; I had planned to suggest they use our guest facilities; assuming that would be OK.

“Oh!, How wonderful; I’d like to meet them; of course, Catherine; they must use our facilities.

“Are they at all like you?”

“I would have to say so. We have been very close all through our growing years. I am the eldest, of course, but Lydia is in her first college year, and Theresa is in her last year of high school, having

leaped ahead a year. Since we have gone away to school our partings are always tinged with a sadness, and regrets.

“As you know I usually go home during the school breaks, but this term I have an increased load, and felt the need to put in the extra time to complete an essay for Robinson’s Writing Course. I have found other things to occupy my mind, and have not missed my family as much, But I am very eager for my sister’s visit.”

“You know, I have considered you an exceptional student, and consider it a privilege to know you. I am, of course like a mother hen, solicitous of her charges. I try very hard not to interfere, but I do hope, nonetheless, you are in full appreciation of your wonderful youth and the opportunity that you have.”

“I am very much aware of my responsibilities, and truly desire and aim to fulfill my potential to the best of my abilities. I know this is what is expected of me, but it is also what I expect of myself.”

“That is so reassuring to hear. I don’t mean to impose myself upon you, at all.

“Good evening, Catherine.”

“Good evening Mrs. Watson. See you Wednesday evening.”

Catherine felt put on notice, but tried not to be compromised by the indulgence.

## *Ninth Day, After Classes*

Catherine and William met outside the restaurant again, deciding to try a different place, a restaurant specializing in ribs located in the next town south on the freeway. They drove away in Catherine’s car.

“Mrs. Watson greeted me upon my return to the dorm last night. First she wanted to remind me of our quarterly house meeting taking place tomorrow evening, something which I had forgotten.

“See what you do to me.

“So, Mr. D., sadly, disappointingly, we shall have to forego tomorrow’s get together.

“Mrs. Watson also had something else on her mind, avoiding asking about specifics. She wanted to let me know she was concerned for my welfare; and my future.”

“See, that makes two of us.”

“Mr. D., if that comment was intended to humor me, I can inform you that it does not.

“This is not an opportunity to moralize on our relationship. So, please, don’t get started.

“Mrs. Watson is a decent person; and we are decent people; so there is no problem.”

William ventured nothing more until Catherine spoke again, “Mr. D., what I said was not meant to shut you up.”

“I realize that, Catherine.”

They drove off the freeway into the town, and soon found the restaurant. It seemed a popular place, for there were a number of vehicles parked outside.

As they entered they were greeted by Western Music, and the clamor and chatter of people, dressed in their western garb, and rattle and chiming of utensils. It wasn't overpowering, but was not conducive to the softer emanations. However they did find a seat somewhat removed from the center of the noisiest section of the hubbub.

“Mr. D., are you feeling miffed by my curtness?”

“Not exactly. I was thinking that your Mrs. Watson represents something you are somehow minimizing.”

“Mr. D., I will not apologize for berating you once again.

“We have already discussed the inherent complications to the unseemliness and implausibility; and improbability of our relationship. We need not discuss them further.

“I would rather we find something else to discuss. There are other things to discuss, Mr. D., are there not?”

“Yes!, what kind of ribs to order, and how many, ¼ rack, ½ rack, or whole rack. Hawg, Calf, or Lamb. What kind of booze. The cost of fuel, and the weather.”

“Careful, Mr. D.

“Remember, we are equals. I do not like to be patronized; talked down to, made the butt of a joke, or handled in a dismissive, chauvinistic manner.

“I am also a very lovely woman who has chosen your company above all others.”

“Got me there.”

“I do not want to ‘get you’. Hmn!, or do I?”

The waiter arrived to take their orders, which they gave without much thought to their palates, more preoccupied with the tension arising between them.

William lapsed into silence again.

Catherine sat across from him, looking at him in a friendly manner, inviting conversation, not one-sided.

She recalled John Travolta and Uma Thurman in Pulp Fiction, dining in the fake automobile, fake celebrity restaurant, served by a celebrity waiter, such a fabricated setting for the location of their dining table, complete with a fake Marylyn Monroe wiggling and gushing upon the stage, Catherine and William sitting across from each other without speaking, for so long that it became necessary to inquire what the silence signified. Travolta indicated that he didn't have anything to talk about, whereupon Uma decided to sojourn to the ladies room for a snort, requesting that John think of something to talk about in her absence. Catherine was thinking she might reenact this scene; without the snort, of course.

"Mr. D., I am in need of going to the ladies room; by the time I return it would be especially nice if you could think of something to say."

"Catherine, I recognize that scene. I liked Uma in that sequence."

"We'll talk about that when I return."

William was feeling self-accusatory. He was not being fair to Catherine with his attitude. She was barely tolerating his rankling. He knew he should not be testing her. Her invention of this break was a wise thing. He needed to cool it. He needed to go back to the first day of meeting her, when he was responding entirely to her astounding loveliness. He needed to be respectful, and not so self-centered. After all, he was more than fortunate to have met this wonderful young woman, even if this was the last moment of their relationship. But it wasn't, unless he deliberately screwed it up, out of a contrived petulant maliciousness. It would be so unfair to her, no matter what he felt he might be sparing her. In that regard, he ought be more selfish, treasuring every moment with her.

The scene was being replayed. The ribs they had ordered were served while she was away.

When she returned, she looked pleased at the sight of the ribs, commenting, as did Uma, how nice it was to return to food, and not to have to wait.

"Well., Mr. D., have you thought of anything to say.?"

"Like Mr. Travolta, 'well, I might'.

"The rest of the scene is irrelevant, since I am not being paid to escort you and entertain you.

"The ribs smell wonderful, and look delectable.

"Yes!, while you were away, I felt that I was being an asshole, for which I deserved a tongue-lashing, and for which I apologize.

"Actually I reminded myself of first day of our meeting, with all its wonder, and my hopelessly awkward response to you.

“Catherine, I have no right to presume upon you, to expose you to such flimsy little boy stuff. I need to do better.”

“Its all right Mr. D., I know you do not mean a lot of what you say. I think you are somehow trying to avert a crashing to earth with a big thud. I might feel the same way if I thought too much about things. All I can say is that it doesn't help to think about such things. Moreover I do not care to think of them. Furthermore, my conscience is clear; I will not allow you to crash to the planet with a big thud.

“So lets enjoy what is before us, with relish and good cheer.

“Lets talk of other things, things more far reaching than our more troubling introspective selves.

“We could conjecture upon appearances, like, while we know the earth to be round, to us it appears flat. How many centuries had man truly believed in its flatness? For how many centuries had he believed that the earth, and albeit, the universe, was created, and stocked with creatures, all in one week? Many still so believe. Perhaps some primitive peoples believe still in the flatness. Those same primitives have a different perception of the world than the seven day scenario. It seems odd, that, while man accepts the roundness of the earth, and the decentralized place it holds in the physical universe, these proven to him by observation, (Mr. Kepler, Mr. Copernicus, Mr. Galileo), that many of the same ones do not accept the observations made with regard to evolution (Mr. Darwin, et al). They might insist, since the world appears flat, it is flat. Because they cannot see inside generations of DNA molecules they cannot see the mechanism or basis for evolution; that is, they cannot see it happening, then there is no mechanism. It is a lot more theoretical than proving that the earth is round. Our space launchings have captured the roundness. There is nothing equivalent to demonstrate the theory of evolution, despite what the externals can demonstrate, like cloning, breeding, selecting some desirable trait in a plant or animal to propagate and perpetuate, which might be lost through non intervention. Plausible!?!; but to them, ‘creationism’ is as plausible.”

“As long as they don't go to war over it, and as long as they keep their mouths shut.

“Do you imagine yourself enlightening these stubborn blockheaded masses?”

“I would propose that all keep an open mind. I know this may seem futile to you. But I cannot argue for anything better, lest it be a thunderbolt from Mt. Olympus.”

“I say lobotomize the lot of them, turn them loose on the desert.”

“You believe there is no possibility, then!?”

“None whatsoever. I have witnessed too many instances close-hand, not to know the inevitable issuance from rigor mortis of the brain; brain dead; by choice.

“As they might feel I am sacrilegious, heretical, profane, blasphemous, irreverent, and a ‘free-thinker’, I feel they are bigoted, dogmatic, degenerate, superstitious, sanctimonious, idolaters, and narrow-minded.

“They slobber over one with their effusive do-goddy-good, holier-than-thou, self-righteous Christian claptrap. If you don’t like that, they give an uppity dirty look.”

“Wow!, Mr. D., EARS ARE BURNING!.”

“I know Catherine, I’m ugly on the subject, another way to rid myself of accumulated bile. Wild emanations from an intolerant person. I’ve written a couple of diatribes on the subject, one titled G A W D, and one titled, Meditations Upon The Loss (of my daughter). (While saying this I am aware of Galileo’s Daughter.)

“Theirs is not a private affair; it becomes an insistent cause, involving missionary zeal. If it wasn’t always in your face, with their incessant superior morality, their hopeless harping on abstinence, on abortion, on creationism, on bedevilment, on ‘my’ salvation, as if they gave a damn (Excuse my French), one could ignore the whole fabrication.

“Sigmund thought man needed something, while faith in reason caught up with the underutilization of his oversized brain. Without reason, man is at the mercy of forces he cannot understand or control. He develops neuroses because he is apprehensive about his place in society, and his purpose in this world; also about his bank account, and where his fucking soul will end.

“From the philosophical side Sigmund summed up cause in his Civilization And Its Discontents, from which we have extracted ‘fatefully inevitable’. To quote the contextual passage:

*‘We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men. The suffering which comes from this last source is perhaps more painful to us than any other. We tend to regard it as a kind of gratuitous addition, although it cannot be any less fatefully inevitable than the suffering which comes from elsewhere.’*

“If ever there was cause, Catherine.

“What does man propose as remedy; Jesus!!!, and his own dubious invention: Justice.

“I remember my father, the ‘holy’ man, when he struck his thumb with the hammer, or when things were not going as he had planned, bellowing: ‘Geeeezzzzzzz Keeeerrriiccceetuhhh!’

Catherine laughed heartily at the image, at the example, at the juxtaposition, at the preposterous absurdity of the life William had ‘knocked into a cocked hat’.

“I’ve learned to do that, and I add a few other expletives as well, to add emphasis to the obvious. Does that make of me a hypocrite?”

“Very amusing Mr. D. That is taking the ‘name of the lord in vain’.”

“I finally became self-conscious in using that epithet in front of my Jesus daughter, fearing she would run away at the sound of such blasphemy. She was ready to run away anyway. With a father like me, she needed something.”

“Don’t lapse into self recrimination, Mr. D. You probably did things all fathers do, which children do not appreciate, which they view as controlling and meddling, especially when its ‘for their own good’, whether declared or not.

“By the way, these ribs are scrumptious.”

“You are a regular carnivore.”

“Sorry I changed the subject. I want to continue with the thread here. Not about self-recrimination, but about man’s need for a ‘crutch’.

“You coupled Jesus and Justice. Are these a coterminous usage, one implying the other?”

“I guess I mean that Justice was a way of dealing with the ‘*gratuitous addition*’, but its not so simple, because Justice proceeds from edicts, which have their roots in Moses and the big ten. Ultimate fairness (or justice) may not be obtained through edicts. Perhaps a Jesus, in the position of a Judge, might offer something else that one might not obtain any other way; that’s assuming a conventional image of one who is apt to forgive certain transgressions; one might be offered a parable to sooth his aching soul; maybe his need for vengeance.”

“Meaning that the world is somehow arranged and fated to preclude Justice, if one is inclined to think of Justice as the guarantor of fairness, a fairness based in real equity, and not in hocus pocus?”

“Something like that. A bias exists favoring those who conform, and those who acquiesce, besides those who are ‘stronger’, and those who can manipulate Justice with their wealth. Jesus would view us all as alike, as Guds creatures; no favorites; not even emperors.

“When Jesus carried it too far, they nailed him.

“Unamuno saw Jesus and Don Quixote, the Knight of the Sad Countenance, in the same light. If you remember Cervantes depicted the Don as a humble member of an essentially poverty-stricken contingent, and the Jesus thing professes a vow of poverty; although you might think differently when you view the wealth of the Church, and the wealth of the purveyors. Jesus tried to chase away, the money-changers; but he failed miserably. (By the way Unamuno’s *Our Lord Don Quixote* is a good read).

“A lot of prayers are directed toward increasing sums; a kind of security that Jesus and the Don had relinquished.

“Why had they relinquished them?”

“To borrow from a modern vernacular; because that was not ‘where it was at.’”

“You, Mr. D., where do you fit? Where are you at?”

“We might ask the same question of each other?”

“But not to dodge the question, Doña Quixote, I may not be a man of my, what?, ‘convictions’. I sometimes wonder at my own ‘substance’. What would I do, if put to the test?”

“I suppose without knowing ‘where its at’, I would be ‘found wanting’ in many respects. One doesn’t actually know. A ghost in the closet. One is a figment of his own imagination. Grandiose, to be sure. But without being one, ‘Christian’ per se; a declared ‘Christian’ or a practicing ‘Christian’ is it possible to be construed ‘altruistic’; brotherly, ‘kindness is ever the begetter of kindness’, without attribution, on my own. Wow, is that possible?”

“Mr. D., you can be very amusing, but, more importantly, refreshingly honest.

“To be equally honest, I cannot say what I am. While I behave in a certain manner toward my fellow man, I can not know the precise origin of that behavior; I have not been put to the test, but feel I could not speak of certain things without becoming them, whether seemingly grandiose or not.

“I suppose one needs to assess his or her true self. I feel certain we all limit ourselves, for one reason or another.

“If we are so inclined, we feel empathy for others, sometimes to a very great extent. We will respond to appeals for help, aid, assistance, funds, charity, ‘do-gooding’, partly out of this feeling, and partly from a guilt over the entire human condition.

“The guilt arises because we know we don’t do enough to make the world a better place; we are too busy living, consuming, enjoying, exploring, seeking adventure, and excitement and thrills, especially in this excessive intemperate western world of ours. To make a donation is better than doing nothing, is it not?”

“So it would seem, Mr. D.. That is putting the worst face on it.



“There are times when I want to put aside this ‘precious’ life of mine to become involved in real situations. I realize that in my own town, my own neighborhood, there might be something requiring attention that must be tackled first. I don’t need to go over the horizon, that is, I do not need to go very far from home in order to ‘get my feet wet.’ That is, to answer to some missionary ‘do-gooding’ impulse.

“Realistically speaking, that might be for what I am best equipped. In an inner city situation I would come as a complete novice, unfamiliar with local customs, local culture; not ‘street wise’, as they say. In a foreign country, I would be even more handicapped; all, despite any good intentions. There are places where ‘good intentions’ are likely to be resented. But that in itself is not sufficient reason to avoid them.

“I could not offer anything but myself, my energy, my skills, and my basic compassion. Certainly I would not offer ‘salvation’.

“Then, like you, maybe, a caution sets in, a sense of futility; ‘if it was so easy, why hasn’t it been done?’ Not necessarily giving rise to cynicism, simply because it is convenient to think so.”

“One thing I have done with my life, which I might sardonically regret. I have always given as good as I have got, and, if the truth were told, more than I got. It satisfied me to be this way. A kind of ethic that sprang from my roots, maybe from both my parents, my mother in service to mankind, from her roots, and my father from his middle-European Protestant ethic; he even served his demons with hard labor.

“With that under my belt, little pride, more a feeling of having been a fool; with few exceptions, like where I derived a lot of personal satisfaction from helping someone; never expecting anything in return, only my own feelings of doing ‘good’. Rare enough. Looking back, somewhat of a waste, in the balance; maybe even doing things with an ulterior motive, a reward, like ‘Atta Boy’. Seeking praise, that base motive.”

“Too hard on yourself, Mr. D. The doing does count regardless of the motive; and that kind of praise goes hand in hand with the act, there is no disgrace in that. Maybe you are looking too closely.

“What is altruism, after all? Is it so unselfish; is there not a hint of reciprocity (Golden Rule-ism); maybe only a sign of recognition, a smile? Does one stain the gesture by not closing his eyes? I think not.

“I don’t know what word or phrase to apply to what I do in my interactions with others, when I feel the urge to console, to physically assist another, or by giving to a charitable cause. I guess I don’t think very much about it. I simply do.

“Where does the impulse come from? Is it also from my roots, is it cultural; do my peers seem to do the same? Perhaps all in the affirmative, to one degree or another. My parents were not people who would say something like ‘God helps those who help themselves’ or think in terms of ‘trickle down’ or see people as ‘social retards’ because they fell on hard times, or because they couldn’t ‘cut it’. There was definitely an identification with the human condition without having to say things like, ‘There, but for the grace of God, go I’.

“Because of the ‘Biblical’ or ‘religious’ thing (‘Christian’ in this case), I suppose there is a cultural awareness of the admonition to do good, and, for the most part, my peers are in tune with that ‘operative’ without being all that conscious of it.”

“Yes!, the Sunday School thing. Even before I was sent off to catholic school, my parents, perhaps influenced by the neighbor’s wife, the husband being a simpatico friend of father’s, who sent her children to the Presbyterian church Sunday School; you know, ‘there’s no harm in it’, rational. Along with learning how to make paste from flour, and stick things together as a sort of collage, we got the ‘good’ word.

“We might hear repeated often enough:

*Help us to help each other, Lord  
Each others cross to bear,  
Let each his friendly aid afford,  
And feel his brother’s care.*

“An innocuous enough rhyme, with a little dollop of ‘p’isin’.

“There were others like it. Steering a rhumb toward heavenly rewards with biblical platitudes, instead of longitude and latitude.”

“We didn’t do Sunday School, but my mother was inclined to the faith. We were trundled off to the Unitarian church often enough when we were too young to know better.

“Often enough one heard oft’ repeated such cant as you mentioned. Looking back, the intent seems obvious. Our young minds were influenced by this repetitive exposure and recitation. We do still reflect upon this brain scald as a kind of check on our more unruly selves.

“My sisters and I would be kept under control with such admonition as seemed fit and consonant with the message. Any conspiracy to create giggles was met with sharp rebuke.

“I suspect mother could not escape her origins, and father tolerated her designs on our young lives. Occasionally he would try to make jokes about our Sunday excursions, like ‘Are my little

darlings souls all spic and span today.?’ Which would draw fierce looks from mother.

“Eventually the churchy phase of our lives ended. I think father asserted his thoughts in the matter, probably feeling that further exposure to such rote would not contribute anything of benefit to our spiritual edification.

“Father found other persuasions for Sundays, like devoting them to family excursions into the Cascades. I remember his often treading heavily on mother’s toes when he would remark of the evergreens, ‘Look, thousands of steeples without a single cross upon them’. I believe father actually felt that way, that when we drove into the forest that we were entering a different kind of temple.

“I imagine that if father had not been a doctor, always involved in the helping of other people, he might have been seriously challenged by mother; but she realized she didn’t have a leg to stand on. So we were spared further ‘collateral damage’.”

“That’s a good one, Catherine.

“Probably true enough.

“One thinks back to the early days, during the formative years of our nation, when the shiploads of those who began to people the eastern seaboard and further inland, ostensibly escaping religious persecution in mother England, their new home oddly enough eventually being denoted New England, how they gravitated to, and maintained the rigid Puritan ethic, the hard and fast morality.

“Can you imagine it, let’s say, as Hawthorne described it, in *The Scarlet Letter*, being essentially branded for sexual indiscretions. Somehow Sunday School and, whatever else the Puritans wielded in the way of ‘moral correctness’, failed to persuade Hester.

“I conjure our high school cheerleaders with their white sweaters emblazoned with a large red letter **A** sewn over their chests, heh!, none the wiser. A for Amenia, or America, of course; only 100 hundred years after Hester was obliged to wear the same red letter for eternity; well, not exactly; it was for adultery. (Catherine grins).

“We had an Ann in our class that got knocked up when she was a high school Junior. She left school, not to return. She had not been a cheerleader. Eternal damnation? An A for Ann?”

“You know, ‘human’ life follows many peculiar twists and turns; all in search of the light, and, on the way, often one falls into a pit.”

“There you go again, Mr. D., endearing your self to me with those peculiars twists and turns of your mind.”

“Its only random free association, trying to make sense out of the data that enters randomly into the computer, without a program. But even without the benefit of a program, some

associations become apparent, and relevant. All in a world where programs run amok of each other, where the attempt is made to corrupt one with the other; even as a challenge to a fiendish hacker. Hah! Who is the hacker?

“Catherine, I do not know very much about anything. I have not been formally schooled beyond what seemed obligatory. My mental apparatus might be analogous to a backyard still where all kinds of concoctions are thrown together to produce some potent juice, the results described variously as corn whisky, rot gut, red tide, applejack, spirits, grog, plonk, swill; resulting in a crude literature.”

“Mr. D., the analogy does not serve. Perhaps formal education is not for everybody. To me, the greatest single advantage to the formal aspect is the discipline that becomes a necessary adjunct to it.

“I am an Honors student; so, in essence, I have become my own disciplinarian. Because I qualified for, and chose this route, I am obliged to put forth even more effort than the average student. There are no ‘built-ins’. I must perform, or forego the distinction. I have elected to do this thing, but as I have realized, it separates me from the average student, some of whom would like to see me fall flat on my face.

“That is to say the average student is as capable as I; its that I have chosen a more independent route. I do not do this as a matter of pride or a feeling of superiority. I happen to feel that grading leads down the wrong path. To competition, that in turn leads to memorization as opposed to thinking, to cribbing, to cheating, and a host of other evils, that have nothing to do with education. Unless of course one thinks in terms of learning certain survival skills.

“Yes!, we probably need mentors, but people especially experienced and skilled in their fields, who are astute and perceptive; people who can anticipate our drift, question that direction, and the associated thoughts and sentiments, at opportune moments. But usually one does not encounter these individuals until his graduate years, if at all.

“I suppose I do not believe in run-of-the-mill education. Even though one might argue that a smattering of the liberal arts does at least expose people to something they might pursue as a career. I am mindful of Gasset’s ‘rarely examined assumptions’ with regard to education.

“In the end, no matter how achieved, the object is the stamp of approval, the credentials, the paper, the degree, that may not necessarily reflect one’s true abilities. Its that our society has thought enough of the process to make it a standard of

performance. Without the paper, one does not qualify for anything of a professional nature.

“As you have probably learned Mr. D.”

“Quite true, Catherine. The worst of that situation develops when one is working for, or under someone with the credentials who proves to be unimaginative, incompetent, and mostly an asshole. Who should be wearing the big A on his chest.

“Many times I have had dreams where I had followed the higher education route, usually after hours, for many years, but never being able to reach the goal. It is surprising the number of times the dream had occurred. My age during these dreams is never consonant with my real age. This occurred most frequently when I worked at the University in a department of self-proclaimed smart-asses. Not that I felt I could do what they were doing, and not that I wanted to do what they were doing, but it was their condescending demeanor toward me that bugged me.

“I think I had a right to believe that these schmucks would outperform all others on the higher plain. I had expected them to be sort of perfect, true exponents of their own humanitarian haughtiness. I was having a problem with overabundant expectations

“It was also my problem when they made me feel like a doorknob, or a candy-machine. If any one of them would somehow be engaged in a conversation with me, that lowly me, they would soon terminate it when a colleague appeared, almost apologizing for being caught in such a compromised position. Like they felt amongst themselves when they might be caught feeding coins into a candy machine for some saccharine piece of junk food.

“After this brief prologue, it becomes apparent what I mean when I say I perceived myself as a doorknob.”

“Mr. D., there is something you are missing. You are also a door. A door to something special. The knob must be turned lest one use a battering ram to gain access.

“I don’t believe they missed entirely who you were.

“I know you not to be the ignoramus you want to portray. Besides they don’t award degrees for your kind of ability to think and imagine.”

“I have heard rumors about the absence of myself, but I don’t care any longer. My own life has acquired its own purpose and meaning, such as it is. I founder for myself now.”

“Mr. D., there is nothing that tells us where we must go, no man, no god. We might imagine ourselves guided by a muse, or some demon. But being what we are, realists and fatalists, we accept the dull chore of inspiring ourselves to do things that please us, or things that we feel compelled to do.”

“I had a strange dream last night. ‘Weird’ is how I might describe it. I found myself in a familiar store, probably local, although I cannot recall which one. I was there to buy a few groceries. However the store had probably changed hands, and the new owners had made this elaborate anti-theft check-out scheme which narrowed all the customers with their various goods through a single twisty windy passage lining a counter along which the customer set down and pushed along his goods. Well, this did not set well with me, especially when impatient customers began pushing and line jumping, some of this activity involved helping those in front of them, often mixing the customer’s goods. This sort of activity began to annoy me and confuse me. A sense of being trapped began to overcome me. My turn finally came. I had remembered the lady at the cash register, who must have been hired by the new owners to fulfill the function for which she seemed to have been born. After the transaction, using my sense of direction, I had chosen to leave the premises by the way I had come. Since I did not know the rules, I was unaware that there was only one way out, through a designated doorway manned by an individual in a uniform carrying a gun in a hip holster. After discovering I could not leave the way I had come, I returned to the only other obvious exit, where this man stood. As I attempted to pass by him, he asked for a piece of paper purportedly signed by the lady at the cash register. I had no such paper. There was a receipt which I showed him, which he said was not sufficient; that it had to be signed by her. I opened the package to show him the meager contents were in agreement with the slip. He maintained it was not good enough. He told me I would have to go through the line again to get her OK. He began to fumble with his holster. He and the cashier exchanged glances, she seemingly amused and he gaining some greater resolution from her demeanor.

“I thought the whole situation was absurd, but worse than that, I began to feel trapped, and began to panic.

“I found a solution. I gave the man the bag, told him to keep it. I took off my shirt, my pants and my shoes. I retained my underwear, and my wallet and key ring. I began to walk past the man in the uniform holding an arm in the way, and who began to reach for his gun.

“As I pushed past him, I informed him that I was 56 years old, that no one had ever pulled a gun on me; and that no one had ever shot me in the back. I walked away without looking behind me.

“A short while later, a police car came alongside me as I was walking the street, by this time with a piece of cardboard wrapped around my waist. Someone had called the police informing them that an old, indecently dressed man was walking the streets. The

police didn't know what to do with me; but decided to be safe than sorry, hauling me away to the pokey.

"They attempted to try to determine whether or not I was in full possession of all my faculties. Feeling I was answering their questions satisfactorily, they sort of left me alone; perhaps even more troubled by what they had been called upon to do.

"I did try to figure out my own reasons for my precipitous action. Then it occurred to me, my reaction to confinement; trapped in the line, which had reached a critical state a dozen years earlier. Claustrophobia. I was made aware of this condition when placed in an MRI machine. I begged to be taken out, and when removed was shaking uncontrollably, and could not stand without leaning on the table used to slide me into the machine. The operators told me they saw enough information that warranted a completion of the procedure, and suggested I obtain a prescription for Xanax, a drug used to mitigate fear response. So I came back two hours later with two of those pills in my system, enabled to endure the completion of the scan.

"To this day I can imagine being in that machine. With or without Xanax, I am still full of the apprehension of being placed in that machine. I will not allow myself to go under anything without a ready escape route; I will not go into a tunnel, or into any enclosed space.

"Anyway, the police began to sympathize with my plight, but took me to the station, and sought some way to help me out of my predicament. Unfortunately there was a scavenging reporter looking for a story from the police blotter when I came in in my skivvies wrapped in cardboard. He knew he had a winner for his scandal sheet.

"While the police compassionately let me go after an hour or so, the type was already being set for the story which appeared the next morning on the front page of the local rag, complete with photo. MAN DISROBES IN MARKET; DARES SECURITY GUARD TO SHOOT HIM IN THE BACK!

"THEN, then, when I imagined you seeing or hearing of this headline, I panicked again, and took off for the Island.

"Then you panicked accordingly, having decided to contact me soonest; or head for the island. You had already talked to Mrs. Watson about your problem and asked for her indulgence. She promised to cover for you in case you needed to follow up on all your inclinations. Then you were able to reach me on the island by phone. You asked me to return, to carry out what I had promised. I was not to be coaxed from my withdrawn position.

"You said, 'have it your way', then, hung up.

“Then you proceeded to book flights, and taxis to and upon the island to seek me out. Where you attempted to persuade me to leave. Face to face with you I was a pushover. So I agreed to return; and you left the same way you had come.

“Weird.”

“Happy ending, Mr. D.; happy for me; good show!”

“Perhaps I was looking for a way out of something. It didn’t work.”

“I would have loved to have been there when you returned the groceries, took off your clothes, and told the man with the gun that you had never been shot in the back; walking away from him; very bold and very amusing; and scary.”

“If you had been there I might have been a lot calmer; you have a very calming influence on me; and you would have done things according to Hoyle.”

“By the way, speaking of that illustrious personage, time is catching up with us again.”

“Well, Ms. Hoyle, I doubt seriously you will ever break the rule.”

“At least you didn’t address me as Ms. Tellerman.

“I hope that you will survive a day without seeing me.”

“A test, Catherine.”

“We’ll make up for it this weekend when we go to the ocean.

“Are you truly claustrophobic?”

“I believe so; the story about the MRI is true. Never want to do go through that again; they’ll have to put me out for that one.”

“I don’t know of any particular phobias concerning myself, unless being badgered by you might develop into a phobia.”

“If I even suspected such to be the case I would be long gone.

“One is full of supposition when it comes to things like phobias, believing the roots to them originate in childhood; some unresolved fear. In my case I can remember being terrified every time I passed by a particular closet in the upstairs hallway of the old brick two story house, with attic, in which we lived until I was eight. The closet was located next to the bathroom, and its door was opposite our bedroom.

“My father was not above putting me into the cellar as a reinforced form of punishment; having rodded me to tears, abandoning me to gasping and fretful sobs. I can vaguely remember being confined to the closet, but that part is unclear. What I seem to remember, though, is someone, more like some thing, coming out of the closet as I passed, in the night, grabbing me, carrying me to my bed. I remember being terrified speechless; I imagine I was trying to tell someone what was troubling me, my mother perhaps, but I could not speak.. The whole thing is probably a reconstruction of my father’s method of punishment, of



teasing, spooking, inspiring fear of him and his doings, to somehow keep us, my brother and I, under control. I do not think of father as an indulgent doting parent, but more as a domineering, terrifying presence. So, perhaps the phobia began with him, at some critical time, grabbing me in the dark, not to tease, but to frighten, and being cast into a dungeon.

“When we are that young, things adults are, and things that adults do, make little sense. They are our frame of reference; they hold such power over us; our fear of them is real. To me, it seems a wonder that we are able to develop any grasp of reality; and doubts always remain.”

“I do not recall ever being traumatized in any manner resembling what you describe; but what you say brings to mind something that must happen far more frequently than we imagine; and with even greater trauma; like unrelenting pressures of one kind or another, both mental and physical abuse, beatings, molestations. Horrible to think of.

“How did you treat your children?”

“I would say that abuse does not characterize any part of what I did. If anything, indifference to a lot of what interested them; until of course, Jesus (God) came in the door. Because of the way I was raised I was sensitive to some things I did not want to repeat. But they incurred their share of ‘spankings’, my son more than his sister. I did not tolerate surliness and unruliness. I tried very hard to keep the boy from dominating his sister, which he always seemed inclined to do. But in the end I probably dominated her in ways far more meaningfully than he.

“But, to be completely honest, I was rarely an indulging parent. Even when I was, I did not seem to go about it in a manner that pleased them. Resentments ran high. But of course much of this bore the influence of a strained household, a war, as it was, between my first partner and I; often the children became pawns in this ongoing battle. I was responsible for my part, which I did not handle well; I must admit that the children received the short end of things.

“Catherine, one cannot go back; he lives with his regrets.”

“Not to respond to what you are saying, which I do; I had better go, before I have some explaining to do.”

They drove away from the restaurant back to their other meeting place where Catherine had parked her car.

“Mr. D., this was an unusual evening. Lots to think about. I must say that I continue to be amazed by your honesty. The truth seems more important to you than anything else. Qualms about your self, your ‘track record’, do not hold muster against the

truth.”

“Hah!, Catherine, if you will permit me a little bit of cynicism, what else have I, but confessions to make before my time is up? Could I have stumbled into any more of an evocative confessor than you? Your charms invite excesses of truth.”

“Mr. D., I don’t mind all the tales that must be told, but I do not want to become someone to offer absolution; or to dole out ‘our fathers’ and ‘Hail Marys’.

“I’ll accept the fact that you are inspired by me to tell the truth., that’s pretty gratifying, and more in keeping with how I perceive myself; perhaps a confidant, but not the other.

“Well, here we are, no time to dally.

“I hope you will find something pleasant to occupy you in my absence. I will be thinking of you, and missing you, I am sure.”

She gave William a firm, knowing, reassuring squeeze, then departed with a wave and smile.

## *The Author Gets A Word In Edgewise*

The Author wishes the Reader to know that he is feeling OK so far in his ‘novel’ rant. He continues to find things for his two protagonists to liven their conversations without repeating himself too often.

Perhaps unwarrantedly, most of the repetition involves William’s more or less scrupulous consciousness in what he feels to be a questionable relationship. Catherine consistently will not yield to his concerns.

The Author does not feel bound to explain himself, or provide a plausible rationale beyond what he has already suggested. The need to be meaningfully employed is as good a reason as any.

He will argue that his is an evolving tale, and like all evolutionary prospects, it tends to follow a single line toward some unknowable end, with or without purpose.

He also knows that no matter what or how he writes, he will not influence a single soul; but; but; if he can stimulate, if he can challenge the thought of others, if he can entertain, while at the same time be taken seriously, then he will have achieved a more than modest goal of appeasing his seeming grandiosity.

Catherine, besides being an attractive denouement, even a beautiful young woman, gifted with a keen mind, and a tender heart, she harbors no prejudices. These are more than surface accouterments; they run deep into her being; they are her wellspring of liveliness, and good cheer. A very solid individual.

William is what he is, and being what he is, has encountered

someone who takes him more seriously than he takes himself. Catherine's loveliness casts a spell over him; but more, this remarkably acute person, so confident and self-possessed, poised; and albeit, this reinforcement to himself, suddenly so necessary to what he is, has brought full measure to his life.

She is somewhat agog, although discovering within herself, ways to meet him head on, and to feel richer and fuller in knowing him, this grave person, full of sparks.

A complementary association? It would seem to have the makings.

Some might wonder how the author would feel if his daughter had selected an old geezer for a 'playmate' 'soulmate'. He informs us that his daughter selected an asshole her approximate age, a 'Christian' 'promise keeper', who found other women more interesting. than her, heartbreakingly. Could she have done worse?

More on other matters. The subjects of their discussion or debate. They are in tune with the import of civilization, the desire for civilization, the benefits of civilization. While William has his life long always regarded civilization as a dubiously haphazard construction, while he speaks derisively and cynically of its aegis, he knows, while 'it is not the best of all possible worlds', that without the modicum of tenuously workable solutions, there would be anarchy and chaos 'the worst of all possible worlds'. He realizes there would be no Catherine; and that he would be unable to defend himself against such rampant forces. Catherine can only be who she is in a civilized world. Anything less, she becomes a victim of circumstance. William, as he appears, would not have survived into his antiquity in a lawless, 'everyone out for himself' existence.

So, as much as these two seem to contravene the constructs, they are its true advocates, because they realize what would otherwise exist.

William whiled away the waking hours with his writings, reviewing those he had mentioned to Catherine. In particular he had studied his arguments in 'Meditation Upon The Loss', amended with 'The Logically Unknowable'. The other writing he had mentioned to her titled 'GAWD' was a scathing attack on all those who used GAWD as a shield and a righteous affront. While the latter mockeries provided him with a kind of raucous satisfaction, it was the former that was a true test of his objectivity. The two writings were linked by his need to assault assumption and presumption. The assumption that one has the right, and the presumption to use that right. To imagine that one can, of his own, divine the 'truth', and to cast that divination about as the truth, without a single doubt, without either remorse, or regret; but with a provocative conceit full of gloat and glee. It

struck William as requiring all means to end this reign of assumption and presumption, beginning with all those nearest him who would imagine he was their proper mission in life; for the salvation of his soul. To listen to the eternal condemnation to the Fires of Hell for his demurrings. How can one truly claim his soul has been saved by having had his feet held to the fire?

William decided to take a break from these heavily burdened, and, if the truth was to be known, fruitless thoughts. He had intended to stroll to the river but it was misting, with a damp chill in the air. He had almost decided to return to his room, when he spied the flickering sign of the Tiny Tavern. He felt like a beer at the bar.

Entering the premises, sort of atmospherically dark with a Pabst, and Budweiser neon glow along with the flickering tube showing a late season basketball game, and the polished bar itself, lined with a few, and behind which stood rows of brews, fantastic and bizarre photos, and the traditional mirror where the introspective could stare themselves into a stupor. A few seats with Tiny tables stationed around the flaming fireplace looked more appealing. He requested a pint of tap Pabst, and carried it off to one of the seats with a Tiny table near the warm glow of the fire.

He nodded to the others, but sat alone, staring into the fire, of course, thinking of Catherine.

Then he began to overhear a nearby conversation, amongst, what seemed, virile manly individuals, all assumed to be men; more like a derisive debate, to see who could say the most provocative thing concerning homosexuality.

One amongst them seemed to have a sister who liked women enough to be considered a dyke by most rampant criteria. He was on the defensive, but made certain it was understood that this aberrant behavior was not manifest in his family; as a matter of fact he took a dim view of men forming a sexual relationship with each other; felt it was unnatural. This whole business of marriage between men; Jesus Christ already!!

It was rumored that his sister was the lover of another woman who had two children, both girls. He was not about to apologize for her; he argued, that it shows ta go ya, its not easy to judge someone you love.

William thought this a rather remarkable statement coming from an otherwise scandalizing discussion.

William tried to recall all the women he had somehow learned were of that persuasion. For one pair in particular, and a woman with two children as one of the partners, who it turned out were more than casual acquaintances of he and his second wife, he distinctly remembered entering their laundry room for a reason which he could not recall, but in observing the number of sleazy

black lacey under things hanging upon plastic coat hangers. While he realized these two shared intimacies, he hadn't thought of the sensuousness of the intimacies of these rather large ladies, the turn-ons and what he considered the sleaze factor, which somehow revolted him. Even though quantitatively and qualitatively he could not claim their desire for pleasurable experiences any more or less than his.

Of men he might know who were considered to be of that persuasion, or who seemed too effeminate, especially if they pretended friendliness, he studiously avoided. Not doubtful of his own proclivities; he simply did not know how to relate to such men. His reaction to aggression had been avoided by reading the signs. A direct confrontation might not be very pretty. Bugger-off!

As far as a union between two males; he felt he had no human sympathy. Was he tolerant? seemed the more likely consideration. He revolted against the thought of sexual intimacies between males. More than he did against the two women. All in all it seemed his tolerance was limited. He had no real opinion about what marries what, or more indulgently phrased, who marries who. He felt that these kinds of relationships were out of the norm. But were they any more or less as relationships, replete with human happiness and/or human suffering; pleasure, love, hate, jealousy, trust, distrust? Once out of the bed, doing, as a member of society, were they any more of a threat to us all than any normal pair of lovers? Of course, it seemed unavoidable they would be put on the defensive if they boldly declared their preferences in public, 'coming out of the closet', so to speak.

William tried to imagine nature's intent in devising such liaisons. Of course, there was no intent, simply because nature is not a mind with an intent. So it was by accident that this thing has happened which confounds our ordinary understanding of nature's mechanisms that purportedly lead to a defined objective; reproduction, for example. So here we are left with an accident serving no purpose. The individuals themselves are cast into a dubious light, one which troubles them as they seek an identity and fulfillment, sexual or otherwise.

A simplistic ruler would have them offed. But here William is, here we are, as a species, attempting to be both practical and humanistic. Some of us might observe, 'There, but for the grace of God, go I', not particularly reflecting upon the invocation of 'God'.

William could not help wonder what these same individuals, and those individuals who were the object of their somewhat bawdy laughter, would say concerning Catherine and he. At least another round of beers would be consumed deriding the old goat with his lusty appetite.

William had had enough of the tavern; he left to return to his room. As he entered the phone was ringing; it was Catherine.

“How’s it going?”

“I tried a couple times.”

“I was taking a break from some marginally unrewarding activity; I had intended to go to the river, but it was dampish and cool so I let myself wander into the neighborhood tavern for a beer. When I had enough of that I left, and was coming in the door as the phone was ringing.

“How did your meeting go?”

“Oh, somehow, the usual time waster; especially now.

“I’m looking forward to tomorrow evening.

“Are you OK?”

“Yes!, but be prepared for some of what I overheard in the tavern, and the thoughts it provoked.

“Not now, Catherine, OK!?”

“I was thinking that if tomorrow is a nice day, we could do some Chinese takeout to carry over to the park on the far side of the river. Make a fire in one of the pits, but dress warmly and all.

“Sound like a good idea?”

“Sure.”

“So we’ll meet as usual, anyway. If it is nice, as it is supposed to be, by the way, then I’ll pick up the Chinese on the way. I won’t keep you, I wanted to touch base, let you know I’m thinking of you ---- fondly!”

“That’s very sweet of you.”

“Night! Mr. D.”

“Night!”

With Catherine’s call, William had forgotten all his qualms.

## *Eleventh Day, After Classes*

The author feels he must notify the reader that even authors must endure interruptions, that is, must suffer with reality. He does not always get to go to his garret at the break of day, even with the greatest of discipline. Often the interruptions prove greater distractions than he would anticipate, even in a worst case scenario. Indeed, some of what happens is brought upon the author by himself, involving himself, somewhat Quixotically in affairs that ought not concern him, but often do. As a result he finds himself unhorsed by the windmills of fate as he attempts to charge them, ending up inconvenienced, given the ‘bum’s rush’ with a bruised ego as well as a bruised carcass.

As it turns out, very few involvements require his attentions; and most other people, whose name he might invoke, would rather he kept his mouth shut.

There are times when the author recognizes the futility of any pursuit, including this writing. When he thinks he ought take from his shelves someone else's grand tome to read until he falls asleep. So much more satisfying.

The author thus apologizes for any seeming lack of enthusiasm or continuity the reader might sense happening with this project, which is none other than the author trying to live out his impossible life in the most impossible way.

The day had been sunny, most of the chill gone from the air. Both Catherine and William were prepared for Catherine's suggestion of a takeout meal in the park across the river.

Catherine did indeed go to the Chinese restaurant with the large buffet style counters to concoct what seemed a delectable selection of shrimp, prawns, sezchuan beef and pork, noodles, sushi with wasabi, brothy beans, sprouts, and asparagus, and some appealing stuff for the proverbial 'sweet tooth'.

With William in her car, she meandered off to the bridge two miles distant that crossed the river, to mostly double back to the other side of the river across from where they would usually sit. There was a park with fire pits and tables, seldom used this time of year.

Both Catherine and William were prepared for cooler evening air, but anticipated the fire. The park was equipped with a small shelter in which one could find some dry wood for their purpose.

It was relatively quiet this distant from the freeway a mile away. One could hear the rushing and roiling of the river, its waters on the way to another river a hundred miles distant, which in turn, found its way to the ocean, yet another fifty miles distant. William often thought of all rivers as symbolic Rubicons. Often he thought one ought be named Siddharttha. But mostly rivers symbolized the flow of life, human life, all life, beginning in the higher plateaus, to flow steadily toward their destiny of an all engulfing ocean, the waters that surrounded their marooned planet, marooned in the greater universe held in place by forces beyond any mere man's control, gravity amongst them; both the gravity that caused the river to flow as it did, and the very gravity of life itself. From whence do we come, why are we here, and where are we going?

Catherine and William had anticipated, awaiting each others company eagerly, and greeted each other warmly, but both were silent as they set about getting to the park, and got the fire going in one of the pits, one nearest a table, closest to the river.

For his usual reasons William was feeling awkward as he observed this very lovely woman, bundled up in her blue goose down jacket, her head covered with a cowichan, her auburn tresses flowing, resting upon her shoulders, opening her backpack, setting things on the table. She had included a bottle of wine, and had brought along a thermos of tea, the containers of Chinese food, and the baked goodies. At this very moment, she seemed entirely a stranger, someone unknown to him; questioning his presence in her company. One might rightly inquire: from whence do we come, why are we here, and where are we going. Set in Paradise surrounded by browned nymphs and mysterious figures and mysterious ways, Paul Gauguin, the product of the overcivilized world, so inquired.

Catherine, for no reason in particular, was also silent, but very much aware of William in her thoughts and feelings. Mostly preoccupied with what she was doing, maybe only a little bit hoping Mr. D. would speak. But it was her game. So she broke the silence, "Well, Mr. D., here we are again; and a nicer venue too.

"Is something troubling you; you seem more subdued than usual."

"Catherine, I don't feel particularly troubled. My silence is something I might understand.

"As I observe you, such wonder courses through me; overwhelmed by many feelings of joy and doubt simultaneously. There is so much to be enjoyed in your company; I want that, but also fear its end, almost as a matter of necessity, if not as part of an inevitable reckoning."

"To borrow a line of yours. 'Not now', Mr. D.

"You are afraid of being happy!.

"Anyway, you are leaping ahead in the script. We have not reached the recognition scene; one that may occur, and pass as nothing."

Handing him the bottle of wine with the opener, "Let's have some cheer; let's list the river, and the crackle, and stare into the flames, and ponder upon times eternal, and the wonder of two such as you and I in this setting in this proximity.

She handed him two plastic glasses. "Pour Mr. D., and cast aside your dour concerns, and ridiculous conceits; for here I am to bring light into your life; and yours alone."

Handing her a glass, and raising his, "Catherine, I toast thee, and the light ye shed."

"Aye!, to you Mr. D., who will yet emerge from the shadows.

Catherine motioned to him to sit upon the seat closet to the fire, where she also placed herself. William responded willingly enough, and once sitting she inched herself close to him, looking in the



direction of the fire, the warmth of which one could begin to feel, and close enough to feel her warmth.

Looking into the fire, but being aware of the river beyond, “Mr. D., do not concern yourself with something that might never happen. At this point, we both know you would not turn aside from this relationship because of its great potential for a personal happiness, however you might assess its legitimacy. I believe this strongly. So flow with the current to wherever it should lead. Perhaps we will be caught in an eddy, where we could await some flood to end it all in a raging rush to the sea, where we must go in any case.

“So, my burgeoning love, Cheers!”

“Wow!, Catherine, you amaze me, truly amaze me.”

“Good.

“I’m a little famished, so, let’s eat while the food is still warm.

“I brought ordinary utensils; I seem to feel that learning how to use chopsticks is a sometime, some ‘in’, thing, the significance of which escapes me. I hope these ordinary western things will do.”

“I share in your assessment of the finer dining skills, none of which I ever tried to master, despite my discomfort when I observe the traditional etiquettes. I would rather disappear into my cave.”

“I don’t entirely share your refusal to conform, but I do like your image of the cave; your retreat, your lair, the place you go to lick your wounds, and retire from the clamor of this estranging world.

“I do like eating with others, especially my family, and friends, and I don’t want them to feel embarrassed by my lacks, so I try to do my part. Besides my sisters look to me for some appropriate behavior in all social situations; they wouldn’t allow me to be arbitrary without explaining myself.

“Somehow its easier for me, Mr. D. But to make you feel better, I have not felt any obligation to do the ‘in’ thing. What I have learned in my culturing must serve.

“You do not eat like a cave man; you are circumspect, and very much aware of your effect on others. You would rather excuse yourself from any company that was made to feel uncomfortable. That, in my mind, makes you pretty special.

“Let others conform to the rigors of their culture; and try not to flaunt them. We are often stuck with who we are.

“But my dear friend, I am not the antithesis to your way, nor the devil’s advocate for another; I am your very appreciative friend.

“Now, can we move on to what you hinted last night in your sojourn to the tavern?”

“Oh! that.

“It seems like such a long time ago. My preoccupations of today have taken me some distance from then. But let me regurgitate the

gist of it all.

“The subject of raucous conversation at a neighboring table was the interest some men or women, but mostly men, have in forming a relationship that might be considered homosexual. They were mocking the ‘gay marriage’ with a somewhat lascivious humor. They seemed particularly revolted by the thought of the intimacies that might be shared in such relationships. They could not envision it for themselves. But I sensed in them, some question of what went wrong; and even a little apprehension of something going wrong with them. Brokeback, Alas!

“Some of this latter was brought into focus by one of them, whose sister was considered a ‘dyke’, to use his expression. He could not bring himself to make jokes about his sister whom he seemed to love a great deal; and he revealed it was very difficult to judge someone you love. Therein lays the meat of the opus.

“But of course, overhearing such conversation, by dint of the seeming hatred and revulsion, stirs no little wonder in me. So I mused as I overheard, and also listened. But also pleased by the change brought about by the fellow with the ‘aberrant’ sister.

“They wanted to make an exception for women.

“I found myself somehow agreeing with their sentiments, but thought I ought set an example for myself by not sharing the utter revilement of those who suffered perhaps more than most, a severe ostracism for their co called ‘choice’. I found myself wanting in the moment to think differently, however much I could not envision such a relationship for myself.

“I can imagine people who are confined for a long time in penal institutions with only members of the same sex, the penal institution being what it is, a gathering of veniality in the most inhospitable environment our society will tolerate, made of such cold tactile reality of steel and concrete. Utter humiliation, loss of self, and totally vulnerable; prey to things unimagined in the outside world, with no escape; where all choice is voided.

“I tried to gain some perspective by imagining nature’s design, or lack thereof, however presumptuous of me to do so. In the prison setting nature’s design is totally inhumanly frustrated.

“We are prejudiced by a certain view of the aims of continuance, or reproduction, of the male/female thing. Modern science reveals to us that replication is subject to genetic mistakes.”

“Mr. D., like you, I am prejudiced by the male/female thing. I have good reason to be; it resonates within me.

“I have no doubts about what I feel toward the opposite sex. You might say my life is polarized by that fact.

“That is not to say I feel that everybody is like me; when indeed they are not.

“But when it comes to defending this position or that, I would rather live and let live.

“My sisters, to my knowledge, are not ‘gay’; generally happy, but not ‘gay’; complicated, No?.

“I know there are two girls in the sorority that have become ‘sisters’ in a way that disturbs me, but is not an affront to me. One of them, in my mind’s eye, is a particularly brilliant girl, with whom I have shared some stimulating discussions. She seems outwardly shy and non-aggressive. At first I had attributed this to her self-consciousness over her looks, but believe now it was because how she feels toward her own sex.

“I have come to view her with sympathy, and try not to make it obvious that I would preferentially avoid her, mostly because of some discomfort I would feel. I realize this is very unfair to her. I guess I might be trying to discourage others from thinking things about me.

“Well, guess what!!!?? Not yet anyway.

“Did someone say something about ‘coming out of the closet’?

“It’s all very tricky, and very human, Mr. D.”

“Yes indeed Catherine.”

“Here we are chewing the fat along with Chinese, and the wine is good. The fire is warm, the evening lovely, and conversation absorbing, with the best company. I will be walking into the dorm smelling of smoke.

“Mr. D., why do we feel these things? This thing about homosexuality (lesbianism)? Is it like some people feel About abortion? About evolution? About being saved?, About saluting the flag? About relationships that don’t fit the mould? It is a feeling, is it not? It’s not an intellectual thing. I mean, we do not get there by being reasonable, do we?”

“How do you get there?”

“I’m calling upon you to tell me, you who have been examining these things far longer than I.”

“Catherine, I trust your intuition about things, your ‘sixth sense’ about things, your innate sense of accountability for what you think and believe.

“I have only recently began to trust these things in myself. I have had to discard a lot of accumulated junk, what one lady acquaintance on the island has called the ‘shit-bag’.

“You are the more naturally genuine article; you come to this condition unencumbered by the moral insensibility of your surroundings, and your upbringing.”

“Gee, Mr. D., you sanctify me without proof.”

“I don’t require proof. It’s as plain as those beautiful, wide open, wondrous eyes of yours.”

“Are you sparking me in the middle of a serious conversation?”

“Catherine, I mean what I say, and I hope I say what I mean. But to remain within context, I believe it is possible to come into this world with such equanimity, and unprejudiced views, after meeting you.

“You speak of that which **resonates** within you; perhaps expresses what I feel about you, that something **resonating**, an incredible open-mindedness, a receptivity to inclusiveness; to be a little more flowery, ‘all-embracing’.

“You project this, and I know you must feel it of yourself, without being principled about it. Simply stated, its you.

“Now that I’ve got you in such a good mood, let me become an ‘agent provocateur’. What’s your take on the abortion issue?”

“Wow!, that’s a switch. You want to be serious after all this sweet talk. But, haven’t we discussed this before?”

“Tell you what; I want to show my appreciation for one thing before I undertake another.”

With that Catherine turned toward him, putting her arms around his shoulders, and buried her face in his shoulder, hugging him all the while. She withdrew slowly, turning her face to confront his, with a long lingering warm invitational gaze. When she began to sense his discomfort, not wanting to ruin the moment, she remarked: “One of these days, Mr. D., one of these days.”

Slowly withdrawing, but, still leaning with a shoulder pressed against his, she resumed her gaze into the fire.

“Mr. D., I’ve read the Supreme Court’s decision. I marveled at the detail, complete with historical perspective, the views of the medical establishment, legalities in other times and nations, and English and US law which is so often cited in judicial proceedings; and significantly, the prevailing moral and emotional climate which has made its voice heard. As well as the most important part; the breadth of consideration, regarding both constitutional rights, and states rights, in assessing the justiciability of a single woman in Texas to challenge a Penal Code regarding the veniality of having an abortion.

“I can find no real fault with the majority decision which did not set out to abridge States Rights. It attempts to define the limits of Constitutional Amendments, 1,4,5,9, and 14, most notably 9 and 14, where applicable, protected a woman’s rights to the privacy of her own decision making process, with regard to her body, without the intervention of the state; as you and I have discussed obliquely regarding ‘women’s rights’.

“Without complicating the issue too much, I feel a few important considerations exist, regardless of the extant Constitutional Amendments; perhaps another is needed to set

matters right.

“In the majority opinion, it raised the issue of population, pollution, poverty, and racial overtones complicating the problem; even if the emotional nature, and vigorously opposing views did not already complicate matters.

“The Court, while mentioning non-litigable extraneous matters, did not include what happens when what had been a ‘quicken’d’ fetus is allowed to go to full term; that is, after it is born; who gets and cares for something that was essentially unwanted. Does the state, in all of its motherly wisdom assume the charge in a manner that would show proper regard for all the rights and privileges of any other child that would have rights without the intervention of the state? What can we assume? That the state cares enough to nurture the foundling in a manner that assures all freedoms to that individual, and cares for that individual in an equalitarian manner?

“What I want to say here is the pro-life, and right-to-life side argues for life on religious grounds. Quality of life is not raised as an issue. Is it to be assumed that the religious ‘right’ will accept full responsibility for any other neglected, unwanted, or otherwise rejected life, as well?

“As for myself, if I was faced with a decision regarding the termination of a pregnancy within my own body, I would want the right to make the decision, given that I feel I am the one best able to make that decision. To require that I go to full term in order to be obedient to some moral consideration enacted into law is patently unfair. Should I be forced to undergo a medical assessment, and psychological counseling as part of my decision making process? Only in as much as it is deemed medically possible to have the abortion. I feel I am my own best counselor where my psyche is involved.

“Do I therefore take a position with regard to the issue? Its like all the issues we face when religion, morality, even ethics; and things like patriotism, are forced upon the individual either through social ostracism, or through some legality. In a democratic nation, we have assumed we are not to be put upon in this manner. So of course, feeling this way, it is difficult for me to take a position that effects somebody else.

“Is the Supreme Court the proper place for this controversy to be resolved? If it is a matter for Law, I would suppose so; if it is matter of individual conscience, NO!

“Simply put, I want the right to choose; I will be the one who suffers any consequences for my choice; that is, the possible regrets.

“At this juncture I could not imagine having an abortion. I do

not intend to engage in risk behavior. I could envision all the plausible reasons for having an abortion; but having a child out of wedlock, while suffering its own social stigma, would not prove sufficient grounds, in my mind, at this time, for myself. I guess what I am saying is that it is my responsibility to see that I do not create a situation where that kind of a decision becomes an option.

“The penal aspect is the most frightening; to deprive a woman of her freedom; that is, institutionalize her in prison, for her choice to abort a fetus, charging her with murder, or manslaughter, cannot be anything but a vindictive action, not commensurate with that decision, however, or whyever made.

“If anyone needed the understanding and indulgence of society, when considering the inherently traumatic situation of a woman in such circumstances, it is that woman. Blathering to her about abstention and Jesus is not what she needs.”

“I suspect that the constructs of our society must be narrowing themselves to some rigid code; a proscription for everybody. How we got there, I do not know. It was pointed out by the Court that the attitude toward abortion in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was more liberal than it is today. Perhaps society, civilization, are sometime things, always having to yield to forces beneath the surface. Cyclical by nature; repressive in one extreme, and permissive in another extreme; one an outgrowth of the other; one necessitating the other. Accusatory and condemning one moment; understanding and forgiving in the next. Now we are entering and experiencing the worst part of the cycle. At the end of it we will be feeding the ‘Christians’ to the lions.”

“Interesting, Mr. D.”

No comment followed. William rose to get some more wood for the fire. With the poking and stoking the fire began a vigorous return to life, their faces illuminated in the flickering glow. William squatted for a time next to the blaze, looking in Catherine’s direction. She was studying him with an indulgent gaze, a faint smile on her lips, and in her eyes.

A prolonged silence ensued. Catherine rose from the seat to come closer to William and the fire, kneeling next to the fire facing him.

“Are you chilly?” he inquired.

“Realistically speaking?”, moving closer.

“How about your self; would you care for some of the hot Chamomile tea I brought along; and maybe something for your sweet tooth.”

“I have all the sweets kneeling before me.”

“Does that mean you will take tea with me?”

“Sounds like a good notion.”

“At the table?”

“Sure.”

Catherine felt in her backpack for the thermos, as William rises to return to the table. Catherine puts two metal cups on the table; then pours the tea.

“Drink up, while its hot.”

She looks at her watch, sighing “Time sure flies.

“Mr. D., what is your take on the abortion issue?”

“Catherine, it seems to me you have said it all; something to think about, for sure”.

“I didn’t particularly like your idea of feeding the ‘Christians’ to the lions.”

“That was a metaphor, Catherine.

“They are the cause of the problem, with their ignorance, their selective practicing of ‘Christianity’. Who gives a damn whether they go to heaven or hell or are fed into the jaws of a lion? They are such bigoted hypocrites and real meddlers, sitting on their cods and butts eating their ‘turds aweigh’; with pious in their skyous.”

“Mr. D.!!!, such vituperation!.”

“Don’t let them get holt of you, Catherine; lest you want to discover the real meaning behind vituperation.

“They have Jesus to coddle them; not the real Jesus; but that half-baked idiot conjured by the Fundament. Bible Scientists! ‘Christian’ Scientists. Hmn! That says it all!

“I’ve always thought with the advent of the second coming, the poor bastard would not be recognized; he would condemn all the fundamentalists to purgatory for their mealy mouthed transgressions, their pukey faith, their fake piety, their ‘I’m a goody goody in the service of goddy’. A gaudy performance it is.

“Then they would be obliged to crucify him again for interfering with their Revisionism.

“Frankly, I suspect the lions would get a gut ache, an undeserved punishment for ridding the planet of a particular kind of plague.”

“O.K. Mr. D., as long as you are not throwing the baby out with the bathwater.”

“I haven’t seen any baby; and a poor specimen (an abortion, to borrow an expletive) it would be, in any case.”

“Mr. D., there is a vein of the baby in me; at least I believe I have been to the headwaters, not being able to distinguish between a natural altruism, and what might be assumed an ingrained, inculcated cultural ‘Christian’ ethos, so insidious, and somehow seemingly necessary to our otherwise lacking concern for others.

“I dare say, you, as a member of this ‘western’ contingent, cannot escape some of the atmosphere of the place, whether or not

you consider it odious.”

“I want to separate the real from the spiel.”

“So do I, Mr. D.

“I believe their take on the abortion, right-to-life, pro-life issue is phony, similar to like their take on the homosexuality issue, and evolution etc. Its so narrow, so prejudicial; and unfortunately, ossified, petrified, fossilized.”

“Now, you’re getting into it.”

“No, I am not; not like you anyway. Even they have a right to live with all their faults. Who are we to judge them?”

“I do, even with all of my ‘faults’.

“I would guess that we will not resolve all the controversy that more or less characterize our imperatives to societal inconvenience; that intersocial thing. He was heard to exclaim, ‘Unhand Me!’ “

“Mr. D. its like the guy in the tavern with the gay sister, saying it is hard to judge someone you love. Somehow I suspect all this anger is connected to your daughter. I know you feel betrayed by your daughter; and you want those you deem responsible to boil in oil; but you cannot boil her in oil. While you see no hope for them, you can’t imagine your daughter not getting part of ‘your’ message, rejecting what ‘you are’ totally, that she will eventually come back to you.

“You imagine your daughter, everybody’s child, became prey to the lurking vultures. You want to be rid of all vultures. Many parents feel that way, even those inclined toward a Christian outlook. To demand a kind of allegiance, and to use alienation of affection as means to gather in others is a brutal perversion of the teachings of the Man.

“Yes!, the withholding of love as weapon against those who do not play the game. Believe me Mr. D., I do sympathize. Perhaps if I could meet her, I might be able to tell her, innocently enough, who you are, and what you have meant to me.”

“You might succeed initially, if you could get her to listen, but when the reality of you and I became known to her, another fault of her father to be condemned; or for which she might intercede with the Almighty, through prayer, prayer for guidance.”

“Mr. D., I doubt we can solve any of this, even hypothetically.

“We are up against something that must run its course; we must navigate carefully these troubled waters; perhaps eking out a life in the eddies.”

“I’m sure you are right Catherine. But, all we get is one shot.”

“Speaking of ‘shot’, Ms. Watson doesn’t carry a real gun, but she could shoot me down all the same.

“For Saturday, I need to discuss briefly how we will handle the trip to coast. To save time, I suggest breakfast at the dorm, then I



could pick you up wherever you say; then we will be off in my car. That way you could avoid putting miles on your rented car. I would pick you up around 7:30.

“How does that sound to you?”

“Its OK with me.”

“Now, I need to discuss tomorrow. Tomorrow I intend to skip all my classes, and cloister myself to get some work done. My work routine has been thrown a bit off to schedule our meetings. I don’t want to get behind. With my sisters coming next week I need to stay on top of things.”

“Oh!, Catherine, if you need all of tomorrow, by all means. Whatever other time, for that matter. Gosh!, I have not been thinking of your other commitments. Very inconsiderate of me not even to mention it.”

“I’m a big girl Mr. D.; besides I would have argued with you if you had mentioned it.

“Our meetings are important to me. I desire them very much. I want them to continue. Most of all, I want to be free to enjoy them. The only way I can accomplish that is to not have something nagging at me.

“Our discussions are forming part of what I will be writing, so they are also very important to my ‘education’ if you will. A small justification I realize, but true none the less.”

“OK Catherine, let’s not try to plan anything for tomorrow; let’s go for Saturday, and see what happens for Sunday.”

Catherine rose to clear the table, placing the empty food containers into the fire, putting her thermos and the utensils in her pack.

“Mr. D., do we need to put the fire out?”

“Its OK, I think I’ll come back here for a while.”

“Alone!, without me? Such sweet sorrow, Mr. D.”

“That is definitely part of it all, dear sweet life.”

“Please, don’t dwell on the darkest aspects Mr. D. I intend to be around; and I intend to see you again so very soon, although the hours will pass slowly enough for me too; even though I am fully occupied. Only by concentrating will I be able to stop thinking of you.

“Know that you are very important to me. If I felt for a moment that you would be so terribly lonely, I would forego all that I am doing to assuage that loneliness.

“But now, you will not tell me, will you?”

“Trust that I would never do anything to hurt you, Mr. D.”

Once again Catherine, in her own inimitable way, approached William, placing her arms around his neck, looking into his eyes with such an affectionate glow.

The moment grew longer and longer.

“Mr. D. have you forgotten how?”

William, feeling awkward, and hesitant once again, wanted to avoid what Catherine was suggesting.

“Have I grown less desirable, Mr. D.?”

At this question, William wondered whether this was not some form of torment, reflecting upon what he had told her about an earlier unrequited love affair. He was at a loss what to do again.

Realizing she had impatiently pushed a little too much, Catherine spoke again.

“Mr. D., that is unfair. Attribute that to my kind. Woman.

“But to show good faith, may I?”

Without waiting for his reply, she reached with her lips for his. He did not turn away, but fell under the spell of the moment, hugging her with such desire and a warmth that was overwhelming. He returned her kiss with a restrained tenderness, rather than an urgent crushing passion.

They fell into a long embrace, holding each other tightly, cheek to cheek. As before, William began to withdraw.

“Yes!, Its time Mr. D.

“You know, I believe I am in love with you.”

There was little else to be said.

As they were parting, each to drive away in their own chariots, William leaned into the window of hers, “I believe, also, that I am in love with you.”

William returned to the park and the fire, lonely Yes!, but happy. He did indeed love her. The consequences were acquiring the character of inevitability. What would happen would happen.

In accepting this fact, he felt more at ease, and let some of Catherine’s dedication to purpose influence his thinking. He felt the need also to concentrate, which this next 36 hours would afford, and require. It was a matter of getting back to a self that was becoming a new self. Even though the advent of this girl had given rise to so many of the doubts that had plagued him all his life, as he yielded to Catherine’s reassuring words, and her distinctly encouraging actions, the doubts seemed to lose their significance.

While earlier in the evening, with her beside him, feeling her strange remoteness, now he could feel her presence, even though she was not there. These moments by the fire were not fraught with longing as in a longing for something lost, but more of something gained. She was real, she loved him. Their closeness was real; she had made sure of that. It was up to him to feel it also.

He remained until the fire turned to embers, as tribute to that

evening, whereupon he doused them with some remorse.

Friday found two people apart involved in industrious activity, with the morrow in the offing.

At this juncture, does the reader suppose he might dispense with the author? Its like watching commercial television, where, at certain strategic moments, the sponsors appear to make their pitch. The author suspects his intrusions might be antithetic to the message, not unlike the aversion the audience feels when the sponsors appear; if they are alert enough, they whack the MUTE button. He can only hope his offerings will augment the flow of the denouement, and help to keep it on track; and will not make the reader fall asleep, or worse, throw it aside in disgust, whacking the MUTE button. No saccharine shit for the reader.

He has grown more comfortable with his players, as they act out their parts in the romance, and as they speak his concerns.

Although he is the origin of Catherine, she has assumed a life of her own. He tries to earnestly make of her a person of her own creation. An original person; a woman, with a woman's manner and a woman's sentiments, and a woman's instincts, a woman's heart, and Alas!, a woman's charms, even her coquettishness; although he knows fully that he can only imagine such an existence. He has modeled her on the women he has known, but mostly upon his own wife, a person who has fulfilled that other halfness in his life. He has imbued her with an extraordinary intelligence, more to stimulate himself to express ideas that he might easily put into a less interesting, less attractive, less developed character, himself, mouthing a pile of soap-box nonsense. These words do not demean the intelligence of his own wife.

'Why not write about his wife?', the reader might inquire. The author hasn't any answer. Much of what he believes he truly knows of his wife, he must also imagine, for, no matter how fascinated by her, and the idea of woman, he himself is not a woman. He can only hope what he esteems of her humanity will carry over into his humanity.

The author announces this writing to be fictional. But he is also aware that all of anyone's life might be led as a fiction, while believing all the while that it is real. Real in the sense that it is entirely self-motivated, in total awareness, that one can independently determine a life to be led. Simply choose a way to be from the moment one is born; escape the mould, the trappings of civilization. It is with conviction that he believes all lives are fictional, almost a network of interchangeable fictions, into which any one individual may enter. He draws upon these fictions of

other peoples lives, as well as upon his own. As much as he would separate himself from mankind, into the isolation of his precious ivory tower, he knows he must descend to reaffirm his own humanity.

How close can one be to another person, though they mingle and couple longingly, intently, lovingly, at times passionately, losing themselves in the embrace of others? One must shortly return to a retrieval, the presence of sensation, to self, a return to survival; and perhaps survival in a fiction, where everything one is and does is measured by how it pleases, and finds accord, with others.

The author confesses to having lost himself, yielding to the wonder of the embrace of his wife, this amazing creature, that welcoming and desirous human embrace, with arms and legs and feet entwined, with human hands that tell all, as much or more than lips, looks and words.

To try to describe it all results in yet another fiction that the reader might knowingly acknowledge. To the reader the description of the two realities might read the same; he, the reader, has the freedom to imagine all he will.

The author must yield to his prospects in the matter.

## *Day Thirteen The Ocean*

They arrived at the edge of the beach around 9:00. A long strand of which spread in both directions, the whole beach probably 7 to 8 miles long. With their backpacks they set out to the North with the sun behind them. The beach was sandy for its full expanse broken here and there by small streams flowing into the surf, and fronted by dunes almost the entire length. The erosion from the winter storms was beginning to disappear as the steady northwesterlies blew the sand into ripples, and began, along with the higher spring tides, to fill in between the drift higher on the beach. By the end of summer the erosion would have disappeared completely, and the beach would be mostly restored by the sand deposits brought along by the coast current, the tides, and the wind.

Catherine was radiant, pointing to everything of even minor interest. She removed her pack, handing it to William, and set out at gallop across the beach, throwing her arms out wide as she faced into the wind. She ran onto the edge of the dunes, kicking up the sand, as the wind blew it past her. She stopped suddenly, and returned to William, taking the pack from him, putting it on. Then

she leaned against him as they walked along. He put his arm around her waist; and she reciprocated, they thus walking close, hips bumping, and Catherine thrusting hers into his, he into hers. Then they walked hand in hand for a while, when suddenly Catherine grew interested in the hundreds of sand dollars in front of them, picking them up one after another searching for the perfect ones. A little further along she spied what seemed a large clam shell, which turned out to be a shell long filled with petrified sand, the shell itself worn smooth from who knows how long washed in the surf, and then another, then stones worn smooth and round, with big cavities in them. She put several of these in her backpack.

“Catherine we have a lot of beach to cover, you keep doing that, and you’ll be packing quite a load by the time we return.”

“You’re right Mr. D.; maybe I should set them high in the drift, and mark the place with some sticks, or draw line in the sand on the higher beach.”

So, Catherine continued with her gathering, placing things higher on the beach, then drawing a line in the sand to the drift, and placing a stick in her pile. She kept the most interesting ones in her pack. “I wouldn’t want to lose these.”

As they walked along, they spied a whole flock of sandpipers running along the edge of the surf line following it as it surged back and forth, their fast little feet and busy little heads. They stopped to watch.

Catherine again snuggled up to William. He put his arm around her waist, as they began to move again, and once again their hips were conversing. She put her arm around his waist; and they continued onward, she looking at him from time to time with a somewhat seductive smile. He remained silent but held rapt by this wonderful creature.

“Good idea Huh!, coming over here.?”

“The best, Catherine”

They continued onward, hardly speaking, taking it all in, and feeling the presence of the other.

Until finally, Catherine broke the silence.

“Mr. D., remember the last night at the sorority, do you remember what I said when you told me I made you ‘feel like a king’?”

“Yes! something like, ‘I’m not through’”

“That’s right, Mr. D., I wasn’t through.

She stopped suddenly, turned to face him, moved to stand directly in front of him. She lifted her head slightly, to peer directly and boldly into his eyes. Was this another invitation? Not waiting

for him to begin to feel uncomfortable, impulsively, she threw her arms around his neck, bringing her face close to his, ready to place her lips upon his, if he did not take the bait. William could not resist, could not, could not. He put his arms around her, placed his lips upon hers, tenderly, at first, then as she responded with marked passion, he too followed her lead, into a long lingering kiss.

Catherine was the first to slowly ease off, pulling her face far enough away to focus on his eyes, which were moist and glowing with emotion unleashed; and Catherine beamed, all aglow with satisfaction.

“See what I mean, Mr. D.? I wanted it understood what I meant.”

She turned, withdrawing one arm, and letting the other slide down to his waist again, making the motion to resume the walk. William followed along side her.

They continued along the beach until they came to a rocky point, where the beach ended in a rocky bluff surrounded by the surf. It was past noon.

“Can we look for a place on the dune out of the wind to attack our lunch. I’m hungry; all this fresh air, and all these hormones.”

They walked along the edge of the dunes until Catherine spied a long declivity in the gorse, where there wasn’t any movement of the beach grass, exclaiming, “That looks like a good place”. William agreed. They clambered over the drift onto the other side along the depression, until they felt out of the wind.

Catherine found a place that suited her; she removed her pack, and began to extricate their lunch.

It was comfortably warm in the sun out of the wind. Catherine removed her windbreaker. She was wearing a white, somewhat tight-fitting blouse, buttoned in front. She was also wearing a loose fitting skirt that came to the middle of her calves.

William was silent. Catherine handed him a tuna and egg sandwich, on rye bread, and opened her canteen to pour what looked like cranberry juice into the two cups she had carried along. She opened another tuna and egg sandwich for herself.

As William began on the sandwich, he noticed colors and flavors, perhaps bits of pepper and sweet onion mixed in with some kind of dressing. Very tasty, reminding him of the sandwiches his aunt would make for his lunch, some thirty five years ago, as he went to work in the shoebox factory. She made the same kind of sandwiches for herself on white bread to take for her lunch as she went off to work in the local GE factory.

“Very tasty, Catherine”

“Thank you Mr. D.”

Otherwise, William remained silent.

Catherine also was silent. The warmth of the sun was pleasantly soothing.

“Mr. D., I have bananas and apples, and some chocolate cake here, what would you like”

“I usually have a banana with lunch, so that would be fine; we’ll see about the cake. Maybe the apple later in the day.”

Again they resumed without any conversation, until Catherine had enough.

“Mr. D., is this that pregnant silence again?”

“I might ask the same.”

“No fair, I asked first.”

“OK Catherine, I am very much under the spell of that kiss.”

“That’s better Mr. D., I am too. Absolutely wonderful, wonderful. We picked the day and the place, it is ours. There is not another soul for miles.

“You know, I feel so relaxed, I want to stay here for a while, maybe even indulge in a nap, feeling the sun, the freshness of the air, listening to the waves.”

“Go ahead, Catherine”

“You too, Mr. D. along side me here, cuddly and cozy.”

“If you insist.”

“I do not insist, but I like the idea all the same”

Catherine lay down with her head on her windbreaker. “Come on Mr. D., right here.” She snuggled against him, moving her head onto his shoulder. It wasn’t too long before her eyes closed.

William could not nap. He was very much awake to this incredibly beautiful young woman. He followed the contours of her body, watched the supine heaving of her bosom as she slowly slipped into a sleep. He studied the lines and shapes of the contours of her face; a kind of perfection, beyond the pale.

She slumbered for nearly a half hour, beginning to stir ever so slightly. William was totally fascinated by her movements. Then her eyes opened; she sleepily, but intently peered into his eyes, almost longingly.

Challenged by her expression, William sensed something was about to happen. Still under the spell of the kiss, he became apprehensive of where this proximity might lead.

What was he to do? Did he want to avoid what he sensed would be an eventuality in any case, if their relationship should continue?

He wanted to find an escape.

Catherine, for her part, persisted in the intensity of her intentionally beckoning glance. Sensing the troubled deliberations in him she did not hesitate to encourage him in a more certain direction. Before he could stir from their close entanglement:

*Leaving Port  
Saving The World*

*Setting Sail  
Requires Courage*

*She reached for his hand, placing it upon her chest; holding it there.*

*After some time, she guided his hand to the top button of her blouse, still holding his. He hesitated. With her other hand she moved the fingers beneath his hand, freeing the button. With the first hand she guided his downward to the next button. Again he hesitated.*

*She waited.*

*Again she slid the fingers of her other hand beneath his to loosen the second button. Slowly she urged his hand to the next. By this time his wrist was resting atop the mound of her breast, soft, and arousingly seductive. He began without any further urging to slowly undo the remainder of the buttons. All freed, he slowly unfurled the two sides of the blouse to the side exposing her exquisitely rounded breasts, cupped in a pouchy kind of brassiere, fastened in the front. He placed his hand, gently, upon the mounds, feeling their softness and roundedness, his body and soul, crossing the Rubicon into regions he might never have dared to imagine; places, abodes reserved for the bards of olde, the original source of music and rhyme.*

*Catherine wondrously sighed. He had had fallen a great distance, wondering if ever he would touch upon terra firma again.*

*They slept, a wondrous sublime sleep, all cares obliterated.*

*They wakened sometime later with the sun now in its late afternoon orb. It was time to move down the beach to where they had parked the car.*

*They were not in any hurry, walking slowly arms about each others waists, feeling with new meaning the movement of the other's body. Catherine would need to stop occasionally to gather her stashes of beach combings. As her pack grew obviously heavier, William offered to carry some in his.*

*William broke a prolonged silence.*

*"Catherine, I cannot help myself. I love you more than I will ever be able to say.*

*"You are such a wonderful wonderful person. Thoughtful and imaginative. The guiding of the hand over the buttons of a blouse to open upon the wonder of yourself. The frontal fastening of the bra, the wrap around skirt, and the coup de grace, no briefs. You are truly an amazing individual. Ready to waylay me, purposefully and masterfully executed. You did not want to give me any opportunities to have any second thoughts."*



“I didn’t know what to expect Mr. D., that’s the honest truth. You are right, of course, about minimizing the opportunities to say, No!

“I placed a great deal of trust in your delicacy. I knew that in no way would you aggress upon me, or hurt me. I wanted you, and wanted you to want me. I haven’t a single regret. I desire more. Would that please you?”

“I’m not quite sure how to answer that question. The differences in our ages will begin to tell almost immediately. You with your young eager body, lusting under the influence of those natural urges that come with great frequency. At my age the frequency, and the degree of passion is much less. These are physical limitations of the human body. Your great desire, should it persist and grow, will not be satisfied with the slower rhythms of my aging carcass.”

“Mr. D. might I have something to say in this consideration? What about love Mr. D., doesn’t love carry its own weight?”

“Of course it does, but love is not intended to be tasked by such considerations, and not incidentally, obstacles, to its blossoming and flourishing.”

“I guess we’ll see Mr. D..”

“Dearest, sweetest life, I do not want to throw a cold wet blanket upon these happenings. Even should our relationship develop, grow, and become a close oneness, even closer than any other, my time is not long here. The saddest of days will come for you in the very prime of your young life.”

“Mr. D. I could not possibly dwell upon that eventuality now. It may not be ill-timed later. But now, it seems so distant. All that we might predict, given what we know, can always be changed by other unseen, and undetected things.

“I realize I cannot fully abandon my responsibilities of the moment, but I can thrive on much else in the same moment. I choose to do that. I will not forsake either one for the other, but will strive for completeness and wholeness of being, at all times.

“Oh Yes! others will scorn me, mock me if they discover my gambit. But it is my life and not theirs. Let them make of their life what they deem worthy, and leave me to bungle my own. Who will live to the fullest?”

“Mr. D.. in this moment, and what I hope are many hinging moments, I am alive, alive. I am not afraid of living. Even though you profess to fear for me, you are also unafraid. Love is unafraid.

“Time will sweep us all away, beyond the paltry record of man and his doings. ‘What has man stood for?’ will become an irrelevant query in the greater purpose being served; purpose of and about which we can know nothing; nothing, nothing.”

“Dearest sweetest life, so dire your pronouncement. As justification for your little fling?”

“Mr. D., do not ever say that again; you hear!?!?”

“We are beyond this callous, indifferent appraisal.

“I know what it is with you now. The gentle, tender lover. You, who would show such consideration one moment, would dash it in another. You cannot believe. Rather than believe, you would scoff. Take your cue from me.

“Instinctively I realize we cannot remain on the heights every moment. Already, we have descended to the mundane world auguring for its place in our consciousness. We might return to our little heaven of love in the dunes to have found the principals have departed, never to return to that moment, even should they try for ever. Its magic belongs in our memories, to course through our bodies, however dimly recalled. It is our hope we might yet find other little heavens. But for me, it was my first taste of a heaven, it is special for all that and guides me toward other heavens I seek. So tread lightly upon my ‘fling’.

“We have no right to demean what has ennobled us, has brought us closer to truths, and states of being we can only begin to imagine. They belong to us, will exist in our memories as long as we exist.

“Mr. D., I am not afraid to tell you I love you, that I will always love you. It is destined. Do not ever try to discover ways to taunt my love; love me as I love you, we two.”

“Catherine, I am learning from you. If I will listen to your heart in this matter. You are the genuine article. Honest, forthright, utterly alive and human, in full possession of your heightened faculties.

“I would admonish ‘caution’ in the public arena. You will be obliged to live a secret life. I imagine painful, heart sore breaks in our comings and goings. Because what must be, must be. Living openly is not an option.”

“Mr. D., it can be an option, somewhere else”

“Catherine, anything that jeopardizes your career, is not an option.”

“What career is that?”

“Catherine, with your abilities, intelligence and perspicacity, your empathy, you are destined for great achievements as a humanitarian. You must have a clear field ahead, unencumbered by the petty concerns of those who would want to discredit you. Of course, the specific career is unknown. Perhaps you can succeed through the pen, as a distant voice. Leaving behind something for humanity, doing all this to protect a love.

“It may be too great a sacrifice.

“If you should become a public voice, a public figure, the media will dig into your underwear, hoping to find some dirt to show to the world, to topple you from your ‘saintly’ pedestal. While none of it would be relevant to who you are, and what you stand for; for it is in fact relevant only to who they are and what they stand for.”

“Mr. D., if I may be permitted a little levity in this matter, As you may have observed, I sometimes do not wear some underthings.”

“Well, my sweet comedienne, imagine what they would make of that salacious piece of information. What they would think of your planned attack on an old geezur.”

“Mr. D., you may not have noticed I carried undies with me.”

“I noticed, but wasn’t able to comment. I did wonder at your sleight of hand, and came to the conclusion, you were not meant to be an obstacle course. You came prepared for eventualities that you were going to do your damndest to facilitate.”

“See, (lifting her skirt) let them look in my undies, Hearts and Flowers, Pristine!”

“God, you are beautiful. Let them say that.”

“By the way, Mr. D., this kind of intimacy is off limits with my sisters.”

“CATHERINE!!!!!!!!!!!!”

William stopped walking, Catherine following suit. He motioned and urged Catherine to face him. He put his arms around her, hugging her very tight, and kissing her with such warmth and passion, as though to communicate the whole Universe. She yielded and responded with her own warmth and passion. They stood in the late afternoon sun, on the wet sand, the surf pulsing steadily, washing nearby. Again the sandpipers appeared, They kissed several times more as they stood there in each others arms, somehow trying to make each kiss tell more and more of the Universe. They whispered I love yous followed one upon the other.

Catherine slowly disengaged from the embrace, taking his hand, leading him to the edge of the drift, to sit in a slightly protected place out of the wind. She coaxed William to put his head on her bosom. She simply wanted to loll in this place, at this time, allowing herself to be enveloped in the surroundings and in their closeness. She could feel William snuggling and reveling in her soft feminine attributes. “I love you.”

You had waited for this intimate moment. Their day, their time. Little was mentioned regarding the rest of the world, even though neither one dismissed it from their consciousness.

Once they left the beach to return to where they must, the world also began to reassert itself in their minds.

“Mr. D., this was such a wonderful, wonderful day. I would wish we might go again tomorrow. At least we must be together tomorrow, maybe by the river.”

“Yes, I would like that.

“But you must not neglect your studies.”

“I’ll bring some of them along; how would that be?”

“You are always attempting to be one step ahead of me.”

“Mr. D., that is not my intent.

“Think of it more like I am alive to the moment, I am there in the moment. There are so many things that will detract from any moment; mostly from the outside.

“We are not puppets, manikins, Barbie Dolls, Mr. D.

“I want to live my own life. We hear it said that we want to be left alone to make our own mistakes. I will not make such a claim. But, I will not be denied what is close to my heart, even though others would fault me for it.

“I know I will treasure these moments for as long as I live. They are mine, not someone else’s; they belong to no one but me. These words are not meant as denial of someone else, an affront, a defiant challenge; they are more an affirmation of my self.

“I believe I am fortunate in all my opportunities. Also fortunate in my family; in my sisters. I feel grounded; I do not feel shaky and insecure, trembling before what will happen next. Rather I want to tremble with the excitement of that next moment.”

“You did not seem to tremble today; you seemed pretty cool.”

“You are wrong, Mr. D., I may not have been visibly trembling, but I was anything but cool.

“One imagines a moment in time, anticipates that moment, sure that it will happen. Is that moment to become something beyond what one might imagine, a moment that could not possibly be anticipated?

“Perhaps in the case, with you and I, all that I had imagined and anticipated, did not happen; that is, the possible negatives did not happen; we did not fail each other. We were true to our selves, our very best selves; we could not fail either ourselves or each other. It all seemed perfectly natural, however unimagined the naturalness.

“In other circumstances, we might have failed, and that would indeed have been unfortunate, because it might have jeopardized what happened in this one.”

“Catherine, your whole being truly fascinates me; the way you think, the way you feel things, the way you perceive things.

“It is more than my good fortune to have met you, to begin to know you, to understand the clarity with which you perceive; and

the acute grasp you have of the world; and very importantly, your wonderful ability to communicate this person you are, again, with such clarity. Your eyes are wide open, your mind is open, your heart is eager to welcome.”

“I guess the author is doing right by us.

“What do you suppose writers of a century and a half ago would do today, with all the alterations and modifications, and uncertainties of formal and predictable behavior? I believe they would be overwhelmed with too many alternative life styles. Their characters could be willful, but in comparison to today, they were far more constrained; almost in straight-jackets. They could only operate in a circumscribed way, a set-piece of rigidified time.

“A great liberation in mores has taken place in the last century.

“Oh! Yes, there are those who would put us all into those straight-jackets again, feeling we have befouled our freedom, our liberation, with licentiousness. Have we have shown that we are not capable of being on our own? Our leader has publicly declared: ‘There ought to be limits to freedoms.’

“Perhaps it is so. If we measure things by social ills, it might be said we have lost, not gained. Why is that? If we cared more, might things have been different? Our current leader has shown he does not care; *laissez-faire*, with purpose and with diligence. Did we care more one hundred fifty years ago? I think not, despite our snotty refinement. Social ills were less obvious, simply because there were fewer of us. In this last half-century alone, and in spite of two tremendously costly wars, both in terms of human life and material waste, population has more than tripled; social ills might be said to have become three times more obvious. The wars might be said to have proved nothing; they did prove nothing. Are we wiser, more certain of where we are headed? I would answer NO!

“Is that sufficient reason to put us into straight-jackets, once again, where we will still be who we are; willful, resentful, clamoring for freedom. Do we ask questions again concerning ‘risk benefit? Like, if everyone is placed in irons, ‘equally’ to be sure, are we better off? Which condition assures more for continuity?

“Do we want diversity, as we claim? What social climate will assure for the greatest diversity? Will diversity assure for a better product; ‘evolved’ product?

“Listen to me!”

“I am. I am impressed.

“I feel obliged to comment upon your analysis. I do not believe we can overlay one time period upon another. However I do not dismiss the Worm In The Bud, that is, the underlying imperatives of the human body, as they attempt to be restrained by shifting

mores. That is to say the underlying imperatives have always been there, as well as the external attempts to control them.

“It comes back to what we were saying about transience earlier.”

“It comes back to what ‘you’ were saying about transience, which, by the way, I have given more thought. Credit to you, Mr. D., most assuredly. Your recitation of the teeny-bopper captured the idea only too well. But in conjunction with your question concerning the declaration of irrelevance of all transiences, the whole idea haunts me. The being of ‘somebody’. You ain’t somebody unless you’re somebody; you gotta be like somebody in order to be somebody.

“A fantastic, terrible yearning to find one’s place, one’s identity.”

“Always!; a person has to begin very early practicing to hit a home run. Our town was called Track Town, because a series of very good runners emerged from the University under the guidance of one particular coach, the one who eventually founded NIKE. The University became a Mecca for track stars and coaches alike, and became also a center for track events, even the Olympic Trials. All this hub-bub filtered down to the very youth of the community. Mere children could be seen jogging and running; doing their laps, in training for the big day that would be theirs; when the crowds in the stands would roar for them, the way they had roared for Bertleson, Prefontaine and Mary Decker.”

“The roar quotient, Mr. D.” giggling, as she snuggled him.

“Yeah!, roaring is relevant!”

”I do not pretend to understand it beyond that. As a matter of healthful activity, one’s government might understand, as in the days of Sparta; a kind of readiness in body, for defensive eventualities; or aggressive eventualities; or other challenging realities. Run like hell when they are after you; but you can’t outrun the bullet, the RPG, or the missile. As an individual imagining those who yearn for this ephemeral roar, I had thought one ought mount a mirror to a headband, positioned to reflect one’s own countenance at the moment of triumph, projecting the one self to one self; seeing what the crowd saw; the ultimate moment, for which one had trained and trained. Vanity!”

They had found themselves again, their mutuality of thought and feeling, the condition that had brought them together, that had intrigued and aroused Catherine from the very beginning. She was beginning to feel a boundless love for this man. He was not less enchanted. Two people; only two people, after all. Creating relevance. Could it have happened otherwise?

Now to prepare for, and await the arrival of the sisters. A sudden feeling of uncertainty passed through William as he began to imagine their shock upon seeing him. The clouds were forming. How could he possibly defend himself against their looks? Would he apologize and head for the hills?

Whereas Catherine was anxious for them to come, to tell of this man, to share the wonder of her feelings. She was confident they too were a product of their upbringing, the utter humanity and reasonableness of their father. The mother is probably another matter.

Did one view others with bias or prejudice; or with cool objectivity? Each was an individual; even Toni Smith; and certainly Kate, Lyd, and Tess, each individuals, free to choose; or so Catherine imagined; and believed. Most of all she believed in the depth of her sister's love; and in their simpatico, their camaraderie; bonded for life. She had complete trust in that love.

At least one of these two was confident.

Meanwhile the author has his work cut out for him, if he in turn expects any kind of roar. He has carved out a huge chunk of credibility which he must conjure and shape, only by letting one word follow the other until the words had become repetitive and redundant. When these two would have to lope off into the sunset, into the imaginings of the reader, who might scoff, who might wonder, who might ponder; and who might even be charmed by something that he or she had not anticipated. Oh Well!

Can you imagine Rex Morgan MD getting into such an earth-shaking discomposure? Hey Doc, Aren't you forgetting yourself?

## *Second Sunday*

This Sunday is set within the proposed timeline. The author has written on beyond this Sunday, even to the time when the sisters appear, and beyond that, as well; but not to the end which is yet to come. Now he returns to what might already be considered a redundancy of interaction between the protagonists. He is attempting to fill in the gaps. Once one has gone past a recognition scene, what more is there? Does the reader wish the author would quit while he was ahead, if ever he was, indeed, ahead?

The beach scene was not the only recognition scene, any more than the first physical expression of something in the kiss, however distracting that only somewhat prurient interest. Not a puritanical love interest, not a platonic love interest, however improbable a love interest (in any case, not X rated).

There is no disgust interest (as in the X rated). Their beach scene will not become a matter of 'a big mistake'. Sorry, but that is the author's prerogative. It must be remembered that the author is writing in a vacuum. While he anticipates a reader, and often refers to a reader, there is but one reader; he, himself. All others are gratuitous, and doubtlessly will become critics.

He knows what critics are. Minders of the mores. Minders of style. Minders of other peoples sensibilities. Minders of other people's business. Anything that becomes public is the business of other peoples to be minded. What we have often characterized as the peoples right to know and the critics right to tell people what is their right to know. So once this becomes public, a disgust interest will develop. As the author pot-boils along, he is unaware of and careless of the consequences of going public; or of the critics looking into his closet for incriminating evidence. Let them criticize the syntax. When it comes to producing the fruit, they are wanting. When they fail as creative writers they attempt to succeed as critics; when they should have set out to sea.

William had wandered down to the river on the sunny morning. All was very quiet, excepting the rushing, somewhat muted, roar of the river; the constant motion of the water somehow manifestly reassuring; and all very certain; even a reasonable thing to be happening. A something that had been happening long before the landscape had been severely altered by the current occupants of the planet; long before the first native peoples appeared, and, if William was correct in his assessment, long after the current occupants have disappeared, hopefully forever. He thought of man, his own kind, his own look-a-likes, as befoulers. He did not consider himself an exemplary exception. It was a gross intrusion, a gross wrecking of something to which only man would apply the term, 'beautiful', all the while desecrating this same very holy place. There may not be another like it anywhere in the entire Universe.

If you are thinking, along with the author, of the absurdity, and the incomprehensibility of man in the landscape, as you might also consider his denouement in this writing, then you are not left with much in the way of enchantment.

Say your prayers, and hope for a better day.

Soon Catherine appeared liling and skipping along, humming to herself, with a huge smile, "Hello, hello, hello, Mr. D". in a sing songy greeting. She rushed up to him putting her arms around his neck, brushing her lips against his cheek, releasing him before they had a chance to become too entwined.



“Hello, sunshine.

“How I leap for joy when I see you.”

“Well, leap this way, Mr. D.

“That’s alright, Mr. D., come sit by me. I have much to tell.”

William moved to sit along side her, and as he did so, he put an arm about her shoulder, hugging her, with a great deal of affection.

They leaned into each other.

“Yesterday was so very special; I don’t want you to think of it in any other way.”

“Not possible, Catherine.

“As a matter of fact, the more I recall, the more I am overwhelmed by feelings of wonder, wordless wonder. Flooded with feelings of love, love, love.

“I realize this is a bleary-eyed declaration that people the world over can only haplessly utter in such circumstances. Everyone is awed by such feelings.

“But Yes!, Catherine, to me too, so very special, actually almost unimaginable. But it is no longer a matter of imagination, as it might have been for all the moments leading up to the predestined one. Perhaps even destined to become so very special. Not two animals in rut; driven wild with passion. But a consummate embrace of two people who stumbled onto the same planet; onto the same stage; acting out a longing and yearning in slow motion, wanting to savor every fraction of time.

“I will run on with this until the truth of us will protest against the futility of these paltry words.”

“Yes! Mr. D. we are awed by our feelings, so made are we to experience them. That we might be awed, yes! Of others, I am less certain. The animals in rut, you mention. Is there a difference between us and them?”

“Absolutely, Catherine, at least in my reckonings, it is so. But I do not want to be put into a position of judging. Not because I do not wish to be judged, but because I have no right.

“Anyway, this is all so much talk. Talk talk talk. All conjecture. Perhaps we ought not try to speak of things that cannot be expressed in such a way. I cannot imagine trying to describe what happened yesterday. Every word would diminish, for me, that which was wordless.

“One must not presume upon some things with the word.

“Sweet life, we are left with, I Love You. How say you?”

“I Love You.

“But I have things to tell.

“Yes!, part of what I feel. A wonder, of course. But also a certainty. Certain enough of who I am, and what I want to feel,

certain in the knowledge that what I feel is not forced, not feeling something that was sought out of curiosity.

“Have I become a woman? Have I answered a mystery that was contained within my being, that was seeking knowledge of itself?”

“As you say, wrapping words around something that words cannot express.

“Am I allowed to get by with ‘I am’?”

“But more to tell, Mr. D., all the same.

“You, Yes! you. It is not only me. It is You. What you do to me. Therein lies the mystery. Yes! within me lies a mystery; but it is you who have a key to the mystery. When, what and who you are turns the key, and the door opens, I emerge as ‘I am’. I declare my ‘I am’ ness to you. To think such a well-spring was born into, and has awakened within me.

“I cannot even begin to compare what I am to others, and what they might feel. I cannot imagine any similarity. Do I want to imagine any similarity? Do I want to believe in the uniqueness of my being? Do I want to share this who I am with anyone but you?”

“No, Yes, No, Mr. D.

“Still I have more to tell.

“How you must treasure me, because of what I feel for you. Although it is quite impossible physically to be so, I am, none the less, another you. Magically you are entering my being; I am become a host.

“I know it will displease you to hear me speak this way, because you will believe I am relinquishing a self, my self, for some self to which I have become vulnerable. You will imagine things I do not feel, like if I allow my vulnerabilities to overwhelm me, which I will deny, then when you are gone, I will become bereft.

“Mr. D. I cannot account what I feel. Yes!, by definition I am emotionally vulnerable. Will not my awareness of that vulnerability serve to protect me from a potential loss? Do I not trust you explicitly?”

“I guess one might ask ‘what is assured in this life?’ Do we live by anticipating what will happen, doing everything to circumvent, avoid the results of what might happen; something which we cannot know, in any case?”

“Mother admonishes, ‘The stove is hot!’”

“Mother’s voice, Ms. Watson’s voice admonishes, ‘Mr. D. is hot!’”

“Mr. D. admonishes, ‘I am hot!’”

“Are you and the stove one and the same?”

“Suppose you are, will I be burned? I am destined to touch you; I have touched you; you have even touched me. Am I supposed to be burning? Why am I not feeling burned? Why do I sense there is no way I can be burned. Isn’t this all a little too metaphysical?”

“I am who I am. No one has prepared me for being who I am. I do not wish to attribute who I am to anyone else. Ah!, but I am merely a link, an evolved link, in a long chain. In a still evolving continuum. Must I then acknowledge my debt to the continuum? That I could not be who I am without the parent, and the parent before the parent, to genesis.

“Is it so wrong for me to seem to show such disregard for my indebtedness? To make a selfish claim? Does not every being contain within it the seeds of something else, something that has past, and something that tends to the unknown?”

“Very intriguing questions, Catherine. How would you propose to answer them?”

“I’m inclined to answer with intuition, without specific knowledge. I phrase the question as though it might also become an answer. I gravitate to the plausible; that is how my intellect guides me.

“I am unsure of the debt I owe to the species for all the evolutionary labors it has undergone to produce me. Why has it produced me; and has it done so with purpose? Why does it not serve its own lineage by cloning all the best and all the good?”

“Catherine, you are not answering.”

“In this instance it seems more natural to me to ask, Mr. D.

“How should I answer you? If I choose to turn an intuition into a fact, that is, posit, declare, assert that what I say is a truth as I know it, have I answered the question? Will such an answer not be arguable? Should I risk a falsehood in order to produce an answer?”

“You are a hopeless inquisitor.

“I suppose we need to risk the false premise. Think of it as scaffolding. Language is a kind of scaffolding. It’s the impermanent thing we erect while we are working on the main edifice.”

“Does the main edifice have a plan?”

“I cannot say that it does. My wife would wonder what was the purpose of language when every other word was ‘fuck’.

“But lets think upon the material from which the scaffolding is made. Language. Words. What are words, and what purpose do they serve? Scaffolding?”

“Now. Look who is asking questions.”

“Would you feel better if I posited all that I am thinking; like, I think, therefore it is?”

“That’s another question, Mr. D.”

“Alright Catherine, but it was you who said you had something to tell. But I’ll see if I can complete a thought without asking a question.

“I am going to suppose that language has evolved as has the species, that the species was not invented with a tongue that spoke all things all at once. In so doing I will also assume that language has not served as a perfect tool, hence its constant impetus to evolutionary, let’s say, improvement, utile improvement.

“While, on the surface, language serves an obvious purpose, let’s say, of communication, some of what it communicates could also be accomplished through gesture, and some of it cannot be accomplished at all.

“What I want to get to in this declaration, this statement without question, is a notion of what language has become as that scaffolding to which we return everyday to work upon the edifice.

“But to create a perspective in the whole matter, I am going to set up a simple construct with language.

“Please pass the salt’. This statement hardly requires improvement. It could also be accomplished with a gesture. Any improvement might involve a simple enough embellishments like, ‘Sweetheart, please pass the salt.’, or the more authoritarian approach of, ‘Pass the salt’.

“Now we come to the crux of what I am saying when I utter, ‘Sweetheart, will you please pass me the truth.’”

“Very clever, Mr. D.”

“Is that the truth which I requested?”

“Another question, Mr. D.”

“I know you are getting what I am saying. However, when you do eventually ‘pass me the truth’ or what you believe to be the truth, let’s say, for the lack of a label, the contents of a purported vessel not being visible, and I take in my hand that for which I had assumed I had asked, to discover it is not that for which I had asked. ‘That’s not the truth’. You look back at me in puzzled amazement. You could say in return, ‘But it is the truth’. I will answer in turn that ‘No sweetheart, It is not’, and will try to help you in your dilemma by suggesting you should search the cupboard for what I had asked. Then, revealing no doubt whatever, you will protest, that you had done as I had asked. You will not address me with ‘sweetheart’; you will be hard pressed not to say ‘Damn it, I passed you the truth’.”

“I love it, Mr. D.”

“What do you love?”

“That is another question. But since you so earnestly ask, I shall ‘pass you the truth’; ‘I love you, Mr. D.’, and don’t ask me, ‘what is love?’. But I will say this is what I had to tell; that is the truth; in so many words.”

“Now you are being clever.”

Catherine snuggled up against him. “Gesture, Mr. D.”

“Even cleverer.”

“Isn’t it fun?”

“Another question?”

“To answer your question, ‘It is fun, sweeeeetheearrrrrt’.

“More gestures, more fun.”

“Got me there! Please pass me a gesture.”

Catherine responded with an enthusiastic embrace, offering her lips to his, which William could not refuse. A prolonged gesture resulted.

“Mr. D., that says it all.

“For the moment.”

“A qualified statement?”

“Question! Mr. D. But I’ll answer; not as qualified as it would seem. In the next moment, I will reaffirm what has been said. I will have anticipated your request for the truth, by simply passing it to you, without your having asked.

“It goes, without saying, an unqualified gesture.

“There is more to tell, however many questions it may generate.

“Mr. D., it goes without saying, but I say it anyway, you have awakened me. Only two weeks ago, I had been coasting in my step-by-step climb to an imaginary goal, plateau, or pinnacle, where I would assume a place amongst those who are deeply involved in attempting to find a permanent remedy for the ills of the ‘human condition’.

“I felt comfortable in who I was and what I was doing. I felt confident I would achieve my goal.

“After two weeks with you, my whole being has suddenly expanded. You have tapped the reservoir of my emotions, you have strengthened my spirit and my resolve, you have stimulated my mind, and invigorated my body. No longer coasting, but now intensifying the purpose and the dedication. I want more. I want it all. I want the whole truth about life and living, to its very depths. I want to know, Yes!, who I am, why I am here, and where I am going, in the fullness of knowledge and truth.”

“Dearest one, beware Adam, beware Icarus.”

“Mr. D., Tales. Myths, do not apply here.

“Am I to be cautioned against being who I am, why I am here, and where I am going?”

“As I take my first step, you warn of pitfalls; after you have kindled the blaze, you would quench with the wave.

“Is inspiration so easily begot that one can readily dismiss its prospect?”

“I think not, Mr. D.

“True, something has happened here, to me.

*Leaving Port  
Saving The World*

*Setting Sail  
Requires Courage*

“Someone has put the spur to my ribs, I am ready, and willing to move, to increase the pace, perhaps to run, to run free, free from the trappings of conventionality, to gallop as fast and as far as my spirited self will carry me.

“Yes! a hint of carelessness in these words, But I am not unfamiliar to myself.

“While I might think one thing, often I do another; because I am being careful, not taking any risk whatever.

“Not from fear, but from what others call prudence; what I have recognized as prudence.

“I have always wanted to please, and to do the right thing, to not offend. I have wanted to be certain of my steps. Even as much as I might have wanted to leap ahead, I have always remained within myself.

“Now!, Now! – Mr. D. – Now!

“More to tell, but how to say, Mr. D.?”

“Will this person who I am becoming, be able to function once the catalyst is removed?”

“Am I becoming dependent upon you for this new surge of self?”

“Is that not what I want, this bond? Because of the way I feel, I believe it to be so.”

“Catherine, I tremble at the prospect of your happiness and safety. As much as I would elude the prospect of being responsible for your happiness and safety, you cast a net over me – Captured!”

“Oh!, my love, do not fear the prospect, we will be to each other what is cast in our bones.

“More to tell? How can I know things I can not know – that I have not lived?”

“I have faith and trust in ‘us’.

“Such big thoughts, such certainty, coming from a mere schoolgirl. Mr. D.?”

“Dearest one, indeed, a very wise schoolgirl, with a lot to tell.”

“A question must follow. ‘Do I fall into line?’ Another, ‘What happens if I do not?’ Still another, ‘If the assumption is that evolution serves a purpose, however blind, ought we not keep our eyes open to it’. Another pursuant to the last, ‘Because I might be different, ought I not be recognized as a prospect?’”

“Prospect, or dubious prophet?”

“It doesn’t make any difference which. What is under consideration here is the receptivity to nuances in the evolutionary prospect. Prophets are seers. Evolution is happening in the dark. Even if it is happening in the broad daylight, it still remains unseen. It is only evident if one is receptive to its premise.

“I would like to infer the prophet as the receptive one. A prophet, a seer, senses something beyond what is apparent, what is observable. He is a theoretician, a hypothesizer, as well as a visionary. Within that individual resides something extrasensory, extraordinary; without sounding grandiose.

“He might declare, ‘Catherine is the prospect for the future. Follow her lead’.”

Snuggling up to Catherine, “I would certainly heed his advice.”

Snuggling in turn, “All I require to pursue, and fulfill my quest, is you.”

“Are we all set for the journey, then?”

“We are indeed all set for the journey. The first steps have been taken.”

“Catherine, I am skeptical. I want to know, as well as being a prospect and a prophetess, are you also a wizard?”

“No, regrettably, I am not. I know what you are trying to suggest; that I need some power to transform what exists into something that ought to exist.

“Don Quixote tried to be a wizard; he fell flat on his parts.

“Fatefully inevitable, Mr. D”

“Catherine, I attempted to resolve this issue of the seer in a piece I titled ‘The Prophet’. Because I am a realist, I could not but end it in only one way. Prophets seem to end badly, even though they show remarkable prescience and clairvoyance; their voice goes unheeded; indeed they are scorned for badmouthing what seems a good thing. A very bleak prognosis for you. We should find a place by the seaside, taking in all that happens without comment; occasionally looking at each other with bleary-eyed acknowledgement. Sweetness and light. In recalling another Hollywood production, the hero said to the heroine: ‘When I gaze upon the world I want see you, and when you gaze upon the world you want to see me’.”

The author is inclined to mention that he is writing this as they were nailing HIM to the cross. It has become part of our civilizing that we do not crucify people anymore. We do worse things, but we do not crucify. He recalls the work that William has mentioned. He had imagined Prophets as Stalking Horses. The prophet is not the real beneficiary of his ominous predictions. He falls somewhere in between property and prophylactic. He rails against men of property (the controllers of the state, and destroyers of the planet) who in turn rid themselves of him through prophylaxis. The hemlock, or banishment. Not an intimate of Athens, soured on humanity, the protagonist opts for exile.

*Leaving Port  
Saving The World*

*Setting Sail  
Requires Courage*

The crux of the Prophet's dilemma rests in his sink of protoplasm, he cannot step outside his encasement. It is to be understood that we all form some notion of the world, albeit universe, that enables us to function within it; that holds the forces that control us, often leaving us bereft.

There are men amongst us who claim to know more of the universe than others. These claimants, through one assumption (usurpation) or another, become the harbingers of the day.

An Assumptive (self-appointed) Claimant may perorate. 'You will burn in HELL for all eternity for your sins.'

A vengeful God has revealed thus to the Claimant, thought to be a prophet, by some.

One of our favorite authors, as a sensitive young novitiate, after hearing that vengeful statement, how it struck such fear into him, causing him to puke out his guts, tells of that *eternity*, in *The Portrait Of An Artist As A Young Man*. Paraphrasing: There exists this huge pile of sand one million miles high; every million years a bird comes by to carry off one grain of sand; a lengthy puke.

Control through fear. Nobody knows, not a single living man (or woman) knows, not a single man (or woman) that ever lived, ever knew. Not the oracles, the shamans, the witch doctors, monks, Priests, Popes, the prophets, mail-order ministers; the Cassandra's, the visionaries, Joan of Arcs, those who resided on Mount Olympus; the dreamers, the righteous prognosticators, the poets, the philosophers, the Utopists; the lunatics. Nobody ever knew, nobody will ever know, so feeble and inadequate is the human mind to comprehend where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. No one! Not a single human life ever knew, not a single human life knows, or will ever know.

*Indeed, there may be call for compromise; however, I cannot compromise my Vision. ... What is this Vision? Is it not something given to one? Surely, from whence it came? Can one truly determine its origin? Given what can or cannot know, does any outsider have a right to assay that other's Visions are a reflection of incompetence, of dementia, because they arise as an inconvenience to them? Am I prompted to promulgate my Vision, or am I obliged to be influenced by outside circumstances and consider them more relevant than my Vision? If the Vision be of sufficient force and form unto itself can there be any dissuasion from it? ... If it should arise as part of my Vision that 'This is not the best of all possible worlds', that I have no further desire to be humored by the opposite perception; that even though the opposite may embody the very heart and soul of ineluctable realities, may these not be overcome*



*by certain other imperatives; an Act of WILL? A Vision unto itself, while not being an imperative, derives from some inner sense whose validity rises imperiously to the forefront of our confabulations. Does it necessarily follow that Visions are relevant to madness? Is it mad then to say 'This is not the best of all possible worlds'. If not mad then, how discredit the sense that gives birth to the notion, albeit Vision?*

## *Ms. Watson*

It was after noon already.  
A voice was heard hailing Catherine.  
Looking into the sun, which shone brightly behind the hailer, one saw a figure surrounded, and eclipsed in light.  
“Yes!, Catherine responded.  
“May I join you?”  
Suddenly the voice rang the proverbial bell. No longer an apparition, some godhead spying upon her, she recognized Ms. Watson’s voice.  
“Yes!, of course”, Catherine responded again.  
Coming to join them, she appeared free from the blinding light, not an apparition, with an indulgent smile upon her face.  
“Be at ease, Catherine. I am also drawn to the river. As I came along I recognized you. I might have turned upon my heels, but you might have heard or seen me do so. I did not want to appear to be skulking; so I hailed you instead. This is not an imposition. It is a well-intended recognition.  
“Hello Mr. Duranachek.”  
“Hello Ms. Watson.  
“Yes!, the waters always hold our fascination.”  
“No need to patronize me, Mr. Duranachek.”  
“Why would I do that, Ms. Watson?”  
“Is it not obvious.”  
“If we are to be at ease, we cannot banter in hyperboles.”  
“Let’s begin again, shall we. Be at ease.”  
Catherine decided she had better say something.  
“Ms. Watson, allow me to welcome you and to invite you to sit in our company.  
“We have been discussing language, and what assumptions we make with regard to its ability to communicate. We were imagining a table conversation that began as innocently as ‘Pass The Salt, Please Pass The Salt, or Sweetheart, Please Pass The Salt’. When next, another request was made, ‘Please Pass The Truth’, the response was somewhat different than with the salt. After a

delayed response, prompted by momentary puzzlement, when you do eventually 'pass me the truth' or what you believe to be the truth, let's say, for the lack of a label, the contents of a purported vessel not being visible, and I take in my hand that for which I had assumed I had asked, to discover it is not that for which I had asked. 'That's not the truth'. You look back at me in puzzled amazement. You could say in return, 'But it is the truth'. I will answer in turn that 'No sweetheart, It is not', and will try to help you in your dilemma by suggesting you should search the cupboard for what I had asked. Then, revealing no doubt whatever, you will protest, that you had done as I had asked. You will not address me with 'sweetheart'; you will be hard pressed not to say 'Damn it, I passed you the truth'."

Ms. Watson, not privy to all that led up to the table discussion, looking a little baffled, inquired, "And where was the truth?"

"Very good, Ms. Watson", William proffered.

"What is the truth of you two?"

"If I am to remain at ease, Ms. Watson, it is assumed the answer to that question does not extend beyond this confidence."

"I think you know me well enough.

"There will be others who will ask with less indulgence and more malice. Regard me as a friendly inquisitor; there will not be many of those."

As she spoke to Catherine, William examined her more closely. A tall woman in her early fifties perhaps. Everything about her seemed circumspect. Despite an unnecessarily austere demeanor she showed all the traces of a once beautiful woman, only now marred by some hint of lines and fuzzy hair; and by a set in her mouth characteristic of those determined and enduring. Her moist greenish eyes radiated warmth as she spoke to Catherine. Her expression was animated, her gestures seemed appropriate, and not exaggerated.

"Ms. Watson, I spend much of the time we are together listening to Mr. D's concerns regarding the propriety of our relationship; and I spend much of our little time together reassuring him that I am not to be dissuaded by his arguments; so important has this relationship become to me.

"To answer the specifics, Ms. Watson, Mr. D. and I will be seeing each other, when time will permit, until my sisters arrive. It is my hope and desire they will meet each other, and will all accept each other. I had requested this visit of my sisters because of the importance Mr. D. had assumed in my life; I wanted to share my feelings with them; and I wanted them to know him.

“After they leave on next Sunday as scheduled, Mr. D. and I will be saying our goodbyes before he departs the following day to his abode upon his island up north.

“This is our understanding, and our agreement.

“Beyond that we will be in communication. The eventualities are unknown.

“I love Mr. D., and I want him in my life, more than anyone else. That is the way I feel now.”

“I was beginning to suspect as much.

“One never knows, for certain, do they?”

“I have watched many of the girls in the throes of their romances, many which do not develop into all they might have anticipated, with all life’s little pitfalls. Often the query is made, ‘Is that all there is to it?’ Some seem very heartbroken, suffering with betrayal and rejection. Others seem very happy, radiant even, excitedly bouncing about, hugging all the sisters.

“But you Catherine, I see such equanimity, a studied quiescence to what fate has brought to you. An inner glow, yes!

“Then I begin worry how far and how hard you will fall.

“I then try to convince myself that you are perhaps the strongest most able girl that I have had the privilege to know. I believe you to be exceptional. I find myself caring for you, solicitously; I want to protect you from any harm, from any source.

“Then I must tell myself, ‘it is not my place to interfere’.”

“But, Ms. Watson, it is your place.

“Even Mr. D. acknowledges it is your place; perhaps even as an individual who cares, but also as a representative of all those others who will make it their business to interfere, whether they care or not.

“We have explored and explained our relationship to each other in so many different ways, that now when we get too near the subject, I deliberately seek ways to avoid it. I do not think we can find a way to end our relationship, because neither of us truly desires an end. So we give in to what we feel, believing that we are prepared for any eventualities.

“It is more at my instigation than Mr. D’s, that we continue. He is of course very concerned for any taint against my future, whatever that might be. So, we are careful. You are the only one who knows the specific reality. Some nosy girls pry into the cause of my absences, which I try fend off with friendly banter about my right to my own life. They leave me alone. I have informed my sisters that there is someone, only that there is someone I would like them to meet, without giving them any details. My younger sister has inquired if he is a two-headed monster. She has good instincts.

“Ms. Watson, I am not inclined to defend myself, or justify what I am doing, because it is simply no one’s business but mine. The truth is I do not want to explain anything, because any explanation could not be framed in any context that would satisfy others; who, by the way, might be doing the world a service if they would concentrate on their own ‘exemplary’ lives.

“I do not presume with haughtiness, or arrogance, in this attitude. Obvious to me are others concerns as I imagine them easily enough. My parents and my sisters have made assumptions about me, and about themselves. We each would be horribly distraught if we brought ‘shame’ upon one another.

“I cannot know then some eventualities that would hurt others, but some eventualities I might anticipate do not concern me, simply because they have been hypothetical since the day I was born. It is not my duty to fulfill a hypothesis. I do not set myself up as its antithesis. I must be allowed my own life; and I must be trusted to lead it as I see fit.”

“I do not question any of what you say, Kate. Being who you are, I trust that you have thought of everything that matters.

“I would not presume to criticize you. As a matter of fact I am more inclined to share in your happiness, to support you in it. But I must not appear to do so overtly.

“Your sisters will be put in a similar position with their (your) parents. They will harbor a secret they will never be able to reveal; you will expect that of them, as matter of trust, prevailing upon the bond that exists between you. It will be asking a lot of them. So, you will be forced to reveal your secret to spare them a burden. Then you must face your parents.

“Perhaps you can put all of this off for a while, as long as others who would wish you harm do not know. Perhaps your relationship will take another turn that precludes saying anything; so, in a way, saying nothing might be the wiser course for the interim.”

“Ms. Watson, I am adult. Should I be bent by what the world expects of me? What world? A fiction in itself, a shabby affair in itself, would presume to ask more of me than it asks of itself. Does it need me to mirror it in all its tainted glory?

“Or is it so starved for gossip, the gossip of the Fall, the desire for the fall to be everyone’s lot in life? If everyone falls, there is comfort in that. But, I have not fallen; I have risen!”

“Indeed you are a marvel, Catherine. Forgive me, for what appears any kind of interference.

“I will look forward to all your achievements; and I might be forced to defend you against all others, should they fall upon you. But I am confident you will steer your own course for the good of all. What might rain down upon you will be shed as a matter of

course, though you be soaked to the skin. I would hope that for you, that you never lose spirit, or sight of your goals.

“Mr. D., you have been very silent during all of this.”

“It is not my conversation. As Catherine has indicated, we have gone over the ground many times. Doubtlessly, unavoidably, we will go over it many more times.

“We may draw a deep breath, but we must exhale; to somewhat parody the Greek Proverb, ‘Fall down you may, get up you must.’ As Catherine has stated, she has ‘risen’. To hear her say that floods me with a deepened affection for her. Because, that is what I would want. Doubtlessly, I have also risen. Mankind would deny me this last, for which Catherine would condemn it.”

“You seem to know her very well.”

Catherine interjects, “Ms. Watson, he does know me very well, because I want him to know me, as I want to know him.”

“I suppose I ought to continue on my way. But before I do, I would want to remind you of the scandalmongers; some of whom are your fellow sorority sisters, who have asked me suggestively pertinent questions. Good guessers, your young cohorts.

“Believe me, I do ask myself truly and honestly, ‘What business is it if theirs?’ Those who ask cannot equal you in any of their accomplishments; their interest seems too close to discovering some maligning secret, that they could use to bring you down, perhaps to their level, or lower.

“That seeming maliciousness bothers me on general principles; Something I cannot easily dismiss under the category of ‘human nature’.

“Catherine, you must be cautious, as an act of self-preservation. Envy is such a powerful source of denigration. As mean and small as the whole notion is; I am nonetheless troubled by its consequences.

“Trust that you are safe with me. I wish you every happiness.”

“Thank You, Ms. Watson” William bides.

“Thank You, Ms. Watson” Catherine chimes, as Ms. Watson continues on her way, without further comment.

“Well Mr. D., do you think we will ever get back to our conversation, our earth-shaking cogitations? Of this earth, this nosy, busy-body earth, this do not live and do not let live? This earth that belongs to us as much as anyone else?”

“As people go, Ms. Watson may be said to be of the nobler sort. Decent. She cares a great deal for you.”

“She has her prejudices; she is very controlled in her responses and her words. Underneath all that restraint she does reflect the prevailing mores; that is, her take on life, as she dutifully helps to

guide young people toward some fixed goal; of ready assimilation into a status quo to which we all give credence through acquiescence to it.

“But still, I do trust her; her word, at least. I am not too sure of her motives.”

“Maybe there are none, beyond what she reveals to you.”

“As you know people are not always what they seem. You would assume there is nothing hidden, which might cause her to betray me, betray us.”

“From what she has just said to you, I would judge she regards you as very special; with which I am inclined to agree. I believe she would deny any knowledge of our relationship; she might innocently enough refer to the evening she returned, claiming complete ignorance of the facts in the case, and that she had no reason to suppose anything other than two people talking, quite out in the open, over the dinner table.

“She would probably not refer to the conversation she had with you that pertained to her suppositions, and this meeting, neither of which, to our knowledge, were public.”

“Can we can it then?”

“Consider it canned.”

Catherine gave him such a huge smile, putting her face very close to his. Suddenly he felt out of his element. This beautiful young woman, so close. He had no right. Then he wondered, ‘Did anyone have a right?’

Catherine noticed his seeming apprehension. “Come now, Mr. D., you know I don’t bite.”

“Catherine, there are times when your loveliness startles me. The presence of you, the reality of you, so near, and so dear! Your eyes so wide open, so earnest, searching, noticing, taking in so much all the time; speaking volumes.”

“Speaking volumes to you; leaves upon leaves of love, my dear sweet man. Please don’t lose sight of my humanity. I will not become gross to remind you, since you are in such a ga-ga state.”

“Actually I was asking myself if I had a right to be so close. Then I asked, ‘did anyone have such a right?’”

“What was your answer?”

“I hadn’t answered myself. Observing, studying my expression, sensing something amiss, you interrupted me with .... ‘I don’t bite’”

“What would you answer now?”

“Don’t bite.”

“Come on, don’t spoil it for me.

“Is it so difficult to answer?”

“You don’t understand Catherine, the effect you have upon me.

*Leaving Port  
Saving The World*

*Setting Sail  
Requires Courage*

“The difficulty in answering has to do with disbelief, which I know, is part of my personality, long standing. There is no way I could argue with myself to convince myself that I should be experiencing what I am now experiencing. Qualitatively, it is like a dream. But most dreams are very brief, flashes of time, and they always become diffuse with consciousness, no matter how much we concentrate on reenacting them.

“If you were a dream, you would become diffuse, and should; but your reality becomes so startlingly clear and defined; so fully occupying the credulity of my conscious state.

“Of course, I recover. You convince me easily enough that you are real, that you want me to regard you with my warmest and most intimate feelings, and that I should feel completely free to be myself in your company. After a few, I do, until the next time such overpowering awareness of your presence, and your remarkable loveliness, does it to me all over again.”

“Enjoy, Mr. D., enjoy! That is my advice to you.

“I will do my very best to be less obtrusive with my looks. I will wear a veil, wear a net, or cheesecloth, perhaps a burlap sack. Then we can have a conversation where you will not be so distracted by something that is only skin deep. And ephemeral, Mr. D.”

“That should shut me up.”

“By the way, I brought some lunch, although it is the middle of the afternoon. What would you like to do for supper? Could you stand takeout again?”

“I wish to feast upon you; so you satisfy your self.”

“Would you like one of those sandwiches your aunt used to make? And some tea? You have not told me your aunt’s name.”

“Madeline; a pretty hypochondriacal Catholic spinster.

“Ever thoughtful, you; and Yes! I would most relish a pretty spinster’s sandwich, with tea, to be devoured with loving care, every morsel and sip to be savored.”

“I’ll join you in your spinster’s fare; and we might do takeout sometime, if there is nothing left of me to feast upon.”

“Certainly sufficient for me.”

“Actually, I’d rather forego the takeout, to remain here.”

“For as long as long be.” “Mr. D., you have caught the drift, notwithstanding all Ms. Watson’s finger waggings.

“Long, as long as long be! Let it be so.”