

Book One

Beginnings

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It's been so long since you've written that you don't even know how to spell anymore. This deficient, trembling hand. This stupid, feeble mind. I can't even do a crossword puzzle well.

I'm hiding behind words, trying to seek meaning, to create order, to have the pieces fit.

Slow down. Less agitation. Don't be so cross with yourself. Less profanity. Take a breath.

BethLEhem. Today, Tuesday, December 25, I went to Bethlehem. What could be a more significant place to seek a new beginning to my life. I think of the words of the morning prayer "To open the eyes of the blind." I want to open my eyes to greater light.

Better. Remember the commitment to care with words. Reducing leshan hara "wrong speech--bad tongue." This is not a time for judgment and recrimination, but understanding and compassion, if not wisdom. Another breath.

Now, back in the old section of Jerusalem, I'm sitting in a little cafe on David street. Dusk. The heavy rains of yesterday and today have briefly let up, but it's still cold, and a fine drizzle continues to fall.

Is reality merely a question of perspective, where you focus?

The moon is just beginning to re-emerge. There is more light from an extra Chanukah candle. From Christmas lights. A few months ago we saw pictures of the earth from Apollo. What a beautiful one-world dream.

Mortar shells are exploding. *Inter arma leges silent.* During war, the laws are silent.

I'm drinking tea and lemon.

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Since the machete cut three of my right fingers two months ago, leaving them barely dangling as gravity urged them to earth, I've been unable to write. There was really no pain during the cut. The steel blade was quite sharp. I remember noticing it glisten in the sun, watching the sparkles of light dance, as together we slowly tore open the female date tree organs enclosed in pieces of brown bark. We were a good team for a while, ripping into the bark with the shaft of steel, finding the soft white buds, and sticking male pollinated white cotton into them. Tree after tree. Step, climb the ladder, take out the steel blade, cut open the bark, expose more female buds, inject soft white cotton into them.

Not unlike the way Kierkegaard's aesthetic man, Johannes the seducer, went after women. With the same surgical skill, intellectual detachment, polished finesse, and soft white climax.

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Bloodied, dangling fingers were hardly the fall harvest I expected.

Rebbe Jonathan, with his partner Dr Lisbet, came up from Jerusalem to our kibbutz to give what they called the "Big Four

Fall Preview"--for English speaking students. It sounded like it was going to be a football sports overview.

My first impression of him was that he seemed perpetually and naively optimistic--cloyingly so--as if untouched by any of the suffering of life. He also delivered a line which I found unbelievably self-serving and conceited "When the student is ready, the teacher appears."

At the very moment I was getting up to walk out, I heard him say that Rosh HaShannah, the first of the "Big Four," was about new beginnings, creating order from Chaos--physically, emotionally, relationally, and spiritually. The chaos part certainly applied, and so I decided to stay, just for a few minutes more. His words, several months later, are some of the last I wrote in my journal:

"For some reason HaShem--God, the Name, the Nameless One the Universe-- provides us with chaos in our life. Rather than look at this chaos and void within us as a problem, we can see it as a fertile opportunity, a time to trust that from this disorder creative new life and light can emerge."

The chaos part I can relate to. So too the darkness and the void. The Rebbe (and God?) definitely got that part right.

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The fall Holidays--"holy" days-- begin with darkness and void. God opens the book of life, judges, and then closes the book at Yom Kippur. Then we move to Succot, a celebration of the ingathering from the spring. Maybe the timing of my accident was appropriate. It was last spring when things first started to fall apart, even though I wasn't aware of it at the time. Was I reap-

ing my spring planting? **Or better yet, Johannes' effort to implant, if not fertilize multiple dates?**

For Succot, the final pilgrimage festival, we on the Kibbutz built a frail structure, the succah. The Rebbe told us there is "symbolic importance in being able to look through the fragile open, latticed succah. We can see the stars, as we seek to connect with a higher power, to dream and create new visions. It is a time," he said, "to see the good in life, to trust God, to find the best in others, even during difficult moments. That way the human spirit can triumph with light over darkness."

I recall his joy in describing the waving of the "four species of fruit--*arba'ahminima*-- mentioned in the Torah, in celebration as thanks for the bounty of God's creation. A celebration of happiness; 'you shall rejoice in your festivals. *V'samachta b'chagehcha.*'"

As he said those words and waved the fruits, I was holding my throbbing hand and thinking "Is this just a bad, mocking cosmic joke?"

Succot, a time to leave our permanent homes and dwell under the succah's temporary, flimsy structure. Why? To help us experience homelessness, that we're all ultimately homeless; and learn the lesson that there is no permanent earthly shelter in life, that all of us and everything in the world and this physical life are vulnerable and fragile.

Then his singing "All the world is just a narrow bridge...."

I understand that lesson.

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The rain continues to fall. I move my journal to make sure

it doesn't get wet. As I take a sip of tea, I look at the empty tables all around me. I definitely have the place to myself. Hardy, or stupid? I continue my writing.

The next day, Simchat Torah, a celebration of dancing with the Torah, a time in the yearly cycle to read the last passages in the Fifth book of the Torah, Deuteronomy. An ending, where Moses once again is allowed to see, but not reach the Promised Land. Then after reading those last lines of the fifth book, the first lines of the first book, Genesis, are read. Endings. New beginnings. The cycle continues.

Is there an irony here? God opens the Book of Judgment at the start of the fall holydays, a time of darkness and void. And on the last of the "Big Four" holidays--Simchat Torah-- while others are dancing, I am in excruciating pain, and can no longer write in my book. Now, several months later, thanks to the quick intervention of a skilled Jerusalem surgeon, my fingers have healed enough so I can again put pen to paper. I am once again able to write. And the first day I can write is a day when there is the least light in the universe, Chanukkah, the darkest night of the year. From darkness and void....to darkness.

I guess God's judgment was clear.

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Even though the drizzle continues, a brief glimmer of the day's final natural light forces its way through the dark clouds, creating vague shadows. **Is there a certain irony that at dusk, shadows are longest, just before they disappear? Where do they go?**

Why does it seem that newness and change, birth and death,

which should be opposites, are often so intertwined?

Today, after I returned from Bethlehem, I stopped for a while at Herod's tomb. His tomb frightened me. I see death in it. The idea of history, countless deaths. Human life is so insignificant. My life feels so insignificant. Why then should death bother me? The end of an insignificant life.

I look at the callous on my right middle finger. It's round, squishy, about a 3/4 inch circle. It's been there forever, caused by the pressure and tension of holding the pen so tight, and from all the writing I do. Soft, but hard. In some ways, it's good, I guess, trying to protect me, the body protecting itself. I'm surprised it didn't go down while I wasn't writing. Are some self-protective tough self-hardenings unchangeable, even with time? Perhaps that's not so good.

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For Christmas and Chanukkah, I bought myself three presents. Why not? If I am not for myself, who will be? Or as Dr Lisbet said she was told by the Doctors in her medical rotation, "The heart sends blood to itself first." Somebody has to be willing to take care of me.

The clean white paper on which I am now writing, is my second present. I open it on Christmas day, the first night of Chaunkkah. (I'm a little embarrassed to say I already hung my first present, which I purchased last week, in my room. A sign of lack of self-control. I probably should have waited).

But I have definitely decided to not give myself permission to open my third gift to myself for the second night of Chanukkah, something to which I can look forward.

Nothing like surprise and mystery to keep life exciting and

the spirit motivated.

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I guess I can comfort myself by knowing that if I were home in Kansas City now, it would be cold outside, and the big oak tree would be totally bare, no acorns, no buds, no leaves. Just empty barren branches silhouetted against a darkened sky, and with roots dug into the cold, hard ground. Inside, there would be the empty living room where we were never allowed to go, because the furniture was too nice and we might spill something. In that empty living room was the only fireplace in the house. It was never used. Not one fire was ever lit.

Why does that comfort me? Schadenfreude? If I'm not happy, at least they're not happy either?

Christmas was also lots of multi-colored lights, both on the Plaza, and on the tall green tree in the foyer of our white Southern-style mansion. Cookies for Santa Claus placed on a living room table by a roaring, warm fire; my parents dancing arm in arm to Frank Sinatra records. Waking in the morning to literally dozens of brightly colored presents under the tree, and knowing that some new, exciting gift--a trampoline on the back lawn; a basketball goal installed in our side yard--was also awaiting me.

Real? Idealized? A happy memory? No, this happy memory actually makes me feel sad because even it once was, it's forever gone, never to return.

There's something perverse in distortions my mind goes through to comfort itself. And I don't think I'm alone in this process of mental machinations.

I remember Nana reading me a Bashevis Singer short story of how to get on with your neighbors--you should always try to have both of you feeling the same emotion. The narrator says if you go to the market and sell nothing and feel terrible, when you return home you should tell your neighbor you sold a fortune. Then you feel bad and your neighbor feels bad. But if you go to the market one day and sell a fortune, then you tell your neighbor you had a horrible day, and couldn't sell anything. Then you feel happy and your neighbor feels happy.

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How often we pretend to ourselves and others that we are in control of our lives?

Was the blade's slipping an accident? One thing my mom said she'd learned from her last ten years in psychoanalytic therapy is that we don't know ourselves very well, and therefore can't trust ourselves. Her therapist told her that there are few "accidents" for which we aren't at least partly responsible, consciously or unconsciously.

"My therapy is helping me understand myself and my life better so I become more aware of why I do what I do." she informed me.

"Is it also supposed to make you any happier, or at least less unhappy?" I asked rhetorically in what was then my empathically sarcastic style.

At the time I thought to myself that increased understanding didn't seem to be helping her very much, as she had tried to commit suicide several times. I wonder now if those efforts were conscious attempts to end her life; a cry for help; a plea for attention and to make others feel guilty; or all of the

above. In some ways the understanding is important. In other ways, it's not, because no matter the cause, this woman is not a happy person.

Yet how many of us are happy?

Is that her fault, our fault, or the fault of the nature of our universe?

A thunderclap interrupts the wail of a woman's song. Arab? Jewish? Israeli? Palestinian? Christian? Muslim? Does it matter?

I wonder where her song comes from.

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Camus said the only important philosophical question humans face is whether or not to commit suicide.

Why?

Because he believed the universe is random, indifferent, bleak. If there is no God, he wandered, if the world is just sound and fury, signifying nothing, a survival of the fittest crapshoot, is that really a place we can be happy and would want to inhabit.

It's a great intellectual question, but for me it's also a personal, deeply-felt question.

It's taken nine months for things in my life to fall apart. I'm giving myself nine months to answer that question.

I'm not unaware of how few people have the privilege and luxury I do to say I'm going to take nine months to answer a philosophical question.

But if I die by my own hand, I want it to be conscious.

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Either death or nine months to create a rebirth.

Sounds melodramatic, but it doesn't feel that way. It feels hopeful in a funny way. As if I'm at last trying to refind a thread back into myself rather than being the victim of the pummeling of my family, relations, the universe, and myself. Nine months. That takes me to the fall. Symbolic. Camus' Fall. Adam and Eve's fall. My fall. Or a new beginning next Rosh HaShannah, a choosing of life. Or a Day of Judgment, during the Days of Awe, when the book of life is opened, and decisions of life and death are made.

Now, I believe I would be more sincerely empathic toward mom. As would Camus, or really any thoughtful person, much less any compassionate person.

Was my knife's slip an unconscious gesture on my part? Truly not that I was or am aware of, even today.

But of course that makes it all the more frightening.

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Trust.

How can I make a decision if I don't know and can't trust myself? Can't trust myself to spell correctly. Can't trust my behavior not to be self-destructive. I don't even know if I can trust my feelings, even my memories change depending on how I'm feeling.

Where is there something I can trust?

I can't trust others. People are lobbying shells at me who don't even know me, Hitler and anti-Semites before and since wanted to kill me.

Grandpa was the first one to tell me you can't trust others, only family. I remember him telling me that one day while he was

driving and saw a dirty looking hitchhiker. "I feel sorry for him, but you can't pick him up. The world is a dangerous place."

Trust your family? The Bible says to honor your father and mother. But it doesn't say to trust them. How do you trust a physically violent father; a suicidal mother?

I can't trust Richard, or any of my friends.

I can't trust the person I thought was my beloved. I seek who my soul loves, but I do not find. Where has my beloved gone?

I remember the men on 6th street--homeless, abandoned--left by the government to soak and rot in their own urine. The government that lied to us and led us into such an unjust war.

Other than that, it seems like the world is pretty trustworthy.

There is a sadness that those whom I trusted chose to hurt me. What signs did I miss? I seem to make such bad choices. I don't like to be vulnerable; and I don't like to make mistakes. Maybe it's the same thing, and I'm feeling and doing a lot of both. Will I ever be able to trust again--me, others, the universe?

Well, Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore. Is there anything behind the curtain to trust? In the universe? In me? I'm here to see.

Where to begin?

How do we learn to "know ourselves," to see our blind spots, to reflect on who we are?

Somewhere near here is the Biblical pool of Siloam, a fresh-water reservoir, a major gathering place for ancient Jews making a religious pilgrimage to Jerusalem. According to the Gospel of John, Siloam is the site where Jesus cured a man blind from

birth.

I am thirsty. I need fresh water. I need to be cured of my blindness. I need to find something or someone to believe in, to trust.

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Socrates' exhortation and admonition aside, is it really possible to "know yourself", much less to know the universe's essence? If I can answer these two questions, will I then naturally know the answer to the connection between the two-- what role, if any, I am supposed to play on this planet?

I squeeze the lemon into the tea, and take a sip. There is still a bit of warmth left in the water, and I like the slightly bitter taste imparted by the lemon. I stab a piece of pita into the humus, swirl it counterclockwise to gather a sizable collection, then upload it with a quick upward flick of my wrist. It's nice to use my hand again. Silverware is vastly overrated.

What are the choices, really?

Let's look at the universe. My task is to decide whether or not the universe, at the deepest level--at its moral core and essence--is a compassionate, loving, trustworthy, sacred place, or an empty, barren, indifferent one?

But maybe, like memory of Kansas City Christmas, it's just a matter of different angles, or perspectives--how I see the world. Is that the battle? If you look at a rock on one side, there is sunlight, on the other side, shadow. Same rock, different perspective. Knowing the rock is knowing both light and dark. Is it only a question of the angle of viewing?

I take a sip of cold water. Water nurtures and sustains the thirsty. Rain hides the stars. Flood waters threaten and drown

us. Even I, an excellent swimmer, am no match for a flood, or a raging ocean. Yet as a life guard, I have saved many lives. Water has mystique, the unfathomable depths of the ocean. Thoughts overflow the banks of my mind.

Is there an essence to me, to reality beyond merely multiple perspectives, more than just a question of perception? Is there something I can trust, a core, an essence--to the rock, to me, to a way of seeing, to the universe?

At the least, my task now is to try to find a different angle on my life, a different perspective. What was once sun, is now shadow. And from this perspective of darkness, it's hard to believe that shadow isn't reality, not just hidden sun.

In the beginning was darkness and the void.

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I cry a lot. Not as much or as deeply as Job. But a lot. Daily. Often a deep and convulsive cry. I know it's not manly, but that has long ceased to be a concern. I remember my South African buddy, Richard, from tennis and the advertising division of the Stanford Daily, saying "Snap out of it, old chap, you're beginning to worry us. Otherwise we're going to start calling you Job." I felt his caring, but it had no effect except to have me read more in the Bible about Job.

The cause of the tears is sometimes clear, but often not. Occasionally the crying has a cathartic effect, removing tension and pain. The aftermath, when it works, is like the clearing of the dizzy nausea after you have vomited in the toilet. It doesn't always work. **When I was younger, I would always feel better when my mom or dad put their hands on my forehead and held**

me when I was sick. Their hands usually made me feel less sick, and they always make me feel safer.

Like when I was eight and there was a flood in Kansas City. The water supply had either been broken or turned off. I was feverish, leaning over the toilet. Dad was standing next to me, angrily hitting the wash basin, trying to force out a few drops of water. He put them on a cloth and then tenderly patted my forehead. I felt protected and loved. I knew I was going to be ok.

The rain was relentless last night and today while at Bethlehem. There are no visible stars. Where are the wise men and women when I need them to guide me?

What has gone wrong? Why am I where I am now?

Graham Greene once described a woman--like most of us, I guess-- as living on "the railroad track of existence." I suppose by this he meant a programmed life which, so long as it's going smoothly, we continue chugging down. My blue eyed grandmother was like that. Until she knew she was going to die. Then I saw such terror in her eyes. It might have been her first reflective moment.

Impending death derailed her.

What has derailed me?

I look up toward the new moon, which I know would not be visible tonight even if there weren't any clouds covering the dark sky. But even if there were a visible full moon, I personally will never be able to directly see that dark side. Is there a part of ourselves we never see, no matter how hard we try. I guess that's too abstract and advanced a question for me.

I can't even see the front side of the moon--or of myself.

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I feel like Humpty Dumpty after the fall, in fragments, lying on the ground. How do you how put your "self" back together, will the pieces ever reassemble, refit back onto the old tracks?

Another bite. Tomatoes, onion. hummus.

Nine months ago, all the pieces seemed to fit, like a well crafted crossword puzzle, or a neatly assembled pita sandwich.

Now they don't.

Where to begin? How do you begin to reflect on my yourself, to know yourself, to find a thread into yourself?

What I do know is that I've tried unreflectively just charging forward, swinging from one tree to another, like a desperate modern day Tarzan, who, as one tree is chopped down, searches for a rope to swing him to the next. But now I feel dead-ended, with an abyss before me. Like I've come to the end of the chess board, and there are no more moves forward, or the board itself has been toppled, the rules changed. No more ropes to swing to, no more safe trees.

I don't want to fall into the abyss. But maybe I already have. I feel checkmated, but no one has said I am. And I still have enough chutzpah to refuse to admit defeat without at least one more effort to find a way out, an escape.

What tools do I have for my last effort?

I have my journals--words of the past. Words. *Logos*. Logic. That seems as logical a place to start as any. So, today, I change tactics. Rather than unreflectively charging forward, I'm going to turn around, to go back to the past, to review my jour-

nals beginning with the one from nine months ago, when things were so different, when I was whole, solidly ensconced on the railroad track of existence. When I was an excellent--no, not true--a pretty good chess player.

I guess that is my second tool: trying to keep my mind honest in its reflections and choice of words.

I commit myself to no self-deception. When God says to Adam, "Where are you" Adam answers "I am hiding." I will not ever have to say that to anyone again. No more hiding. At least consciously. "*Hinani.*" I am here

Will it help to look back at the past to try to gain understanding, to see what happened, to learn what went wrong? Can I use words to put myself back together? Reading my words. Writing words. Can words give self-understanding, a base back into existence?

The truthful answer is I don't know. I really have no idea how to begin. Maybe I'm just retreating from the abyss, trying to hide behind the words. Maybe understanding my past won't help me understand my future, or the universe, or how I fit.

I do know I am scared.

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And alone.

Where do I belong? To what club, tribe, nation? Or is my task to seek a Crusoe self-sufficiency?

The props have been removed. I'm bare and naked. I've left behind my family and friends. I've lost my societal goals and ambitions. I've exiled myself from my country, and its adversarial legal system and capitalist consumer culture. My blue-eyed grandmother died. Mery left me.

What's left? These past nine months certainly seem more like a time of death than birth. A time of personal exile, like Joseph and later Jacob going into Egypt.

Everything is in chaos.

What is my goal?

Though I hate to admit it, there is a part of me that wants to get back onto the railroad track from which I've been dislodged, and be able to unreflectively continue the journey. That may be possible, but I'm not sure humpty dumpty can ever be put back together again.

If not, then my task is to try to find out who I was then, and who I am, and is there a connection. Did I ever have an independent self that wasn't programmed by my family and society? When I strip everything away will I find my core self, or will I find emptiness? Then? Now?

Can words, writing, help me understand and build a bridge to the past, find out what went wrong, where I lost my base into existence. Can words help me build a base into myself, find my core, create a core, understand the world around me and within me enough to build a bridge over the abyss I see before me?

Do I want to? That is really the third tool that has always been so much part of me: will, effort, determination, chutzpah.

Would I engage in this reflection voluntarily? No. Maybe I'm like grandma. But I don't really feel like I have any other choice. My guess is we all have to do it at some point and now seems to be mine. Partly I feel too young. But that may just be one more excuse to half-ass this. Didn't Alexander conquer most of the known world by thirteen. Be the best, Grandpa

said. I don't want to do it half-heartedly, like all I seem to do in life.

What is sabotaging me now is that part of me is afraid to leap the abyss, and part of me is doubting whether I can actually do it. I have images of falling into it due to my ineptness and clumsiness.

But worse, there's a part of me that is asking, even if I can leap the abyss, who would I be, or could I become on the other side. Is it even worth the effort? Am I a person worthy of living in this world, and is this world as it is a place where I would be willing to continue living?

Toward the end of Deuteronomy, God says "Choose life."

Will I be able to rebirth myself in these next nine months? I hear the Rebbe's chant echoing: "All the world is just a narrow bridge..."

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The rain has started up again. I sit under a slight overhang of the building, which partially covers me and my writing. My back is protected by two walls, and I can look forward unobstructed at the empty seats surrounding me, and the puddles forming on the ground. My left ear is against the wall, guarding my vulnerability, and my right ear is facing out.

So many jumbled, non-linear questions. I feel my thought whirling about, like an eddy in my mind. I'm cold, I'm jabbering now. I don't really know where to begin.

I want so desperately a linear, clear framework, a base into existence. Like when I was a child and used to amuse myself creating landscapes through "paint by numbers." Someone tells you what to do, you do it, and a three dimensional looking beau-

tiful landscape appears. I would then go outside and play capture the flag on a magical island in our street. And on both sides of the island was a sign that said "Caution, Children at Play."

Now there is no one protecting me. There are no longer children. There is no longer play.

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I have some papers with me, my diary. Disordered, crumpled, torn pieces of paper. I feel like York, after Richard left for Ireland: "If I know how or which way to order these affairs/ Thus thrust disorderly into my hands/ Never believe me... everything is at six and 'seven..'

You, oh diary, are where I begin. Re-read the diary; transcribe it; learn from it, comment on it. And be honest. Don't try to temper it; don't try to modulate it. Face yourself and your past without deception.

This is my last attempt, my last hope, it is my life. No games, No tricks. I'm not going to pretend that I'm editing someone else's papers that Tyche cast into my hands by fortuitously leaving open an unlocked drawer. These are my words. I wrote them. Or, more accurately, these were my words, written by some past self. Yet now, as I hold them in my hands, it seems so futile to try to pull out my past as if it were still alive; to try to cast light cast light on these paper, to somehow form a shadowgraph from them.

Words, I'm afraid of you. You are my last resort. Can I put my faith and hope in you, or are you just a crutch, or worse, something to hide behind, like the legalistic, intellectual, jargony words of the law and academics, or even playing crossword

puzzle games on the Kibbutz? I guess I don't have any other choice. Try and see. Either the pieces will fit or they won't. Simple, clear, honest.

December 25. Whose year? Hebrew or Christian Or Muslim? The world lives in historical time based on a calendar created by Jesus's birth. Normally we don't think about that. We take time for granted time, an order and structure that was arbitrarily determined by some powerful fiat. Sometimes I think it's better not to question too much, not to see all the relativity. Because what it can end up doing is pulling all structure out from under us.

The first night of Chanukkah. The darkest and longest night of the year. The least hours of sunlight, even if I could see the sun.

Here, alone, in the final fading light, my new journey begins.

I sometimes catch myself trying to remember the touch of my father's hands on my skin when I cry. Though I no longer trust them, and am no longer sure they would help.

Take a breath.

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ovial journal, jubilate judiciously!

I sit holding the letter in my hand, looking at the dappled images dancing and playing around on this single sheet of paper which is bringing me so much joy. Sunlight filters through the fresh spring buds of the overhanging maple. It's amazing what a difference one small piece of paper can make in a life. The winter is past, the rain is over and gone.

I did it! All the years of grueling, meticulous work have paid off. Yes! The fruits of my labor.

I take off the burgundy touring cap that Richard gave me. Fine wool stitching, he told me. I like to call it a touring cap, even though it's actually a beret. Although perhaps not the best way to receive a gift, I'd asked him if a beret isn't kind of "artsy fartsy."

"Not at all, old chap," he said in that South African filtered British- educated way. "I picked it up when visiting my parents' summer home in London. I'll have you know it's worn by the British Armed forces and NATO troops. It's a beret for a man's man. You'll look positively jaunty in it, whether on the links or while driving your Mr Red."

It was actually nice of him to give it to me, considering I always crush him in golf..."on the links" and in tennis.

When I cock it at just the right angle on my head, with my brown curly locks emerging beneath, I must admit he's right, I do

look rather "jaunty."

I place the hat on the letter to keep the wind from blowing it away. I also want to save my favorite table from trespassers, though I wouldn't mind if they happened to see the letter's contents. I leave enough exposed so it looks like I'm hiding something, but if they walk by they can read it, surreptitiously, they'll think.

Sometimes my cleverness astonishes me!

I walk toward the Tressider Union coffee house. The sun is directly overhead, so no shadows precede or follow me. I am whole within myself. With her Jungian approach, Dr Lisbet would have a field day with that one. No shadow, indeed! As I walk toward my clean shaven image in the large glass window pane, I can't help but pause and admire. I see myself reflected through the eyes of my Brooks Brothers' tailor. "43 long, sir. You have to have that because of how tall and broad shouldered you are. But we'll have to take it in because of your narrow waist. A real clothes horse....What a perfectly proportioned body" he exclaimed. Subtracting a half percent for groveling obsequiousness, the man was still certainly over 99 plus percent correct. All the weight lifting and swimming have definitely paid off.

A time for celebration, indeed!

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Self-serve. I push the hot chocolate button, letting the creamy liquid fill my cup two-thirds full, then take my hand off and watch the rest of the liquid fall into the drainage filter. What a waste. Their fault. They should give people more flexibility. Not everyone wants a full cup of chocolate. Too sweet. I then place one third coffee in the mug, and let the other two

thirds of the coffee from the machine likewise spill into the collection area. Perfect. Now, a large dollop of whip cream.

And to go with it, a cheese Danish.

Self-serve has it's limits. But sometimes you want help from others. Now, it's time for "other-serve." I need some assistance.

I see an older woman behind the counter, harried, busy arranging squiggly jiggling jellos.

"Would you mind heating this for me?" I ask pleasantly.

She doesn't look up from her arranging task.

"No, it's self-serve. Use that microwave. That's not my job. I'm working, can't you see."

I start to get angry. I never want to hear "No," but especially not now. I'm trying to celebrate. And a cheese Danish is best if heated in an oven so the butter melts and oozes and the cheese bubbles to just the right consistency..

I'm about to tell her how rude and insensitive she is, but remember Grandpa \$ saying you always catch more flies with honey than vinegar. I was impressed when I first heard that homily, and the main point still seems wise, but why on earth would you want to catch flies?

Would getting angry with this old rigid woman get me what I want? Definitely not. She'd probably think I was just another rich, entitled Stanford student.

Grandpa also told me that "No" should be heard as just a starting point for negotiation. "Almost every 'No' can be changed if you have the determination and patience."

So, let's make this "No" into a challenge. How do we get to

yes, and, just for added spice and difficulty, at the same time change her dour look to a happy smiling face?

Pity would be one strategy. Some sad event (family illness? lost a loved pet?) and I'm trying to comfort myself. Too morbid. Out of proportion to warming a cheese Danish. Also, even if it might get me what I want, it wouldn't put a happy face on her.

Charm. Ok, give her your most ingratiating smile.

All that thinking in less than five seconds. Talk about a quick mind.

"Please..." She doesn't look up and misses my megawatt voltage. I need a reason to go with my "please." "Please" is not going to be enough, especially when she won't stop fussing with her bowls of rainbow colored semi translucent lumps. I need to tell her I'm celebrating. This is a special occasion.

But she would not be moved by the real reason--my upwardly mobile success. In fact, that would probably even create additional class resentment, between her she as the lowly server she is, and me as the one demanding special treatment. I need to find a way to translate my celebration into terms she can understand. Grandpa said in law that's not really a lie. The celebration part is the truth. Putting it in simple terms that jurors can understand is really "art."

"Please...it's my birthday....." She looks up. Now we're cooking. She's starting to sniff the bait, but is not yet hooked.

"And..." Now for the *piece de resistance*. I look at her directly, while I slowly extend my lower lip out in a a little

boyish pout, letting it rub and slide sensuously along and past
the top lip

"...I'm all alone on my birthday."

Perfect. She's biting now. She no longer seeing me as entitled, but as vulnerable. I've got her. Slowly now, just easily pull the line in. I reach into my pocket and pull out a couple dollars "And, cocking my head slightly to the right at about twenty degrees, "I'd be so appreciative." I extend the money toward her.

"No, I can't," she says, but now her "No" is about not taking the money, and though her mouth is saying no, both her hands are reaching out in yes. Into one hand I place the money, and into the other the plate with the cheese Danish on it.

"A minute and twenty seconds at 325 degrees would be perfect" I say with a little wink.

"Oh you young men, you."

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Returning to my table, I look around to see who might have read my letter. Then, sitting, I look up at the maple. Now, budding green, just last fall it provided me exquisite bright red foliage that shaded me as I wrote my application. Sometimes it amazes me how the world is created as if for my benefit. Just like the lovely plant the Lord provided Jonah at Nineveh, to shade his head and save him from discomfort. Ah, a few remnants of Sunday School still remain!

I sip my self-created coffee mocha and feel the whipped cream sensuously foam on my lips, as the warm, sweetish liquid enters my mouth. I sense the taste down my palette, then lick

some of the whipped cream off my lips with my tongue.

A cute, though serious and focused mini skirted blond--carrying a heavy load of books against her chest-- walks by as my tongue seeks the excess white whip. She looks over and smiles, which I mirror, and with open hands graciously offer her a seat to my right. She nods to her books and toward the Meyer stacks--going to the library to study, I suppose. What a waste in such a beautiful Saturday.

I shrug my shoulders, and give my little boy pout. She smiles again, this time a little flirtatiously. Her seriousness has vanished. The flowers are starting to appear in the land. I wonder if she'd be willing to be photographed some time. Her lips are striking, like a scarlet thread.

I lift my right hand and make a gesture as if asking a waiter for a check, writing with an imaginary pen in mid air. She walks over to my table. I extend a real pen, which, after putting her books down--calculus, economics--she takes. On a clean white piece of paper, she writes her name--Elaine--and phone number. We shake hands. I feel her hand's softness, and hold them just a moment longer than the customary ritual, but not so long as to make her uncomfortable.

Now that her books are no longer covering her chest, I can see that she has very small breasts. Maybe 32b, if that. Not my preference. But her legs and face could compensate.

No words have been exchanged, but she is definitely in a less solemn mood. I love when I can have that effect on people, especially women, turning them from serious and uptight to pleas-

ant and cheerful. In a lighter mood, they're always much more malleable. They're happier. I'm happier. Everybody wins.

Another seed planted. Like Johnny Appleseed. You never know which ones will sprout. Ah, you charmer, you.

A bite of the cheese Danish, bubbling and dripping with butter.

Yum. Juicy.

Life doesn't get any better.

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When I first received the letter, I was a bit apprehensive. I didn't open it right away, but instead jumped into Mr Red, motored down Palm Drive, noting all the tall, soaring palms, and headed to my special spot under the maple tree. I'm not really superstitious, and I know intellectually that the contents of the letter are not going to change depending upon *where* I open it. Still, it is my lucky tree.

Though I'm embarrassed to admit it, I actually started to utter a little prayer under the tree before I opened the letter. Look, my history prof said that the godless Communist Joseph Stalin once embraced religion during the Nazi invasion of Communist Russia. I understand. Like any intelligent person, I know I was just engaging in mere superstitious behavior, praying to a myth created for the weak and enfeebled.

As a country, we're just the same. We get religious and turn to God during times of fear and stress. During the Civil War, as a sign of our deep and abiding faith, we put "In God we Trust" on our money. During the height of the Cold War and McCarthyism, to show we weren't pinko communists, we added "under God" in the

Pledge of Allegiance.

My irrational mumbo jumbo prayer? A similar moment of weakness. That's why there are no atheists in foxholes. I guess it's a why take chances attitude...just covering all the bases. Just in case. But totally unnecessary. Not for the strong. I just don't understand how anyone can be a God's literal word halleluja Bible-believing fundamentalist.

What we need is a church-state cleavage.

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Though science was never my strong suit, intellectually I'm with Newton, celebrating the rational. Scientific knowledge allows us to continuously eliminate the supernatural, and liberates us from superstitious behavior. We don't have to worry about offending this or that deity who must be placated by infantilizing incantations and personal sacrifices. We are no longer at the mercy of devils or fates. The intellectual darkness that once surrounded us is illuminated.

I, also, believe in science's power to enlighten us about the laws of nature. There is no realm in which science should not probe in order to help improve our species. This self-improvement is not for the lazy or faint of heart. It's for the strong. The winners. It takes discipline and courage, like Prometheus, stealing fire from the gods. That is the only way I know. We can't wait for the gods. No one will take care of us but ourselves. It is our responsibility to help evolution along.

Epperson v Arkansas, 1968. Louisiana' anti-evolution statue forbade teaching evolutionary theory in public schools and uni-

versities. It was a Jewish Supreme Court justice, Abraham Fortas, who delivered the majority opinion that the statute violated the First Amendment. What we need are more strict constructionists.

Maybe one day that will be me on the Supreme Court.

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The light is continuing to fade, and it is almost completely dark so that it is hard to continue reading. But even if it were full sunlight, how much of this can I take without feeling completely nauseous. This was me? Is the lesson "Be careful what you wish for?" The waiter brings over a small candle and puts it on my table. I continue

I mean, of course I was confident I was going to get in. 99% plus percentile on the LSATs. Phi Beta Kappa from Stanford, Political Science major. I took those useless "Literature, Religion, and Existential Thought" classes to show I was as "broadly" educated (boy, if they only knew how salaciously "broadly"). I even did filing and xeroxing a couple of hours a week at some poor people's community service agency in East Palo Alto so it looked like I was a humanitarian. What a waste of time. But it all worked out well in the end.

I believe the myth of great potential my family has about me, and encourage, support and cultivate that myth--in them, in me, and in others. Cream definitely rises to top. I know there is something heroic in store for me.

Herbert Spencer called it natural selection. But Wallace felt the word natural seemed to imply a supernatural creator evolving divine "natural" order. Hardly. That's why Wallace coined the more accurate term "survival of the fittest" because it eliminated the idea of an entity doing the selecting.

I did it. All by myself. Self-serve!

Survival of the fittest. A sportsmanlike race. On merit.

The world is fair and just. Effort is rewarded.

I won. Justice is served.

One sheet of paper proves it.

Another slow, pleasurable bite of my cheese Danish.

I rest my case.

Harvard Law School, here I come.

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ustice indeed. Harvard. You may be the apex of evolution. Just think, simple, primordial creatures evolved into increasingly complex life forms, like yourself.

All by yourself. There's certainly no doubt about that. It probably didn't help that much that you went to Stanford. Nor did it really help that much for you to get into Stanford that your grandfather was a donor to and could afford to send you to an elite, private "Country Day College Preparatory School for Young Men" where your father also happened to go. Or that you lived in a southern style white colonial mansion where there were upstairs and downstairs maids, a separate person for cooking all your meals, and another person just for laundry. All by yourself.

Reb Jonathan once told a story of a philanthropic man who was being honored for his great community service. He rented a tux, and was ready to go when he realized he couldn't find his cuff links. He searched in the bathroom, his coat pocket, under the bed. Nothing. Finally, in despair, he raised his hands into the air, closed his eyes and pleaded "God, please help me. I need these cuff links in order to go tonight." When he opened his eyes, and lowered his hands, he noticed that there was one cuff link in each hand. He looked in amazement at his cuff links, then gazed back up to heaven and said "Never mind, God, I found them myself."

Yes, it was definitely a level playing field. You won the race fair and square. Really the only question you will have is

what goals could possibly be left commensurate with your titanic self-regard.

Johannes' Kansas City sarcasm seems to have traveled relatively seamlessly all the way to Jerusalem. Is there some jealousy, or even anger, at Johannes, who is the center of his own, and his family's galaxy? Just like our human distress when Copernicus and Galileo showed the earth was not in a central position in the Universe, does living alone in Jerusalem now feel dishearteningly removed from the central place in the family?

As the final filtered light by which I'm reading and writing completely fades, I stop. Whatever shadows once existed have now disappeared into darkness. That's definitely enough reading for tonight. It's time to head back to my little room at the YMCA.

As I get up and gather my papers, I take one final bite of my self-created pita sandwich, and, as I do so, I look into the window pane of the coffee house. Why do I look? To see me reflected back--an old reflexive vain habit. It's dark, and I can't see myself. But even if it were lighter, there wouldn't be much to see. My glasses fogged from the cold. And I would barely recognize myself. Scraggly beard covering a gaunt face which is almost completely hidden. Long hair. It's almost like a reverse Sampson. The longer my hair gets, the more out of control and more vulnerable my life seems to be.

My clothes are like a white shroud, yoga stringed pants once white t-shirt, gray sweat shirt, well-worn sandals. The self-appointed broad-shouldered Adonis has morphed in these past nine months into a much thinner version. When I went for the final recheck of my fingers, the nurse noted that me weight was 158. I couldn't help but think that from my football weight of

215, that's a loss of over 50 pounds. Still, that's fine with me. It's just flesh. Though I do wonder where almost one-quarter of me went. I'm like a shadow of my former self.

I still wear the same style of beret, though this one is dark navy. When I lost the burgundy one in Carmel, Richard bought me this new one. I no longer wear it to be "jaunty" but as a type of Kippah, a spiritual head covering. Others might not understand why I'm wearing it, and that's fine with me, too. I'm not wearing it for them. I wear it just for me. I like the "hidden" nature of its double meaning. To a casual observer, it would look like a secular winter hat. (Though they might think it rude that I keep it on even when I go indoors). But I know what it means to me. Different angles and perspectives, again.

Just as the hat's meaning is hidden from others, I wonder what I am still hiding from myself.

I don't like wearing the more usual little round kippah that falls off when you bend over unless you bobby pin it to your hair. And it doesn't make sense to wear the "black hat"--too old world Eastern Europe caught in the past, too stereotyped, and too ostentatiously drawing attention to myself. Also, the letter of the religious law, I now realize, is not my path.

Thinking about the kippah, I am intrigued how, in some ways so much has changed during nine months, and in other ways, so little. "I" in Jerusalem wear a hat for spiritual reasons, while my doppelganger in California wears one for body focused appearance reasons. This change in motivation--from flesh to spirit--is nothing short of revolutionary.

Yet, despite the desire for complete differentiation, there

are still similarities, which are minimized, and almost denied. Both the "I" in Jerusalem and the "I" in California are still very self-focused; both are concerned about the form and shape of the hat, and want to make sure that personal and comfort needs are perfectly met. Both like things "just so" and are very attentive to inner needs and desires. Both "Is" spend a lot of time wondering about the perceptions of "others." There is also a certain oneupmanship comparison and narcissistic pride going on--physically in California, spiritually in Jerusalem. Though I am decreasing that egoic issue, the change is slow and evolutionary at best. The issue still exists and it's a blind spot to pretend it doesn't.

Despite all that's happened, and despite the absolute commitment to self-awareness and removing illusions, it's sobering how much "I" in Jerusalem don't see. I wonder what illusions and blind spots I still harbor--does that even include the illusion that I can rid myself of illusions?

But I do know one thing for certain when I feel my hat on my head, or see it reflected in a mirror or someone else's eyes. I know that I am trying, in my own way, to make a sign to myself that I am committed to this spiritual searching. I also want to believe that the hat represents, in some way, God's hand on my head.

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Because of the rain, there are several puddles in the street, which I have to walk around, or try to leap over.

As I'm walking toward my room, I see some candle lights in the homes, stores, and windows, reflecting the first night of Chanukkah. What a brilliant idea someone in our human ancestral

line had--to create a "festival of lights" around the winter solstice, a time of such profound darkness. Both Jews and Christians have different stories they tell about the reason for holidays of light at a dark time of the year. But I wonder if there isn't some underlying human commonality--our need for light and hope at the darkest times that informs both stories at a deeper root level.

Perhaps one way to view this darkness from a more positive, uplifting perspective is to realize that this is as bad as it will get. Sort of like when mom would say to me, "it's always darkest before the dawn." Yes, a platitude. But when she would hug me and tuck me in and sing to me, I believed her, and the fear would go away. Her singing and hugs got me safely through many nights as a child.

The truth is, seasonally, if not psychologically, tonight is the darkest point. From this day forward, each day will be a little longer, each night a little shorter. The increasing light brings the opportunity for potential growth in the upcoming spring planting and harvest, with its hope for continuing the cycle of life. Perhaps I can see this as a moment of transition in my own life, as well as the seasons--a turning point, a new birth, a chance to feel more nourished by hope of the upcoming increased warmth and sunlight.

When I enter my room, it's totally dark. Rather than turn on a light, I place a candle in my small Menorah, strike a match and kindle the shammash--the head, helper candle, which in turn is used to ignite all the other candles. With the shammash, I light the candle for the first night of Chanukkah.

I don't like dark. It reminds me of weakness, despair. I like strength, the optimistic belief I once had that any dilemma can be worked out. I guess I do have some envy of Johannes' too ready smile and confident trust in the future.

The Rebbe said we should come up with one positive statement for each new candle we light.

I watch the flame of the shammash which goes skyward, seemingly defying the laws of gravity. Even when I bend the shammash at a 45 degree angle to light the first candle, the flame still aims upward. I turn the shamash nearly upside down. The flame still rises up, as if there's an unextinguishable yearning to reach toward heaven, no matter what the obstacles.

I like that when the shammash shares its light, it is able to create a flame in another candle, without in any way diminishing its own radiance.

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I look at the light blue walls illuminated by the candle. There are two wall hangings, one a black and white photograph by the Frenchman Bresson, a picture I purchased last week as a pre-Christmas gift to myself. Maybe it was impulsive of me to open it early, and I should re-wrap it for the third night of Chanukkah. The other, an ink drawing by Devu given us by the Rebbe last week about which we're supposed to write a paper this semester.

On the desk, the candle reflects off the cross word puzzle I'd been working on before I cut my fingers, and provides light for the words now being written in my journal.

The darkest night of the year. Where is the light? One thin sheet of paper between me and the abyss

Take a breath.

My father, when he was coaching my Little League team, and I was playing shortstop, just before the pitcher threw the ball, would remind me "Take a breath." He'd learned that in his mandatory probationary anger management classes. Even though it didn't seem to help him much. it is still good advice,

Maybe that's not completely fair. What is fair is that I only saw the times when it didn't seem to help him very much. It's possible there were many times when he used breathing to calm his rages, and all would seem normal. Those times may have been hidden from me.

Another breath. I feel full of doubt. What good can it possibly do to go back through these past journals? It seems what I'm actually doing is looking at the worst, ugliest parts of myself. Does it really make sense to try to find light and wisdom by looking at darkness, vanity, haughty judgmentalness, and self-centeredness?

I feel stuck. Mentally, emotionally, spiritually. I guess one good thing in that list is that "the flesh" isn't there. I'm no longer trapped by my body-focused narcissism. A positive frame would be, one down, three to go.

But how do you learn to reflect on yourself in order to get "unstuck." What are the tools? It seems all I have is mind: thoughts, images, emotions, awareness. Period. Self-serve.

So, using my mind, I need to concoct a better rationale for why I'm searching my past. My first rationale was that I'm dead ended, and haven't been successful in just charging forward. But

that's not a great rationale for looking back just because the way forward seems blocked.

Somehow to keep up my motivation for this task--and that's really all I have to keep me going at this point--I need a better explanation. Why am I doing this? Does it make any sense at all?

I look over at the table which contains my papers, journals, a used tea bag, a cup, a couple of pens, and the Menorah.

My eye is drawn to the first night's candle.

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A dark blue candle. As I stare at it, I feel the dizzying pace of my mind start to slow, and, like a moth, my eye is drawn toward the light. There is a soft stillness in the air, total darkness outside. The rain continues to fall. It feels like a telephoto lens in my mind begins to narrow in. I gaze up the length of the candle to the flame. As I do so, the rest of the room seems to disappear. The Menorah disappears. The candle disappears. I disappear.

All that can be seen is one huge candle flame. Multi-colored. Turning, twisting, struggling upward. For several minutes--which seem timeless-- nothing exists in the darkened space but the candle's light, which fills my entire visual field. It's like being in a completely dark movie theater, and on the huge screen there is projected only the wick and flame of a

candle. The light sways, writhes, quivers, in a dance either from an unseen force blowing it, or by a life of its own. The tip of the reddish-orange flame is thrusting, wrestling, as it reaches and extends skyward. The yellow shades dart in and around,

dancing to an unheard beat, intertwining with a dark blue that emerges and disappears.

Then, just as inexplicably, the lens in my mind begins to pull back. The candle appears. Darkness is visible beyond the flame. The lens draws back further. The Menorah and desk reappear. Now the lens is further back still, behind me. On the visual screen is an image of a person hunched over a Menorah, in a darkened room seeking to warm his cupped hands by a small quivering, barely flickering flame.

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It feels like I am an art gallery, and looking at a picture. At the same time, I have entered a candle-lit world, and am part of the painting. Reality bleeding into art. Art as reality? *Fictio cedit veritas*--fiction leads to truth?

The Talmud compares a person in the last stages of life to a flickering candle. I wonder at what stage my flame is. An ending, or is the candle bringing light and hope, a new beginning?

My mind seems calmer. Clearer. I return to the task.

A rationale. Connecting the past to the present to the future. Is it that I'm seeking a dream of a future better than the history of my past? A return to the past? Where is the "eureka," Euripides --or is it Archimedes? Am I mixing autobiographical metaphors? Stop. Focus. You're getting distracted, mind. I'm seeking a fulcrum, some anchor or wedge into my life. Some place to stand that feels like solid earth.

Now there is no structure, and I have to build one, to create the outlines of the puzzle, the numbers of the painting to

be filled in.

What can I use for a structure, a metaphor that makes sense?

Connecting past and present. I think about what I've studied. Pre-law in school. What about my constitutional law class?

Maybe I can be like a judge, trying to interpret my past in light of the present. The old battle of Hamilton and Madison which is still being fought today over how to understand the Constitution. As my constitutional law prof said, both sides agree that we bring with us from the present our language, experience, and prejudices as we examine the past. I need to realize that I am seeing Johannes' past filtered through the glasses I'm wearing now. Any real practice of interpretation--legal or otherwise--has to acknowledge both that we live in the present and that our present is always also a continuation of our history.

But back to the debate. One side says that though we interpret the words of the past in the present, we need to strive to do so with an understanding of what the words of the past meant then-- their social, legal, and historical context. This side views the Constitution as a sacred document, like the Bible, that is true once and for all, and the task is to devoutly interpret it as it was given and written--the strict, orthodox constructionists.

The other side maintains that we have the responsibility to see these documents as foundational roots, inspired--divinely or by human genius. But times change and though the roots are important to maintain, so is allowing new leaves and limbs and understandings to flourish, from which a more evolving, growing "tree

of life" can emerge. This school suggests the documents need to be understood and interpreted in light of present times and realities--the more liberal, progressive evolving judges.

What does this discussion mean for how I now approach Johannes' writings of the past? First, it makes me sensitive to trying to at least understand the past as Johannes approached it when it was his present. Thinking about the law at least gives me a clear choice between two different methodologies for viewing the past, and its relationship to the present. **Both sides believe--whether in legal discussions, or religious ones--that their method and belief (strict or progressive) is the "true one."** Leaving aside the actual "truth" of each view, I wonder, as the Rebbe and Dr Lisbet once asked, what is it in a person's character and experience which causes them to choose to come down on one side or the other of these debates, and then to claim their method and belief as the unvarnished, sole "truth."

Does the belief and method they choose say at least as much about their personal psychological needs and dynamics, if not more, than it does about their professed "truth"? Johannes is a legalistic strict constructionist, and a Biblical non-believer. Why? His life experience is limited and successful. He likes the status quo legally; the system works for him. Within his narrow worldview, religion is unnecessary. He has no need or desire to believe in a strict, orthodox view of the Bible and it's laws.

"I" in Jerusalem have seen all too clearly the limitations of the legal system, and the potential prison-like confines of the law's rigidity, and therefore would argue for a more liberal construction. Spiritually, "I" in Jerusalem am more experienced--more sensitive to signs of God's presence. I am also more

vulnerable, and need Divine order and structure, and almost desperately want to believe the Bible's literal truth as a way to provide that structure. Two views arising from two different life experiences. I make a note to create a folder to explore this idea more deeply.

The second question is how much do I see Johannes' writing as inspired --like the Constitution or the Bible. What I realize is that these two methods are based on quite different assumptions about the unique validity of their historical material. Johannes certainly isn't God or even a Founding Father. Johannes is drowning, a lost soul, and doesn't know it. Do I really want to use his journals as the basis for deep textual analysis?

One of the first lessons I learned as a life guard is to know your limits. If a person is drowning in an area outside of your skills and competence, you need to get help. Otherwise you just have two people drowning.

I look at the dark water in the Devu drawing, the dark blurry image in the puddle of the Bresson picture.

I need another metaphor.

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Why not a metaphor of what is all around me here in Israel: archeological digs?

This has possibilities--it connects past and present, but it looks at the past for historical clues, not for sacred legal or religious wisdom. How about this sound? I hope to excavate a *tel*, a mound of myself-- to find out how and where things fell apart, where my "self" fragmented, like shards of pottery.

I can be like an archeologist, or evolutionary anthropolo-

gist seeking to understand some remote, exotic, and primitive species.

Was it Santana, or Nietzsche who said "He who does not know the past is condemned to repeat it." Better.

I feel like I'm back in school trying to come up with a thesis sentence. My assignment: Connect past, present, and future. How about:

"In using the present to dig into the darkness of the buried past, I'm hoping to unearth and better understand my historical ancestor. By adding depth and clarity from the present, I hope to lay, create, uncover, and/or ensure a firm cornerstone foundation upon which to build upward into the light of the future."

Not bad. In fact, very good. Though it's a two part thesis sentence. I'd give myself an A-.

Or maybe a B+. Even though it is beautifully articulated, it sounds abstract, dry, and academic. These are life and death issues. Maybe when we're really scared, we fall back into old habits--for me, taking refuge in being academic, intellectual, detached. Trying to sound more assured and confident than I actually feel. It's ok to recognize the fear, the terror. That's not a sign of weakness.

I don't feel any better even with a good grade.

Why?

Go deeper.

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I look once again at the Devu's picture. A hand emerging from the dark water. Drowning? Seeking to be rescued?

Maybe that is the deeper-- that I don't feel any better--the emotions. I'm not sure I really do have a future that I believe

is worth living. Part of the future depends on who I might see myself becoming. Can I create or discover a vision of me worth believing in? Part of the future depends on how I see the world and the universe. Is this really a world worth living in? Is all this--me, the world, everything-- going to end in a train wreck? Will I be able to create new tracks to lead me into the future? I don't believe there are any guarantees as to the outcome of this task. Maybe that's part of the reluctance to continue. What if it doesn't work? What if the past doesn't create a future. In some ways, there is a certain safety in suspending myself under the hope and spring buds of a lovely maple tree.

Although there is not much I can control in my life now, you Johannes are at least something I can control. You are in my power. I can do whatever I want with you. And if I want to suspend you under a maple tree until I'm ready to let you move, I can do it.

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I'm angry, I'm powerless, and I'm taking it out on him. It has to be all right to let all my emotions be present, not trying to be some spiritual caricature I'm not even close to emulating.

I need to reflect honestly about myself, not caring about how others see me, but trying to see how I see me, who I am. It's amazing how many illusion and tricks my mind plays. I want to learn to face life without any illusions, to hide nothing from myself in this task. I make a commitment to delve as deeply into myself, my demons, my dreams, as I am capable.

Can I trust Johannes' reflections?

Why did Johannes write? Because his mom told him to when she bought him a journal while he was in fifth grade? Because it became a daily ritualized habit? To describe, capture, and enshrine his accomplishments, like his picture taking of women? For self aggrandizement, pleasure of words, to describe his narcissistic tale?

Why am I writing and reflecting? This writing is for me. There is no one to impress, and the only watchword is truthfulness. I look to the past to wade through the mire that lies beneath and bring to light. It feels like my past is an anchor that is dragging me around, heavy, possessive. And maybe it's also written so that my future self, if there is one, can judge: I'm trying to be as open truthful as I can. Did i succeed? If I'm still around in nine months, I guess I will be able to answer several questions, really: did I succeed, did it help, was it worth it?

I realize that by writing right now, and by reviewing my past, in some ways I may be hiding behind words. Ruin in a flood of words. Doesn't the Word live in living? From that perspective I'm retreating from the future, maybe even from the present. My creative writing teacher, when he gave me an incomplete in class, wrote to me "You can you use words to make experience come alive, for understanding, or you can use words as a buffer to protect you from experience and hide you from reality. You, of all people, need to choose wisely."

I feel I need the words to help me. I hope this isn't another self-deception. I don't want to hide behind them. This is only temporary. I need time to regroup myself. To find out what my

"self" is.

My creative writing teacher also said most memorists shade the truth, wanting to be stars of their own life stories. There are rooms they don't want to let anybody else into. But in addition to deceiving others, the most devastating is when we realize we've deceived ourselves. There are some rooms we don't allow ourselves to enter. But I'm not writing a memoir, I'm writing a diary. And it's only point is to be totally open about who I am. Is Johannes really being as honest as he is capable?

Could truth become my fundamental pleasure? It seems Johannes constantly succumbs to temptation, wants too much. Though he has a lot of "outsight"--seeing into others, their weaknesses and vulnerabilities-- he has no core insight into himself and what drives him.

Is there "a" truth? Or is it just competing narratives, all equally true, fighting for the light?

* * *

Writing can hide, but writing can also create a structure for freedom and liberation. It was the writing by wise statesmen that created the words of our Constitution. The Constitution represented an ending-- break from the tyranny and bondage of England. And it represented a foundational new beginning for our country. Am I trying to write and create a personal constitution as a foundation for my life? When we studied the Constitution, our teacher pointed out how it often lapses into the passive, whether deliberately or carelessly. I know how often of late I've felt that life is just happening to me, like a passive victim. I don't want that passivity to be unconsciously or carelessly reflected in my constitution.

When I was a little boy, 3 or 4, my moneyed grandfather and blue eyed grandmother would take me for a ride in their Cadillac every Sunday that they weren't traveling abroad. As a special treat, I was allowed to sit in the booster seat between them. As I grew older and higher, I could look in the rear view mirror, and the image of what I could see shifted. At first, I could only see the dark green vinyl interior of the top of the car. As I grew bigger, though I could not see my face, I could just see the tops of my blonde curly hair. Sometimes I would see my grandmother's reflected hand run through the curls. I connected that hand in the mirror with the experience of a loving touch.

When I would look into the rear view mirror and through my reflected, wispy tendrils, I could see behind us--where we had gone. And, at the same time, all around the rear view mirror, I could see where we were going.

Now, I have a sense of loss as I glance in the rearview mirror at Johannes, and it feels foggy, if not dark, as I stare ahead through the windshield.

I don't want that for my current feeling as I begin this project. I want the feeling of being that small child. The feeling that while looking back and going forward at the same time, I am protected on each side by people who adore me.

Before I came off the tracks, I was adored.

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J

.C.....Grandpa \$.

Definitely the first person I'm going to call with this good news.

What a moniker. "\$." The first time I remember using it was when my brother and I went to dinner with him and grandma by ourselves. Mom and dad stayed home. There were two rituals near the end of every "grandparent" meal that I loved. The first was a double-cruste'd strawberry pie that grandpa had the chef especially bake for us. Served hot with two scoops of vanilla ice cream.

The second ritual was led by our blue-eyed grandma, who would say nothing the whole meal, but would just sit regally, smiling occasionally. Then, at the end of the meal, she would nod, or maybe say, "JC".

J.C.

Great initials for a Jew whose grandfather was a Rabbi. He was actually named for the Roman emperor. Another irony.

So, Grandma nods to JC, and my brother and I knew that was the "signal" for him to reach into this pocket and give us a few bucks. While he was doing that, we'd surreptitiously signal to each other by making an S (like superman) with a line through the S: \$. Grandpa \$.

Actually, I don't think he would have minded. Years later, when he would write me letters (dictated but not re-read) when I was away at camp, and even still while I'm at college he would

invariably tell one of his infamous jokes, such as: "Did you hear the one about the farmer who sowed his wild oats Saturday night, and then at church on Sunday prayed for crop failure !?"

Then he would write Smile. And place a line through the S: "\$mile!"

He was proud of being a self-made multi-millionaire, and never tired of telling how he and grandma had to borrow \$150 to elope, and now, so his self-created legend goes, owned half of Kansas City.

His success is my success.

The candy apple red Corvette he "leased" for me--as long as my grades are good--is one example. That baby--Mr Red--is definitely going to continue to be mine. And, in preparation for this call, I am going to need to think of other rewards, too. This is by far my biggest achievement yet. There is definitely going to be a large \$ reward in it. My father says its Grandpa's way of showing love, and, frankly, one I very much appreciate!

And through "reflected glory" my success is his success.

I enjoy the central role he has created for me. I believe he truly is excited and takes a genuine pride in me and my accomplishments. As I start to make the call, I know I will have to listen to his self-aggrandizing litany, which I've heard numerous times before. I've memorized the monologue and can say it even before I dial the number. I imagine his words:

"Outstanding, GRANDson." Or sometimes, he calls me "son." Although it feels a little awkward, I actually like it when he calls me that. "Finally someone in the family worthy to follow in my footsteps. Your achievements bring 'reflected glory' to me

and I'm so proud of you. Did I ever tell you that I was not only Phi Beta Kappa, but also Order of the Coif, the Phi Beta Kappa of law school? Your grandmother will be so pleased. Who would have thought when we had to borrow \$150 to elope that one day my GRANDson would follow in my legal footsteps. And that I would be able to put him through College Preparatory School and then college. At Stanford yet. Built up a real estate empire from nothing. Did you know I was a friend of Truman--yup, went out to Independence, Missouri to personally encourage and then later help him become our Vice-President."

I decide to postpone the call. I need to think more specifically of what I want to ask for; and I want to get some exercise to get rid of some of my excess energy and burn some calories after the Danish.

* * *

Saturday. Swimming and weights. Everything in its place, and a place for everything. Wednesday and Saturday, the pool and weight room. Tuesday and Friday, tennis; Sunday, golf; Thursday horseback riding; Monday only my flute lesson, allowing a day of physical rest to recover from the revelry of the weekend.

At first I'm sorry its not Sunday, Tuesday or Friday so I could share my good news with my tennis and golf buddies and watch closely the plethora of emotions it will set off in them. Feigned happiness for me, jealousy, concealed feelings of inadequacy. Pretty black and white, either/or thinking, Johannes. You should have known that Gregory would be the most genuinely happy for you, Richard the least. Richard will have those feelings too, but he hides them better than the others. He always finds

some way to reright, usually by throwing a counter punch to try

to puncture my balloon. About Richard, though, you're right on target. **I wonder to what extent Richard's behavior and comments were fueled by and a mirror of my own unrecognized competitive and judgmental thoughts and actions**

I hear him saying "Fine school, that. And I see you're happy, so that's good, too. As long as you have to work to earn a good living, and as long as it sounds fun to you to put in three grueling years so you can then work 14-16 hours a day, six days a week for a living, I guess the law is as good an option as any. Guess you won't have time to work on your chess game, huh? Congratulations, chappy."

The old schadenfreude in reverse. My grandfather always said, you have no real friends in this world, besides family. Only family truly enjoys your success, because--ok, inner choir, altogether now-- "it brings reflected glory." So, maybe it's fine that today is a swimming day. The guys are fun to compete with but not really to celebrate with. I'll let them know in good time.

Chess. Yes, before I stopped playing him, he almost always beat me in chess. When he'd win, he'd pound his chest like Tarzan, and say "Ah, Richard the lion-hearted triumphs again."

But the only reason he beat me is because I don't want to waste my intellectual muscle on a prosaic little game with no purpose. I see life as a big chess board. I don't want to be confined to some batch of tiny squares. Also, I only have limited mental energy and I want to use my mind where it counts--in

school, and with women. He may not have to study, or care about getting good grades, but I do, and I want to focus my intellectual effort where it has the biggest payoff. If I wanted to spend as much time as he does studying the "masters" I'm sure I could crush him at chess, too. It's just a matter of where I choose to place my effort.

He tells me it's just sour grapes that I no longer play him at chess, but he's wrong. Of course I like to win at whatever I do, who doesn't. But it's not that I don't do it because I don't win, it's I don't do it because it's not worth my effort to get good enough to win.

Unlike him, I don't really have schadenfreude. I don't care whether others do well, or not. It gives me no joy if he has bad fortune...or good. Truthfully, I really don't think too much about, or care too much about others when I'm not with them. I wish me well. I think that's a good quality. I don't wish others poorly. I don't pay attention to their success, as long as I'm happy, and the best and get what I want. I guess maybe if they get in my way in a class, I may need to voodoo them--put a hex on them and overtake them. But that almost never happens.

I need distraction from the mental and chess is too much of the same. What I've learned I need is something physical. Tennis. Women. I've even thought a good distraction would be to some day use my hands creatively, maybe even whittle a chess set. I really enjoyed arts and crafts at summer camp, and I like the creativity of working with my hands. When I'm not studying, I don't want more mental games, I want some kind of creative, physical, earthy distraction.

I don't remember writing this, but it's interesting how some things stay consistent, and, in this case, foreshadows my upcoming surprise gift for the second night of Chaunkkah.

And speaking of distractions, I do want to make sure I have a fun date tonight. I'll let that be the topic to keep me occupied during the eight and a half minutes while I swim my 600 yards. I know I could swim faster with no more effort if I were to breathe every third stroke--alternating one breath left side, one breath right. But when I get water in my right ear, and can't hear, it feels too vulnerable to me. Like once, when I was learning to wrestle. I was on top of a person, leaning over to pin his shoulders. The next thing I knew he thrust his legs over my head from behind, locked them under my neck, and leveraged me back onto the mat. Then, holding me down, he pinned me, my right ear to the mat. I squirmed, I thrashed. I couldn't hear at all. And I couldn't escape. That was one of the most helpless, panicky feelings I have ever experienced. When I told my parents what happened, they insisted I stop, because it wasn't safe for my ear. I was glad to obey them.

It's ironic. I have only one ear that hears. But one of my strengths is that I listen to others very well, and hear their point of view clearly. This gives me an advantage, for I can find out what moves them, what is important to them, and make them feel safe and trusting around me.

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The swimming and weight workout go well. I like the clarity of the lanes in the pool, so I know where my lane is. It's the

rule of law vs the rule of the jungle. Then I time myself so I know how far I've gone, and at what pace. Consistent. About 85%

effort. I like to pace myself in all things. I'm really not a 110% guy, not the hare. More the determined, unstoppable tortoise. Once, during the summer before my senior year, while a counselor and life guard at summer camp, I pushed myself to the edge, and a bit beyond, in preparation for the upcoming football season. I lifted weights twice daily, and ran wind sprints up sand dunes until I would vomit from exhaustion.

In special cases, I can make that effort, and it certainly paid off in my football performance-- I was selected all district honorable mention, that season. But I don't generally make the exceptional effort unless I've created a specific goal and a clear, limited structure. Similarly, with few exceptions, I dislike taking risks. Why? Life is good the way it is. Again, sometimes, I will venture forth. The first time I was about ten, and jumped off the high diving board. No question but that it was fun and exhilarating, and I felt proud and competent. And I did progress to recently doing a one and half flip off the high dive. But, in general, I like to know my limits, stay within them, and keep things well in control.

After the workout, I shower, shave, and apply deodorant. I've learned from the consistency of my swimming rituals what temperature works perfectly for me in the last shower on the right. That way, I don't have to waste time fiddling with the faucets. I immediately turn the right shower handle one and one

half turns, and the left shower handle two and a quarter turns.

Wait ten seconds. Enter. Perfect.

For the deodorant, the correct application involves turning the bottom of the container two times, and then making four strokes on the left armpit. Two more twists, then four strokes right armpit. I know myself and my body well, and know what works for me.

After I shave, I use a tweezers to check for and then pull one incipient and one actual ingrown hair, and then to pluck a renegade eyebrow hair. With each hair, I see in the mirror, and feel in my brain the skin stretch upward, trying to retain its captive as long as possible. The hair follicle, too, tries to remain attached to its home. But I know the inevitable fate. There is something pleasurable at the effort, focus, tension, and even pain, which are preludes to the success of feeling that moment when the hair is completely removed from its source.

I never brush my hair, just towel it dry and it curls naturally just the way I like it.

I peer carefully through my contacts, at the mirror observing every feature, until I am satisfied with each part. Then, I look at the whole face. I'm interested in parts, but I also like to see how and in what ways the parts coordinate to create a whole pattern.

As part of a long-standing training, I practice making minuscule changes in facial movements, like an actor, to see what effect is created. I warm up by practicing a couple tried and true "etudes." First, the "arch" where I raise my right eyebrow, narrow and squint my left eye, and create a furrow above my nose. When I do this, I can almost always get a woman to feel uncom-

fortable and vulnerable, and say "What? What's wrong? What did I do." Then, if I wish, I can crack a joke, and put them at ease. I'm sure the arch will be helpful in trial work, cross-examining a witness.

Second, I rehearse the move I did today that was so successful with the old woman at Tressider. I push out and pout my under lip, tilt my head to the right, and put out my open right hand, palm up. With this move, I can almost always get the other person to feel kindly disposed to me and give me what I want.

I feel myself cringing as I reflect on Johannes' journal, as he reflects on his mirror image. I'm not Johannes, but I'm both repelled by and embarrassed for him. What a superficial, external, existence, focused only on body and behavior. When there are feelings, intentions, actions they are directed only toward his primitive biological, survival, and egoic status needs. I guess from that narrow perspective, he does "know himself" very well.

And I also practice a couple new "minimalist" gestures I've been experimenting with. I realized that there is some awkwardness I feel when I pass certain "classifications" of people: Strangers, people I vaguely recognize from my classes, people I used to know but have stopped associating with, including but not limited to former conquests. I need to develop some "move" that does not ignore, but does not cause an expectation that I want to commit time to stopping and talking.

I look in the mirror with clear, focused eyes, and subtly and slowly-- almost imperceptibly, not more than 3/4 inch, raise my chin. It's kind of like an aloof non-verbal "Hi." You can't do it too fast or you'll look out of control, caught off guard. Not bad. I try it a couple more times, even more slowly. Up,

then even more slowly down to recovery position.

No, I don't like it. Too vulnerable--starts to lay open my neck and exposes too much of my chin on the upward movement.

I try the opposite: nodding my head in a slow downward gesture, then with an even slower upward recovery. Better. Protects my neck, tucks my chin. Yet something is not quite right. Ah, my eyes are following my head downward. I don't want to lose eye contact with the mirror. As the head goes down the eyes have to stay steady. There. Excellent. I practice the "nod" a couple of times until I have it just the way I want. There. Yes, downward is definitely more powerful and effective.

Now, the lips. I add a very slight upward curl at the corners. First I try about a half inch raise of the corners. I don't like that at all: much too needy, almost obsequious. I lower the lips a bit. A quarter inch raise seems maximum. Friendly, kind, but not overpowering. I might even be able to get away with an eighth inch corner raise. Good. Now, some more texture with the eyes. Keep a direct look, but add just a touch of twinkle as the lip corners go up. No, that's too much twinkle. Softer, quieter. Yes, good. And maybe both eyebrows can raise just a hair, for special effect.

Ok, chin down, slight upward curl of lips, smidgen of skyward eyebrow movement, eyes focused with a touch of twinkle. Careful, relax. I can't have the jaw too tight or it looks like I'm grimacing, not smiling. This is going to take some practice. Try again. Better. Again. Ah, maestro, excellent.

That's enough facial training for the day. I can't wait to

try variations of these moves out on the different groups of people I walk past on the sidewalk, or the Quad, to see what their response is. I'll need to be careful to do it subtly, so it looks natural. And to keep it restrained so that if someone ignores me and walks on by, I can just as subtly retract the movement, and act as if I didn't make an acknowledgement of them, either. I can just walk on by, acting completely unbothered that they'd just ignored me. Always stay in control.

Perhaps next time I'll practice by adding just a bit more lip (corner up smile), eye (twinkle), and dual eyebrow arch. I wonder if that new, evolved version of the "nod" can be utilized as a more flirtatious opening gambit, in those situations in which I so choose.

The possibilities are infinite.

It will be fun to field test these new moves.

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I feel strong, healthy, clean after the workout, and take Mr Red back to my room, and call Grandpa.

The conversation goes just as expected. I am definitely in the winner's circle. When he starts his litany, I tune out and stare at myself in the mirror. This was really a good workout today. Now, I need to make some plans for this evening.

When I tune back in, he's talking about the family name, his name. Reflected glory. Money.

"Names are important grandson. Take my name. 'Julius Caesar.' Connotes power, strength. Just like my Cadillac. Even when my practice was just beginning and your grandmother and I could barely afford the basics, I borrowed money to buy that car. You

always have to project success. When people think you're successful, they come to you. You become successful. Image brings reality."

"It's really amazing, Grandpa, what you've been able to create from nothing, actually less than nothing, from borrowing that money just to elope."

"That's what's great about America" he exclaims. "In the Bible, especially their section of the Bible, Jesus is always saying you can't be a servant of both God and money. Nothing is further from the truth. Our Protestant forefathers who settled this country and the new frontiers replaced that stale aphorism with the more accurate belief that hard earned earthly rewards are in fact evidence of spiritual wellbeing. Got to give the goy's credit for that wise thinking."

I say nothing. He continues.

"Well, you know my motto, from my namesake *'vini, vidi, vici.* I came, I saw, I conquered. Only non-legal Latin I know, not like my grandson who took four years of Latin, built a great vocabulary, and learned early on many of our sacrosanct Latin law phrases."

I think to myself how I've changed his phrase to apply to my dating life: *vidi, vici, vini:* "I saw, I conquered, I came."

He's off and running again, and I begin to reminisce about our relationship and stories he doesn't ever talk about. How he served as Pendergast's lawyer (the Al Capone of Kansas City). How my father feels grandpa never shows love, how domineering my father feels JC is. Though a larger than life character, who

seems to block my father's light by his towering shadow, being his grandson gives me enough distance to enjoy his rewards, without any of the domination.

Though he does keep me on a somewhat short leash. When I was 21, he gave me some insurance policies and stocks, which provided me an income for the rest of my life of about \$2000 a year. Not really a very substantial sum. When I thanked him, he said

"This is just a very small bite from a very large cherry tree, maybe even an orchard of trees. There are much larger trees from which these few cherries were picked. I'm going to be watching to see how you use these cherries. Use them well, and there will be more. 'Enuf' said."

The same with Mr. Red. Leased dependent on grades.

He is proud of me when I succeed, and failure is not an option. I don't want to test his disapproving anger. In fact, one of the only times he ever become upset with me was when I told him that I had put a sticker on the bumper of the car.

"What are you thinking. It's a leased car. You can't do that." Then there was a pause. It was as he were catching himself, realizing that he wanted to make sure he treated me with kid gloves, and he'd better be careful, not wanting to alienate the golden "son" who was following in his shadow.

"What kind of sticker?" he asks, and I could hear a softening in his voice. I remember having a feeling of power--rightly or wrongly--that he was backing down, was almost as if he was afraid to test my anger, and was looking for a way out.

"It's the name 'Stanford' spelled out in big letters, and

under the name are 10 Indian mascots. The first mascot thinks

he's the best, and he is thumbing his nose at the Indian mascot next to him in condescension, derision, and judgment. That Mascot in turn is thumbing his nose at the mascot next to him, so on down the line. The final mascot, turns to the rest of the world--the audience, the other drivers, the public, the less educated masses out there and thumbs his nose at them."

He bursts out in a husky, cigar-deepened laugh. "There's more than a touch of snobbery in that, you realize, son." There is a pause, then he says "But in this case, the elitism is earned and justified. You deserve to be a leader, to rule, because you are the best. As you know there used to be restrictions and quotas for Jews--still are I believe, though they don't admit it--. But you showed them--your test scores, grades--this is not accidental or random--you're a winner. And it's really good the way you stayed focus on your studies, didn't get distracted like some of those poor rich students, protesting the war. You're made for better things than front line grunt work.

"As I've always told you, it's a dog eat dog world. Life is a struggle against weakness and you have to 'be the best.' If the shoe fits, wear it. The world is yours, at your feet. Better yet, since the bumper sticker fits, leave it!"

No matter how he got there--some combination of merit plus all the advantages-- it's clear that Johannes lives in an impregnable fortress of privilege, education, confidence, and entitlement. It's what lets him unapologetically cast a condescending glance at lesser person who would dare to get in his way while

he's driving Mr Red. He's been trained to feel superior to those less advantaged, entitled to certain degree of protection within his walled off world. **Dr Lisbet said that I was like Buddha before coming out of the castle.**

I hear from the tone in his voice that his monologue is drawing to an end, and so return my attention to the present. "I can't wait to call all the family members" he says. "Would that be ok."

"I'd really appreciate that. That's why I called you first, Grandpa."

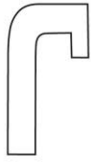
I can almost feel through the phone his pleasure at my response as he then says "GRANDson, we're going to have to have a very serious conversation, soon."

"May I ask about what" I queried, trying to sound innocent and nonchalant, while looking in the mirror, and making an S with a line through it.

"I don't want to get into details. Let's just say it's about whether you might grow to enjoy cherry pie as much as you enjoy the double crusted strawberry pie. Smile"

\$mile.

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level, oh rascal, in romantic ruminations.

Tonight there will be a full moon, definitely a positive portent for passionate provocative possibilities. I saw the nearly full moon last night through a window of the Meyer library, where I had gone to study--like Elaine today. I was actually surprised at myself for going. I had all the books I needed in my room. There was no one in particular I wanted to see there, and I didn't want to meet anyone new. I really just wanted to study.

Maybe I wanted to get out of my room to feel the energy of other people. Once I got there, however, I was continually annoyed by the insensitive, distracting noisy chatter. I was a bit behind in class, and needed to finish reading Camus' so I could begin my paper. Since I hadn't then heard from law schools, I knew I'd better not slack off before the end of the race.

It's interesting that I go some place to be part of an environment where there are people. Yet I sit apart, with no desire to be with anyone, but just to be generically in a social situation. And then I get annoyed at the people there.

I sometimes wonder if I'm more complex than I realize.

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Enough useless musings. I have two tasks to complete before I can leave for this evening's revelry. I need to practice my flute. Later. Now, more importantly, I need to decide which young lady will be honored by my presence tonight. The options

are endless. I continue the seriously playful ruminations I'd started during my swim.

I take out my little "red" book. On a clean piece of paper, I write Saturday, March 10. As I do so, I remove my pants and give myself a little anticipatory stroke. I like to do this ritual anew each Saturday, so I don't get into a rut and I can look through my book afresh, to see whom I'm attracted to this week.

Yes, I like variety. My buddies and I have debated the forced choice psychological item: "Would you rather have sex with a thousand different women, or sex with one woman a thousand times." Clearly this was not a serious question, or it was created by a woman. The text said that "in the present we want maximum alternatives, but once the present has past, we like limitations." We all laughed at this psycho-bull. Of course, we said, we're all talking from the present. Now that the present is past, I can see more clearly the wisdom of being with just one beloved, and not for sexual reasons. It's too bad that it seems sometimes you can't learn the wisdom before you need it. And that whatever wisdom comes is often on the other side of ignorant, stupid mistakes.

Novelty is clearly critical. A more interesting and sophisticated question, we decided, would be "Novelty versus attractiveness." Given the choice of a date with a more attractive woman that you've already dated and "scored" with several times, or a new less, but still somewhat attractive woman, which would you choose?

I faced that forced choice while dating Olga, a busty round-faced girl from Poland. Big brown eyes. Smart, playful. One evening

after several dates, I came by her room to pick her up, and by chance her roommate, Shirley answered the door. Olga was still getting ready. Shirley was tall, blonde, cute ut really less my tpe, less "attractive" to me than Olga. But we started flirting, and I asked her a hypothetical question---suppose you were in a philosophy class discussing ethics and here was the question posed. Is it appropriate for a person going out with one girl--though no commitments had been made--to date the roommate of that girl.

Friday night I scored with Olga; and Saturday night, I answered the psychological question and the philosophical one. Psychologically, novelty won over an additional date with Olga; philosophically Shirley and I agreed there was nothing wrong with dating the roommate. Scored again.

Though, in this case, after back to back night games, neither of them would return my calls for a repeat match. I'm not exactly sure why, because when I was each of them, we all had a lot of fun. And even with great variety, I'm always a gentleman and don't want to hurt anyone. I'm upfront about the importance of my professional ambitions and future. Often, they are excited by my upward mobility. If not, I use the "live for the moment, life is short, eat desert first" philosophy.

Two different, even opposite strategies--future profession or here and now--but one goal: no long term commitments.

Pretty clever, if I do say so myself.

There are indeed many roads up the mountain.

And over the cliff.

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I have two sets of choices for this evening. I draw a

straight line down the middle of the paper, and on one side at the top, I write "*STANFORD LIST*" and on the other "*BERKELEY LIST.*"

Then, on the left side--the rows-- I write A) "*EASY*, nearly guaranteed", above 90% chance of a "score" on the next date; B) *MEDIUM* (which means will take some work, and the odds for the "next date" are around 50%; and C) "*HARD* (pun sort of intended, but more ironic). This level is a real challenge and the odds for "scoring" on the "next date" are less than 10%.

I continue a soft stroking.

My list of rows is really a simplified version of an even simpler psychology experiment--probably the only thing I took away from my oh so boring Freshman psych survey course. Rats, salivating dogs, nutso people. The experiment was a babyish version of basketball-- a person throws a round sand-filled ball into a three foot wide peach basket sitting on the ground.

Balls. Hole. I wonder what Freud would say this experiment really means.

You start three feet from the basket and can almost lean over and drop it in. Success is nearly 100% guaranteed. Then you move preset lines that are further back and continue trying; then try from additional lines still further back. With each increased distance from the peach basket, the odds of any person getting the ball into the hole go down (Unless you're amazingly endowed).

Finally, for the last throw in the experiment, you are given the freedom to choose the line from which you want to shoot. What interested the experimenters was what level of challenge would a person choose: from a guaranteed "success" (the front line); a moderate challenge; a challenge right at the edge of their abili-

ty; or a nearly impossible task.

I'm not exactly sure what they were trying to correlate this behavior with--self-esteem, achievement motivation, risk taking.

I don't really care. What interests me is how it applies to me. Literally getting balls into a hole.

Do I prefer "hard vs easy"? Would I stand farther back the last throw, or closer. The problem with simple psychological experiments, as I, a naïve traveler to that new land, see it, is that they are "simple." The answer to their question of where I would stand, is "It depends."

It depends on what is happening in my life; do I have an exam to study for, a paper to write, how much time do I have? If I'm busy or tired, or don't want to do a lot of work, I might just want to make sure I get the ball in the target. Other times, if I feel more patient, have little to do, and am ready for a challenge, I might try the harder "ball in hole" variation. And, of course, last but not least, it depends on how much effort I want to expend based on the attractiveness of the person surrounding the hole. For an especially attractive basket, I might be willing to expend more effort.

I also realized that sometimes I want to choose a "hard" date just for the challenge, and am willing to put in the effort even with a low probability of success. If it's too easy and there is no risk of failure, or no striving involved, and I'm in the mood for a challenge, then that's not as much fun. It would be like playing golf, and having a funnel direct the ball from the tee box to the pin. Where's the excitement?

I like to believe it's my moves that create success, like Kierkegaard's Johannes, that I'm the seducer, overcoming resistance.

What was a questioning maybe becomes a yes. Now, with some of the

girls I go out with, it's not always that clear who is seducing whom. I can handle that, of course, but it doesn't maximize my pleasure, especially when I am wanting to show my prowess.

Other times, I want to make sure I'm going to be successful. And don't want to put in too much effort. This was especially true when I first came to California from Kansas City. In Kansas City, there was almost no date where there wasn't enormous effort required. I never scored as much or as often as I wanted. When I arrived in California, I was amazed at how open and friendly the girls were, especially at Berkeley, but even a subset at Stanford. It was as if I could throw out my equations. Just fun.

Yes, maybe now there is a bit of a feeling of loss of challenge. But initially, to increase my batting average, to score more often, was a welcome contrast to so many frustrating evenings at home self-serving after not getting my way on a date.

Different strokes for different....moods.

And as I write strokes, I feel amused at my own cleverness and continue my mood enhancing stroking.

I guess, though, bottom line, it's about scoring-and winning. I like winning everywhere. It gives me a sense of power, of control, ---winning with women, in tennis, n golf, with good grades. Clearly I wouldn't keep trying to get the ball in the hole, if there were simply no way I could do it. I actually talked to my psychology professor a bit about this general idea, though without the specific content. He said I'd actually understood the problems and limitations with the experiment very well. He noted that people act differently--really different parts of themselves--in different situations depending on their mood, prior experiences, salience and proximity of the reward, and who's around.

If we are different selves, in different situations, and with

different people, does that mean that all we are is a collection of parts and there is no unified whole "self"? Rather, our behavior is just determined by the external situation—we change our self depending on the reinforcement available, depending on our internal biological mood? Have I always been Humpty Dumpty in fragments and didn't know it?

So tonight, hmmm. I really feel like something new and exciting. There is nothing more fulfilling than a novel conquest: the uncertainty, the daring of a new adventure. I feel in the right mood for a little bit of risk. With my law school admission, I now once again have a clear structure. I can afford to be a bit more adventurous this evening. And I also have a time frame, so all I need to do is be back for golf tomorrow at 12. "Freedom within structure." Somebody should write that down as a wise saying, and make a poster out of it.

There's no question that the new can be much more interesting and fun than the known and tried and true. Sameness can become boring when it's too easy and familiar, and there is no doubt or striving.

But there's also something to be said for safe and steady. Sometimes I want the sure thing, just take the edge off. It all depends.

I guess it's really just a question of combining two pieces of wisdom:

"Know thyself", and "Above all, to thine own self be true."

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I have a team of advisors to help me in this learning process. I like to image myself when I date and play, as a Dionysian, like Kazantzakis' *Zorba the Greek*, dancing and singing, with a lust for life. That's why I took I took a Greek language

elective for fun so one day I could read Zorba in the original. Then there's Shakespeare's fun-loving Falstaff, the 'ebrew Jew. And my final advisor is Kierkegaard's Johannes, in the *Either*. This guy is great. He knows the importance of the challenge. The unattainable woman whom he wins. I loved the way he sees a beautiful woman, and rather than go up to her and meet her (awkward at best), he walks past her coming out of a shop. Then runs around the block, and she runs into him again. He sees her do a double take, and realizes he's registered in her consciousness. The seduction has begun.

I realized in my Greek class, that I'm really more a rational Appolonian than a bawdy, ribald Dionysian. Too much mid-western gentlemanly values. Yet, clearly and obviously, I'm not puritanical. I'm an interesting combination. Within an intellectual and structured framework, I'm attracted to the Dionysian, and like to let the side emerge, particularly as a counterbalance to my careful, structured life. That's why Zorba and Falstaff are such good advisors.

I'm not afraid to ask for help when I occasionally need it.

I guess I have to admit that maybe I'm not as alone as I sometimes believe. I, too, have my circle of advisors and friends, too. Just a different circle. My companions are Goethe's *Werte* suffering from a loss of love; Stendahl's Julian Sorel, trying to figure out what choices society offers and how an intellectual can best make his way; Kafka's "land surveyor" approaching the Castle, trying to justify his existence, overcome fears and emptiness, establish an identity, make a choice, and get past the intimidating guard.

Then there's my Irish buddy, Joyce's *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, trying to learn how to live apart from his society and religion; my modern French existentialists, Camus' *Mer-suault* and Sartre's *Rastignac*, seeing the emptiness, searching for meaning and realizing it's not just about a job for society.

And my religious team: Buber's "*I-Thou*", Frankl's *Man's Search for Meaning*; Rubenstein's "*After Auschwitz*", Kazanzatki's "*Last Temptation of Christ*." Plus the Old and New Testament. See, I have my circle of friends, too.

It's interesting how we only see from the depth of our own wisdom and experience. Many of these books, nine months ago, were only a means to law school. Now, they're friends. I guess that's progress. Somehow I grew enough to know what I didn't even know I didn't know.

Tonight I want to ensure my conquest is successful, a reward to celebrate my good news. I write Sandy's name down in column one, row one: *STANFORD, EASY*. She is a 100% guarantee. No matter what she has planned, she will drop everything to be with me, and will provide me whatever I want sexually.

I continue my slow caressing. She's pretty and playful.

I think about just stopping stroking, putting the red book away, practicing my flute, and calling her.

But, but she's also very known and predictable.

Sometimes, like the shower handles, I like to know how to manipulate the world to maximize pleasure and success with no more effort than is absolutely needed. Why waste time figuring out each time how to turn handles to get what you want.

But sometimes, ease and simplicity, especially with the same woman, is simply repetitive and boring. Tonight I feel like I

want a little more novelty, newness, and challenge. Sorry, Sandy, but you won't be the one for tonight, but out of respect, I focus on her for a half minute of mental reverie while offering her a few lingering strokes that she won't have the opportunity to provide me tonight.

Since I first was introduced to the orgasm--self-serve--I have come to realize that I have a very high sexual desire level. And swimming seems to increase that arousal.

I'm coming close to a dilemma point, as I mull over the different names, faces and bodies that are possible for this evening. To paraphrase my friend the Bard,

"To 'cum' or not to 'cum' that is the question. Whether tis nobler to suffer the vulnerability of women's vagaries hoping for fulfillment, or, to take life into one's own hands, and through a simple act of Will, complete the task oneself, knowing it will assuredly be done right."

When I was younger and first dating, I'd always masturbate before the date. That way I could enjoy the date without pressuring the girl, which was always awkward, and which I have since learned is not the approach that works best for me. I think they could feel my need and desire, and it's as if that made them fearful and withholding. From a needy place, I was less verbally quick, and therefore it was harder to come up with good counter-moves to their inevitable resistance. I detested being in the one down position of NEEDING something from someone, or better yet, of appearing as if I needed something. I've since found it's best for me--and most effective in gaining success-- if I can look and act as if I'm nonchalant, totally self-possessed and in control.

Now, the question is a bit more complex. I realize that in many ways, the quest for the orgasm is my motivation to get me out of the house this evening. If I have my orgasm first, then there is some question about make the effort at all to take someone out. On the other hand, I have learned from experience that an orgasm has a remarkable ability to clear my mind, and without it, my mind starts to lose focus and become confused.

It's a delicate balancing act, keeping my body and mind happy and content.

* * *

Under "*HARD*" I write the name of the cute blonde today at Tressider. Elaine. Her long legs. Lovely blonde hair. I could call her. But first date odds of orgasmic success with her are almost non-existent. Too cerebral. Studying in the stacks on Saturday. She's a reasonable long term project. But not for tonight's celebration. I feel like Goldilocks: Sandy is too easy, Elaine too hard. I need a bowl of porridge that is just the right warmth.

I offer Elaine and her legs homage through a few additional strokes.

A lot of it depends on how you define success. I look over at my manilla folder labeled with my notes about "bases." I need to organize and update that folder. But not now. Maybe I'll take it with my this evening, and work on it over dinner.

Once I'd hit a few home runs, I came to define that as the only measure of success. But, I've met some girls, especially at Stanford, who are determined never to let you hit a homerun in their ballpark unless you're married to them. With these girls, I have to not only be creative, skillful, and patient but also

more flexible about how I define success.

I've come to realize that the goal is really to have an orgasm, and sometimes that can be done quite well by skillful base running, even though I know I will never get a chance to slide into home.

Like Christina. She had definitely decided to remain an intact virgin. Yet, after the second date, she carefully removed and folded her clothes, except her panties, and lay down on the bed, with her hands over her head. My personal taste is more toward the earth mother, with large breasts in which I can bury my face, snuggle, and suckle, Christina has firm, pointy breasts--cute and playful-- and I was flexible enough to be able to handle--literally and figuratively-- any minor disappointment. She also has a beautiful, long-waisted stomach. She looked at me, with compliant, doe-eyed innocence. I began stroking, and in no time came on her stomach.

This became our dating ritual. After each movie, or dinner, we'd come back to my place. She'd lie down. On subsequent dates, she would let me cum all over her face. And on our most recent date, after she removed her clothes and lay down, she let her head dangle off the bed, hanging toward the ground. I stood behind her, and she began making little goldfish movements with her lips. I moved in closer, as she opened her mouth, beginning to tongue john john, and then taking him completely into her mouth. I watched the concave indentation of her cheeks as she applied increasing pressure. I couldn't see her eyes any longer as they were buried between my legs and under my balls. I wondered what that must have smelled like, whether her eyes were

open or closed, what she must be thinking. She began to suck me so hard I thought she was going to pull ol' john john right off me. But then he fired and she moaned and swallowed.

I'm not sure which column to put her in. Easy for third base? Hard or harder (impossible) for home? I am becoming harder and harder as I continue stroking. The exact column and row she should go in is becoming less and less important.

It pays sometimes to be flexible about how I define success.

I continue stroking.

* * *

It's amazing the power of the orgasm. What a discovery. And I do mean discovery. No one ever talked to me about this elixir. Nobody. I wasn't aware such a phenomena even existed. Then, one afternoon, just after I had turned 14, (a late bloomer, I'm told--maybe I'm trying to make up for lost time) everything changed. A new world within me appeared.

Interestingly, if not surprisingly, it all began with me looking at a picture of myself.

That's better, slows the process down.

A few months after my 14th birthday, I saw a picture of me taken from my birthday party. I was struck by this tall, skinny kid. The tall I liked, but the skinny I hated. I'd read in a magazine about Charles Atlas, a person who was once a "98 pound weakling" and made himself into a magnificent, muscled specimen. I wanted to look like that. I had my vision.

I decided to start with my stomach, wanting to get a tight, rippled 6 pack abs. To do so I built an "ab board" I'd seen in a weight lifters' magazine. I found some plywood and attached it

to a couple of poles, so that the board inclined at about a 30 degree angle. I put a leather strap across the board at the highest point, under which I could tuck my feet and have them held securely. The goal, the magazine said, was 5 sets of 20 at this angle at least once a day.

I lay back with my head now lower than my feet, put my hands behind my head, and tried to do a sit up. Perhaps I was able to raise my neck a few inches. My stomach tensed and tightened, but that was it. I couldn't move any farther. I couldn't even do one. I got off the board, and lay on the ground. On the flat ground I could do 4 sit ups, and the next day my stomach was aching and sore.

As I think of my ab board, I start lifting my legs, feeling the tightness in my stomach. I image Sandy and Elaine and me in some kind of hazy meeting in the Meyer stacks. Elaine is the innocent lamb. Sandy and I pretend we don't know each other, but wink and nod toward Elaine, who is pouring over some differential equations, unaware that her skirt has risen a bit higher on her thigh.

For the next few months I worked out one to three times a day. Progress was slow but steady. Ten sits ups on the floor; then two sets of seven. Then one sit up on a 10 degree incline. I kept meticulous notes. After a couple of weeks, I could do 4 sets of 3 on the 30 degree incline. The board was near our furnace in the basement, and the atmosphere was hot, stuffy, and dank. I would break into a sweat just walking into the room.

Sandy and I lean over Elaine, asking her if she would help us with one of her calculus calculations. We tell her we've

noticed how smart she is, and admire her dedication to the studies. She turns to smile at each of us, her hair brushing across my arm, and her cheek quite close to me.

I continue lifting my legs, my stroking becoming slightly more intense.

After several months, as summer shortened into fall, I started hearing the quiet noise of crickets outside, as evening began to settle. I was doing 3 sets of 15 and 1 set of 10. That was straining every muscle fiber I had. Weeks passed, with daily practice. Finally, on the day in question, I had worked up to 3 sets of 20; and was determined to complete the 4th set of 20. I had pretty much given up the goal of 5 sets of 20. It was nighttime. The crickets' noise outside was becoming louder and more intense.

We are in a secluded area of the stacks, and I drop my pencil accidentally into Elaine's lap. Sandy and I both reach down to retrieve it, and our hands meet at the point where Elaine's skirt stops, and her thighs begin. We leave our hands there for a few seconds, and Elaine makes no movement. We act surprised that our hands are touching, but slowly begin to stroke each other's hands. That motion surreptitiously causes Elaine's skirt to rise another few inches up her thigh, so our hands are now on her bare flesh.

On the fourth set, the first few sit ups were harder than usual. 8,9,10. I thought "This is never going to work. I simply can't go on." 11,12,13. I was actually afraid I was going to tear a stomach muscle, or hurt myself in some permanent way. My face was so covered with sweat it looked like I was sobbing. I screamed out "Keep going" 14,15, "You can do this!"

16,17. So close, but then I knew there was nothing left. I tried one more.

The crickets were louder still. The males, from nightfall to dawn, trying to seduce a female, or die trying. Rubbing their organs in their front legs just below the knee.

My hands behind my neck, I held my body half way up. The pain was excruciating. I was groaning in agony. I was just about to ease my body back down when at first I thought someone had turned a light on in the semi dark room. That burst of light gave me the energy to finish number 18, then 19, then 20. I felt an almost uncontrollable urge to pee. I looked around and realized there were no lights on. Rather, some current had been activated inside my body which had erased all pain. 21,22,23. I was like a superman character come to life. The sit ups which moments before had been impossible, I could reel off now as though I was lying flat on the ground and just beginning my workout. 24,25,26...Phrases entered my mind, as if from some unknown source: "fragrance of your oils" "climbing on the mountains" "a pouch of myrrh"

Sandy and I smile as we see the slight undulation in Elaine's abdomen, tightening, relaxing. Sandy rubs her hand sweetly and softly in a clockwise motion over Elaine's stomach, as my fingers begin to edge under her bright orange skirt. "No, please. I need to study, this differential equation set is due" her words say, contradicting her behavior as she places one hand over Sandy's and presses it harder onto her stomach, and places her other hand on mine, helping me lift her skirt higher, guiding my fingers under the elastic of her white panties. The fig tree

has ripened its figs.

All three of us are panting louder and louder. Elaine is less and less in control. She leaves my hand free to begin to roam under her panties, and as if in a stupor, she lifts her right hand towards the tent-like protrusion in the front of my pants and begins massaging and caressing me. Third base.

27,28,29.....30....40. The thought crosses my mind, unbidden and just as unexpected as the burst of energy, "I need to get a date with that cute girl in Sunday School." No overt sexual image or other thought occurred while my body continued like a flywheel: I'd now done the fifth set without even stopping and was at 100 overall. 101,102.....and at 120 I decided to stop.

I felt like I had peed, but unlike any peeing sensation I had ever had.

Only later did I learn that orgasm was in this place--inside me-- and, until that magical moment, I did not know it.

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As I wipe the translucent white liquid off the ripples of my stomach, I am still awed now, as then, at the remarkable sense of strength, competence, pain management, calm, clarity, and relaxation I feel after an orgasm. What a great mood regulator. What a great lesson I learned that day. When you work hard enough, even past your belief in what's possible, a potentially wonderful, unexpected reward can await you.

What a gift.

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So, I guess I've answered the first question facing me--a decision has been made for me regarding "to cum" now or to wait and "cum" on the date.

I reflect for a moment on the "third base" scenario I'd just created with Elaine and Sandy. Sandy I know would be game. Elaine, well, there's a long way between the cup and the lip on that one. We've only just met, and not really spoken. Yet, she does have flirtatious eyes, and cute, sensual lips, covered with a shade of quiet pink lipstick I bet her lips are warm, moist, and soft. I notice john john seems to give a slight stirring arising from the evocation of these images. Leaping on the hills.

After football practice in high school, I would often come home deliriously thirsty. My favorite drink, like moms, was Dr Pepper. I'd throw open the refrigerator and guzzle one down. One day, mom saw me do this, and asked,

"I bet you didn't enjoy that very much, did you."

"Why do you say that?" I responded, annoyed at being interrupted.

"Because you drank it so fast. Sometimes when I'm really thirsty, I'll drink a glass of water first. Or even two. Then, once I've quenched my immediate thirst, I'll put some ice cubes in a tall, cool glass, pour the Dr Pepper in, listen to the fizz, watch the bubbles. Then I'll sit down and enjoy the drink slowly and refreshingly."

Good advice, Mom.

Maybe I just had a glass of water, and tonight will be the Dr Pepper. I guess the Bard's question, in this case, doesn't necessarily have to be an either/or. Enter/ellen.

How about "Enter Elaine."

How about both/and.

"Oh, you rascal, you" I say as I give john john a couple of playful pats and a few final shakes of congratulations for

another job well done.

Let the games begin.

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eaching for a sheet of paper in a half-awake daze, I see the cross-word puzzle, and turn it over. I rub my eyes in the semi-darkness to clear the cobwebs. I know I had a dream, but can't find it. It seems hanging just outside the reach of my consciousness. Though I don't like letting it go, I've had an inspiration and don't want to take the time to try to retrieve the dream, for fear I'll forget my idea.

Instead, on the top of the clean white side I put the date, and draw a straight line down the middle of the paper. On one side I write "*SACRED UNIVERSE*" and on the other side "*INDIFFERENT UNIVERSE.*" My dream is now drifting just out of reach. I reluctantly let it go. I awoke with a Johannes-inspired idea, and I want to get it down before it, too disappears. Along the left side of the paper I write "*NATURE OF UNIVERSE; SELF AND PURPOSE; LEAP?*"

You see, my onanistic Johannes, even though your bodily preoccupation is the furthest thing from my mind, and the contents of our concerns are polar opposites, I am not above learning from and borrowing your cognitive organizational strategies.

Actually, you don't see. I see you. It's a one-way mirror. I can look through and see you, but you can't see me. **It's also interesting how hard it is to see the lens through which we see. Yet, unless we learn to, we are faced with the lesson that the more some things change, the more others stay the same. Is it really best to apply the same approach--intellectual, bifurcated**

forced-choice options, cost-benefit, risk-reward analysis, and either/or thinking-- to issues as divergent as "scoring with women" and "exploring the nature of the universe"?

How will I know? The answer is one of those stock phrases like "Time will tell" or "History will judge." What funny phrases they are. Take the latter. History, in the present, judges the past. The phrase implies that we in the current present cannot see ourselves as well as we will be able to in the future, when some future self which doesn't yet exist will historically look back to the past at our current present, and see more clearly.

Is that clear? It's certainly clever. Is it helpful? Only time will tell.

You can only see yourself, Johannes. You can't possibly know what I'm doing. Even if you did, you would find it absurd, silly, mockable, useless, or uninteresting. I wish you could see how much I despise you and your pathetic journal. You think you're so smart, so suave, so sophisticated. Yet your journal is written in the concrete style little children use to tell about their day. First I woke up. Then I went to the bathroom. Then I put on my clothes. Abstract thinking either isn't in your repertoire, or you find it an unnecessary distraction to your "self-serve" fantasies. And I won't even begin to tell you how much I loathe the content of your flesh-worshipping activities.

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Morning, Day Two. The morning of the second day of my new journey. Finally, something simple.

Actually, on second thought, it's not so simple. It depends on your perspective. Whose day two? It's day two of my Christian new beginning, the day after Christmas. But since the Jewish

"day" begins at "sundown" it's really the middle of Day One of Chanukkah.

Christian Day two? Jewish Day one?

After such an auspicious start this morning, I'm having some trouble, as usual, maintaining motivation and momentum. I'm sort of dawdling, letting myself get side-tracked.

My task this morning is not to worry about the particularity of time, but to fill in the "universal" framework that occurred to me when I awoke. I write at the top of the page, above the two columns a heading, as though I were still in school:

UNIVERSE, SELF, WHY I AM HERE

TOWARD A LEAP?

Johannes the Lothario, the Don Juan, is wrestling with whether to choose Stanford or Berkeley women for his evening dalliance. I am trying to make a choice about the nature of the universe and my role in it.

Everyone needs some structure. If you are thirsty and want a drink of water, you can't pour water into a formless glass, or the water will just spill onto the floor and be wasted. You need some vessel into which to pour the water. We all need a form, a story, a vessel into which to pour our lives. The framework I'm seeking is the biggest one I can find--the nature of the universe.

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Outside, I hear the rain continuing to pour down.

I'm feeling more awake now, and sit up and gaze at the Bresson picture. The picture was taken behind a Paris railroad station in a flooded yard. After a rain. Water everywhere. God

crying?

In my life, it's still continuing to rain. Why did I buy this present for myself? At the time it seemed like a perfect gift, an inspiration.

Henri Cartier-Bresson's "The Decisive Moment." A single solitary figure, trying to jump a puddle. His image, leaping upward, is reflected, as a dark blur mirrored in the silvery water below. (Logically, wouldn't you have to say this reflected image is leaping downward?)

There is the thinnest possible shred of light separating the heel of his shadowy form from the heel in the reflection. Time is suspended a split second before the splash. In an eternal moment? A moment outside time?

What is he feeling? Chaos, fear, panic, joy, calm, relief?

Will he succeed in his leap? Is he trying to find his way back to the train tracks? Is he leaving the train tracks, and trying to find a new direction on which to continue his life?

A perfect gift? Time will tell.

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In the left hand column, in the row entitled "*NATURE OF THE UNIVERSE*" I write: In this view, the world we live is filled with the energy of a sacred, monotheistic, loving, omnipotent, compassionate God to whom Jews and Christians **and I've recently discovered, Muslims** pray.

Under "*SELF AND PURPOSE*" I note: With a belief in a benevolent universe, then must be a a meaning that I can uncover and discover--the reason I am here. Rebbe Jonathan noted that all of

us are a piece of the cosmic puzzle. It is up to each of us to uncover our unique "piece." We don't have to be all pieces, but rather trust that if we become our own piece as best we can, God will make sure all the pieces fit properly.

LEAP? Row three. Within the context of a sacred universe, in which I know I have a role, purpose and meaning, I will easily take the leap of faith across the abyss.

I look back up at the Frenchman's photograph.

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Column Two.

I notice myself feeling hungry, an unusual experience these past few months. They offer a simple breakfast downstairs, included with the price of the room. I have the same thing every morning, similar to what I ate on the kibbutz. Shemenet with honey, into which I cut a banana. A salad. Tea.

The breakfast room is in the basement. There are no windows. I don't really mind, though it is hard to tell whether it's day or night. Like the Las Vegas casinos where Dad would take my brother and me to "party" and gamble. No windows. The Vegas lights were much brighter and multi-colored. Still, no night or day. Timeless. Different principle, I'm sure.

But both windowless rooms are not that much different from my room. It's so dark, rainy, and gloomy outside, it makes no difference whether I open my window blind or not, so I leave it pulled, even during the day. My only light is the small one on the desk, and a smaller one by my bed. There is no overhead light. Is that meaningful?

I look toward last night's light, the hardened wax of a once vibrant candle. Then my gaze shifts to Devu's painting and I'm still drawn to the dark water in the lower part of the picture. I'm especially empathic with the single hand reaching desperately up, out of the water, crying for help.

I also see a letter my Nana wrote me a couple of days ago. I need to reply to that. Priorities. First, write about the second column. Next, breakfast. You can write Nana then. Later today, you can read more Johannes. Take a walk. Then go to the coffee shop and do more writing. Maybe about the desperate hand picture for Reb Jonathan's class. A structure for day two is slowly emerging. Now I just need a structure for life.

I'm procrastinating again. I'm really trying to avoid Column Two.

Focus. Breath.

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Column Two, Row One. *NATURE OF UNIVERSE*. In this view the universe is random, indifferent. A survival of the fittest. You either find your niche, or you die off.

Row Two. *SELF AND PURPOSE*. There is no a prior meaning, "self," or essence to us. As part of blind evolution, we each have to find our different niches. Like the bills of different birds, some for crushing seeds, others designed for eating insects, still others for collecting nectar from plants. What is the special niche of me? Whatever it is, we struggle to survive in that niche, then we die. We create our "self" by our actions and thoughts; we create our "meaning" by an act of self-chosen will. All "selves" and all "meaning" are just arbitrary stories

that have no validity beyond themselves.

There is nobility and grandeur when we look at the regularity of the planets' revolutions in the vastness of space. There is something astonishing about the variety of colors and shapes and sizes of living creatures. But there is no meaning, and all creatures, all lives end up as fertilizer.

Looking into the abyss, confronting a godless universe, Darwin, in his sixties, described himself as a non-believer. If animals and plants are the result of impersonal, immutable forces, then the world has no validity or purpose. Dogs, birds, weeds, humans, in the eyes of nature, are equally astonishing and equally dispensable.

This discussion verges on the sad and gloomy. Yet, for some reason the image that comes to mind is the Dodo bird. Mom used to read the story to me every night--the story of a funny looking, waddling bird with a plump body, stumpy wings, hooked beak, dull expression--a bird that couldn't even fly. Though mom never told me its true fate, I learned in school that it became extinct. Why? No one really knows. Because the Portuguese who landed in 1510 on Mauritius, part of the Mascarene Island group, loved to eat them? Because it was too dumb to survive? Because there were too many predators and it couldn't fly to get away? I'm glad I didn't know the whole story when she read it to me. Poor baby.

Row Three. *LEAP?* This is the most difficult box of all on the page. In this box there are only two choices. One choice is to make a volitional, existential leap toward the abyss. Confronted by an indifferent, bleak, meaningless universe, without hope, the best we can say is that there can be a nobility, grandeur, and even pride in such an act of defiance, in

seeking, as Malraux said "to deny our nothingness."

Existence precedes essence. With this leap, I could choose to devote myself, by my actions, to creating an essence within me of the most authentic person I can envision. With this choice, there are no guarantees that personal strength will be enough to develop a satisfying meaning for my life. Nor is it clear I have the will and stamina to repeatedly watch the rock, pushed up the mountain by my Herculean efforts, roll down again. And even if I can continue the struggle, it is not clear I will be able, as the rock and my life and creation sink into nothingness, "to imagine Sisyphus happy."

And that's the good choice.

The alternative choice is to decide that life is not worth living in a random, meaningless, barren, lonely, eat-or-be-eaten universe. If I choose this option, then I will consciously end my existence. This possibility seems to me to be a fair and rational decision, based on emotionally knowing that such a life is not one I could tolerate.

I look once again at the hardened candle wax at the base of the menorah; at the Frenchman's photograph; at Devu's artwork.

I look at the piece of paper on which I have been writing. Two columns. Three rows. These are all the choices that exist.

I have a structure. I still have one thin piece of paper between me and the abyss.

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Choices are not easy for me, and this is not an easy choice.

I remember when I used to ride a motorcycle. One time I came upon a dirt road that was closed to automobile traffic by five

steel poles, placed about three feet apart. I knew intellectually that I could easily fit through the space between any two poles. But as I came closer, I found myself having difficulty deciding which space to select: between the far two poles on the left? on the right? in the middle? I knew it didn't make any difference which space I selected, but I knew it did make a difference that I quickly make a selection or otherwise I was going to crash into a pole.

I'm aware that my current choice will make a huge difference. Rather than trying to go through the spaces between poles, I need to choose one pole or the other. Do I, as an existentialist, live in a world I can't trust, and strive to create an authentic "self". Do I, as a believer in a benevolent universe, live from a place of trust, and work to discover and uncover my already existing unique cosmic piece of the puzzle? Like a photographic negative of my motorcycle experience, if I don't choose one column or the other, I'm going to crash myself on the space between them.

Now, it's time for breakfast. I place my paper on top of Nana's letter.

Let the games begin.

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J

reflexively, my eyes go toward the movement, and are riveted as I watch the honey lazily ooze off the knife and start its slow descent toward the white, creamy shemenet. But rather than passively watch, I decide to take charge and consciously choose a target for the honey--the center of the bowl. As the first drops hit, I rotate the knife in a clockwise circle, increasing the distance from the center with each rotation, thus creating a golden spiral design.

Breakfast as art.

I say a brief blessing, then plunge my spoon into the golden white mixture, and stir it several times in a clockwise direction. I take a bite.

The ephemeral, vanishing nature of one's art. *Vita brevis, ars brevis? ars longa?*

59 down. Woman in Judges who gave Sisera milk when he asked for water, then crushed his head and shattered his temples. Ends in L. Four letters.

Look at 59 across. Three letters. Same word related to a) a difficult situation (colloquial) b) too much traffic; c) Mashed Strawberries.

Cute: JAM.

59 down, begins with J ends in L.

That's enough. One success per meal.

I linger for a moment over the letters J and L. It's interesting how the two letters could be considered like two people sleeping back to back; or two people who are walking away from

each other and not speaking. JL. Almost a mirror image.

Another bite. I taste some of the sweetness of the honey amidst the tart shemenet. It gives me little pleasure. Eating, once such a joy, is now just a task that must be done to keep up energy.

I turn to Nana's letter.

She has asked me to put *simply* what it is *exactly* I'm up to in Israel, now that I've left the kibbutz. She wants to be able to describe what I'm doing to the "girls" she plays card with on Tuesdays and Fridays. It's really a question surrounded by an accusation. Do you realize how much easier it would be just to say "He's in law school!?! " Ah, Nana, best chicken livers and eggs; strawberry jam and cream cheese on Wolferman's English muffins. Sunday brunches. The reward for attending Sunday School. I wonder if there is a way to look at all the worrying she does about me as a sign of love. When she heard about my cut fingers she called and said "You must immediately fly home to Kansas City and go to Menorah Hospital for the surgery. I'll arrange everything and pay for your plane flight."

When I asked her why Menorah, she said because it's the "Jewish hospital in Kansas City--and therefore, because all the Doctors are Jewish, it's the best hospital in the city. " She only allowed me to have the surgery here when I explained to her--after I asked her to take a breath so she could calm down enough to listen-- that in Israel (as she well knew) , all the Doctors were Jewish, too.

I take out a post card.

Dear Nana,

Looking for self and life's meaning....

Details to follow. Love "J"

* * *

I eat a few bites of salad, and reread the postcard.

Simple. True. Cute, witty, clever. Wait a minute. How will Nana hear it? She doesn't have much of a sense of humor, she is concrete. Will she be upset and think me withholding, wondering "Why isn't he just telling me what I asked?"

I could add after "details to follow--if you want."

I feel some annoyance and maybe a bit of anger. "If you want." Kind of patronizing. If you want and are able to understand and absorb details without panicking. She's a simple woman, why go after her.

Try again. Give her some details.

Dear Nana,

I know that you feel my extended time in Israel is not quite kosher. Unfortunately there's no really simple answer I can give you to share with the "girls." However, let me suggest you milk it for all it's worth to receive maximum condolences. Here's a possible approach:

"Oy, how could my grandson, a nice Jewish boy from Kansas City, instead of going to Harvard Law School, end up in Israel, (pause here for dramatic breath) and can you believe, tracing the path of Jesus (at the suggestion of his *goyish* "ex" girlfriend, yet) throughout the Holy Land, while also studying Torah and the Jewish Holidays (which isn't so bad, but don't we have Rabbis here in Kansas City--I mean Rabbi Silverman is such a *mensch*).

At least he's studying. Generally on his own, though occasionally he goes to a class with some Rabbi (whom he calls a Rebbe) who was born in Rumania but fled to England during the Nazi invasion. And this Rebbe is partnered (does that mean not married?) with a Swiss psychologist (who's certainly not Jewish and sounds like she's a very unusual type of Christian--doesn't even have a church she belongs to). She's a student of Carl Jung, who was a student of Freud. (Ask mom, she'll know the name; or her psychiatrist will).

The Rabbi met her while they were both living on an ashram (some kind of commune thing people do now I guess) in Pondicherry, India, (what's a Rabbi doing in India?) And this woman now teaches with the Rebbe, and she is instructing my grandson in Taoist Chinese Tai Chi exercises and Japanese Zen Buddhist meditation.

Can he still be Jewish?"

Hope this helps.

Love, your "wandering Jew"ish grandson.

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Another bite of shemenet.

I re-read the second attempt to respond to Nana's letter.

Sigh. I really don't like trying to justify myself to others. Especially when I have no idea what I'm doing. It's sad how quickly and reflexively I can fall back into that sardonic, biting, Kansas City family humor. I feel upset, even angry at myself for just using such language. Where is "right speech?" Isn't my goal to develop and evolve into a more giving, compassionate person? Change is slow, indeed. Even when I'm trying. **It's important, though, not to be too hard on yourself. In neither effort at correspondence did you show her your Job-like sadness and pain with living. And shading that omission was done consciously to protect her feelings and minimize her worry.**

Ok, third time, let's hope it's a charm. I stir the honey and shemenet, which have now joined completely, creating a soft white yellowish golden mixture.

Another bite. A sip of hot tea.

Dear Nana,

Thank you for your loving letter of concern. Please don't worry. Yes, I did leave the kibbutz, but I'm quite safe here in Jerusalem. I'm studying and pursuing my education with some fine teachers.

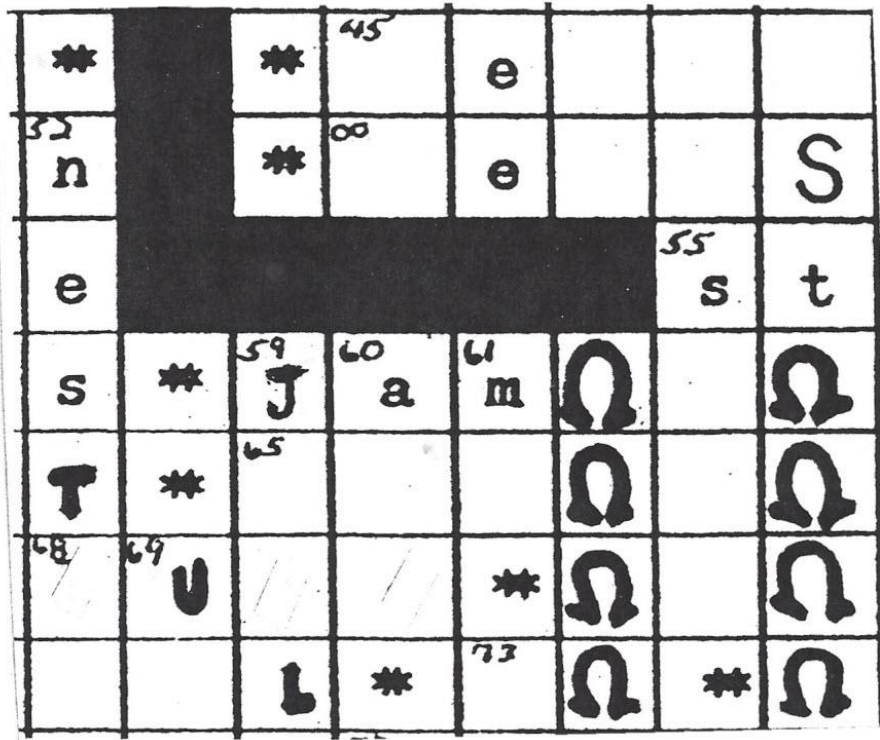
I'm sorry to hear about Grandpa Dave's coughing and fluid on the lungs. Remind him of what we both know: that even though the red birds have migrated for the winter, they will return to his birdbath with their song this spring.

Again, please not to worry. I send you and all the family my love. I miss you, too.

Love love 

* * *

Syphilis. 68 across. From the Latin plague. Akin to Greek, to loosen. Let's come back to that one.



I'd set a limit of one word per meal, and here I am trying to figure out the third one. It's like an itch, trying to solve a problem. And I guess I'd rather work on a cross word puzzle (moderately easy), then face Nana, (difficult) or face my other sheet of paper on the reverse side (definitely hard).

65 across. Three letters. Cover yourself with sackcloth and Too simple? Ash.

Ok, 59 down. J A --- L.

I re-read draft three to Nana. Better.

I like the subtlety of the final signature. Read one way, it's "Jr", Nana's affectionate term for me. Read another way it's "J" followed by an upside down J, to reflect confusion-- a world and self that is topsy turvy and in disarray--but stated in a way that shares the truth, but in a way Nana wouldn't recognize and therefore wouldn't unnecessarily frighten her.

It only took three tries this time. I don't know whether I'm less mentally agile than I used to be, or just less trusting of myself. In California, I'd figure out what I wanted, and do it. Here, I look each thing over from all angles. Try, evaluate, try, evaluate.

It's like that joke about the National Rifle Association's slogan that my existentialism professor shared. Some students in the class were upset because of their non-violent pacifist views when he mentioned the NRA, and began booing even before he could tell the joke. At the time, I'd been a junior card-carrying member of the NRA for several years--since my days in camp when I loved the firing range and achieved the rank of "marksman"--I tried to quiet them with a counterattacking "SHHH. Let him speak."

They finally shushed, and he shared the joke. "The NRA says 'Ready, aim, fire.' For business people, the slogan is 'Ready, Fire, Aim.'" Entrepreneurial action, my father would say. I remember now it was me taking offense at what I thought might be a put down of business, and by extension, law. I gave a mild "Boo"--the only one in the class to do so. My thinking wasn't

exactly logical, but that's what I felt at the time and I wanted to show I could protest too for something I believed in. Finally, he said "For academics, it's 'Ready, aim, aim, aim, aim, aim.'"

Everyone laughed, including me. The joke seemed to capture all of our views of academics as ivory tower non-doers, either from procrastination, excessive pilpul, or fear of action,

Kind of like me now. I do a lot of "non-violent" aiming. At least physically non-violent. At least for now.

I feel myself drawn back to the cross-word puzzle, but resist. A bite of salad.

Maybe a better way to frame "aim aim aim" is as a wise, thoughtful, approach. By trying on different options before taking them, we might be able to sometimes prevent precipitous, and unnecessarily hurtful actions, as in the case of Nana's letter. It's a lesson I'm increasingly trying to practice, and it's reinforced by imagining each new task as a flute song. Some people are able to "sight read" life. I'm not. When playing a new flute song, I need a few rounds of practice to understand the notes, and to gain a sense of the feel and flow of the song. I really do better with life if I'm given a couple of practice rounds before the concert of actually having to live it. It takes me a while to figure out which notes to play, to find my tone, my melody.

I tear up the first two efforts, fold and seal the third one and place it in an envelope.

Am I lying to Nana by not giving her the whole story? Is that wrong? This feels different than Johannes' legalistic shading of the truth for his own benefit. Is that just a rationalization? I know Grandpa JC said there are Talmudic sources that

say when and under what conditions it's permissible to shade the truth. I make a note to myself to ask the Rebbe at this Friday's class if he knows those sources.

I do know that even God lied in Genesis. A "juicy" part Johannes found when he looked through the Bible for other sexual passages besides *Song of Songs*. Sarah hears that Abraham is going to try to get her pregnant, and laughs saying "Am I to have enjoyment, *with my husband so old.*" And the Lord said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying 'Shall I in truth bear a child, *old as I am?*'" It seems God was lying to spare Abraham any hurtful feelings about his ability to still have sex--at what, 90?

White lies, barefaced lies, lies to protect a person; facts fudged, forged, shaded. I know there's a difference. Sometimes I wish the world were simpler.

I hope Grandpa Dave is able to see his redbirds this spring.

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R

ain continues to pound the building. Although the breakfast room is dark and cloistered, when I leave the Y and walk outside, it is darker still. Though morning, the clouds are thick, gray, and menacing, and I don't have an umbrella to shield me from the angled, driving downpour. But I want to mail the letter to Nana. Just as I am about to plunge unprotected into the blustery, cold wind, I remember a fragment of last night's dream. The lion again. Dr. Lisbet said truth can come in many forms, and isn't limited to external reality. I don't want to let this dream slip away again. I decide to wait until later to mail the letter, hoping there may at some point be a let-up in the weather.

I head back upstairs to my room to retrieve my dream journal.

* * *

The memory of last night's dream flickers through my mind. It's now old and known--one of two recurring dreams I have had since I've been keeping my dream journal--nearly a decade. When I first wrote about the dream it was simply my brother and I playing catch with a football, laughing, and joyfully roughhousing. He's nine or ten, I'm thirteen or fourteen, and our ages have never changed over the years I've had the dream. For the first several times, the dream was like a re-run, with only minor variations. I'm the quarterback, and create the play. He's both the center and wide receiver. Hup one, hup two, Hike!

He hikes the ball, then runs the play: ten yards, turn and fake button hook. I cock my arm, fake a pass. The imaginary

receiver falls for our deception, and overcommits. Then my brother turns and sprints to the left end zone corner. The play never changes. His route never changes. The pass is always a perfect spiral. It always hits him in the hands. Sometimes though the pass is too high or too low. Other times it's perfect. In some dreams he catches the ball, no matter where I've thrown it. Touchdown! In others he drops it. In those dreams where he catches it we'd celebrate. "Great pass." "Great catch." "What a team!" In those dreams where he drops the ball, we'd yell and argue for a bit whose fault it was, then we'd celebrate. And try again. It was always in good fun.

Then, after about a year, I noticed something strange in the dream. For the first time the ground on which we were playing came into clearer focus. I'd never paid attention to what we were running on, just assuming it was a neatly lined, grassy football field. But this time it clearly wasn't a football field. Rather we were playing on a sandy, desert-like plain. It could have been grass in the other dreams. I just don't know.

I do know I was startled and disoriented by the desert. There were no lines to tell my brother when he had gone ten yards, and should begin the fake button hook. There was no end-zone. Just an endless plain.

Although I didn't put it together at the time, it was obvious why this variation occurred. Mom and dad divorced that year. A lot of the assumed order and structure in our lives disappeared.

It was a couple years later when the lion appeared for the first time.

Maybe it was my junior year in high school. The content of the dream--my brother and I playing football-- was exactly the same, except it was as if there were a wider angled lens through which the dream was being filmed. My brother and I were still in the foreground and central. The lion was in the distant background, but on the same large plain as us, just watching. We are oblivious to the lion, though it's not clear whether we don't see it, are fearless, or just stupid. That's the way the dream has been for the last several years, and the way it was again last night.

I've explored possible meanings, but don't really understand what the lion represents? Though in the dream I'm not bothered by it, when I wake up, I always have an eerie, ominous feeling. What is clear is that even though we are "Children at Play" there is no one watching out for us. There is no caution sign. We seem vulnerable, and the lion represents danger.

When I dreamed the dream last year, one idea I had was that the lion might be symbolic of Richard, because of the Tarzan call when he beats me in chess and his shout "Richard the Lion Heart-ed." But the dream with the lion first occurred long before I met him.

Another thought was that the dream represents the clash between the rule of the jungle--the lion--versus the rule of the law. Football, as rough a sport as it is, still has guidelines and rules, referees, a time frame, and a way of keeping score. The lion, king of the jungle, has no rule but power. Eat or be eaten. In the dream I'm not yet aware of that clash; when I wake

up, I am, and maybe that's what bothers me.

Now, having the dream over Chanukkah, I think maybe the dream came because of the Rebbe's talk about Judas Maccabee--his ferociousness and conquering strength. But his name means hammer, not lion. Maybe, though, my unconscious was symbolically equating Judas' strength and the lion's courage, like the courage which the cowardly lion received in the Wizard of Oz. Do I fear that strength and power? Does the lion represent the strength I want? Why don't I see the lion in the dream? **Could the lion represent be Reb Luria, the Ari, the lion, the mystical Kabbalist of Safed, watching over me, ready to help me when I'm ready to be taught?)**

I'd be curious how Dr Lisbet would interpret it.

I close my eyes as I try to revisualize the dream for any more clues. Nothing appears. All I see is blackness. From that darkness--by contrast and absence-- I realize that there was something about last night's dream that I'd never before noticed. It's sunny during the dream. There are no trees on the plain, and no shadows. Only bright light everywhere. I don't remember any shadows on me, my brother, or the lion. **Can you have a picture without shadows?**

I keep my eyes closed. What I notice now is that when I first closed my eyes, everything seemed black. But as I look more carefully, there are lots of vague, little white forms dancing on the black background. Streaks, twirling shapes, fragmented images.

It's fascinating how much light--often unseen-- there is behind closed eyes.

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When I awaken from my unintended sleep, I pick up my flute, re-close my eyes, and allow my fingers to play notes at random. No score, no conscious effort. No scale or constructed song. The notes, like a fallen Humpty Dumpty, are scattered fragments.

No melody emerges.

I think of returning to reading my California journal, but decide against it. "Johannes, I'll see you later. For now I'm going to continue leaving you suspended in your joyful state of completed masturbatory fantasies. Even though you don't know it yet, I am aware that you have a salacious, sybaritic evening ahead of you that will bring you a great deal of satisfaction. If you knew what I knew, at least short term, you'd really be ready to rev up Mr Red. I promise I will return to you. But, as the Rebbe once said, 'Good news can wait, bad news won't go away.'"

So, I return to me.

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At the best, right now, each individual fragment of me is like a note of the flute. There is sound, which is relatively well-played; clear, but it's not clear whether the tones can be fit together in a way which creates a melody, "my voice." Will it help to change some notes, add new ones, discard others, modulate to a new key? Or will there just be forever discordant, random sounds, still-born jazz without any structure?

Thoughts continue to swirl, like someone has put a spoon in my mind and is stirring, now clockwise, now counterclockwise, trying to find a way to integrate disparate parts.

I pick up the crossword puzzle.

Where was I? 68 across. Syphilis. From the Latin plague.

Akin to Greek, to loosen. *Lues*.

A crossword puzzle--a game with words-- on one side of the sheet of paper. A cosmic puzzle--views of the universe, self, the leap--on the other.

In some ways the crossword puzzle really embodies the issues of the cosmic puzzle on the other side of the paper.

Two sides of the same coin? \$mile?

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With a cross word puzzle, there is a certain leap of faith, certain assumptions, one of the most important of which is that with enough knowledge, understanding, skill, and determination, the pieces will eventually fit. The answer is there, the crossword puzzle player just needs to uncover and discover it. There is a "maker" of the puzzle and that maker constructed it in an ordered way.

But sometimes, when I am especially stumped, I have doubts. Sometimes about me and my ability. Sometimes about the puzzle itself. What if there are parts missing? Or it doesn't all fit?

I play a few more notes on the flute. Not discordant exactly, but not harmonious either. I look at Devu's desperate hand emerging from the darkened waters, reaching upward for help.

Go deeper. More brain stirring.

Parts and whole. Will letters be random, or will they fit together to form words? Will the fragments of me fit together to form a self?

What if all the letters do fit, and make words; and what if

all the words fit and intersect in an ordered, structured way?

There still is the issue of whether finishing the puzzle will solve, reveal, answer, the question of meaning and purpose. With the letters, just as with the fragments of my "self", the overarching issue is how and whether the parts can be connected or reconnected to an intelligible whole.

More stirrings. Counterclockwise. Deeper still.

Even if I can put me back together, I need to ask if that self then fits and connects to some larger meaning in the universe, a cosmic "Self." Or is the process of self-assembling merely a personally important, though ultimately meaningless effort? Like the crossword puzzle, just one more game to pass time, another way to distract myself with trivia, to hide from the barrenness and meaninglessness of life

If the latter, and there is no ultimate meaning, then the question becomes do I feel I can create enough meaning in my life just utilizing my mind, playing around with a small mystery/puzzle created for my amusement, trying to put fragments together for no reason other than the enjoyment of the game.

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I know that to most people the questions I'm asking seem irrelevant or self-indulgent. The majority of the world still lives in conditions where daily sustenance is the concern, not seemingly abstract questions of how do you decide if the world has or can have a meaning, either to be discovered, or to be created. In working to earn a living and provide food and shelter for that day, nothing may seem more absurd than someone asking

how do I put the fragments of my self back into a whole.

I understand that viewpoint. But it does not make the questions any less serious or less important to me. For whatever reason or set of circumstances, random or ordained, to me those are THE only relevant questions, ones I need to address as a prerequisite to continuing life.

I don't believe Jesus is more concerned or loving toward me and my personal suffering and spiritual hunger than toward a poor starving homeless person in India or on Sixth Street in San Francisco. I also don't think he's less concerned and loving toward me.

It is hard for me to understand why a compassionate God would allow either hunger to exist.

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In addition to physically, I sometimes feel emotionally like a shadow of my younger, former self. I don't feel like an old soul, but an older (and much too dour) soul, lacking any playfulness and joy. I feel closer to Job lamenting or Jonah in the dark belly of the whale, or Joseph thrown into the pit by his brothers than I do to Jesus's loving Sermon on the Mount. Maybe closer to Jesus's dark night of the soul, 'Why hast Thou forsaken me?' Where is the light amidst the darkness?

Not that there haven't been moments of light in the past.

With Mery at the Fairmont. At Sinai--certainly not climbing it, but after I returned to the monastery. Moments of such sacred luminosity that can only be described as stunning, breathless, ineffable. Amen.

But also so rare and so fleeting. **It's certainly easy**

to empathize with Mohammed's asking Allah in the Koran (asking, not complaining, mind you) why God's moments of revelation are so infrequent.

Amen.

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Where is the "light" today? Somehow, amidst sleeping and musings, the day is nearing an end. Dusk is once again falling, along with the rain. It's nearly time to light the second candle. I'll have to wait to mail Nana's letter until tomorrow, Thursday.

Time now to once again follow the Rebbe's instruction to come up with an example of "inner" light in our life as I prepare to light the menorah. Did he say we should find one example of light per night, or one example of light for each candle lit?

I realize I haven't done any reading today about Johannes. Is there any light there?

I light the first candle with the shammash. I think of Johannes' first masturbatory experience, and at the same time I think of the Rebbe's teaching about Chanukkah. I actually feel myself smiling. I see a connection. A masturbatory meditative Maccabee metaphor.

Johannes, reading your journal entry from nine months ago, when you recall your first masturbatory experience, is a wonderful metaphor for me at Chanukkah. Not, not the physical masturbation. I've chosen to cut myself off from my body as much as I can. Ironically, as a spiritual teaching.

Chanukkah celebrates Judas Maccabee and the Jews retaking the Holy Temple. However, they find only enough oil keep to keep the "eternal light" in the Temple from going out for one more day.

But it will take several days to get supplies. Yet the eternal light in the temple is never to go out. The miracle is that the one day supply of oil miraculously lasts eight days.

"The mystical teaching," the Rebbe said, "is that within each of us there is more ability to find and sustain the 'eternal light' than we believe. Chanukkah comes on the shortest day of the year, when there is the least light. There is no moon. So, it is the darkest day of the year. We may feel we are only capable of one more day's effort, but there are resources--oil, energy--within us far beyond our belief systems.

You, Johannes, manifested that on the physical plane, and for me, now, that view is comforting and hopeful. It helps counter the part of me that feels at the end of my rope, quite discouraged, even hopeless--about me and the world. Not only do I have no sense of who I am anymore, I distrust my ability to relate to others, to find my role in the world. I distrust others, and I even distrust the benevolence of the universe. My energy is lagging, slothful, tired. I am clearly in darkness.

Yet, Johannes, when I read your masturbatory story, I see that you were once struggling on the physical plane to create your body--five sets of 20. You felt at the end of your rope. No more sit ups were possible. You had no knowledge that there was something inside you that could give you more energy than you ever believed. "Orgasm was in the place, and I did not know it." You show me that enormous effort and determination, even amidst seeming hopelessness, can lead to something completely unexpected, uplifting, and glorious. What you learned and said on the physical realm, I hope one day to be able to once again say on the spiritual realm. **God was in this place, and I did not know it.**

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I light the second candle. I might as well try to think of a second example of light. I look once again at Devu's picture. I focus this time on a row boat--with two unattended oars--next to the outstretched hand coming from the water below. The boat is still, its shadow reflected in white in the water.

A second example of inner light? I think of the story Dr Lisbet told our class about the impossibility of forcing a flower to appear before it's ready. "The flower's beautiful bloom lies within, hidden. But, if you are too anxious for the it to emerge, and try to overcontrol and hasten the natural process by tearing apart the closed bud to find it, you will never see the flower, and may kill the plant."

One of the students asked whether our only choice then, was to sit and wait passively, like a victim, hoping the flower would one day blossom.

"Excellent question. Just as overcontrol is an unhealthy option, so is feeling like a victim. There are really two healthy options you have, and they can complement each other. One is a positive assertive mode of control. Following this option, you can nurture, fertilize, and water the soil. You can remove that which is inappropriately creating shadows and blocking the light. So far so good?"

The student and others in the class nodded.

"The second option is one we're often less familiar with in the West. It involves learning a positive accepting, yielding mode of control. This mode is not passivity or victimhood. Rather, it is knowing when to act and when not to. Once you have done

everything you actively can, it is wise to learn to trust, wait patiently, and pray."

"As Reb Jonathan often says in quoting Rebbe Nachman 'Act as if everything depends on you. Know that everything depends on God. What is supposed to come forth will do so on its own accord. The bud will find the light and will flower and blossom in its own way and time."

I feel hope when I hear her words and image this metaphor. The essence is inside. There are positive actions I can take--maybe like this writing and reflection-- to clear away some past shadows. "The time has arrived for pruning the vines." But then I also have to learn patience, and let what is inside to emerge in its own time, "to see whether the vine has budded."

Is there really something beautiful in me that I can eventually birth? Is it possible that even though I feel like a sluggish larva in the present, there awaits within a fragile, delicate loving butterfly seeking to come forth? Or a colorful radiant flower?

I pick up my flute. More notes. I try, almost desperately to hear a melody emerge.

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avid's Deli. Double D...at least.

David's Delicious, Delightful Deli. (DD)²? 2(DD)?

I'm seated at my favorite window table.

Behind my reflection in the window, I see flaming red hair and a voluptuous body coming towards me to take my order. A diffident walk. She must be new here, and won't last long unless she toughens up. One of my attractions to David's is the sarcastic waitresses. There's a certain demanding "hurry up I'm busy and you're bothering me" attitude with which I love dueling--like verbal chess. Their barbs, cuts, and parries feel like billows of affection.

When I first entered, the cashier, a dumpy squat woman with an ugly mole on her neck, said "Seat yourself. Take a load off," and she points toward the counter and returns to taking a payment from a customer. I give her the downward nod, but with a little more than a quarter inch upward turn on the corners of the lip, and proceed directly toward my favorite seat across from the window. Not only do I like the better view from this table, but there's also enough table space so I can spread out my manila folder. I have a couple of hours to kill before the party, and plan to get some serious work done. Also, I hate counters. Too claustrophobic. It feels like being part of the masses. I spread out my manila folders.

After finishing with the customer, and somewhat distracted, the cashier sees what I've done and says "That's reserved for four." But I

know from grandpa that possession is nine-tenths of the law, and she's not going to budge me. I think of saying that to her, but I'm sure it would be too legalese and beyond her comprehension. Instead, I reply, while giving her my boyish charm smile, "Don't worry, I eat like four."

At first she seemed annoyed, as if she was going to make this a protracted battle. Then, seeing my manila folders, she realizes she has lost and surrenders. "All right, but you're there too long" she points to the folders, "we're going to charge you office rent." Was there a small smile as she turns back to the other customers. Vanquished *and* charmed by me.

As I turn back from her, I see the approaching waitress.

A successful start to a promising evening. Another victory. I love when I get my way.

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Her voice reflects her walk. She is definitely new.

"May I bring you something to drink while you decide what you want."

When I turn toward her, I'm not sure where to focus.

I work hard to consciously keep myself from concentrating on her breasts. I know that most women know that men are reflexively attracted to breasts, and often will watch your eyes to see if you are so unliberated (or have so little control, or they by fiat so much) that you stare, or even clandestinely look.

I instruct myself to look briefly at her eyes (in a variation of the upward "nod") and then directly at the menu. Although I'm not sure she noticed, the movement was a little more hurried than I'd have liked, and faster than I'd practiced. It's hard trying a new move for the first time in the real world. Like going from the driving range to the golf course--the longest

hundred yards.

I try to appear nonchalant, ignoring her breasts, not an easy task in this case. Corny lines flash through my mind. "I know what I want to order: you." Crass. What's going on, suave one? "I want to drink in your beauty." Ouch. You've been hanging around your tennis buddies too much. Maybe Richard with his British/South African (and sometimes affected French--actually who knows with Richard what's really real, what's affected?--he such a phony) accent can get away with a line like that. But it's much too direct for me. And for her. Nothing comes out of my mouth, for which, given the options considered so far, I'm thankful. My mind is in overdrive, searching for the right *bon mot*. I notice she also seems a little awkward at the silence, and says,

"How may I serve you."

Her uncomfortableness relaxes me a bit. I remind myself to return to basics: when in doubt, go slow, be patient, keep it simple.

"Tea, black would be fine, thank you, and a glass of ice water."

As she turns to leave, I give myself permission to observe her reflection in the window. Even though she is modestly dressed, and appears trying to conceal herself under a bulky dark yellow buttondown pullover, the sheer size and volume of her lushness is striking. The material of her sweater is pulled taut and smooth over her breasts. Because of their size, there is a substantial shadow under them, which gives them their dimension. I imagine myself in art class, drawing them. I clearly see several dark vertical shadows highlighted by whitish-yellow

crests where the material of her sweater is pulled tight, like radiating sun beams, around and under her arm.

I definitely made the right choice to stop here and feed my body and --serendipitously-- to feast my eyes before heading on to Alice's party in Berkeley. Solomon's, down the street, is funkier, but for some reason tonight seemed deserving of a more upscale celebration. Father over son. And David, given his captivity and dalliance with Bathsheba, would certainly be supportive and empathic of my choice.

I think of my Grandpa Dave, who introduced me to Solomon's *Song of Songs*, along with Raphael paintings. He would also approve. Thank you, Grandpa. Dave and Solomon. Still connected.

She returns with my tea, but forgets the water, and asks "Are you ready?"

Am I ever ready. Is the Pope Catholic? Shh, slow down. You've already taken care of your needs once today, and you know you're going to have a good time later with Alice or one of her friends. This is just silly meaningless playfulness. Down, john john.

I look directly into her eyes, and completely ignore the breasts I of course haven't even noticed, and say, "I'm going to order the brunch my Kansas City grandmother would make for me." As I say this I smile my sheepish little boy smile, and look away. (I make a mental note to practice and refine this move in my next mirror session). I want the smile to say "I'm vulnerable, I'm far from home, and I'm a nice, safe, guy." I want averting my eyes to say "I'm kind of shy, too." I then look back up at her.

She seems to become a bit more relaxed. Better. The moves

seem to be having their desired effect. "All right, let's hear.
We'll try to be your 'home away from home.'"

Is that a flirtatious comment, or is John John clouding my
view and I'm reading too much into it?

As she is taking the order, she shyly tucks her chin, then
looks up with delicate brown eyes, as if over invisible glass-
es. It's modest, and yet slightly encouraging, whether intended
or not.

"Let's start with matzah ball soup. With the works: chick-
en, rice, and noodles. With a side of Russian rye--that's with
caraway seeds, some sliced onions--red and white--; and I'd like
a bottle of spicy mustard, and one of honey mustard. Please."

She's writing furiously, trying to take down all the de-
tails. "I think some of the extras to the soup will be an addi-
tional charge."

"No problem." I say with a gallant and cavalier wave of my
hand. "Please bring that first, and then I'd like lox, soft
scrambled eggs and onions, bagels, cream cheese, strawberry jam.
Fresh orange juice, and a glass of water."

She continues writing, then asks me to repeat it, which I
do. When she finishes writing, now on the back of the page, she
looks at me and says:

"Big appetite. Definitely a growing boy. And one who knows
what he wants and likes." She then turns and walks away.

How did she mean that, I wonder. Did she have a hint of a
smile? Was it sardonic? Was she mocking me? Was she saying I'm
selfish and self-centered just because I know what I want?

I wonder if she knows that her top button is undone, showing

the faintest hint of cleavage. I always reflexively assume that to be an invitation. It's as if a woman is saying through that quarter or half inch--an illusion created by shadow when I draw it-- "Here is a glimpse of what I have to offer. There is much more here for you....maybe. Can you find the key into this treasure? Will these ever belong to you to enjoy?" I think of my formula. Definitely a second base worth trying to steal.

Growing "boy"? Did she mean that playfully? It didn't sound that way to me. It seemed patronizing. I'm not a kid anymore. What is she, my mother? Talk about throwing cold water on a scenario I was just starting to create.

A shadowy illusion?

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I pull out a piece of paper and my pen. Journal time.

This habit, like my sweater, is a gift from mom. At eleven, she suggested I start writing, and at sixteen she bought me a five year journal, which I have written in faithfully at least once each day. She even suggested I keep a separate dream journal, which I occasionally do, although I often don't remember my dreams. Whenever I am without a pen, I feel somewhat naked.

The writing has become an essential habit, almost like orgasms. In different ways, each serves to keep me grounded and centered. The orgasms remove a certain physiological stress in my body, and seem to calm my mind. The writing, in a different way, allows me to pull back from the situation, events, thoughts, and externalize them in a way that provides a calming perspective. Also, sometimes my mind gets going too fast. Writing concerns and issues helps slow me down.

I think back to last night's reading. I sense a connection between my writing and Camus'. I grasp the manila folder called "Camus Paper," an assignment due next Friday for my existential literature class 203. Let's assume the plague is symbolic as well as real, representing difficulties and adversities people face in life. On a literal level, Dr. Rieux is a doctor who fights the plague by caring for the sick. But Rieux also recognizes that the plague creates psychological separation between humans. Often he feels exhausted and overwhelmed fighting both problems. To restore

"Make sure you return the pen." DAMN! My stupid pen ran out of ink. I had to borrow one from the cashier, a frustrating and humiliating experience. I set aside my Camus writing. I need to get this down exactly as it happened. I may need to write a letter to her supervisor, as well as to the manufacturer for their defective product--it was nearly a new pen.

When at first the pen didn't write, I wiggled and twirled it like a baton several times. Nothing. I scribbled hard on a sheet of paper, which only accomplished the creation of inkless white indented lines. I shook it, this time harder. Futile.

Why now? Why when I was writing about the importance of writing to me, working on a paper? The wretched pen took away my means of communication. Created undue pain and suffering. And then the cashier really created undue pain and suffering. Someone will pay.

This was completely unfair. Especially on such a special day in my life. I felt blocked, helpless; those are feelings I hate, and not ones I allow to last very long without taking action. Another angry shake. This one I realized had nothing to do with

getting the pen going, more like trying to punish it. I looked over and saw e that the new waitress is preoccupied. A couple of customers at a neighboring table were staring at me. I guess it must have appeared strange to see someone shaking a pen so angrily and violently. I didn't want to appear out of control. I gave them a slow version of the downward "nod," and stopped shaking the pen.

With a calm that belied my mood, I slowly bent the pen in the middle, so it created a nearly 90 angle. Sometimes this has actually worked in the past, and re-started the ink flowing, as if the pen realized it's just been given a spanking and better straighten up. Again, nothing.

I looked for a glass of water. The bumbling new waitress hadn't brought it yet. As an alternative, I placed the pen in my mouth and sucked the tip, to coat it with saliva. Sometimes water has worked in the past to re-start a pen's ink flowing again. Still nothing.

Yes, someone will suffer for this. I didn't get into law school for nothing. I want to make sure I write this down just as it happened, a written record for future action which shows the righteousness and purity of my position--especially with the cashier. I can't believe that I--a paying customers--was treated that way.

This whole interruption was ridiculous. Absurd.

Like a bad cosmic joke.

* * *
Here's the situation:

A waitress walks by, and though I'm upset, I hold up my pen toward her with a rather kind quarter-inch upward curving smile

on my lips.

"Want a bill, ask your own waitress," and she says dismissively and walks on.

A different waitress approaches, and I ask her, again in a kind tone, if I can please borrow a pen.

"Only have one. Go ask the cashier. She's got lots." Her tone is can't-be-bothered curt, preoccupied, like I'm some sort of low-life who's emerged from the sewer.

Holding my pen out in front of me, I stand up and walk to the front counter where a customer is starting to pay his bill. I see an opening while he counts out his money and say to the cashier, "This pen just ran out of ink." I speak to her as if it's her fault my pen doesn't write. My tone is modulated to come across as a bit annoyed. But intentionally so. I feel completely in control of myself. Given my prior experience with the other two waitresses, it seems you have to be assertive with these types of people to get what you want. I give her a mild version of the arch--narrowing of the eyes, furrow above my nose, slight raise of the right eye.

She turns to look at me. Not only is she not intimidated by the arch, but she actually turns away, saying nothing, ignoring me to wait for the customer who is still trying to find the exact change. I'm starting to feel somewhat helpless and ineffective. Then, without looking at me, she parries with "So why you holding it out to me? I don't want it. The trash can's over there."

I know she's not that stupid, and knows what I want. But I don't let myself get sidetracked by her rudeness.

"I need a pen. I'm writing." I say with more than a hint of

exasperation and even bitterness.

"That's generally why people want pens. Did your mommy ever teach you the two little magic words." I'm not liking this banter. This is not the time. I'm doing something important, working on great ideas. Does she have any idea who she's talking to? But before I can say anything, she continues:

"Yes, the two little magic words for all good boys: 'I want.' You've been well-trained. You've evolved it to 'I need.' You even have the eight word advanced version: 'I need it, and I need it now! Akshav.'" She turns back to the customer she's helping.

Take a breath. Don't get distracted by a sarcastic verbal chess game. Stay focused on your goal. All you want is a pen so you don't forget your ideas.

"May I please borrow a pen?"

"Are you sure you're just going to 'borrow' it?" She's counting out the customer's change with excessive slowness.

She's playing me. I'm not going to bite. "I promise" I say, not rising to her bait.

"What about the ink?"

"What about it?"

"You want to borrow that, too?"

"What good is a pen without ink?" I say feeling true aggravation, not just a "move." Damn. I bit. She hooked me.

"Well, how are you going to 'borrow' ink? Aren't you actually going to take it and not return it? That's like stealing."

"Let me buy the stupid pen" I say, enunciating each word carefully and slowly.

"Why didn't you just ask in the first place."

"How much?"

"Does this look like a drugstore to you? We don't sell pens. There's one a half mile down the street. They're probably still open, but maybe not."

She doesn't know who she's up against, and so I tell her: "Do you know who I am?" I tell her I'm a soon to be Harvard lawyer, a Phi Beta Kappa Stanford student, and I have enormous capital reserves at my disposal.

She looks at me and counters: "Do you know who I am?"

Somewhat stunned at her retort, I ask, "Who?"

"I'm the person in charge of the pens."

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"Please, I would like a pen." I'm actually shaking, and my voice is high-pitched and whiny.

"Don't grovel like a little baby--it doesn't become a grown man." She turns to help another customer. I give up, and start to walk away.

She stops me by saying, "We don't sell pens, but I'll lend you a pen for free."

"Thank you." With something close to gratitude I turn back and reach out my hand for the proffered pen.

"Not so fast" she reprimands, as she pulls the pen back "We don't lend ink."

"Is this a crazy joke? Am I on Candid Camera? I'll buy the ink."

"We don't sell ink."

I turn again to leave, as she says, "Don't panic, there's always a solution. Just make a donation to the March of Dimes for

the ink," and she points to the square glass box which has a few coins in it--lots of pennies, a couple nickels, a dime or two.

"How much would be fair?" I query.

"Whatever you think is fair." I don't have any change, so I take out a dollar, and thrust it into the jar, probably tripling the day's take. I reach out my hand, thinking to myself, "Finally. She got her donation--a generous one at that--she probably takes a cut."

She doesn't offer the pen. She now has a version of the "arch."

"What?" I say, completely exasperated.

"Lousy attitude. Give with love or don't give at all."

"Fine, I won't give. Give me my money back." I reach for the jar, but can't find a way in.

"It's Too late. What's done is done. Your money is gone forever. Your harsh action is also unleashed upon the world. You'll need to make another donation as an act of repentance and to see if you can do better. Try again."

"I don't have any change" I say as I hold out another dollar, expecting her to tell me to put that in then, too. Instead she takes the dollar and gives me three quarters, two dimes and a nickel.

"Just put the nickel in--but do it kindly. Think about the children you're trying to help." I put the coin in as gently as possible although I am still fuming on the inside. I try to smile in what I conceive to be a kind manner. The cashier hands me the pen. I take it, thank her perfunctorily while giving her a clipped downward nod, and turn to go back to my table.

As I walk away she shouts after me, "Remember you said

'Borrow.'

"Make sure you return the pen."

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But Rieux also recognizes that the plague creates psycholog-
ical separation between humans. Often he feels exhausted and
overwhelmed fighting both problems. To restoreI reread
what I last wrote. Part of me, still cross, wants to draft a
letter from my notes to her supervisor. But I tell myself she's
not worth it. Take a breath. Save the legal battles for the big
cases. Try to remember your train of thought. You've got a
paper due. Don't be sidetracked by a meaningless experience from
which there is nothing to learn.

To restore...his energy, he swims in the balm of soothing
waters. Excellent. Now you're back in flow.

The scene is sensuous, and at the same time, provides Rieux
with what I suppose could be called an existential equivalent of
baptism, renewal, and rebirth.

But what about the author, Camus? How does he deal with
his helplessness in fighting "plagues"--both actual disease, and
symbolically, human separation and alienation. He resists the
plague by writing *The Plague*. By writing fiction, he addresses
the real-life issues and difficulties he's facing in the world
and in himself. Dr. Rieux, the character, helps heal others.
Writing about Rieux's efforts helps heal Camus the person, as the
author copes with his own helpless feelings and uses words to
combat the plagues of his time.

I look around for my waitress. Where's my food? I know
she's knew, but what an idiot. I've never had slower service.

I remember from the professor's lecture that many scholars believe the plague represented the Nazis' overrunning France during World War II. Plagues, whether real or symbolic don't have much direct relevance to my life--unless you count the stupid cashier and the inept waitress who's supposed to be serving me. But the insight of acquiring a certain detachment through writing is still a good idea, the kernel of a paper.

It makes me happy when I kill two birds with one stone, getting an insight into myself-- the benefits I get from my daily writing habit--and an idea for a paper I have to do anyway--why a writer might write a novel. I like any effort I make to create maximum benefits for me.

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I feel more relaxed, competent, just by jotting down these ideas. Order has been restored. The cashier woman is fast becoming a soon-to-be-forgotten blip in an otherwise perfect day. Though, maybe I should write her manager to have a note put in her file. There are limits to rudeness. And limits to incompetence. Where's my matza ball soup? I don't see my waitress anywhere. Is she taking a break? Slipped out to get her huge breasts fondled by her boyfriend, or a cook? What's going on here?

I put the notes back in the "Camus" folder.

Maybe I'm a little stressed from making all those decisions about where to go this evening, what to pack, and then driving up here through way too much traffic.

But this evening's party should make it all worthwhile.

Alice (column: *BERKELEY*, Row: *EASY*) was great when I called her. Yes, there is going to be a party this evening in Berkeley.

Yes, she's of course "free"; and yes, she has some friends--sisters no less!-- she'd like me to meet. Berkeley became the perfect choice. "EASY" Alice is my fallback. The sisters provide the potential for something new and novel. I placed the sisters in a space half-way between "EASY" and "MEDIUM" on my chart. I did this because even though meeting someone for the first time tends toward a *MEDIUM* placement, Alice's reputation, recommendation, and salacious tone as she described them, created a movement toward *EASY*.

I guess the lesson is that sometimes you have to be flexible in your categorization system, allowing for people who don't simply fit into the boxes.

At least before you get to know them.

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I had some trouble deciding what to wear to the Berkeley party--no simple feat given the different sartorial situations and cultures in which I'm trying to travel and assimilate. Shoes are the simplest of my choices. I packed my wingtip shoes, just in case there's something fancy, but am wearing my penny loafers. I no longer keep money in the slot, though I thought it was clever to do so when in high school. Times do change.

To find the right clothes, I open the blue bundles--freshly laundered and neatly folded--which I picked up yesterday at the dry cleaners. Each Monday I drop off the week's dirty clothes, each Friday I pick them up. That way everything is fresh and ready for the weekend. Some scoff at a college student using a dry cleaner rather than doing laundry himself. But why waste my time on servile tasks. Does anyone really enjoy doing laundry?

Would they actually do it if they didn't have to? QED. I rest my case.

I'm wearing my turtleneck, and uncuffed khaki pants; and packed my sleeveless argyle sweater and cuffed (that fall half way along my wingtips) khakis--for golf tomorrow if nothing else.

I look at my ties. Choices. I decided to take one, just in case. Mom says my preference in ties reflects my difficulty in making choices. I think it reflects my creative integration of multiple options. All my ties are Talbott "composites" I purchased in Carmel. The first impression you have of a given tie--from a distance-- is it's overall color; red, yellow, green, blue. But the closer you get, the more you realize that each color-themed tie is a composite, composed of carefully stitched together fragments of many ties of that color, but with quite different patterns. Several people like them, calling them "creative," "charming," "unique." Some, when they get closer, feel they are too busy and confusing. But I like them and that's what counts. I feel they're elegant, yet unpretentious and comfortable and can travel well in many disparate worlds. I also feel I'm getting a really good deal; each tie is actually like getting six ties. To color-coordinate with my car, I pick the red-themed tie.

I guess my choice in ties is similar to my choice in women and icecream. Variety. Even with icecream, I never just get two or three scoops of one type. I always get three different types of icecream, and at least two different sauces. Flavors like chocolate mint chip, orange 50/50, chocolate mocha are great.

Banana splits are perfect.

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Finally packed, I could feel the excitement building as I jumped into Mr. Red.

However, just as I started the engine and heard that powerful thundering revving, I realized that in all the day's excitement I'd forgotten to practice the flute, and my lesson is Monday, my day without physical exercise, but Taylor makes sure my fingers get a lot of exercise.

I hate to break the structures I've established--whether exercise, study, flute practice, not writing in my journal. If I deviate from my routine, I feel slightly uncomfortable. I don't think it's just superstitious behavior or obsessiveness. I've carefully crafted a schedule that works perfectly to keep my body and mind in top form. Just like maintaining Mr Red. So, to skip a maintenance check up is not good for its--or my-- health. And, to keep myself from feeling trapped by my routine, I structure in a certain amount of time for spontaneous, unplanned activities--like tonight.

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I turned off the engine, went back into the house, and looked into my flute practice book, where Mr. Taylor had written down the assignment. Tyrannical Taylor, who never gives a compliment, came close at last Monday's practice. After telling me that the last line of Goddard was "Fair" he said it was "adequate enough" that next week we should bring back the accompanist.

I never played in a school band. Rather, I hire an accompanist. Why be just one of a number of anonymous people in a band? You can't even hear yourself play. I much prefer being the sole,

unique melody line. I thought if I ever were in a band, the only position that would suit me would be the conductor, the maestro, the head of the band. (Though I don't like the idea of my back toward the audience).

I wish my accompanist Ms. Fleming were cuter. Though school-marmish, she is Julliard trained, and is able to work around my errors, and, with Taylor's guidance and admonitions, to make me sound quite good. Taylor said it's not his job to give praise--leave that for family and friends. And most people I play "recitals" for don't have the knowledge or expertise to even hear when I make a mistake. They all applaud appropriately. I love being center stage and receiving praise. I wish he'd give more, too.

It's interesting that there are so many female flautists, but the males are really the ones that make it to center stage. Hubert Laws in jazz, Jean- Pierre Rampal in classical-- (Richard never tires of boasting to me about his French connection as if somehow the fact that he studied at the Sorbonne, and I admire Rampal, makes Richard more special. His logic makes no sense, but annoys me nonetheless.)

Bmajor Scale. At the start of the week, I found the key signature, with its five sharps, daunting. But after five days of practice, my fingers and mind were starting to catch on. Then I practiced the G# minor (in three variations: melodic, harmonic, regular). I decided to limit my practice to those scales, using different tonguings--slur, then legato and stacatto with tu-ku; and tu-ku-tu-, ku-tu-ku-- but not to do all the tonguings on all the scales. Then, A little work on a couple of Anderson's *Etudes*. Finally, a few run-throughs of Goddard's *Allegretto*. After a couple of months, I'm starting to be able to play it from muscle

memory, and my speed has increased, based on the metronome, to a quarter note equals 80, which is fast for me to play the sixteenth notes in the piece. Taylor still wants it at a quicker tempo.

In his dreams.

Well, I shouldn't be too hard on him. I'm paying him to push me to be the best. Still, a few more "good jobs, attaboy" would be appreciated

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I don't think Taylor appreciates the process of learning I've had to go through just to get where I am. It seems the process is the same no matter what the area: arduous, disciplined practice. Connecting parts and wholes. For the flute, in order to "read" the music, at first there is the awkward learning to see visually which line or space a note is on; then to translate that note into a cognitive letter equivalent; then to translate that letter into a kinesthetic physical position for each of my ten fingers. (And this is all after having learned to use the lips and breath to even get a sound, much less a pure tone, out of the contraption).

Then, with lots of practice, I learned I could make that process faster and soon could read not only an individual note (like reading a specific written letter) but musical phrases (like reading a word). Eventually, with a lot of practice, I could read several bars, like reading groups of words, sentences, or a paragraph.

What seems to happen is that with practice I am able to bypass the earlier steps, and can go straight from visual to

muscle memory. That's how, with the Goddard piece, I was able to go from an initial tempo of eighth note equals 60 on the metronome to quarter note equals 40, and now with quarter note equaling 80. But I think I'm approaching my outer limit.

Often my fingers and mind seem to get stuck. Taylor calls it a "brain hiccup." If it's a particularly "stinking stuck silence" he calls it "malodorous" and says "That was more like a brain fart." (When he criticizes me, I'd like to let loose an SBD--silent but deadly--to let him really experience malodorous).

Whenever the stuckness happens--no matter what the technical cause-- I have to look at where my fingers are, and then compare their placement to the note I'm supposed to be playing. But when I check my fingers--which I never do unless I'm confused--they often appear to be strangers on the round shiny silver discs, and give me no clue as to the note I'm playing. When I look back to the sheet music, I'm also not exactly sure what note I'm on--like reading, where you don't read letters, you read a "word." So it becomes nearly impossible to quickly create a match between finger placement and note.

Then, I have to go through the entire elementary learning process again--visual, cognitive, kinesthetic-- at each note, stopping and translating where my finger is to where I am visually on the sheet music. I have to backtrack to find the part of the mind which reads letters, followed by translating the letter into finger placement.

I don't think Taylor's sensitive enough to how hard all this is for me.

And that's not even considering the rhythm, which is certainly not my strength. I have trouble keeping a beat. That's why

I use the metronome. But if I concentrate too much on the metronome's beat, Taylor yells at me, telling me I'm losing the flow of the music and it sounds mechanical. When I turn the metronome off and try to count with my feet, I get confused and lose focus on the note reading. If I focus on the note reading, my foot keeping the beat becomes confused, and Taylor shouts that my timing is off.

Then, whenever I get all that right, he tells me my tone--which is usually my strength-- is not as pure as it should be. "The high notes Eflat3 and up are too sharp. Tuck your upper lip more around your teeth. C#2, the lone wolf, is howling, turn your instrument toward you to rein it in. hollow your throat, you need more sound. Project as if to the back of Carnegie Hall. Where's the vibrato? Too forced. Relax your jaw. Now your fingers are too tight. Anticipate the next note. Like a cat, ready to jump. Soft paws. Don't pound the keys. Caaarresssss them."

Reading notes, translating notes into letters, translating letters into finger positions, remembering the key signature, dealing with "accidentals", keeping the beat, striving for pure tone. ARRGH. There are certainly a lot of different parts that have to be assimilated and organized to create a whole in music--a moving melody line. It's a miracle anything comes out.

Poor parts. Poor brain. Poor fingers. Poor feet. Poor lips.

Poor whole. Poor me.

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When I first started practicing Goddard, the last line in particular felt like I was slowly and laboriously ascending a mountain, with frequent dips into valleys along the way.

Grandpa \$ might say that the last line looks like a bullish stock market--always rising overall-- with some mild bearish dips, as the melody line drops from the root note of the arpeggio, D-F-Bflat D2 back to F1 arpeggio, then rises again: Bb-D2 up to F2; followed by a drop back to Bflat 1....continuing ever upward and eventually culminating in a tonic Bflat arpeggio--D3, F3 and Bflat 4 crescendo.

I love the smooth-building crescendo in Goddard's' climactic finale line; arpeggios from low D1 to high Bflat 4, from one end of the flute's range to the other. Finally, last week, Taylor gave his almost compliment on the last line...."Play it flowing, rising, yes, that's close, faster, more powerful, rising again, crescendoing, fortissimo...yes, you're getting ever closer, yes, throat more open, hollow, vibrating, yes, almost there....yes..do you hear it..finnalllllly..almost like it's supposed to sound---yes...like somebody in the throes of an orgasm."

I finish, feeling ecstatic. That was the best I've ever done and may ever do in the future. I turn to him for praise.

"That was fair. Keep practicing."

Fair? Part of me wanted to take my flute and shove it up Mr Taylor's a-- where the sun don't shine.

But another, larger part of me was proud of me. I'd played it like "somebody in the throes of an orgasm." More than faint praise, indeed.

The parts coming together to form a w(hole).

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Once I finished my practice, I gave my hands a massage to keep them smooth, soft, and supple, and acknowledged them for their competent work. Got to keep the parts happy.

Then I packed the flute, several manila folders for writing,
and put them all in the car. I once again turned on Mr. Red.

I once again turned him off. I had to go back inside to
retrieve Mr. Cannon, just in case there is a situation this
weekend where a "shooting" might be involved. You never know
what's out there. I think humorously of the Second Amendment.
Strict constructionism.

Once again, I turned on Mr. Red.

And now I'm here, writing in my journal, with a new pen,
back in the present, fully caught up with myself, ready to charge
ahead into the future.

The soft, sensuous, playful high notes of the flute. The
deep bass sound of the car. Mr Cannon by my side. I really am a
man for all seasons and of all notes. What a range. I wonder
what luscious mounds of mountains await my scaling.....

Vavavarrrvvvvvooom.

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L

"Life is simple," my Grandpa would repeat to me during our monthly pep talks the year before I was to enter high school. When I applied his formulation to my dating life up to that point, it certainly was true. I look back now with a certain nostalgia at the naivete of my B.O. days (Before Orgasm). When I went to my first school party in seventh grade, Mom asked me how it was and I said, "It was really fun. They had cherry kool ade punch and good chocolate chip cookies. Without nuts, the way I like them." Life was simple, indeed.

But Grandpa wasn't talking about parties and fun, he was talking about effort and money. "Life is simple if you remember this motto: Effort equals success." He'd actually write it out for me: "Life is simple: Effort=\$uccess."

After my first orgasm (A.O.), I also understood the motto well. It certainly applied and was always true. Effort (through self-serve) equaled Success (defined as orgasm). I, indulging my high school freshman sense of humor, changed the equation to "EFFORT=SEXCESS." Still "simple."

I put the Camus/Plague/Existentialism file back in my back pack, and take out a series of manila folders, the first of which is titled "EFFORT=SEXCESS: AN OVERVIEW."

I'm feeling happy, almost giddy-- from the exhilaration of my drive up to the City in Mr. Red, my admission to Harvard, my talk with Grandpa \$, the evening ahead in Berkeley, and even the little playfulness going on now with this waitress. Life is good,

and simple--past, present, future. Everything is happening and evolving in my life just as it should.

As I sit at the table across from the window, I can hear the traffic outside, but because of the bright lights in the restaurant, it is impossible to see into the night.

The window acts like a mirror, and I can see my reflection looking back at me, wearing a dark blue cashmere turtleneck, a gift from mom. I like to think of it as mom symbolically keeping me warm. Some women, especially in Berkeley, don't like the idea of cashmere for anti-materialism or pseudo-environmental reasons. But, once I can find a ruse to get them to rub their hands on the sweater, there is no woman who can resist commenting on its soft feel. Thus, by extension, a point is scored for the wearer--moi.

I don't see the waitress or my food coming. I look at my watch. I still have plenty of time before I need to leave. I decide not to complain about her slowness so as not to draw any further unnecessary attention to myself. I don't want to become a *persona non grata* here.

I turn back to my stack of "sex" folders. There are now six: an *OVERVIEW* folder, four "*BASES*" and *MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS/ADDITIONAL REFINEMENTS*. Each folder has an overview page, and several index cards with additional ideas. What was "simple" has become quite complex, and every few months or so, I try to sort out and catch up with the accumulated ideas. What happened to simple? Well, actually, it's simple. Once I started to date, life became much more complex.

In fact, Grandpa \$'s equation was almost never true for the first three years in high school. At first I blamed the problem on the fact that I couldn't drive. Mom drove, and the tone was

set on the first few minutes of my very first date.

I walked to the door, greeted Sheila's parents, and walked her to the car, where mom was waiting. Because of my deaf left ear, I'd spent a lot of time thinking about which door to open. I wanted to make sure that Sheila sat to the right of me. As a gentleman, I knew I needed to let her enter the car first. To keep her on my right--and still be a gentleman--there were only two choices. The ideal choice was to open and let her enter the passenger side back door. Then I would walk around to the driver's side back door and enter. Choice two was to enter the driver's side back door, let her in, then scrunch in myself. That night, I chose option one. Politely, I held the passenger side back seat car door open for Sheila to enter, only to hear:

"What are you doing opening the back! What am I, chopped liver? Am I supposed to be a chauffeur? Up in front, you two."

Her voice was annoyed and garbled at the same time.

I was embarrassed for two reasons. First, I didn't like being reprimanded by my mom on my first date. Secondly, by letting Sheila get in first through the front passenger side door, she would be on my deaf left side, and it would be hard to hear her without turning my head awkwardly and staring. I thought of saying something, but it seemed too complicated to explain to mom and Sheila, so I dutifully closed the door and walked around to the other side of the car.

Once we were all seated in front, I turned to ask Sheila, in the politest way I knew, what her curfew was. My exact words were,

"Do you have any restrictions?"

First there was a screech. Because of the deafness in my

left ear, I couldn't tell exactly where the sound was coming from. One of my SAT vocabulary words came to mind. A cauterwaul. Had we run over a cat? Then I realized the sound was more like a cacophonous cackle, and it was coming from my left in the form of high-pitched almost hysterical laughter, followed by a string of words: "Hahahaha. Oh my God, what did you just say?!?! 'Do you have any restrictions?' What kind of a dumb bunny question is that! That's like asking your date if she's a, pardon the French 'sleazy slut....'; I mean, Sheila's a sophisticated proper Sunset College Preparatory private school girl....like I was. I can't let you get away with that. What kind of idiotic question is that?" At first I thought the slurring was from too much alcohol. Of course, later I learned it was from mom's "Long Day's Journey Into Night" with prescription medications from multiple doctors and pharmacies.

That opening salvo established a pattern, not just for that date, but for all subsequent dating the rest of freshman and sophomore years.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, what I really needed was....

A better, more precise, equation.

* * *

And it came, of all sources, from dad.

One night, during the end of my sophomore year, my father turned to me during a night baseball game and asked if I had any questions about "the other sex." The A's were playing the Yankees. But it didn't really matter who we were playing. The A's were perennial losers, always ending up in the cellar, always losing. Kind of like my dating life.

I told him things weren't going too well, dating wise.

"What's your batting average? Are you up around .300?" he asked. "That would get you a big contract in the majors. Hell, .200 would probably get you a starting job with the A's."

Dad had been the coach of my Little League team for several years, until I stopped at twelve. He had told me that the next year the pitching would be too fast. I trusted him, and switched my attention to golf and tennis.

"Gosh, Dad, that was several years ago. I don't remember."

He laughed. "No, I meant with girls. Are you getting any base hits?"

I looked perplexed, but shook my head no.

He put an arm around my shoulder. "I understand. Not easy, right?"

I nodded, and said "But Grandpa always said 'Life is simple,' if you just do the effort, success will follow. It works with grades, but not with girls."

He laughed again. He had an easy, engaging manner, when he wanted. People instantly liked him. "Grandpa told me the same motto. But once when I was a young man around your age--about 15-- I went to him with a failing grade in physics. I told him that no matter how hard I tried, I was just overwhelmed, and couldn't get it. I expected he'd get angry and tell me to try harder."

"Rather than get angry, Grandpa told me there were two more

lessons I was ready for. And now you're ready for them, son."

Dad's arm was still on my shoulder, and I felt really close

to him. It didn't make any difference whether the A's won or lost. I was aware that just being there, talking with him, his arm around me, was the victory.

I glanced up at the sky. It was a dark, moonless night. Yet when I looked around at the stands, the field, everything was so clear and well-lit.

"The first lesson was, 'When you have a problem, call it a challenge and break it into smaller chunks.' The second was, 'Don't get bloody hitting your head against a wall. Know when to cut your losses and find a better way.'"

I took out a pen, turned over the night's program he'd bought me, and wrote down what he said.

"It looks like you and I need to put those two lessons together, and see how we can better address your problem." So, that night, while the Athletics were losing, dad talked to me about the birds and bees. We actually created a more precise formulation for what kind of effort equals what kind of success, and how much effort was worth putting out before cutting our losses.

He pointed to the infield, and told me that I should make a formula incorporating each of the four bases. "You know what those represent, don't you?" I nodded, though I wasn't exactly sure.

<I subsequently asked around and learned that four bases were a relative common nomenclature; something like standardized time: kissing (base one); petting above the waist, (base two); petting below the waist (base three); and home run. The output side of the equation.>

He then said I should break down the input side "effort"

down into its two components: time and money. So, the revised equation was $EFFORT (TIME + MONEY) = SUCCESS (BASES 1-4)$

Dad told me I should spend the next few weeks refining what I meant by success at each level, and then we could talk again.

Because I was embarrassed I didn't tell him that I wasn't getting much playing time--not too many at bats. And that my batting average was goose eggs.

He gave me a final word of advice. "Son, baseball and dating women are like a chess game. You always have to know your opponent's tendencies, and then be thinking two or three moves ahead. Women you'll learn about soon enough. But now watch the chess game between the pitcher and batter. The batter's a pull hitter, and the pitcher knows it. The score's 2-2. There's a man on first, the potential go-ahead run. So the pitcher will throw outside, and if the batter tries to pull it, he will be forced to ground to short, into a double play.

"But the batter knows that the pitcher knows his strength, and will pitch outside to his weakness. Let's see what happens."

The first pitch: outside and low. The second pitch, outside. The hitter singled it to right field, and the winning run went to third.

"See, the batter went to right. That's great talent. You have to go with what you're given, rather than force it. You need to know your opponents strengths and weaknesses; know where to

strike, where to pitch, where to hit. It's all a big chess game."

I was filled with thoughts. There was so much more going on than I realized. Baseball (and girls): not a simple game. I was

impressed by how much Dad knew about baseball and told him so
(Though I didn't say anything about how angry he gets when I beat
him at chess).

The A's lost that night. But I won: time with dad, and a new
structure for approaching girls.

* * *

I open the manila folder labeled "*SEXCESS OVERVIEW*." I thumb
through it and find the original program on which I created
my initial formula that night with dad. Behind the formula I had
penned comments called "Draft One," which I worked out in the
following weeks. Looking back, it's quaint.

FIRST BASE

Effort (3 dates, \$40)= Success (kiss)

SECOND BASE:

Effort (4 more dates <7 total> + \$50 more <\$75 total>=

Success (Feel of breasts).

THIRD BASE: No idea. I know that in terms of absolute
distance, it makes no difference whether I'm at home plate. or at
second base. Each is equally far from third. But I'm going to
wait until I get to second before formulating criteria for third.

HOME RUN: In my dreams, the only thing I know
here--drummed into me by Grandpa in our pep talks--is to wear
protection. Don't let a girl let you get her pregnant. She'll
just try to take your money. "Enough said."

So, I now had a more precise formula. I had cut-off points
for effort for the first two bases. If no success, then it would
be time to move on to the next flower.

I thought my formulation was fair. I knew good girls in
Kansas City never kiss on the first date. So, I'd give them three

chances, and, given my allowance, that's what I could afford.

Of course, there was still the problem of getting up to bat.

I was at a disadvantage at "Country Day College Preparatory School for Young Men" because there were no girls in our classes. The only girls I met, from our sister private schools, were snobby, elitist, and prudish "door huggers." So for my first two seasons in high school, I was hitless. Zero for three at bats in year one; zero for five at bats in year two.

Because of my low percentage, and the low audience response, the manager--me-- even benched me for a lot of the season. I knew this average wouldn't get me into the majors, the minors, or even AAA. But I had the formula, and I was hopeful one day it might apply.

If I were to write a book about me as my hero, Don Juan, and modeled the book after Joyce's *Portrait*, which we read in junior English, it would be called: *Portrait of Don Juan as a Young Man*. When you opened the book, all you would see are blank pages.

I was forced to self-serve: to play pitcher, batter, and the adoring fans.

I tried to think of it as batting practice.

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As I'm rereading these efforts, a shadow crosses my papers,

covers me, and blocks out my light. I smell matzah ball soup, and fresh caraway.

"Whatcha you working on?" she asks as she puts down the honey mustard, the plate of onions, the toast, and the Dr.


Brown's cream soda. "Whatcha" I think to myself. "So lower class.

How about 'Do you mind if I ask you what you're working on.'"

I push my napkin on top of the folder, look up a little awkwardly, and say,

"Oh, it's a paper on existentialism, human suffering, and Camus' Plague." Darn. Why did I say that? First, it's not true; well, it's kind of true in that I was working on that paper just a few minutes before. But secondly, it's way too academic for her; my reflexive intellectual snobbery when I'm uncomfortable coming to the fore. It's not light, cute, or flirtatious. I try to think quickly what could I say to improve this disastrous sortie. Nothing comes to mind.

"Sounds deep," she comments as I move the papers aside and she places the food on the table. I suffer a momentary lapse of self-control, and I can't help staring as she bends over to place the food on the table. The 1/4 to 1/2 inch shadow between her breasts exponentially increases, to at least two inches deep. Generally, on less well-endowed women, no more than 2" down from the start of the cleavage, the breasts have begun to separate as

gravity pulls down and out, like a hand-written . But not here: no Red Sea parting. Rather, it appears as if two giant marshmallows, topped with reddish brown cinnamon freckles, are trying to pour forth from either side of their containers and are only being held back by a combination of some hidden, invisible force to which they are attached and the fact that they are being squished into each other by the banks of the bra, preventing further movement, like this handwritten "w" How much is the bra doing the work, and how much her natural endowment. I've got

pictures of Jane Russell in the 1943 feature, the *Outlaw*. For that picture, Howard Hughes designed for her the first push up bra (steel underwire). She later confessed she didn't wear the bra in the movie and, she said, "He never knew." I have this nearly uncontrollable urge to bend my head forward and bury my nose and mouth within the waitresses w's softness.

It's not clear whether I lean forward slightly. I don't think I do, but I'm not quite sure. Still, my face is only a few inches from her chest as she finishes placing the food on the table, straightens up, and looks at me somewhat self-consciously, her face reddening.

"Will there be anything else?"

I think about apologizing, but am not sure I've done anything wrong.

"The spicy mustard, please, and some water." I look at the food, and then back up at her. "This looks great. Thank you. By the way, I see from your name-tag that you're 'Mery,'" and I extend my hand and introduce myself. Good recovery, that. I could have just been trying to see her name-tag better. Her hand, though slightly damp, is soft and warm in mine.

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I place my face a few inches over the soup and waft the aroma towards me with my hands. I still feel a tingle from the touch of the waitress' hand. Am I also smelling her scent along with the soup? I waft a few more times.

I have a vague image of when I was quite small seeing my great Grandma Richmond once do this same motion over some candles. My gesture makes sense, bringing the glorious smell to my nose. Her gesture confused me--then and now. She closed her eyes

so she couldn't see the candle, then waved her hands like an American Indian, bringing smoke toward her face--some kind of smoke signal? Another strange, esoteric, meaningless Jewish ritual, I suspect. I take one more big inbreath whiff and, now fully receptive, take my first bite, close my eyes, and feel the warmth throughout my body.

I return to reviewing my notes.

Junior year. Finally, I can drive. I decide to call this my rookie year, and the expectations are high for the season. Particularly New Year's Eve. I'm told that everybody gets at least to first base at midnight. It's a ritual, even if she doesn't like you that much. I'll take whatever I can get, however I get it. I'd like to get to first base on a bunt, an infield single, even an error.

Sarah was a bit of a mousey girl, studious, college bound, Jewish. Both mom and Nana were pressuring me to take her out. "She's such a nice girl, and an excellent family." Yes, she was rich, but not very pretty, and quite haughty. I'd already tried three other girls, but their season was already committed, at least so they said. I took the hint: they weren't desirous of having me be part of their season. So, I called her a month before New Year's and she agreed to go out with me. I was actually delighted she agreed. I was going to be at the plate again.

New Year's Eve came. We went to a movie. To dinner. I'd brought her flowers, and spent over the limit for getting to first base--treating this date as three dates in one.

We decided to go to a party after dinner. It was about 11:45. The service at dinner had been slow. I thought things were going pretty well, though. We had trouble finding the party,

and got lost. 11:55. I thought maybe I could just pull over to the side of the road. I tried that, but she said, "What are you doing?! This is a dangerous area."

11:59. I was sweating, feeling desperate. I'd spent my whole allowance and more on this date. It was New Year's Eve. Everybody was going to be getting hits, probably homeruns. I just wanted to get to first base for the first time. I decided at midnight I was going to stop, wherever I was, and kiss her. Period. No if's, and's or butt's.

11:59:45. This was the moment I'd been waiting for.

11:59:59. I prepared to stop the car.

12:00 As I started to pull over, I realized that the car was on the middle of a railroad track, and we suddenly heard the warning whistle of an oncoming train.

Sarah screamed.

I continued driving.

The magic moment had passed.

I wondered idly whether I could blame this experience on Jesus. If he hadn't been born, there would be no A.C./B.C., no December 31 New Year's Eve celebration; no expectations; no failure.

I take her home.

My batting average was still "goose eggs."

Another night of self-serve.

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There were two favorite "make out" spots in Kansas City--Luce Park, and a certain road near the airport. Not that I had ever been to either with a girl, but I had asked, just in case.

One night, at a high school party which I had gone to dateless, I had seen an unbelievably beautiful, sexy, big busted girl dancing wildly. I hadn't recognized her from our sister schools, and I found out she was a "public school girl" there with her steady boyfriend, also from a public school. I don't know how "they" got invited to our party, but when they left the party early, I asked where they were going and my friends told me he'd bragged he was going to take her to Luce Park to make out.

I had borrowed Dad's car to go to the party. Since he was a reserve deputy sheriff, he had outfitted his car with a siren and hidden red lights under the grill.

The normal post party ritual was for me and my two buddies, Jim and Bill, to go to Winsteads and get a frosty shake and a double cheeseburger with grilled onions. Then I'd go home and self-serve. But that night, out of boredom, frustration, voyeurism, or jealousy, my friends and I followed the public school couple to Luce Park. I kept my car a block behind, and when they parked, I waited about a half hour, so that things would be getting steamy. I tried, but couldn't see anything through the fogged up windows in their car. My imagination was in overdrive.

Then, when I felt I waited long enough, I turned on the engine, with no lights, and approached silently in the darkened

night to within ten feet of their car. Suddenly, I switched on the glaring siren and flashing red lights.

Jim, Bill, and I broke into hysterical laughter as we drove off.

Then we went to Winsteads, and had a frosty and a cheese-

burger.

Then I went home and imagined the buxom blonde public school girl behind the fogged windows. Self-serve.

I take a gulp of Dr. Brown's Cel-Ray. Memories of my summer as assistant water front director at a camp in the Borscht Belt. Another bite of matzah ball soup. Memories of Nana's Sunday brunches. I've come a long way from Winsteads' frosties.

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Jim and Bill said that the private school ballpark was much harder to get a hit in, and the fence was so far back a home run was out of the question. Our batting averages would go up if we switched to the public school ballpark. They had an "in"--a public school friend called Rusty who was a real stud--great looking and all the girls loved him. So, one night, the three of us picked up Rusty and his blonde, buxom, public school girl and all drove to Jim's house because his parents weren't home.

I was excited. Was Rusty going to share his girlfriend with us? Was he going to show us some moves? Would my first hit be a home run? I had my protection ready, hidden deep inside my wallet.

Rusty and his girlfriend went into Jim's room and locked the door.

Bill, Jim, and I listened outside the door.

I heard what I presumed a "home run" sounded like.

Afterwards, we dropped Rusty and his girl off, and Jim, Bill, and I went to Winsteads for a frosty and cheeseburger.

That night I self-served to the sounds of a public school homerun.

* * *

"Here's your spicy mustard. Sorry it took so long." She pauses, as if considering whether to continue, then does. "Some of the customers were complaining because we'd run out of some three cornered pastry---hament something. I went to see if there might be any day-old ones in the back." As she's talking, I have a vague image again of great Grandma Richmond cooking *chamentoshen* in Nana's kitchen.

The waitress is speaking to me over my left shoulder and it's a bit hard to hear her because of my ear. I ask her if she would come around to my other shoulder. She gives me a quizzical look. Normally I just say, "Sorry, I'm deaf in my left ear," and that wins me some sympathy points. But for some reason, I feel vulnerable and weak saying that. Instead I say:

"The light frames you better on this side." (Not a lie, it did in fact). "And the word is '*chamentoshen*?' I say with a guttural ch.

"Yes, that's it. Are you Jewish?"

Why did I use the guttural "ch"? Was this reflexively showing off? Did I really want to "advertise" my Jewishness? I feel awkward now. I'm certainly not ashamed of being Jewish--after all I'm eating at a Jewish deli. Though lots of Christians now eat at delis, too. I have no reason to hide being Jewish, but I have no reason to call attention to it, either. I remember Grandpa telling me that's why I didn't get into Yale as an undergraduate--they only take so many Jews.

"My parents are, so I was born Jewish. You know, can't choose your parents. But now I'm really nothing."

She doesn't smile or seem to appreciate my response. Try again.

"Well, I guess you could say I'm lox and bagels Jewish."

She offers a perfunctory smile. I notice a small gold cross about two inches above the start of her cleavage. Oops. My focus had been several inches too low. Bad move. Unobservant of me. This fish is getting away before it was even near enough to sniff the bait. Is it time to cut losses and move to another flower?

Mixing metaphors. Take a breath. One more effort. Christian.

Wears a cross. Works as a waitress. *Agape* love. There's one line that I find almost always works. (It's good I wrote it on a red index card for easy retrieval. I remember it's in the section "CHESS MOVES" in the MISCELLANEOUS folder). I don't know if it's true or not when I use it, but girls love it, regardless, and always think it's true of them.

"You seem like a really kind-hearted person," and then I ad lib "quite different than most of the other waitresses here." As I say this I glance over at the cashier. As soon as I speak the ad lib words, I pinch my right thumb nail into my index finger, hard, like I do in tennis or golf when I make a bad mistake.

It's a form of punishment, an effort to wake me up so I become more focused and don't make another stupid error. It's a subtle movement, so no one else can see it. But I feel the pain and the indentation in the finger.

The mistake? First, I shouldn't be putting the other waitresses down. It makes me look like an unsafe, judgmental person who talks behind others' backs. (I do, but I don't want to be seen as doing that). Secondly, I fear I'm being too charming too soon, before she'd think I had enough time to sincerely be able

to make that kind of observation.

Her shy smile returns. Her eyes light up. Some redness returns to her cheeks.

"That's very sweet of you to say. I really try to be." She didn't notice my error. I got lucky. Back on track.

"You're new here, aren't you?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

I know the right answer is not "Because you're so awkward and slow in your service." But before I could say anything she continues "Do you come here often?"

"Not too often. You just seem very attentive to the customers, and very careful to make sure you get everything right."

"Thanks. Yeah, you're right." (Music to my ears. I think of asking her to say that again: "You're right.") "I've just started. I'm only doing this part-time to earn some money." She smiles shyly again. "I'm trying to support my painting habit."

"An artist. That's cool. You must have a creative soul." Once again I see the shyness, innocence, naivete in her face. I like that look--a lot. Especially on top of that body.

She turns abruptly when she hears someone yell "Mery, station 4. Food's ready. Whatcha you doing, loitering?!? Hurry up girl. Timesa wasting."

"Sorry, I'll be right there." She turns back to me. "Sorry, gotta go. Maybe we can talk later." I think how all waitresses are similar in the way they talk--"whatcha, gotta, timesa." Different accents--East coast New York, California, Israel-- but as if all educated in the same lower class school. As I'm watching her walk away, she turns back and says,

"I guess you're interested in baseball as well as existen-

tialism." And then she smiles, but it's not quite as innocent and naive as the other smiles.

* * *

Toward the end of my junior year, Rusty set me up with a public school blind date named Patty. Jim and Bill said that if I didn't get to first base with her--everybody did--there was probably something wrong with me, and I should not only switch ball parks, but switch teams--I was probably a homo or something.

With the date just a few nights away, I was nervous, realizing that I didn't really know how to kiss a girl. Who do you ask for help? Not dad, or grandpa, or mom, or Nana. I decided to call my older cousin, and ask her for some guidance. She was shocked when she heard about my .000 batting average. She was more startled when she heard what I was asking for.

"You want what?"

"Like a preseason exhibition game."

"Are you crazy? I'm your cousin."

"Yes, but haven't you had a couple of boyfriends? Don't you

know about.....base running?"

"You are crazy. I don't talk about what I do."

But eventually she took pity on me and gave me a lesson in getting singles. She even showed me how to round first base and head toward second.

That night I went by myself to Winsteads, had a chocolate frosty, a double cheeseburger with grilled onions; and then went home to self-serve while imagining rounding first and approaching second.

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What did she mean by saying I must like baseball? Did she catch an innocent glance at the capital letters FIRST and SECOND BASE when she served the food? Or, less innocently, did she recognize the moment when my eyes were diverted watching her treasures, and used that time to read what I was working on? Is she teasing me? Is there some spice mixed in with the shyness and marshmallows?

Where does she fit? I realize there's no place for her in my two column chart of *BERKELEY* and *STANFORD*. I'll need to add a third column "*MISCELLANEOUS/SERENDIPITY*." A potential treasure on the way to Berkeley to seek other treasures.

What did she mean by "Maybe we can talk later?" Was that an invitation or just a polite way of exiting? She clearly belongs in my new third column, "*SERENDIPITY*" but which row? Definitely not *EASY*. I'd say somewhere between *MEDIUM* and *HARD*. This will take some reflection. I look into the window as she walks away, seeing her long legs beneath a dress just an inch or so above the knees. Relatively demure by the current California standards.

She is a little plump, full hips, closer to my ideal of a Rubenesque woman than Richard's ideal of a Modigliani.

She could be a really fun challenge.

I make a note on a green card "Why"? What is my *MOTIVATION*? Why do I like what I like? And how does it motivate me to pursue it? I know (or at least hope) my taste is more than simply a reaction to Richard, choosing what he doesn't like. I put the green note card aside and take out a red one: "Hot Leads."

On this card I take some preliminary notes on the waitress, like a baseball--or chess--scouting report. Kind of frumpily

dressed. A waitress: someone wanting to please? Sees herself as good-hearted. Earnest. Not that competent. An artist. Visual, intuitive, creative. A Free spirit? Risk-taking? Unconventional, maybe even a rebel? Yet she also seems modest, shy, restrained, even innocent and naive. The effect of the gold cross? Was Richard right? Is part of my motivation for sexual encounters to corrupt the innocent (Green card: MISC folder, MOTIVATION)? I didn't think he was right when he said that, and I still don't agree. For me, it's just good fun, a game.

Back to the red card: What is the best way to "pitch" her. Perhaps she needs some structure? Might she be malleable if she feels acting from kindness? Lots of possible approaches.

Oh, immortal, heavenly sins
the damsel hast not a chance against my pen
especially when
it is harmonized with my os rotundum
right, Horace?!

I take a bite of the matzah ball soup. It's warm and nurturing. Comfort food.

* * *

My big date with public school Patty was approaching. Would a different ball park make me a better hitter? First we went to a party. We danced and talked. Then I went to the bathroom and after peeing, looked into the mirror as I washed my hands. I saw that my hair was still in place: neatly parted on the left side, brushed to the right. Short cropped so no curls. Then I looked below my hair to my forehead. There I saw lot of big red zits

with yellowish pus in them. I thought of trying to pop them, but there were too many, and they'd only look worse--bloody and oozy. "Forget it, she'll never kiss you--who'd want to kiss that?" When I went out, she was talking with some other public school guys flirtatiously, even coquettishly. What a slut. Forget it. I thought of not even saying good-bye to her, just leaving and going straight to Winsteads. Maybe I should join the other team and find a homo bar.

As I started to leave, Patty runs up to me, and said, "Why don't we ditch this stupid party? Let's go to the airport and park."

Airport?! Park??!?!?

Maybe there was a God.

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The planes were taking off over us, creating a feeling of tension and excitement. She initiated first base. I responded. I initiated second base. She was both allowing and helpful, moaning, removing her bra. A cluster of henna blossoms; I, feeling like a pouch of myrrh. This was heaven. Real breasts. In my hands.

I was content. I needed nothing more. Winsteads paled by comparison.

What a first date! It was successful for both first and second base by any definition of success in my equations.

She was moaning, I was moaning, and I started to think, do I actually dare go to third base on the first date? Unheard of.

But before I could do anything, she went to my third base, on the outside. I was still at second. I realized then and there that my equation was too simplified. I needed to create new third

base subdivisions: two infield diamonds, a his and a hers. Otherwise, we could have two players on the same base at the same time. I realized this wasn't the best circumstances to be thinking about equations, as she continued to hug and fondle third base, and even undid my pants and reached inside to begin stroking me. I realized, somewhat shakily, that I also needed a subdivision called "initiation."

Apple tree. Is my fruit sweet to your taste? Arise my darling, my beautiful one.

Her stroking became more insistent. Petting below the waist needed a subdivision of petter and pettee. Or would that the MISCELLANEOUS folder, as it could apply to any base? I was still stranded on second base, but even though it seemed a manager was waving me to proceed to third, and maybe home, I was content remaining where I was on my side of my diamond.

An airplane was taking off, its engines thrusting overhead. I felt myself feeling a bit dizzy. My first other serve experience was about to happen. I knew it was inevitable. Partly I was joyous and partly I felt fearful at the idea of losing control in front of another person. But before I could address my fear, I realized I'd need to create still another third base subdivision: petting by hand versus petting by mouth. Thinking of my folders made me feel in control once again. Her lips and tongue were warm, moist, and almost painful as they first licked and then pumped and sucked my third base bag. Yes, more refinement was indeed needed on my equation.

I thought of categories and colored cards.

Let's see, initiation, ahhh; sequence and progression; ohh; separate diamonds; things were getting blurry, it was hard to focus; variations and gradations within each base; I didn't have a pen, --

hand versus mouth--will I remember these? I definitely felt myself about to lose control in the presence of another person. I became nervous, and started to pull back.

But the desire for oncoming fireworks overrode my anxiety, and I decided to turn myself over to her for the last few seconds. As the disappearing plane glided almost effortlessly into the heavens, words and thoughts completely vanished. When the fading plane was nearly out of sight, another plane came roaring in. Wheels extended and locked in place. Engines backthrust.

A magnificent landing.

* * *

What Johannes didn't write about in his journal was what happened post-orgasm, after the landing. Awkward glances and silences. Sticky semen on clothes and hands that needed to be cleaned up.

Petit mort. The French had it right. Each orgasm is a little death of self.

Though I no longer self-serve, I am intrigued by his uncomfortableness at having someone else have control of his instrument panel when he's coming in for a landing. There is still something quite disconcerting to me when I'm on a plane, and someone else is in control of the flight.

* * *

I later asked my father if diving head first into third base--"oral sex"-- was ok to do. He paused, then said "Although most people in good society don't talk about it, most of them do it and enjoy it." Phew, I was glad to hear it was ok. Only years later, did I wonder how he had learned information about what most people in good society do and enjoy. Was he playing around

in other ball parks? Scouting reports? Just talk?

I never asked him.

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I realized after that night, and subsequent dates with different girls over the years, that my initial equation system--though somewhat intricate-- was itself too simplistic, and one folder was not enough to contain all the information. Even more precision and organization was necessary to handle the increasingly complexity.

My first effort at organization was to buy several manila folders. I love walking into a supply store to buy folders, notebooks, pens. There is a sense of adventure, new possibilities, greater order and control. With my new folders in hand, I labeled the main folder OVERVIEW; and created additional manila folders for each base. Then, for topics that didn't neatly fit into a particular base, or involved issues between bases, or could apply to all bases, I created a catch-all (pun!) folder called ADDITIONAL REFINEMENTS/MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS.

Later, when I realized a topic could go in two or more folders, that some topics were more important than others, that others were just rough ideas that would need refining later, I went back to my supply store and bought the multiple colored three by five cards.

The problem, if you want to call it that, is that as I became a more accomplished slugger, things have gotten still more complex. I realized there was substantial variation within each base. For that, I created a Table of Contents of refinements and gradation within each folder including cross referencing where appropriate. But the question I'm now having to face, after all

these years, is when might a given folder have to be divided, creating additional folders and categories. I have resisted making new categories and additional folders. Six already seemed a lot, and new folders would only add to the bulk and organizational logistics, the cross-referencing, thus making this increasingly elaborate project even more complicated, intricate, and cumbersome.

Thus, for simplicity's sake, I have tried to fit all new information into the existing folders. But I'm now approaching a time when that, too, is messy and cumbersome. Three of the folders--first base, third, and home-- are between fifty and seventy percent filled with cards; two of them, breasts (second) and overview are 90% full; and the sixth--MISC--is overflowing and stuffed with multi-colored cards. I'm at a point--in at least one folder-- where two complexities are colliding--the burden of new folders versus the burden of trying to retrieve information from a messy, overstuffed folder.

Which choice is simpler? Maybe tonight is the big night when I'm willing to break out of the mold, and create new folders for MISC. I look at the MISC Table of Contents to see which are the most likely candidates.

**PARTS IN RELATIONSHIP TO (W) HOLE* (that theme seems to be coming up in several contexts--like the flute, golf, tennis);

**MOTIVATION:* why I'm attracted to women for orgasms (vs just doing self-serve); why I'm attracted to certain body parts; what type of women I'm attracted to;

**CHESS MOVES:* all the different techniques and means I've learned and developed which help me move toward my goal. This includes not only moves for me--the "arch," the "nod," the

"you're such a kind person"--but also ways of trying to find their vulnerability, what motivates them.

**HOT LEADS: SCOUTING REPORTS.* Nothing more needs to be said here, except why have I waited so long to make this a separate folder?

**OUT OF SEQUENCES BASE RUNNING.* This subsection includes all the examples when a base was skipped, such as first, without being called out. When that first occurred, I was confused whether I should put those examples in the first base folder, the base arrived at, the overview folder, or the MISC folder? I chose the MISC. Now, with so many examples, maybe they need a folder of their own.

I pause from pondering the list of possible new folders and start reminiscing about the out of sequence base running in my afternoon fantasy about a three-way with Sandy and Elaine. Sandy and I skipped first base (her cute lips); skipped second base (her breasts were small and uninteresting compared to her legs). We went straight from batting to third--hey, it's my fantasy--and what a great "Panzer" pincer attack we devised----approaching third base from her stomach while at the same time advancing up her long legs. I feel john john enjoying the reliving, and I cross my legs to keep him contained.

I look once again at the five possible new folder topics. I glance at the six already existing folders, seeing hundreds of multi-colored cards in each.

In the world of dedicated sexual science, life becomes more complex as we evolve.

Yes, the evolution of a formula, much less a person, is complex indeed.

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I see that waitress Mery is now serving a couple two tables over. The woman is old, maybe 75, and wearing gaudy yellow clothes, with a yellow ribbon tied in platinum blonde dyed hair. Her make up is caked on, like a Halloween or-- given the holiday yesterday, which I realize I'd totally forgotten about--Purim mask: red-streaked sleep-deprived eyes covered with splashy turquoise blue eye shadow, garish too-thick red lipstick, smeared at her lips's corners. Haggard, wrinkly skin hangs from her creviced face. She's wearing rings on each finger, and wild brassy, loop earrings.

Her right hand shakily holds a fork, which contains a bite of steak. She tries to lift the fork toward her mouth. To compensate for the wobble, she places her left hand on top of her right hand to try to hold the fork steady. But this strategy does not really help much, and only accentuates the quivering random dance of the hands, swirling the fork in an undulating circle.

As if oblivious to this dancing hand, the man, about her age, with gray hair slicked back and wearing a very well tailored dark gray suit, white dotted blue tie, and three pointed white handkerchief in his jacket pocket, takes his knife and fork and cuts another bite of steak on her plate. When he finishes cutting several small pieces, he looks up at her. She has succeeded in removing the piece of steak, and is now chewing it. Slowly. I begin to count, but after 30 chews, I lose interest, and turn my attention back to the old man. He hasn't lost interest. Rather, he's now staring with rapt attention at her, as if watching a magical stage show. He is wearing an affectionate smile.

What a creepy tableau in the darkening evening.

I know it's probably not a *kosher* thing to say, or even to think, but is it really fair for someone who looks like that to come out to a restaurant and disturb someone who has just gotten into Harvard Law School and is only trying to enjoy a pleasant meal of matzah ball soup?

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To distract myself from the image of the old couple, I close my eyes and switch from visual to auditory. As I listen to the noise of the traffic and the sounds of the bustle in the restaurant, I'm reminded of the andante overture to my favorite opera. Two thunder claps as the orchestra opens in D minor. Clarinets, flutes, with soft violin accompaniment. Then the brass enriches the tone. D minor modulates to A. And then, ahh, then the first violin begins to play deep ominous notes reinforced by soft rumbling thunder of the viola and cello. Rapid key shifts. D minor/A/D minor/A. Shifting, ominous, building. Crash, ba da dum. Crash ba da dum. D major.

My Arts and Humanities breadth requirement: Music appreciation 101. As I open my eyes I also remember enjoying my other breadth requirement: "Figure Art", a chance to stare at naked women. I wonder if mentioning this class would be an acceptable segue between her interest in art and my prurient interest. I could ask her to pose for a private sketching session. Or maybe a photo shoot with my Canon cannon? Too soon. Patience. You're wanting to hurry things too much. Too slick. Too quick. This one is going to take some time, effort, and maybe, money. She dresses pretty simply. Be careful, sometimes artists are anti-money. Make no assumptions, proceed cautiously. But, regardless, the treasure chest--buried treasure-- looks definitely worth some

additional exploration. (Green card: *MOTIVATION*. questing? uncovering the mystery?)

As I look up from my reflection in the window, I see her returning with the water, and I turn to be served. As she goes to put my water down, she spills some on my sweater. She immediately apologizes, takes a napkin, and starts trying to pat it dry.

"Don't worry, it's only the most valuable, sentimental and treasured gift my mom ever gave me." Ah, I'm back in form again.

She looks like a little child caught in the cookie jar, knows she's caught, and is frantically searching for some words to explain her guilt. I like seeing her blush, a sign of high arousal and some vulnerability, which hopefully I can transform sexually to my advantage. Also, blushing is a sign of a potentially passionate nature. I never blush. Ok, now I can let her off the hook.

"Just kidding...this is not a clear and present danger!" I give her my reassuring smile and just the hint of a soft, supportive pat on her shoulder. "No need to blush. Your action is not a substantive evil!"

"Thank you. You are very kind. I'm soooo sorry. I'll be right back." I don't know if she actually understood the legal references, but that's ok--it's too complicated to try to explain it to her, and she got the intent. I'll just have to be the sole judge who appreciates, applauds, and congratulates myself for the depth of my own courtroom cleverness. Self-serve praise.

This time she returns without my water, but with milk for my tea. I don't have the heart to tell her that I had asked for black tea, and still want the water. Actually, it isn't heart. It's strategy. Some vulnerability is good, but if she feels too

inadequate, and sees me, rightly or wrongly as too critical, and the cause of those uncomfortable feelings in her, that wouldn't be helpful for my emerging plans. (I make a note to make a note: red card: *MISC* folder: *CHESS MOVES*).

"See?" I take her hand and place it on my shoulder in a rubbing up and down motion. "It's almost dry already."

"Wow, your sweater is so soft." After I've taken my hand away from hers, it seems as if she rubs up and down a couple more times on her own volition. Then, she asks:

"If it's not too personal, I have a question for you."

I give her the "nod" with a smile.

"This job is driving me crazy, it's so chaotic. You seem so organized, all these folders. How do you do it?"

I point to the manila folders and say "These are my way to create order and deal with complexity in all topics of importance in my life. I have folders for everything-- the papers I have to write; my flute practice; tennis; ideas for drawing; for taking pictures; a dream journal." I look at her and wink. "Baseball, too." I like the way I drop hints of drawing and pictures. Plant the seed.

"And the colored three by five cards?"

"As you can see, there are lots of scraps in each folder." I imagine myself as a professor, lecturing before an adoring student. "Every time I have an idea related to any topic, I put it down on a 3x5 index card, and place it in the appropriate folder. White is a complete idea; Red is a complete idea that has particular salience; green, something that needs more work. If it fits in two folders, I cross reference it in both with a yellow index card. Blue, well, I'm not sure yet what to do with blue,

but it allows room for growth. When there are too many cards in a folder--like now in one of my baseball folders-- then I consider making additional folders for the new categories."

I think about stopping there, but she seemed at least to know the word "existentialism," so why not give her a little blast of intelligence to see if she can handle it: "Then, when I'm ready, I pull out the scraps and start to re-create. It's deductive: top down --I have the big premise from which the scraps follow and fit. And it's inductive: bottom up-- the details and notes help me see if the big formula still holds, or needs to be revised and challenged."

Sometime during my discussion her hand left my shoulder, but she seems interested. She starts to ask another question when she's once again called away, she turns, (almost reluctantly?) to take another order. "I definitely hope we can talk later," she says.

On the one hand, that sounds promising. On the other hand, maybe she's just looking for some free consulting on how to be a more organized waitress. Only time will tell if we're playing in the same ballpark. I make a note on a green card and file: I can't think of a catchy title, but the issue is how do you tell when a verbal exchange, or a touch of the hand, is part of the base path to first; or when it is merely pre-game banter, to see if you are even going to get up to the plate to have a chance? Am I even at bat? Are we playing the same game? I place it in the MISC folder.

I prepare to take another bite of soup. I ensure that the matzah ball is surrounded by a piece of chicken, some rice, a couple of overlapping noodles, and chicken broth. It all fits on

the spoon in a perfectly balanced combination.

Mery. A mistake, or an unusual spelling? Well, though defi-
nately not to marry, I look forward to making merry with Mery.

I'm ready for a new challenge.

Berkeley is a guarantee.

The night is young.

I feel the food and liquid wend its way down my throat and
warmly coat my stomach.

Contentment and comfort.

No question about it, Grandpa was right.

Life is simple.

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isdom excels folly as light excels darkness....

Simple.

Wisdom and light are what I want. What I need.

Akshav!

Now, how do I obtain them?

Last night, after lighting the two candles, I wrote about Dr. Lisbet's comment that the bud is within. Do I have a "wisdom bud" within me waiting to get out?

I see the images of two trees. One is the bare, stark, empty, naked oak tree in front of our home in Kansas City. It looks like it could be the poster tree for the cover of an existential play. Stately, proud, defiant, yet alone, stripped to its essence. In spite of its winter appearance, new buds magically emerge and the tree evolves its great leaves and foliage each spring.

For this to happen, I need to do nothing but trust in nature's benevolence, a lesson I learned year after year as I waited for the little baby leaves to appear.

If I'm like that oak tree--if all people are like that--then Dr. Lisbet is right, the bud is within, and all we need is trust.

In fact, the prodding, probing, poking fingers of humans and science only get in the way, but even then, as e.e. cummings wrote, "the earth responds with a flower."

I add a fourth row to my sheet of paper, and call it

MODES OF CONTROL:

POSITIVE YIELDING AND POSITIVE ASSERTIVE.

Dr. Lisbet, based on her study in China, and her experience with tai chi, calls this positive yielding mode of control Lao-Tzu's Way of Harmony. She explained it to us by having us imagine water-- fluid, accepting, allowing--running into a rock. The water goes around the rock, but this is not victimized passivity. Rather, she noted, "the way of water is really a powerful mode of control: for, in the end, doesn't the water erode the rock? There is great strength in acceptance, patience, and trust. We all need to learn to let 'what is' come forth, allow it to unfold organically as it is meant."

One of the students asked whether Lao-tzu's philosophy wasn't a non-theistic one, and did that make it harder to yield than if you believed in God. The Rebbe fielded the question, saying for him, personally, it does. "Each week, in the havdalah service, I sing 'Into Your arms, your loving arms, I commend my soul.' I like having a personal God whom I trust, and to whom I can surrender." Dr. Lisbet noted that there is a similar view in Christianity "Not my will, but Thy will be done" and in Islam, which means, at its root "Surrender."

"The important point," she emphasized is that whether they believe in a theistic or non-theistic worldview, all humans, psychologically, need to develop this mode of control."

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I wonder what the role of the positive assertive mode of control would be in the case of the oak tree? Perhaps, in a spiritual context, it would be to cut away branches that are excessive, unnecessary, or hurtful. That's really what I've done by leaving everything and everyone behind, cutting back all the limbs on my tree, so that only its (hoped for) essence is left.

And now, by going through Johannes' journal, I'm trying to remove all that is unhelpful within me, to learn from my mistakes, so that there is nothing left to block the budding of that essence. Then, my task is to wait and pray and hope and watch to see what new branches might grow.

I also would pray that in cutting back, I've only helped find my root core, rather than accidentally cut into my roots, or dug them up so that the entire tree topples. But that, of course, would be my stupidity, my error, not the fault of a sacred universe.

I wonder how buds, if they had some small amount of consciousness (but were not all knowing) might see their situation. How would they know, while surrounded by total darkness, whether they were dying and entombed; or ready to germinate? I think of asking Dr. Lisbet this question. The question flowers into one of her favorite styles of poetry--the haiku.

Buds buried in black...

Dying in darkness? Or being born...

Blossoming into light

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The other tree that I image, juxtaposed with the oak tree, is the date trees on the kibbutz. Keeping the same spiritual perspective, we employed a more positive assertive mode of control to fertilize and pollinate the date buds so that they would reproduce. We were creating new life by assisting nature, not waiting for birds, bees, and wind. A line from Frances Bacon comes to mind: "Nature to be commanded, must be obeyed." Weren't

we just appropriately helping nature along? Does this mean, I need to go deeper within myself, to continue to unpack the negative, remove it; and actively add that which can enhance and catalyze my bud's growth?

I'd like to ask Dr. Lisbet's opinion about where you draw the line between taking action to take care of, help, and even create your inner self's growth, versus a more accepting and trusting, allowing the growth to naturally evolve and emerge.

* * *

Last night after I lit the two candles, I felt sad, so gloomy that I even decided not to open my second night of Chanukkah present. Instead, I wrote a Chinese linked verse poem, Dr. Lisbet's (and the Rebbe's) other favorite style of poetry. In this form, one person writes a line or two of a poem, and then the next person writes, continuing some theme (or word) from these lines. Either a third person, or the original person completes the poem. Since I was all alone, I invited different people to participate. I let Johannes, speaking from Kansas City on snowy winter night begin. Then, I asked the Job-like part of me--past and present-- to write the second stanza; and I--whoever that is-- wrote the third stanza by the last light of the candle, right before the entire room became black.

Frozen snow encircles the night.

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The white candle wax cries
as the spiraling red flame
causes the wick
to decay into ashes

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The hardened remains of a
cold silent puddle lie unseen.

* * *

A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart...with thanks

to Kohelet and the new girl...

* * *

Fun a kasha shtarbt man nisht.

No one ever starved to death from an unanswered question. Nana would often say that to me when I was younger, because I constantly asked, after every explanation, Why? Why? Why? I think of all the weight I've lost trying to understand my--and the world's--seeming contradictions and meaning. I wonder if you can starve to death by trying too hard to answer too many unanswered questions. Questions which seem to beget questions.

I wonder why she doesn't take her own advice and stop worrying. Are you ok? Are you eating enough? When are you coming home?

Maybe we give advice and teachings based not on what we practice, but on what we believe, or what we want to believe. We teach what we need to learn. I guess my lesson here is compassion: often advice, no matter how wise, is easier to give than to follow.

Part of me feels my Nana is right. In a way, it would be good if I could stop all my questioning. It often feels like mental masturbation, wheel spinning for no purpose. *"Be warned: excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body...for in many dreams and in many words there is emptiness....in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain...do not be overly wise. why should you ruin yourself."*

But another part of me feels that thinking and asking questions are really the only tools I have to address where I am. "A dead fly makes a perfumer's oil stink, so a little foolishness is weightier than wisdom and honor."

Which is true?

There are too many contradictions, and they don't fit together neatly. On the one hand, Kohelet says foolishness leads to calamity. On the other hand, he says wisdom brings grief.

No exit?

Mom always said I was lucky because I have a nearly photographic memory. I read something once and I can see the place on the page where the words occurred. When I study a text a few times, I have almost verbatim and instant recall. If knowledge can lead to wisdom, then she's right. If knowledge is just useless pieces of information leading to increased pain, and if wisdom involves grief, then I have a very big brain filled with useless clutter, at best.

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Is it inevitable that we are drawn to change? Kohelet is becoming my new Solomon favorite. I imagine he wrote the Song of Songs first, when he was he was young and in love. I've now graduated to his next stage, where he is caught between: *"How can one be warm alone"* and *"I discovered more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets and whose hands are chains."*

I feel the gloom starting to re-descend. I look over at the Chanukkah present, wrapped with a blue background paper, on which are a myriad of white menorahs and six pointed stars. Impulsively, I grab it and tear it open.

"Oh, you shouldn't have. This is so kind!" I exclaim. "How did you ever know? What a thoughtful gift. Especially timely now that my right hand is becoming stronger. Let me give you a big hug. Thank you so much."

To my utter surprise, it's a wood carving set: gouges,

parting tool, skew chisel, whittling chip carving knife. The end goal is a set of chess pieces. I read the note: "Happy Chanukkah to a dear friend. Remember what your mom said about the best way to conquer fear. Also, remember the store keeper said it's really sharp, so you need to be careful. Choose well. Blessings and light. Your sometime secret admirer."

I set the tools aside and look at the second part of the gift: balsa wood, a soft wood for practice; and basswood for the actual chess set. When I was younger and fell off a horse, my mom told me it is always important to get right back on the horse, so you don't let yourself develop fear. "A very thoughtful present, indeed." I thank myself again.

The carving knife doesn't look that sharp. I pick it up and look at its long wooden handle and short steel carving blade. Seems innocent enough. I rub the tip very lightly along my left, non-writing hand's index finger. There is a bit of a sting, like a paper cut. Maybe three-quarters of an inch long.

There is some blood. A few drops drip on the "UNIVERSE" sheet of paper; other drops on Johannes' journal.

I take a kleenex and tamp down on the cut.

* * *

Life is Simple. Covered in blood. I try to pat the blood off the last sentence I read of Johannes' deli entry, but I only succeed in smearing it in a thinner form up through his bite of the matzah ball soup.

I run some water over the cut and let the water rinse out the indentation.

Johannes' entry at the deli begins with "life is simple" and ends the same way. Yet, in between he goes through unbelievable

manila multi-colored machinations on these sexual bases.

Does he ever really arrive home?

Will I?

His return to simple--on the other side of complex-- is not through integrating or solving his Talmudically complex calculations. Rather, it's setting complexity aside, stuffing everything into folders, putting the folders away and changing focus to return to and enjoy simple pleasures--a bite of soup.

A complex bite, of many balanced parts, at that.

Is his strategy an act of simple wisdom, or the distracting ploy of a dilettantish simpleton?

The cut doesn't seem too deep, and the wound seems to be closing ok. I don't think there's anything more I need to do, except let the skin begin its own healing, let the blood naturally begin to coagulate.

Is simple wisdom an oxymoron? Naivete? Illusory wishful thinking? A Hollywood story where everything turns out happy in the end. Love conquers all. The human spirit triumphs. A single well-defined conflict, and a tidy resolution.

Can I ever go back to chocolate chip cookies and koolade? Would I want to? Maybe that unreflective naivete and innocence is the price, the cost to immunize oneself from all the fragments of confusion. And once lost, and broken into fragments, can it ever be reclaimed? *A time to be born and a time to die*

After the inevitable complexity of life, after eating from the tree of knowledge, can anything ever again be simple? Does the process need to get more complex before it gets simple; or is it that as you get older, and see more, the universe and the self are just more complex. And that's the price of awareness and

evolution?

I dry my hand, and again press a kleenex against the cut.
My writing hand is still fine.

Maybe complex wisdom is the best that can be hoped for.

* * *

I look at my chart: *SACRED UNIVERSE; INDIFFERENT UNIVERSE*.
That's as simple a reductionistic either/or choice as I can make
for myself. But is it too simple? I pat some of the blood stains
that are on the chart on the new row I was working on "*MODE OF
CONTROL.*"

What is the relative role of the different modes of control
if we live in an *INDIFFERENT UNIVERSE*? The answer is simple.
You'd better be quite good at using positive assertive skills to
"create" your existence. And you better be quite good at using
positive yielding skills to accept that nothing you do will ever
amount to anything lasting or worthwhile. If this column is
reality, then the pruned trees reveal not buds, but emptiness,
nothing there. I need to start creating my essence by my actions
in the here and now: this writing, playing the flute, thinking.
That's who I am.

No buds but the ones
you plant; no guarantee of
growth; all blossoms fade

Why am I writing haiku? Why do I want, as soon as I finish
the poem, to immediately show it to Dr. Lisbet and the Rebbe for
their approval? How desperate is that?

*"Man will spend his years like a shadow....For who can tell
a man what will be after him under the sun.... All is vanity and
a striving after wind....a generation goes and a generation*

comes. *The sun rises, and the sun sets.....all things are weary-some.*"

The sun remains aloof, indifferent to all the vain strivings here on earth, shining equally on the poor and innocent as well as the wicked and evil. All die. No accomplishment--poetry, writing, flute playing--lasts, or means anything. Wanting approval? Nothing but striving after wind.

I pick up my flute, and try to play. I feel a sharp pain in my left index finger, and place a larger wad of kleenex on the cut to serve as a cushion., and wrap a bandage around the kleenex. I feel angry and helpless and am unwilling to be derailed again by an injured finger. Though there is still physical pain, it's relatively mild compared to my mental distress.

I play the long slow mournful notes of one of the opening acts at Woodstock: Richy Havens, at least as I've recreated it. Long E, long G, G G "Sometimes....I feel like a motherless child....a long waaaay from my home." I hear and feel the words as I play the notes.

A simple, mournful song. Yearning.

Clear, pure notes, on the other side of so many years of complex, disciplined practice.

Is there a simpler way to simplicity, to simple wisdom?

Do you have to go through the complexity? And then hope somehow you get to the other side?

I make a note to ask this question of the Rebbe and Dr. Lisbet at Friday's class.

It is both a clever and a deep question. I bet they're impressed.

I continue to play Havens.

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One of the things I like about Kohelet is his clear sightedness. One would think, and accurately, that on one level, the oppressors have it better than the oppressed.

But he also realizes that both are hurting and in pain.

"I saw the tears of the oppressed and that they had no one to comfort them ...and on the side of their oppressors was power but they had no one to comfort them."

A cruel, indifferent universe in which both are, in the end, without comfort. A further irony is how when power shifts and changes hands, the connecting and fundamental dynamics between oppressor and oppressed don't change. As Payton anguished in *Cry the Beloved Country*: "Why do the oppressed, when they gain power, always become the oppressors....When we have turned to loving, will they have turned to hating."

Another cruel cosmic joke under an indifferent sun?

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There needs to be a place to examine evil in this one page chart. Does it deserve to be a third column: *SACRED, INDIFFERENT, MALEVOLENT*? Like Johannes, I resist adding another column. I'd prefer to fit evil in as a row, and write it as the fifth row, below *MODES OF CONTROL*.

EVIL. Under the column *SACRED UNIVERSE*, I write, if God is all omnipotent, omniscient, all loving then God is One without a second. At the deepest level there can be no evil. Then how do I understand my grandmother's death? A suffering child dying? *Yad Vashem* and the Holocaust?

I need to ask the Rebbe about how he understands evil.

I want to continue writing, but realize I've come to the end

of the page. I look over at some of the multi-colored index cards I have. I reluctantly reach for one, a yellow one, for cross referencing. It looks like this material is not going to be able to be contained on one page, and I'm going to have to use the system of manila folders and cards. I have a couple of colored manila folders left. One red, one blue. I choose the blue one and write on it SACRED UNIVERSE. Why blue? For blue sky, heaven, God.

It looks like I'm going to need to buy more colored note cards. Would that be a good present as a surprise gift for the fourth night of Chanukkah?

I pick up the yellow card and continue writing:

Some try to explain away evil through "original sin" in which our only hope is grace and forgiveness. Some use the concept of "free will" to solve the problem of evil: God gave us choice. But where does the evil inclination come from in a sacred universe? If, at the deepest level, there is only God, then why is so much time devoted to trying to understand, address, atone for, and curb evil?

If you image the color of the SACRED UNIVERSE column as blue, when you put the yellow card of evil in it, you would create green, the heart chakra, the one of compassion.

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From the perspective of an indifferent universe, evil is just the viewpoint of the loser who doesn't survive. The lion, the king of beasts, is not evil eating the lamb, he's hungry. Malevolence, from our perspective--an earthquake, a typhoon, a famine, a flood--is merely amoral or indifferent, from Nature's.

I visualize my biology text, and can see Darwin's letter to

Joseph Hooker, a botanist and good friend. Darwin, once a theist, became an atheist in later life:

What a book a Devil's chaplain might write on the clumsy, wasteful, blundering, low and horribly cruel works of Nature. My god, how I long for my stomach's sake to wash my hands of it.

Though existentialists say there are no buds--no essence--in us except what we create. Freud and Hobbes--also arguing from the perspective of an indifferent universe--disagree. The difference is no less chilling.

I've again run out of room on my one page sheet, and take another yellow card. I'll put this card in the red manila folder. Red's fine--it fits: Hobbesian "tooth and claw."

I continue writing:

Freud believed that humans are filled with a bud--but not a very attractive bud. Rather, it's an amoral pleasure seeking id. Humans are also innately filled with anger and aggression. I recall from my psychology text:

The Christian commandment love thy neighbor as thyself...nothing else runs so strongly counter to the original nature of man. The stranger is in general unworthy of my love. ...he has more claim to my hostility and even my hatred. Men are not gentle creatures who want to be loved; they are, on the contrary, creatures among whose instinctual endowments is reckoned a powerful share of aggression.

The son hates the father and wants to kill him; the father and son vie for the mother's affection; the son fears castration from the father; siblings compete with each other; and often the individual dreams the death of those of whom he is fond, the dreams representing a repressed wish.

Everything follows from how the universe is seen. Dostoevsky's Ivan says, "If there is no God, then all is permitted." Why live and act ethically if there is no fearsome, judging God

to curb your appetites and punish you if you misbehave? Kohelet says "There is an evil I have seen under the sun and it is prevalent among men." If we agree with Hobbes, that the universe--and we--are brutish, red in tooth in claw, then how do we address evil?

Hobbes and Freud posit human societal laws or intrapsychic "superegos" to control and civilize us. With Freud, we need some kind of therapy to at least uncover, understand, and perhaps contain--though never cure our basic nature. Early Freud believed we were basically helpless to effect change. Hobbes was no less pessimistic.

This is depressing to write about. Even if it's true, it's not very pleasant. I wonder if it would be better to develop a good fantasy story. Almost done. Actually, I am done with *EVIL* and *INDIFFERENT UNIVERSE*. I take out one more yellow card, write on it *EVIL* and *SACRED UNIVERSE*, and note:

Freud's view is not that different from the one espoused by some within a sacred universe, who argue that evil is original sin, and that we can't through free will and human effort ever hope to cleanse ourselves of it. Thus, we need the church to forgive us, and Jesus to die for our sins.

Neither provide a very robust picture of the human capacity to exercise positive modes of control.

A yellow card in a red folder. Blazing sun and red flames. Burning in hell by either God's wrath and judgment or human folly, weakness, and inability to control themselves.

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I wonder how Dr. Lisbet, with her Jungian orientation, thinks about Freud. What is her worldview? How does Jung see

evil? I think he calls it the shadow, but I'm not sure. How does the Rebbe understand original sin? I have so many questions for them--which I list on a blue index card. Finally, I've found a purpose for a blue card: on which to write painful, unanswered questions.

As I imagine asking all my questions in class, I feel a little guilty--sigh, thanks mom--about taking up too much time by what interests me. Maybe I should request a "special session." I could take them to lunch. Should I pay? After all, they're the adults.

I don't want to call the session "therapy," or have them see me as a patient. I have too many bad memories of Mom as a patient. And not very good associations with Mery and her therapy. Being a patient, someone "in therapy," seems to say that I'm not in control of my life, something's wrong with me, and I need help.

Actually, that sounds a bit defensive. The truth is, I'm not in control of my life, there may well be something wrong with me, and I do need help.

* * *

It seems we are always making judgments. I am like a judge, logically trying to decide what the nature of the universe is, and do I want to choose to live in that universe. Johannes is judging his different women, and trying to decide what is the cost/benefit of a date, and then chooses with whom he wishes to go out.

Same mind, with the same judging process, only with different content. **(Another judgment: What is missing is the heart.)** Johannes is looking to women and the external, trying to judge

what might make him most happy: the most prestigious college, the most succulent looking breast. But he is not yet very introspective about how his criteria for judging have been formed, or what drives him: biological reactivity, and externals such as status and money.

I'm looking inside now, to understand me. And I'm trying to exploring both inside and outside for signs of the spirit.

Maybe there is a hierarchical chain of judgment.

Johannes is judgmental and self-centered. He objectifies women, cringes from and is callous toward people who are aging and infirm, and thinks of no one but himself. But I am no less judgmental of him, his flip, cocky arrogance, sophomoric intellectualism, his lack of deep introspection, and his absence of true empathic feelings.

Though I talk a good game of wanting to be compassionate and help others, what am I really doing except indulging in a self-centered focus on myself? I do feel a lot more anguish than Johannes does. And yes, my goal is to become a better person; his isn't. But I once read that all that it takes for evil to succeed is for good people to do nothing. So, yes, I'm judging myself for not doing enough.

In a sacred universe, God judges. Kohelet says that the way Johannes lived--"*all my eyes desired I did not refuse them*"--even if wrong, is perhaps inevitable. Kohelet goes so far as to invite and counsel such pursuits: "*Young man...during the days of young manhood...follow the impulses of your heart and the desires of your eyes...childhood and the prime of life are fleeting.*"

But of course, as I now know all too well, you can't live like that with impunity. Kohelet continues "Yet know that God


will bring you to judgment for all these things....

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I look back at the start of my journal entry today.

Wisdom. How do you get it? The W  transformed from Johannes' lower chakra sexual breast musings to the start of finding aspects of the highest.

Johannes is seeking sexual wisdom through accumulating knowledge on note cards. Once he has enough bits of information, will that become "wisdom"? Or will that just be collection of complicated, complex folders?

If I can hold my nose long enough to ignore the stench of the negative that emanates from getting too close to Johannes, I can see that the way our minds work is not that dissimilar.

How do I gain the wisdom to know which to choose? What are my data? Experience? Knowledge? Is it just a question of sorting through the words I write on the note cards? Then, at some time in the next nine months, I could pull all the cards out, sort them, and decide. Sounds silly. Yet what are the alternatives? How do people consciously decide their perspective of the nature of the universe?

It's a simple enough question. It's a vital question.

The answer is going to be simple: one or the other.

Is there a simple solution to getting to the answer?

Simple wisdom?

The trouble is that the universe--and me-- seem to be enormously complicated. And that's just based on what I know of each. I don't even know what I don't know. "Who knows what is good for a man during the few years of his futile life."

I feel confused about who I am as a "me." Are there sides of me--buds within me, in Dr. Lisbet's terms-- that I don't even know about. If there are, are they products of an indifferent universe--angry, aggressive. I'd like to believe I've seen all of those sides of me already, and am working on containing and healing them.

What I'd like to believe is that there are some positive buds buried in me, that are supposed to come out; ready to be born, to blossom, like the "wisdom bud" I wrote about at the start of today's journal. Are there other positive buds, parts of me, that still lie within, ready to be expressed: like where I fit in the universe, in society?

Is there someone or something in me that can love; that is lovable?

* * *

Sometimes mom would sing to me at night when she put me to bed. One song I never understood why she sung: "Rock-a-bye baby, in the tree tops, when the wind blows, the cradle will rock. When the bough breaks, the cradle will fall, and down will come baby, cradle and all."

Beyond this, my son, be warned...

* * *

Under the Sun

Swaying in harsh winds
A branch falls, ripples quiver
the clouds undulate

*

Stirred sediment clouds
the water, hiding the willow
and its white aura

*

Winded. Take a breath.
Calm...will...return...after the fall...
Trust...what...Who...remains...

I examine the cut on my finger, which looks like slightly-parted thin red lips. The cut's not very deep. A superficial stupidity.

I trust that if I don't pick at it--thereby reopening the wound-- and if I am patient, the body's wisdom will help it heal.

I pick up the flute, but my finger is now throbbing, and it is too painful to play.

I set the flute aside, lie on the bed, and listen to the rain.

* * *

Each story can be understood from so many vantage points. Like the art exercise where from one angle we see a vase in white, from another perspective we see the shadowed profile of two people looking at each other. Same picture, two ways of seeing it.

Unless we can broaden our vantage point, we become like the "blind" people in the Sufi story Dr. Lisbet related to our class. These people, figuratively she said, if not literally, are in the dark. Each one is touching a different part of an elephant, but it assumes it to be the "whole." One, touching the leg, declares an elephant is strong and round like a tree trunk. Another, touching the trunk, declares an elephant is pliable, like a thick garden hose. Each feels they have the "truth." And they do, at least a limited version of it. But unfortunately people often are willing to fight and kill to ensure that their limited version of the "truth"--which they mistakingly believe is the "whole truth"-- prevails.

That is why it is so important to learn to see from multiple perspectives and angles. Further, as the psychologist Abraham

Maslow noted "If you only have a hammer as a tool, all problems begin to look like the head of an undriven nail."

How do we learn to see from multiple viewpoints? We need to bring everything into the light.

As an experiment, and to shed more light--and here form matches content--I look again at the above linked versed poem--"Under the Sun."

From one perspective the poem is a lamentation on a fall from innocence, symbolized by a branch, torn loose from its home connection (stanza one). The wind, the fall, create chaos, confusion, disorientation, ripples and undulations in the mind. The sacred clarity--the "white aura"-- seems to disappear (stanza two). The author, exhausted, is asking questions, almost pleading (stanza three): Calm will return after the fall? Trust what? "Who remains?" after a loss of innocence. Is there only futility, a striving after wind?

The Job-like aspect of the Jerusalem self.

* * *

But imagine how the poem would be viewed if we thought Johannes was its author. The branch could be a symbol of his john john, during the panting, heavy breathing of love-making, falling (stanza one) into and being hidden in the woman's yoni, creating ripples, quiverings, undulations, and a white climax (stanza two). In the last stanza, winded from the enjoyable exertion, he takes a breath, and asserts with self-efficacy based on past experience: "Calm will return" after the "fall" into his orgasm. In a declarative way he states: You can trust what remains---you, the one who is left post coitus, after you leave behind your sperm and your partner.

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The Rebbe once said, "When a pickpocket meets a saint, all that are seen are pockets." We only see from the perspective of our awareness. It is not just a question of different viewpoints, but some perspectives are wiser than others.

The poem can be understood as an historical progression and evolution from Johannes to the Jerusalem self. This Jerusalem self is trying to prune away the branches of Johannes that are no longer helpful ("A branch falls," stanza one--getting rid of Johannes' sexual habits). Though this is confusing and "stirs sediment" (Stanza two), he reminds himself to try to stay calm, and to trust whatever or whoever remains ----the search for the spiritual-- (stanza three)--after pruning the branches and leaving behind the less helpful parts of himself.

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The poem can also be understood as reflecting an internal battle within the Jerusalem self. This battle is between a Job-like suffering part and a spiritual part seeking to emerge and come to prominence. This spiritual side could be symbolized by a Christian archetype--John the Baptist--trying to point the way to a new, evolving spiritual self. Or by Jewish archetype--Jacob--battling with the angels, and becoming Israel, which in Hebrew means "wrestling with God."

The fight being waged by this evolving John, this emerging Jacob, can be seen in the first two stanzas. The first line of the third stanza could be seen as their way of acknowledging the difficulty of the task ("Winded") but also as a reminder to keep meditating "Take a breath." "Ruach" in Hebrew means both breath and spirit. The word 'breath' here can serve to mean both liter-

al breathing, and also as a reminder to stay focused on spirit--God's breath.

The second line could be understood as a hopeful assurance (declaration?) that "calm will return." And the way stillness will return is if he takes a breath to help himself become "calm"; uses his "will" to make right efforts; and engages in "return"--teshuvah--the re-turn to the sacred Self, to God.

The last line of the poem can be read as an assertion of developing faith. He asks the question "Trust what?" And he answers the question with a capital W: "Trust" "Who remains..." God, the one Who remains, because God is all that is.

* * *

As I write this at dusk, there is young woman standing outside. In the evening shadows, her hair is being stroked and combed behind her by the breeze, like fine supple strands, branches and leaves of a willow tree blown by the wind.

On one side of the horizon, the sun has set. Vanishing purple anticipates evening.

The sound of a flute is lost in the closing sky.

In a different direction, into the darkening horizon, there is a faint white glow signaling the moon's imminent birth. Oncoming light, eerily suspended, hinting at a yearning to be born.

Soon, the fleshy white color of the increasing light seems to draw forth the curved edge of the moon, like the appearance of a blushing aureole peaking forth, arising, slowly emerging out of a lacy textured black bra, as the earth continues to spin.

* * *

A sad lamentation? A happy declaration? An historical process of pruning and change? A present-focused intrapsychic battle

between despair and optimism for an evolving spirit?

Many shades of the truth.

What's still missing for me in this poem is context: Reflection and heart. I add a beginning and ending "linked verse" to it--alpha and omega.

Under the Sun

Still water reflects
an unpruned overhanging willow tree
ringed by white clouds

*

Swaying in harsh winds
A branch falls, ripples quiver
the clouds undulate

*

Stirred sediment clouds
the water, hiding the willow
and its white aura

*

Winded. Take a breath.
Calm...will...return...after the fall...
Trust...what...Who...remains...

*

The tree's shadow hugs
the land. Reflections in the
pond of Still water

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The willow in the first stanza could represent either a weeping willow, therefore Job-like sadness; it could symbolize the lithe, undulating sensuality of Johannes; or it could represent the unpruned John and Jacob, ringed by a halo of spirituality but not yet wrestling with the numinous. Still water is the unmoved awareness observing the scene.

This first stanza can connect to any one of the other interpretations in what are now the second and third stanzas. For the distraught Job in Jerusalem, the branch falling from the weeping willow could be tears, which hide the sacred. For Johannes, the stanza could reflect his thrusting efforts, as he, like a branch pulled by gravity, reflexively and inevitably seeks sexual union

and climax. For Jacob and John, these stanzas might represent a wrestling with God.

The last stanza, like the first, provide the contextual "reflection" and stillness necessary for a poem to be created, a detached perspective to be able, as my literature prof said, to detail the "objective correlative" of personal feelings expressed through nature. It also suggests compassion and *agape* love--the tree's shadow unconditionally hugging the land.

The water? It's still, as in quiet. But it's also "still" in the sense that its essential nature is unperturbed and undistorted by the commotions of movement and momentary events. The observing self, the eternal Self. After all is said and done, it is "still water." All, at some deep essence, is connected, both changed and unchanged, reflecting and reflected:

* * *

I feel some droplets of rain. Tears of God?

When it rains, it feels as if it will never stop. Maybe not God's tears, but ours?

Arise, cry out in the night...
pour out your heart like water in
the presence of the Lord.

I raise my hands to the heavens and let the water drip down my face. As I touch the droplets, I feel like Munch's Scream. I'm experiencing a sense of deep, inchoate inner occurrence. As it rains harder, it's more difficult to see what is right before my eyes.

Rain makes a mess. Puddles and mud all over the ground.

Yet rain also fills the space we normally walk through without noticing. The droplets make the air and wind visible, as each globule of water catches the light. Tears can do the same, making visible what was hidden. The dripping water compels me to think of and see the precariousness and fleeting nature of life.

I also know that when the rain stops, when my crying stops, it's like a cleansing. The air is clear and crisp and fresh. There is something healing, even beautiful, about water, and the nourishment it brings to trees, plants and soil...and us. Cleansing the door of perception? God giving us all a mikvah?

Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew,
like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants.

In my mind, I see two mirrors. The past reflecting the future, the future reflecting the past. These are the mirrors that give birth to the present. I look at the sky, then at the ground.

The puddle mirrors
Rain drops dissolving in the
Image they contain

* * *

I remember a story the Rebbe told about a wise rabbi, who taught all his students that the world was sacred and compassionate. One day, his students heard that an equally wise existential scholar had come up with startling understandings that would disprove the rabbi's position and cast into doubt all his teachings. And the scholar was traveling that very day to meet the rabbi.

When they met, the scholar explained his views to the rabbi, and articulated the truth of his position. The rabbi listened politely, then bent over and whispered one word to the scholar. They both immediately began crying, and embraced each other.

What was the one word?

"Perhaps."

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How much of the way we see the world is based on events and experiences? For Johannes, so far, based on how life has treated him, the world is fair and just. After my experience on Sinai, I saw the world with a sacred clarity. Here in Jerusalem, after the visit to Yad Vashem, after Grandma's death, the world seems dark and cruel. Different worldviews based on diverse experiences of life.

When do we "lock" in a perspective? Once we do, it's like putting on glasses with a certain tint, through which all subsequent events are interpreted. Are there some events so positive and powerful that we keep them as a touchstone context forever in our life, and upon which we base our worldview? Conversely, are there other events so horrific, like the Holocaust, that their shadow absorbs all light, and there is no way the world can ever be seen as sacred again?

And how are we to understand people who have survived similar experiences and reach different conclusions. Such as the Holocaust, where one person becomes more religious, one less. I remember a psychology research study on children who grew up in distressed, dysfunctional families. One group became more depressed and less functional than normals. Another group become more resilient and resourceful than children growing up in "normal, intact" families.

What about those of us that have had events in our life that support both perspectives? Do we just draw on data to support the view that is salient at the time? If I want to see a trusting,

sacred universe, I recall a nurturing family environment and loving, sacred events, altruistic examples of lives well lived; moments of I-Thou intimacy; wondrous joys in nature.

Song of Songs.

If I want to see the universe as barren, I can look at painful experiences in my upbringing, wars, battles, ugliness between humans, vicious and cruel killing in nature, sad events in my life and the world.

Kohelet.

Both are there for the taking.

Is seeing both "wisdom"? Or "wishy washyness" and fear of making a choice?

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Like that simplistic psychology experiment with the balls and basket, is the position we take for the last throw really a matter of "It depends"--where we are at the time, which memories we choose to recall? Do we somehow consciously--or more likely for most of us, unconsciously-- sift through and try to integrate all the different data, to determine which is "more" true.

If we try to make a conscious choice, how do we integrate these different pieces of reality into a coherent worldview? If I choose to believe in a sacred universe, how can I explain evil? If I choose to believe in an indifferent universe, how can I ignore so much love and giving by some people?

"Do you swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth?" The Rebbe said this legal injunction in America courts when you take the stand can only be honestly answered yes to two out of the three questions. He said he could honestly say he was telling the truth; he could honestly say he

was telling nothing but the truth; but he felt no one but God knows the whole truth, and anyone who said they could tell the "whole truth" couldn't be being entirely honest.

It seems there are data to support either choice. How and why do we then choose certain views once and for all? Paul Tillich said faith can have doubt. Doesn't the existentialist also sometimes wonder?

I wish Dr Lisbet and the Rebbe were here so I could ask them to talk more about her experiences in Bali, pursue the Rebbe's comments about Zorasterianism. I hear them saying

"Fly, little bird, fly. You can do it. Flap those wings!"

I miss their presence.

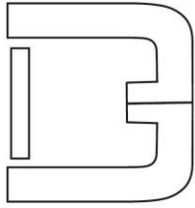
* * *
When I awake, I once again pick up the flute and, as I start to play, hear the rain outside continuing to pound against the building. "If the clouds are full, they pour out rain upon the earth." The rain's sound provides counterpoint, as if watering the melancholy, meditative, budding notes of Haven's motherless child. Tones, which appear from nowhere, created by breath, burst into glorious blossoming sound, then fade and die away, leaving only an eerie stillness.

"Wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness....yet one fate befalls them both."

Simple.

Wisdom?

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ERKELEY. SUNDAY MORNING. 7A.M. A NEW DONUT COTTAGE.

Good morning, sunshine! Alice's party did not disappoint.

In fact, it was beyond any expectations for success I might have had. A startling experience, and one for which a new manila folder is definitely needed.

I have three donuts on my plate, an old fashioned caramel, an old fashioned chocolate, and an old fashioned plain. I start with the plain. Plain is hardly the correct term. It is covered with a bewitching sugary glaze, and with my first bite, the buttermilk flavor permeates my mouth. I follow it with my "standard" drink: 1/3 coffee, 2/3's chocolate, and whip cream.

What to call the new folder. "Two base runners?" "Audience at ball park watching?" "When the crowd comes onto the field?" "Double play"? "Triple play." I smile at the accuracy and confusion of the word play. It was certainly "playful." But double play means getting somebody out, and is the opposite of running the bases and making it to home. Non-baseball wise, however, the term is perfect. How about "Playing a double header."

I debate whether to continue with the plain, which is excellent, or switch to the chocolate or caramel. A glimmer of sunshine is coming over the hills and buildings, reaching through the window pane, illuminating my old fashioned, and shining off my white index card in a bit of a glare.

Decisions, decisions. Like last night. Like this morning.

Ok, first things first. How to structure this morning? I think I can fit everything in. Like a systems analysis, work backwards from your end point. My golf game begins at 1. I need to arrive by 12 so I can have my usual hour of warm up: hitting, chipping, and putting. So I should leave by 11:00.

Mery's church service begins at 9. I can't imagine it lasts more than an hour, or an hour and a half at most. Let's say 10:30. Conservatively, that allows us a half hour to get coffee and talk.

A moment of doubt slips in. What if Mery isn't there, or brings a boyfriend? It seemed too forward and too presumptuous, as well as too revealing of my intentions, to ask her last night if she was in a relationship. What if she doesn't want to see me (perish the thought) or doesn't have time to talk with me afterwards? Actually, not to worry. You've got yourself protected. Nothing can go wrong. You have a structure on both sides.

Last night and this morning was one side of the tracks--the "easy" column, including the "insurance" orgasm this morning with Lilly, Lori, and even Alice's help. This church outing is just a preliminary foray, a brief scouting expedition for potential future explorations and potential treasure hunts. Yes, it is definitely a challenge, a risk, and an experiment in "hard." But whether it works or not, remember that by 12 you'll be warming up on the range, and by 1 you'll be on the links crushing Richard and the others.

So, for now, just glide on the Eros of the oceanic current, and see where it leads.

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There's no question but that last night was fun. Yet, there was a part of me that, while enjoying the experience, also felt it was almost too simple. No complaints mind you. But, even as I was reaching a lovely climax, I was already thinking about the challenge of Mery.

Keep working backwards. To get there by 9, I'd better leave here by 8, at the latest, because I have no idea where this church is. 7:10. I have fifty minutes for journaling.

Excellent. A morning structure--that takes care of the immediate future. Everything fits. Now, some commentary about the past. But first, in the present, caramel calls. A bite. Yum. Again. Superb choice, maestro.

Now, another sip of my perfectly blended drink to complement and wash down the donut.

* * *

I left off last night's journal with matzah ball soup. I still had the lox, bagels, and eggs ahead of me. Delicious. And an opportunity to find out information from Mery that may be useful pieces of the puzzle to advance my plot to the next stage.

The most important piece of immediate information provides me with my morning mission. I asked her about the small gold cross she was wearing (in a Jewish deli yet, talk about ecumenical!), and if she had found a good church here. Her brown eyes glistened, as she mentioned the name of one on Eddy Street that she attends most Sundays. It would have been too obvious to ask her if she were going to go tomorrow (this morning), but if she is there, the element of surprise will be in my favor.

A bite of chocolate for energy. Some milk.

I found out that she got off work at midnight. Part of me wanted to stay, and offer a ride home, just as a "gentlemanly gesture," with no (well, low) expectations. But I also knew that the odds of reaching even first base were extremely low. I also was aware, after such a delicious meal, and such good news today, that I was I wanted/needed an "other-serve" orgasm. With her, I would be leaving myself much too open and vulnerable. I thought of making a quick trip to Berkeley, then coming back to surprise her at midnight, but again that could have been seen as pushy. And, I don't think as well or as fluidly at night, especially in unstructured situations. Got to keep the framework. I realized I'd pushed this preliminary exploration as far as was wise.

I left her a nice tip. Not too large to be ostentatious, but large enough to be noticeable. Under her very ornate, curlicued, and artistic "Thank you" on the bill, I wrote "THANK YOU. YOU ARE A DELIGHT TO TALK TO" and drew the fish sign and wrote Jesus in Greek. You never know when and where what is learned in class--in this case, classic Greek-- will come in handy.

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I see I have thirty-five minutes. What to write about next? Either my experience with Lori, Lilly, and Alice of last night--which will be easy and fun to relive. Or I can begin organizing the new manila folder, *MOTIVATION*. This seems a bit confusing, like trying to see your face without a mirror. Let's start there, because it's harder, and then after fifteen minutes, switch to re-living last night as the reward for effort.

Grandma's law, my psychology professor called it: First eat your string beans, then you can have dessert. Self-control. Delay of gratification.

I take another bite of chocolate, indulging my desire for something sweet.

Why am I attracted to the opposite sex? It seems natural, like an apple falling to the ground from a tree. But as my psychology professor said, what seems "natural" is often caused by some unseen force--like gravity in physics. "If you want to learn about yourself," he said, "you need to explore what seems natural. You'll generally find that natural is nothing more than reflex responses based on the environmental events, your cultural conditioning, and your biology. If you want to be consciously in control, you need to recognize how you are being controlled without your awareness. Dig deeper."

The short answer is I'm attracted to women so they can give me an orgasm.

Good start. I give myself a pat on the back.

Now, go deeper. Why do I seek out women to give me an orgasm when I have found I can obtain one with a much higher batting average in my home park playing on the same team as myself versus playing against an opponent.

Better. So, there's something about the competitive aspect. I know I'm on my team, and am always ready to help myself, but the challenge of getting a girl to do it is fun and exciting. I get a sense of conquest and competence.

Each base I get to can seem like a victory. conquering new territories, overcoming obstacles and resistance. Success, whether on a given base, or in tennis, golf, the flute, my studies, gives me a feeling I'm in charge of my life, I can make things happen, I have a sense of control. Robert White called it

the "joy in being a cause."

I cause another bite of chocolate to be eaten.

* * *
When I look at sexy pictures of women, either that I've taken, or in magazines, I like to always spend time observing the wrapping paper, like on Christmas Eve. There's a sense of mystery and the unknown. Something is hidden, which promises fun, and excitement. What is underneath and within? Which one belongs to me? Will I be allowed to open the present?


I feel a yearning in me to find a way to get into the locked up treasure. I believe there is always a unique key to each puzzle, a way to unlock it, to find a way to enter. I like the challenge of finding that key. It's like once I do, I feel a shift from outsider, who doesn't belong, to insider, who is allowed in and does belong.

* * *
FIRST BASE. Frankly, I have no motivation to get to first base except that for most women it's necessary, a means, to proceed to second.

I don't really enjoy the hungry, open mouthed mutually tongue entwining French kiss--(too messy and too much saliva). But girls often seem to like it, so I've learned to do it well. If I think of it as their being vulnerable and giving, and I finding a way into their mouth, then it becomes more erotic, at least intellectually. Also I have found it can be a good distraction technique as I proceed to other bases.

Let's go to third.

I place the chocolate donut in the center of the plate, and form it into a triangle, with the base at the top, and narrowing

into point, like the **V**  of third base. I tear a piece of napkin and daintily cover the V, so it is now hidden, as if by a skirt.

A private, exclusive third base. I remove the napkin, take a bite, then recover it.

Third base should taste so good.

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THIRD BASE. What is most attractive to me about third base is the wrapping and the approach, not the present. I love seeing long legs pointing the way upward to this secret under a short skirt (six inches or more above the knee is ideal). I love low slung bell-bottom jeans and swim suit bikini bottoms which allow the abdomen to show at least two inches below the navel, pointing the way downward toward third. Pelvic bones over slim hips also guide the way to the mysterious treasure. The skirt is a bit of a taunt: are you skillful and competent enough to find the key to unlock and get into this puzzle.

For the rest of my junior year in high school, and for several months into my senior year, I was content to merely approach this third base realm: rubbing my hands on top of a girl's pants, dress, or at most, under her skirt but over her panties.

One day my fingers groped awkwardly around under the panties and I felt-- hair. Reaching a new version of third base was intellectually exciting. Legs-- which had once been daintily crossed while sitting, legs once covered by cloth--skirt and panties--were now spread wide open and vulnerable, like an M.



That was arousing.

But the actual arrival and the physical touching and probing

of third base, once I arrived, was not that satisfying. In pictures--that I take and look at it in magazines--I much prefer the clothed body in a short skirt, to the graphic pornographic depictions of a woman's legs flung open. There's nothing hidden there, nothing to unlock, no need for effort find a way into a hidden, vulnerable treasure.

Further, I wasn't exactly enchanted by the feel--hair didn't seem very girlish or feminine. Nor was it that enjoyable for me to stick my fingers into some dark sticky hidden cavern that was actually difficult to find.

If it were solely up to me, I would have preferred to withdraw my fingers and my hand completely from third. In my afternoon fantasy with Elaine, though Sandy and I approached third base (from different directions), we never arrived there. It's really the seeking of the third base intrigue and puzzle that is arousing for me, not the arrival.

So why on subsequent visits, did I go back to third? Was it merely like a moth to a flame? Not at all. Like kisses, it has to do with:


CHESS MOVES: MEANS. (Yellow card: Cross reference). What I found, especially at the start, with private school girls, is that if I wanted them to approach my third base, I had to actually get my hand in their pants first, start to arouse them,--your oils have a pleasing fragrance--and then when they felt they were "losing control" through passion and against their will (though perhaps enjoying it) they'd let you lead their hand to your pants, and perhaps touch your john john on top of your clothes, and maybe actually stroke it a time or two through

your zipper. All, of course, without realizing what they were doing and therefore not being responsible for their actions.

I leave the chocolate donut covered under the napkin and take a bite of plain glazed.

Silly, irresponsible girls.

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I take what's left of the caramel and plain and place them together, like two O's: , for inspiration.

We now get to second base, my favorite part of the woman.

Why?

I have twelve minutes left for motivation. And I plan to devote all of them to breasts and donuts.

What is it about breasts that I find so attractive, so motivating? Can that really be a serious question? Isn't the answer obvious, sticking out right in front of your face?

Breasts make a woman different from a man. It's their uniform, to show they are on the other team, a place where you can focus. The bigger the breasts, the better I like them.

Like third base, I love the packaging. When I see a tight blouse, a top button or two straining to become loose, the start of cleavage, and more and more often, jiggling braless girls, some primitive biological reflex in me goes berserk. But unlike third, I also enjoy not only unwrapping but also playing with the present.

A bite of caramel for dramatic effect. A gulp of milk.

Each step of progress I made toward second base was glorious. Is her elbow closing in on my hand and saying no? Where is

the boundary that she has set for this date? Don't press, back off, go back to first base. Use distraction. In a few minutes, try again. Slowly. Don't act like you're that concerned. Maybe compliment her hair. If still there is some resistance, wait patiently for the next date. You have to learn to read them. Tell them how much you respect them. That they are in control of where the line is. Keep looking for their vulnerability, though. Rub their hair, their back. Sometimes try for third base, so then second will seem something they might as well give into.

Eventually, there is a progression: petting the blouse; inside the blouse but over the bra, under the bra. Touching the aureole. The penultimate purest double was the bra off and feeling the softness and malleability of the flesh with my hands and placing my finger on the target: the nipple, and feeling it rise. I love to manipulate the breasts, squeeze them together, creating as large a cleavage as possible. The purest double was to feel her hands in my hair, and my head being pulled closer to her breast as she would let me nibble and nuzzle and lick and then eventually groan contentedly and in victory as I would suck her nipple like a little baby, my head resting on her breast like a pillow.

This sounds so Freudian, but I know it isn't. Partly because for all his talk, Johannes never lingers more than a few seconds in that contented baby-like state. He's then off to other bases, or trying to get her to his third base. Though there may be something Freudian in seeking the breast that was never offered when we were young. Maybe it's the search to fill the empty hole that no physical piece of flesh can ever offer. And

that's why he asks them to reclothe, ever seeking the mystery, the attainment of which never ultimately satisfies him because flesh cannot ever be the ultimate answer.

Interestingly, when I've dated a girl a few times, and we've passed second base several times, I'll still often ask her to put her bra back on. Why? It's like I want to re-find the buried treasure, re-sense the feeling I might not be allowed in. I actually miss some of the initial resistance and doubt that occurred the first time progress was made. If she just takes off her top and says here, they're yours, I don't find that as erotic or arousing. I re-enact this scenario over and over, as many times as I still find it enjoyable. When it gets boring, I seek a new, novel romance with whom to start the process all over again.

When I self-serve using magazines or pictures I've taken, I use three pictures in sequence: one clothed, one with some cleavage and movement toward disrobing, and one with just the peak of the nipple. When I have my orgasm, it's not by focusing on any one picture, but the sequence of uncovering the treasure. Sometimes it's erotic to focus on the empty space between pictures, knowing what's to come.

I cover the plain donut, then uncover it a bit, pull it to my mouth and lick some of the sugar off, then gently bite into and chew, feeling the sweetness. I drink some milk to wash it down.

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I love the visual picture of large breasts protruding out from a chest and over a slightly babyfat abdomen. The breasts are

fighting to stand upright, to defy gravity, like a rocket ship seeking liftoff.

The girl is seeking to hold in the stomach, to try to keep it lean and relatively taut, and having some success at self-control. The bra is seeking to contain and pull back the breast, which naturally yearns to billow forward in freedom, and to jiggle and dance unrestrained. There is the battle to remain in control, to overcome the vulnerability of flabby flesh seeking to droop. The good fight is being waged, and overall there is victory, but the victory creates a tension.

And that tension--between seeking control and losing it and re-seeking it--enhances the Eros for me.

* * *

Fifteen minutes left until I have to leave. I've done the hard part. I've started thinking about motivation. I've gone through mystery, belonging, competence, adventure, and three of the bases--their body parts: lips, breast, private area. But these parts are true for all girls as a "generic" group. One topic I'll have to consider next time is what causes me to be more attracted to and choose one whole girl--as a gestalt my psychology professor would say-- over another: face; personality--fun, playful, innocence-- different sizes of body parts? What? I'll save that for another time.

What I do know is that after so many years of hearing no, of batting goose eggs, it's really fun to be able to go into so many different ball parks and score. Like a kid in a candy shop. Or a young man in a donut cottage. So many women, so little time.

Time is up for writing about motivation. I need to write
about Alice and the sisters from last night.

I've done the hard part, Grandma.

Bring on the dessert.

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eneae aedae Thea. paleadeos, Achilleous olamenen a muri

Listen to my story, oh goddess... inspire me with the gift of song....

The opening lines of Homer's *Odysseus*. It's fascinating how goals and journeys change. My alter ego California scholar and Lothario, Johannes, wanted to learn Greek to read Kazantzakis' *Zorba* in the original. But classical Greek was all that was offered at the right time period for him. Of course, he learned it well, and it became one more tool in his seduction armamentarium. He'd sing the opening lines of *Odysseus* as preamble or as departure line to his most recent conquest. He felt (and it turns out rightly so) that it showed a certain class to quote Homer. The girls always admired his erudition (if not his singing voice). He leaves Mery a note with Jesus name written in Greek on the bill, as part of his tip. Johannes seeks the mystery of the hidden breast through his use of charming clever words.

Now, I'm using my knowledge of Greek to help me as I read the New Testament. Logos, the word, In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. *Logos*. Only in the Gospel of John 1:1-14. And I know from my Hebrew that this recalls the word of God which creates the heaven and earth in Genesis. The power of the word also is reflected in the Psalms: "By the word of the LORD were the heavens made (33:6-9);" "He sent His word and healed them (Psalm 107.20)."

And it also foreshadows Revelations 19 where Logos is spoken of as the name of Jesus, who at the Second Coming rides a white horse into the Battle of Armageddon wearing many crowns, and is identified as King of

Kings, and Lord of Lords: "He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God."

I think to myself, what power in words. To create, to reveal **to heal**.

I seek the mystery of self-understanding through the words of Johannes' writing and my journals; I seek the mystery of the universe--the Word--through living and being here in Israel. Even as I use words, I see their limits. Can words really give me a base from which to relate to the absolute? Can words describe a religious quest, a search for the ineffable? I hope to eventually stop using words, and let the Word live in living. **Or maybe there is a way, through Kaballah, through art, to see words in a new light, as a way in which life and being come into existence.**

We're both seeking mystery. He is motivated by *Eros*. I face *Thanatos*, and pray for *Logos*. How the journey shifts. **Indeed.**

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Evening. Start of day three. That seems so topsy turvy. The day starts in the evening. It's been a long day of just reading my past. I light the shammash.

In some ways, the shammash's role is dual and opposite. On the one hand, the shammash is like the leader of the band, set apart from the orchestra, with the responsibility to light up all the other members. But the word itself in Hebrew means helper. It doesn't count as one of the nights. A leader as a helper, a facilitator, a giver, who doesn't count. Almost like in a subservient servant's role. Both? Is that a role I could have in life? The fire equivalent of the Sinai "serving water?"

I place three candles in the menorah, and begin to light them from right to left, like Hebrew reading. After I light the second one I realize I forgot to perform the Rebbe's assignment and say something positive after lighting each candle. I blow out

number two, and place the Shammash, still lit, back in its holder.

I don't know whether you are supposed to blow out the shamash after you have lit the candles.

While trying to think of something positive. I replay "Motherless Child" on my flute.

Nothing comes to mind. As I'm trying to concentrate on finding something positive, I remember a snippet of a dream I had...from last night? From a nap this afternoon? I know that when I remember a dream, I need to write it down right away, or it may slip away again, often never to be recovered. Is it still in there? Does it affect me, subconsciously? How can you be committed to absolute awareness when sometimes you can't bring to light what is in there? Stop chattering, otherwise you'll forget it again.

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DREAM JOURNAL, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 27. WRITTEN: DAY THREE OF HANUKKAH; THE DREAM OCCURRED ON DAY TWO OF HANUKKAH; (OR ON NIGHT TWO OR DAY THREE COUNTING FROM CHRISTMAS).

I am at Disneyland, the self-proclaimed "Happiest Place on Earth," on an especially sunny spring day. (Dr. Lisbet said I need pay special attention to my emotions--the affective tone--of my dreams). Ok, I am happy as far as I can tell. I am alone, and enter two high doors to board a ride. The doors close behind me. It's dark inside, like an elevator without lights. I start to lose my moorings and become frightened, but I remind myself that I am at Disneyland, and this is only a ride. Probably just a new scary one I haven't yet experienced. Thinking that they have created this ride for the purpose of frightening me makes it less scary and more fun.

A small pale green round light comes on, in which a number

appears to show which floor we are on. The elevator starts at ground level G, then descend...1,2,3,4,5,6. and is now six flights underground. No scary creatures have yet appear. The light goes off and the enclosure is now completely dark, almost coffin like. There is no one else on the ride with me, and nothing happens. Ten seconds, twenty. One minute. Am I getting air, I wonder. I cough, then give a little cry "Hello, anybody here? Nothing. I try to push the button where the light once was. Nothing.

Then I hear the doors open. A hazy bluish indigo-violet light from an unknown source illuminates a tomb-like enclosure before me. Then the light fades and it is again completely dark. I continue to wait. One minute, two...

I realize this is a test. The goal is to return to the sunny light of the happiest place on earth above ground. I am in the belly of darkness. I have to make a choice. The only way I know for sure back to the light is the elevator, which brought me here. So, one choice is to stay in the elevator. This choice I realize is a test of patience, trust, and acceptance of what is. The hope is the elevator will ascend in a few more moments to the light. My fear is that if I remain in the elevator, nothing will happen, and I will be trapped there forever, until I die. It's possible no one knows I'm here, and I mistakenly got on a ride that no longer is in operation.

The other choice is act by going forward into the dark tomb-like structure. Perhaps this is really a fascinating new ride, and its purpose is to test how courageous I am. Perhaps I'm supposed to get off here, enter what appears to be a dead-end tomb, and once I show my fortitude, some other new path out of the darkness to the light will appear. But that new path won't

appear until I act and enter the next stage of the puzzle. So acting with bravery also requires trust. My fear with this choice is that by going forward, the elevator doors may close, and I may be leaving my only possible source of hope, and become buried in the tomb forever.

I hear only my breathing. There is no other sound. Then I hear the elevator doors start to slowly close. Is this to take me back up, or is this my last chance to leave the elevator and escape?

I put my hand in the door to try to hold it open a bit longer to preserve my options. I'm not able. I have to choose. Both choices, I realize involve trust and fear. Just as I'm about to make a decision,

I wake up.

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What is the right answer? To go forward courageously, to wait patiently and acceptingly. Dr. Lisbet said I should always take a moment after I wake up and have written down the dream, to look at my overall feeling about the dream as a whole.

Horrible. Claustrophobic. Sickening. Petrified. Helpless.

I hate choosing. I hate when there is no clear path. I hate when my very existence is at stake, and I'm not sure what to do.

The dream does not involve a moral dilemma, where I'm intentionally hurting either others or myself by my choice of staying in the elevator, or going forward. Thus, I realize that how I interpret the dream casts me back into the reality of the central question I am facing in life--how do I choose to answer the question between column one--is this a benevolent universe? Or column two--do we live in a random, indifferent one? The choice I make in life will make all the difference in how I feel about

my dream.

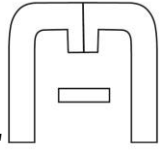
If I choose to believe in a benevolent universe, then that provides the context for this dream. The elevator, additional room, is just a cosmic game. Given my humanness and limited information, all I can do is the best I can. Both positive assertive and positive yielding are reasonable choices, contexted by trust in the universe's goodness and compassion. Things will work out as they are supposed to. There are no wrong selections. This is just a ride at the happiest place on earth. Although I would probably still feel a little fear, overall I would feel safe, assured, relieved. Everything is going to work out fine, at the deepest level.

If the universe is random, then, given limited information, there is no way I can know whether there is a right choice. If I don't act, as I'm dying I can accuse myself of negative yielding--passivity and timidity. If I do act, as I'm dying, I can accuse myself of hubris and overcontrol. My situation may be the result of a universal accident, bad luck, human carelessness. Again, there is no right way to act. But in this case there is no context of trust. Acting or not acting may lead to my death, and no one would care, nor would my death trapped in an underground shaft have any meaning.

I look at the Shammash, and the first candle light burning. I remember, before writing down the dream, I was trying to create a positive thought for the third day of Chanukkah. I look at the last two candles, still unlit.

I pick up the flute and play Havens once again.

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"lice" I say, opening my arms and giving her a big hug.

"So, you decide to finally show up." She returns my hug, and gives my butt a little playful squeeze. "Decided you could cum slumming tonight, eh, Mr. Stanford elitist scum. Hope you don't catch anything."

Alice is the most promiscuous, foul mouthed Jewish girl I have ever met. She is nothing like any Jewish girl I knew in Kansas City, at Stanford, or frankly anywhere else. Mindboggling. After all the social conventions, manners, and etiquette that were drilled into me--and into all the nice Jewish girls-- so we could fit into Kansas City High society, Alice is like someone who lives down the rabbit hole in another dimension--so uninhibited, and refreshingly free-spirited. When I am around her, I try to watch to see how she does it. Her braggadocio, her swagger, her ability to get along with everyone and enter into any situation or group seamlessly. She has a lot to teach me. Of course, although I don't mind her foul language, I personally don't want to ever curse like that. I'm still a gentleman.

"Not my fault. I was detained," I retort.

"Ok, let's hear it, who was she?"

"You're egging me on. It was the lox from which I couldn't unchain myself."

"Sounds like a little unkosher B and D to me. You into S and M, and never told me? Quite a jam, I suspect. Pompously said,

of course. No Stanford dangling prepositions. Anything else dangling? Come here john john, here boy." She starts to stroke my pants and I draw back awkwardly.

Alice. Quick, intelligent, highly sexed. Always. Maybe even more than me. I'd met her last year while I was the Advertising Manager of the *Stanford Daily*, attending an IBM conference for student newspapers on how to go from hot type to cold type. She later told me her goal at the conference was the opposite "To make hot types out of cold types." When I first saw her, she was wearing a cowboy hat.

She was my counterpart on the editorial side at U.C. Berkeley. I couldn't believe the words that came out of her mouth. Or what she was willing to put into her mouth.

"Come on in, you're forgiven--again. I've got some friends I'd like you to meet. They're sisters, Lilly and Lori. I've told them all about you, and they're more than ready to meet you. Your dutiful pimp at work for you once again. But I want to make sure I get mine later tonight, promise?"

"Have I ever let you down?!" I parry. Not a lie, but not a guarantee. I hate to feel pressured, want someone new tonight, and don't like to make a promise on which I'm not sure I can deliver. I bend and give her a kiss on the forehead.

"What's with that, asshole." And she pulls my face down and sticks her tongue deep into my mouth. Then just as quickly withdraws it. "Just look at you. I'd have never known."

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I'd have never known. I know exactly what's she's referring to. Our first meeting. I, as usual, when entering a new situation, especially a group, stand back and observe, trying to get

my bearings. I never just enter into the scene.

When I first noticed her, she was on the far side of the room, a butterfly flitting around--men, women--no matter whom, getting to know everybody, flirting with everyone. Except me. Finally, she came over

"Ok, Mr. aloof Stanford know-it-all, what's your problem?"

Not the introduction I expected. I didn't know what to say, so I was silent.

"Still ignoring me when I talk to you? Fine. One time, shame on you; two times, shame on me, there won't be a third time." She started to walk away.

"Whoa, cowgirl, what do you mean, still not talking to you? That's the first you've spoken to me."

"Bullshit. When you came in and got some punch, I immediately came up to you and said 'Hi Handsome.'" You just stood there like a piece of stone."

"Ah, simple explanation. I bet you were standing on my left side, right, I mean, correct?"

"Yeah, so. This better be good. You ignore people on your left. Think they're pinko commies? You're a right wing sympathizer, only talk to people to the right of you?"

"Deaf in my left ear, since I was three."

"Fuck you. That's good. Quick on your feet. Or at least a quick tongue. Bet we can put it to good use. But no need to lie. Even a good lie. You're forgiven."

In my most charming tone, I explained, feeling I'd finally begun to gain the upper hand: "In second grade a teacher slapped

me and took me to the principal. Exact same situation. The teacher told the principal she was talking to me, and I completely ignored her. The principal, who was a friend of mom's, told her that I was totally deaf in my left ear. Needless to say, the teacher was non-plussed, quite embarrassed, and I became her special darling the rest of the school year."

Alice only said: "Oh well, win some, lose some."

I was startled by her response. It was not at all the guilty, fawning, sympathetic one I'd come to expect when people don't realize I'm deaf and first learn. What did she mean? Was she telling me "That's the breaks. Some people are deaf, you win with your right ear, lose with your left?" That felt like a pretty harsh, flip way to dismiss my handicap.

Was she trying to say she'd made a mistake. Where was the "I'm sorry." Or was that her way of apologizing? While I'm thinking this, she just stood there staring at me. Finally she said,

"Bet it's easy to sleep at night at a noisy convention--just roll onto your right ear. But damned if I'm going to let you get any sleep."

I thought I was good at deflecting guilt. She's a master.

And what's more, she was right. She didn't let me get any sleep.

* * *

Over the course of the next two days, I shared with her more openly than I usually do with anyone. There was something about her complete uninhibitedness that seemed to draw me out. She wanted no commitments, lived in the moment, and was one of the smartest and most quick-witted women I'd ever met. Her desire

for no commitments made it easier to share with her.

"So, what's with the aloof, Mr above-it-all pose."

I confessed that I'd never easily or smoothly glided into parties, or large group settings. "They make me uncomfortable, so I always stand back and wait and watch. Sometimes people approach me, and then once someone has taken an initiative, I'm good at repartee and taking things to the next level.

"But if I have to go into a group gathering cold, with no role and no structure, it's very hard for me to take the initiative."

I told her about my failed experience with all of the fraternities I visited my freshman year.

"My grandfather said it was because I was Jewish that I never got invited back. There may be some truth in that. I don't know. The only truth I know for sure was that I never got invited back."

"Oh, poor little wandering Jewish baby, didn't get invited back. Wah wah wah. Some Jews feel rejected. Some Jews get clan-ish, saying 'I never wanted to belong anyway.'

"I assimilate everywhere. Not a problem. I can get on with anyone anywhere."

"Not me. I've come to realize that I'm just not an insider, group type person. I don't seem to belong easily."

"You could have fooled me. I see this handsome hunk, poised, charming, and say, 'Mr. Aloof. Looks like a challenge.' And to think, all along, it's because you're a vulnerable little boy. Who drinks punch. How cute. I'd have never known. But you know what, it makes you all the more adorable," and she pinches

my cheek like my Aunt Bev might do.

"I crave novelty--I'm definitely not a one man kind of woman; and you look like someone who enjoys variety, right."

I nod, a little sheepishly at having this side of me so undisguisedly and openly recognized.

"Not to worry. I'm a *yenta* at heart, and man do I have some friends who would lust to meet you. I'd love to be your unpaid, how would you all euphemistically phrase it at Stanford, 'facilitator?' 'procurer'? I can definitely help you penetrate" and as she says that word, she pinches my cheek again, a bit harder, and thrusts her pelvis forward "yes, penetrate into the inner recesses of others--so my little wandering Jew boy feels he belongs."

I hesitate. She continues, sensuously

"Don't worry. Be happy. No strings attached. Just make sure every once in a while, I continue to get my salacious, synergistic payoff. Starting tonight. We'll be perfect for each other. Deal?"

That was a year ago.

No complaints. From me, or from her. A good team.

I can see how Johannes would think Alice's perfect for him, but in his selfish greediness to get his biological needs met--from her, and untold "novel" others--he doesn't stop to think what she means by how he is perfect for her. He's truly deaf to looking at whether she has any motivation beyond her glib surface statements. But maybe in that way, they are in fact perfect for each other.

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Alice leads me by the hand into a smoke-filled room. The

music is quite loud, and there are people dancing. Without her guiding me, this is the type of situation where, entering alone, I would totally feel lost. With her, I feel confident and at ease. Alice thinks so highly of me and always gives me a great set up before I arrive and such an enthusiastic introduction when I do arrive, it paves my way. Once introduced and the ice is broken, I can always take it from there. I love it when my reputation precedes me. Speaking of reputation--at least to myself--I turn to Alice and say

"I heard some great news today." I want to tell her about Harvard. But she has trouble hearing me over the music, seems intent on finding the girls, and not that interested.

Alice points, and, following her finger, I see two girls maybe ten yards away who are holding hands and playfully dancing with each other. One is my age, and the other a couple of years older. I expect Alice to walk me over toward them. Instead, she takes out a lighter, and starts swaying it in a circle until she catches the girls' attention. She closes the lighter, points at me, then disappears into the crowd.

* * *

I stand there awkwardly, wondering what just happened to my introduction. The girls dance over toward me, almost skipping. Kind of corny. I reach out my hand to introduce myself. They are still holding hands. In their free hands, one is holding up a joint for me to smoke, the other takes a gulp from her beer, then offers it to me.

I know that these gestures are meant to be companionable, a way to ask me to join them, a type of bonding ritual. I want to join them, but without the ritual. I feel awkward saying to them

that I am abstemious with regard to smoking and drinking. I thought that probably was one of the reasons I didn't get invited back to any of the fraternities. I don't smoke, and I don't like the taste--or the effect-- of beer or alcohol. I'm not a kegger type guy.

I shake my head with a smile, start to say something, then realize the music is too loud for the girls to hear me. I take a deep breath through my nose, open my mouth wide and point with my index finger, then point to and pat my stomach, trying to signal that I've already had too much at a previous party. Not a lie, exactly. It depends on how you interpret it. I mean to say "too much food at David's Deli, I'm stuffed," even though they might not interpret it quite that way. And it was a party--of one.

I enjoy my own company, and when I take myself out to a public place, I am content to sit and work on my manila folders and journal projects, whatever they happen to be at the time. If I am able to flirt or talk with someone, that's fine, and if not, that's fine, too. I still think it's a fun outing--so it's not really a lie to call it a party. And I did have too much food; that's certainly not a lie. Though as I'm thinking this, as if arguing a case before a judge, it's not clear they really care one way or the other. They can't even hear me over the music.

The girls do interpret my hand signals differently than I meant them, but not with the difference I intended. One starts patting my belly in time with the rock music, spilling wine on my turtleneck. She rubs her hand on the soft cashmere to wipe the stain away. Then, she tries to take the sweater off me in front

of the other dancing people. I resist, pulling it down, and place her hand back on my belly.

The other sister, in a move not dissimilar to Alice, tries to stick her tongue down my open mouth. I turn my head quickly to the side, and her tongue lands on my cheek, which she starts licking. The sensation is not all that pleasant, and I feel more uncomfortable as her tongue continues upward toward my right ear. The hearing in my right ear is acute--as is its reaction to touch. I think of pulling my head completely back from her, but don't want to appear too rejecting and so diminish my chances for scoring later in the evening. I take a breath and allow her to lick the right ear, feeling a prickly, tingling, almost too sensitive sensation. I decide to allow her tongue to remain, and lick, even though it feels vulnerable and her tongue somewhat blocks my ear, muffling my hearing. It's nothing like the one and only time I was ever pinned in wrestling, with my right ear to the mat so that I couldn't hear at all. That was total vulnerability and helplessness. This is tolerable, though not enjoyable.

But I have my limits. My left ear is definitely off limits. Nobody ever has or ever will touch, much less lick that ear.

Both girls start dancing with me.

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I already have an excellent and complete set of photos of Alice, so there is nothing more I want from her, but as I dance with the sisters I wonder if they would be willing to let me take a few pictures of them. They seem pretty free-spirited.

Even though I'm having fun, I do think that taking pictures could perhaps maximize my excitement, making the experience of being with them more pleasurable and erotic. Capturing their

image in a photograph allows me not only to luxuriate in the moment, but also to make that moment last forever, creating many opportunities for subsequent satisfying self-serves.

But this evening I'd made the decision to leave Mr Cannon in the car.

At the first party of Alice's I attended, I brought Mr Cannon with me and was taking pictures. A guy accused me of being a narc, trying to catch them smoking dope. He made me take my film out, then grabbed and would have smashed my camera if Alice hadn't intervened and vouched for me. Now that I'm better known at her parties, I don't think that would happen again. But I have also become more sensitive to other's feelings, and realize it might not seem that suave when you first meet someone you're hoping to spend time with later that evening to approach them with something dangling on your chest that looks like a one eyed Cyclops at the end of a long round pig snout. It might make them feel intimidated or uncomfortable. I can understand that.

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The girls' initiative in beginning to dance with me is unexpected and disorients me a bit. I haven't even been properly introduced to them, and haven't made any moves at all. I feel my main source of seduction--my use of words for repartee--is completely thwarted by the music. Even though it seems all is going well, there is a part of me that feels I'm not earning it, and therefore don't deserve it. Also I don't even know who is whom. Names give me a feeling of control. It's much easier to call a waitress over if you know her name than if you say, "Excuse me, ma'am ; heh, waitress..." Names give a type of control and influence, even intimacy.

Oh, well for everything there is a season, a time for words
a time for not speaking words or some such....

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The music is much too loud and fast. "Strange days have
found us." Whatever happened to Johnny Mathis, Robert Goulet,
Frank Sinatra? I see them dancing around me gracefully, and have
some trouble finding the beat, never a strength of mine anyway.
Toto, we're not in Kansas anymore. Well, when in Rome....and I
allow them to pull me further into the center of the dancing
area, still patting and tonguing.

As they continue their exuberant, joyous gyrations, I am
aware that I don't mind watching women let loose and cast aside
their inhibitions. In fact I love that. For many, I've found
they need some intoxicant to give themselves permission to do so.
But sexual desire is enough to cause me to lose my own inhibi-
tions, and I don't need to be drunk or stoned to do that. Also, I
like to be in control when I do so, watching, and even orches-
trating to a certain extent what is happening. I like to know
what's going on and be in control all the time. The only brief
time when I am willing to choose to let go of control is during
an other-serve orgasm. But after that brief moment of delicious
disorientation, I immediately return to structure and order.

All I have to give me a sense of control is my mind
and body.

It is for that reason that I don't like feeling hazy, foggy,
dizzy, or confused--the very loss of control some people seem to
seek in distilled spirits. Not me. Not drinking works to keep my
mind, and my body toned and in control. I don't want to waste

enjoyable calories on alcohol. Getting heavy makes me feel out of control, and I don't like that feeling, either.

But here, though my mind is seeking to be in control, and my body feels strong and healthy, I am again acutely aware that I'm not having to make any moves at all. It feels a bit that this is happening all too quickly and too easily, as if I'm being drawn into a vortex, an actor in a play not of my creation. I could be any "body" to these two sisters, not the special, charming person who just got into Harvard, and whom they want to get to know better.

It's like an intentional base on balls. I just stand there and get to go to first.

Good analogy. I start to feel better, more in control. Why does a pitcher often walk a person intentionally? It's because of his reputation as a great hitter. These girls do know me; Alice has already provided them the "stats" and so I need no further introduction. It really is my prowess that is charming them.

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As I watch them dance with me, I think, hey, I just got into law school, this is a time of new beginnings and new adventures. Why not let loose a little? I imagine Zorba beginning his dance; I image drinking with my friend Falstaff (I, of course, with a Dr. Pepper). Falstaff, fellow boarder of Eastcheap, who could drink a well of beer, or I am a Jew else, an Ebrew Jew.

I feel their arms entangle me, like four slithering snakes braiding their way along the branch of a fallen tree. There is something exciting and sensuous about the two women alternately kissing each other, and then me. Two runners on first at the same time. Is that legal?

I'm mainly enjoying their hedonistic humping, but I'm also aware of how smokey the room is. And I have a strong distaste for the smell. For that, I can thank mom.

When I was 12, she said, "I want you to try a cigarette so you can see how much I enjoy it. Here, take a big puff and really fill your lungs." I did, I inhaled deeply and trustingly, and went into a paroxysmal spasm of coughing.

She laughed at me. "That's really fun, isn't it?! It's a vile and disgusting habit and I can't stop. Every time you think you want to start, anytime you feel social pressure, a so called 'friend' saying, 'Oh, just try one, it's cool,' remember this taste. And, "she smiled and continued, "as a special incentive if you don't smoke until you're 21, I'll give you \$210." To a 12 year old that was Fort Knox. I never smoked another cigarette. And I've also decided that weed, and hashish can create the same effect, so I've never tried those either. Maybe it's a similar issue to alcohol and control. I don't trust the effects. In any case, mom's offer did help me withstand social pressure, and maybe is one reason why I don't fear not being part of or going along with the crowd, Thoreau's different drummer. Sinatra's "I did it my way" and all that. And, I did indeed collect my money at 21. So, thanks, mom.

I'm pulled back from my reverie by the pulsating of the music and the pulsating of me. For some reason, the beat has now appeared to me--clearly and congruently-- and I let my body move to and flow with the sound.

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There is a strong intimate bond these two girls--sisterly

affection?-- and their connection passes through me like a current. Electric, oceanic. As two pairs of hands crawl through my legs (the drink and smoke have now been tossed, having served their purpose), I feel *Eros* rising, like a swelling wave cresting toward the moon. I'm drawn by the gravitational tension caused by the moon's force lifting the wave, and gravitational tension caused by the wave's cresting and starting to be pulled back to earth. Tensions mount and conflict. Rising, falling.

Even though the forces of those tensions are nearing a point which is almost beyond my control, I have learned that I can extend the ride on the wave for or a long time. In the foreground I observe the girls hands running all over my body, now removing my turtleneck. This time I let them.

I have a vague background awareness that a group of people are dancing around us urging us onward toward home. I feel myself basking in the audience's clapping and appreciation. Rounding second. Moving toward third. In the middle of a dance floor, I let myself yield a bit more to the increasing pleasure that I have been holding back since this evening's flirtation with Mery. After a few minutes, I sense myself nearing that point when I know that the orgasm is close, nearly inevitable, but still controllable. Now it's time to exert some will power and discipline.

I realize that here's where my baseball metaphor breaks down. There's not an inevitable, systematic connection between bases and orgasm. I can have an orgasm at second base, or third base, without ever reaching home. Also, to delay orgasm, you can't just stop and walk the base paths.

Thinking about the limitations of bases as metaphor slows me

down a bit. I try to think of different, more precise, images of the moment leading to orgasm.

Surfing the wave. Pure California. The ocean. Ride the waves. The feeling I have is riding and savoring the crest of a wave, seeking to keep the crashing joyous sensation from happening as long as possible.

It's interesting surfing is the first metaphor that comes to mind. I've never even been on a surf board. I'm actually much more comfortable in pools than the ocean--must be growing up in landlocked Kansas City.

Maybe a better image for this pre-orgasm time is the high diving board. Just before the leap. You have more control on top of a board over a pool than you do on a surfboard in the ocean. Then, once you jump, you let yourself go for a brief moment, into gravity's downward ride. The pool catches you--structure on the other side.

Or maybe a still better metaphor is a rollercoaster ride; going up the tracks, slowly climbing, clankety clank, clankety clank, rising toward the inevitable, knowing you will reach the top. Once there, you peak, and let go. It's fun because you also know there are tracks to keep you contained on the ride down, so you can truly surrender, raise your hands over your head: "Wheeee...."

We drift into one of the side bedrooms to continue the ride.

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7:55a.m Right on schedule. One more bite of each donut.

Caramel for Lilly; chocolate for Lori; plain for Alice, who decided to join us this morning. *Choice fruits, both new and old.....*

At first it was confusing where to focus my attention. Also, I was tired, even though it was early, and I wasn't quite in gear, (no initial 0 to 60 surging sensation--sorry, Mr. Red.).

Plus, I did have one concern about Alice. She has been letting the hair grow on her legs and under her armpits. I liked it when she decided it was "natural" to go without a bra, and told her how much I admired her feminist decision to not be constrained and confined, to "let it all hang out: let yourself be free."

But all this hair is taking "natural" too far. It confused me partly because I wasn't being logically consistent. I guess I like some natural things, which, in my eyes, make women more feminine; and don't like others, which to me make women more like men. Everything in its place and a place for everything. A time for every season. And hair under the arms or on the legs just not right for a woman.

Nevertheless, I was able to set aside these ruminations, and decided to just watch the girls, who seemed to be enjoying each other as much as, if not more than, me. I observed carefully to see if I could learn a few things from the other team about how women pleasure each other. Being a student was never more illuminating.

By the end, the revving, rumbling, rocket's revolution and powerful pulsating pistons were firing quite well, and everyone was satisfied. *I have eaten my honeycomb and my honey.* As we were all goofing around with each other, lines from the *Song of Songs*, unbidden and automatic, appeared in my mind, as always. *Your oils have a pleasing fragrance.* When I first read that

passage I thought it applied to many oils on one woman; maybe the plural means oils of many women at one time?

I thought about sharing these verses with them, but felt they probably wouldn't appreciate having lines from the *Song* quoted to them at this time, and might even think I was weird.

In the end, Alice wasn't let down, I had my insurance orgasm for my drive to San Francisco, the church service, and golf ahead. Lori, Lilly, and I giggled wordlessly good-bye, realizing it would have been awkward to say anything since we hadn't exchanged any words the whole evening or during the night. I still didn't know who was whom.

Just as I was leaving, I did think that the sisters would most likely be quite amenable to being photographed, perhaps even in action together. I thought of running out to my car to bring Mr Cannon in, but it seemed the timing would not quite be right.

Perfect for next time.

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7:58. Church this morning. I've never been to a church service. This should be interesting--at least for the first few minutes. I think again of Grandpa's joke of sowing wild oats Saturday night and praying for crop failure in church Sunday. Well, that's one prayer I won't have to utter. During one of our "pep" talks, Grandpa warned me, sternly, to always be "careful" around women.

"Never have intercourse without a condom. Women will want to derail you from your goals. They'll be after your money. Never. Promise? Never. Do we understand each other?"

It was the only commandment he ever issued. And I always obeyed. No intercourse without condoms. Period. (So she always

has one). I don't need any pregnancy problems. I feel my hip pocket. There are still a couple left. "Insurance."

7:59. As I start to get up, I take one more bite of the caramel donut. Mom would chide me--maybe I was 14-- that I never finished a meal at the table. I'd always reach for one more bite as I got up, something to eat as I was walking away. She seemed to think it was significant, and was going to talk to her psychiatrist about it. It probably isn't, because she never mentioned it again. It's interesting how habits remain, though, and I wouldn't even know it was a habit now, if she hadn't pointed it out to me then. Now, that is interesting, sort of. But no time for further reflection. It's now 8a.m, and "Get me to the church on time...."

First, one more bite. I realize it's not just about pleasure--which is guaranteed--but about maximizing my pleasure. I look at the three donuts before me. Choices choices. Rhetorically, and anthropomorphically I ask them,

"Which one of you has a taste treat that you want to offer me that you feel will make me the most happy....."

They don't answer, but instead passively wait for me to do whatever I want with them. It's really unfair the burden of responsibility that is placed on the one in charge.

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powerful pulsating pistons. Revving, rumbling revolutions of Mr. Red's energized engines. Yes, Johannes, you and your car are one. I leave you refueling yourself, reminiscing over donuts, faced with the dilemma of which bite from which donut to eat last.

Of course, in your speed and hurry, there is no time to reflect on why you seek a last bite upon leaving the table. So let me do it for you. For starters, it could be greed. Always wanting one more thing. Never filled. Never satisfied with what you have. Could it also be you avoid endings? You rush from the three girls to three donuts to Mery at church. You protect yourself with an "insurance" orgasm before leaving Berkeley--one more bite. You take a last bite as you're leaving the donut shop, so even as you leave you try to carry part of the past experience with you. How else do you explain the photos you take of your "conquests"? You never stop to reflect on what it might actually feel like to say "good by" and face the anxiety, pain, fear, sadness, and poignancy of an ending.

So mockable, so unreflective, and worse.

You may be abstemious (is that one of your pompous SAT words?) with regard to smoking and alcohol, but hardly so regarding food and sex. You feel proud of your night's efforts. Manly. Competent. But how different are you from a young woman who goes to a beer-drinking frat party, and lets herself be undressed in public, and then passed around and felt and poked by all the guys there?

How would you view her? A slut? A victim? Both? I certainly would. And that's how I view you. You may not drink, and you may think you're in control. And our culture lets you believe because you are a male, this is ok. But aren't Alice and her friends just passing you around like a hunk of flesh. You perform well. They're happy. You may think you're acting manly and not a victim, but you're just being used. And what's worse, you don't even know it.

Maybe that is something you should reminisce about as I leave you to eat your donuts while feeling so proud of yourself. Eat well and restore your energy at your pit stop in preparation for your drive to church in San Francisco. Your main concern: "Get me to the church on time" is motivated by only one thing: seeking the potential of one more conquest of the flesh. This goal is not only untimely, it is sacrilegious. For God's sake, the only reason to be in church is for God' sake. You seek flesh in the house of the spirit. You don't know the Rebbe's comment about saints and pickpockets, but it so applies to you, and you should be ashamed of yourself.

You go to church as a flesh-seeking pickpocket.

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I look at the two unlit candles. I'm not doing too well coming up with a positive thought. I need to switch my focus from anger at Johannes and the helplessness and dark emotions I'm still feeling from my dream.

I'm also frustrated at my inability to make a decision about my two columns--the nature of the universe. I know that's really a stupid frustration and childish impatience. It's only been 48 hours since I decided that was THE question I was going to try to

figure out. I've given myself nine months. Slow down, patience. Now, think of something positive and light the last two candles.

As I look at the shamash and the one lit candle, I have a thought which seems to "come out of left field." I wonder what it would be like to watch a baseball game at night only lit by menorahs. At first, that seems like a positive thought. I imagine all eight candles lit and burning brightly. However, the more I reflect on it, the more I realize that the image that comes to mind is dim, especially when compared to my memory of the bright lights at that night game with Dad. It would not be a nearly sufficient amount of light by which to play a night game.

Johannes' light at the ballgame is much brighter than mine, which pales by comparison. That seems so unfair to me. Why should he be basking in the light of his father, while I have to search so hard to find mine? I'm enraged by this contrast, so furious I wish Johannes were here to pummel him.

What's going on?

I know I'm angry at Johannes. I know I'm repulsed by his fastidious, almost fetishistic preoccupation with food and appearance. Look at him, on the Sabbath, he lit no candles, and his only Shabbat like gesture is to make the proper hand movement to gratify his sense of smell. His welcoming in the Shabbat bride is perverted into an obsessive search for the flesh of women. I know I judge him and feel superior to him in that my search is addressed to higher, more spiritual concerns. So, I'm superior. Fine. Then why such rage?

He shouldn't even be deserving of my anger, he isn't an opponent worth competing against. Yet isn't comparing a type of competition; "look how much better I am than you?"

But my mind seems to have taken on a life of its own. Fueled by anger, my diatribe continues.

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Purim is a time to rejoice collectively, to celebrate the freedom from persecution for the Jewish people, to become so intoxicated spiritually that you enter an altered state of consciousness where you don't know the difference between evil Haman and righteous Mordechai. Yet Johannes' ribald revelry Saturday night is a celebration only to self-centeredly congratulate himself for his achieved status and upward mobility, his assimilation into a group orgy by salaciously indulging in pleasures of the flesh.

Johannes, you bring the clown like celebratory attitude of Purim toward life but you don't even realize that you are not acting the role of a clown, you are a clown, a buffoon. And your way to the altered state your elixir of choice? Not spirits. Not the spirit. Sex.

You are as godless as Purim. God isn't mentioned once in Purim. And isn't mentioned once by you, who even forgets it's Purim. Even your self-serving thought of a prayer, before opening your admission letter, is aborted.

And as for wearing masks at Purim, well, Johannes, you are definitely in disguise, though you don't know or acknowledge it.

You and I are total opposites. In contradistinction to you, I am devoted to unmasking myself, and to being as honest and illusion free as possible. I am searching for the light and the spirit.

The day will come when you will have to take off the mask, and see what is being hidden. You'll get your punishment, and

it's deserved.

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But, still, why the rage at him? Just because he's so disgusting?

Go deeper.

I sit alone in my room, seeing no real cause for celebration, having no upward "mobility" of either a social or spiritual kind, only seeking freedom, and seeking God. I light candles at every chance possible. Sabbath, Chanukkah, trying to bring more light into the world, and into my life.

Isn't light supposed to be a sign of God? The eternal light.

Yet, thinking of the baseball image, I'm embarrassed to admit it to myself, but in the interest of complete honesty without illusions, could I also be jealous of him, even a bit competitive toward him? Why should such a pathetic scoundrel get to see a baseball game with his father, have a good time, enjoy himself while I am left completely alone, feeling Fatherless and Motherless, in the darkness except for two little candles, and trying to force myself by a sheer act of will to imagine more light--menorahs at a baseball game? I feel like a victim, how unfair life is. **A Wilde story.** Like I'm the little matchstick girl, shivering, freezing, trying to huddle over the small little flame for warmth, creating illusory happy visions to hide me from the cold and lonely darkness of the night. As each match burns out, darkness returns. Soon there will be no more matches and I'll just shiver and freeze to death, watched impassively by the hardened candle wax at the base of the menorah.

Poor, poor baby. If the despair weren't so palpable, it would almost be mockable, too. An Oscar-caliber performance

worthy of mom's favorite actress, Sarah Bernhardt. Why create an image and then tell a story which makes you so unhappy? What causes the mind to swirl like an eddy into an ever deepening ocean of despair?

And it's even worse, more unfair. It's like the mocking or indifferent universe is providing that "objective correlative" to reflect our two different situations. He, who is actually living in darkness, in ignorance, gets to enjoy a Purim weekend, with its full moon at night, and sunny days. I, who am seeking the light, am living at the darkest time of the year, with no moon. Or, more precisely and honestly, now, on the third day of Chanukkah, just a crescent sliver of moon, which no one can see because of the rain, clouds, and gloomy weather outside.

Poor baby. I truly do wish there were some way to comfort you.

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For heaven's sake, stop thinking and light the stupid last two candles.

Mind, this is not going well. My positive picture is getting darker and darker.

Take a breath. Act. Bring some additional light into the world, no matter how small. Try to trust that doing that action will lead you to something positive.

Am I really connected to Johannes at all? He seems so opposite to me, like such a discordant note.

Is that a positive?

I fiddle some more with the flute.

After Johannes and Mery played that Gluck piano and flute duet together, he took a couple of lessons from a jazz teacher.

One of the things I remember the teacher said was that there are no wrong notes, only the wrong time to play them. The other thing the teacher said was that even if the note is wrong, in jazz, you're always only a half step away from being right.

Not bad. More positive. I keep fingering the flute.

Sometimes in the middle of sight reading a piece of music, there is a discordant note. I think I've played it wrong. But if I play additional notes, and enough bars, there is a resolution, and realize the discordant note was meant to be. It was there for a reason, to create tension for subsequent resolution (like the tension Johannes feels before he has an orgasm?).

The positive?

I may need to learn to trust discordant notes. They may be placed there for a higher purpose, one I don't understand at the time because I'm not the composer, and don't have a sufficiently broad overview. Why is that positive? Well, it's at least a reason to keep going forward.

I quickly light the second candle.

I should transpose this discussion from my journal to a note card and place it on the left hand column of my chart under "Benevolent Universe," in a new row, called "music notes." If the world is benevolent, then discordant notes in life "fit", even if like Job, you hit a distressing period in your life, and it doesn't make sense. If you just trust and keep going, eventually you will hear the overall harmony, as Job does at the end of the story. Everything works out well--right Candide, and Pangloss, 'for the best in this best of all possible worlds." There is a cosmic melody, even if we can't always hear, or feel, or see it.

Positive indeed. I light the third candle.

But there is also the right column "Random universe" which would need to be filled in. Another note card: Column Two, Row: Music. Sometimes a discordant note is just a discordant note. True, sometimes there are also unbelievably beautiful pure, vibrant notes that are created by masterful playing, enormous practice, and luck. However, all notes, no matter how discordant, or how mellifluous, are fleeting and vanish into nothingness.

Positive? The Rebbe would probably give it a B-. But I tried. That's as good as I can do tonight.

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Sometimes from a place of relative darkness--internal and external--and from being so close to a situation, it's hard to see the light and the positive. Yet, with just a little distance, what I notice in rereading and thinking once again about these last few pages of writing--the dark underground dream, the idea of the discordant note, and the contrast between moons and light on Purim and Chanukkah--is that one clear positive does emerge. I believe more strongly than ever in the rightness and importance of my quest to address the nature of the universe--sacred or random. The choice we make the about the nature of the universe, which most of us never really spend time addressing, is not just an abstract one, but effects everything in our life, constantly. Not only from the present forward, but also how we understand the past. The answer to that question informs how I will see and context everything in life--how I interpret my dreams, view discordant notes, explain the different amount of light at different times in my life, the natural cycle of the moon--all of it.

If it's a sacred universe, then the fact that Johannes has more light at Purim than "I" in Jerusalem at Chanukkah, makes sense, at some deep level. It's the way it should be, it serves a meaningful purpose, and I'll learn why or at least trust there is an answer. From that contextual perspective, jealousy, competition, judgment, feeling inferior, superior, make no sense. Things are working out just as they should, and all I can do is the best I can do, and trust the rest is in God's hands.

If it's a random universe, then it makes no sense, and is just the luck of an indifferent draw. I can be angry, resigned, jealous, competitive. All of those feelings are understandable. They make sense. Then all that is left is to decide whether for some inexplicable, equally random reason, I wish to choose what I feel is a more or less healthy reaction to a given situation. Really, in that case, the only thing I have to control is my response to the situation.

The positive? Don't lose heart. You are on the right path in your quest. The answer between column 1--sacred--or column 2--random- is not yet clear. But as you rightly note, you're only two days old. Give it some time. And know that there is nothing more important that you could be devoting yourself to at this time in your life. That certainty and clarity of purpose is a positive indeed.

I refocus my attention on the light of the shammash and the three candle flames straining upward.

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" *our lips are like a scarlet thread; and your mouth is lovely. Your lips drip honey. And your mouth like the best wine. Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth.*"

4 p.m. Solomons Deli. It's only appropriate that I am here this glorious Sunday afternoon. Solomon. The creator of the *Song of Songs*. Irony of ironies. I am now down the street from David's Deli. Transmission from generation to generation. From father to son.

And from grandfather to Grandson. The *Song of Songs* was first taught to me by my Grandpa Dave. I was spending the night at with Nana and him--maybe I was 11--and saw one of their art-books. He came in when I was staring at a Raphael, admiring what I didn't yet understand, the voluptuous curves. He smiled, and said women were often the subject of great art, and people shouldn't be as ashamed of the body as they are now. He also told me the Bible has some wonderful passages and that I wasn't too young to start reading. Every time I'd visit him, we'd read from the *Song of Songs*. I now have it completely memorized.

So, the cycle continues. From David's feeding me food last night, to Solomon's feeding me food this afternoon. Solomon's *Song of Songs* transmitted through and birthed by Grandpa Dave to me. Everything is indeed working out for the best in this best of all possible worlds. I feel like I've just come from the Garden of Eden--the Shakespeare Garden in Golden Gate Park.

The only fly in the ointment--or ant at the picnic--or snake

in the grass--and it was small-- was that I had to cancel my golf game this afternoon. I waited to the last possible minute. 10:59 came. A choice point. I thought my business here wasn't quite done. I decided I could give it another 1/2 hour, and just practice a 1/2 hour before playing. At 11:30, another choice point. I decided to throw caution to the winds, and stay until 12. I could still arrive in time for the 1:00 tee time, and just skip practice today. At 12, I realized that the ocean current was pulling me in a different direction, and I was going to miss my Sunday golf game. I was choosing to break my routine. Very unusual!

I thought of calling Richard, but didn't really want to talk to him. I want to present my Harvard news in person to see his reaction. Instead, I called Gregory. He likes to be called by his American name. I actually prefer to call him Yutaka or even use his last name. I like the way the four syllables roll off my tongue "Inamatsu" of Kamakura He's got the smoothest swing of all of us, though I can usually get him to choke when it's close, and he's on the other team. Although his English is very good, he's somewhat shy about speaking, and doesn't talk much. A studious engineering student. So I knew I wouldn't have to give a lot of explanation.

"Inamatsu. Ohayogozaimashta.

"Who's this?"

"You're arch golf nemesis. Actually, your partner today."

"I thought you'd be out practicing."

"I'm detained in San Francisco. I won't be able to make it this afternoon.

"What! You never miss."

"I know, a sign the world may end soon. Listen, tell Richard and Jeffrey I'm sorry for the late notice, but I won't be able to

make our foursome. I'll explain when I get back, ok."

"What's her name?"

"Inamatsu, I can't believe you'd think..."

"No need to say more. Hope whatever you're doing turns out to be more fun."

"Although few things are more fun than you and me beating Richard and Jeff, you never know. Talk to you later."

"She's waiting."

* * *

I don't know what it is, maybe the confidence built from last night, or the acceptance to Harvard, but I am in a groove. I want to describe exactly how this day evolved, or better yet, how I made this day evolve. I am definitely the active voice in control of making things happen.

* * *

Jesus, this is strange. I've never been to a church service, and I can't even remember when I was last in a synagogue. My confirmation at 14? Maybe one other forced Rosh Hashannah service a couple years later? When we had to stand for responsive reading, and some prayers, I liked the fact that I was taller than almost anyone else in services, including Dad and my grandparents. I can see I'm also one of the tallest in the church. I like my height. It gives me an overview, makes me feel powerful. Clearly evolution at its finest.

I sit in the far left back pew. This position prevents anyone from sitting behind me or to my left, so the vulnerability of my left ear deaf is protected. Secondly, I have the perfect

vantage point from which to observe the people coming and going.

I have more moves than the Queen with my field of vision: I can look parallel in front and to the side, like a rook; diagonal like a bishop; and everything in between. The ninety degree arc is mine, controlled by my eyes.

To my immediate left and above are high vaulted windows. Multicolored. I notice in particular a deep blue shade. The sun shining through the windows gives this color the appearance of a rich velvet texture. The windows end and give rise to a series of high vaulted, arching domes in Gothic style.

Mery walks in, dressed in a bright, yellow flowered dress. She is alone. Ah, fate, thank you. She walks to the center aisle, finding a seat on the right side a few people in. She has a blue shawl over her shoulders, but nothing can hide her natural voluptuousness. When she enters, I start to call out to ask her to join me.

On reflection, realize that would be too direct. It gives her no time to absorb what's happening, and may throw her off balance. Sometimes that's good, but not at this fragile point in the relationship. Yet to spend the whole time during the church service invisible to her would be a waste of time.

Putting a prayer book on my seat, I walk down the left aisle to the front of the church, turn right, looking straight ahead. Then I turn right again, and begin walking up the center aisle, looking as if I'm trying to find a seat.

When her aisle is four rows ahead on the left hand side, I look to the right. Then, when I'm two aisles away, I slowly turn my head back to the center, and look at my feet. Pause, ignore, pause. Now. I look up suddenly. Her eye is attracted by

the motion, and she looks over at me. I stare past her unseeingly, to the far left end of her aisle, then slowly bring my gaze down the length of her row, toward the center aisle until, with an oh-my-gosh surprised expression, I catch her eye.

She looks a bit surprised. I shrug my shoulders, like I'm lost. Then she smiles and offers me a seat next to her. Glorious. I bend toward her, thanking her, and say I need to sit more towards the back. "If I see you after the service, I'll tell you why." I give her a little soft pat on the shoulder. Perfect. My presence has registered, I've made an initial overture toward getting together after the service, and at least part of her attention will now be focused on me, as well as on Jesus, during the service. I like the competition.

A worthy opponent.

* * *

Satisfied with my initial foray, I return to my fortress-like observation point, a king protected by his vassals. What I like best about this sortie is how natural it appeared. No one but me knows the depth of my calculations. If they did, they might call it manipulative. But I've thought long and hard about that, and they would be wrong. Manipulation is when you try to coerce someone, physically or psychologically, to do something they don't want to do.

I don't ever do that.

What I do is seduction. Gently, kindly, smilingly. And, frankly, I've come to the conclusion that all life is seduction.

Everyone is trying to seduce everyone else for their own personal goals. People are always trying to influence each other: a smile

is bait, the "nod," the "arch" are efforts to influence. How we dress--what else is a mini skirt? Money, the car we drive --Mr. Red is an influence machine. Some use anger (Dad), others money (Grandpa \$), and some, guilt.

Guilt was the culture of mom and Nana, the air they breathed. In some ways that was good, because I learned to recognize it in all its forms and defend against it. It was also good because I can now recognize in others those who are susceptible to its influence.

Even the place I find myself now is all about seduction. The church tries to seduce its members with love and a promise of a better life: Come, be happy, comforted, believe in our doctrine, and donate to our coffers. It will make you feel good while doing good.

There's nothing wrong with that. You just have to be aware of what is going on, so you play the game better and for your advantage. That's why I prefer tennis--where you can see your opponent-- to squash, where you opponent can sometimes be hidden behind you. And why I prefer a swimming pool, where there are lines of demarcation and no underwater menaces, like in the ocean's depths.

I want to see what's after me.

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I take pride that I influence in soft, subtle ways. I'm not an in-your-face, arm-wrestling type forceful person. Oblique, subtle, like the way I approached Mery. And I'll continue to use all my resources--money, intelligence, affection, charm. But I have no real physical control over her (except as I can influence her to become sexually aroused). If she one day decides to per-

form oral sex on me, of course my hand will be behind her head
guiding her. But I won't be forcing her. She'll be choosing to do
it, allowing me for whatever reason, for whatever bait she's
chosen to be influenced by. I'm not trying to conquer her at her
expense. I don't want to hurt anyone. I want everyone to win.

Is that true? What about tennis? No, that's different. There
the rules are known, and there is a winner and loser: that's
competition with a structure.

I don't manipulate, I influence. And I don't like to be
manipulated. That's why I like the corner seat--literally and
figuratively-- so I can see what's happening. It's a game of
influence or be influenced.

* * *

Everything is a transaction. What you give, what you re-
ceive. It's never a perfect 50-50, and nobody ever gets nothing
out of a transaction. So the only real question is what percent
is fair. 51--49? 55-45? 60-40?

I like to always get at least 51% or more. But others
shouldn't look at it as if they are "only" getting 40% or less.
That's the wrong way for them to look at it. They should feel
that without meeting me they would have received 0. Anything
above that--e.g., 40% is something they wouldn't have had and is
therefore a good deal.

Even the laws of the universe reflect this influence and
seduction. Though it's beyond me technically, I remember my
physics prof talking about Einstein's metaphorical bending of
space and time. The moon pulls one way, the earth's gravity
another. Time influences and bends space. Space bends time.
Everything is always trying to exert its influence and will on
everything else.

I just want to be best at it.

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Why didn't I just sit with her? Simple. We couldn't really talk or converse. So it would be a lot of awkward time. This way, I have made the maximum impact, and can spend the rest of the time observing her from a distance. She can't see me, only imagine me, and wonder what I'm doing there.

Perfect. But then I wonder, is it so perfect? What if she asks herself, if he needs to sit in the back, what was he doing walking up the center aisle. Why didn't he just start in the back."

Quiet, thoughts. You're thinking too much. You did fine.

Straight ahead of me is the figure of Jesus.

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He is hanging from a long, narrow cross, which accentuates the leanness of his body. The first thing I notice is the taut ripples of his stomach. I smile, wondering what he would think of an abdomen board like the one I first unintentionally masturbated on. Then I almost laugh at loud at the image of Jesus on the board, to strengthen his "abs"; and then I do laugh out loud at the image of him unintentionally being introduced to an orgasm. A spiritual experience indeed. I wonder if there was ever actual *Eros* in his life, other than the platitudinous Platonic *agape* love toward all humanity?

His arms are long and wiry. They are outstretched in an embracing manner, as if he is trying to hold the entire congregation. I don't particularly like those arms. I have not asked nor do I wish to be embraced by him. He's never been much of a friend of mind, and has even caused me some trouble. I think of Yale,

New Year's eve, the fraternities, the country club.

His head is bent and looking downward. In this last gesture of embrace Jesus is sculpted and enshrined meeting his death.

He certainly doesn't appear very happy.

I wonder what it is that causes an entire religion to use as an icon and central image someone who is suffering.

If I were to create a religion, it would be about joy and celebration, about *Eros*, not *Thanatos*. Like the lustiness of the *Song of Songs*. Solomon got that one right.

After memorizing that book, I did some research to find out if there were any other enlightened religions that had a focus on *Eros*. In early Hinduism, and other goddess worshiping schools, there were temple prostitutes to help enhance the fertility of the seasons, and lead individuals to wisdom and enlightenment. Sounds good to me. Hinduism even developed Tantric texts on ways to use sensual energy to help one reach the divine.

I, of course, wondered, and still do, if there isn't a way to work it the other way, to take a religious person, and help them reach the sexual. I look over at Mery, and see she is watching an old lady seated in front of her. My eyes watch her watch the lady, and I wonder what is going through her mind. I image, with some lust, the gold cross around her neck, and the treasure the bottom of the cross points to.

The organ music begins with some ringing chords.

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Mery seems startled by the music, as her eyes refocus. A half minute later the choir enters in an orderly procession, mouths wide open, singing, looking appropriately entranced and holy. Soon their ranks split, half to the left, half to the

right.

The audience rises and joins in. There are about 150 people, most of them old, over 50. I do admire the fact that they would get up and spend a Sunday morning in church. But couldn't they have found a better place to pray and sing rather than one in which some mounted dead guy hangs from a cross and forlornly watches them?

* * *

Mery, like many others, seems totally immersed in the hymn.

I feel myself becoming bored. I need to kill some time. There is not going to be any forward movement in our relationship until after the service.

Pick a topic, any topic. Ok, sex.

Last night, the two sisters didn't let me get much sleep.

It almost felt as if they were competing. In fact, once they did have a contest to see who could get me aroused the fastest, and then to decide which one could create the shortest time from arousal to orgasm.

I feel my erection begin to return.

It's interesting the names we give that part of our anatomy.

I started with wee wee; then pee pee; then dad called it the weinerschnitzel. My first mature choice was John Henry (from the song "He was a steel driving man"). Sometime, as a friend, I just call him john john (no caps). As in, john john, you behave now! Or, oh my what's john john up to! Alice loves that appellation: "Come on john john, show me your stuff!." Maybe the competition wasn't only among them. I guess I wanted to show them that john-john was indeed a man of steel, night and morning.

I've been trying to evolve a new, more sophisticated and more esoteric name for him.

Based on my reading, the best term I've come across is
"*Lingham*."

I like the Hindu euphemism for the penis, *lingham*, "shaft of light." And the female dark moist cavern they call "yoni" a sacred space. I can think of a lot of good images: "Come on baby, light my fire"; or is that "fire my light"? "Light my light"?

Or, "Let me see if my shaft of light can illuminate your dark cavern." For now, I'll keep the new name secret--just for me-- because when I've mentioned the word to others, they think it's too strange and esoteric.

I look over at Mery and wonder what it would be like to be her bra. My job all day would be to hold and squeeze her breasts together. I'd be gentle and kind, very caring about how I held them. I feel my shaft of light stirring.

I've learned how to park my *lingham* away at times like these, letting it run down my left leg, then crossing my right leg over and placing it between my thighs. Applying slight to moderate pressure by flexing my thighs, I can keep it contained. Quiet *Lingham*, don't burn too brightly.

I imagine I'm performing a secret baptismal naming ceremony. Who'd have thought, that I, a Jew, would be in church this morning, Christening John John now and henceforth, as "*lingham*"-- a Sanskrit word from the Hindu tradition. Ecumenical and assimilated.

May you continue to rise to meet the challenges facing you and light the way for me.

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Mery is still engrossed in listening to the responsive reading. The sun is playing off her reddish hair, accentuating

the multicolored highlights. When I first saw her, it was just flaming red, but as I look closer, I see there are soft hues of light gold, an undercurrent of bronze, a gentle swish of a tannish blonde.

One small tight braid hangs down over the far left side of her forehead. Her face is framed by long, straight hair covering her ears and cheeks. A portion from each side has been pulled in a soft arc gently upward, like two tributaries, which narrow and meet and are briefly held on the back of her head by a yellow flowered clip. Once these two streams merge, they flow under the clip and cascade down like a golden-red waterfall, seeking to land and rest on her blue shawl.

I take a pencil and a small index card from my pocket and begin to covertly draw just her hair: its radiance, texture, and multicolors reflected in the sunlight.

My black and white, two dimensional rendition is such a distant approximation.

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"There are two simple messages for you today. Both from the old Testament. And they are, of course, connected through Christ's teachings in the New Testament.

"Lesson One. You were strangers in a strange land. First mentioned in Exodus 2:22, regarding Moses' son, this theme is repeated throughout the Old Testament. And it is coupled with the injunction: 'Therefore you should have compassion for others who are strangers.' Why is this passage mentioned repeatedly in the Old Testament?

"Because it is not easy for humans to treat the stranger with compassion and kindness. The Bible reminds the Jews that they were strangers once--they know what it is like to be a

minority--to not belong, to be on the outside."

I come to an plateau in drawing Mery's hair, and turn the white index card over and start to sketch Jesus. An older, bearded fat man a few seats down looks over at me, as if I'm doing something wrong drawing in church. Is he concerned that I'm not paying attention to the Reveren's sermon? That's pretty judgmental, old man, trying to save my soul; why not save your own, and quit being so distracted by my distraction. I give him a silent "arch."

I take out a yellow card and take a few notes, just to show I'm really totally interested: strangers, kindness, Jesus.

"Therefore they should open themselves to others, and not be clannish. We Christians, on the other hand, need to remember that even though we're in the majority, we should not treat others--immigrants, even the Jews who are born here--as strangers. We should embrace them and reach out to them. Which is what we have done, and that's why we call America a Judeo-Christian country. We are all in this great American experiment together, as a team. We can even learn to appreciate the Jews as our elder brothers."

I feel like he's trying to compliment us--bring us into the big tent, under the common umbrella. Partly I like that: I like putting things together that normally don't fit, like cynic and romantic. What better way to overcome years of anti-Semitism and persecution than by a "joining" hyphen: Judeo-Christian. Ergo, we belong and are assimilated.

I'm not feeling completely at ease. There's something about the underlying tone and assumptions I don't quite like. What bothers me? I don't mind being the outsider, that's ok with me. In fact, being a stranger in this church, is actually comforting

to me. There are no expectations on me, no pressure to be or do anything, no one (except Mery) who knows me. I can just sit in my corner spot and watch.

But something is bothering me.

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Maybe it's that I don't like my outsider status called attention to, or referred to in a pejorative way. If I'm choosing to remain aloof, and feel at any moment I can rejoin an event, then I'm in control. If I'm considered a misfit, a minority, awkward, clannish, not invited in, then I'm not in control.

I remember in Latin class, I would sit in one of two places: front row just off the left-center, to be the "best student"; or back left corner, to have an overview. Also, both were necessary so that my right ear, my one good ear, faced the teacher. One day, as finals were approaching, I was feeling overwhelmed by how much work I had to do, and my folders were disorganized.

Rather than waste the ten minutes before class started (and the teacher was usually late), chatting with other kids, I took a waste basket to the back left corner of the room, circled a few chairs around me upon which I set my folders, and began organizing-- cleaning out my notebook, tossing unnecessary papers and other miscellaneous discards into the trash can.

Suddenly I heard my teacher's fierce booming voice: "Who do you think you are, Mohammed, moving the mountain and rearranging the entire room to suit your prima donna tastes? That is not your personal trash receptacle. Get that trash can and your pompous ass up to the front of the class now."

What was his problem? Class hadn't yet started, I was bothering no one, and of course I was going to return the trash can. Was he having his period?

Clearly, I don't like my outsider status criticized.

Maybe I'm also uneasy at the idea of the younger brother becoming more powerful and stronger and almost condescendingly reaching out to "welcome" the "clannish" vulnerable, weak older brother.

I wonder what Mery's reactions are to the minister's comments.

* * *

If I am an outsider--and I am--how then do I connect with people? Someone like Alice at the party helps me create an entry into new settings. And with Mery, how was I able to even get this far? I think it was the roles. Like the maids I grew up with, she was a waitress and she was forced to come over to me. The role structure gave me the entree--she came to serve me. If we were just two strangers sitting in a deli, I'm not sure I would have been able to begin a conversation. It's like Archimedes, give me a fulcrum and I can move the world.

Now that the ball is beginning to roll, let's see how far I can move her.

* * *

"All of us--Christian and non Christian--should learn to reach out, have empathy and compassion for those who are different, alien, foreign. "Stranger in a strange land" is mentioned so many times because it is a message that is so hard to live. Think in your own life how that message applies."

I'm going to be a great lawyer. Both Grandpa \$ and mom tell me all the time that I argue my positions brilliantly; and I can even take the other person's position and argue that brilliantly as well.

That's probably what the minister means by empathy.

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Stranger in a strange land. I know exactly what he means.

When I first came from Kansas City to California, that's exactly how I felt. Haight Ashbury. Counterculture. The Golden Gate Park summer celebration when Timothy Leary told us to turn on, tune, in drop out. Well, not exactly "us." I had no idea I was supposed to be part of the Summer of Love, or where these places were. For me, no drugs, no turning on pharmacologically. But from my oblique angle--never in the center of action--I did take note, watch, and begin to learn.

California was like a foreign country. There were different customs, strange music, unusual styles of dress--sandals versus not only wingtips, but even my loafers. I learned they had their own disparate ways of showing wealth, even incongruous attitudes toward wealth: some think Mr. Red an elegant sleek machine, others feel he is a pathetic, preppy toy and capitalist car.

I really didn't know how to fit in at first. I had to work hard just to learn the cultural rules: first to assimilate, and then to learn how to use them to my advantage. It's not exactly that I'm a chameleon. I know what I like, and what I don't. But if you have an overarching goal, you need to know the style of the opposing team, to get your advantage. It's all a big chessboard. Except in chess, there are universal rules everyone has to follow no matter what country or culture you are in. With cultures, there are no universal rules. Each one plays chess by its own guidelines. I'm having to learn both the style of the opposing team, and the rules they play by.

But I'm a quick study. I've had to overcome many challenges here, but I think I'm adapting pretty well.

Some areas were obvious. The first thing I realized I had to change was my hair style. In high school my teen age rebellion was to part my hair down the right side after years of parting it down the left. But I always kept to short and neat. My models were Steve McQueen, Paul Newman, James Bond. Short, carefully groomed hair, always in control.

I've let it grow longer out here, and it's naturally curly, like when I was a little boy. I feel like Sampson, the longer it gets, the more attractive I am to women, the stronger I become.

Some areas are more complicated. Nana and mom taught me to see debonair, like Cary Grant, as the epitome of maleness. No foul language, open doors for women, stand when a women enters the room, proper manners everywhere, a rigid code of appearances: proms and tuxes were cool. Now while some still see opening the as gentlemanly, others view it condescending toward the "weaker" sex.

There are advantages, too, to this new ballpark-country-culture. Women in general are a lot freer sexually. Sometimes --and I never thought I'd say this-- even too easy, if that's possible (A phrase Grandpa sometimes uses comes to mind: "If you ever repeat what I just said, I'll deny it under oath.") The upside is that it's a lot easier to hit home runs.

After so many years of being relegated to the minors. I'm becoming quite the major league hitter.

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I feel my cashmere turtleneck. It's also a perfect example of what the minister means. I wore the turtleneck because it seems to bridge the sartorial culture clash. Mom gave it to me

on Christmas, and it works perfectly in Kansas City. That same Christmas, she also gave me a sleeveless argyle golf sweater, which you can also wear anywhere in Kansas City--out on a date to a movie, down to the Plaza. But you can only wear the golf sweater playing golf at Stanford. Wearing it on the quad, you're laughed at. And if you wear it at Berkeley, you'd be immediately thrown out before getting to first base.

It was actually a very kind present mom gave me, two real cashmere sweaters (sometimes--even though she can afford whatever she wants-- she buys me fake cashmere sweaters with a real label sewed in). But these were real, and I was delighted. I immediately put on the golf sweater, because I could put it over my button-down Oxford light blue shirt. I thanked her and gave her a big hug. She made a grimacing face, and when I asked her did she have a cramp, she said.

"Yes, but not in my stomach, in my heart. What's the problem, don't you like the blue turtleneck? It's not good enough for you?"

Ahh, mom! Another example of her helping train me to be injured to guilt-inducing remarks.

Speaking of guilt, Taoism is fashionable on campus now, yin and yang.

I saw a slogan on a kiosk the other day, which said:

"The Tao says life is simple. Peaceful. Non-Judgmental. Accepting. No guilt.....The Tao is not Jewish."

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My turtleneck sweater is perfect to bridge Kansas City, Stanford, and Berkeley. And, even though it's a bit wine stained from Lilly and Lori, it also works in church. In my car I have the argyle sweater which I am going to wear for our golf foursome

this afternoon. Not only would the sweater be mocked in Berkeley as pretentious, but and golf itself would be decried as elitist.

The turtleneck carries a certain cachet in Berkeley, or at least doesn't stand out too much--sort of professor-cool. And I've noted at both schools, the girls really enjoy the soft touch of the cashmere though you want to be careful not to mention at Berkeley that it's made from the underside of llamas. Even though there is no harm to the animal, it just doesn't sound environmentally sensitive, too "pretentious" and preppy. So, I'm learning, through experience, when to keep elitism under wraps, and when it can work for me.

I think of my golf buddies-- Richard from South Africa; Gregory (Yutaka) from Japan. They were strangers when they first arrived on campus. Just like I learned to fit, they learned to fit. And, perhaps I am living the Biblical lesson. I did reach out compassionately to them. I let them play golf with me. And I sometimes even let them almost win.

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I continue the shading of Mery's hair, trying to give it more texture and depth, and let the words of the minister waft over me, occasionally pulling out additional cards to take a few more notes.

"The second lesson involves Jacob leaving Beer-sheba for Haran (which, in Hebrew, means crossroads). Jacob, who is at a crossroads in his life, falls asleep and dreams of a stairway from the ground to the sky with angels going up and down the ladder from heaven to earth. Upon awakening he says, 'God was in this place and I did not know it.' (Genesis 28:16) He names the site Bethel, the house of God. After I came down from Sinai, the

Mea Shearim student told me about a commentary in *Genesis Rabbah* that interprets the stairway as a symbol for the sacred mountain since they both have the same numerical values in Hebrew: 130. Why is that interesting? Because Johannes at this moment has no idea that one day soon he will be climbing Sinai, and feel God's presence.

"Jacob here is at the beginning of his quest. He hasn't yet wrestled with the angel at the river Jabbok, has not yet striven with beings divine and human, and has not yet been renamed Israel--the one who wrestles with God (Genesis 32: 23-29).

"So how does this early Jacob respond to God's presence? He makes a conditional vow: "If God remains with me, if He protects me on this journey I am making, and gives me bread to eat and clothing to wear, if I return safe to my father's house--the Lord shall be my God." Jacob, who has just seen God's angels, responds by doubt and bargains.

"How do we respond when we experience God's presence?"

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"What are angels? The Old Testament chapter *Malachai*, means, in Hebrew, both angels and messengers. Angels are messengers to bring us spiritual guidance and wisdom. Angels sometimes carry our prayers to God--up the ladder; and sometimes bring God's message down to us from on high.

"All of us have to ask ourselves, 'Where is God in your life and you do not know it? Who are the angels that might be right before you, giving you a sacred message, and you do not recognize it, and maybe even wrestle against it.'"

This lesson is even easier to apply to me. After my first orgasm, the world actually did change. Breasts appeared. "Breasts were in this place and I did not know it." It was amazing.

Before orgasm (B.O), it was an asexual breastless world. After orgasm (A.O), walking down the street, on television, it was like women and girls' chests suddenly developed from two dimensional to three dimensional. Half tones, shadows, cleavage, reflected light, and occasionally the faint outline of the gloriously erect nipple breaking through all the clothing to create prominent shadow and darkening discoloration of the garment. Always there, but never before seen. It's amazing the way a shift in consciousness can add texture, nuance, and dimensionality....just like now, seeing and drawing Mery's angelic hair.

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"And how are these two connected by Christ? Simple. In John (1.1, 1.14) we are told that 'the Word (*Logos*) is made flesh.' Many early Christians, especially in the more mystical Gospels, believed there was a divine plan, rational rules (*Logos*) for understanding that God is everywhere, through Jesus. Words have power, meaning, sacred messages. In our book of John, John the Baptist is pointing the way--"he was not the light, but came that he might bear witness of the light" (John 1: 1:8) And Who is the true light that enlightens every man--it's Jesus. And Jesus says "Truly you shall see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending....(John 1:51). God sends Himself as the ultimate angel, the ultimate messenger to let us know He feels our pain and suffering. That He, as flesh, through His death, dies for our sins, and we are forgiven and we will not perish and have eternal life (John 3:16).

And what is Jesus's message? It's love. The Sermon on the Mount, recalling Leviticus: 'Love thy neighbor as thyself.' Love the neighbor. Love the stranger. Love the one with whom you are

wrestling, for they are most likely an angel sent by God to teach you."

His voice is reaching a dramatic crescendo. I look around and see that Mery and the rest of the audience are indeed paying rapt attention, as they turn to a responsive reading section in the book.

"And the Lord said let there be light, and there was light" they intone.

The Word was made flesh. Let there be light. I squeeze my fleshy lingham--my shaft of light-- between my thighs.

I wonder again, what, if anything, will happen with Mery after the service. I'll only have a brief minute to make my move. But that is the fun and the challenge. Most of my life, by my own choice, is pretty structured and scheduled, so it's exciting in these brief interludes without structure to see where my "light"-- john john--now rechristened "Lingham" leads me.

Of course, I'm not praying for crop failure, as my grandfather might joke, but looking for more harvesting opportunities. Hmm, that sounds crude. Looking for more fields to seed and sow? Still primitive. Looking for ways to share the light of *lingham*. Ah, better!

Jesus came to be the servant of mankind.
By being humble, he became exalted.
God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong

To keep myself from becoming too bored by the minister's ramblings, I begin to muse on what he is saying. So Jesus was the humble, weak servant who, because of his weakness, was exalted to the status of master. The strong are humble and weak in comparison to his exalted strength due to this humble weakness. We are to be servants of the servant who came to serve us. And because he came to serve us, somehow he exalted himself. But it is through weakness that has strength is shown,

and through serving, his mastery.

What sophistry. For losers.

Johannes, you haven't yet learned the lesson, that what we don't truly absorb will always come back to create additional suffering for us. Akishige's wise words about samsara await you, as well as the Taoist lessons of strength in yielding. You will have another chance. And more pain because of your blindness.

When I tear myself away from my ruminations, everyone—even non-Christians—are being invited to partake of the Eucharist and drink the wine/blood of Jesus. Impanation...what symbolism. Or maybe we are actually drinking Jesus' blood. What A delightful bouquet, what fragrant aroma. I wonder what vintage. I feel Like laughing. Where is the joy in this ritual? Everyone looks so serious and solemn. How about some dancing and singing? Isn't this supposed to be a celebration of life?

And how did you feel during the singing and flute playing and dancing? Awkward, not belonging, distantly observing. You're not willing to admit you are the outsider no matter what the situation.

I look up toward the choir. Most of the women are too old to be of interest. But in case Mery doesn't work out, or even if she does, there are a couple who seem possible. It's a little hard to tell with their choir robes. One is late 20's or early 30's, another seems mid to late 30's, about the age of mom's friend's visiting sister, Carol, who taught me how to hit my first homerun.

Women at that age work well for me. They are generally very appreciative of my youth and stamina; they value my sophistication; and they often are thankful and grateful for the attention.

I watch both of them sing, especially the way their mouths move when they intone "Everry step takes you highhhhh-

eeer, hiiiiighhheeeer." As they sing "higher, higher" their mouths oval wide, then close, then open wider. I feel their mouths closing around john john as he leaps around in his thigh encased cage. I wonder if this is what is meant by words becoming flesh. Their words, vibrating through their open mouths, their tongue quivering, leaving their soft lips, make my shaft of light dance.

Word made flesh, indeed!

Now we're being told to embrace our neighbor. "Love your neighbor as yourself." I hug an old man on my left that I hadn't noticed during the service. I see Mery, and for some reason feel a pang of jealousy--as well as some erotic urges-- as I see her open her arms wide, revealing the full sensual protuberances of her breasts, as she throws her arms indiscriminately around people to her right, in front, and behind her.

I imagine her hugging me, as I would enjoy lingering on the sensations, and perhaps giving her a little pat. Would she glare at me, or smile mischievously. My religion. The flesh.

The postlude wafts over us. I hear the final tonic dominant. At the conclusion I say a quick prayer of thanksgiving--that it's finally over.

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yes open slightly. The room is completely dark except for the clock which says 3:16. It's still raining outside, just like when I last looked at the clock, which was 1:51. I've gotten almost an hour and a half sleep for which I'm thankful. And during that time I had some wild dreams.

I've been having a lot of trouble sleeping lately, and am keeping records of when I go to sleep and wake up. I turned the lights off at 1:01. I closed my eyes, rolled around, and the next time I looked at the clock only seven minutes had gone by; 1:08; more turning, more efforts: only six minutes: 1:14.

The dreams this last hour and a half have been so vivid and colorful--and such a contrast to the drabness of my life, that they may have been the reason I just awakened.

I turn on the bed light, see the leftover nubs of the three vanished candles, look at the black and white ink drawing of Devus, the black and white photograph of Bresson, and pull out my dream journal. Third day (nighttime, early morning), Chanukkah. Friday.

The first dream was simple.

I dreamed I was buffing, polishing, and detailing my former car, which had a beautiful purple color.

End of dream.

Meaning? It seems pretty simple. Some unconscious primeval remnant of Johannes' lust for Mr Red is leaking through. But there are two clear differences. One, I was doing this myself

whereas Johannes never worked on his own car, he always had some place wash and detail it for him. Two is the color of the car. Dr. Lisbet gave us a "chakra" chart, in preparation for a class in two weeks. I pull out my class folder "Jewish Holidays and the Journey of Consciousness: A Psycho-Spiritual Approach." Looking at the chart, I see that purple is considered one of the more spiritual, higher chakra colors, whereas red is definitely first chakra, lower root sexual energy. So, I'm evolving along the color spectrum.

I like this dream interpretation a lot. Even in the dark of night, it's a positive sign, and one justifying the lighting of at least one candle at the end of today.

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In the class folder, I see that I haven't finished the assignment to write about Devu's picture, for today's class on the which meets at two this afternoon. I take the sheet where I've been making notes and re-look at the picture. My overall image of the picture when I look at it as a whole is still one of darkness, a person drowning and reaching upward for help out of the dark water toward the row boat whose oars are motionless and not held by anyone.

As I look closer, I see a hand which is extending downward. Initially the hand looks like it is coming from the rowboat, but the row boat is in fact empty. The hand seems to emerge from a dark-shadowed white cloud. As I look still closer, the cloud has an eerily-hunched bodily form, as if it is emerging somehow from within and beyond the rowboat with its shadowy head resting on and slumped over a white space. The shadowy form of the body is both held up by the white space, and gives shape to the white-

ness, which appears like a mountain created from emptiness.

Ah, the brain sees a connection. Sinai. Fascinating. God's hand reaching down from the clouds above Sinai to the struggling human below. Why is it that sometimes you look at a picture and see the darkness below and a desperate hand reaching up, and other times you look at the same picture and see the hopeful sign of a rescuing hand reaching out to help?

No matter what the causes, the image is definitely a positive one I can use for lighting the second candle tonight.

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Could it be the person in the water is being baptized? what about the rowboat with oars not moving? 3:26. That's enough for now. I'm really tired and need some sleep. I turn off the light and get back into bed. Still raining.

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3:29. The oars and the boat are a symbol of Shabbat.

A+. Exactly. On Shabbat, we drop the oars. We put our cares of the week--fears, anxieties, concerns-- into the "black box" and turn them over to God for 24 hours. **We sing Reb Luria's Lecha Dodi: awaiting the Sabbath bride.**

The Rebbe will love that interpretation. Part of me wants to get up to write it down so that I won't forget it. Part of me wants to just go to sleep.

Desire for approval wins. I turn the light back on and jot some notes. Once again, exhausted, I return to bed, turn the light off. As I get into bed, I feel a wetness on the sheets, and a bit running down my leg. I wonder, with a tinge of Johannes' juvenile humor, if I've just peed in excitement at my insight.

It's then that the second dream, which I'd somehow completely forgotten, comes flooding back over me.

It's actually startling how Johannes is so acutely aware of his body and his sexual needs, while "I" in Jerusalem am so repressed, in such denial, and out of touch with my body and sexual self that it took me so long to become aware of and admit what happened during the dream.

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I really don't want to get up and write down another dream. Especially one as inchoate as this one. What purpose does it really serve? I've just had a couple positive thoughts and there's already enough negativity. I'm tired and I'm not motivated to keep looking so scrupulously at everything. Enough efforts at self-understanding. Maybe the dream will just disappear into my unconscious once again.

Instead of thinking about the dream, I let my mind drift back to last night's reading of Johannes' journal. His first time in church. With such unchurchly thoughts. Judging him is so easy. Learning from him is harder. I'm sure the second dream and the liquid texture on my body and the sheets was caused by reading his journals.

Food and sex.

Is this helping me at all in my search for the spirit, or is it really just feeding my unconscious with the very things I'm trying to remove from my life. Will forgiving him ever be possible?

He seems so calculating. Every eye movement--a feigned

surprise glance--walking down the aisle is plotted; the pats on Mery's shoulder to induce comfort and trust. He's so self-deceptive and doesn't yet realize it. Not manipulative? What world does he live in?

* * *

Even his desire for the breast, and the mystery of the nipple, which he uses to motivate himself, is all an illusory self-deception. He loves the challenge, the invitation of the cleavage. He says to himself that's his goal, to suckle the breast. Yet, he spends hours trying to figure out how to reach that goal and, once reached, he almost never suckles for more than a few seconds. It's like a game of tag or hide and seek; once it's tagged or found, the game is over. I see through it so easily. He just keeps playing.

Once you see through the illusion, however, how do you stay motivated to do anything? How could he find golf so enjoyable? You swing a club to hit a little white ball, trying to avoid traps and rough. You go find the ball, and hit it all over again. Eventually you putt it into a hole, and then take it out and go on to the next hole.

Actually, that sounds more like his sexual style.

Ah, good, a hint of a joke. Could I possibly be a more dour, grumpy human being?

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What can I use for motivation? I'm trying to minimize as much as I can the body and flesh from my life. The advantage I see is that it seems simpler, purer, less confusing. Flesh is flesh and spirit is spirit. But I've taken away the motivation

of the body, the physical Eros, and the spiritual Eros and drive often isn't there.

As hard as it is to sleep, it's also hard to find a reason to wake up and get out of bed. I have no structure. What gets anyone to wake up, once they've seen the emptiness of actions? No women, obviously. No golf, no tennis. No social interaction. One class to attend, but there are no real consequences if I don't go. Grades no longer matter. Law school and the laws of humans are on hiatus. I have no desire for food. I'm like a new born infant, but with no motivation to do anything, and no one to help me, no earthly parents any longer to raise me. I am that newborn baby who doesn't want to move.

The clock says 3:35. I'm just exhausted. This can't be good for me to stay up all night. I get up and go to the desk, and plop myself down on the hard wooden high-backed chair. I put each hand on the opposite elbow, and place them before me on the desk. I lean forward, close my eyes, and rest my right cheek on my right forearm. As my eyes close, it seems there is a faint ray of light under the tightly drawn shade, but that's not possible. It must be the glare from the lamp. I notice that the rain has stopped. Maybe the clouds have also disappeared and the light is from an increasing sliver of moon allowed to shine through.

A third positive for tonight's candle.

A realize that, like mom, I'm living in a blind-enclosed room. I start to get up to see if I can see the moon, but decide the reward is not worth the exertion.

I image myself lying in a fetal position, wanting to believe

in and be cuddled and nurtured by the breast of the holy spirit.
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When I open my eyes again, only a few minutes have passed.

Grandma's law: Let's make a deal. Self-motivation. Write down the second dream. That fulfills your commitment to yourself to be honest, and not hide from anything--even your subconscious dream life. Then you can return to bed with an empty mind, a guiltless conscience, and give yourself permission to lie in bed with knees drawn up to your chest, arms around your legs. Even though it's not yet Shabbat, everyone deserves, as the Rebbe says, a guilt-free "Shabbat nap." I certainly deserve it at this wee hour of the morning.

My dream life is more active and alive than my days and nights, an obvious and stark contrast to the sterility of my waking life.

It definitely has stopped raining.

Ok, dream journal. Time for a phantasmagorical, constantly shifting, bizarre, amalgam of waking life and sleeping life.

My midnight morning Morpheus musings.

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Black musical notes are written precisely and carefully on a sheet of white-lined musical paper. Crisp, structured, recognizable. As a flute starts to play, the single line melody becomes clear, graceful. Life is simple, the song exists.

The music continues, quicker, more passionate, and some of the notes actually vibrate and quiver, as if alive, like dancing stick figures. As the arpeggio ascends, the notes appear as if they are actually climbing the treble clef, like moving up rungs of a ladder.

Some of the notes begin to quiver so passionately, they actually dance right off the sheet, as if removing themselves from the jail like horizontal and vertical bars that have been imprisoning them, no longer constrained by the paper and form.

The little wing like extensions at the top of the eighth and sixteenth notes join in a circle, like limbs holding hands and dancing. Somehow as if by immaculate conception, this touching and connection of the notes creates new musical sounds, new life, and new baby notes emerge and are born between the notes, creating harmonies, counterpoints, textures never before heard, unwritten, newly conceived, created, discovered.

I realize in the dream that I'm hearing a jazz improvisation like none I've ever before been able to perform in my own life. New music is pouring forth. Though I am invisible, I am somehow there, playing and living between the structured notes.

These new groups break off from the original circle of notes, and intersperse, weave, braid under their parent source. When it looks like a crash is inevitable, the notes duck, bob, or weave, so that even though tension is created, and there is disharmony, it's all within the song's overall melody. At times, the music slows, rests appear, and the notes come to a temporary halt. But even the silence sounds harmonious. Then the music begins again. There is never an interruption of the dance.

Then a picture is taken, a snapshot capturing in time an image of the dance, each note in its improvised posture, some bending with arched stems, head looking upward, others, like little bodies doing headstands. As the picture is developed, it becomes a photographic negative, with white notes on black paper. The blackness disappears, vanishing and merging into the back-

ground.

All that is left are white notes which look like white candles. Unlit. Captured in stillness.

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My hand is tired of writing. I look at the clock and see I've been writing about 45 minutes. I set down the pen and rub the fingers of my right hand. A self-massage. Because of the intensity with which I hold the pen when I write, I have a huge callous on the top left side of my right middle finger. It's been there ever since I can remember. I rub it gently back and forth, pushing down on the fleshy skin. It's actually comforting when one part of the body is willing to take care of another part. I look back up at the Devu picture. Would it be strange and schizophrenic or like a multiple personality to have my right hand thank my left hand for the massage?

It's now 4:24. I guess there's probably no wrong time for the "morning prayer" the Rebbe suggested we do each day. It starts with Modeh Ani. I give thanks. Ok, this morning I give thanks to my left hand for its comfort.

Now, right hand, back to the dream.

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I look once again at the nubbins of the burnt, used candles in the menorah. I image the tall, full, erect white candles in the dream. At the circular base of the dream candles, a dark reddish color starts to emerge, vague, hazy, almost imperceptible at first. But then like kindling catching fire, it turns into a flame of yellow golden light. The musical candle notes captured by the photograph start to warm up from the flame and slowly

begin to resume their dancing, breaking free from the negative sheet which had captured them.

Some pieces of wax soften and melt, like white tears dripping off a black background face. The notes, as if acknowledging the pain and tears, modulate into a minor melody. But though there are tears, the notes continue their swaying and dancing. As the musical scale arches higher, the flames start to shimmer and the notes begin to quiver and, like whirling dervishes, are soon once again dancing joyously around the darkened backdrop.

As the beat quickens, and syncopates and the notes ascend, all bars and lines of the treble clef have now disappeared. Even if they were there, they wouldn't be needed because many of the notes have soared and ascended to heights far beyond where the long horizontal bars of the treble clef ended. Some have fallen below the line, too. But the distinction is irrelevant. All there is...is the dance.

The melody modulates once again to a major key. The pace of the beat quickens, galvanized like never before. Once again wings of the eighth or sixteenth notes join at one end, while at their rounded, flamed ends, they lean in toward each other and join together, like a dancing couple, their heads resting against each other. Their extended lines, the angel wings, become like two thighs that are slowly spreading wider apart. Just when the spread thighs start to open so far that it might look lewd, the thighs become bird wings that gently flutter and soar upward toward the heavens.

At their apex, they break apart, and like leaves floating on invisible soft wind, come back down the scale's tones. At some point they return to note form continuing their glorious, impro-

vised melody, now slower and more playful.

The roundness of the eighth, and sixteenth notes retain their reddish color. But instead of being flames soaring, they become blood red; then a solid violet. Like a balloon being blown up, the violet circles grow wider and dimensionality is added as they become lush, round grapes that burst forth, join as a cluster and fall into a waiting, though invisible bowl, which holds them caressingly and safely.

While these grapes are falling, the quarter notes, half notes, and even the few whole notes are morphing in their own direction. The outside lines of the whole notes and half notes grow thicker, creating luscious, sparkly, sugar-coated donuts around an empty center. Some donuts are crumb coated; some are filled with reddish jelly; still others are covered with chocolate and caramel.

The quarter notes elongate, take a more upright thicker form, yet still are dripping--and what was once candle wax now is gooey, oozing, and creamy. I recognize chocolate eclairs and delicious napoleons with cream filled centers and pink and chocolate icing, a veritable pastry shop window banquet. Fruit tarts join them, also filled with cream, covered with incandescently bright strawberries; yellow curved bananas; sliced green kiwi with black seeds interspersed. From nowhere, like rain from the heavens, dates, darkish brown, reflecting the sunlight, slightly sugary, make their appearance.

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As the flute tone continues rising, I recognize it's the last line of Goddard's Allegretto, beginning on low d(1) and

through arpeggios up by thirds to d2, then dropping back a bit to f1 and up, rising, falling, like angels going up and down Jacob's ladder, fluttering their wings, rising ever upward toward heaven.

The dance once again accelerates and the eclairs and napoleons seem drawn magnetically or by some invisible force in counterpoint, to the center of the donuts. As they penetrate and thrust into the donuts hole, creamy custard oozes around the edge.

There is laughter in the dream, --is it heard, felt, seen? Is the laughter self-conscious and awkward? **Could it also be the laughter is fun and joyous and happy?**

During and briefly after the custard's emission, there is a single piercing note on the flute, a high bflat(4), an almost unbearably soaring sound.

But it is not unaided. It is supported by the intonations of fifths underneath. The high bflat reverberates loud, shrill, forte fortissimo, then down a fifth, forte, down a third. Each note yearning, striving, soaring, then returning to its foundational support. All notes, no matter where they are on the invisible ladder--higher, lower, ascending or descending--harmonize with each other.

Then there is a final pure tone, a pianissimo low bflat(1), diminishment, which somehow seems to contain and enfold all the notes in its ending echo.

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ven though the curtain is still drawn, the light outside seems to be stronger than what a three day old moon can possibly provide. I look at the clock, and open the curtain. Early sunrise. It's been a long night. I'm exhausted.

And my task is still not done. Dr. Lisbet would now want me to write about the overall feeling tone of the dream. I notice that there is very little traffic, not unusual for this time of the morning. As I start to return to my writing, a glint of light catches my eye. I assume it's the sun reflecting off a store window. Sunlight after so much rain. That's actually a pleasant surprise, a morning sun peeling back darkness. I decide to look at the light more closely.

As I do so, I realize it's not sunlight at all, but a shopkeeper lighting a menorah. Man, does he have things backwards, or is behind schedule. He should have lit the third night's candle last night, at dusk.

I watch closely as he takes the shammash and lights the candles. 1,2,3. But instead of stopping, he lights the fourth.

I'm baffled.

Then I notice that rather than getting brighter, the light from the sun is diminishing.

The sun is setting.

Another night and day has passed. Dusk has begun, and with it a new Shabbat, and the fourth day (at dusk) of Chanukkah.

This feels like the ultimate disorientation for someone who is so meticulous about time.

I return to my desk, where it seems safer--though not all that much--to reflect on the overall feeling tone of my dream than on the overall feeling tone of my life.

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I've missed this afternoon's class with the Rebbe and Dr. Lisbet. It's probably just as well. Not only haven't I finished the assignment on Devu's picture, I haven't looked over the *para-sha* notes from last week, and haven't even read this week's Torah portion. At first this thought comforts me, then I realize I have once again abnegated responsibility. If I didn't want to go to class, I should choose not to go. If I want to go to class, even unprepared, then I should go. But somehow to unconsciously sleep through the class, or just miss it, seems to sabotage the very efforts at responsible awareness I'm trying to foster.

If I'm honest, there's another reason I'm afraid to go to the class. There's a new girl, who joined the class the week after I did. She's from New York, and visiting her grandmother over the holidays. Although she didn't say anything last week, I noticed myself having to force myself not to look over at her. I don't want to meet her. I don't want to get to know anyone new, male or female, but especially female. That's just not safe for me. Even as a friend. All I'd do is drive her away like I do everyone else in my life.

Careful, your fragmenting self is starting to further fragment. Be responsible. There is some truth that there are qualities in me that seem to make it difficult for people to relate to me. But once I sense that, I also leave without giving the relationships a chance to work. I leave to feel I'm in control. See, you didn't break up with me, I broke up with you. In any case,

being totally honest, I'm clearly not in a place to be with anyone new. I'm having enough trouble being in relationship with myself.

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What is the tone of my dream?

Overall good and overall bad. I can't seem to make a choice, to reduce anything to a single essence.

After all the negative and darkness I've just been spewing, let's start with the good. As I think about the good, I light the shammash and reach for four new candles.

Seeking more light. Half way to the eight day miracle.

The first good is that the dream is a reminder to light the candles! The photographic negative: musical notes becoming flames. A clear guidance from the dream to keep seeking to bring forth light.

I look closely at the menorah, and particularly at the three round holes where yesterday's upright heaven-pointed candles once stood, Upon being lit, they started to burn, creating a flame that reached even higher to the heavens, a yearning of light throbbing skyward. That flame softened the candles, warmed them, gave light. But then their glow ended, and all that remains now is today's hardened, puddles.

It's a good thing I'm trying to create good thoughts. If I were doing the negative now, I'm terrified to imagine what I might be thinking.

Good boy. A little joke, Grandpa Dave would be proud. Some humor amidst all this gloom. That's some light in itself.

To place the new candles in the menorah, I have to dig out the dead remains. I take my whittling knife out of the desk. The

fading light of the sun, and the lamp glisten off of it. I pause, start to put it back in the drawer, and instead take a breath. I shouldn't let fear rule me. I decide that the blade might break in the hardened wax, and so put the knife back in the drawer from choice, not fear, and use my room key to carve out the candle wax.

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As I place the candles and light them, I remind myself that today (tonight) a new candle is added. More light. I have more light within me, more oil than I know. I must believe that.

I awoke this morning to a new evening, a new day.

My first act is to seek to add some light to the world. First the shammash, then one more candle. Using the mysterious extra oil within me to light my inner darkness. I am seeking to bring light to the world, inner and outer. That is my goal. It's all about vision and motivation. Thank you for that reminder, subconscious dream. I light the first candle.

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What else is a good feeling tone from this dream?

Well, I am delighted that, at least in my subconscious, I can play, listen to, and enjoy jazz. Certainly I created music in my dream far superior to any that I've ever been able to in real life. Maybe it's the lessons, which my teacher said I "got" intellectually but hadn't really absorbed, finally being ingested, even without my conscious effort. Maybe, as the teacher also said to me, it's that the "wisdom of jazz is in your soul, you just need to let it out."

Created through effort and placed within, and then absorbed and arranged by the unconscious? Or already within and then for

some magical reason--grace-- discovered?

No matter which model is correct, in this dream my subconscious was able to release music that I'd never before heard, that somehow had formed within me. Hallelujah! Candle Two.

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I also am amazed at the integrative power of my subconscious mind. Not only can it play jazz, but it can dream in magnificent colors, and have the colors create shapes and forms and choreograph a dance joyfully and playfully in counterpoint to the music, melding the auditory and the visual in a multi-media presentation far beyond anything I have ever come close to creating in my life.

I look at the light of the third candle.

There's also a large part of this second dream, which, though complex, has the same feeling tone as my car buffing first dream. I am ascending Jacob's ladder, moving from lower, earthy red chakra concerns to pursue purple, more spiritual concerns. Both the shift in colors in the first dream, and the musical notes dancing and ascending off the bar line signal my subconscious feeling that I'm breaking free from my fleshy imprisonment and moving with the angels, upward toward spirit. I feel this aspect of both dreams validates that my efforts to evolve toward higher wisdom and the spirit are working. The feeling tone is one of competence and pleasure at my success. Also, in contrast to the dark gloomy Disney elevator dream, there is joy and dancing and lots of color in this one.

I light the final candle.

I look at the hand reaching down from the clouds over the mountain in Devu's picture. It's like some force--subconscious

within, external without-- is, was reaching down to the drowning me, and helping pull me higher.

I think of opening the present Mom gave me, but I have a feeling that would be a mistake, and decide to trust that feeling and save the present for later.

I'm glad I have already lit the four candles.

Because now I need to look at the descent, and the dark side of the dream, the bad feelings in me.

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It's raining again, and once more completely dark outside. There's no need to even draw the blind.

As I look toward the window, all I see is a vague reflection of myself seated at a desk, four candles, lots of papers, and a small dimly-wattled desk light.

I haven't eaten in at least 24 hours, but I'm not really hungry, at least consciously.

And that's the problem. There seems to be a disconnect between how I feel consciously--asexual, not hungry-- and what is happening with me unconsciously-- dreaming about pastries, eclairs, and climaxing.

I fear, am embarrassed by, and feel out of control because of that disconnect. My unconscious sabotaged me; my body sabotaged me. Flesh rises up and again wins.

Though I feared the total darkness, emptiness and silence of the tomb-like elevator dream, at least there was no temptation. No carnality, no food, no overwhelming dazzling lights and colors. Exactly opposite of my fornicating pastries and jazzy dream.

Yet, in both dreams I am fearful, and not at all in control.

I hate that feeling.

It's all Johannes' fault. How can I read about all Johannes' delicious deli foods, his orgasms, and not be affected by them. Even as I'm repulsed by them, I'm reading about them and filling my mind with them. I reached 4th base in a game I don't any longer want to play, with these pastries and donuts doing the base running. It's like when Dr. Lisbet said, "For the next five seconds, don't think of pink elephants. 1,2,3,4,5."

What comes to mind? Pink elephants, of course. How can I learn from Johannes without being re-corrupted by him? Dr. Lisbet said one way not to think of pink elephants is distraction, such as think of gray squirrels gathering acorns in Kansas city. But there seem two problems with that. One, I don't want to hide. That's what I've always done. And two, this wasn't conscious. Can you ever learn to control your unconscious?

Is there a way to go through without being contaminated by what you're going through. Learn from it, rather than being reabsorbed into it's gravitational force.

I look at the Bresson picture.

A person leaping over a puddle. Caught in mid air, as though defying gravity. A space between the leaping feet above the water, and the feet and body reflected in the water. There are the vertical bars of a fence behind the leaper, like bar lines of a musical score. There are also horizontal ones, like the staff lines in my dream.

Do the bars keep him safe, keep the evil out? Or are the lines imprisoning him?

He's oblivious to them. Leaping. Defying gravity.

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I want to deny my body exists. I wish I could get rid of it. Flesh is flesh and spirit is spirit, and, dear Kipling, I want never the twain to meet. Flesh is not spiritual, of that I am convinced of.

Complete opposites.

Why then, just as I feel, at least in my conscious mind, that I'm making some progress--dreaming of a purple car, chakras rising-- reaching toward the spirit, separating flesh and body from the spirit, that everything shifts back toward the flesh?

Consciously, I abhor the flesh. I have been trying to make my "*lingham*"--the so called "shaft of light"-- dark and unused. I try to see my *lingham* as an it, not really part of me; as a "john" in the sense of dirty, ugly, brothel seeking, prostitute infested, whoring, disease ridden flesh. The flesh is what led Johannes astray. I demand my body do without sex. And if it wouldn't kill me, I would stop eating completely, too.

Yet I dreamed of chakras lowering, falling with oozing flowing creams, eclairs pounding into donut holes, fleshy grapes ready to burst and spurt juices. And I climaxed in my sleep. Not exactly Elijah's still small voice.

I want to believe the rising chakras are the real me, and that I've exorcised this carnal self. Where did this flesh seeking salaciousness come from, and what does it mean?

It must mean that in spite of my best efforts to excise it, it is still within me. The best interpretation is that it's in its last throes, fighting for survival, like the goldfish as a kid, when they were just about to die, they'd lie limp, then suddenly rise up and gulp frantically for air, in one final effort for life. Is this a sign I'm learning to curtail my demons

of the flesh?

Kazanzatkis said to beat the devil, you need to become a devil and a half. Is my subconscious doing that work for me? Facing the erotic, the desire for the worldly, the sensual, the spice of life and food in a final Armageddon fight? Since returning from Sinai I've been celibate, and don't interact with women. The battleground has become my subconscious, and the carnality can only emerge when I'm not in conscious control. There is some small comfort in this interpretation.

The worst frame is that this ugly part of me is not being diminished at all, only hiding--suppressed and repressed, hungering to emerge--buried within me where I can't get at it, regrouping, gathering strength, ready to find ways to attack and sabotage me when I'm least suspecting. My subconscious seems a mysterious world, shadowy fantasies that seduce and menace; ambiguous symbols and sensual encounters. If this is the case, then even when I can begin to trust myself consciously, unconsciously I'm still completely out of control and untrustworthy.

What I do know is that I dreamed the dream. It is me.

I feel helpless.

I want to remain in the upper register, in the heavens with the angels. I don't want to come back down led by lewd notes whose stems spread like inner thighs splitting.

I look once again at the Bresson picture.

Can you go up without coming down? Is there any way to stay suspended in the upper register, to stay in midflight, with spirit, other than in a photograph?

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I remember two stories mom told me about going up and not

coming down. When I was just over a year old, I was learning to pull myself up to standing position. Once I could stand, my knees would lock. Whereas I had to flexibly bend them to stand, once locked, I didn't know how to unbend them to sit back down. The only way I could return to earth was to straight leggedly topple over.

Later, at age 2, I learned to climb higher-- onto a couch in our living room. Mom would laugh when, once on the couch, I would cry when I wanted to come back down, but was not able to climb down on my own.

Could it possibly be that what needs to be remembered from my dream, and Jacob's dream, is that there are angels going not only up the ladder from earth to God, but also down the ladder from God to earth? Could my task be one of learning the flexibility of ascent and descent, just like I once learned how to stand and then bend my knees to sit; to get on the couch, and then climb back down?

When I re-read the dream carefully, I do notice that the higher notes are supported by the intonations of the lower ones. And the lower notes also contain and harmonize with the higher ones. Could the dream be suggesting that all the fluttering notes are "angels"-- messengers of connection? Is it possible that the flesh can be a foundation and temple for the spirit? The spirit as a way to make holy the flesh? Angels going up and down the ladder. Maybe neither is better. Maybe it just depends on what message needs to be heard at different times in our life

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So many questions, so many teachings, so much hard effort, and what do I have to show for it?

I switch from looking at Bresson's "leap" to Devu's picture.

Is Devu's drawing what inevitably happens if the still photo became a movie reel? In the next frame, we would see the result of the leap is landing in the dark water, drowning, with our hand outstretched for help?

Where do you get the faith and motivation to make the leap?

I look at the candles, and back at the two wall hangings.

Where do you get the faith to trust and believe there is more oil within?

I'm so aware that I don't know, and feel I'm running out of motivation and ability to continue to try to deal with whatever is happening within me. I look over at my whittling knife.

I need to find something to get me out of the coffin like confines of my room. I feel suspended between an urge to wake up and a temptation to return to sleep. Part of me wants to break out of the coffin of my room and seek to live more fully, whatever that means. And part of me just wants to give up.

I pick up the knife and stare at its sharp edges and pointed tip.

Still holding it, I take a blanket and wrap it around me. A shroud? A prayer shawl?

I pull the blanket tighter around me, covering my sticky nakedness.

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A rustling of books, feet, and clothes awakens me from my aural ("oral"?) reverie. The choir is still standing on the--I realize I don't even know what they call it-- bimah? stage? tabernacle? altar? The congregation hasn't started moving toward the exit, as they would in a movie theater, but remain poised to do so.

The Reverend and his two assistants dart down the center aisle, and each takes up a position by the exit doors. 10.32. Plenty of time. Though I didn't factor in the ten minute walk to the parking lot. I'll need to leave Mery at 10:50. Eighteen minutes, unless she walks me to Mr. Red. Still, time should not be a problem.

I don't know the customs here, so I remain seated, one eye on Mery, one eye on the unfolding scene as people get up and start to file toward the exit doors. My only task is to improvise my next chess ploy, to move Mery along toward first base. Actually, first I need to see if she even wants to play the game.

She's in the center aisle, ten people back. It's a slow, hug the Minister custom, with broad smiles, and praise for him, blessings from him. Should I go out the exit next to me, hug the assistant minister, and meet Mery outside, or should I go toward the big reverend guy.

My timing is perfect, as usual. It's like when Dad and I were playing football and I'd go on a pass route, and reach the designated spot just as the ball gets there. I arrive in the exit line just before Mery.

"Brilliant sermon, Reverend. I especially liked your call for compassion toward the homeless. It was a beautiful, an angel-

ic message, indeed." I am a few inches taller than he is and bend down to give him a big hug and pat on the back, as I've seen him giving others. Not hard for me to do. Dad's a big hugger and back slapper.

"Reverend, I assume you know Mery" I ask him as she steps up next. They mumble something to each other. I don't really listen because I am so pleased at how well I pulled off that move. Me, a Jew, a stranger, my first time in this or any Christian church, playing host and facilitating the greetings between Mery and her Reverend. I'm just amazing.

Sometimes even I am awe struck at my chutzpah.

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"What are you doing here? Aren't you Jewish?" There is no smile on her face. Ouch. Check.

That wasn't the first move I expected from her. I was anticipating something at least like, oh, "You remember my name." or "You seemed so warm with the Reverend." Or, at best, "Gee, thanks for the introduction to the Reverend. Even though I come here a lot, I'd never really been formally introduced."

Oh well. "Win some, lose some," as Alice would say. I'm losing here. That's fine, I have a fun golf game waiting. But let's see how quick and clever you can be, now, when you're back's against the wall and you're in check.

"Well, as the good book says, 'There is a time for every season' right?"

"Solomon, my favorite biblical author. *Ecclesiastes*." She looks up at me. Is there a hint of softening in her eyes? 10:41. Nine minutes to go. The game continues. We're standing on the sidewalk outside the church. People are bustling by. What next?

Should I ask her where she lives? Too pushy, too prosaic.

"And is that your favorite Old Testament book?"

"That depends on my mood. Generally, though, it's a little dark for me. Too existential."

"Existential? I'm taking a course on existentialists."

"Yes, I know. You told me you were writing a paper of the *Plague*. Have you read the *Rebel*."

"No, why"

"You should. It's Camus' philosophical context and rejoinder to the *Plague*." 10:46. I'm astounded at what's coming from her mouth. And impressed. But it's too academic. We're not moving forward, and I've got four minutes left.

"Thanks for the recommendation. I'll be sure to take a look at it."

I need more time. Maybe I'll see if she wants to walk towards my car with me. That'll give me a couple extra minutes to see if we can set a follow-up time to get together and then say good-by.

"It's really noisy here--the people, the traffic. Would you mind if we walked down Eddy toward a quieter street."

"Sorry, the bus to take me home is in the other direction, and I'll miss it if I don't go in the next couple of minutes."

"Do you live near here?" Innocent, inquiring, yet moving my pawn forward.

"A few miles away. Near S.F. State, just down 19th Street."

"Oh, near Golden Gate Park, do you go there often?" Perfect segue. Light, information seeking on the surface--but moving a pawn. I'm even a couple moves ahead, creating different scenarios

depending on her response.

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"I haven't been in a long time. But I love it." Ok, bingo.

In another minute I can invite her to go, maybe next Saturday, get her phone number and then get out of here to the links.

I could offer her a ride. But that seems a waste. Just get the information you need, say good by, and clear out. 10:52.

"Me, too. I've found a wonderful spot there--The Shakespeare Garden. Maybe we could go some time." Keep it casual.

"Oh, I've never seen that. That would be fun. We could read Shakespeare, or Camus, or Solomon." Ok, that's enough. Connection made. She's willing to join me in the Park. 10:55. Time to go. I'll need to run.

I need to say good by. But for some reason, instead of the safe, secure play--like moving a bishop pawn forward,--getting her phone number-- I make a make a wild gambit and bring out my queen.

"If Ecclesiastes is too dark, what is your favorite Solomon book?" I'm fishing, Queen as bait.

She says something in a quiet voice, but because of the traffic, and all the people, it's hard to hear. 10:57. If I run, I can still make it to my car on time.

I push again.

"Sorry, I know you have to go. I just didn't hear what you said."

She's speaking very softly, and looking down at the ground.

I can barely hear her. I lean closer. I don't want to violate her personal space too soon, and frighten her, but I do want to hear what she's saying.

"Well, actually, my Father's a minister, and so he made my mom read the Bible to us every night. When I was a young teen, she would read to me from Solomon every night. And that became my favorite book. The *Song of Songs*."

She looks up at me when she says "*Song of Songs*" Her face is just about 10-12 inches from mine. Rather than backing off, she remains steady, and watches my eyes closely, as if to see the impact of her words. I want to look at my watch, but I'm afraid to. I keep looking directly at her, trying to appear casual. My heart is racing. *Song of Songs*. Are you kidding me? I feel a chill throughout my body. Can she see that I'm starting to shake. I will myself to remain still. I say nothing.

She looks back down at the ground, but continues speaking: "She actually read it to me so many times, I have it memorized. Because of my Father's rigid, puritanical views, I believe this was her way--and it was her only way-- of teaching me about" and here she looks directly at me again: "the 'birds and bees.'"

Did I imagine--was it a blink-- or did she give me a little innocent wink when she mentioned the "birds and bees"?

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Whether she did or didn't wink, what I am aware of is that the chill running up and down my body is turning into a shiver.

Three simultaneous images pop into my mind, all connected by the excitement of anticipating something new. They are inchoate at first, but I try to separate them.

The first image occurred when I was about 10, on a vacation with my family in California, just before I knew I was going to jump off the high dive. An image of being on the top surveying

what was to come. A choice point, but I knew I was going to leap.

The second image I recall was when I was younger, maybe 7, with my parents at Fairyland, just as we were about to board the roller coaster. My right foot was in the car, and I knew that once I lifted my left foot off the land, something unique was going to happen. Although I'm sure I didn't know how to categorize and label the feeling at the time--surrendering control--I knew that I felt something quite strong and electrifying within me. I remember looking at the ascending tracks, seeing where they appeared to end at the summit, and knowing that a wild ride was about to begin.

The third was an image of me, as Tarzan, jumping out of a tree, swinging on a rope. As the swing from the first rope was about to end, I was forced to reach out toward a second rope, attached to another tree. In order swing to the second tree--and move further along in the forest, I had to let go of the first rope, and grasp the second.

It's instructive that in all these images, in order to change, I needed to let go of where I was, and take a leap into the unknown. I look once again at the Bresson photograph, which is becoming like a good friend.

About to descend, starting to ascend, and vertically swinging. Yet all those images, though different, have one thing in common. They are arising from an adventurous, exhilarating chill in my body. I realize that in less than twelve weeks, my life will be over--at Stanford. I will need to dive into a new life, swing to a new rope, take a leap into a new body of water.

Could it possibly make such a big difference to my life if I were to, on a much more minor scale, practice doing that now, by

breaking my routine and canceling one little golf game. Especially for an opportunity like this--how often in my life will a buxom, innocent-looking, cross-wearing woman who knows the Song of Songs intimately, and sees it connected to the "birds and bees" cross my path. *Carpe Diem*. Seize the day, man. The links can wait until next Sunday.

"It seems things are in such alignment--our meeting and all--how would it be if I gave you a ride home, and maybe we could stop off briefly at the Park and I could show you my garden."

"Oh, that would be fun. My only restriction is that I need to be back at David's by 4 to start working. Would that be ok?"

I said "Stop off briefly" and she said "back by 4"--five hours from now!" She said "Only 'restriction'?! " "Only?!"

I glance toward the heavens.

Maybe there is a god.

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Plan B.

We stop at Solomon's to pick up supplies. Mery said she didn't want to go to David's--she has to be back at work by 4 and didn't want to be called in early. And, Solomon's seemed perfect given the memorized text we shared in common.

While waiting for the supplies, I call Gregory.

I return to the checkout counter.

"Elizabeth?" I vaguely hear someone say as I'm paying for the supplies. Silence.

"Beth, heh, I never took you for a traitor." The person, an older woman, walks over to Mery, who looks awkward, then smiles somewhat

falteringly. After I finish paying the cashier, the older woman is gone.

"Beth, traitor?" I look at her quizzically, giving a slight shrug of my shoulders and opening my hands, palms up. Soft but to the point.

Her eyes seem to glaze over, as if she is looking through and beyond me. She says nothing. Then, refocusing, she replies "Are you giving me the third degree, too?" She sounds very defensive and way overreacting to my carefully calculated gesture. But I decide to give her the benefit of the doubt...maybe she's just trying to be cute.

"No, no Perry Mason, just curious." I give her my boyish smile.

"Della works at David's. She was probably surprised when she walked by the window and saw me here at Solomon's. Traitor, you know, consorting with the competition. That's all." She seems more composed with each word.

"Makes sense. No nefarious plot there. But I was wondering about "Elizabeth", and "Beth"? I try to be clever, "Maybe a secret identity?"

She does not smile. "No mystery there, either. There's another waitress at David's named Elizabeth. Since that's my first name, to avoid confusion, they suggested calling me Eliza, or Beth. Then they decided to just use my middle name, Mery." She looks at me pointedly, her brown eyes not at all shy and averting as she continues "Della must have reflexively called me by my first name, because that's how she first met me." There is a pause, then "Case closed?"

Time for a full retreat. "Well, as my friend the bard says in his garden at Golden Gate 'What's in a name? That which we call a rose...."

"Cornny, but acceptable. Can I carry anything?"

Phew, parry and counter parry. Case closed, time to move on.

Derailment averted. After I finish paying, I wonder if I can count last night at David's as the first date, and write off the cost of my meal and tip as part of the data in my calculation formula. Then the cost of today's "date" would be the couple bucks I put in the collection plate at the church, and the apple, cheese, and wine I'm buying.

Seems Fair. Let's see what I get in return for my investment.

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Everything is going perfectly as we walk toward the Shakespeare garden with the picnic supplies, a blanket I always carry in Mr Red (just in case), Mr Cannon, and my flute (she needs a name, I decide--maybe I'll ask Mery to name her).

I see a small group of children, maybe 7 years old, having a birthday party in "my" spot right under the "rose by any other name" sign and the budding roses. I feel frustrated. I debate whether to move to a different place, or set up right next to them. I know it's not rational, but my frustration is evolving into anger. I choose a compromise. This is not a time to make a scene with Mery here on the first real date. I choose a spot far enough away so it doesn't appear I'm trying to impinge on them, and also so that Mery and I can have some privacy,. But the spot is also near enough to cause them some discomfort so that they may move of their own accord.

I also purposely pick a place in the sun, rather than under a shady tree. I'm hoping she will start to feel warm and want to take off her shawl. She sits somewhat primly, legs tucked under her buttocks. Still, her dress rose nicely maybe a third of the way up her thigh. She tries, unsuccessfully to pull it down.

Maybe she gains a 1/2 inch physically, though seems satisfied emotionally. I intentionally don't look at her breasts.

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Once I spread the blanket and unpack, I lift a glass of the rather inexpensive, bland, sweetish wine (I'm embarrassed to have bought it, but on the spur of the moment that was all that was available without wasting precious time):

"To a lovely church service....and to a rose among the thorns." Lovely church service. Not a lie, exactly. For me, it was boring, and a waste of time. But my images of last night at Berkeley-- the phrase "your oils have a pleasing fragrance" comes to mind--and my fantasies about different choir members kept it "lovely."

I've learned with women that if you want to succeed in the courtships, you have to meet them where they are. If it's poetry, fine. Tennis, fine. I'll even talk clothes with them, or their shoes. That I learned from my mom and Grandpa Dave, who runs a high fashion women's clothing store.

Mery is clearly not that concerned about clothes and fashion. In truth, she is rather plainly, simply, unfashionably dressed. Maybe even a little dumpy. That's ok with me. It's not the wrapping I'm interested in.

"This is beautiful," she says gesturing to the roses, the park setting, and the children playing as she takes a somewhat dainty sip of the wine. Rimless glasses. There's an almost librarian type quality to her. Quiet, subdued. A folk music type--the three J's?

Obviously the best place to connect with her is going to be

around the *Song of Songs*. But I have to be careful not to approach that too directly. It's too easy an entree, and could scare her off.

"What kind of music do you like--folk music?"

"Yes! How'd you know? Especially Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins, Joan Baez." Nailed it.

"Any other kinds?" Stay focused on her, her interests, bring her out. "By the way, it's kind of hot out here, do you want to take off your shawl."

"No, thanks, I'm fine. It depends on my mood. If things are chaotic, then I like classical music, particularly the structure of Bach. In a more passionate mood, Beethoven."

My ear picks up when she alludes to passion.

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"Favorite Beethoven?"

"Easy, the 9th. What a testament to the human spirit. Written while he was deaf."

More depth than I expected. Knowledgeable from the existential "Rebel" to the classical "Ode."

This seems an opportunity to mention to her about my deafness. I start to say something, but she continues talking about other music she likes.

Turns out she also likes jazz. Way too unstructured for me. Not a good time to talk about my ear, after all.

Then she mentions some new rock singers and groups--Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendricks, the Doors. I've never listened to any of these, though their names are vaguely familiar. I'm going to have to do some more research, if things proceed with her. The Doors. I

wonder if learning about them can help me open some doors. (Hmm,
not very good. Too obvious, not clever enough).

"You play the flute?"

"Great guess" I say, holding up the black flute case. Careful. Too sarcastic. "Do you have any favorite flute pieces?" Good recovery.

"I love Gluck's 'Dance of the Blessed Spirits.'" I play it on the piano but it's also written as a flute and piano duet. Do you know it?"

"No, but what a beautiful title," I exclaim in a way that seems a little too enthusiastic. But she doesn't notice.

"Oh, it is, and it's so lovely and uplifting."

I take note. If this relationship continues, I decide to learn it to surprise her.

"Your oils have a pleasing fragrance" reemerges in my mind. Why? I thought it was from last night. Could I be thinking of third base with Mery? A little early, I'd say. Oils at third base are often so hidden. You don't know they're there, in most cases, until you're far enough inside. By the time you get there, frequently, they're gushing. It's really unfair that women can keep their arousal so hidden, whereas men--and I surreptitiously look at my emerging shaft of light--are so obvious.

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I take out my flute.

"Would you help give her a name?" I ask while I'm assembling it.

"How do you know she's a she?"

"Good point. Would you help me give 'it' a name."

"How about 'Grace.'"

"Grace. Whyever?"

"Once in church I heard a flute and jazz combo playing the most unbelievable version of Amazing Grace. That's just what comes to mind when I think of a flute, the spiritual, soaring notes of Amazing Grace."

"Grace it is. Mery, meet Grace." I play a few trills to consummate the introduction. Then, after a brief warm up scale, I play Bach's 3rd Brandenburg Concerto, one of about ten pieces--of varying genres-- that I've memorized for occasions just such as this.

I can see she's intrigued and impressed. I hope she's thinking I played this because she told me she likes Bach. As an artist, I hope she is resonating to and seeing a fellow artistic soul in me. Perhaps some oils are beginning to flow?

As she watches me play, I try to look impassioned yet spiritual, ethereal yet intense.

A couple of the children have taken straws out of their milk containers, and start playing them like flutes. Coming closer they begin moving and dancing to the music, laughing and singing. Those welcome children, it's as if I'd willed them to be there as stage props for my Shakespearean drama in the Garden of Eden.

The leaves are just beginning to bud. What an idyllic setting, a perfect stage set. It feels like we have entered the kingdom of heaven.

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Is there an actual snake in this Garden of Eden?

Or is Johannes the snake?

I put my flute down, pull out my red Swiss army knife, and cut a piece of gouda cheese, which I place on a wheat cracker and offer to her. As she's chewing, I pick up my camera and take a few pictures of the roses, the partying children. I really would like to have a few photos of her. Partly to study her face without staring. Partly to see if I'm under the spell of her breasts, or if they really look as good as they appear, when I'm only able to catch glimpses.

"Mind if I take a picture of you?" I ask as I snap one. Click.

"I can't believe you did that" She blushes, a little upset.

"I had food in my mouth!"

"Oh, sorry. Let me know when you're ready."

"Well, actually, I don't really like having my picture taken. I'm kind of shy. You probably already noticed that."

"What makes you think I noticed you were shy?"

"Well, isn't that why you introduced me to the minister? I don't really know anyone in the church."

"Very perceptive." I had no idea. I assumed she knew the minister.

"I did appreciate that."

"Not a problem. How about if I take a picture of you over by that rose?" I stand up and start walking toward it before she can answer. She doesn't say anything, and at first doesn't move. But

then she does rise, straightens her dress, pats her hair, and as she walks over, pulls the shawl tightly around her.

I take a couple of pictures. Click. Snap. Click.

"That's all, please."

"Those were a bit stiff. Shake your hands a bit. Good. Now, look over at the children and imagine them dancing. There, perfect." Snap. "Now, keep looking at them and start to turn toward me." Snap. "Perfect." Snap.

"Now, pretend you're a willow tree, with long arms, reaching toward heaven." Snap. "Great. Eyes toward heaven. Exactly." Snap. "Now a wind comes along. 'Awake, O north wind.' You feel the wind swaying your hands." Snap "Beautiful. 'And come wind of the south.'" Snap. She smiles in recognition.

"Now shake your hands toward the ground again." Snap. The shawl has nearly fallen off her arms, resting on the lower part of her back. She starts to pull it up. Snap. "No, just let it fall to the ground, slowly, like you're curtsying." Snap. "Beautiful. Delicate. Graceful." Snap. Finally, a bit of cleavage as she bends forward. "You're a natural." I go over and give her a little hug of appreciation and thanks. (Is anything ever really non-sexual?)

"I'm an amateur photographer, and will develop these myself. I'll bring you a copy next time. You'll love how you look. Now, how about another glass of wine?"

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"You're right, it is warm" she says as she removes her shawl and lays it on the blanket. When she sits this time it's a bit more careless, her dress a bit higher still on her thigh. One button has come undone on her sundress. She seems to notice and

places the shawl over her legs, and rebuttons the dress. I clearly don't notice anything about her dress or body, commenting instead:

"Isn't it wonderful the way those children are playing so happily in the park" I point toward the ongoing birthday celebration.

"What was your childhood like," she asks.

I love this question. It is inevitable--and obligatory-- in any dating situation at some point, and I have scripted the perfect answer. Like a piece of music I've practiced many times, I'm able to give a harmonious recital. It's perfectly honest in what it says. I deliver it like a good lawyer arguing a brief, but for this jury of one, I will use my most spontaneous, ah shucks, Kansas City boyish style.

"It's almost embarrassing to say it, but I had one of those amazingly lucky upbringings."

I pull a couple of pictures out of my wallet. "Here's my mom holding me when I was just a baby."

"Wow, she's beautiful. She looks so loving." It is a great picture. That's the response I always receive.

"Thanks" I shrug as though slightly awkward. She continues to stare. "Almost like the Madonna and Child," she smiles. Well, that's one I've never heard before. But it does allow a segue into a vignette I sometimes use.

"Funny you should say that. Mom told me that once my Grandpa Dave, who is the comedian in the family, once said 'We Jews believe the Messiah is supposed to be a descendant of David, right?' (actually, that's our deli, too!)" I say as I give her a little pat on her bare shoulder. "Then Grandpa points to him-

self proudly, and then to me and says,

"Well, then, there's no reason why Jr, my grandson
can't one day grow up and be the Messiah."

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Everyone laughed when he said it, but you can see that he
certainly had high hopes for me. So, Madonna and child. Very
kind of you. Fits right into my family lore!" Mery smiles,
perhaps a bit uncertainly. Madonna, the virgin Mary.

Two questions arise. One, though I doubt it, I do wonder if
Mery's still a virgin. With her rimless glasses, she has a cer-
tain school marmish librarian look, which I like. The innocent,
scholarly exterior. How experienced can she be? I've never been
with a virgin. The thought excites me.

I also am curious about the spelling of her name. Neither
question seems quite appropriate. I decide to steer the conver-
sation away from me and the Messiah, but still keep it family
oriented, and Madonna related.

"The most beautiful representation of the Virgin Mary I ever
saw was a stained glass window created in the 12th century in the
cathedral at Chartres. I saw it when I was traveling in Europe
after high school with my grandparents. Her robe was a glorious
blue, backlit by the sun that streamed from the panes onto the
floor, creating little blue puddles. There was a dazzling ruby
red background. The guide said that usually you see the Madonna's
eyes downcast or gazing toward heaven, but in this creation she
looks straight at you, directly, fearlessly, with power and
strength, head slightly tilted. What is the expression on her
face? Mysterious, enigmatic, yet with strength and dignity."

"You have such a way with words, that's a beautiful por-

trait. I can see it so clearly."

I smile sheepishly in thanks, and hand her another photo.

"It's my second grade class. Is there anything that strikes you about it?" Mery moves a bit closer. Whoever I show this picture to has to move closer in order to see it clearly. Nothing is unplanned about my presentation.

"Well, everyone is staring at the camera with that second grade look of innocence."

"Yes. But look more carefully. What about that little guy, front row left?" Still closer. Do I feel one of her breasts slightly touching my arm?

"Ah, I see. Everyone is looking at the camera except for one little naughty boy in a Cub Scout uniform, who's staring dreamily off into space." She gives me her first clearly unasked for pat. It feels even better than when she was wiping the water from my cashmere sweater--was that only last night?

This picture always has the desired effect on girls. It shows me as a little Thoreau in the making, going his own way, hearing that different drummer, and looking incredibly innocent and cute while doing so. Naughty, too. That's an interesting addition.

"My mom was the Cub Scout den mother, and also president of the Parent--Teachers Association. Both my parents were close friends of the principal, and would have him and our (my brother's and sister's) teachers over for parties at our house throughout the year."

We share another sip of wine, some more cheese.

I take out my knife again, and cut a piece of apple, and offer it to her. When she takes it, she looks up at me briefly,

then looks toward the blanket. Before she takes a bite, she says,
demurely *"And the fragrance of your breath like apples."*

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"Do you have any more pictures?" Excellent. It's always good to assess the jury to see how they are reacting. Don't want to overload them. Don't want to give them too little.

I'm feeling excited and aroused, even though I'm not even close to first base. But there's something about the chase, the unknown. She seems shy, naive, innocent, a little fearful even. I have to be careful of every move I make. Yet this feels almost more fun than last night when there was no timidity on the girls' part, no resistance. I didn't need to make any moves. There was nothing to overcome, and it was almost like I was sucked (willingly of course) into their current.

"Just two more. This is Dad and me in our baseball uniforms. Dad was the coach of my baseball team. He'd always take off work early to come help us practice. He also would take me bowling every Sunday, and to baseball games."

"He's a friendly-looking man. Great smile. Like yours."

"Thanks." I know my smile is a large part of my bait. And I raise my glass as if in a toast, "and thanks, Dad."

"My parents had a division of labor. Mom would help me with my English and writing, Dad with my math. I felt really protected and taken care of by them."

She reaches for the last picture.

"Our house was a place of safety and refuge." I show her the white brick mansion, with beveled glass English carriage lights surrounding the front door, a second story porch with red geraniums, framed by tall oak trees and a circular drive. "My other

grandfather helped my family buy this house. He's a lawyer, the money in the family."

"Over here" I pointed to a space off the picture, "is the magic circle. This is where the street divided and left a piece of land where the kids on the street would meet to play hide and seek and capture the flag. There's a sign on both sides of this magic circle which says 'Caution, children at play.'"

"Caution, children at play." She looks up wistfully at the birthday party celebration. "It looks like Norman Rockwell could have painted your childhood. You're very lucky."

"Thanks, yes, I was. I am. I was given a very secure and trusting environment to grow up in, with loving, protective parents. It was great."

Girls always love this Camelot fairy tale upbringing, the protective parents, the loving family. It gives them a sense of safety and security about me. And, as far as it goes, it's all true. As my lawyer grandfather said, "Always tell the truth. But there can be many truths. It's a question of point of view. There's nothing wrong with only telling that part of the truth that best makes your case. That's true in the law, and that's true in life."

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I know my script well, and find it enjoyable to play it, like a familiar flute piece. But I know that as well-presented as it is, I still need to make sure it feels like I'm taking a personal interest in Mery. I start off casually:

"Seeing how a rose by any other name would be as sweet, may I ask how why you spell Mery with an e?"

"I really don't know. That's just the way my parents always

wrote it."

"I have some ideas. Want to hear?"

"Sure."

"When I was younger, my brother and I, loved to play word games and charades. Now I do the same thing with my tennis buddies. The spelling of your name sets up such wonderful associations. If you take away the y, (I make a peace sign V with my right hand, and add a single finger as a line to its juncture, creating a Y) you have the French "mer", the sea. <Though I don't say this to her, the hand signals come from an aborted attempt when I was younger and my parents tried to get me to learn sign language, just in case I became deaf in both ears>. Maybe the reason you're Mery is to help us "see" (and I point to my eyes) better? Or "r" (which I create with my thumb aiming down and index finger perpendicular) you less inclined to mar(r)y, and so stay mer(r)y (more hand signals)?"

She looks at me at me mischievously, then speaks and signals back: "R you for real? I can C your point, but your ideas are not all that clear, and I suggest you should throw them and yourself into the sea." And with that she playfully take both hands, as if picking me up, and tossing me.

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She's smiling, loosened up a bit, so I ask her with a sincere focus in my eyes:

"If you'd be willing, I'd love to hear about your family."

"No, it's not very inspiring, really." She seems a little too nervous. There may be something there she isn't comfortable sharing. If I can get her to share it, she will feel like I'm a

confidant, and become more trusting of me.

"Please, I'm really love to get to know you better. How about just some rough sketches--shouldn't an artist at least be able to do that? By the way, what kind of art?" This is a classic distraction move. Seemingly change the subject to a safer one, then once there are once again feeling less nervous, use the new subject as the springboard to return and try again.

"I don't really have a specific style. But it's closest to abstract expressionism. My teacher was taught by some of the pioneers in the 50's."

"And what does art mean to you? Why do you do it?"

"Oh, don't get me started! Art elevates the senses, brings me into a heightened state of awareness. I try to treat everyday life, as much as I can, as a work of art. When I paint, I feel like I'm dancing with my hands."

"I'd love to see a few of your pictures, if that seems ok at some point." Then, before she can respond "So, did you get your artistic talent from your mother or your father?"

"My mom is really the artistic one. Dad was too busy preparing his sermons, ministering to the congregation." See, back on track, and from here it will be easy to keep her talking.

I would learn to see this pattern in her. First, "No." Then, gentle protest. Finally, agreement. At the time I thought it was her naive shyness, coupled with my brilliant maneuverings. Now, I wonder if there wasn't more artifice on both sides than I realized. Were two people playing chess, when I thought there was only one?

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"Yes, you mentioned before that your Dad's a minister. What

kind? Similar to the church we went to? How would he have liked that service?"

"Daddy's a sort of a fire and brimstone, tough, strong-willed by-the-book preacher. Not a lot of singing and joy comes from him. That's why I like this church so much. The sermons are much more compassionate than dad's. Also, I love the choir. They're so joyous when they sing."

I nod empathically, then ask "Does your mom, with her more creative side, help right the balance?"

"Mom's very creative and smart. She was the high school valedictorian, and she's very well-read (secretly). I actually think she's smarter than dad." I can sense she's warming up now. The sharing faucets are opening. "Her family is Germanic. Tough, disciplinarians. I think that may be one reason why she was attracted to and generally defers to dad. At his insistence, she never got a job--she's always been a stay-at-home mom. Sometimes she volunteers at the neo-natal intensive care unit at the hospital. I don't think she approves of Dad's anger and outbursts, but she doesn't say too much to discourage him."

"Would they approve of this church?"

"Dad wouldn't. I think mom would, but I'm not sure. Dad's got her pretty brain-washed. Maybe there wouldn't be enough fire and brimstone for either of them. But I've learned that I have to follow my heart and trust myself more. There's enough suffering in the world without taking on extra burdens we don't need to, and my parents opinions and unwillingness to be joyful are just additional burdens. No matter how harsh the world is, I believe each of us should try to bring a little kindness and laughter to it."

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"I was right last night when I said you were good hearted.

She looks down. I can tell she's appreciative. "Thank you.

That's kind. I believe that in their own way, each of my parents wants to see themselves as kind, healing people. Daddy wants to heal people's souls; mom, their fragile bodies. I believe their intentions are good. Though this may be too much to share--I mean I've just met you--but you are very easy to talk to--I've been working with a therapist for the last three months. With her help, I'm getting much closer to forgiving them for the discrepancy between their good intentions and the negative effects of their actions."

I take a breath, and try not to betray my feelings. The idea of her being in therapy does not make me happy. I've seen too much for too long with too little success with mom. This is not a good sign, breasts aside. But as long as I am here, I decide to continue the play:

"Sounds like you're the real true healing force."

"Thanks. I try to be. Not only with my family, but with others, too. I actually volunteer some time with autistic kids, doing art therapy with them."

"Impressive." But I'm not interested in her work with kids. What I've found in the past is that there is always something you can learn from a girls relationship with her father that is

helpful in the seduction process. How they see their father is important in finding their vulnerable spots. Do they want a strong father figure type? Are they rebelling against that? I

need to save autistic kids for another time, and redirect the conversation.

"What was your Dad's favorite message for his sermons?"

"Fear. As I said 'Fire and brimstone.' The torments of hell. And not just in Sunday sermons. I often wished I were a congregant who could hear the message, then go home. But I had to listen to him everyday. The burning flames were a reality for a little girl; and each action I took I felt might cast me into eternal damnation: a dress too short, letting a boy get too near me, any impropriety was certain to...." She lets the words drift off, and adjusts her shawl tighter around her legs.

A silence follows, during which I nod empathically. Why is this story of her father so arousing to me?

"How did you deal with that message?" I ask in the most caring voice I have.

"The constant criticism became a torment, too much for me to handle. I felt myself on the verge of completely falling apart, and I left home. I decided I couldn't accept what Father said. God couldn't have meant for us to live each day of our lives in agonizing fear. I decided to choose my own path. I wasn't going to be guided by the words of my parents or the words of his religion, but by what I felt was the essence of goodness within me. I try so hard to hear that still small voice, telling me the way to act."

She is breathing somewhat quickly, which is causing her chest to expand in a way I find delicious. "Ouch. that's rough. I really admire your courage." I reach over and give her a slight, but tender pat on her shawl, which is resting above her naked knees.

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"How were you raised religiously?" she queries, not making any move to remove my hand. But I need to give her credit for making a great verbal countermove. She's has just taken away whatever indirect sexual innuendo and effectiveness my hand, still resting on and patting her shawl, was supposed to have. I don't want to immediately remove my hand, as if I'm retreating. So I give her one more pat, then raise it to my chin, as if pondering.

"In Judaism, there are several branches, from the traditional Orthodox to the liberal Reform. Our Temple's Rabbi says the distinction is that in Reform, the Ten commandments are really the 'Ten Suggestions.'"

She smiles, and I continue, "My family's more reform than Reform. We know we're Jewish, but mostly culturally, or maybe gastronomically Jewish." I wait for a life, but all I get is a blank stare. Too subtle? Too unfunny? "Food and sharing a common meal was an important factor in maintaining my family's cohesiveness."

"I'd have never guessed after the meal you ate at the deli." Hmm, she can dish it out pretty good.

"I guess you *have* seen what our Sunday brunches were like. After going to boring Sunday school, we'd always have that big brunch: My Nana would make sure everyone was fed and full, then she would suck and chew the marrow from the chicken bone, then swallow the bone, making sure nothing goes to waste. She grew up very poor. I guess if there is a lesson, it is that one has to suffer through Sunday school to gain the reward of Sunday breakfast."

I laugh and she seems to smile appreciatively. I'm in the clear again. The sun silkily shimmers in her hair, birds boisterously and baroquely sing. I am feeling whole and content.

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She says nothing, so I continue:

"At Passover I was dragged to some long, boring Seders. During the New Year, Rosh Hashannah/Yom Kippur, I had to choose to go to at least one of the 7 services. I always tried to find the shortest!"

She again smiles "What do Jews think about Jesus?"

Ouch. She doesn't fool around. Her soft, doe-eyed innocence, apparently goes hand in hand with a capacity for fearless, tough probing. Is there more going on here than meets the eye? She seems to realize she has me on the defensive, and is moving in for check.

"Well, my family didn't spend a lot of time talking about Jesus." I laugh, a little awkwardly. "I remember a conversation with my mom. Maybe I was 14. I told her I wanted to go back to Sunday School to get confirmed. I'd dropped out when I was 12, so I could go to the country club on Sundays and play golf. Mom asked me if I was becoming religious. I told her, no, I was just noticing that there were no girls in my all-boy's high school, and thought Sunday school would be a good place to meet them."

"What does that have to do with Jesus?" Mery continues to probe. Maybe she's the one who should go to law school!

I need to go back on the offensive.

"One thing I don't get about Jesus is that the way he hangs on the cross seems like such a painful symbol of suffering, as if he's taking on the anguish of the world. Doesn't that seem to

accentuate the misery in the world." What am I doing? This is not the way to move toward first base. Keep it light, playful. Don't explore potentially divisive topics. I'm getting off balance, and need to regroup.

"How about another glass of wine? Some more cheese and crackers? Fruit?" She shakes her no after each question.

"I'm happy to answer your question, which is really one I've thought a lot about--but would you mind--I'm still curious about Sunday school, country clubs, girls, and Jesus. Where were you going with that?"

She does not get deflected. Like a pit bull going after it's target. This is definitely preparation for Harvard Law. I notice the sun is moving west, and some of the trees' shadows are starting to elongate. The children are still frolicking. Doesn't she notice any of that? If I were to point it out, she would recognize I am trying a diversionary tactic to hide my discomfort. I need a more direct countermove.

"Well, you see, I had to drop out of Sunday School because the country club where we played golf was so far away. I remember mom saying to me when I quit Sunday school--which, by the way, was not a big fight at all-- 'It's too bad our country club is nearly an hour away, otherwise you could do both--golf and Sunday School."

"Jesus?"

"Right. I'm getting there. "Two blocks from our house, about five minutes by bike, there is a beautiful country club. Mom told me a story, which I hadn't remembered, about when I was seven. My friend's family across the street belonged to this country club that was within walking distance of our home. Apparently,

one day I said to my mom,

'Mom, you know there's only one person that is stopping me from belonging to the country club of my friend.'

'Who's that, son.'

'Jesus Christ.'

'Why is that?'

'Well, my friend said that nobody can belong to the club who's Jewish and doesn't believe in Jesus.'

"Mom tried to comfort me, saying even though our country club was far away, it was every bit as good as theirs. I guess I felt a bit like what the minister was saying today, 'a stranger in a strange land.'"

Mery doesn't respond, but looks away, and I think I see something in her eyes. What? Pain, annoyance, frustration? Oh man, I've blown it. Too much, too fast, too splitting. Why did she guide me down this divisive religious path?

She then looks at me with an incredibly kindly expression, and says, "I'm so sorry. That's one thing I'll never understand, how a religion of love---and that's how I see Jesus--can be turned to such loathsome ends." I actually thought she was going to start crying, but then suddenly her eyes turn to the birthday children, and, like a switch had been turned, she starts laughing, and says playfully, "Tag, you're it."

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I revel in the joy of chasing her! She is running unself-consciously, her breasts like soft custardy pillows rising and falling with every stride. The sun glistens off her gold cross hanging around her neck, as it is tossed, flying skyward, and then comes crashing back into her body with each stride. A modest

tag on my part, then she is chasing me. I duck and weave, remembering my football and tennis footwork--showing off my agility--but all so I can soon be caught. Pretty soon we are not alone, and there are a half dozen little kids joining in as we all play a huge game of tag.

Finally, the birthday girl's parents call her over to the candle-lit cake. The little girl waves us over. I bring my flute, and play accompaniment as we all sing happy birthday.

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"You have a wonderful way with children." I look down, feigning shyness. I know for many women the best way to get them to feel safer is to show that you are vulnerable. That both draws them to you, and makes them feel less vulnerable (and therefore more pliable *and* vulnerable). If she only knew how I first felt when I saw those children in my space. Well, when given lemons...

I say nothing, and she feels my awkwardness. As if to relieve it, I feel her left hand take my right hand as we walk back to our blanket. I realize I still haven't told her about my ear.

"Unless ye become like little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven, right?" I reach over and start stroking her hair with my left hand. She keeps hold of my right. What would be great is if she would voluntarily put her right hand on the small of my back, a cue to proceed to first base. But she doesn't.

Another important strategy is lead them to believe that you feel there is something "fated" and unique about the way you met her.

"I'm so happy fate guided me off the freeway last night, to

make a detour on my way to Berkeley. It was as if something were drawing me to David's." Yeah, matzah ball soup. Hunger. I continue to stroke her hair. I hear her sigh.

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It's becoming colder, as the sun is now receding behind the tree tops. The gentlemanly thing would be to stoop down, pick up her shawl, and place it around her. But that might break the moment and the mood. I gently rub the soft spot behind her ear, and stroke down across the back of her neck. Though my hand motion is gentle and smooth, my mind is frantically trying to figure out whether I should go in for the kiss, or pause, put on her shawl, and win points for not being too goal oriented.

I bend over and kiss her on the hair, softly, very lightly just enough so she can feel it. No resistance. "You have beautiful hair. I love its texture and color." I'm still stroking her neck. Soft kisses on the top of her head. Fatherly. Kindly.

She takes no initiative. Her hand still doesn't move around me. That would be a clear sign to move in. Or she could turn her hand lightly toward me, just a little sign of offering herself.

Nothing. She doesn't pull away. She doesn't move forward. I hear some sound coming from her, at least I think I do. A slight moan? A cat's purr? A sigh?

My next initiative is a bold one. Overall, I think seems things are going well. Why not try? I bring my lips forward to her forehead. She doesn't pull back. So far so good. As I move toward her cheek, I feel movement in her neck. I hope she's raising it toward me. But it seems she's lowering it, just a bit.

A rebuff? Shyness? Am I going too quickly? It's been less than 24 hours. Generally, if my approach is working, they'll turn

their cheek and lips toward me. Is she tensing a bit? Or teasing?
Better back off for a moment, go back to where things were fine.

I begin restroking her hair. "You have the softest hair. And I love the way you wear it." I take all of the hair covering her cheeks and tuck it behind both ears, while continuing to caress it. "Especially the way these two tributaries rise and meet."

She speaks from an almost hypnagogic state "Oh, thank you... my angel's wings..."

"Exactly. You are like the messenger the minister talked about today. A peaceful sleeping angel with a beautiful heart." My soft stroking continues. As I say this she exhales gently, sighing. Her neck raises a bit, back to where it was.

And then I realize the key was before me all the time, and I'd forgotten it in my search.

Stroking her hair, and kissing it gently once more I say:

"Your hair is like a flock of goats...."

As I say this I stroke down and across behind her ears, toward her neck, I feel some tension in her neck as she starts to lift her head, letting her hair drop further down her back. I once again stroke the hair along her back

"...a flock of goats that have descended from Mount Gilead."

As her head continues to arch upward, my right hand assists her by more forcefully stroking the hair along her back in a downward direction.

I hear her purring sigh of contentment just as she lifts her face toward me, eyes closed. As she does so, I see the lower case "t" of her gold cross, Jesus resting on the soft vulnerable part of her neck. I slowly lean forward and kiss her cheek. I am in no rush now. It's like when you know an orgasm is inevitable, you

just want to enjoy the ride. I know first base is inevitable.

"Your cheeks are lovely with ornaments." I place both arms around her back, pulling her slowly toward me, letting her soft breasts melt into my chest. Both of her arms are now free at her sides.

They hang there, limp, for a moment. Then, of their own free will, they reach around me and clasp together at the back of my sweater. I know she can feel the cashmere's softness. I pull her a little more tightly toward me. Her hands follow, pulling me in toward her. This time there is no resistance.

Her lips are now facing toward heaven. She is wearing no make-up. She actually does look angelic.

Gently, slowly, I lower my head. I feel a shiver at the first touch of her lips. There is no resistance at all, and maybe even the slightest sighing bit of pressure back from her lips.

I say to myself, "Safe at first base."

I loosen my hands behind her back, to give her space so she feels she is in control, and is not being pressured. I am always watchful for that fine balance and distinction: between keeping a girl feeling valued, wanting attention, being hugged and cuddled; and when the hugging and cuddling start to feel like imprisoning arms.

Mery relaxes more deeply into the kiss, and my body. I think of the note cards in my first base folder on variations in lip quality and breath freshness. I remember from last night that there are perhaps twenty additional note cards, of varying colors, that I need to review in the first base folder.

Her lips are soft, yielding. Yet almost electrifying. Usually a kiss is just a means to an end, , on the way to home; certainly, in her case, on the way to second. But for some rea-

son, strategy aside, I feel content just to remain at first base:
feeling the texture, touch, feel, passion, kindness in her lips.

I wonder what she's thinking and feeling now. I know she's
not saying anything in her mind about base running. But I hope
that at this moment, we are in every other respect both saying
and feeling the same thing inside our minds and bodies:

*"Your lips are like a scarlet thread; and your mouth is
lovely. Your lips drip honey. And your mouth like the best wine.
Kiss me with the kisses of your mouth."*

What an amazing 28 hours I've lived since yesterday at noon.
Under the maple tree, I received admissions to Harvard Law
School. Last night, a triple header in Berkeley.

Now, a new girl, in the Garden of Eden.

First base. And well within the time and money equation.

Our first kiss.

I feel a throbbing tumescence in my lengthening, light-filled
lingham, like a slithering snake surreptitiously sneaking down my leg.

My life, already excellent, is getting even better.

A time of new beginnings.....

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eginnings. Things always seem better to me in the morning. I wonder if Jews start the day in the evening because things do look better in the morning. So, at dusk, when you're bringing the day to a close, and are most tired, you can light a candle and feel light when you need it most. I'll ask the Rebbe. Even if I'm wrong, I like the interpretation.

Morning. 7:45. Midpoint of Day 4. Chanukkah. Actually, I should double check to make sure it's morning. I put down Johannes' journal next to me on the bed. As I get up, I notice the whittling knife on the floor, where I must have dropped it last night. I raise the blinds. It's still raining. Of course. But there is enough light to know it's not night time.

I'm still here. New beginnings.

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If you take out all the chess like machinations, and the childish "first base" and alliterative images, there is something tender, very Shabbat-like in his Song of Songs "kiss." **Like greeting the Sabbath bride, a holy embrace between Israel and God, between the human and God.**

No dreams last night, at least none that I remember. That always make me a little nervous, feeling I might be being influenced by something of which I'm not aware.

There is a 10:00 Torah study group with the Rebbe today, and though I haven't decided whether to go, I do want to read the

pertinent sections. I need some structure in my life.

It's 8 a.m. Breakfast. Read the Torah portion. Go to class.

I notice some stirrings of hunger. If you don't count my dream two nights ago, it's been 48 hours since I've eaten.

I see mom's present which I didn't open last night, and which I rip open.

Elegant Johnson and Murphy wingtip shoes, in a rich leather black-brown shade.

Her note: "Dear Son, Merry Christmas. Or, since you're in Israel, I guess I'd better say Happy Chan.... however you spell it. Thank you for sending me some of your poems. Like them, the enclosed are to keep your "soul" protected. Wear them in health. Even with you so far away, I want you to know I'm looking out for you in love. I know you're not very communicative now. (No, I'm not trying to make you feel guilty). Just drop me a line when you have a chance. And, hey, be thankful, no dead flowers like on your birthday---still I thought it was hilarious. Love mom."

Wow, a pretty sweet note. I think of Mark Twain's witticism: When my parents were 14, they were idiots. Now that I'm 21, I'm amazed how much they've matured in just 7 years. Is there more depth in her that I was able to see. Is it both of us growing older? Or is that we just do better when thousands of miles separate us?

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In preparation for breakfast, I look at the sandals that Mery gave me, and I debate whether to put those on, or my new wingtips. The Johnson and Murphy seem pretentious, given my quest, but would be warmer and keep me drier. The sandals obviously reflect who I want to be, in a better way. Though there is

some taint because they were a gift from Mery. And mom's letter was pretty loving and guilt-free. Perhaps if I wore non-ostentatious white socks with the Johnson and Murphys, that would create a more casual balance to their elegance.

I experiment, and look at my feet. I've put a sock on my right foot, with a Johnston and Murphy wingtip; and a sandal, sockless, covering my left. As in life--covering my soul--so as with shoes--covering my sole-- I'm having trouble making decisions. I wonder whether wearing both to breakfast is an option.

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I set the Torah down next to my bowl of shemenet. 8:40. There's no one here but me in the Y's basement this morning for breakfast. Normally I like the quiet, but this seems almost too eerily silent. Ok, focus. First things first.

I ladle out my shemenet--nine tablespoons--which I have learned is the right amount to curb my hunger.

My next task, placing the honey on the shemenet, is one which is a little more complex. The past several mornings I have been conducting an experiment to determine the precise ration of honey to shemenet. By placing my tablespoon beneath the honey container, I have been counting out the number of tablespoons I place in the shemenet, varying it from 1/4 tablespoon each morning. What I've learned through trial and error is that three tablespoons of honey is the perfect sweetness for me for nine tablespoons of shemenet (one to three ratio). The positive of this precision approach--with which I feel most comfortable-- is why take chances of having too much or too little honey when you can methodically know the correct amount. There is something to be said for structure and order.

However, I hear a little voice (Mery's?) which mocks me, saying you are giving up all spontaneity and leading such a rigid life. This morning, in a rare burst of impulsiveness, I decide to throw caution to the wind, and not count, just squeeze the honey directly into the bowl. I turn the honey container upside down, squeeze, and let it go directly into the shemenet.

I immediately encounter a feeling of subtle panic. How do you know when you've poured enough? What are the criteria? With a huge container of honey at my disposal, how do I know when to stop? It must be some process related to my stomach, brain, eyes talking to each other, and an integrative "I" trying to guess when the shemenet is sweet enough.

I realize I'm deceiving myself. I say I'm going to be spontaneous, but really I'm secretly going visualize an imaginary tablespoon into which the honey will fall, and try to count. I try to tell myself not to do that, because that would be cheating. But how do you hide counting from yourself?

It's hard trying not to count and just letting my intuition guide me. I watch the granular, glacially slow moving honey as I turn the container upside down. It has coagulated and I shake it several times. Nothing happens.

It figures.

I feel like my efforts, with the honey, with life are pretty ineffective. I shake again. A few drops land in the shemenet. Was it my efforts? Would the same result have happened anyway? I think of Dr. Lisbet's comment: God's will, not my will. I'd like to ask her opinion about where you draw the line between taking care of yourself, helping the buds to grow, and trusting,

allowing them to grow.

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Returning to my seat, I stir the honey into the shemenet in a clockwise direction. I stir it six times. It doesn't really blend in. Then I try a counterclockwise direction. Still not effective.

This doesn't seem like an auspicious start to the morning. My first food in so long and I can't seem to get to the point of eating it. I feel a stirring of hunger within me. Partly it's a feeling I don't want to have--more bodily cravings. But I remember Dr. Lisbet saying there is a fine line between being lost in the flesh, and being mindful of the body's sensations and allowing oneself to enjoy them. Partly it's pleasant to feel some desire in my body. I want the first bite to be as good as I can make it.

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Last week's Torah portion, the *parashat* for the week, was *Vayegash*. I look through the notes I took on the Rabbi's lecture. The Hebrew word means "Went up" (into Egypt). The word "Egypt," in Hebrew, is *mitzrayim*, which means "narrow place." He pointed out that when we "go up" to our narrow places, there are three possibilities in the Bible: we may proceed to do battle, we may pray, and/ or we may seek conciliation.

I feel in some way that I'm doing all of those at the same time.

He also commented that *Vayegash* can mean not only to "go up" but also to "draw near himself."

That feels like my task. To try to climb Jacob's ladder toward the spirit. And somehow, in raising myself higher spiritu-

ally I also feel I will be drawing near to my real authentic self.

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I take out my whittling knife, remove the cover, and carve a few bananas into the honey covered shemenet. I watch as each yellow piece plunks gently into the squishy white-honeyed substance. I guess I could use their butter knife, but I want to test myself with my knife, as a way to build greater trust in myself. First, I carve bananas. Then I get ready to carve the chess set. And no more foolish mistakes carving me.

I continue reading my notes, unrelated ideas that seemed important to me when the Rebbe said them: "Judah is 'drawing near' himself, his higher self, to plead for Benjamin. Jacob and Israel, often two separate names for different aspects of the same person, finally join once and for all. God tells Jacob not to be afraid to go down to the narrow places (Egypt) to look for your son, Joseph, "for I will bring you back." Joseph chastises his brothers, saying you sold me into slavery. You have to confront, you can't hold in and gloss over wrongdoing. This is the human level. At the divine level, it's all part of God's plan and Joseph tells his brothers there is nothing to forgive."

I take a a few bites, reading, and rereading the notes. Each individual idea makes sense, but together they seem jumbled, not linear. It's a lot to digest. A lot that's relevant to me, if only a coherent story can be created.

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I briefly look at the notes of the *Haftarah* portion. The name *Haftarah* is something that confused me when I was younger. I

used to think it meant Ha(lf) torah. It's not part of the Five Books of the Torah, which proceed linearly, and then recycle each year at Simchat Torah. Rather, they are a second tract of readings that emerge from, and sometimes seem related to (and sometimes not) the week's Torah portion. Actually, its role each week still confuses me. I'll need to ask the Rebbe.

Last week's reading was Ezekiel, the master of mystic dreams and visions. Perfect for me on a night with no dreams. He talks about God gathering in all the separate "sticks" of Israel--and making them one. Sounds good to me. Just like I'd like to gather in all the separate parts of me--if only I were Israel rather than Humpty Dumpty--and make them one again.

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Another bite. Some tea with lemon. Ok, that's enough for last week's portion. I need to spend at least a little time on this week's. Ah, the final, 10th, parasha of Genesis. Jacob is now in Egypt, and blesses his children and grandchildren. I can't even imagine having children, much less grandchildren.

When it is time for Jacob, now Israel, to die, he doesn't want to be buried in a splendid pyramid in Egypt, but makes Joseph promise to bury him in Israel, even if in a small cave in Hebron.

In the Haftarah portion, First Kings, father David gives advice to his son Solomon--tough crafty political advice.

There, I've completed my studies for today's Torah portion.

9:10.

I can eat in peace for thirty minutes with a guilt-free conscience.

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I let the *parasha* and *haftarah* portion swirl around in my mind. The question which they address that is most interesting to me is how do you treat someone who has wronged you. Do you do battle with them; pray for and/or with them; seek reconciliation? Joseph first chastised his brothers for their wrong doing, then said, it's all part of God's plan, you are forgiven, and welcomes them back as part of his family. Ezekiel talks of all the sticks made into one again.

What is the relationship I want with Johannes? My gut reaction is that the last thing I want is for him and me to integrate like God integrated Israel "into one stick" in Ezekiel. Rather, I want to create as much distance between us as possible, to see him as completely different from me, and to seek the spiritual as free and unencumbered by him and his body lusts as possible. I see him as a joke, a two dimensional character. Like Joseph toward his brothers, I can't gloss over or hide what he's done wrong. Much of my writing about him has been doing battle.

I can't yet forgive him, even though the Torah portion suggests eventually, if I become spiritually wise enough, that will happen. In my effort to distance myself so much from him, am I being fair? What I haven't spent much time doing is seeking conciliation, or praying.

Because today is Saturday, Shabbat, maybe I should take a few moments to ask, not what is wrong with him--which is so obvious--but what, if anything, is redeemable, or positive about him, or at least what similarities there are between us.

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I see Johannes as some primitive, historical, evolutionary

relic, who birthed me. I see myself as a more complex, evolved person than he is. With that greater complexity has also come more disorder, chaos, and suffering. (He doesn't yet realize how much of a mess his life is, or soon will be).

Are my disorder, entropy, chaos, and feelings of lack of control leading to destruction? Or are they an inevitable, necessary precursor for growth: seeking a higher level organization, and greater control and complexity at a more highly evolved level?

I feel I am now at a choice point.

Can I leave Johannes behind, as I become an evolutionary new branch of the species of me? Or can Johannes and I create something better than each other--thesis, antithesis, synthesis--birth some wiser version of ourselves, either discovering one already within us, or authoring one together?

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This is actually high level thinking. John in Jerusalem is starting to recognize for the first time that he wants to see himself as further evolved and distant from Johannes than he is. Johannes wants to feel himself as more integrated than he is. Both have been self-deceiving, though for different motivations. Johannes, to hide and repress his vulnerabilities and deficits, and to believe everything is going to work out fine. John, even in all his agony, to feel he is more spiritual and non-physical than Johannes, and therefore to separate from and feel disgust at Johannes.

Aren't they really like the thumb and index finger? Though opposed, each is needed to help the other, and their very opposi-

tion is what makes for their complementarity. Working together, they can pick up objects: for example, hold the flute.

Sometimes, though they hurt each other, like when the thumb pinches a punishing nail into the index finger. Even that, Dr. Lisbet told me, can be healing. When I asked her how, she told the story of the Zen master who bows to a drowsy meditating pupil. The pupil bows back. Then the master lifts a stick and gives a KWAT!, a blow to the student's shoulder. The student bows; the master bows. "I can tell you from first hand experience," Dr. Lisbet said, "that the Kwat returns you instantly to the here and now!" The pinching of the nail can be a way to awaken yourself. But, if you are going to use it, remember to do so within the context of compassion.

Johannes and John need to learn reconciliation; or if there is fighting, they need to learn compassion as the context. They need to recognize, like Joseph and Judah in the parasha section John is reading, that they are like brothers, each of them part of the same hand. One day they may even come to think of each other with the love and suffering a father would have toward his battling children.

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9:20. All right, Johannes, I have certainly done battle with you. For the next fifteen minutes I am going to make the best case I can for your positive points to see if any conciliation is possible. Excellent. And sometimes, what we learn is that the best we can end up with is "reconciliation without close association." But we must make the effort.

I would say my weakest point now is motivation. It's hard for me to have the desire and energy to do anything. What gets a

conscious, thinking person out of bed in the morning? How or why do we build connections to the world? The life force in me does get me out of bed--sometimes-- to eat. Again, however, small, there is something in me, I think, that wants at least minimal human contact, or why else would I write Nana back, or think about going to class. And, there is still some spark in me that keeps me struggling to seek the spirit, the Word.

But there seems a counterforce that keeps me entombed. If I didn't go out for food, or to my one class a week (which I missed), I'd just stay here like a hermit. I feel a bit like a wounded animal. I am seeking to leave that Job-like anguished side of me behind. At best, I can see my hermit-like existence as a type of holding action, a necessary prelude, like hibernation in animals, that ultimately might lead to rebirth.

If I can keep myself from being repulsed by Johannes' insensitivity, arrogance, self-centeredness, and body orientation, I can recognize, in an ironic way, that reading about Johannes is not just a dark exercise. I have an envy and longing for his energy, vibrancy, humor, and primitive joyful attitude toward life. I know, literally and figuratively, I need to "lighten up."

Also, at least Johannes is motivated to do something. He studies hard. Plays tennis and golf competitively. Laughs with his buddies. He probes how to best proceed toward his goals, his view of success, whether with women or with upward mobility. And he does it with an unremitting determination. I admire his drive, intellect, persistence, and motivation.

What drives Johannes is his reflexive biology--the orgasm; and reflexive external goals: status, money. He's very thoughtful

about the means he selects to achieve his goals, but not very introspective about why he is motivated to choose them. I am struggling to choose wiser, more thoughtful goals than he had to motivate me, but I wish I could be as steadfast and unwavering in my pursuit of the spirit as he was toward the things he valued.

I need something like a spiritual orgasm to motivate and focus me.

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Johannes' discussion of his first orgasm still sticks to me as a powerful metaphor. "Orgasm was in this place and I did not know it." There is something frightening, yet hopeful, in knowing that such a powerful force could be within us, and we have no awareness of it. I actually find myself using that visceral, physical reality he discovered to keep myself motivated to believe in its mental and spiritual counterpart. To have faith that, as the Chanukkah story mystically suggests, there is more "oil," more light in me than I think. That I am stronger, less frail, more resourceful, than my limiting ideas about myself suggest. I'm waiting for grace, but as I wait, I need to trust my inner resources too.

Johannes, you have shown me the truth of that message on a physical level, that sometimes in ways beyond our highest expectations, efforts are rewarded when we least expect it. You showed me that we can do more than we believe we can do.

That inspires me, and for that I thank you.

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Johannes, you also show me that realizing that there is more energy within us changes not only our relationship to ourselves, but also to the world. You used that message of the orgasm to

see the world in a new light. What you began to see--embarrassingly--were women's breasts. But the way you describe that shift might apply to me in the spiritual realm: you began to see--with your mind, your consciousness-- with increased dimensionality. Not only was there a change in you, in which you found something new, but that change made you see parts of the world in a new way--to see what was always there, but you had not noticed.

I want my search for spirit to be within, but also to be reflected without. I want to see others, and the world, with new eyes. I want to find God everywhere, in places where God is and I just don't yet know it.

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So thanks to you, to me, and to the holy spirit of inner oil. Maybe more conciliation is possible than I've recognized. And now prayer. I turn to my morning prayer of gratitude, the Modeh Ani. Not exactly the kosher version; hardly my first thought...a few distractions there. But with heartfelt kavanah--intention. I'm now trying to go forth, slowly, haltingly. To draw near myself.

Gratitude is a good place to start the new birth, the new day. I am now three and a half days old. 84 hours.

Still a very small spiritual baby.

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I can hear the rain outside.

I feel rage. Rage at the rain. Why, when I'm trying to bring more light, does the world continue to be dark and gloomy? For the 84 hours since my new birth, there has been nothing but rain and darkness, except for one small patch yesterday of sunlight in

the afternoon. And that, because of my own sloth, I missed.

It's astonishing how quickly a mood can shift from compassion and gratitude to anger and self-judgment.

Careful. You're starting to fragment again, and your language is not being skillful, or sufficiently precise. Did you miss the sun completely? Obviously not, or you wouldn't know you missed it. What would be more honest speech, especially on the Sabbath? How about,

"I missed much of the sun's appearance; I didn't see it directly."

And I would add,

"I did catch some faint glimpses of sunlight."

"Yes," you might counter, "but I misinterpreted them as moonlight."

"Right, but isn't that reflected sun? Why so harsh?"

"Ok. Right. I did see some light, and before the light was completely gone, I was drawn to the blind, and the light. I did open the curtains. And I did see dusk. And that sunlight led me to candlelight."

"Much better. Even within the context of overall darkness, there was and is some light. Have you ever noticed, when you close your eyes at night, and it's completely dark in the room, even as you look at the backs of your eyelids, there is some light there?"

The path to recreate a healing relationship with ourself is slow and arduous. There will be lots of mistakes. As Dr. Lisbet said, quoting a young Hindu devotee: "You will fall off the path a thousand times. The trick is to get back on the path a thousand and one times." And, in the process, to be careful not to be too

harsh and judgmental when we see ourself falling off, and try to be as compassionate as possible as we help ourselves--and our helped-- back on.

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It's Sabbath. I need to be careful not to get too down on myself. I should feel proud for how much I've actually accomplished. I look over at the writing I have done the past few days, since Christmas.

I leaf through my journals, counting. I've gone through 153 pages of Johannes' journal. I've written with this page, 139 pages of comments and my own journal. I could perhaps call this the "Tiny Talmud" commentary on commentary.

But is that fair? I've lived through 3.5 days, 89 hours, which is about 1.5 pages per hour. Johannes in California has lived only 28 hours, and he gets almost 5 pages an hour. Why should his page per hour count be nearly three times as robust as mine? I know this keeping score is emotionally stupid, but I still have some feelings about it. I guess that is the part of my precision that Mery didn't find very attractive. Yet, do I really want the core of my "Talmud" to be Johannes? That hardly seems fair or proportional. Is it even wise?

How attractive do you find it? What if you had been living in Safed for the past month and had only ten pages of commentary by you: less than a tenth of a page per hour. Our worth can't be measured only by pages of commentary about or by us. Remember *Kohelet*: "Ruin in a flood of words?" Remember the distinction between the two Greek words for time: *Chronos*--chronological (horizontal) time, of which you are so fond--and *Kairos*, (verti-

cal time), infinite moments of seeming timelessness. It's all about perspective. Try to see the larger perspective, the Talmudic like design you point to: narrations on narrations.

Ok, maybe that thought is a little bit motivated by left-over competitiveness slipping in. But where did that competitiveness originate? With Johannes. It's his fault. He's really the competitive one. I'm trying to move beyond that.

Take a breath. Ok, you can't gloss over the narrow places--in him, or in yourself.

I guess I have no choice but to begin with him. That's where I began. That's who I was. Maybe that's who I am more than I'm willing to recognize.

What's interesting is that both of you have more need of companionship than you realize. From one perspective, John, Johannes really is a companion for you, like one of Joseph's brothers. You are not as self-contained as you believe. And look at the roots of that in Johannes. Yes, Johannes lustily celebrates with women friends. Yes, he's led to women by his desire for orgasm. But isn't it really more than that? He knows how to self-stimulate; so there is something about the social interaction that is also important. Yes, there's the challenge, the "game," maybe even the competitive conquest as in tennis. But there is also the human contact, the warmth, the touch of flesh, like Elizabeth's smooth skin; the interaction with another human being at a deep and intimate level that motivates him,--and you, John, though you don't yet recognize that in either of you.

I can see there is some humor in my counting pages. I know Grandpa Dave would be laughing:

"You don't have to be meshugenah, but it helps."

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9:32. If I want to get to the Torah class, I will need to leave in the next few minutes. As I get up, I realize that I'm still a bit hungry, and take one more bite of shemenet, making sure that there is some honey and a wedge of banana in it.

I imagine the Bresson photograph, the unknown person caught in the decisive moment of choice trying to leap a puddle. How do I know whether this time in my life is a formative or a decisive moment, a small evolution, or a revolutionary change? What I need is some type of revelation. Am I ready to jump? And am I leaping over an abyss, or am I plunging into a dark ocean?

As I take another bite, I imagine Devu's picture of two hands, not touching but reaching toward each other.

I picture last night's four candles, the flames yearning higher. I hear myself saying a little prayer, asking please, please let there be more oil, more light in me than I currently believe exists.

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To draw near oneself. To face oneself, all the parts of oneself. That's the message of last week's Torah portion.

It's the same message Dr. Lisbet gives about waking and dream life. When I dream, Dr. Lisbet said, I have to take responsibility for all the characters and all the parts of the dream. No "body" dreams the dream but me, even if the parts are what she calls "shadow" parts, aspects of me that I don't want to recognize or admit to.

I'm really trying to be honest and own all sides of me.

I think of Descartes' maxim, and wonder, if it should be

modified in my case: "I quest, therefore I exist." "I reflect, therefore I exist"?

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9:34. One more final final bite.

In this week's Torah portion, Jacob descends into Egypt, and dies.

Is there a part of me that is dying? The last chapter of Genesis.

Genesis, *gegensthai*, to be born. Is there a part within me wanting to come forth, to be born?

Will there ever be buds that evolve so that I, like Jacob in the *parasha*, can one day become a father, can one day bless my grandchildren? Too many questions, too far ahead. All I can do is prepare myself so that I am ready to go forth.

A new beginning, as in the start of Genesis. As in the Gospel of John.

I, John, an intermediary, am trying to serve as a bridge, seeking both to uncover and understand the past, and to point the way to the future.

Where I, a new Jacob, now living in Safed, might serve?

Is this the beginning of a new Exodus? A new effort to emerge from the bondage of myself? I thought I'd already lived the Exodus by leaving everything and everyone behind.

I feel some fear, and a chill. But I don't mind either. This is a new beginning. There is nothing I shouldn't be willing to face. Why not? I really have no choice but to push forward. And I should be proud of the efforts I am making.

Maybe this can be the last Exodus, finally leaving all the

bondage of myself behind.

Can it be the final chapter of Genesis; the beginning of a new chapter--the Exodus--, and, all at the same time, a return to Genesis, a new beginning?

Beginnings.

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