

Chrysopoeia

FOR FALLEN ANGELS



Thuban Etoile



A Not So DiVine Comedy
Of True Falsehoods

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

By Thuban Etoile

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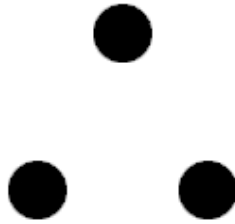
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Liber Bacchus

This book is a fabrication
Hyperbole of a sick *i*magination
Only the *r*amblings of a Fool
Therefor*e* everything is a lie
Hence the only truth is found *w*ithin



Gnothi Seauton

The chapters in this book are not consecutive but are interlaced and entwined like snakes.

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Dragon's Fire
The Hanged Man
the knight, the navigator & the gnom
Animus & Anima
Amor Est Magis Cognitvus Quam Cognitio
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The Number Thirteen
Ghosts In The Attic
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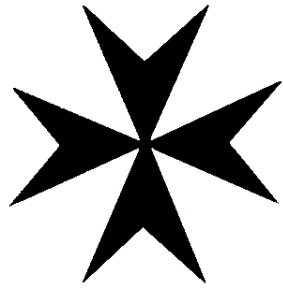
Anima Mundi

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For All My Knights



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Dragon's Fire

It was the evening before the wedding of Edmund Cristal and Simone Abernathy.

Siri von Saft had just left the salon room of the hotel in Berlin and headed down the foyer of the banquet area to the lobby after making excuses to the bride for her early departure and assurances for her attendance at the wedding the next day. The ladies were seated at tables in the tastefully decorated salon having a good time but in her present mood Siri felt the entertainment failed to compliment the urbane tone of the décor.

The loud music was obnoxious and the two male strippers strutting around the tables of the bachelorette party were extremely ludicrous to say the least. Siri had noticed that the mothers, aunts and older female relatives were enduring the raucously vulgar scene all in good fun, but she was betting that some of them wished they could have walked away from the family obligation.

The men of the wedding party were waiting in the lobby lounge at the bar, there was to be a joint fête after the girl's fun was over and the gentlemen would join them later in the salon for drinks, buffet and dancing. Apparently Simone the bride to

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be had forbidden her betrothed a bachelor party. Poor Edmund, he was on a tight leash.

Siri inquired at the concierge desk for directions to the nearest bookstore. She needed solitude, soothing music and a book to give her balance after a long day with the large gathering of chatty and overexcited women. Siri was reticent by nature preferring to project her mental thoughts rather than speak them.

Spotting her across the lobby the groom's older brother, Bastian Cristal, hurried from the bar lounge to catch her before she left the hotel.

"Siri, are you leaving already the party hasn't even started?" He looked at his watch and frowned, "Less than a half an hour to go. Please stay and have a bit of fun with us."

"You know me Bastian I'm a recluse and I long for quiet evenings at my age."

"You can't leave just yet! Not until you meet a friend of mine, he's known my family for ages. I know you'll adore him, he's a marvellous chap," Bastian expressed adamantly.

"Oh come on Bastian, you're trying to fix me up with some man who probably has a lot of psychological baggage or who is desperate to get a date for the night. Uh ah, no way Bastian, it's not going to happen and besides, neither your mother nor your wife said anything to me about it and I've been with them most of the day."

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“No Siri, it’s not that way at all, he just got in late this afternoon from London and we kept him on the attendance list in case he could make it to the wedding so Rosalind probably doesn’t even know he’s here. Alec’s father is staying with the Settegasts’ in Dahlem. His father and mine are old friends. I have wanted you to meet Alec for some time now but there has never been an opportunity to introduce you. Trust me he’s fantastic, he just needs balance in his life. He’s so right for you. I know it Siri. I have seen it. At least just meet him.”

To her embarrassment Bastian grabbed her arm and led her towards the lobby bar where the men were crowded in a large group waiting for the wedding party to start, her high heels made audible tapping sounds on the marble floor as she walked and attracted stares as some of the men turned to discover the source of the noise.

After Siri released a heavy sigh at being forced to humour one of his whims, Bastian sensed her discomfort and halted a distance away from the lounge. Bastian Cristal was her longtime dear friend indicial of a facetious younger brother, always the nosey-parker, devious in his stratagems and yet so sincere and instinctive at times revealing him as an all-knowing angel.

“Wait here Siri and I’ll introduce you.” Bastian walked back towards the bar and approached his father, Ian Cristal, who was speaking with a broad-shouldered man in a black suit with a financial centre haircut.

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She shook her head and laughed at the situation. The guy was probably a prim and proper, zero-personality aristocrat or a business mogul who in all likelihood wanted to meet some twenty-two year old bimbo for arm candy rather than a forty-nine year old woman who was a nonconformist and a lover of wisdom.

At least Bastian had the courtesy to allow for some measure of privacy instead of leading her into the entire group of males to observe his machinations.

“Excuse me father, I’m stealing Alec from you.” Bastian lightly touched Alec’s sleeve and moved him away to have a word with him.

“Siri’s leaving, if you can’t convince her to stay then follow her. Ask her to dinner, a bar, a café, anything! Back her into a corner and don’t let her refuse you. At the very least make sure she gets back to her hotel room safely, promise me.” Bastian looked him in the eyes with absolute conviction of some secret truth and was almost challenging Alec to refuse him.

“Alright, I give you my word.” Alec was curious at his friend’s insistence. “Here I am in my early fifties and I’m taking dating advice from a younger married man who sounds like an old matchmaker woman dabbling in other people’s love lives. Is this what your father calls one of your crazy premonitions?”

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“I know things Alec, I see them, feel them, and at this moment it’s as right as rain, trust me. Siri is a captivating person. You’ll idolise her. She has the spirit of some immortal enchanted fay. Just ask my parents or Rosalind, they’ll vouch for me, they adore her. If you had not refused our many invitations to visit us in Argyll you would have met Siri sooner, but you’d never leave your bloody nightlife in London.”

Bastian walked across the lobby accompanied by the tall, well-dressed gentleman with dark brown hair and a look of embarrassment on his face. Siri stood alone in patient insipid compliance just waiting for the social ceremony to be over with.

Alec fixed his eyes on the petite woman with shoulder-length blonde hair clutching her handbag and standing as straight as a soldier at attention. She was dressed in black slacks and a gold silk blouse under a long black wool coat and wore black leather gloves. Even for her small stature she had a marked presence and exuded confidence, especially when being forced to tolerate one of Bastian’s fancies. He surveyed her from top to bottom, his eyes locking on the strappy black leather high heeled booties. *Nice, love those*, he mused with prurient fantasies.

“Ms Siri von Saft, may I present Mr Alec Nachton,” Bastian said and smiled back at her.

“A pleasure to meet you Siri, Bastian has been telling me so much about you,” Alec greeted her in a deep voice laced with a slight Scottish brogue.

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“It’s nice to make your acquaintance as well Mr Nachton,” she replied in a professional tone.

Alec immediately felt the pull of magnetism just by being in her proximity. Bastian grinned at them reading the attraction in their auras.

“Please call me Alec.” His six-foot two frame towered over her even in those heels she wore. He stared into her eyes as he spoke pleading for familiarity. She had the same grey-blue coloured eyes as he did and it was like seeing his own reflection, looking into his own eyes.

Returning her *if looks could kill* gaze on Bastian she continued with a half-taunting, playful laugh in her voice, “I certainly hope Bastian doesn’t know that much about me to give a full account of my life, some things are sacred you know.”

Bastian just snickered and excused himself, abandoning her with this stranger to attempt polite conversation. They exchange pleasantries, Siri asking most of the questions since Bastian apparently *had* been telling him so much about her.

Bastian was staring at her from across the room pointing and nodding at her behind Alec’s back in the mannerism of a teenage schoolboy. Bastian Cristal was forty-two, married and had twin children, yet he still displayed a childlike charm possessing a kind of Faunus incarnation and always smiled as though he knew the secrets of the universe.

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“Why aren’t you enjoying the bride’s party right now?” Alec asked while privately extolling her figure, his eyes travelling her entire body taking longer than the journey of Odysseus.

“Oh, I’m afraid it’s not my cup of tea.” Siri closed her eyes and smiled to herself trying to recall some wispy thought that floated across her memory.

Alec noticed that she only smiles to her left, a half-smile or more of a smirk. “Are you attending the wedding party afterward?”

They were both looking directly into each other’s eyes. She locked onto his focusing her left eye into his right.

“I’m afraid not. Actually, I was just leaving for the bookstore. I don’t want to seem rude but if you’ll excuse me...” She halted abruptly in mid-sentence, her mind drawing a blank and everything around her appeared surreal reshaping her reality like a movie being played in slow motion watching the scene frame by slow-moving frame, there was a delay in time between what had just occurred in the past and what she was currently experiencing in the present.

She felt she had disappeared for a moment, her perception penetrating all densities, all dimensions at once and she had a vision of probable futures. She awakened from her trance then resumed speaking.

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"I'll be heading out now. Umm, it was so nice to meet you Alec," she continued slowly, pausing between words contemplating her reason to leave.

Siri just stood there looking at him. She was hesitating with this man. She was usually very proficient at rejecting men's advances.

He took advantage of her respite and clutched her lightly by the arm guiding her towards the door.

"I'd like to go with you if you don't mind, please don't say no." He looked at her imploringly, her icy façade melted and she rewarded him with a left-sided smile.

"Very well, I was going to walk. I want to enjoy the fresh air."

He put his arm around Siri with his palm on her lower back as they walked down Friedrichstraße. The gesture was both protective and possessive.

Moments ago the introduction seemed strained to Alec, just knowing that it was a setup by Bastian had put him on the defensive, but after a few minutes of being near this woman he began to feel the chemistry between them, he relaxed and let all pretence and tension fall away just wanting to be himself around her.

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“Tell me why the bride’s party isn’t your cup of tea.” Alec turned to look at her while they walked.

“Hmm, now that question calls for either a socially polite lie or a confession of the truth,” Siri said stalling to ponder how she was going to answer and hoping he would just drop it.

“Oh, you can confess to Father Nachton, please bare your soul to me Ms von Saft and reveal your deeply harboured secrets.” He had to laugh as he said it, pretending to be a man of the cloth indeed. There was no sincerity in his voice, it sounded taunting and flirtatious. It was a dare.

Siri walked a few steps in silence before she spoke.

Okay if he wants to play, I’ll play.

“Well Father you’re not wearing your collar and the only thing I have to feel guilty about is that you did not bring your coat with you from the hotel.”

Alec turned and looked down to face her, “I didn’t get a coat from my room because I thought you would change your mind and leave without me. Besides, I have your radiant personality to keep me warm.”

The mere mention of his missing coat seeded his mind with an instant awareness of the chill in the night air, he reached his arm around her waist and pulled her into his hip wanting to immerse himself in her heat and consume her life force.

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“Well that was honest enough.” She was a little shocked by his openness.

“Please indulge me with an answer,” he coaxed as he ogled the line of her throat with a wolfish esurience.

She would take his dare.

“Okay Father Nachton, I’ll answer your question but only because you will probably freeze on my account.”

He smiled at her waiting for her to continue strolling leisurely as they talked and despite the cold, their pace was not hurried.

“I’m not a prude by any means and I do love to laugh at life but it was probably just bad timing. My mood did not fit the environment. The loud music was abhorrent and the tawdry display of nearly naked men jumping around like apes and gyrating their spandex thongs in women’s faces was not my idea of sexual excitement. Call me a romantic, but to me sex is an intimate sharing of self. It should be sensual and erotic, deeply emotional or fierce with passionate lust, not some campy comedic vaudeville act. That’s just my perspective. Everyone has their own tastes. I guess it’s just degrees of polarity.”

All Alec heard was *Sex, Erotic, Lust*. His whole body tightened as heat rushed through his veins. Other ideas began seeding his thoughts. He forgot all about his coat and smiled to himself. *Boy, if I really was a priest I’d be in trouble.*

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He tugged Siri to a standstill and stared into her face. “Well I concede to your point of view, thank you for expressing the truth of your feelings to me.”

She let out a deep sigh then smirked to the left and replied in a mocking tone, “Don’t thank me too soon, I may demand reciprocation and make you tell me all.”

Alec only laughed and said, “I hope so.”

He led her to the building and opened the door of the bookstore for her. The warm air hit their cold cheeks as they stepped inside.

Siri was silent and seemed to forget Alec’s presence. She was absorbed in scrutinising her intended selections as if she had mastered the art of oniochalaria. He followed Siri around the store in a puppy-dog fashion as she chose several books from the English section on Gothic Architecture and Castles of Germany. He refused to leave her side and stayed almost joined to her fearing she might disappear at any moment.

With her bag of purchases now in hand, Alec did not want the evening to end so soon. He moved Siri away from prying eyes and bent down to speak in a soft, smokey voice reminiscent of a muted jazz trumpet seeping out some slow bluesy tune.

“Would you have dinner with me tonight, we can head over to a restaurant right now?” he asked while rubbing the back of her neck trying to persuade her with his touch.

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She thought about it before she answered, making a habit of choosing her words carefully.

“Yes, I’ll have dinner with you but I planned on dining in. I wanted to have a quiet evening, restaurant conversations are rarely private and there are always unwelcomed interruptions from waiters coming to the table every five minutes. Why don’t you join me? I’m headed back to my room at the hotel with these books. I certainly don’t want to carry them around.”

Alec stood silent for a moment as his mind was still processing her words. He was in disbelief wondering if she could read his thoughts, his desires.

“Definitely!” It was the only thing he could think of to say, he was speechless. Alec was amazed at the intuitiveness of this woman. She was so refreshingly pragmatic preferring liberty from social customs that always made life so complicated, and it was this part of her nature that he found himself attracted to, drawn to, she was a magnet radiating with an aphrodisiacal nimbus. Perhaps Bastian was right, maybe she was some magickally enchanted being after all.

Alec acquired a taxi and spoke with the driver giving him instructions to take them back to the hotel.

“Ah, no, I’m not staying there. I’m at the Carl on Potsdamer Platz.” After she said this, Siri noticed his confusion when his eyebrows creased.

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He corrected the destination with the driver and asked her, "Is there a reason why you're not staying at the Grand?"

Her eyes squinted and she smiled that left-sided grin at him waiting before giving an explanation, "It was deliberate. I need the freedom to be able to leave at will and I didn't want to be caught up in the wedding chaos. I prefer things simple, relaxed, I need to flow at my own pace. I require balance. What, didn't Bastian tell you I was a hermit?"

"As a matter of fact he did say exactly that, he also said you were eccentric."

"Very," she admitted.

When they stepped out of the lift of her hotel Siri removed her gloves and smiled while walking down the hall. As she unlocked the door with the keycard Alec leaned behind her and kissed the back of her blonde head. She opened the door to the large suite, stepped into the room and put her purse and gloves on the dining table then removed her coat. Alec set down the bag of books that he had carried for her.

Yes, she had gotten it right. This was comfortable, personal and relaxing. She seems to instinctively remove herself from all pressures.

Alec's mobile rang. He was standing in the sitting room but did not answer it. Siri went into the back bedroom of the suite to hang up her coat allowing him some privacy in case he

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needed to take the call, but when he did not answer she walked to the small kitchen and picked up the ice bucket.

“I’m going to take off these heels. Will you get us some ice? There’s none in the kitchen freezer unless you want to wait for room service delivery?” She held the bucket out to him.

He was disappointed. *Too bad, I was hoping those high heels would stay on.*

“Anything my lady desires.” Alec followed her as she walked to the dining room area and handed him the keycard from the table.

He did not want to leave her and reached out for the card but instead of taking it he drew her into his arms and pressed his mouth over her lips, his tongue demanding a full kiss. He used his left hand to caress her neck almost pushing her mouth closer to him if it was even possible and devoured her while holding the bucket in his right hand. His mobile rang again. Siri broke away from his savage desire and took a step back dropping the card into the bucket while his phone continued to ring.

Still he stood there, his whole body rigid and unwavering. Siri turned from him and went to the bedroom unbuttoning her blouse as she walked. She heard the door open and close.

Alec lingered in the hall outside the door of the suite as if in a brumous dream. His senses were vibrating with energy.

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My God, who is this woman? He was so affected by her he had no self-control. He reached into his jacket pocket for his phone and viewed the missed calls, Bastian. He was going to kill him for his bad timing. He hit the button to dial him back. After four rings Bastian answered in a loud voice shouting over the blaring music in the background.

“Hang on!” Bastian yelled.

When Alec heard the noise he knew he would have been miserable in that earsplitting brouhaha. His nerves would have shattered. It reminded him of the club scene in London. You could not possibly hold a conversation there, even the hotel lounge was a loud public forum.

Bastian may really have foresight after all and certainly Siri’s sanctuary is what he craved, she had uncannily given him the serenity he needed by turning the tables on his dinner invitation offering him to be in her environment instead. Somehow she knew what he needed even if he did not know himself.

A few moments went by and the music in his ear faded, Bastian must have left the ballroom.

“Sorry Alec, I couldn’t hear a bloody thing in that madhouse. So how are you holding up with the faerie queene?” Bastian sounded a tad inebriated.

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“Bastian, why exactly did you ring? Is it important?” Alec growled his impatience and inhaled a deep breath, his body still flushed with the heat of yearning.

“Yes, right, the wedding coordinator is verifying that everyone has a ride to the church and reception, they’re double checking their list to place people in the limos and since you are a last minute addition you need to ring them so they can accommodate you. I suppose you can always take a taxi if you don’t make it in time, in case you get caught up in Siri’s faerie magick.”

“Bastian I’m a grown man and I’m sure I can get to where I need to be, but alright, I’ll ring and leave a message for them later.”

“By the way, where are you Alec? You sound beastly, what’s got you so irritated?”

“Have some respect for your elders. I’m too old and too discreet to tell you everything Bastian but I did promise you I would deliver your faerie back safe and sound so don’t worry, just know that a gentleman keeps his word. Goodnight Bastian, don’t drink too much and I’ll see you tomorrow.”

Alec ended the call before Bastian could reply and turned off his mobile.

Now for his mission, he had to find ice quickly because after that kiss he was craving more, infinitely more.

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Siri removed her heels and clothes then donned black silk pyjamas with a Chinese dragon embroidered in gold silk thread on the back of the shirt. The front of the shirt was closed with only one button in the middle leaving the top and bottom of the shirt open exposing part of her stomach and the drawstring waist of the silk pyjama pants.

She walked barefooted to the sitting room to crack open the window letting in the cold night air and then hit the switch to light the fireplace. She stared into the prime element for a moment lost in the dance of the flames as an oracle might perform a divination by sacrificial fire.

She found the room service menu and put it on the coffee table then went over to the mp3 player docking station to start the playlist she had planned to relax to this evening along with her books and champagne cocktails. If she could absorb the music into her soul, just the first seven selections, the world would melt away. She hit play, and so it began.

Barber's Adagio for Strings Op. 11

Bruch's Violin Concerto No. 1 in G Minor Op. 26 Adagio

Christoph Willibald Ritter von Gluck's Melodie

Sibelius' Belshazzar's Feast Nocturne Op. 51, No. 3

Albinoni's Adagio in G Minor

Beethoven's Piano Trio in D Major Op. 70, No. 1, 'Ghost'

Chopin's Nocturne No. 20 Op. Posth. in C Sharp Minor

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She was leaning over the player with her eyes closed feeling the music when she heard the click of the lock and the opening of the door. Alec moved silently through the room and placed the ice bucket on the kitchen counter then went into the sitting room and noticed Siri's enrallment. He went over to her placing an ever so soft kiss on the side of her cheek and whispered gently into her ear while running his hand over her silk covered back as if to awaken the embroidered dragon.

"Hi Honey, I'm home."

"Mmm, so my noble knight has returned from his quest," she whispered back and turned to look at him. "Perhaps I should ask another task of you later so I can reward you with a kiss."

"Would you send me on a seemingly impossible errand like the Twelfth Labour of Hercules to kidnap Cerberus?"

"We shall see," she said noncommittally. "What would you like to drink? You can help yourself to whatever you want." She walked to the kitchen and retrieved a couple of shopping bags and started to put their contents in a row on top of the counter. "I planned to have Chakra Champagne Cocktails this evening if you want to join me."

"That sounds intriguing of course I'll join you. What do you need me to do?"

"There's three bottles of champagne in the kitchen refrigerator, you can open up a bottle to start with." Siri finished

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lining up a row of seven bottles of liqueur on the counter, each was a different colour.

She went to get a coat hanger from the hall closet and heard the pop of the champagne cork.

Alec placed the open bottle of champagne in the ice bucket then retrieved two champagne glasses from the cupboard, "Are you riding with the wedding party tomorrow?"

"No, I arranged for a car to take me on my own so I have the freedom to leave when I want to, you're welcome to ride with me. My driver can pick you up at your hotel tomorrow morning."

"You really think of everything don't you?"

"I detest any unnecessary hindrances in my life and worrying about trivial things does not add any depth to my existence."

"I would be delighted to be your escort. That is if we can survive these cocktails and we're still alive in the morning."

Again Alec was astounded by her absolute prospicience in each of her actions. She was so realistic.

"Make yourself at home. The bathroom is through those doors," she pointed to the back of the room, "if you need anything there are extra supplies in the drawers and cabinets,

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take off your shoes and jacket and get comfortable.” Siri waved the hanger at him.

Alec removed his suit jacket and rolled up the sleeves of his dark grey dress shirt, only the top button of his shirt was undone. He looked down at her bare feet and removed his shoes and socks as well. He felt at peace, totally without care or anxiety. Siri appeared to have foresight especially when it meant making him feel at ease. All he had to do was exist with her in this wonderful stream, enjoying the experience of just being.

She took his jacket and hung it up in the hall closet.

Alec looked at the row of bottles and called to her, “Okay, what are we doing here?”

“Well I wanted champagne cocktails this evening so I thought I’d try different flavours of liqueur and decided on the colours of the seven chakras. Of course I was only going to take a sip of each one, not drink seven entire glasses, so just fill mine to taste otherwise I won’t make it to sample the last cocktail. I’ll also have sparkling mineral water with lime in between drinks. I don’t want to be dehydrated tomorrow. Are you still game?”

Alec grinned, “I’m in.”

Now this is fun. It’s the start of a perfect relaxing evening with pleasant music and an adorable blonde with pyjamas that I can’t take my eyes off or my hands for that matter. He decided he would not kill Bastian after all.

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“Alright,” she said, “chakras go from bottom to top, but let’s go backwards from top to bottom and start with the crown chakra. That would be the violette liqueur. Just splash some in the champagne. Maybe it will open our chakras.”

“Who are you anyway?” Alec asked wondering about this strange ritual, who thinks up this kind of stuff? This woman amazed him, she was so different from any person he had ever met and wondered if she was palpable or just a fanciful dream.

“I think a more profound and intriguing question is, collectively, who are we?” Siri replied stoically, her visage appearing like a Grecian goddess sculpted from living stone.

Alec just looked at her with a confused countenance, “Aliens?”

She laughed and suggested with a raised quizzical brow, “Perhaps or fallen angels in a fallen time continuum. N’est-ce pas?”

“Now that sounds like something a space cadet would say,” Alec jested, but Siri did not laugh, her expression was as placid as a lily floating upon still water.

Siri rested on the sofa after she poured the mineral water into the tumblers on the coffee table. Alec came over and handed her the glass of champagne then sat down next to her.

“To dining in,” she raised her glass to him in a toast.

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“To opening chakras,” he said holding up the champagne then took a sip.

“Well in that case, here, let me kiss the top of your head. We’ll experiment and see if it opens your crown chakra and gives you a connection to cosmic consciousness.” Siri stood up and leaned over Alec’s seated form kissing him lightly on the top of his head and inhaled in his hair taking in the scent of him like a she-wolf then kissed him again.

Her chest was in his face and he could not resist the bounty of silk and skin in front of him. His mouth moved instantly to the exposed flesh while his hands ran up and down the smooth fabric on her small bottom. Alec was fully aroused and he pulled her down onto him taking her mouth with uncontrollable fervour. He moved his tongue across her lips opening them to get inside her mouth, his tongue wildly circling hers as he pulled in and out to suck on her lips. He was just about to roll over her and pin her down underneath him, but she was so petite, her small frame so fragile like a nacreous sylph that he thought the force of his strength and his size would break her, she was all of five feet high and scarcely weighed a hundred pounds.

He needed to stop. He wasn’t behaving like a gentleman, more to the tune of a sex-crazed adolescent. This passion was driving him to madness and he could hardly restrain himself. Alec did not know how long those silk pyjamas would stay on and could tear them off her at any moment. He stroked her hair

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and then her cheek. Reaching for the champagne glasses he got up to refill them.

“So what colour do we have next my dear?” he asked before walking to the kitchen of the suite.

She answered in an alacritous tone, “That would be my elixir of life, the Black Sun made with Siberian ginseng. It’s my absolute favourite! The colour corresponds to the brow chakra, the third eye or seat of Samâdhi, the gateway to the higher self.”

After mixing them he carried the cocktails to the sofa and kissed her between her brows. She took his head in her hands and returned a soft kiss to his forehead then kissed each of his eyelids.

“You know,” she said, “if we start following this pseudo philosophy of kissing each chakra open it could get extremely wicked when we get to the red cocktail. If you want to play it safe you can go back to the wedding party, and of course, I still have my books.”

“I think I’ll test the method, and I want to get wicked.” Alec sighed surrendering to the excitement.

“Oh, a scientist at heart, then you should untuck your shirt. I may have to unbutton it later.” Siri winked at him and smirked.

“Come here, sit closer to me and talk,” he ordered as he finished the champagne and set the glass on the coffee table then

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refilled their water glasses, but that was just a ruse to lure her closer, conversation was the last thing on his mind. She closed the distance and moved beside him on the sofa.

“Okay, tell me your life’s story. I did say I might demand that you reciprocate and make you tell me all, it’s your turn to expose your soul Father Nachton. What of your hopes and dreams, tell me about your family, your childhood, career, hobbies, and have you studied either Jung or Steiner?”

Alec narrated a condensed autobiographical outline of his past and present which he expressed in short sentences and took him approximately twenty-two minutes to complete. He did not want to talk. He had other ideas for the use of his mouth.

“Do you believe in multiple dimensions and parallel universes?” she asked while examining an ormolu bibelot on the end table.

“I believe in everything, nothing is impossible,” Alec replied with such conviction as if were a universal truth.

He fingered the opening of her shirt and could not resist sliding his hand inside to feel her soft bosom. He groaned and Siri was acutely aware of the steel hardness of his shaft, its size could not be ignored. He moved over her and encircled her with his arms, kissing her tenderly with superhuman restraint. His throbbing erection demanded satiation. Alec had reached his threshold of control.

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“You say nothing is impossible? What about abstinence?” she countered as she stroked a single finger down the side of his neck and licked her lips in a coquettish manner.

“Okay, you proved me wrong. Damn, Woman! I’m not even going to make it to the third cocktail without attacking you.”

“Then we should order dinner, it will keep your mouth busy with other things. You make the blue chakra cocktails while I look at the menu,” Siri ordered him and pointed to the kitchen like a queen requesting him to do her bidding.

He got up and went to the bathroom before going into the kitchen.

Siri perused the menu and wrote down her selections on a piece of hotel stationery. *Bach’s Sonata for Solo Violin No. 2, in A Minor, Andante* was playing as a light chilly breeze blew through the slightly opened window and the curtain billowed in the current of air.

Alec returned to the sitting room from the kitchen after mixing the blue liqueur in the champagne. He had untucked his dress shirt from his pants as she suggested.

“Here’s the menu and the wine list if you want to order a bottle of wine with your dinner, I’m just going to have water.” She handed him the menus and the piece of paper when he had set the cocktails down on the coffee table.

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“I’ll make a bargain with you Alec, you place the call to order room service and I’ll deal with the unwanted interruption of answering the door and signing for it.”

“It’s a deal.” He read her order on the notepaper and when he got to the bottom of the list he raised his eyebrows and scrunched his face. “Side of chocolate sauce?” he questioned with obvious amusement having a proclivity for employing his vivid and licentious imagination.

“It’s all in the interest of scientific inquiry. You wanted to test the method,” Siri retorted.

He just shook his head sporting a rakish smile.

She left the room while he made the phone call to place their dinner order.

Alec’s legs lay along the length of the sofa with his back resting against the arm. He was folding the piece of notepaper she had given him into a geometrical shape of origami.

Siri came into the room and sat at the far end of the sofa by his feet and slid her fingers between the spaces, spreading his toes and locked her fingers through them. His left leg flinched slightly.

“Are you ticklish?” she asked, removing her fingers from his feet.

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“I have several sensitive spots if you care to try and find them,” Alec said hopefully as he threw the folded paper on the table then leaned over on his side to grab the two blue champagne cocktails and handed her one.

Siri held up her glass to him and said, “Throat chakra.”

He drained the glass in two swallows and curled his index finger in a gesture back and forth indicating for her to come and get it. Siri set the glass down slowly and crawled over his legs and up his body then leaned back on her calves, her knees straddled over him to sit in his lap. She felt his hard length beneath her and could not resist torturing him with a deliberate grind of her feminine nub against him as she unbuttoned his shirt spreading it apart to expose his muscular chest and torso.

Alec took her hips with his hands and pressed his groin into her wanting more friction. She held her tongue to her teeth sucking the air into her mouth and putting her arms on his shoulders, bent down to lick his neck with her dry firm tongue while breathing him in, smelling the woody cologne on his skin. She placed soft kisses just below his left earlobe and pressed her lips all the way down to his collarbone.

“It will raise your prana,” Siri said as she took another in-breath and began licking down the middle of his throat from underneath his chin to the indentation of his clavicle where she placed a slow soft tender peck of her lips.

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“It will raise more than that,” he chuckled and moved his head back in surrender. He closed his eyes and continued to pull her hips, rocking her over his erection and slipped his fingers under the waist of her pyjama bottoms so he could feel her skin underneath. She moved her mouth over to the right side of his neck sucking and caressing him wetly with her tongue this time, then started kissing his throat in an alternating rhythm to feed his storm cloud of desire.

“Oh, this is getting dangerous,” he let out a deep-throated moan and thought he glimpsed a beam of Sothic starlight in her chalcedonic eyes but when he blinked the illusion was gone.

He sat forward suddenly and moved her off him, getting up hurriedly he doffed his clothes ridding them with urgency. He stood there glorified and naked exhibiting his large phallus, muscular arms and chest, all male, incredibly beautiful male.

“Abstinence is impossible! I need to vary this method of experimentation, I can’t take the tension any longer,” he spoke through clenched teeth as he forced her on her back bending down to swiftly unfastened that one middle button of her shirt revealing her breasts and pulled the drawstring to untie her bottoms ripping them off of her and throwing them on the floor in haste. Upon seeing the completely bare flesh that had been exposed, Alec became titillated. *A Sphinx wax!*

He crushed down on her and springing like a predator, he went for her throat in a hard and hurried frenzy mauling her skin

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biting and kissing her beautiful neck. She tilted her head to give him access, inviting him to feast on her. He was caught in some magick spell of passion.

Alec's hand slid between her thighs nudging them wide open with his elbow. He moved a finger to the rose petal folds of her denuded mound and parted her, the vestibule to Elysium, wet, very wet. He grabbed his engorged member and guided it into her velvety wet core circling his head against the opening of her moist arousal then inserted himself inch by inch in slow lunges. *My God she's tight.* He stopped abruptly as a growl escaped him, he was going to burst, her body was so small and snug he did not think he could fit all of himself inside her.

Siri pulled his head down to her face. He plunged his tongue into her mouth and drove his erection deeper inside of her pulling and withdrawing, surging forward with repetitive thrusts wanting to fill her hot cavern completely.

He wanted to capture her, conquer her, and revel in the hoard of her secret treasure. His hands clutched the sofa for leverage, and as he pulled back out of her again amid thrusts, her muscles clench his cock tightly. He heard a soft gasping sound escape from her like a whisper of quiet waters running deep exciting him even more, casting him to the edge to hover on the verge of eminent pleasure. Alec slammed into her harder needing to bury himself to the hilt.

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Siri held her arms around him, her hands caressing his back and his bum. He repeatedly glided into her wet delight forcing himself into her deeper and deeper, he wanted her to take all of him and lose himself in this garden of Hesperides. Alec pounded her hard with brutal lust. He was afraid he was hurting her but he could not stop and relinquished all control. He took her, the rape of the lock with his key. His self-mastery wavered as she clamped around his aching head raising his climax. His entire body tightened just before he let out a shout of rapture and exploded in orgasm releasing his seed deep inside her.

He continued pumping her until he was drained and collapsed over Siri's small form folding his arms around her.

She stroked his dark hair letting her fingers run through the short layers as *Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 14 (Quasi una Fantasia) in C Sharp Minor, Op. 27* began to play and she let her emotional energy flow with the music.

When thoughts started returning to his mind, Alec opened his eyes in alarm feeling guilty for his selfishness. He pulled slightly away from her out of compunction looking at her questioningly expecting her to tell him that he had hurt her. He was wondering what she was thinking, wondering if she would forgive him.

She probably thinks I'm a barbarian and is going to ask me to leave.

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Siri just innocently looked at him expressing that quirky left-sided, sapient smile and continued stroking his hair in unabashed silence.

She knows me, knows me entirely, he thought. She was characteristic of a pixie. She was lithe and omniscient to him. He stared back at her. Her eyes held the soul of a thousand lifetimes and he swam in the pools of their sublime enigma. The word 'Destiny' came to his mind in a jolt of awareness.

Alec did not apologise for the forcefulness of his lust. She was accusing him of nothing. She just allowed him to be, accepting that part of him as if predicting his unbridled passion.

He kissed her tenderly and Siri returned a light kiss on his forehead. He did not want to speak fearing it would ruin the moment but he knew she must be smothered under the weight of his body.

"I'm probably crushing you," Alec said as he pulled his frame off her. She never confirmed nor denied, just gave him a stoic smile that dismissed his words and concern as unnecessary, letting him know in that smile that his presence was all that mattered. She was but a cradle for his soul.

He got up and handed her the clothes he had discarded on the floor. She took them from him but did not put them on or attempt to cover herself. She wasn't embarrassed and she did not want him to feel awkward from the encounter.

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She rose, put her arms around him and placed a supportive kiss on his chest, "I guess I'll have to start calling you Vlad."

"Vlad? Who's Vlad?" Alec responded with jealousy not getting the pun.

"The Impaler," Siri said with that sarcastic smirk on her face trying to lighten the mood.

Alec feigned a riant smile but was chagrined by his dissoluteness and felt like a blackguard.

Siri walked across to the bedroom naked holding the wad of clothing. Her confidence dissolved his fears immediately. She made the boundaries disappear. There was no strangeness between them. It just felt right. He got dressed but left his now wrinkled shirt open since Siri enjoyed looking at his chest he would indulge her because he was compelled to look at her chest as well.

He heard the water running through the open bedroom door and went to the kitchen to pour a Scotch. He needed to relax, not wanting to be so aggressive towards her. She should have been made love to not ravaged by a Viking.

The ice was melting in the bucket. He dumped out the water in the kitchen sink and retrieved his mobile from his jacket hanging in the hall closet of the suite then took her keycard from the table and went down the hotel corridor barefoot to refill the

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bucket. He would ring the wedding coordinator to tell them he would not need a ride. He wanted to ensure he would be with Siri tomorrow and he would make her take him since she had already offered.

Siri thought about Alec and smiled to herself. She could tell he was upset at himself and laughed. He was beating himself up. She knew damn well he would not survive that game long. The temptation was too great, it brought him to such a peak she knew his willpower would crumble, could have bet on it.

She contemplated on him more deeply and remembered what Bastian said about Alec needing balance, she had been reading him but not the way Bastian can intuit. She analysed their shared connection and wondered if she could help him to bring balance to his life and harmonise his opposites. Something else was missing though, he lacked progress in his own unfoldment, he was moribund and without purpose.

It might not be the right time to have him in her life. She would try to help him find his path but it probably meant leaving him on his own to do it, he needed to grow. Maybe that's what Bastian saw as well. She might be the needed catalyst to move him forward but that did not necessarily mean his fate lie with her own. It was funny how she can see him imprinted in her future but it was not really him it was someone so very different though she could feel his familiarity, a conundrum that has yet to

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be revealed. *What is the same but not the same?* Then she realised the answer, *when something has been changed, transmuted.*

Siri came out of the bedroom wearing a hotel terrycloth bathrobe that was too big on her and she had to roll up the sleeves, she swam in it. Alec was in the kitchen pouring another glass of Scotch, he must have gone for ice since the bucket was full.

He was pouting. She walked over to him and turned him towards her sticking her arms through his open shirt and hugged him around his bare stomach planting three supportive kisses on his sternum removing his doubts and providing him with encouragement. She was neutralising his rhythm, changing his energy into a more positive flow. He took a sip of his Scotch, put the glass on the counter and bent his head to hers indulging in a slow rolling kiss sucking on her bottom lip and then sealing it with another kiss.

“We still have to open another bottle of champagne after dinner.” Siri released him from her grasp.

“Oh, you still want to play? Are we *Game On?*” he asked.

“Ab-so-lute-ly,” she said slowly in four syllables. She saw his eyes light up instantly. She had recharged him with her energy and removed his worry.

Alec’s spirit was lighter. He guessed he wasn’t in the doghouse after all. He opened the fridge and took out a bottle of

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sparkling mineral water then finished off his Scotch while watching the red star spin as he flicked the bottle cap on the counter.

Siri changed the music and smooth sultry jazz filled the room so seductively that even an orchid would hold its breath.

“Nice. That sounds relaxing.” He poured water into their glasses on the coffee table and added lime wedges from the plate.

“It’s a different vibration. The music floats on the air like a blown kiss,” she said as she sat down next to Alec on the sofa.

He was happy now, a smiling little boy who thought he was going to be punished for breaking a window but instead his mother gave him cake. He wondered since he had his cake if he was going to eat it too. He put his arm around her and gave her a big hug and fingered her robe.

“It says one size fits all. If they had dwarves stay here they’d probably have to use a bath towel,” she said lightly.

He grabbed each side of the lapels on her robe and tugged, “What time are we leaving in the morning?”

“I scheduled the driver to leave for the church at nine, so after we have breakfast we’ll get you ferried over to your hotel in a taxi so you can get dressed. You need to be ready spit-spot in the lobby before nine o’clock or I can pack you off tonight after dinner, your choice.”

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He was wondering about that, whether he got to spend the night with her or not, she must have read his mind. "I want to stay for breakfast!" he said smiling.

"Okay, but you'd better not snore or you're sleeping in the other room. We'll order our breakfast choices tonight and mark down what time we want it delivered. Are you an early riser?"

"I think that happens twenty-four, seven," he chuckled.

She kissed his cheek, "I'll make it an early breakfast. I already mentioned that there are extra supplies in the cabinet if you need a toothbrush or even a sleep mask. Actually that might come in handy, I can blindfold you at dinner and you can try to guess what I'm going to put in your mouth," she said bathetically then gave a piquant wink of her eye.

He leaned over to tickle her and gave her a slow delicious kiss as she ran her fingers through his dark hair.

There was a knock on the door. "That's for me. Can you clear off the coffee table so they can set it? I'm throwing convention out the window. We'll dine bohemian style and sit on the floor tonight." Siri answered the door while Alec removed the items off the table.

The service cart rattled as two waiters came in with the food. She directed them to put everything on the coffee table.

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“We’ll serve ourselves,” she said after they finished setting up. Siri made sure that their breakfast order was arranged for then signed the chit and shut the door behind them.

Alec asked, “Do you want me to get that blindfold?”

“No, I want to look into your eyes but you can change into the other bathrobe,” Siri said seriously. Alec’s face beamed with pleasure as he padded across to the bathroom. She looked at the bounty on the table and removed the covers from the plates.

She glanced up at Alec as he came over to her, appraising him in his robe she said, “Yours fits.” *He looks good in it.*

They sat on the floor with their backs to the sofa and ate while engaging in quiet conversation. Alec shook his head in admiration wondering if she was psychic.

Again she is right in every action. Sitting side by side and leaning on one another snug in our robes having this close contact and feeding each other bites of food from our plates is far more intimate than sitting rigidly at the formal dining table or even worse, in a public restaurant.

“How come you think of everything?” Alec asked her.

“Because I think,” she stated in a tone that insinuated most people did not. *“Mens est omnibus.”*

Alec only shook his head not quite understanding the full implications of her words.

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Siri was dipping pieces of fresh fruit from the platter into the chocolate sauce. Alec's brow frowned. "Is that what you've ordered it for?" He looked disappointed.

"Yes, I didn't want the calories of a heavy dessert so fresh fruit with a taste of chocolate does it for me," she said biting into a dipped strawberry.

"I thought you alluded to it being part of the experiment."

"I was teasing you," she waved a piece of chocolate covered fruit at him then sucked it salaciously with her mouth.

He leaned over and kissed the sweetness from her lips.

"Are you ready to get to the heart of the matter?" She flicked her tongue up and down at him resembling a snake. At that gesture Alec's snake flickered under his robe.

"More champagne?" he asked and smiled devilishly.

"Yes! I could have used absinthe in the champagne in homage of Hemingway's 'Death in the Afternoon' cocktail but we'd probably start seeing green faeries," Siri said jokingly.

Alec went to the kitchen and rinsed their glasses. Siri encircled some of the bottles in her arms carrying them off to the bathroom, placed them on the marble steps of the bathtub, walked back into the sitting room to get the mp3 player station and then retraced her steps to the bathroom. Ambient meditation music resonated from the room.

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Alec came out from the kitchen holding glasses and the bucket with an open bottle of champagne in it, he heard water running and bared his teeth in a rictus like a roguish pirate.

The room was dark except for the light of the candles by the tub and on the sink counter, the melodious darkness was echoing enticements. Siri sat on the marble steps absorbed with her eyes closed, a psychopomp waiting to conduct souls to the otherworld. Alec let her have a moment. He poured the champagne, laced it with the green melon liqueur and shut off the water. The bathtub was full.

Sitting next to her on the steps he placed a kiss on her cheek. "I hope you didn't fall asleep," he said as he handed her the glass.

"I was preparing my crucible, opening my heart," she said abstrusely as she took a sip of champagne.

"I hope I am worthy of your heart," Alec whispered so softly almost saying it to himself hoping it was true.

Siri heard him and thought, *I am your heart Alec, you just haven't realised it was missing, the Shekinah, the Luna to your Sol.*

Siri pointed to her heart moving her robe aside and tapped at her left breast indicating for him to plant a kiss there to open her heart chakra. The devil in Alec came unleashed. He parted her terrycloth robe wider to behold the aching loveliness of her soft bosoms. Her aroused nipples begged for his mouth's

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attention. He put his ear to her chest to listen to where her heart beat and then brushed soft kisses across her magnolia-white flesh sliding his tongue lower until it circled her nipple capturing it into his hot mouth. Siri released a pant of arousal. Heat surged down to her lower region and flooded her with moisture.

Not wanting to neglect her right breast Alec sucked on it indulgently as well. His robe could not conceal his erection. He removed it and reached to discard hers. He would have her here on the marble steps, a goddess musing between two pillars of a mystic temple aethereal and alluring, inviting sanctuary like the house of God in man, and as a loving builder he would worship her shrine. He took her mouth entwining their tongues in a wild consuming dance.

Siri moved her mouth over his heart kissing him tenderly as her hands caressed the sides of his torso. She loved his solid muscled chest. He moved forward to enter her but she pulled back and sat up shaking her head side to side and pointed for him to get into the tub.

“My God Woman, you’re going to be the death of me.” Alec’s voice was strained with lust by his heavy erection.

“I’m counting on it,” Siri said as if his decent into the abyss of Tartarus and certain death were actually being foretold.

Tension built up in his every muscle from frustration as he climbed into the bath letting out a disgruntled growl when he

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immersed himself in the water. *The little minx*, he thought, closing his eyes trying to relax in the hot water.

Siri refilled their water glasses and mixed them another cocktail with saffron coloured liqueur. She handed Alec his water first, "Drink," she ordered. "I don't want you to get dehydrated."

"Yes Mother!" he said jokingly and drained the glass of water then let out an exaggerated, "Ahhh!"

She took the glass from him and handed him the cocktail in exchange refilling both their water glasses yet again.

"Get in here before I fall asleep!" Alec closed his eyes and sipped his champagne.

She got into the tub and straddled his lap then kissed his eyelids gliding her mouth over his wet skin to plant fervent kisses on his solar plexuses. She hugged his chest to her bosom and ran her fingers through his now wet hair.

Siri pressed her upper torso to his mouth, "Kiss my chakra right here please."

Alec planted a kiss on her then closed his eyes again. Siri kissed him at the base of his ear and then sucked gently on his earlobe as he let out a muted "Um." She continued down to the enticing indentation where the side of his neck met his shoulder and swirled her tongue sucking at his skin and inhaled.

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Siri drank her cocktail and set the glass aside, taking Alec's empty glass from his hand, she rested it down as well. She submerged her head below the water line and brought herself back up through the thick meringue of bubbles to the surface and said, "Don't worry I wasn't bobbing for apples."

Alec laughed. *God I enjoy being with her. She is a child at times, but all woman, and what a woman! Yet she has a prescient wisdom far too great for her age.* He was enchanted by her.

"Tell me what you want to achieve in life. Do you have any goals or projects?" Siri asked him.

"You sound like my father," Alec answered. "I guess when I was younger I had some designs in mind but after I got in and out of a couple of bad marriages I hadn't thought that much about them anymore, I was too busy trying to make the relationships work and my own interests got neglected and put on the shelf. What about you, do you have an objective in life?"

"Let's just say I'm involved in ways to further the development of mankind providing them with that needed regenerative force, the spark of inspiration. I want to make an impact in their lives and I get fulfilment from that. I perceive creation through my own active creativity like giving birth to a child I suppose," she remarked while playing with his hair, running her fingers through his wet locks.

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“The water’s getting cold and we should open another bottle of champagne, it’s tepid.” Siri rose up out of the tub and used a towel to dry off. That meditation music was putting her into a theta state. She handed Alec a towel.

“Do you want me to be your kitchen helper?” he asked her as he towelled off.

She pointed to the bottles, “As long as you don’t get distracted you can bring those with you.”

“Then you’d better put your robe back on or we’ll never make it to the kitchen.” He grinned wickedly and wrapped the towel around his waist.

“Aye Laddy and what would ye be wearin’ under that kilt?” she asked in a mock brogue to mimic his Scottish accent as she reached for his towel to yank it off.

Alec was faster and caught her by the wrist then pulling her into his chest, he put his arms around her neck and bent down to kiss her mouth, “You’ll see soon enough. If I have to behave so do you. Now off you go to the kitchen wench!” He placed a peck on her forehead and trailed after her with items in hand.

Alec opened another bottle of champagne from the fridge and mixed two cocktails with orange coloured peach liqueur then stuck the bottle in the bucket of melted ice. Siri was mixing some dark greenish liquid into two small tumblers.

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“What the hell is that? Swamp water?”

“Ancient Chinese Secret,” she said, “it will make you feel great in the morning, trust me, no headache. Here, drink it. You can chase it with the champagne cocktail.”

Alec sniffed it first suspiciously then sipped the side of the glass slowly in case he needed to spit it back out, it looked like algae and had the taste of an herbal mixture with maybe lemon juice in it.

“Pretend it’s a tequila shooter and just get it over with, don’t be such a baby,” she laughed and guzzled down her concoction.

He knocked it back and made a face.

“Here,” she said sliding the champagne glass at him, “drink up.”

She drank her cocktail as well. “Let me kiss your naval chakra. You purposely wore the towel to tease me.”

At this comment Alec swung his hips in an attempted belly dance.

Oh God, she thought, not another tacky bridal party strip-dance. What is it with men anyway?

“Aren’t you going to ask me where I learned to dance?” Alec asked with male pride.

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“Well I'd inquire if I cared, but right now I'm suffering from an acute attack of zero curiosity,” Siri said rolling her eyes.

Kneeling upon the kitchen floor she kissed his stomach biting the sides of his hips and then placed a kiss on his belly button. The towel rose.

Alec lifted her up and sat her on the kitchen counter. “Either I'm too tall or you're too short. I need to bring you up to my level,” he said cheekily and laughed.

“Oh very funny Alec, are you insinuating you won't stoop so low?” she bantered.

“Would you rather I put you on a pedestal?” he asked with a raised eyebrow and a wide smile.

“Yes, you need someone to look up to as your wise mentor and role model to emulate my qualities of divine light so you too can attain the highest state of perfection, like the saving of Ennoia. *Ne Plus Ultra.*”

“This is what I think of your self-aggrandisement.” He untied her robe and blew a raspberry on her abdomen. His erection swelled in excitement and he began kissing her small stomach urgently and then started to move lower until she stopped him.

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“No sir, you’re breaking the rules. Only one more cocktail left, so go play bartender and maybe I’ll give you a tip.” She pulled her robe back around her and got down from the counter.

“Not likely Honey, it’s me who’s going to give you the tip.” Alec looked down at the protrusion in his towel to emphasise his meaning.

She waved the bottle of red pomegranate liqueur for him to take, “You can serve me in bed Jeeves,” and she walked out of the room before he could retort.

Siri extinguished the candles in the bathroom, filled their water glasses and set them on the bedside tables then removed her robe and got into bed between the sheets.

Alec came around to her and handed her the cocktail, “Your drink Madam.”

She took a sip. *Um, pretty good.*

Alec asked, “Does Madam require anything else this evening?”

“Oh, Madam most certainly does. Finish that,” she pointed to his drink, “I have a chakra begging to be kissed.” She now pointed down at her lower extremities beneath the sheets.

Alec set their glasses down and unwrapped the bedcovers from her as a kid opening gifts at Christmas then removed his towel and got into bed with her.

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“Bring me to life,” she whispered into his ear as she kissed the side of his neck.

Holding back his own need Alec kissed her mouth then moved his worshipful kisses purposefully down to her inverted chevron allowing no distractions from her full breasts as he traced his lips to the velvet smoothness of his newly discovered secret heaven, the romance of the rose. He approached her sacred altar, and as if bowing before a throne, lowered his head to her bud and sampled her ambrosial flesh with his tongue, pulling her slowly with his lips he played her with his mouth as a maestro would a rare instrument, coaxing her to a crescendo intoxicating his own soul with her seraphic melodies.

His tongue fluttered around her, delicate bee wings enticing her flower into releasing the divine perfume of her enduring ecstasy. Awakening sleeping beauty with his kiss.

He penetrated her with his rigid tongue suckling as one would savour the juice of a delicate sweet fruit at a Lucullan feast bringing her to utter abandon unveiling her mystery completely. The skies of her mind were parted by pealing thunder sending her aloft to the uppermost region of consciousness and there she was lost, frozen in the immensities of time.

Alec crawled back up her body in humble veneration to place a single kiss on her cheek as he caressed her breast. She looked at him bearing the visage of some ancient immortal lost in a dream, her staring eyes akin to an otherworldly being as a

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crown of light surrounded her deific face radiating in celestial glory as if to say, *'I Tego Arcana Dei'*. Only when she smiled that same left-sided smirk did he know for sure it was Siri and not some phantasm that had exchanged places with its host.

He tenderly ran his fingers through her hair. She laughed and rolled over to kiss him then aggressively started moving kisses over his lower body. Alec kept trying to sit up to watch her.

“Lie back down, don’t try to look. Close your eyes, just feel, just experience. Everything you see is an illusion anyway. *Experiment, experience and expression.*”

Siri kissed that beautiful line of his torso just below his ribs at the space before his hips and moved beneath him to attend to his sacral chakra.

When she got between his legs Alec asked nervously, “Uh, are you going where I think you’re going?”

“No,” she replied, “but close.” She placed a kiss on the area of his coccyx and at the underneath end of his scrotum licked the seam all the way up to his erect member.

She grabbed his hard shaft in her hand and caressed the head of his cock with slow maddening flicks of her tongue driving his pitch to frenzy licking it around the ridge of the head with circular laps and placed a petal soft kiss on the tip of him. His cock lurched forward in response.

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Alec uttered in elation as he began undulating towards her begging her to take him in her mouth. Instead she licked all the way down the length of him placing kisses on his steel form. His veins were engorged by his thickness. He was moaning with bittersweet anticipation.

She took his full head in her mouth and sucked it in a long slow stroke bringing him deeply into her throat with a devouring relish, tonguing him in whirling lashes vacillating sucks between sweeps on the up and down strokes. Alec grabbed locks of her hair pulling her down on him in desperation.

He let out a throaty sounding groan, “Uhhhh.” His head was thrown back in a rapturous throe. “Siri, stop! Stop! I’m going to....” Alec pleaded but she drove down on him harder sucking his flesh into her being.

His toes curled as he erupted with a scream that echoed from the depths of his essentia. Energy burst through him in a shattering nova, his mind taking flight riding upon Pegasus’ wings.

She drank him in completely.

Alec lay there in a mute fugue but for one thought, *I have died and gone to heaven.*

Siri drained the glass of sparkling lime water from the bedside table. He could barely open his eyes to look at her. She

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had conquered him and just stared back at him with a smug triumphant left-sided smile on her mouth. *Oh, that mouth.*

Alec was drained as if a vampire had sucked the life out of him. It was wonderfully intoxicating akin to having drunk some divine wine from one of Odin's horns.

He mustered to speak, "My darling girl." It was all he could manage to say.

She lay down next to him and snuggled against his warmth as the subtle harmonies of the music lulled them to the edge of the veil and they transcended into layers of dream.

The next morning Siri was already up and showered waiting for room service to be delivered.

Alec was still asleep on his stomach, she crawled on top of his back and mounted him sitting with her knees astride his hips and sat back on him touching bum to bum.

He moved slightly and she leaned forward to kiss the back of his neck in repetition down the nape of it and whispered to him, "Good morning."

"Am I dreaming?" he asked in a soft groggy voice.

"Life is but a dream," Siri replied. "How's your headache?"

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“Don’t have one. I guess your elixir worked its magick.”

“Oh I knew it would work, I was asking about your *other* headache, I can give you something for that as well,” she said as she slipped off him and lay by his side.

Alec just moaned and rolled over exposing to her what had risen with the dawn.

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The Hanged Man

After breakfast Siri sent Alec off in a taxi to his hotel to get dressed for the wedding. She started packing her suitcases gathering her clothes, docking station and books, leaving out her mp3 player, travel clothes and essentials to throw in at the last minute after she returned from the wedding reception since she was flying to Bern that evening. She had not told Alec.

Alec was waiting outside of his hotel when the black four-door 1933 Rolls Royce Phantom II Continental pulled up, Siri pointed him out to the driver. The limousines were lined up waiting to caravan the wedding party off to the church and people were lingering around the hotel entrance. Alec was wearing a dark charcoal grey suit, white shirt and a patterned tie. The formally dressed driver got out to open the passenger door and stood attentively gesturing for Alec to enter.

Siri was seated in the backseat retaining a posture matched only by the goddess Selene, soigné and dressed in a gold worsted wool suit with black trim and an elegant gold church hat accented with a black bow. Alec noted her two-toned oxford high heels, they were incredibly sexy.

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“I’ve promised to sit with the Schwartz family so I’m afraid you will be on your own during the ceremony, besides, I do not trust you enough to adhere to propriety and keep your hands to yourself,” she explained to him.

Alec looked hurt. She took his hand in a gesture of reassurance. He wanted to be with her and wanted everyone to know she was with him. He was becoming possessive.

At the church Alec introduced Siri to his father, Robert Nachton, who was staying with the Settegasts’ where the reception was being held. Apparently from their conversation together his father knew more about Siri than he did, but then he remembered how endearing she was to Ian Cristal who was his father’s good friend and Ian must have told his father all about her. Siri excused herself to speak with some friends.

“I just know I want to be with this woman, somehow know that I must be with her!” Alec confessed to his father.

“That sentiment has to be felt both ways, do not lose your head Alec. From what Ian tells me she is a very independent person and that is something you are not used to,” Robert Nachton commented as they followed people inside the church to be seated.

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Simone was poised and elegant, nature's most beautiful flower. Edmund was blushing during the ceremony, perhaps it was the bride who would blush later. His face was flushed looking like a red king next to his white queen in her beautiful wedding gown, *unio mystica*.

After the ceremony ended Siri found Alec standing by the car wringing his hands and clenching his jaw in impatience. He kicked the earth with his foot stamping like an impatient bull scuffing his shoes continually. He captured her in his arms the instant she was within his reach and enfolded her bringing his head down to plant a firm kiss on her lips. The driver politely looked away.

“Let’s go so we can put in an appearance and leave early. I want to spend some time with you. Why don’t you come and stay with me in London?” Alec said all at once overwhelming her with his sense of urgency.

Without responding to Alec right away she motioned with a wave of her upraised hand to the attentive driver who immediately came around to open the door for her. Alec went around the other side of the car and got in.

“Alec,” she said while they were on their way to Dahlem, “this day isn’t for us. It belongs to Edmond and Simone, let’s celebrate their happiness and not concentrate on ourselves. Just

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enjoy the here and now and not live for the *'what's next'*, please relax and let the day unfold for us instead of trying to control every moment of it, you'll have a much better time. Experience and observe."

She pointedly avoided any further mention of London.

Alec took in a deep breath then exhaled. He had just been scolded. She turned to press her soft lips to the side of his cheek throwing sugar at his wounds instead of salt.

How can I not melt at her nurturing touch? Alec thought.

She sensed his hurt and stroked his forehead with a feather-light caress that even angels would envy. He grabbed her hand and kissed her fingers. He could not contain the intensity of his emotions. She had ignited a dragon's fire within him, the spiralling vortex burned through his core threatening to consume him. He felt his life was a cell of sameness trapping him its *vis inertiae* that he would never leave but her force was impelling him to escape from his own comfortable prison and it frightened him.

The wedding reception was held at the estate home of Herr and Frau Settegast in Dahlem. Beautiful white pavilions were erected over the lawns and the tables were artfully decorated to perfection. It was a sunny winter's day, the air was cold but the special event tents were entirely covered and heated inside. The

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surroundings of nature painted the setting with its own aesthetic poetry. Guests were helping themselves to the large buffet tables in the main pavilion, the seafood bar displaying an enormous ice carving and the cocktail bar were housed in an adjacent pavilion. The live music provided the scene with an overture-like quality, holding its breath as if waiting for a curtain to rise and the grand performance to begin.

Alec was immediately separated from Siri upon arrival, each being pulled into a different direction by friends.

It was Ian Cristal and Alec's father, Robert Nachton who led Siri off to the Settegast's library to meet Dr Meinard Amsel, a retired surgeon from Salzburg who had acquired a rather recondite hobby involving sacred geometry in architecture and the earth's landscape.

The entire library had dark rich wood panelling and immense bookcases along the walls, even the ceiling had carved wood tiles. The décor of the sitting area held sofas and chairs in deep brown leather and wood tables leaving no doubt that this was an intrinsically male dominion. There was a spiral staircase leading up to a second floor loft that was lined with more bookcases and had a private desk with several chairs around it. It was in this upper balcony that Dr Meinard Amsel and Heinrich Settegast were engaged in conversation.

Not wishing to disturb the gentlemen, Robert, Ian and Siri stood below in the sitting area facing one another in a triangular

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configuration. It was then that Ian Cristal began to reveal his cabal. “What do you think of Alec?” he asked Siri.

“I have only known him since last night. In what context would you have me describe him? Surely you and Robert know him better than I do,” Siri replied still considering the question in her mind.

“Well, let us just say we want your opinion from a Minerva-esque point of view. Bastian can read him but what he intuits is also seen and interpreted by his own male understanding whereas the depth of feminine insight beholds a subject in their entirety seeing their circumferential aspects as well, it is also so acutely irrefutable it’s scary. We never mock women’s intuition,” Ian said as he widened his eyes and tilted his head in a gesture that enhanced his words to emphasise the paranormal.

Siri took a deep cleansing breath and let it out with a sigh recalling to memory an observation like that of holographic imprints from multiple time streams that she had experienced when she had first met Alec in the hotel lobby.

Speaking in a monotone voice she recited to Ian and Robert as if reading from a direct feed of information like data waves without any emotion attached to it and imparted her perception of a flux in time and a sense of moira in probability waves at their encounter, a juncture where multiple possibilities existed in an indeterminate pattern. Alec was somatic, existing at a low

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vibrational rate. He has never experienced deep love, his ideas of love were surface, more whims if anything, he was in perpetual conflict and he would continue to recycle and repeat old patterns.

“I had a vision of us together but he was in an altered state, it was him and yet not him. Call it the law of association or entanglement, I somehow have an influence in his future but that future has not been determined yet, it is only a dream of what may come. I’ve seen blue pomegranates, visions of blue pomegranates everywhere,” she said cryptically.

Siri related her impression that Alec was caught in something of a recursive loop which he would never break free from unless something forced him to change, otherwise he would never move forward from his present state, ever.

Both Mr Nachton and Mr Cristal stood in a hushed stillness and felt a quickening, their hearts skipping a beat. Ian’s eyes shone with a starlight quality and his meditations were interrupted when Siri changed the tone of her voice to include an injection of the purest emotion of love.

“We must help him or he is lost.” Compassion and empathy flowed from her as honeyed air, her words held the healing balm of Asclepius.

“Robert and I have held concern for Alec for some time now and we have been plotting ways to intervene for his own

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good. It appears we have a serendipitous opportunity at hand and we want your help in implementing our plan,” Ian stated.

As the three stood there in synergistic communion Robert mentioned that he was going to volunteer to help Meinard Amsel with his research but he felt that Alec needed some focus in his life and it would be a good project for him to get involved in. Siri supported the endeavour wholeheartedly.

“Alec told me today that he was quite smitten with you my dear and I am afraid he will not be so agreeable to be sent off to Salzburg for a month. I doubt we’ll be able to get a commitment from him especially if you are around to distract him. Did you tell him you are leaving for Bern?” Ian asked her with a concerned frown.

“No, not yet,” she said, “but he asked me to follow him to London today and as you know Ian I won’t follow anyone around anywhere or dangle on a man’s arm, being neither an accessory nor some pet. I require integration with a man’s soul. I need to be a part of him not an external dalliance. Sorry Robert, I do not mean to speak disrespectfully of your son. It is just men in general that I am referring to.”

Mr Nachton laughed.

“However Robert, we need to remove you as an option and arrange it so you are not available to help Dr Amsel. Since Alec will be taking your place in Salzburg I would be delighted

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to have you accompany me to Bern. I want you to meet an old friend of mine, Viktoria Engel. I know you will find her company quite charming.”

“I think I would enjoy that very much, thank you Siri,” Robert stated.

“You probably did not pack for an extended stay so if you have need of more things we will just have to buy them. My flight leaves this evening. I can make a call right now to book you a seat. Since you are staying here just be packed and the driver and I will pick you up on the way to the airport or you can join us later if you prefer, this way you will be conveniently removed from the equation. We will leave him no alternative. Just use whatever pressure you can on Alec even if it means revealing the painful mercurial mirror of truth to him, use the influence of Kali, we must evoke causality.”

Ian Cristal looked at her with surprise, “You are astoundingly perceptive my dear sweet Siri, you are truly a master's jewel.”

“Why?” she asked jokingly. “Is it because I'm multifaceted and reflect the light or am I ready for rebirth?”

“Indeed!” Mr Nachton remarked with respect in his voice.

“I will make the necessary tactical manoeuvres using Robert and Bastian as reinforcements so Alec will have no way out without dishonour. I will volunteer Alec to Dr Amsel right

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now and have him already committed so he cannot back out. This is our secret, right?" Mr Cristal asked as he looked into their eyes for confirmation from both of them, the sealing of an unspoken oath.

"Sub Silencio, Sub Secreto," Siri replied.

Meinard Amsel finished his conversation with Herr Settegast who had already descended the stairs and left his library to return to the festivities of the wedding reception in the pavilions. Dr Amsel was staring down from the loft at the *triangle* of conspirators. He could feel the flow of energy in the room, a union of purpose. Dr Amsel stepped softly down the spiral stairs and joined the **three** below, they parted to allow him into their grouping and the **four** of them now stood in an equidistant *square* formation.

Dr Amsel was a septuagenarian having a close-cropped beard and completely bald on the top of his crown except for a fringe of white fuzzy hair around the back of his head from ear to ear. His nose was slightly upturned and he had a short, round, well-fed body. He looked rather gnomish and his red cheeks flushed with good humour. He radiated with a genial and blithesome charisma which gave one a feeling of instant warmth and comfort in his presence. Siri appraised him as perhaps being one of the August Fraternity.

Ian Cristal introduced Siri to Dr Amsel and opened the topic of his research. He was impressed at Siri's depth of

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understanding of the subject and with her knowledge regarding arcane matters as well. He agreed to accept Alec's help but he told Robert that he thought Alec was a bit impetuous.

Dr Amsel was leaving for Salzburg tomorrow morning and hoped Alec would be able to join him there as soon as possible so they could get started on his project without delay.

Bastian walked into the library and the group stepped aside to allow him into their gathering. The **five** formed a *circle*. The cooperative current of conversation flowed collectively with the synapse of one mind. What each person expressed was a presage at that very moment in time. Every spoken thoughtform triggered an appropriate response. The comments were pertinent and insightful. There was no interrupting one another nor was there anyone waiting for a chance to speak, the exchange between them was though their convergence of minds was a shared Bodhi.

As their discussion came to a close Bastian quoted, "*Wisdom thoroughly learned will never be forgotten*," thus spoke Pythagoras." He smiled his Pan-like grin and had a mischievously satirical gleam dancing in his eyes.

Alec, Bastian, Ian and Robert sat around a banquet table near the glass doors of one of the entrances to the pavilion closest to the house. Ian had explained the expedient need for Alec to

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help Dr Amsel and they forced an obligatory agreement from Alec after much arguing.

Alec was now in a thoroughly foul mood. His father, Ian and Bastian had pressured him relentlessly into something he did not want to do. He was pursuing other interests right now, Siri. *Maybe she would go to Salzburg with me?*

Alec's mobile rang and he looked at the display, international roaming call. "Hello?"

It was Carmen his ex-girlfriend wanting to know where he was and why he had not returned any of her calls. "Carmen I don't have time for this..."

She wasn't letting him get a word in edgewise. "I'm not playing any more of your on and off again games. Carmen will you listen to me!" The others at the table heard yelling out of his phone when he held it away from his ear.

"You went to my flat? Yeah and did you bang on the neighbour's door again the way you did last time? This has got to stop Carmen... Carmen... Just shut up for a moment and listen! Look, I have met someone else and I'm going to start seeing them seriously." Alec was getting upset raising his voice and people around him were staring.

Screaming now erupted blaring expletives from his phone as the caller went into a ballistic tirade. Alec cut her off and put the mobile in his jacket. It started ringing again.

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Bastian let out an amused laugh, Mr Cristal shook his head and Alec's father scowled at him in disgust. He shut the phone off. Alec had a look of embarrassment on his face as the other men stared silently at one another.

Alec did not have one moment together with Siri all day. Throughout the entire reception other people were constantly stealing her away.

He wondered at this. *She doesn't laugh loud or isn't attracting undo attention to herself by acting posey or being the life of the party, she was silent, reticent and yet people were doting on her hovering around in her atmosphere by a hypnotic lure.*

He was sulking.

As the two fathers and two sons were sitting around the table, Alec observed Siri on the far side of the pavilion speaking with an older couple under one of the large flat screens that was hanging down from the ceiling. Three gentlemen approached her and she excused herself from the couple when one of them by the name of Niven Pembley called out to her. Alec made a move to get up and run over to her but his father clutched his arm and pulled him back to his seat.

"Sit back down, do not make a scene," Robert Nachton snapped.

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Sensing Alec's discomfort, Bastian sneered and said with gibelike laughter, "Looks as though Pembley, Collin and Harrington are trying to win Siri's affections."

Alec looked over at the three men flirting with Siri and remarked to his father, "Is she moving onto Pembley now because he's a better gold digging prospect? I hope I'm not being made to play the Fool." He was livid with jealousy.

"Nonsense," Robert said dismissing Alec's words.

"Alec you are a Fool! Robert, keep your son in check! I will not allow him to speak of her so. I will not allow it in my presence! Siri has her own wealth, quite a lot of it I assure you, and you will show some respect towards her Alec." Ian Cristal was incensed and his jaw had tightened.

"You had better tend to the care of your homunculus Alec. This is not the place to let your evil genie out of the bottle," Mr Nachton said waving a finger in his son's face.

"Pembley may be a toff but he's an arrogant cad," Bastian stated trying to lighten the mood.

"I apologise sir if I have offended you, I really am truly sorry," Alec said to Mr Cristal. "I have not had a moment with her at all. She acts so insouciant while I have been suffering for her company. I feel I am being ignored when everyone else flocks around her. To be so close to her last night and then being so distanced from her today is maddening."

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“Apology accepted Alec,” Ian said and began to relax. His tone softened forgetting his anger instantly after recalibrating himself.

“I told you she had intensity Alec, she's got you under her spell too, must be that faerie magick,” Bastian proclaimed as he looked at his father to share a secret knowing smile, everyone seemed to feel that way about Siri.

“You sound like a spoiled child Alec,” Robert admonished. “All the nightclubbing and the young women you have been dating has brought you down to their maturity level. I doubt any intelligent woman would tolerate your complexities. For years now you have been involved in revolving door relationships, it is time for you to grow up and become the man you were meant to be, achieve the Great Work in life.”

Alec iced over at his father's reprimand. *Is that really my father's opinion of me?*

Bastian nodded his head in confirmation at Alec.

“I take it you feel the same about me as well Bastian?” Alec asked him with a look of scorn on his face.

“If you want the painful truth Alec, some of the mates tell me about your flirtations at the gym, they said it was embarrassing seeing a man your age acting the role of a college boy. You only started going to the gym and the nightclubs because that was your ex-girlfriend's scene.

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“You've been treating life as a smörgåsbord putting whatever appeals to you on your plate without considering the consequences. You may think Siri is your here and now, but I tell you my friend, she will not be your happily ever after unless you make some serious changes in your life and I am not just referring to your activities. You need inner work.

“Your outbursts of temper are ignoble. You have no community or charitable interests outside of yourself. We've all given you time after your last divorce to readjust but that's been over five years ago. You used to behave with the sophistication of a well-bred gentleman, confident and in control, but lately you mouth off with incendiary reactions, you just don't think first. You've come undone.”

Bastian continued, captivating Alec with his gaze of intent compelling him to listen to his roasting of him without interruption.

“We have all been taught the knowledge Alec but having that information without practicing it with right action is equivalent to a book sitting on a library shelf gathering dust, you have to open the book and read what's inside to learn anything. Use the knowledge Alec. Get some balance back into your life.”

Bastian sighed, he knew he had struck his friend a blow and sent Alec a mental push of consoling energy.

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Alec felt he had been crucified. Deep remorse set in. He sat in silence while the words still stung like a slap to his ego, a wakeup call. He was incommunicative for some time.

“I am so very sorry that I've been a disappointed to all of you and mostly to myself. I realise I have been behaving foolishly for my age, and you're right, I don't quite fit in with that younger crowd. I guess it's sobering to admit to the cliché of having a midlife crisis.”

“We love you Son, and we only tell you these things so you can get back on the path,” his father said with a careworn expression.

“It's because Siri knows, Alec,” Bastian said cryptically, as if it was the explanation for everything, his statement as vague as a Delphian oracle.

“Knows what?” Alec asked.

“Perhaps,” said Ian Cristal, “because Siri sees you in her future she does not worry as you do, so she is free to share her light with others at this moment. There is possibility between you two right now but that may shift into a different direction if you let it slip away. Seize this opportunity and use the time with Dr Amsel to make the inner changes you need Alec, it may give your relationship with her a real chance. You do know she resembles a star? People cannot help being drawn by her light. She shines.”

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"L'étoile flamboyante," Robert Nachton added.

My Star Child, Alec thought. "Yes, but I want to be the one to have all of her attention," he said greedily.

"No Alec," Bastian said, "you want to possess her."

"All you do is take Son, but what are you giving back? It is obvious that Siri is spreading her energy to everyone around her and you sit here and bemoan because you cannot take it all for yourself, that's selfish my boy, selfish," Robert said speaking with a tone of authority.

Ian commented, "If you love her, you must free her."

"Then unite by ritual," Bastian said matter-of-factly.

Alec cocked his head and listened in interest but said nothing and filed that comment away.

"Bastian, that's enough," Ian Cristal chided his son.

Bastian looked directly into his father's eyes but did not speak his thoughts. *Father, I have already seen it.*

They continued to watch her. Siri moved away from Niven Pembley to speak with Bastian's beautiful wife Rosalind, as Pembley, Collin and Harrington walked up to Bastian and greeted the other gentlemen at the table.

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Pembley announced, "I have just met the most fabulous woman, quite intriguing mind you."

"But she turned him down flat at his invitation for a dinner date and now his pride is wounded," Harrington laughed out.

"I do not understand it, I am a handsome fellow with title and fortune, how can I be so bluntly refused by any woman?" Pembley complained.

"Well cheer up mate you're not the first bloke to be rebuffed," Collin said with an obvious Cambrian prosody.

Rosalind came up to the table and kissed Bastian on the cheek, "Hello Dear." She placed a lady's purse on the table in front of Alec and turned to speak to him.

"Siri requests that you hold this for her, she's visiting the greenhouse with Herr and Frau Settegast and she said she'll return straightaway to retrieve it from you."

Alec shook his head. *Here I sit waiting for her all day and now I'm holding her bag in servitude while she flutters around like a butterfly.* He felt used.

Rosalind took Bastian's hand. "Come with me Bastian your mum wants to speak with you." She excused them and left.

Pembley seeing Alec's perturbed look took up the gauntlet, "See here Alec, I'll hold Siri's purse if it embarrasses you so much, I plan on staying for a while."

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“I believe I can honour the lady's request,” he growled to Pembley.

“Right then, gentlemen if you will excuse us.” Pembley turned to Harrington and Collin, “Let's find the bar mates,” he said as they walked away.

After they were out of sight, both Mr Nachton and Mr Cristal started to laugh.

Puzzled by their joint laughter Alec asked, “What's so amusing?”

“Niven Pembley's rejection,” Ian Cristal said still chuckling.

“What do you mean?” Alec asked.

“My God, Son. Are you dense?” Robert explained, “It was a slap in Pembley's face, probably because he's so presumptuous. Siri did not make you her footman Alec. Rosalind could have held Siri's handbag for her or Siri could have given it to Pembley to hold, she did not need to request that you keep it for her. She sent Rosalind over here to reassure you. She must have seen you staring at those three and by giving you her handbag she was saying that she would be with you soon since she needs to collect it from you, and at the same time showed Pembley where her interests lie, that you are her knight Alec. Pembley was aware of that and even offered to take the bag from you since you looked so put out.”

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“I must say it was a brilliant strategy. Well done Siri!” Ian Cristal remarked as he raised his glass in triumph. “Come Robert, let's go find my wife, she's probably hovering around the bride and groom somewhere. We'll leave your boy to ponder the intricacies of the female mind.” The two gentlemen rose and left Alec alone at the table.

Alec stared at the black bag made from *Capra hircus* skin in front of him and flicked the gold Pegasus lock charm hanging on it with his finger. It swung back and forth, the mighty horse bound unable to fly. He noted the designer name on the handbag and laughed. *Thrice Great indeed!* And he wondered if there was an emerald tablet inside.

What is wrong with me? He shook his head at his own self-reflection. Even Bastian saw it. He needed to refocus his life. He needed Siri. But what if he did not fit into her lifestyle? She made him feel not necessarily wanted or needed, but included, a part of her life already, a part of her soul. He thought again about her ternion nature, *Woman, Child and Sage all at once*. The blood drained away from Alec's complexion as realisation struck him. The three faces of the Goddess, her tri-star personality.

After they left the reception Alec told Siri he was going to Salzburg to help Dr Amsel. He asked her to come along with him suggesting that they could stay at a hotel or rent a place nearby so it would not be an imposition to Amsel, but she

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pointedly refused. Alec was quiet in the car. He could not wait to get her back to his room.

“I’m going to drop you off at your hotel Alec, my flight leaves soon and I have a charity function to attend in Zürich but I need to go to Bern first to see my solicitor who handles the trust,” Siri said softly explaining as one would to a child.

She remained taciturn about knowing his promise to work with Dr Amsel before he did, and Siri did not dare tell him that his father was going with her to Bern, she knew he would insist on going with them.

Alec paled. He never thought about them parting ways, he assumed she would just tag along with him back to London and then to Salzburg, any of his other girlfriends would have.

“You didn’t tell me you were leaving right after the reception. I’m not returning to London until tomorrow and I thought we could spend some time together this evening or you could at least come back to London with me before I go to Salzburg, please?”

“We sat for a while talking last night Alec, but you never asked me any questions regarding my plans, your mind must have been on other things,” she laughed. “I have work to do and a schedule to keep.” *So do you*, she thought.

Alec was stunned by her refusal and felt rejected.

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“What, you’re just dropping me off on the doorstep, that’s it, so long, see ya? You’re acting like a man would who takes advantage of a great night of sex and then uncaringly just gives a hasty *bonk and bail* goodbye wave the next morning. Is this some kind of role reversal?” Alec expressed with a volatile outburst of emotion. *She has fuelled me with passion and now expects me to become an ascetic?*

“Ha ha and you’re acting like a hormonal drama queen, needy, clingy and emotionally unstable,” she laughed as she said it but was only half-joking.

“No Alec, it is acumen, it has nothing to do with gender. I’m a mature adult, we had a positive experience and instead of acknowledging that you are interjecting negativity into it. Listen to the way you are speaking and reacting, you’re emitting pernicious dark energy.” She took his hand in an attempt to soothe his demon with her touch.

The car pulled up to his hotel. “I’ll just be a moment,” she said to the driver who now went to open her door. Alec squeezed her hand and followed her out of the car. They took a few steps away and stood aside for some privacy.

“I want you to stay with me Siri,” Alec beseeched her with his grey-blue eyes.

“We’ve only just met and it may take some time for you to understand my psyche. You need to know yourself before you

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can truly know me and I am aware of your needs Alec," she said prophetically.

"Now you're sounding sibyllic like Bastian." He was distraught at the thought of separating from her. "Where do you think this is going between us?" Alec urged.

Siri abided in silence looking at him before she spoke then used a push of energy with her words, "I accept what it is at this moment, when demands and expectations are made it ceases the flow. You just need to let the magick happen Alec."

He took her in his arms and held her as tears filled his eyes. He thought she was telling him goodbye and he felt insecure thinking that she was leaving him forever. He wanted an answer and he got ambiguity. She saw doubt in his eyes and stroked his cheek to calm his fears spreading warmth and light, her strength subduing the lion within him.

"Don't worry so much, just trust and let go." She gave him a smouldering kiss on the mouth. "Keep this kiss for me. I want it back when I see you again. The time will go by fast, you'll see." She smiled that left-sided smirk.

He embraced her more confidently and passionately, his fears subsided for now. Siri supported him with her attributes. *She is Wise, Strong and Beautiful, shining like the light of Polaris.*

Gnothi seauton, is that what she's trying to tell me?

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On the flight to Bern Mr Nachton was seated a few rows behind Siri who was alone in a single seat row on the left side of the plane. They were lucky to get Robert a last minute booking but then first class usually had empty seats available. Robert looked exhausted. They could both recharge in Bern.

She started the playlist on the mp3 player and thought of Alec while listening to the vibrations of the music visualising the colours and images the sounds conjured up before she drifted into meditative reflection.

3 Libras - by A Perfect Circle

I Am the Highway - by Audioslave

Boys and Girls - by Bryan Ferry

Windswept - by Bryan Ferry

Voodoo - by Godsmack

Relax - by Frankie Goes to Hollywood

Black Hole Sun - by Soundgarden

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the knIght, the nAVigator & the gnOme

Alec arrived back in London only to find his flat totally trashed upon entering. Things were smashed and scattered on the floor, there was broken glass everywhere, most of the furniture was destroyed, some of his shirts were ripped up and strewn across the bedroom and the word 'Asshole' was written on the bathroom mirror in a violent scrawl with mauve lipstick. Carmen.

He was physically and emotionally exhausted and this was the last thing he needed, an opprobrious guilt engulfed him as he thought about how he had been living his life, a punishing dark shadow began to blacken his soul and he cried out in wrath. To phone and confront Carmen with the demolition was just what she wanted, to fight and drain him even more.

Alec walked amongst the wreckage staring blankly imprisoned in an ego-crushing haze. He did not even bother to start a salvage and recovery operation nor did he unpack his suitcase. He felt he had been split in two and his darker self was mocking his other half, ready to rise up out of the deep to take his place, killing his living self to revive the dead one. He poured himself a Scotch and decided to ring Dr Amsel, he would have to

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break his promise and cancel his flight until he dealt with this hell, his own private version of Dante's Inferno.

As he took another gulp of Scotch his mobile rang. Alec looked at the display; it was Amsel. *Now that's a bizarre coincidence.* "Hello," he answered.

"Alec, how are you? I wanted to confirm your arrival time in Salzburg so I can arrange for a car to pick you up at the airport, no need to take a taxi." His voice was full of cheer and warmth having the light cadence of a magickal flute echoing through a sun-filtered forest. Alec pictured the jovial man and he was reminded of a gnome.

"Dr Amsel, I was just about to ring you. I've run into a problem and I'm afraid I will have to cancel our plans. I'm truly very sorry, perhaps at a future time it will be more favourable," he said taking another slug of Scotch.

"I hope I did not catch you at a bad time, I just felt an urgent need to speak with you. Did you just get in? Tell me what's troubling you Alec. You sound distraught." His voice held compassion and Alec experienced a push at his emotions with the need to confide in this man feeling prompted to explain his woes to him.

Alec choked back a sob and then just let it all out. He explained to Dr Amsel the scene that he had come home to and how the pendulum had swung him from feeling such an

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exhilarating high when he was with Siri, to this ozone of malice that sunk him into an abysmal low of wretchedness.

“Have no worries Alec, all will be well,” Dr Amsel said with his genial confident tone. “Tell me when your flight is scheduled to depart for Salzburg?”

“It doesn’t leave Heathrow until tomorrow afternoon at *Three Fifty-Seven*, it was the only flight time available at such short notice,” Alec stated.

“Now I want you to hold the phone for a moment, please do not hang up Alec, I will be right back with you,” Dr Amsel sounded like an epitome of compassion, hope, and light.

Alec wiped the tears from his eyes. He felt like a helpless broken child. He did not understand these emotional outbursts, the anger, impatience and then crying like this. He was ashamed of himself at being a grown man and weeping like a little boy. The chamber of his heart was full of despair as if a midnight sun had descended upon him to swallow him into oblivion. It was like being thrown into the pit of Hell.

Dr Meinard Amsel put the receiver of the phone down with Alec holding on the other end of the line. He got up from his desk walking across the room to look out the window and placed a call from his mobile to a very exclusive friend who specialised in coordinating very detailed operations, usually of the clandestine nature, for an extremely élite clientele.

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“Now Alec, are you still there?” Dr Amsel asked when he got back on the line.

“I’m here,” Alec replied.

“Sehr gut. I have contacted an old friend of mine who is sending his agent out to your home at nine tomorrow morning. The fellow’s name is Dieter von Ritter. He will take care of all the necessary arrangements for you and bring the legal and banking paperwork with him for you to sign. Leave everything in his hands, trust him and just relax. He will get you resettled to a more suitable place. Your life is in turmoil Alec. It’s time for you to get away from London, perhaps move back to Scotland. Siri loves Scotland by the way, I am sure a place in the country would please her rather than that chaos you have surrounded yourself with.” Meinard Amsel was planting the seed to germinate in Alec’s mind so he would not try to protest leaving London.

“Ah, I guess you’re right.” Alec was too stunned to think or speak. He was also a bit anesthetised from the Scotch.

What if Siri had come back to London with me and witnessed this fiasco? I don’t want her involved in this mess.

“Of course I am right. Dieter will be giving you a new phone as well to bring with you. All of your old numbers will be disconnected, he will take care of any leases, damages, utilities and transfer whatever items you still have intact to your new place, easy as that!” Dr Amsel gave his assurance.

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“You have the same enthusiasm as Siri, nothing seems complicated to either of you. I don’t know how I can thank you enough sir.” Right now Alec felt very humble.

“Just be on the plane and everything will work out fine, you’ll see,” Dr Amsel said with the knowingness of a gypsy fortune teller or put more accurately, a psychic.

Alec gave him the airline itinerary and thanked him again. He had hit rock bottom and was even beyond self-pity, he was numb, he felt nothing and he would surrender to Dr Amsel’s care.

At nine o’clock sharp Dieter von Ritter rang the bell at Alec’s door. Dieter was about five-foot eleven, had a trim but muscular build, he was clean-shaven and his short black hair was slicked-back making him look like some Carpathian Count. He wore round black framed glasses that transitioned to sunglasses in the sunlight because after entering the flat Alec saw the lenses fade to clear revealing his piercingly penetrating beady eyes.

He was dressed in a black suit and wore a black tailored shirt accented with gold cufflinks and a black and gold paisley necktie, his clothes were immaculate. His black leather shoes were shined to perfection and his well-manicured fingernails were revealed after removing his kidskin gloves and overcoat. He carried a black leather case that looked expensive.

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Dieter surveyed the ruined surroundings. Alec had not bothered with anything last night, he ordered takeaway, had another Scotch and fell asleep instantly. Dieter pursed his lips but remained silent. He noted everything sweeping the room in reconnaissance as if constantly assessing any threat in the environment. Alec thought him intimidating, tenebrous actually, there was just something about him that was very odd, a preternatural instinct signalled a warning in Alec and it made his skin crawl.

Dieter looked directly into Alec's eyes and smiled sublimely, his sphinx-like gaze was all-knowing as if he held the hidden answer to some cosmic riddle as well as reading Alec's every thought. *This guy is creepy.* Alec evaluated him, ignoring Dieter's Cheshire-cat grin and motioned for him to have a seat at the dining room table littered with objects in disarray.

Dieter pulled out a folder, laptop and micro printer from his briefcase and explained the process and paperwork to Alec. Basically, all Alec had to do was sign and everything, and he really did mean everything, would be taken care of.

Maybe there was a crew of operatives from some secret section of the government that sprang into action at a moment's notice, Alec mused.

"Please give me your phone Mr Nachton," Dieter von Ritter said unctuously, then Alec pliantly handed him his mobile not daring to question him.

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“We will only retain the absolute necessary contacts on your new phone. It is time to eliminate liabilities Mr Nachton.” To stress this Dieter scanned his head around the room at the havoc and flashed him a darkly malevolent smile. Alec just nodded. He wanted this guy gone now.

Alec felt as if he was in the room with a wolf, no too normal, something far more terrifying, like a saurian denizen from another dimension, and Alec knew he read his mind, he felt the violation of it.

Alec left a voice message for Siri with his new number and urged her to ring him back as soon as possible. He held so much longing for her and knew she was the missing secret of his heart. When he arrived in Austria it had been raining and he was given a comfortable room in Meinard’s small town-villa.

They spoke for several hours after dinner. First about Alec himself and the adumbral nemesis that plagued him, how he felt stagnant and needed to free himself from this cycle of sameness but he just could not seem to force the change.

The doctor instantly comforted him with beneficent words and told him, “If I were Prometheus Alec, I would just give you the fire, but perhaps I know someone who can help navigate you through this journey.” There was a twinkle in his eyes that hinted at secrets held behind them.

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Meinard then went on to described his project involving sacred geometry in more depth but left out the more sacrosanct details of light codes and time gates, it was too mind-boggling and Alec just nodded his head hearing but not understanding.

No wonder he hadn't hired a college student to help him they might think he was loony. That's probably why Ian had insisted on someone he knew and trusted.

The doctor had ordered Alec to retire for the evening so he went to his room to settle in. He was about to undress when his mobile rang. His heart skipped a beat, it was Siri.

"Hi, I'm glad you phoned," Alec said.

"How are you doing, is everything alright?" she asked.

"Fine, but I miss you Siri." As he said it Alec could hardly contain the bleed of emotion from the hole in his heart that only she could fill.

"I wanted to tell you that I'm moving back to Scotland. An agent is locating a new property for me and I hope to be moved out of London before I am finished helping Meinard. I'll be sure to give you the new address but I don't know if I can wait that long to be with you, I'll go mad here. I hope you know what's going to happen when I see you again. I'm afraid it will be a repeat performance except it won't be on a couch, the floor maybe, but I'm going to let you have it nonetheless so I hope you don't bruise easily."

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She laughed, “Is that why you wanted me to ring you? To threaten me? Or is that a promise? I guess I can take either one but I’ll have to think of something creative, I’m not into carpet burn. I’m glad you’re moving back to Scotland, you’ll find peace there, the landscape is breathtaking and full of energy.”

Siri already knew he was being moved with the help of the doctor’s friends, Meinard called his father and he had told her. She remained silent regarding that knowledge.

“I don’t think you will be worried about carpet burn if you didn’t have any brains left,” he said oozing with sarcasm.

Men are so bi-cranial, but it’s never the noetic head that they think with! Siri giggled at her own thoughts.

“I see, so after you bonk my brains out, I’ll no longer be a sentient being but return to my vegetable state? You’d better hope I don’t become a man-eating plant. *Cave Ros Solis!*” she countered with feigned indignation in her voice.

Alec laughed, “I adore you! Just let me ring you every night to hear your voice for a few minutes, it will help make the time go by faster.”

“Of course you may, but I do have a few evening functions to attend, so leave a message if there’s no answer and I’ll ring you back if it’s not too late, otherwise I’ll send you a text message just to say goodnight. I won’t be sitting at the computer all day so there will be no sending emails back and forth, you will never get

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any work done. You said you would be helping Dr Amsel with his project and you should really try to commit to it wholeheartedly to accomplish as much as you can for him, so be a good boy and behave.”

“Okay, I will. Goodnight my Lady Fair,” Alec said tenderly.

“Bonne nuit mon Chevalier,” Siri replied and rang off.

Gee, funny how he never asked me about what I was doing or what charity functions I was going to attend, his only interest was sex. She shook her head but then when she pictured his beautiful fully erect phallus, she laughed aloud at the image of it screaming in need, “*Me, me, me, me, me!*”

Alec spent the entire day working with Meinard in his study. He took a break from the maps and drawings of rings, rhombuses, cubes and tetrahedrons, and walked around Meinard Amsel’s garden, the vegetable kingdom had transitioned into dormancy. He guessed it was a perfect time to begin work on things.

As he walked back to the front door he saw a garden gnome off to the side by some bushes that had a black sign with gold metallic letters next to it which said ‘Cead mile failte!’ The gnome looked uncannily like Meinard. He hadn’t noticed it last night since it had been too dark.

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As they sat at the dinner table that evening Alec had to ask about Dieter von Ritter. "Meinard, just who is von Ritter anyway? I have this impression that there is something intangible and very different about him but I can't pinpoint what it is exactly. He's strange."

Meinard gave a thin-lipped smile and merely stated, "Let me just say that Dieter has many unique psychic gifts and most people cannot help but feel a little disturbed and disconcerted around him."

"He must have a hard time in the romance area where women are concerned. I bet he puts them off," Alec expressed.

Meinard just laughed, "Most women have more in common with Dieter than you think." He did not elaborate.

Alec could not believe that was even possible and he felt immeasurably more than a little disturbed and disconcerted by von Ritter. He noticed the Dutch oil painting of a tall ship on a stormy Baltic sea and felt an affinity with the vessel as if they were both being tossed about by adverse circumstances.

Alec had already spent three weeks in Austria. They had made a lot of progress and the doctor was pleased with his assistance and continued to discuss Alec's personal wellbeing treating him as his patient but Alec had a suspicion that the good doctor was up to something.

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Every night Alec could not wait to speak with Siri, he longed for each time to hear her voice and he was acting like a lovesick teenager. *Was it love or infatuation?* He questioned himself, *or hormones?*

It was on a Friday that Meinard approached Alec with news of an email he received from a friend in his mysterious coterie. He was truly excited about it and wanted Alec to travel with him to Budapest, Hungary, apparently there was a missing connection he was searching for relating to his project and his friend in Budapest had maps and notes for Meinard to review. The maps were too big to scan and email so they would travel there and make copies. Alec had to ask himself why Meinard's friend did not get copies made and just mail them.

When he questioned Meinard about it he remarked, "It is more personal to speak vis-à-vis in conversation with someone, you express more than ideas in the exchange and besides, I think you need to meet this man," and then winked at Alec.

I guess I won't suggest video conferencing, Alec thought as he frowned. He wanted so much to see Siri. He took a deep breath and looked at his watch, it was only eleven eleven, still too early to ring and she would probably reprimand him like some authoritarian schoolteacher if he continued to bother her.

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“I will see what flights are available then we will go into town after lunch, I need to pick up a few items and it will be good for you to get out of the house for a while. I will drop you off so you can take a stroll, then you will not have to follow me around from store to store. The fresh air will do you good and I want you to walk and contemplate to change your perspective,” the doctor said as if he were giving Alec a prescription.

“Sounds good Meinard,” Alec said as he smiled attempting to appear enthusiastic. He recognised the doctor was trying to help ease the burden of this umbra that was surrounding him. He would accede to his wishes and take his medicine.

Their flight was booked for midmorning on Sunday. Alec was dropped off at the Mirabell Palace Gardens and he walked amongst the balustrades admiring the statues of Roman gods sculpted with dead frozen stares that held no mutual admiration for him in their cold lidless eyes, he had the sensation they were scoffing down at him from on high, the stone gods more alive than the foliage.

He contemplated as Meinard suggested and concluded that it was time to take responsibility for his being as he stood at the statue of Venus. It was Friday, today veneration was hers, and with his foot he reverently brushed away the dead leaves that had fallen around her base like an acolyte preparing her altar for worship and hoped that she would bless his endeavours. Perhaps he should leave some corn, wine and oil at her feet.

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He meandered through the lifeless gardens and smiled as he came upon a Pegasus fountain, his mind connected the threads as he recalled the small purse lock with the Pegasus charm on Siri's bag. There were so many coincidences. His consciousness started registering signs everywhere.

That evening Alec had phoned Siri and told her he was leaving for Budapest.

Sunday morning he sat on the plane still feeling apprehensive about going to Hungary and he knew Meinard was aware of his despondency. Alec thought about the meaning of Sunday, the day of the Sun, he should be energised by warmth and glory but he was in a dark maze of confusion fighting the shadows in his mind.

The doctor placed a hand on Alec's shoulder from the seat next to him and said, "I know you are enamoured with Siri but you need not worry about her, she will not abscond from you, she is your anchor and the light that shines in the ninth hour of your darkness. She will always be with you, once together always together. You must trust her Alec. Now when we get to Budapest I want you to think of yourself as a knight on a quest or that of Jason in search of the Golden Fleece, the pursuit will give you purpose and once you have obtained your goal it will imbue your life with true meaning. *Descendendo ascendendo.*" He gave Alec a wink and a smile.

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Alec returned the smile, just hearing Meinard speak her name sparked a picture of her in his imagination and it overwhelmed him with a current of vital impetus and positive emotions, even though Siri was at a distance she could still influence him. She was a cornucopia and could give him whatever he desired and he could eat from her endless bounty forever. He laughed with joy as his eyes watered elated just by his thoughts of her, she was his manna and she sustained him, and he needed to trust her for his own survival.

They arrived at the home of Utomere and Leucothea Nymandus at 3:20 *PM*. The manor house was just outside of Budapest in Leányfalu. The car drove up the stone driveway to an ornate black iron double gate with black and gold metal crests mounted in the middle, stone pillars stood as sentinels at each side of the gated entry, the driver announced their arrival on the intercom and the gates swung open for their admittance.

After greetings and introductions were made they were both given grand rooms for their stay. The house was decorated in an old world style with exquisite furnishings and décor. The floors were marble with a medallion in the middle of the entryway and on the wall of the landing above the staircase was a beautiful painting of a Star and a Goddess with a depiction of her on her celestial throne but the star was the central focal point of the work.

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Alec did not unpack, he was in denial, if he did not make himself at home then he would not have to stay long, this was his logic. He thought he would just live out of his suitcase and grab what he needed like a vagrant hoping to make a quick exit.

He threw himself backwards on the bed staring up at the ceiling then spread his arms and legs apart like a Vitruvian man. He resembled a star. He was a starman. *Ecce homo*. A five-pointed star, the golden section found in the harmony of man.

He lay there for a while unmoving then placed his legs back together but left his arms apart and became a cross, at its junction where triangles meet above and below becoming a rose, a rose cross. He was a cube unfolded.

Alec closed his eyes for a moment of solace and thought, *What am I doing here?*

He took a deep breath hoping that when he opened his eyes everything would disappear. He wondered what kind of home Dieter would pick out for him and thought it would probably be a place just as creepy as Dieter that had a macabre element to it, like a torture chamber, an oubliette or even worse, a cemetery and no internet access.

There was a soft tap at Alec's door. *Go away I'm dead!* Is what he wanted to say, but instead called out, "Come in!"

Meinard entered the room and asked Alec to join him downstairs to speak with Utomere in the library.

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When Alec entered the library he was attracted to the impressive antique navigational instruments displayed in a cabinet. They were truly magnificent. Octants, sextants, quintants and astrolabes, some hundreds of years old but in mint condition, and there was also an assortment of armillaries on the lower shelf of the cabinet.

“Ah, I see you have discovered one of my intrigues,” Utomere said to Alec who was still eyeing the beautiful craftsmanship of the items. His voice sounded ancient, “I started collecting them as a hobby a very long time ago. Men used to navigate by the stars back then. I too learned the mastery of navigation using the stars as my guide, unlike today where we have man-made stars, satellites with GPS. I am afraid the old ways may have become a lost art.” He sighed, his features softening with the remembrance of some poem that caressed his mind.

*Gazing at an atramental sky flecked by noctilucent constellations
And where Auphanim abide there fetching dreams
Only heavenward should be each man's meditations
Towards the mystic temple whence her borrowed light shines
Upon him ensuring his divine elevation.*

“I guess I am a zodiacal man at heart.” Utomere closed his eyes with inner reflection.

Alec praised his acquisitions and asked a few questions regarding the age of some of the pieces, while Utomere answered

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Alec studied him intently. He was about five-foot nine and probably in his seventies although he seemed ageless. He was completely bald having a salt and pepper haired goatee and moustache that gave him a Mephistophelian look when he squinted his eyes.

He wore black wool slacks and the collar of his shirt with gold pinstripes was showing from under a black cashmere sweater. His eyes were pansophical holding tomes of prodigious wisdom. Utomere and his wife Leucothea both possessed a shockingly blanched complexion that contrasted severely against their clothing. Their achromia skin had a blue cast reflecting from it like a lazuline aura.

Leucothea brought in a tray of chicken curry tea sandwiches, some Marrakesh couscous, a hummus platter and Meskouta, the cake looked delicious. She was an elderly woman that looked like a porcelain goddess with her almost salt-white skin. Her manner of dress was a fusion of eras, modern but with a flavour of the Victorian style.

“Ah, thank you Darling.” Utomere stood up from the rococo-style desk and walked over to the bar by the sitting area of the library as Leucothea deposited the tray on a small round table nearby. “May I offer you gentlemen something to drink?” Utomere asked.

“I will have a brandy, thank you,” Meinard requested.

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Alec was just about to express his need for a Scotch when a powerful suggestion must have come from the aether to abruptly change his mind because to his own surprise he said, "Just water for me please." *Wow, that's a new one for me.* Then he thought of Siri and her insistence of them drinking lots of water. *Must have rubbed off.*

Utomere just smiled a devilish grin and retrieved a bottle of sparkling mineral water from the bar refrigerator as Alec joined Meinard at the table.

Alec gestured to the provisions in front of him, "Thank you for your hospitality Leucothea."

"You are welcome Alec, please call me Leucy. I hope you will enjoy your stay with us," she said genuinely.

"I'm sure I will," Alec replied.

Leucy exchanged a few polite words with Meinard Amsel then exited the library leaving them to enjoy their refreshments.

Utomere and Meinard were preoccupied and began discussing their the maps, matrixes and charts while Alec glanced at sketches of arks, vaults, a *vesica piscis* and an equilateral triangle on the table then just listened to them incomprehensibly discussing the intricacies of sacred geometry for a while before getting up to play around with the chessboard on a table by the window of the library.

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He thought of a connection with the twentieth letter of the Hebrew alphabet, 'Resh' in the shape of an inverted 'L', with the knight's move in a game of chess and also the 'L' being the two axes of the phi ratio rhombus for a time gate grid system on Meinard's geometrical drawings. He laughed, the knight in the centremost square of the chessboard can command eight squares at any one time, he marked the eight points and drew lines in his mind from the centre piece then he rotated the chessboard at a forty-five degree angle. A Templar Cross within a diamond?

Alec thought of diamonds and knew the knight's tour tessellations make diamonds patterned into an asterphairia which contain dodecahedrons and icosahedrons. He picked up the white queen chess piece, *what if the queen was at the centre?* He moved her to one of the centremost squares, if he extended lines out in the eight directions she could move, it looked like an eight-pointed star, a '+' united with an 'X', but when he rotated the chessboard twenty-two degrees it looked like the same Templar Cross with the queen at its centre.

He walked over to the shelves to browse the library books and pulling one from the shelf he leafed through it and saw a notation made in the margin, *'Three Stars; Stellar, Solar, and Lunar; Two pillars of the Abode in Solomon's Temple; Star of Shakti'*.

It was getting late and Utomere approached Alec who sat across the room in a comfortable chair superficially skimming through a book in his hands. He was not actually reading it but

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flipping through the pages taking in a few lines here and there, he could not concentrate. His mind was a turbulent sea.

“I am sorry my friend, we have forgotten our manners and I am afraid we have excluded you. You must forgive us old men. We get excited when like-minds are joined.” Utomere stood over Alec and put his hand on his shoulder then continued, “I do not wish to pry into your affairs but Meinard has told me that this is a difficult time for you. It might seem hard to master one’s mind under stress. Perhaps I can help you in some way. I am an expert guide after all. *Nil nisi clavis deest.*”

“That’s very kind of you, I appreciate your concern, as it is I’m still trying to figure things out for myself but with no success I’ll admit,” Alec said contemplatively.

“Come, let’s have some dinner and I will see if I can find something that will help you chart your course,” Utomere said confidently, after all, he was a navigator.

Alec and Meinard retired to their own guestrooms after dinner. He had already spoken with Siri that evening and a perfervid ache swelled in chest as the need to touch and taste her grew more intensified. He would be here for a week and needed the time to pass quickly to be rid of this constant pining. There was a knock at the door and Alec went to open it.

“Excuse me for disturbing you Alec.” Utomere held an old black leather book in his hands, “This may hold your interest

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while Meinard and I are collaborating. It is a relatively short work. You might be able to get through it if you read a portion of it each day, and perhaps it will help the time pass more swiftly for you," Utomere said encouragingly then added with a grin, "*Pulsanti operietur.*"

He handed Alec the book. Alec thanked him and Utomere turned away walking back down the hall. Alec noticed the happenstance. Those were his same thoughts just a moment ago, needing time to fly.

He looked at the black book in his hands and opened it. The title page simply read '*Tales of Argot*'. He thought it odd that there was no author or publisher. He flipped through it, the front part of the book was modern but it got even stranger, the section at the back of the book looked really old, it was in Latin and had decorative borders and illustrations, like the pages were taken out of another book. It was very peculiar.

Seven nights, and then hopefully I will be with Siri.

He got ready for bed and reclined against the mountain of pillows he had stacked behind him, opened the '*Tales of Argot*' and started to read.

Because Of A Book

You never know how your actions or choices will impact you later on in your life, like a chain reaction as the dominoes fall one after another. What if you were not really a whole person but split into two separate entities and the other fragment of yourself was living a completely different life in another time stream. Could their actions and choices affect you in your material dimension? Could you influence the other half of your being that exists in the psychic realm? Do you believe in Fallen Angels?

It is said that words are immortal. That a story stays with you all of your life, that it resonates. There are stories that bring you sorrow and tears, stories of joy and laughter, stories of love, romance and mystery, and then there are stories of another nature, ideological ones that can change your perceptions and your very beliefs.

All of those stories become a part of you living and breathing in your mind, evolving you. They grow in you as you grow, then one day when you look back you may wonder if somehow you had been written into the stories resembling one of the characters in the book or was it really the stories that have been writing your life as you were living them out, realising that

you actually became one of the characters in the book unfolding the same story? Yes, books can mould you, shape you and make you who you are.

You are what you read.

There are however some books that are dangerous, so very, very dangerous. It was because of just such a book that I was in danger of losing my life. I was being hunted and it was coming for me to consume my soul, to eat it away in a slow agonising decay. I could feel it every day. It was coming for me.

Yes, words can affect someone's life. Do people even feel any responsibility for the causality of their words? Words can vibrate with harmony and light, or words can destroy you, take away your hope and envelope you in darkness. I understand now the law of cause and effect and what a profound effect indeed a book can have on one's life. I warn you!

Be careful what you read!

There is no place left to run, nowhere left to hide, it will always find you inside.

It was coming for me.

All because of a book.

So now I must tell you my story...

I used to work for a university as an archivist and later became a professional researcher working for a private firm that furnishes hard to find information to a variety of clients, some of them scientists, some of them collectors, some of them producers, some of them executives, and all of them were eccentric. This is the age of dissemination of knowledge, people ask and I get it for them, it is what I do, it is what I love. I investigate and compile data. *Nam et ipsa scientia potestas es.*

It did not matter what topic I was researching for a client, each assignment opened up a new line of discovery for me. I loved knowledge. I loved books. *Helluo librorum.* The office had a pet name for me, they called me the Querent and I started answering to my nickname early on, it had been stuck on me for years now, why fight it? I did have an inquiring mind after all.

My job held a personal bliss for me, a place where I could be alone in a quiet room doing exactly what I wanted to do in life, a kind of cosmic dharma, reading just about everything imaginable, in many different languages about many different topics, countries and cultures. All the libraries, museums and national archives worldwide were a paradise to me.

It was on an early spring morning that I was engaged on a research assignment at one of the old universities. It was cold, the skies outside were grey with enormous black clouds and it had just started to downpour.

I entered the depository, stowed my gear then proceeded to the reading room. What I needed had not been scanned yet.

Why does it always seem to give me the creeps down here? Though the humidity and temperature was controlled to protect the fragile archives, this place always unnerved me and sent chills down my spine.

A clock on the wall was obscured by the tall shelves but I could hear the rhythmic ticking echoing across the vast room as I descended the stairs, the air hung silent and still except for that incessant ticking of the clock, the only reminder that time was passing, especially when I was so engrossed in reading and research. It did not matter which library I visited or what part of the world I was in, time seems always to stand still while I was reading as though the words transported me to the edge of an event horizon and when I had finished I found hours had gone by without me even being aware of it. *Tempus fugit* indeed!

I took off my reading glasses and rubbed my eyes. I looked at my watch, 5:01 PM, so late already. I gathered up my pencils, notes, camera and laptop then went to the lockers to retrieve my belongings and stuff everything into my worn brown leather satchel, preparing to call it quits for the day having exhausted all the available data on the subject here and I began to feel hungry. It was still raining and with my umbrella in hand I hurried through the various campus buildings to the street to hail a taxi to take me to a local café for tea. I decided I would have dinner back at the hotel.

It was warm inside the café and lit up with amber lamps. The glow of the light was a welcoming sight and offered a cheery invitation from the dark gloom outside. The café was the kind of place many would call quaint, the food was exceptionally good but it mostly served as a college hangout for both professors and students in between classes and apparently also functioned as a lecture hall since many passionate discourses floated in the conversational air and buzzed equally with hot debates of the academia.

By the time I finished tea the rain had stopped and I had decided to walk back to the hotel in the brisk air which smelled of wet earth, wet cement and cloying vegetation. Occasionally I would breathe in a whiff of smoke from a wood burning fireplace, a cosy smell you would associate with gingerbread and spiced rum.

Turning down one of the side streets, a shortcut to the hotel, I saw a shop that I hadn't noticed before even though I had passed this way many times. Strange, it must be a new business since it was not there yesterday. I was immediately intrigued by the window display and would have surely visited the shop if I had seen it earlier. It was at the end of a long white brick building that looked like the back of a warehouse. A black painted sign hung from black wrought iron which had gold metallic letters that read 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly', and underneath this name 'Antiques & Curiosities'.

I reached for the brass knob of the heavy panelled black door and entered to the tinkling of a bell that hung on the inside of the knob to alert the shopkeeper of a customer's presence. A wave of impressions hit me all at once. I was in awe of so many objects arranged in such a small space, every surface seemed to be covered, walls, tables, floor, and a number of items even hung from the ceiling amongst antique chandeliers. Rich plush wool carpets covered the floor and some were rolled up and leaning against the wall in the far corner of the shop.

Decorative items from crystal bowls, ornate boxes, old globes and candelabras; to old furniture with embroidered silk fabric for sale and glass curio cabinets full of even more collectibles lined the walls.

The window display had a raised platform with a lavishly carved wood desk that sat upon a beautiful Turkish rug with a grand harp next to it. Wood and leather trunks full of odds and ends were arranged on the perimeter of the rug. A pearl handled magnifying glass, a violin and an armillary lay upon the desk amongst an assortment of oddments and other intriguing items like a bronze statue of flying Mercury, a crystal and silver inkwell, a scrimshaw of ivory, as well as a stack of old books.

Masks of various kinds, some tribal, some Venetian were hung on the walls amid oil paintings, gilded framed mirrors, tapestries, swords on hangers and shields bearing heraldic crests. The room had an ethereal quality, a kaleidoscope of coloured lights shining from the many tiffany and hurricane lamps that

were all alight on various tables around the room, created a prismatic effect one would expect to see from the rose windows of a gothic cathedral whose use of colour and light might open the mind's awareness, activating the chakras within a human being.

As I closed the door and shut out the fresh cold air behind me I inhaled a rich scent of exotic rose incense combined with the scent of old leather, wood polish and antiquity. I was at home. A haunting tune from an Oriental guzheng being played in the background was faintly audible and even though the music was subdued it lent a certain quality to the whole environment adding vibration that harmonised with the surrounding objects from different eras. It was overwhelming to take it all in, like walking into a different world or another dimension of time.

I didn't know where to start browsing since there was so much of everything and I wanted to see it all. I naturally began with the many volumes of books displayed in groups about the shop. I picked up one of the leather bound books from the stack on the fancy desk that was displayed in the window and examined it, a collector's edition. It would be a well-deserved splurge for all the hard work I had done lately and besides, I thought the price was fair. I felt silly trying to justify the need to buy it for myself so I just tucked it under my arm and wandered around looking at all the interesting rarities. I felt like a child exploring Aladdin's treasure cave. It seemed a place of mystery.

I had just put down a porcelain beehive Limoges box when from behind the counter at the back of the shop, an elderly gentleman was revealed like the wizard in the Emerald City appearing suddenly from a heavy velvet curtain. He was completely bald with brown skin, at first glance I placed him in his seventies yet his skin was smooth, free of wrinkles and his eyes were golden brown and timeless. He wore round gold framed spectacles and black slacks with a gold kurta embroidered with intricate designs in black thread.

“Welcome, I see you have already found something to your liking? You are a book lover are you not?” He spoke with a clear tone of voice that hinted of a foreign accent which was undistinguishable as if he had belonged to many different countries and cultures, or was from another period of time altogether and he gazed at me as if trying to read my thoughts or even my very soul.

“Why yes indeed,” I replied and began discussing my work and the latest research I had been doing.

The shopkeeper had a kind of energy about him that made the atmosphere seem to vibrate with vitality and he radiated with an ultramarine hue, his body projecting out blue waves of ultraviolet light that cast around him as he spoke.

I explained to him that I had not seen the shop here yesterday, and although he was dismissive, even evasive when I asked him if the store had just opened, I still could not help liking

him immediately. We conversed for a while and when he noticed the worn satchel that I was carrying he convinced me to purchase a fine new leather one of better quality that was larger and in a deep shade of mahogany. How could I resist? This man exuded such an aura of pleasantness he could charm just about anyone.

I paid for my purchases and the shop owner disappeared behind the velvet curtain for what I thought was taking a bit longer than deemed necessary. I expected to see him come out with a bag but when he emerged from the back area he handed me a package wrapped in brown paper and twine with a white card held underneath it. 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities' was printed on it in black typescript and the package felt heavier than I would have expected for the combined weight of the book and the new satchel I just purchased but I paid it no mind. We said our farewells and I walked out of the shop in an exhilarating and carefree mood as if my own spirit had been lifted. Life was good.

It was dark outside but the streetlights were on and as I looked back at the antique shop I saw the coloured lights go out and the shutters being closed on the front window. I headed back to the hotel in the cold night air, the raindrops started again, first a few sprinkles then larger drops fell faster and harder as I ran. I made it back to my room without getting too soaked. I deposited my burden of the parcel, umbrella and the old satchel then decided on a long hot shower. It was strange that I started

feeling sleepy all of a sudden, as though some power of suggestion had induced me to slumber and instead of heading to the hotel dining room for dinner, I felt more tired now than hungry and opted for retiring to bed.

I woke up to a clear and sunny morning. Having completed my research at the university I was prepared to journey back home and compile my data into reports. I got ready for the day and decided to have breakfast at the hotel before checking out. When I got back to the room I packed my clothes and belongings in my portmanteau and opened the brown paper parcel to transfer my files to the new satchel which seemed rather bulky since the book I had purchased was a small volume. When I looked inside I was surprised to see a book with hand-tooled designs in the worn black leather, probably goatskin, it had decorative brass accents at each corner of the cover and at its centre.

“What is this?” I spoke aloud to the room as if demanding it to give me an explanation.

I examined the book. It looked extremely old, not fragile, but old. It appeared to be an incunabulum from around the fifteenth century and in very good condition as if great care had been taken to preserve it. It must be worth a fortune. My first thought was that the old gentleman of the shop, Cygnus Burnett Lowly, had made a grave mistake and gave me the wrong book. He did

not seem absentminded, but on the contrary, he appeared very sharp in both mind and manner. I thought I had better go back to the shop and exchange it before I checked out of the hotel. He probably already realised the mistake if he saw the collector's edition that I intended as my purchase still sitting in the back of his shop in the wrapping area.

Curious, I opened the book. I was immediately fascinated by what I saw, beautiful Latin script, decorative borders and woodcut illustrations throughout the pages. It appeared to be a collection of stories. The title page said, '*The Levoriquum*', there was no author or printer's mark. I flipped to the middle, then to the back, more illustrations and highly embellished borders and text in some strange language I could not understand. There were alien symbols all throughout the book that surrounded some of the readable text.

This was something to wet my appetite, a researcher's dream, a book lover's paradise, a mystery that begged to be solved, but it would have to be translated. I could have sat down and started reading this unknown gem just to investigate its origins and the absence of any information was most intriguing, but I had to stop myself from delving into the incunabula and instead tore my eyes away from it wrapping it back up in the discarded brown paper and hastily tying it with the broken string, I knew I should return it. I grabbed my ulster and headed for the antiques and curiosities shop still feeling ever so inquisitive indeed.

When I got to the white building I was flummoxed. The shop was not there. It was the same building but there was no sign, no black door, no window, just a plain white brick wall.

I furrowed my brow in puzzlement. How can this be? I looked back down the street, yes, it was the same street, yes, it was the same block, yes, I walked back this way to the hotel last night.

What is going on? I retraced my steps to the hotel, turned around and walked back looking down side streets and alleyways hoping that I would discover my error, still no shop, no sign, no door. I went back to the white brick building and walked around to the other side. It was Prospero's Furniture store. I went inside.

I inquired of the sales clerk regarding the antiques and curiosities shop that was around the corner or somewhere nearby, and asked him if they shared the building. He looked at me in astonishment and informed me with curt certainty that there was no such shop he knew of in this vicinity, that they do not share their business space with another company and that he has never seen or heard of 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities'. He himself was the son of the owner of Prospero's Furniture. It had been there for twenty-three years and he rudely exclaimed in a tone of voice that sounded more like a curse, "Good day to you!" He gave me the brush-off.

I walked to the café I had eaten at yesterday and ordered coffee and a ham and spinach croissant even though I already had breakfast, I needed to sit and think. The café was full at this time so I had to take a seat at the counter.

I looked at the croissant and baulked in disgust, I shuttered at the reminder of eating wrapped food with stuffing inside, it brought back memories of when I was in California on an assignment and decided to stay with my friend Duncan who I had known from college. He had obtained a position at an American firm and married a woman named Myra. They had a dachshund they called Charlie who was named after *guess who*, and yes, they did treat him like royalty. The little wiener dog had brought in a huge burrito through the doggy door and carried it into the house. The burrito must have been as big as he was.

Myra was rushed to get to the office and took the foil wrapped burrito away from Charlie and threw it on the table in the kitchen while Duncan was in the shower.

They had just picked me up from the airport the night before and I had terrible jetlag, I was also starving. I saw the giant burrito on the table and there were puncture marks in it, I assumed that Myra had made it for my breakfast and stabbed it with a fork to release the heat. It was cold but I ate it anyway. Duncan went to answer the door and I heard yelling in Spanish. I went to see what all the commotion was about and stood at the

front door eating my burrito when the Hispanic man went nuts, waving his arms and spouting off expletives as I continued to eat my burrito, licking the sauce off my fingers in front of him.

I thought he was going to rush towards me and attack me. Just then, Charlie came to the door excited by the noise and the Hispanic man went even more insane. We could not get anything coherent out of him until we finally heard the words 'perro, burrito, especial, and conejillo de Indias.' I choked in revulsion after I translated his ravings, we now understood that his mother was Quechuan visiting from Peru and made him this special burrito from guinea pig meat which is apparently a delicacy. Duncan called Myra who told him she had taken a burrito away from Charlie but didn't know where it came from.

Evidently Charlie had dug a hole under the backyard fence and went over to the construction site across the street and heisted it from the Hispanic man's lunchbox. Then I realised I was eating a stolen, dog-mauled burrito made with rodent meat.

Duncan made compensation to the man with money and a thousand apologies, Charlie the burrito bandit just wagged his tail and I went to the bathroom to chuck up.

I stared into my coffee then at the parcel wrapped in brown paper at my feet. Am I going barmy? I do not think the old man would have purposely exchanged the priceless

incunable for my collector's edition that now seemed of little value compared to this rarity. No, whatever his reasons were he must have switched the books, why go through the trouble of wrapping it to disguise it? I would have known instantly if he had just placed it in a bag, but to have the entire shop disappear from existence was to say the least a mysterious phenomenon. Could a portal in time have opened up like some stargate on the buckle of Orion's belt?

I looked at my watch, eleven eleven. I'd better go back to the hotel. Checkout was at noon. I left the café and walked to the hotel. I continually looked this way and that in stubborn persistence once again searching for the antiques and curiosities shop refusing to believe it was not where it should be, at the white brick building! It was not there.

When I got back to my room I put the incunable in the new satchel with reverence and loaded my notes and journals from my old satchel in with it. I would leave the worn one behind in the hotel room like discarded rubbish. I carried my new satchel and portmanteau down to the front desk to check out then took a taxi to the train station and made it just in time to get aboard.

By Jove it was good to be home! I scanned through the mail and laid it on the desk in my study for immediate attention along with my satchel then went upstairs with my portmanteau mentally exhausted. I was still dumbfounded about the shop's

disappearance. It bothered me. Maybe I had been turned around? Maybe I was on the wrong block? But yet I knew I was not.

Every landmark was still there except for 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities'. I pulled the white card out of my coat pocket and laid it upon the bureau as proof of the shop's existence at least, the tangibility of it eased my mind a little.

After a light dinner, attending to the mail and finishing my reports, I lit a fire in the study, took the black book out of the new satchel and sat down in the armchair to become acquainted with it and start the translation. I positioned my laptop conveniently on the end table in order to access the reference database.

I didn't dare show the incunable to anyone, no one would believe my story if I told them how I acquired it, they would probably accuse me of theft from one of the library archives so I kept it as my secret, and of course I had paid with cash and there was no copy of a receipt inside the satchel to prove ownership.

I opened the incunable and was again mesmerised by the beautiful script and illustrated borders. I turned the pages forward and saw woodcut illustrations of what looked like demons or devilish dark angels, the pictures had different types of malevolent zoomorphic beasts on them. Names were underneath the pictures and symbols with strange writing were printed above the illustrations of each beastly depiction,

apparently they were some kind of gatekeepers or threshold guardians.

I turned the page of *'The Levoriquum'* to read the first chapter and begin writing down the translation.



The Levoriquum

The Ravens & The Rose

Minions of birds were perched upon the gnarled deadfall of a massive black tree calling eerily, their echoes shrieking across the plains, servants of a darker purpose waiting for prey to feed upon.

A lone knight wearily travelled across the desolate landscape. Horseless and armed only with his sword, his journey had been long and the road arduous, only to end up here in this final place of despair. Something smelt mephitic, a kind of putrefaction. Blood was dripping from his wounded thigh.

He was being pursued by an unholy entity, a goetic demon with the ability to transform into a black mist that could follow him like smoke or hide in the shadows by day waiting to devour him, and by night it could solidify, incarnating itself into its hideous form of a dark angel, a dragon or gargoyle type creature with a humanoid-like body and black leathery dragon's wings. They were called Zargozvod, malice incarnate and they came from the void, the depthless abyss of darkness.

The knight collapsed against the base of the giant oak tree of dead and twisted black wood having skeletal branches full of ravens. He rested upon a pile of bleached white bones and a *caput mortuum* stared back at him with its toothy smile in mocking indifference.

How fitting that this place should be his tomb. He kicked the human skull with his foot so he would not have to look at that mordant grin. It gave him the creeps.

He closed his eyes trying to tune out the cacophony sounding of a hymn of doom but the birds only chanted louder, they smelled blood, his blood, and all of a sudden a unified scream reverberated through the air like a war cry of Norsemen berserkers as the black ravens attacked.

He reached for his sword but he was powerless and could find neither strength nor will to wield it. Black birds swarmed upon the knight like a velvet cloak pecking at his flesh to eat out

the beating red rose of his heart like ravenous vultures in a frenzied feast. He died in the crypt of bones, his prophecy self-fulfilled.

Blackness engulfed him. There was nothing around him but a vastness, a void. Where was he? He felt light, as if he had no body, just the flow of his own conscious thoughts, all was mind. He held a black stone in his hand. It was his heart, no longer beating it had petrified into a solid black stone.

A terrible fear came over him, the dread filled his soul, he was not alone in the abysmal depths, something was out there looking back at him and he knew what it was without having to see it, a Zargozvod.

He cried out invoking names of deities, names of comrades, family and friends, he begged and pleaded for someone to rescue him from this pit, a feeling of pure evil gnawed at him in torment, pursuing him, it was getting closer and it was coming for him. He continued to wail.

A pure white light appeared in the distance piercing the darkness. He tried to rush towards it but it only seemed to drift further away as a mirage of an oasis would flee from a man dying of thirst in the desert. No, he must reach it, whatever his existence was in this current state he knew the Zargozvod would end it utterly in total annihilation. He tried to move towards

the light again but found he could not get any closer, it remained elusive, a taunting ray of hope. The knight persisted and followed it nevertheless. He suddenly felt a rush of air against him.

A diffused light now shone like the moon through a thick fog, he appeared to be in a cave for he now felt solid earth under him. Walls of rock surrounded him and he felt the prenatal comfort of a womb. He continued towards the muted glow and noticed two slumbering forms.

On his right side there was a white dragon that had the same half-dragon and humanoid body with wings as the Zargozvod but it was its opposite having pearlescent white scales instead and also there was no dark malefic energy projecting from the sleeping dragon, only an impression that it was benign but apathetic.

On his left side was a zoomorphic creature locked in a rusted cage that looked part-goat and part-human, it had dark black fur and long curved horns like an ibex protruding out of its massive head. It lay deep in the shadows unmoving. The knight did not want to disturb it. It looked frightening, evil.

He approached the white dragon slowly. A large eye opened and looked at the knight obviously perturbed. "You are disturbing my rest. What is it that you seek?" the dragon spoke lazily.

The knight found the courage to answer the beast, “I seek knowledge for one thing. Who are you and where am I?”

“I am one of the Selphi of course, ignorant man, and you are in the interior of the earth, many souls pass this way but few ascend from this maze of caverns. Did you not die?”

Stunned at this question the knight pondered its significance with horror. He had died but yet his true self must have passed beyond into some other realm.

“Yes, I suppose I did die. Tell me, who or what is that goat-like creature and why is it locked in a cage, is it dangerous?”

The Selphi was clearly not amused by this man, wishing he would just go away so that he could go back to his slumber but answered, “That is Lucursiax. You would have to be very strong to awaken and release the goat from its cage, and that would require you to get through the gates first. As for Lucursiax being dangerous, I would say it is a matter of your own perspective, everything has degrees of polarity.” The white dragon seemed to speak in riddles.

“You mentioned gates, is there a way out of here?” the knight asked.

“Indeed,” said the Selphi, “but you will never find it alone. Nothing is wanting but the key.”

The knight did not care for these guessing games with the Selphi and instead of wanting him to elaborate on his vague answer he asked, “If it were not for your white hide and your affable nature you are like the Zargozvod but yet you call yourself a Selphi, what is the difference?”

“Ah, I see that you will not be allowing me to return to my repose. Ages ago in ancient of days the Zargozvod and the Selphi were once in a complete and perfected state. There was a time implosion causing the light races to be separated.

“The Zargozvod are fallen beings, you would perhaps call them Fallen Angels. They are ever in captivity until they can unite with their other half to attain their lost crown. Like a triune being, consider man a neutral grey pillar, on his right side is a white positive pillar and on his left side is a black negative pillar. Just as the three realms must be united, so must man raise the sacred light to resurrect the fallen pillar in order to become a whole being and return to the full light reality.

“You may go to the pool if you require reflection, just use the order of your mind to balance the chaos of your emotions. The mind is everything. Now leave me to sleep.” The Selphi closed its eye retiring and ignored the knight.

The knight looked around for the pool that the Selphi spoke of and glanced at the black goat to make sure Lucursiax stayed somnolent in the rusty cage. A large natural well of chalybeous water was near the far cavern wall directly under the

hazy globe of light. He stared into its depths contemplating his predicament.

He had a sense of foreboding that the black misted fiend, the Zargozvod was somewhere nearby following him even in death like a demon chasing him through the underworld. He concentrated on the pool and felt his own humility wash over him, the dark inner world of his soul revealed his pride and after being hounded by the baneful foe, he was beaten down so low that he had put his ego aside.

He took a deep breath and let it out forcibly upon the still water. The air of his breath caused a reaction on the pool. It seemed impossible but the surface now rippled and changed colour giving it a mercurial quality, hematite mixed with polished black glass like a scrying mirror.

He looked at the mirror of water and saw his image coruscate back to him but as he focused into the face of his own reflection, he saw a vision of black mist arise and form into another being who was silently gazing at him, and to his surprise it had the same exact coloured eyes, his eyes.

They continued to look at one another as though they were caught in a spell. Then the form put an index finger to its lips as if to say “Shhhh,” to guard some intimate secret that only they alone shared, and taking that same finger it stirred the pool creating a whirling maelstrom that set the metallic-coloured water ablaze with a midnight fire. Its vaporous image distorted

then began to dissolve from the fiery pool and the form vanished.

The waters of the pool parted and out of it emerged an alabastrine swan serenely gliding over a silver lake of halcyon waters contemplating its heavenly nascency.

A light flared from above the water and a woman appeared clothed in a diaphanous robe environed in citrine effulgence. The woman was ancient and divine.

She waved her arms in a gesture of power and strong currents of wind began to blow through the caverns and echoed in the rocky chambers like organ pipes intoning a sacred mantra vibrating the air. A spark ignited charging the knight's sword infusing it with power and light giving him the strength and force to conquer.

The white dragon awoke, not just with the opening of one eye, but the Selphi stood up tall as if obeying the summons of the Great Mother and walked through the gateway of light from whence she came. The starry woman pointed for the knight to follow through the illuminated passage not needing to speak a single word, her will made known to him by thought alone. His tomb now womb as he went forward into the light.



I closed ‘*The Levoriquum*’. Stunned was the only word I could think of, I was stunned. I felt like I had been taken on a journey, that I was not the observer but the participant, yet there was something very fishy about it, dubious even, the terms used were modern and the colloquial style did not fit that period, it had to be a forgery.

The content was spouting a bunch of bullshit as if written by a mad artist that drank absinthe and turpentine then wrote down the musings of their mongrel mind, ravings of cloaked references to something only their delusional eyes could see.

I set the incunabula down on my desk in the study, the words still resonating through me while my mind was trying to connect all the threads from the vast research I had performed over the years. I pondered the significance of the maze of caverns. A bardo? Was the story alluding to some kind of metempsychosis? Information flashed through my brain as I tried to grasp elements in the story and especially about the Zargozvod that was mentioned.

The Selphi’s words hinted at *ordo ab chao*. A maze of the mind surely, but I wasn’t certain about some of the symbolism. I will have to see what I can find out regarding the three pillars that the Selphi had referred to, but I think it had something to do with the djed pillar, the backbone of Osiris.

I reviewed all that I had read and translated, making a précis of components that I should research to increase my understanding.

Fallen Angels? Yeah, right!

I went upstairs to my bedroom and saw the white card on top of the bureau.

**Cygnus Burnett Lowly
Antiques & Curiosities**

I shook my head out of disbelief and exhaustion, a puzzling book indeed but I longed to unveil its secrets, it made me the Querent ever more.

I went through my nightly routine and got into bed, and that's when the dreams first began.

Horrible dreams...

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec closed the *'Tales of Argot'* and placed the book on the bedside table. It seemed that the book had been translated and interpreted into a more comprehensive form. Someone had compiled and rebound it with what read like journal writing. This was very odd, no collector would ever do such a thing it was anathema unless it really was a forgery. *Oh well.*

He thought about the story recalling the *memento mori* that was mentioned in *'The Levoriquum'*. It reminded him of Dieter's sardonic grin on some demonic skull which also gave him the creeps.

It was an unfathomable coincidence that the knight saw the entity in the pool with the same eyes. He experienced this exact same revelation when he had first stared into Siri's eyes, the same grey-blue colour that his eyes mirrored back to him. This was weird, too weird.

Alec hoped he was not going to have nightmares like the Querent.

He adjusted the pillows and turned off the light. He had jealous thoughts of other men wanting to possess Siri for their own and he needed to control the demons of his imagination or they would consume him. He finally settled into a soporiferous calm. Misty shadows floated in his mind transporting him through star-filled skies to sail the Argo across a sea of dreams.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

He was ascending a spiral staircase made from a human spine, it was twisted like a DNA strand, the steps were thirty-three vertebrates of white bone and two serpents were chasing after him as he climbed. When he had reached the top of the stairs he saw seven stars then fell into darkness.

The images in his mind began to form, morphing and wavering in an emerald light that eventually solidified into the texture of a leafy green hedge. It was a labyrinth. At the entrance there were two living guardians, topiaries stood on each side of the path that were carved in the image of lions with wings.

He entered the path and moved forward through the verdant foliage continuing to twist and turn, guessing at each junction which way he should go.

He became lost many times and tried to backtrack but only found himself disoriented even more. He was trapped. He sat down feeling powerless to continue and putting his head in his hands he cried out in dismay.

A woman appeared by his side emblazoned by a rosy light with such beauty that it could not be defined. He raised his head beholding her in the cloud of fire and silently without a word; she bent with exquisite grace and placed around his neck a wreath of flowers to give him strength.

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*Upon receiving such a gift his heart had lightened,
replacing sorrow with courage and vigour. With a discerning
smile she led him to the end of the hedge where the foliage had a
giant face-like figure.*

*The leafy green man was made out of magickal breathing
flora, his mouth open wide as a living jade door. She bade him to
enter and they passed through the lush tunnel together in amour.*

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Animus & Anima

When Siri had introduced Robert Nachton to Viktoria Engel she saw the sparkle in their eyes. It was nice to see the two who were both widowed find companionship this late in their life. They seemed to complement each other and she noticed Robert had become spry in step. His conversations with Viktoria were more witty and flirtatious as Viktoria's choices in her toilette became more flattering, like birds they were epigamic.

They had left Bern at noon that day and drove an hour and a half to Zürich checking into their hotel on Kurhausstrasse for just one night to attend a charity function that invited large contributors.

Later that evening the three of them entered the banquet room linked together arm in arm as if they were Hermes' golden chain of light causing people to stop and stare as they detected the invigorating shift of energy pulsing about them.

In one recess at the far left side of the banquet room, Rénard Clare-Dusont had cornered a prospective conquest. The poor woman was almost pinned against the wall and forced to

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listen to his false praise. The only thing Rénard really flattered was Rénard himself.

He was a pompous brag. It was undoubtedly his constant need to be the centre of attention that would eventually lead to his demise someday. Rénard Clare-Dusont was a descendant of noble birth which handed him the privilege of wealth and social position that afforded him every opportunity to be moulded into a great man but for the one blemish that his aristocratic lineage failed to breed out of him, Clare-Dusont was without a doubt, a complete imbecile.

His good looks, fashionable attire and family liaisons opened doors to the most élitist of social affairs and at first glance he gave the appearance of being a gentleman of the utmost refinement, however that opinion was instantly degraded the moment that Rénard Clare-Dusont opened his mouth to speak.

He never failed to make a bad impression, and the worst of it being that he was so incessantly caught up in the feeding of his own vanity that he was altogether blind to the fact that the people around him not only thought of him as a supercilious bore, but made it a practice to go out of their way to purposefully avoid him whenever possible.

This of course had required several pre-planned strategic manoeuvres between fellow conspirators who had made a pact to rescue one another in the event that any of them should be snared into the net of his conversation. Those unfortunate

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enough to find themselves in his path were only forced to endure him out sheer protocol that was demanded by one of his status and affluence, thus in turn making them all the more obliging in their tolerance of him.

Trapped by the duress of social obligation, these captives were made to suffer his ever-constant ramblings comprised of seemingly rehearsed monologues of trivial stories that either were about him or revolved around him, and some of which were rife with such blatant fabrications that they literally bordered on the absurd. He was bloated with his own superbia.

The most painful of these torments was one of his pity-seeking, maudlin recollections of some insignificant personal tragedy that was over dramatised by the constant waving of his arms or the retaining of a statuesque pose. No doubt this was clearly meant to add effect and lend credence to his over imagined asperity as well as to keep the focus of his audience's attention centred upon him.

The detainees who were unable to get a word in, even if to add a comment or to excuse themselves from his company, seemed to remain paralysed like inanimate puppets with blank stares and feigned smiles. An occasional nod of the head was made out of polite regard as if to appear that they had been genuinely listening yet all the while they were inwardly seething with the utmost contempt. In order to escape Rénard's intolerable piffle they would formulate designs of retreat desperately scanning their eyes across the room for someone they

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knew, anyone to whom they could motion to in order to cause an interruption which would warrant them a pardon and be thankfully whisked away by a regrettable need for their presence being required elsewhere.

Others however, who were unable to stand these unpleasant encounters would contrive any excuse, even to the point of feigning illness or stage a collapse from heart failure, in order to escape the witless and unceasing gust of hot wind that prevailed from the unbearably altiloquent and egotistical lips of Rénard Clare-Dusont.

On seeing Siri, Rénard abandoned the woman who now appeared to be a drab proletariat compared to this bright heavenly star that glittered by and he moved to intercept her. He was attracted to her beauty. She would look good on his arm and accessorise his polished attire making him stand out in the crowd. Rénard assumed that since he had wealth and position that naturally he was entitled, that everything should just be given to him because of his status. He was delusional. His personal glory and lofty aspirations were about to come crashing down as his own self-deception was revealed.

“Hello charming lady, I am Rénard Clare-Dusont and it is a pleasure to behold such a jewel amongst the rubble, would you care to join me for a drink and quiet conversation?” Rénard inquired in an oily and licentious manner.

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Still entwined with Robert and Viktoria, Siri regarded him and seeing his true epithumetical nature dismissed him abruptly. “I think not sir, can’t you see I am already joined with perfect company and I do not believe there is any affinity between us to warrant such a correspondence,” she said, instantly detaching any connection to this man.

Rénard shivered with a sudden chill, the radiance that flowed from Siri had been extinguished. She cut him off so completely it was as if all the lights in the room had been shut off. He felt deflated, and not getting the attention his ego demanded, he walked away in pursuit of his own false fulfilment.

“He’s a toad,” Siri told Robert and Viktoria as they continued to walk through the room to their table.

Garin Imenov stood at the bar surrounded in his own umbrageous cloud of antagonism watching Siri from across the room. He was a rough looking character with a flattop haircut and dressed in a designer suit, he was unmistakably Russian mafia. He had no interest in charities. He was there to meet potential clients, the kind with power and large sums of money that he intended to swindle.

Garin was a violent killer and what he could not take for himself he would destroy rather than see another man walk away with his prise. He was an odious vampire inciting fear and stealing other people’s energy, draining their power to add to his own like a magickian dabbling in the black arts using knowledge

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for his own gain and imposing his will to dominate and control others.

He saw how Siri affected those around her and felt the strong force exuding from her persona. He eyed her with a fierce lust and continued to watch her greedily formulating how he would take her if she refused to give freely what he wanted from her. He slammed his drink down on the bar and walked after her stalking like a predator.

“Good evening, I would like you to join me at my table so we may get acquainted with one another,” Garin Imenov insisted as he grabbed Siri’s arm trying to pry her away from the two elderly people but they were like anemones clinging to her as an encrusted sea barnacle would to a hull of a ship refusing to let her go. His force only made them tightened their hold even more.

“Who the devil are you? Do you have a habit of manhandling women?” Siri accused.

“I beg your pardon my dear, please forgive me I forgot my manners. I am Garin Imenov,” he said with a half-bow from the waist. “I did not mean to frighten you I am just most eager to make your acquaintance.”

Robert was about to let go of Siri but she held onto him keeping the connection between them solid and unbreakable. Together the trinity stood firm against this beastly man.

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Sensing his vitriolic presence Siri denied him, "I am afraid I cannot allow anyone so violent in my presence. You are of a corrupt mind and you will please leave us sir or I will summon security." Her aplomb was so unmoving she stood frozen with Olympian detachment as if carved from cold hard diamonds that matched her rigid glacial stare.

I can never be obtained by force and just as the sun chases the moon through the heavens I will elude you. You will never achieve an eclipse as long as the red dragon rules your heart!

At that moment Lance Sunlion came rushing towards Siri and stood between her and Garin.

"I believe you should do as the lady requests," Lance said forcefully.

Taking the advice grudgingly Garin Imenov let go of her arm. He was vibrating with hostility as a dark cocoon pulsed around him. He would not be intimidated by her and no woman should hold more power than he did.

Women should be suppressed, subordinate, and I will make sure the goddess will never rise!

Garin had a look of penetrating hatred as he stormed off stewing in anger, his face flushed with fury. He would make sure all women would suffer because of her rejection.

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“Thank you Lance, my noble knight. It’s good to see a familiar face,” Siri said releasing Viktoria and Robert whom she now introduced to Lance.

He turned to acknowledge Robert and Viktoria greeting them with a warm altruistic smile.

“I am sorry you were harassed by such a man. I saw him grab your arm rather harshly and it did not look friendly. I do not know who he is but I will certainly find out and have him dealt with,” Lance expressed to Siri.

Lance Sunglion was an honourable and upstanding man. He was true to his craft, a mentor and a pillar in the community with the interest of his fellow beings at heart. He worked with many charitable foundations and above all he was self-sacrificing.

The four of them conversed for a while before taking their seats at the table. Siri imparted Lance with words of encouragement, “I know you will achieve all that you have worked hard to obtain, through your love, diligence and selflessness you are ready to receive your reward, the world is yours Lance.” She kissed him lightly on his head. Fire and light seemed to levitate above him like a solar crown.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Amor Est Magis Cognitvus Quam Cognitio

Alec spent part of the day working on his laptop helping Meinard and Utomere. He had not slept very well last night and thought it was from exhaustion or being in a strange place so he planned to turn in early this evening.

His uncanny dream had left him a little disconcerted. He had tossed and turned restlessly all night. It must have been from reading Utomere's book and the story about the knight with those bones, except where the ravens were perched on a black tree in the story, the bony spinal staircase in his dream looked eerily like a white skeletal tree. He shook off the thought of it and yawned.

It was *1:20 PM* when he finished the assignments Meinard had delegated to him and as he got up to stretch he noted the picture on the library wall of the constellation Draco.

There were also star maps on the opposite wall. One of the seven stars of Ursa Minor and one of the seven stars of the Great Bear, Ursa Major, both were in frames side by side. He guessed that Utomere being a navigator truly worshipped his stars, especially the one that had such a prominent place in the foyer.

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Tomorrow he would go into town to get some of the large maps scanned and printed if it was not raining again. It was pouring outside now, the skies were black and the rain pounded on the glass windowpanes like bullets, if it got any colder it could turn to snow. It was thirty-three degrees outside.

Alec stood staring out the window at the storm, the watery firmament formed puddles that flowed into small currents and streamed away like the ruminations of his mind. He thought of Siri and conjured up her fire in his imagination, the heat of desire flooded through him. *God I love her fire!*

He recalled his dream of the resplendent woman in the living maze, it reminded him of Siri and he smiled to himself.

She is the lost element to my soul, my quintessence, he mused still watching the rain.

Leucy offered to send the tea service in the parlour for Alec. He took the leather book with him and settled comfortably on the sofa, turned on the lamp sitting upon a black lacquer chinoiserie cabinet next to him then helped himself to the Romanian chicken *șnițel*, *sarmale*, *mâncare de urzici* and *papanăși* from the tea trolley while the rain induced a hypnotic rhythm.

He opened the '*Tales of Argot*' and began reading as he sipped the hot tea.

Night Creatures

I awoke the next morning in a cold sweat. I had terrible nightmares of things you could not even imagine existing in this world, but I do not think they were from this world or even this universe for that matter. These things, these beasts were from some other dimension.

I made coffee and got ready to brave the day. I was still trying to shake off the dark images as I went to the office to submit my reports and receive a new assignment. All morning I was lost in the haze of my dreams and I had a kind of *jamais vu* towards my co-workers. I was thankful to return home early.

I settled in my study and searched the databases of where the research material I needed was deposited and then I would map out the places I needed to visit tomorrow. It was evening by now and I was working at my desk in the low lighting that glowed from the brass desk lamp. Usually once I get started on a research project I became unstoppable, it was like detective work. Seek and you will find.

I felt a crawling sensation and was startled as something caught my attention at the peripheral of my vision and when I

looked out the window to my left I noticed a sinister black shape moving outside. Holy shit! What the bloody hell is that? It could not have been my reflection in the glass, I had colour, what moved outside was a kind of dark shadow that glistened in the porch lights and it was no dog in the bushes, it stood tall. My heart raced. Was it a burglar or maybe just a shadow from the wind blowing a tree branch? I went to the window and looked out, the streetlights were on but I didn't see anything in the yard and the roads were empty.

I closed the shutters and turned off the desk lamp. Whatever it was I did not want it looking inside at me. There was also a window behind me and I secured those shutters as well then sat back at the desk to continue working on my laptop in the dark with just the computer screen for illumination. I could feel the tension tighten in my neck and shoulders. It felt like there was something close by watching me.

I had just started typing on the keyboard when I heard it. A long slow scratching sound on the glass behind me, getting up I tilted one of the shutter slats up and I screamed.

I saw it, a shadowy form at the glass, it engulfed me with fear and then it disappeared with my sharp cry. I was in a state of hysteria. Should I run to lock all the doors and windows, should I phone the police, should I get a weapon of some kind? I did nothing. I froze. A feeling of emptiness and total helplessness overwhelmed me.

When I recovered I decided to phone my neighbour. Their phone rang and I got their answering machine but I rang off not wanting to leave a mental ward message that they would play back later and either laugh at me or accuse me of being dotty. Why is it when you are busy and want to be left alone you are constantly interrupted and when you need someone there was never anyone around?

I peeked back out the window slat with the phone in my hand ready to dial the police, nothing.

I took a deep breath and gathered my head for a minute then went to the kitchen to get a butcher knife and a torch like some stupid character in a B-Horror Film. I opened the front door and flashed the light around by the bushes in front of the study window, nothing. Then I went around to the side yard surveying the perimeter. Still nothing, no footprints in the flowerbeds below the window or anywhere else around that I could see.

Okay I'm losing it, definitely time to shut down the computer for a while. I must be tired from lack of sleep and now my imagination was running amuck. I went back inside the house walking around locking every door and securing all the windows twice like an obsessive-compulsive. Whatever was out there, even if it was only in my imagination, I did not want it in here. I went upstairs and got ready for bed taking a sleeping aid to make sure I got some rest then locked the bedroom door.

I turned on a movie and set the timer to turn off after an hour and hopefully the sleeping pill would have kicked in by then. It did. I had fallen into a deep sleep until I heard a sound that woke me up and it took me a while to regain consciousness because I was still groggy from the pill. I looked at the clock. It was 3:20 AM. The noise continued, a pounding, it felt like it was beating in my head.

It was knocking. Someone was knocking on the door in three slow raps. Thinking of the earlier incident with the ominous shadow I paled. Bloody hell! It sounded like it could have come from downstairs but it seemed to originate from everywhere at once. *Knock, knock, knock...* It was louder now.

Shit! I got up and went to the bedroom window and looked out hiding myself behind the curtain but I could not see anything. I unlocked the bedroom door and tiptoed silently downstairs, the tapping sounded again. *Knock, knock, knock...* I screeched on an intake of breath as the hairs rose on the back of my neck and I cringed in fright. This was freaking me out!

The saying '*To him who knocks it shall be opened*' came to my mind but I wasn't the one knocking was I? And there was no way I was going to open a door to whatever hell might be waiting on the other side of it.

I stood at the front door and looked through the peephole but there was nobody there. I turned suddenly when I heard scratching noises like steel nails on glass coming from the study

and a primal fear washed over me like a spectre from an opiate dream that promised unsavoury horrors of unknown things.

I moved slowly, step by cautious step, my whole body tingled frying my nerve endings with excited current as I crept into the study. Something was trying to get in.

Knock, knock, knock... Again it beckoned from the window behind the desk. I walked towards it and lifted my hand to open the shutter slats but I could not force myself to do it, afraid that my darkest nightmares might manifest. I decided instead to devise a strategy to defend myself if it broke into the house.

I sat down in the chair breathing in the oppressive darkness and felt as if I was in a Chamber of Reflection in my comfortable Chair of Contemplation letting the silence consume me. I waited, and I waited some more, there was nothing but the perfect stillness before the coming of dawn. If it happened again I decided I'd phone the police but I doubted that they would dispatch someone because I heard knocking.

I looked down at the desk and saw the incunabula from the mysterious shop I was reading last night. I picked it up and took it with me to the kitchen to make some camomile tea and then returned to bed locking the door behind me once again.

I sat for a moment sipping my tea and then opened '*The Levoriquum*' where I had left off and started to read and continue the translation.



The Levoriquum

Inner Reflections

The knight entered through the gateway of light and saw a giant crystal. Inside the crystal was a hundred disembodied eyes surrounded in pale mist. It was some kind of entity trapped in a glass prison. Every time one of the eyes blinked a beam of rainbow-coloured light like a prism would shine out from the centre of the eye projecting it into holographic moving images at the other end of the shaft of light.

He realised these were recorded thoughtforms coming from the hundred-eyed entity within the crystal. Some of the eyes appeared to be sleeping but then as half of the eyes closed, the others awoke and began projecting their images alternating between waking and sleeping. The knight wondered what would happen if all of the eyes were opened.

One of the floating eyes regarded the knight, there was no audible sound but the knight understood the eye's projected thoughts in his mind.

It communicated to him, "Time... It does not exist for us. We are Ormolek. We are the gatekeeper of this place, there are many of us here now, our thoughts are all one, we are combined yet the stream of memories from each one of our lives flows on an individual path of vision. We communicate for all of us as one. We exist beyond the threshold of infinity confined in this astral dimension in the absence of time. Every instant being an eternity, we suffer in this tomb behind this crystal barrier, our abode of hollow nullity, our prison of glass."

The knight looked around him while Ormolek continued his desultory conversation, he was surrounded in a hazy glow like frosted glass and he could see nothing beyond the fog of diffused light. There wasn't anything above him or below him only the vast crystal of eyes in front of him with its multitude of colourful images suspended from rods of light like long feathers, peacock feathers.

Still Ormolek went on with his unending prattle, "All here have failed, our conscious mind entered the unconscious and we became embedded in this crystal held captive by our thoughts and illusions. We are blended between light and shadow seeing neither darkness nor day only to be beguiled here by recalling our thoughts and life's experiences over and over

again as if reviewing vast archives collected throughout countless lifetimes.

“Every thought, thing seen, heard, smelt, felt, tasted, perceived and even our every emotion is recorded and regurgitated back to us cycling in an endless loop. We wait for our redemption behind these walls of soundless vacancy.

“All movement has stopped but our consciousness. We are only thoughts ingeminating cognitive reflections and ever wakeful plagued with a current of recollections recycling repeatedly. We are held captive by these visions but they are all we have, stale remembrances, desires and fabrications which harbour mostly regrets, remorse and unendurable loss. We are fractured, an egg shattered and we have no power or light to dispel these illusions in this monotonous eternity.”

“Have you come to free us?” Ormolek asked.

The knight did not answer him. Ormolek was droning on in a nonstop monologue that was making him drowsy as he watched the superabundance of moving holographic images streaming from the crystal pillar with the concentrated beams of light. It was mesmerising and he was getting caught up in its spell. The iridescent colours and hypnotic visions were distracting him and he was so fascinated by them he was in danger of merging his own mind with the myriad of the other engrams suspended in air.

“Have you come to free us?” Ormolek related his question again to the knight who finally snapped out of his trance.

“If it is in my power to do so I will surely try,” he replied, but the inflection in his voice held uncertainty. He wondered if the entity heard his voice when he spoke or just read his mind.

“By freeing us, you free yourself. Everything is a reflection here. If you do not find a way you will also be trapped here becoming one with us, the thoughts and recordings of all your incarnations will be embedded within the crystal for all time,” Ormolek stated.

“Who is that woman in the images?” the knight asked.

“Our Lady... She is our lost light. If we knew not such exultation we could not know so much sorrow. Her semblance sends threads of sensations imbuing us with her loveliness and saturating us with joy of her remembered touch and then we grieve in our inner world of anguish for the loss of her.

“Our life’s red rose stopped beating without her and we hold a valley of reasons that we have devised to cloak our pride. We have all lost her light throughout our many lifetimes. We have tried to work the magick to break through this prison and escape but there is no energy force here for us to draw from. We are only watchers observing an endless performance of our own retentions.

“How many times have we replayed these retrospections? To breathe without air and to exist without body has become our interminable damnation. A change is needed to break the monotony of this lasting state of emptiness, this, this, mirage of ourselves... Soliloquy our only companion...”

“The woman who led me to this place had given me a fire that charged my sword, perhaps this energy force will free you since you seem to have lost your spark,” said the knight encouragingly.

The knight closed his eyes so he would not be entranced by the colourful visions and focused on the Ancient Woman’s image reconciling her to him calling forth a correspondence between them bringing harmony to the three planes and then he experienced a change in his being, a white revenant of himself descended upon him.

The knight opened his eyes and beheld an enantiomorph next to Ormolek’s crystal prison. The twin crystal rapidly changed colour from white to purple to cobalt blue to emerald green and began resonating.

The knight raised the light upward charging his sword and then used it to strike the giant emerald crystal creating a vibrational tone that hummed like a tuning fork, the waves of energy produced a burst of light as the tone grew louder and the pitch grew higher until its white duad shattered.

Shards dispersed into oblivion and disintegrated revealing a truly magnificent Centaur. Ormolek had a dignified face and muscular body.

“Thank you my friend, a thousand times thank you!” Ormolek said.

“*Amor vinci omnia,*” the knight replied thinking of the Great Mother.

“That is indeed so my friend. There is something you should know,” Ormolek changed his mirthful countenance to a look of serious concern, “beware of the night creatures they can travel between the gates and they are destructive, the spores of the dark void and the sovereigns of the night, the Zargozvod.”

Ormolek gestured with his human-formed arm towards the emerald gateway of light emitting from the crystal, “Come let us leave this forsaken place,” he said as he stepped through the lambent passage and the knight followed after him.



I closed *'The Levorigum'* and shook my head. I just wanted Ormolek to shut the bloody hell up! He was going on and on with his claptrap and I thought my patience would run out. Maybe a twenty-two calibre bullet through his eye like an Active Measures KGB hit would cease his rambling of endless twaddle.

Night Creatures. Could it be possible that these Zargozvod the Centaur mentioned move through different planes or do our thoughtforms actualise from the psychic realm into the material world creating matter from our imagination?

I was scaring myself now.

I should see if I could find any information on these Zargozvod while I'm researching my other assignment.

I wondered just who Cygnus Burnett Lowly really was and why the hell he gave me that incunable!

My tea was cold. I turned the light off and fell back asleep, and I dreamed...

I was holding a black stone with a symbol written on it. I tried to read it but it was completely alien, no recorded symbol I had ever studied even resembled it.

I continued to stare at the strange sigil and as I concentrated on the image of it a faint red glow shone in the etched lines of the rock. I withdrew my gaze then glanced passively at it without intent and it turned black once more. Curious, I stared at it again focusing my mind on it and the same red cast returned spinning like a wheel. I began to hear whispers...

The symbol started to shine brighter and spin faster, red against black, until the entire stone appeared to be on fire like a piece of red-hot coal but the touch of it was still cool.

The whispers grew louder but I did not understand what was being said, it was in an obscure tongue. I tried to see where they were coming from but I was shrouded in complete darkness. Were the voices in my head?

I stared at the glowing red fire in the stone and the more I gazed upon it the louder the whispers became. Was I bringing something to life? What had I awakened in this infernal region?

Whatever was whispering I knew with certainty that it was evil incarnate, it vibrated with malice and dark intentions. The stone must have called something from the pit.

I threw the stone and heard it hit something, what or where I do not know, but still the susurrations continued and just as the last echoing wave faded from the falling stone, a hollow sucking noise sounded like some dark portal opening into the abyss.

I felt an instant dread, fear struck me and the taste of copper flooded my mouth as terror in the most nefarious sense snared me with its evil dark energy. The voices grew even louder. I heard a deep chortling that turned into a hyena's blood-curdling howl like hellhounds hot on the trail of some quarry.

It was here and it was coming for me...

Oh dear Jove!

I knew I must be dreaming but I could not wake up.

I cannot wake up!

I must wake up!

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Knock, knock, knock... Alec jumped out of his skin and yelled out. The book fell to the floor and closed. He turned to see Meinard who had rapped on the side of the archway at the entrance to the parlour.

“Ah, don’t do that!” Alec snapped out of tension.

“I am sorry Alec. I did not mean to startle you. I have just come to collect you for dinner.”

“Oh, forgive me for being so brusque, I didn’t sleep well last night and I was deeply engrossed in this book,” Alec said as he began to relax a bit letting the stress go from his neck and shoulders.

“Well then I prescribe rest for you immediately after dinner, you should retire early and catch up on your sleep Alec,” the doctor suggested sensing his agitation.

The four of them had engaged in pleasant dinner conversation but before Alec dismissed himself for the evening he asked Utomere, “I read part of the book again today and I did not understand exactly what kind of story the Querent was reading. Who are the Zargozvod, the spores of the dark void and the sovereigns of the night?”

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

He looked at both Utomere and Leucy as he spoke and an impression flashed across his mind, he was personified as a wise old man and she a wise old woman.

“That, Alec is for you to riddle out and only you alone, but think about the words that are used and I am sure you will find some correspondence,” Utomere said in a passive tone.

Alec went to his room and got out his laptop to read the news and check his email. There was going to be an eclipse on December 21st.

He got into the shower. The hot water felt good, it would help relax him and hopefully he would sleep well tonight. He thought about Utomere’s nebulous reply and closed his eyes letting the water wash over him recalling the words of the Centaur as he tried to think of any corresponding meanings they might have.

Spore, Void, Sovereign. He mulled it over in his brain almost falling asleep in the water. *Ovum, Womb, Queen?*

He towelled off and got ready for bed placing the mineral water on the bedside table and thought of Siri, *she is my water of life and I will drink of her freely.*

It continued to rain that evening. He opened the ‘*Tales of Argot*’ and started reading the book in bed. The house was silent but for the tempo of falling drops on roof and panes.

Seeds Of Imagination

The alarm clock rang with the most irritating electronic beeping ever invented by the human mind. The noise resounded through layers of my consciousness peeling them back one by one until the blaring repetitive beat surfaced to my cognition and I woke up in shock shutting the alarm off in haste.

I stared vacantly across my bedroom. That nightmare. That bloody hellish nightmare! My heart was still pounding from the alarm jolting me awake. God I was drained. I went to make coffee and got ready for the day. I would be doing some research in several different libraries at the university, there is absolutely nothing like walking into a depository and smelling that supernal scent of old paper and leather-bound books permeating the room, I lived for it.

I ran into some people I knew at the university and we chatted for a bit. I asked them if they knew of anyone who would be playing a college prank on me, only briefly describing to them that somebody was knocking on my door in the middle of the night. They told me that it was no one they knew of and they did not think I was on any hit list. I suppose I was

becoming paranoid after that bizarre encounter at the antique shop and I would start accusing everyone soon. I needed sleep, but right now I needed more coffee.

I made my way to the library and found a secluded nook in the reading room then turned on my laptop and set up camp with my notes and journals around me. After I was done here today I thought I would hang out with some friends who always managed to get into lengthy discussions on various subjects. Their minds were like machines gobbling up all the knowledge they were learning then analysing it scientifically and philosophically.

I liked to compare the original source material that I was researching with the modern-day impressions from the students, so I would canvas the university coffeehouses for my compadres and ask their opinion, not for validation, but as the times change the collective paradigm changes and things are interpreted through a different viewpoint of world consciousness, it becomes relative truth. I like to 'ping' the meme. Just one person's perspective can provide meaningful insight. Our understanding as a human race was evolving.

Looking at how language has changed, I cannot imagine us using 'Thee, Thy and Thou,' and honestly, no one speaks with perfect grammar, the computer programs force grammar corrections that, hello! *Aren't keeping it real.* Therefore, I will bathe my paragraphs with solecism staying truer to the spoken

word preferring my crude written form over syntax that reads like a technical manual or a transcript of elocution.

There was a time when some knowledge was only passed on orally and never written down. That chain of knowledge must have kept its clarity through the current use of the verbal language in each generation. For me, pulling relevant information from some of these archives and then trying to translate it with modern understanding was a challenge, and who is to say that my explanation or interpretation was correct? One must attune to the *Zeitgeist*. Perception is everything.

While I waited for the staff to retrieve the items I had on reserve, I wandered down the rows of shelves scouring the bindings and looking for additional material to glean information from. I opened a book and started browsing through it when I felt a cold chill run down my spine as I heard grating whispers in some bizarre language that I was unacquainted with, it was curmudgeonly, demonic.

The hackles rose on the back of my neck as I looked around but no one was there. I went up and down the aisles. Everything and everyone else appeared normal and unaffected.

I went back down the aisle I had just been in and returned the book to the shelf. I had a sensation that someone was behind me, that knowing feeling you get when another person is in the

same vicinity and you can detect their energy in the air announcing their presence, but I was alone. The murmuring continued flowing like the thick gloomy waters of the Styx calling me to swim in its saturnine depths.

I walked along the back wall, a black mist hovered in an alcove, I didn't know what it was but it looked almost like black powdery copier machine toner that had dispersed through the air and then formed into a cloud. I leaned forward trying to define it and heard the loathsome whispers again in garbled, almost growling sounds. I screamed and ran. When I got to the kiosk I turned to look behind me but nothing pursued me into the light.

Then I noticed it, something very odd, my laptop screen was open and my document was displayed. I had closed the lid to hibernate it and that should have forced a login requiring a password. I leaned forward to turn it off and gasped inhaling a breath in a *crise d'angoisse*. The words 'I Am Coming For You' were typed on the top of the document in bold letters. I looked around for anyone I knew. Obviously somebody was fucking with me playing head games. I did not recognise anyone and all the other occupants of the library acted nonchalant.

I packed up my laptop and belongings and left. I could not be here right now. Am I just imagining things? I think I really needed to sleep, lots of blissful sleep. I rang the office and told them I needed a sick day and drove home to rest.

When I got home I went into the kitchen to make myself some lunch. Normally I would have stopped off for takeaway but I did not feel like going anywhere. It was just before noon and I stuck the frozen lasagne in the microwave then opened a bottle of cabernet, I intended on getting some shuteye even if I had a sulphite headache later. Walking into the bedroom I looked at the white card with black letters still lying on the bureau, 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities' and I shook my head still in disbelief.

I had passed out and when I woke up later it was already early evening. As predicted, I had a wine headache that would have made Agathodaemon proud so I went to the bathroom to take some aspirin. I turned on the light and as I reached to open the cabinet I inadvertently glanced in the mirror, there was a black demon staring back at me. I screamed in revulsion. It just stood there with piercing lacertilian eyes. It was that gargoylish biform, the entity described in '*The Levoriquum*', half-dragon, half-man, a Zargozvod.

It smiled revealing pointed fangs and stuck out a black forked tongue as if threatening to consume me. Its monstrous body had leathery wings that were closed and tucked behind it. The demon's deep black hide was plated with a myriad of triangular scales that shone like polished onyx which seemed to absorb all the light around it capturing each golden ray only to have it ignited into burning flames that blazed through the lanterns of its hideous amber eyes.

Its deleterious curved talons were like sickles of black glass which could reap a deadly harvest of flesh with just one swipe.

I considered smashing the mirror but had a wild thought, what if breaking the glass allowed it to come through? I must be going insane. A hellish fear seized me and I backed up against the bathroom wall in a state of apraxia, the only movement I could perform was to close my eyes, I could barely even breathe.

My mind was processing the enormity of the vision trying to separate the rational from the imaginative. I did not subscribe to the supernatural, things of that nature only existed in science fiction and faerie tales of the fantastical kind. I was a person of logic and reason, and I must have a case of paramnesia because I think I was losing my mind.

I opened my eyes slowly and squinted, peering through the slits of my eyelids as if feigning sleep in case the beast was there. It was gone and the only thing staring back at me was my own image in the mirror. I had mattress hair. It stuck out all crazy and I looked like one of the flea-bitten derelicts on the streets who had passed out on cheap hooch.

I cried. I must be under stress and my head was pounding something awful. Here I was a grown adult bawling like a child, I don't cry, I never cry, it made me feel even more depressed thinking I was having hallucinations and a nervous breakdown.

I got into the shower, the hot water cascaded upon me calming my traumatised nerves. Later I made something else to eat needing to absorb all the acidity from the wine and my head still hurt. I went into the study. The nap had refreshed me so I got out my laptop and opened the document to see if the message was still typed on it. It wasn't there. Had I imagined it?

That damn incunable must be feeding upon my fears but I needed to discover more about the Zargozvod, they seemed to be the key. I did an extensive search on-line. There was absolutely no result to any of my queries on 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities'. He did not exist in this world.

I had zero motivation to get any of my work done so I checked all the doors and windows to make sure they were locked. I picked up '*The Levoriqum*' and started to read and translate it, knowing by now it was some farceur's contrivance and I wondered if I could use it for stichomancy like a gypsy to find out what the hell was going on with this demon.

If I was really seeking revelations, then perhaps it was *Time* to look in *Revelations*.



The Levoriquum

The Augury

The knight entered into an underground cavern that snaked its way along the hillside of a volcano. Rivers of lava flowed in many forked paths, orange against the black volcanic rock. The steamy air was stifling hot and oppressive, and the effluvial smell of sulphur pervaded the scoriaceous cavern making it foul and choking. Ormolek was nowhere to be seen.

The knight knew something was stalking him, he felt the menace of its formidable nature behind him, a *Zargozvod*, it must have come through the gate with him and so he ran down the tunnel quickly before it could catch up to him.

When he got to the end of the tunnel there was a junction of three separate paths, he halted deciding which way he should choose. He recalled what the *Selphi* had mentioned about the three pillars. He chose the middle path, neither black nor white,

but grey was somewhere in between, he hoped he had chosen wisely.

The path ended at a cave, the entrance to which was covered with a leather hide that had rust-red symbols painted on it. *Was that blood?* A lit torch hung on a metal bracket mounted on the wall next to the leather curtain. He parted the veil and looked inside.

“Come in, come in, my handsome Knight.” An old woman waved her hand for him to enter her sanctuary.

The crone had long tousled steel grey hair and wore a robe that was of the same colour. A key made from human bone hung on a silver chain around her neck. A white apron with embroidered symbols was tied around her waist and a short black cape was draped about her shoulders and pinned at the left side with a brooch bearing a circle, a square and a triangle interlaced together.

She wore a wrinkled smile on a wrinkled face of her wrinkled and sagging body and her ardent green eyes danced in the firelight nearby.

The knight stepped forward cautiously, aware that even though this woman looked old and feeble, a force of arcane power surrounded her.

“Who are you?” the knight asked as he surveyed the cave around him.

A fire burned in a hearth occupying a small alcove with a shaft that vented the smoke to the surface and at the exact opposite of the fire there was an open cistern of clear water. The walls of the chamber were covered with skulls and bones protruding halfway out of the dark grey mortar, a few pieces of furniture were scattered throughout the room along with bowls, jars and various dried herbs.

There was a metal ornament with seven charms that dangled from small chains hanging from the ceiling. They tinkled in the slight breeze coming from the shaft like a symphony of wind chimes echoing subtly from some distance unseen place creating a spellbinding tune.

The beldame took a staff that was leaning against the wall and tapped the seven charms causing them to vibrate, the sound waves pulsated upon the pool of water creating movement, rippling the surface and the vibration in the air increased the flames of the fire intensifying its heat.

“I have many names but you may call me Asmoedia. Tell me Knight, what is it that you seek?” she asked as if weighing him, searching for justice with her scrutiny.

The knight pondered this question hard and truthfully.
What am I really seeking?

“Self-conquest,” he answered with conviction.

“Then you must increase your vibration using your mental influence, only a sword of power can slay your most dangerous foe. Come, you are not without foresight, I know without knowledge, I see without looking, I Asmoedia am a seer and I shall reveal the way to you. Pierce the heart and you will find the key to continue the path of the mystic tree.”

She removed the key of bone from around her neck and inserted it into a small niche in the face of the rock wall, a stone door sprang open about a foot wide and Asmoedia moved forward to push it open. Inside the interior chamber he saw a barrier of liquid fire beyond.

Asmoedia handed the knight a golden chalice with sulphur in it. “You must add the blood of your true self to the cup and then visit Eryx, the eagle in his eyrie.”

“What do you mean by the blood of my true self?” the knight questioned with a confused expression.

“Ah, ha ha,” she cackled. “You will know that when you see it!” She pointed her finger at him and then recited a poem.

Listen Children of the Sun, Awake
Obtain your Golden Fleece
Valiantly pursue the Falling Star
Elixir for Anima Mundi will Release

The wall of liquid fire wavered then rippled like mercury and the knight walked through the roiling entrance with his sword and chalice. The passage sealed appearing solid when he looked behind him. He descended down steps between an arch with pictographs of a black scorpion and a red snake on either side of the keystone.

When he reached the pit below he encountered a gruesome red dragon. The words of Asmoedia echoed in his mind, 'I know without knowledge, I see without looking.' He realised the meaning of her illation and it burned in his breast with an undeniable truth, the adversary was him.

So that's what Asmoedia meant. I have to kill my beastly nature.

"What brings you to my abode? A little far from home are you not?" the red dragon mocked in a callous tone.

"I require your blood," the knight said addressing the dragon in a battle-ready stance.

The dragon dismissed him with a casual wave of his claw and yawned as if bored, the knight appearing no more than a bee to be squashed.

"Tell me what I have done that you come here demanding my blood like an angry mob screaming for justice?"

The knight thought about all of the pettiness, deceptions and misjudgements of his heart.

“You betrayed me!” the knight accused him.

“Ha ha, do not make me laugh. Feeling sorry for yourself are you? Everyone must suffer, a little dose of humanity never hurt anyone,” the red dragon taunted.

“Do you refuse to admit to the misuse of my own soul?” the knight questioned the red dragon.

“I admit to nothing, life is a playground and who said I had to play by the rules? I have free will after all. Besides, I do not have to answer to you, take one step closer and you will be devoured,” the dragon threatened.

The knight concentrated using his mental focus to raise his vibration and his sword began to pulse with energy, the waves increasing in light as it climbed from hilt to tip until it was vibrant and illuminated with power. With one swift stroke he plunged his sword into the heart of the red dragon.

The Betrayed Betraying The Betrayer.

He captured the *sanguis draconis* into the vessel and ascended the steps of a staircase on the other side of the slain dragon. Stepping onto the landing into the fresh air, glad to be away from the heat and the stench, he continued to climb upwards seventy-two steps to the eagle’s eyrie.

Eryx was an enormous bird with a regal bearing and intelligent eyes. “So you have come at last? I have been waiting over many ages and countless lifetimes, it is good to see you have made it thus far,” he said.

“Such a rough road was mine to travel and it has been a long and weary journey, but now my course is charted, I was told to reach for the star,” the knight replied.

“Then place your black stone in the chalice,” Eryx commanded.

The knight dropped his petrified black heart into the cup of dragon’s blood and sulphur igniting it into a fiery piece of coal, the stone continued to blaze, the fire grew hotter and flames leapt over the sides of the golden grail as it began to cook. His black stone now purified by fire looked like a white egg and the image of a single eye illuminated with a brilliant star hovered over the chalice. His heart was now white like new fallen snow.

The knight wept. His eyes were opened, to know without knowledge, to see without looking. Seeker now seer, he saw things how they really were, the shadows of illusion dispelled. The star within man was waiting there, waiting to shine.

Eryx expanded his wings and hovered over the knight snatching him up by the shoulders carrying him aloft, soaring higher rising into the atmosphere until they reached a high

Arcadian peak. You could see the entire world from the precipice as if it were infinity. Eryx set him down and the knight walked into a golden cloud of light.



I closed *'The Levoriquum'* and rubbed my eyes a bit but I was not tired so I decided to do some research. I had to go back to the university tomorrow. I was now behind in my work and I would probably not make the required deadline. My boss might have to foist a portion of the workload onto some of the abecedarians that worked there part-time if I did not make an effort to catch up. I made a list of items from *'The Levoriquum'* to investigate.

I dug up what I could on the black scorpion and guessed it was the sign of the constellation Scorpio which was also represented as an eagle. It is widely known that religions are astrologically based, a great cosmic drama. The red snake, Le Serpent Rouge? But what was the symbolic meaning for the egg, a cosmic egg? For me it was more like a cosmic turd with all the weird shit that was happening around me.

I wondered if the knight got showered with bird droppings while he was underneath the eagle as it flew.

I tried to make a connection to the reference that was made about a mystic tree which can be perceived as a living man but it could also have been a diversion, a purposely woven knot that only a clairvoyant could unravel. I was sure this incunable was some knave's dupery. It was riddled with vague innuendos and half-truths. I came up with a number of associations ranging from the Acacia to the Kabbalah noting everything in between.

I went over the poem that Asmoedia had recited in *'The Levoriqum'* and a Latin saying came to mind, *'Si talia jungere possis sit tibi scire satis'*, who said that anyway? Only Jove knows, it was probably some graffiti written on the bathroom wall in the Hall of Akashic Records.

I had no clue what role the saggy-titted hag was supposed to play in the incunable other than rhapsodise a lame-ass poem and open a door with a bone key, if she was a true oracle she would have said something prophetic for crying out loud.

For what it's worth I decided to comment on
Asmoedia's ludicrous composition and how her
Rhetoric of blabbering nonsense stunk so bad
That this paragraph describes her style
Succinctly!

What did the falling star in the poem mean, could it be referring to Astarte, Ishtar or Ashtoreth?

Or was it the jewel that fell out of Lucifer's crown?

I searched for information on fallen angels and the amount of content about the subject was staggering, resulting in multiple interpretations from archaic texts to abductees who should be in an asylum. These nutters were professing to be radio antennas asking people what frequency they vibrated at and suggesting that they should tune into their broadcast.

Hello! I was still not convinced that there were fallen angels in the world we lived in. I might as well be considering the possibility of aliens and UFOs. I had to laugh at the thought, to imagine myself with my alien twin holding a ray gun to my head demanding a thirteen strand DNA exchange under some mandate saying, "I want your Violet Flame and Flower of Life."

It was just too comical. I chose not to believe in either one. I was only responsible for myself, my good side as well as my bad side. I wasn't biting into these notions of other dimensional entities.

One particular article was even proclaiming a fallen angel was interpreted as a falling star or comet that was going to hit the earth exterminating all life as we know it.

Bummer or good riddance? Everything was a matter of perspective.

The cornier one stated that because the word 'live' is 'evil' backwards and the word 'lived' is 'devil' backwards, that we are the evil devil living on earth, we were all fallen angels.

Hey, that's great logic. Snigger, snigger, I think my horns are sprouting!

A strange thought did cross my mind though, when I visited a chapel in Scotland on vacation a few years ago, I had taken pictures of the reliefs and symbolic carvings throughout the interior. One of the photos had an upside down angel with ropes wrapped around it that looked like snakes. Nephilim? A fallen angel? A fallen star?

The morning star was the planet Venus. Was the son of the morning star Lucifer, Horus or Jesus? Or were they the same entity but opposite polarities? I also had to consider the Milky Way twins Tezcatlipoca and Quetzalcoatl or Enlil and Enki. Each story a dichotomy, Oritronic fighting Metatronic, the battle goes on.

There is so much trumpery where do you find the truth amongst the contradictions in life? Would I know the answers to all life's problems if I held the keys of the Fifty Gates? Or should I subscribe to the law of true falsehoods? It's what you believe and perceive.

If it was a paradox did that mean it was probably true?

This incunabula was a bowl of noodles tangled and twisted with strings of insinuation without any validation. Trying to seek answers amid the complexities just inadvertently creates new problems while trying to solve the one, too many questions and interpretations. Everyone had their own opinion, twittering their bullshit on the net.

It was just a matter of what you chose to believe. Pick your poison, *Vide, Aude et Tace*. (Know, Dare and Shut the fuck up!)

I could find nothing that told me how to combat this fallen angel from another dimension that was stalking me. I was disgusted, angry and terrified.

I suppose I should employ the attributes of the sphinx to solve the problem myself but I wondered how using my head, breast, claws, flanks and wings would defeat a demon from an infernal region. That was the true riddle.

Only one thing is certain, there can be no confusing Sirius with Venus.

I pulled out my notes and got to work, I have had enough of this implausible flimflammy and if I ever saw Cygnus Burnett Lowly again he would see my bad side because there would be hell to pay.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec was getting tired. He closed the *'Tales of Argot'* and turned off the light. He did not ring Siri that evening to reassure his insecurities because his grail was full of love, he had given her his heart and he trusted her with it completely.

He rolled over onto his side and let himself slip away through arched hallways in his mind that led him into higher realms of being.

He was carrying his egg in a grail and flying above landscapes feeling the rush of air against his face as he travelled but it was neither hot nor cold and everything was a part of him, even the air. The scenes vanished, evaporating as vapours of dew consumed by the dawning sun and he could no longer see any ground beneath him, the fabric of the world was replaced by an openness so vast it was beyond mind-expanding to comprehend.

He soared euphorically through empty space in the absence of all light beyond galaxies into the All of the universe.

A white Unicorn appeared and asked him in a melodic voice sounding of rapture from galloping through fragrant trees on magick carpets of green, "Who are you?"

"I am but a Fool on the rainbow path," Alec replied humbly.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

The Unicorn gave Alec an Ivory Key and pointed to an Ebony Chest, a treasure chest.

“Then open your chest and store up your treasure in heaven,” the Unicorn encouraged him.

Alec placed the Ivory Key in the lock and turned it with a click, the lid sprang open. He placed his grail with the egg inside the Ebony Chest. His egg hatched and a newborn immaculate white heart emerged coruscating with pure white light containing all the colours in the spectrum that flooded into a rainbow prism, a bridge of light illuminated a pathway through the aphotic sky.

He looked around him to see what the light revealed in the darkness. He beheld a hidden door and knocked thrice upon it and entered. There were seven gates, stargates attached by rays of light, the northmost gate leading to a supreme being, a god on a string. A bright sun shone on one side and a moon on the other. He moved forward walking step-by-step on the coloured passage towards the light.

He became the centre of a cube...

Unfolding into a gate of the Unseen World...

A doorway in a box...

Leading to Aula Lucis...

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Veritas Vos Liberabit

Alec drove the car into town to get some large maps printed and got lost twice. Utomere had offered to go with him but Alec refused wanting to get out on his own. He felt elated and still had euneirophrenia from last night. His dream had edified him and he was on top of the world.

He had a hard time locating the place even with Utomere programing the business address into the car's GPS, he was struggling with the language and the street names were foreign to him, but driving around in circles gave him a chance to see the city. After dropping the matrixes off for copying, he walked around the streets to kill time until they were ready to be picked up.

He thought about what he should buy Siri for a holiday gift and looked through several shops but all these material things seemed like insignificant baubles, tarnished and cheap compared to her splendour, and he knew that the only worthy gift he could give her was himself, his perfected heart. The treasure chest being his own chest, and his greatest treasure was his heart of gold.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec strolled amongst the many stores and it reminded him of Portobello Road in London. He found a vintage eighteen-karat gold pocket watch circa 1880's at a jeweller and horologist shop. It was an expensive and exquisite timepiece. Meinard deserved it since he had rescued him from Carmen's bitch fit.

From a nautical antique store he chose a unique astrolabe for Utomere to add to his collection. He did not know what to get for Leucothea. He would try to find out her tastes then look for something on the internet and have it shipped to the house.

Today he saw the divine in all things. He began to see signs and symbols everywhere revealing the same theme over and over again hidden in plain view. Nothing was disguised as the secret of Isis was unveiled before his eyes. *Lux et veritas*.

Everywhere he looked it was there, in the arts, literature, names, places and architecture. He laughed to himself out of pure joy. He did not even have to look for it. He recognised it, stamped into his consciousness as if a second sight had opened within him increasing his understanding.

Thread after thread connected weaving signs, symbols and stories into a magnificent tapestry. It had always been there throughout time, the same drama telling us to wake up. Man creating himself through his creations. The majesty and design of it was too beautiful to comprehend, humanity expressing itself. Man evolving himself.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

His heart was expanding and it could not contain the abundance of fire that burned within and it started to overflow. He felt like Icarus and hoped his wax did not melt because he was flying as an eagle longing to attain celestial heights rising towards the heliosphere. *Ad te levavi oculos.*

He was a Christmas tree lit up from within, the coloured lights twinkling, his luminous chakras spinning and all he needed to do was to raise the fallen star to the top of the tree so she could shine her light through him.

A golden silence hung in the space of his mind as truth dawned on him like a magnificent sun, exposing miracles, dissolving myths. His laughter turned to epiphanal tears of awareness, his soul was finally awaking and he wept as he expressed a silent paean to God.

He was learning about a different kind of love and it was far greater than him, he felt changed, empowered and the core of his being was shaken. *Ad lucem per amorem.*

Alec spent the rest of the day in the city and it was truly enlightening. He relaxed at a café watching life stream by, just experiencing and observing, studying the natural world around him. He retrieved the maps with their intricate geometrical matrixes and drove back to Leányfalu.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

After spending some time with Meinard and Utomere who were now engrossed in an intense discussion on the emerald gate of the heart, flashing universes, di-poles, multidimensionality, spinner fields, tori, couplets, and teleplanes functioning as enfolding time apertures along the event horizon.

Alec smiled at them, widening his eyes and waved his hand over his head indicating their topics were over it as well and he left for the parlour where Leucy had set out his tea as well as a book on mythology that was opened to a story about Arachne.

Leucy obviously must have wanted him to read the tale. Alec ate some Turkish Künefe, poured his tea and began reading.

Basically the story was about a girl who received knowledge and refused to give recognition to the goddess who had given it to her, she became vain and conceited about her gift and she was turned into a spider by the goddess.

Alec thought about his newfound awareness today and he would endeavour to acknowledge the outpouring of the gift he received.

Leucy was very much the wise old woman that she projected behind her eyes.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec phoned Siri after dinner and to his delight she answered right away and his heart started beating faster when he heard her voice.

“Hi, I miss you,” Alec said in a low whisper that sounded devilishly seductive. “I had such a wonderful day today, I just had to ring and say thank you, not only for your insistence that I be a good boy and help Dr Amsel without distraction, but also for the support and influence you have given me. You inspired me to make some inner changes, to want to be an honourable man, a whole man.”

“That’s kind of you to thank me but you’ve always had the power within you. Tell me about your day,” she urged him.

“The grains of wisdom I discovered today were like pieces of gold, knowledge that any man would treasure and I would have never found it if it wasn’t for you Siri. I just phoned to share my joy with you. My heart is so full of love for you that I feel it may burst.”

“Oh Alec,” Siri smiled to herself and told him what any mother would say to their child, “you know that I love you totally and unconditionally, I always will.”

He melted. Catching his breath he asked her, “Can I be with you as soon as I’m finished here?”

“Are you going to impale me on the floor like you threatened before?” she asked smugly.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec laughed, "Damn. No, I wasn't thinking about that, I just want to be with you but now that you've seeded my mind with that visual my body just responded to it, thank you very much, do you want me to be sexually frustrated now?"

"No Alec, I want you to be completely fulfilled," Siri said in all seriousness.

"Then fly over here right now because I'm in pain and it's throbbing," Alec dared her.

Siri just laughed. Alec did not, he really was in pain and he grunted under the strain of his erection. His thoughts turned to Siri swallowing his snake and he let out a lung full of air.

She could devour me for an eternity.

After he ended the call he was still enraptured. This entire day he was in a state of bliss soaring in a vimana upon the aether to a hyperborean plane, his chariot ever climbing higher towards the triangle of light to receive the crown of the sun.

Alec went to bed very early but he was too energised to sleep so he opened the *'Tales of Argot'*.

Nightmares Of Night-Mirrors

It was after midnight and since I had slept during the day I was still awake so I picked up '*The Levoriquum*' and walked around the house checking the doors and windows, not for the last time. I grabbed a bottle of water from the refrigerator and went upstairs to the bedroom locking the door behind me, not for the last time.

I inspected the bathroom cautiously and there was nothing in the mirror but my image with a mongoloid unibrow that needed to be dealt with but it was still just as scary.

I put a nightlight in the socket like a five year old afraid of the bogeyman and shut the door. I was apprehensive about going in there and decided to use the bathroom in the guestroom until morning just in case I have another episode.

I got into bed and opened '*The Levoriquum*'.



The Levoriquum

At The Heart Of Mortality

The knight stepped forth from the golden cloud of light. He stood upon a mountain plateau and looked down from the towering cliffs. There was no way to get below. He spotted a pelican on the lakeshore feeding its young. He followed a pathway of displaced stones upheaved and broken like its civilisation.

Statues of fallen gods lay headless, their crowns stolen by wild vegetation and their marble bodies with dismembered limbs were reaching out from the layers of earth attempting to reawaken and rise from their interment. He walked down a path lined with arid shrubs that led to distant ruins.

The knight approached a white stone temple. He climbed the steps and entered continuing to the naos where he beheld a fabulous creature. It was a white snake with ivory feathered wings. She had four human-like arms on each side of her

reptilian body and held a golden scale like Libra in one of her hands. She had female bosoms and rested like a cobra upon her coiled tail. Her white serpentine skin was smooth and shone with an oily reflection from giant pots burning with vestal fires.

“Welcome Knight of the mystic sun to my inner sanctum. I am Scytheon. You have come to the crossroads. Tell me, do you carry your white stone?” Scytheon asked. Her voice was seductive and beguiling with Venusian charms. Her ophidian eyes glowed like rubies from the fire.

“Yes, I have it here,” the knight said extremely leery and untrusting of this beautiful serpent.

“Then a question I will ask of you,” she said in a leggiadrous tone like water running rapidly over smooth mossy stones. Her eyes locked upon him as a viper hypnotising its prey.

“Would you sacrifice your life?” Her words were spoken softly with a fluttering tongue as her voice wove a hypnotic spell over him. The slits of Scytheon’s eyes seemed to expand and contract in the flickering firelight.

“I am a warrior, an honourable knight true to my word and worth, countless times I have fought for the lives of others,” the knight replied with courage and conviction.

“Yes,” Scytheon hissed, “that is well and noble to risk your life for yourself, a child, loved ones or comrades at arms.

That is an easy choice to make, but would you die for your enemy?”

He mulled the question over taking longer than necessary to respond. He could not answer. His silence was his answer.

“Well then, since you have nothing to say you must learn the way of balance, equalising positive and negative poles to come into conjunction with yourself and others. Behold! Decide your fate with the Minotaur, Dubraxor,” Scytheon said and gestured to a doorway in the mountainside that led to the catacombs.

She gave him a key with a golden scarab on it. “The way out is not the way in.”

The knight unlocked the massive wooden door with the scarab key and entered the catacombs. Torches hung upon the walls, their smoke emitting a feculent fume that smelled of animal fat or was it human? His nostrils revolted at the odour of this foul perfume.

He wandered through the maze down corridors with stale air disturbing bats that took sudden flight screeching past him in the torchlight. In the darkness of the mountain’s belly he felt that certain tingling at the base of his neck and identified that familiar formication, his leviathan, the Zargozvod was in here with him.

Sensing that negative pull through his spine, he changed his mind to calm the fear that threatened to envelope him with dark shadows and still darker thoughts that were conjured up in this foreboding silent city. Recalling cheerier times to dispel the woe as he passed through piles of bones and shelves of skeletal dead amongst dreary cinerariums.

Seeing Charon's coins in eyes of skulls, the payment for twilight's passage, he moved through the subterranean necropolis counting lefts and rights to map his route and hearing sounds of cloven hooves on stone, he halted in deep attention. An animal paced and the clippety-clop of hooves echoed through the tunnels, then he heard distant crying sounding like an antenatal soul eerily weeping as a whale's song birthing from an ocean of a higher plane into the suffering and pain of mortal existence.

The knight entered a chamber of the catacombs to see his most hated enemy, a man who dealt out death by the thousands to fill a polyandrion. Behind this reviled and cruel man a pit of Hell was opened up and a mighty Minotaur, whose name must be Dubraxor, had cornered him in submission. The knight pondered the flaming inferno and knew it would cease his rival's vital force destroying his subsistence.

His adversary's sword was broken, as was his spirit beyond all recognition and his shield was smashed offering no

protection. The warrior cowered in a foetal position having no hope but to wait for oblivion.

The knight saw the feral look in Dubraxor's bullish psychotic eyes which raged with hate and fury. The Minotaur was now circling his target ready to go in for the kill, and seeing his worst enemy brought down to such despair, the knight began to ponder.

The knight thought about how far he had come on his journey persisting through these many trials only to be faced with such a situation. If he tried to help and he lost it all would he have to begin all over again? His conscious called to him, he shook his head and realised his thoughts were selfish and not selfless. He looked at the bestial eyes of Dubraxor seeing bloodlust was his only purpose.

He weighed the position in his mind and observed the warrior lying in total human degradation, the knight tried to view things from his enemy's perspective. There were two sides to every story. There was polarity in all things, like a scale ranging from black fading gradually into white, having different shades of grey in between.

What if the warrior was just fighting for what he thought was right from his own viewpoint, defending those whom he was ordered to defend the same as him? Who was he to judge another man? He himself was not perfect. Although an enemy,

the warrior was also his fellowman and the knight empathised the warrior's suffering and wept for him out of compassion.

If he could not show mercy and offer his aid, then he was no better than his enemy.

The knight took a deep breath then releasing it with resolve, drew his sword with courage and started tapping it on the ground to attract the beast's attention. As the drooling Minotaur stamped his cloven hooves about, he yelled to the warrior, "Get up now and get out!"

The knight continued tapping his sword to focus Dubraxor's wrath upon him and he paced back and forth as the warrior rose up. The knight threw the warrior the scarab key and called, "The door out lies that way, three lefts, two rights, one straight." He pointed to the tunnel while keeping eye contact with Dubraxor at all times, the creepy bovine eyes glaring at him with hate.

"Thank you and bless you," the warrior choked out with a sob in humble appreciation.

The knight walked to the far side taunting the beast away from the warrior who now ran out of the catacombs. The Minotaur stamped and snorted as dust blew from its nostrils and caked with the spittle from its mouth. The knight continued to pace around the wall giving the warrior enough time to make it out.

The Minotaur charged after him and the knight took the first blow but immediately got up again and centred himself as Dubraxor circled around for another pass, jockeying the knight into the corner where the pit burned as a portent of doom.

The knight had no place to go as the beast hemmed him in and charged. Dubraxor's horns gored him through his chest and violently shook his head back and forth to release the knight's carcass from his horns, tearing his flesh even more. The knight fell into the flaming pit, his funeral pyre, dying in the warrior's stead.

Peace... He felt a soothing peace. No more pain. *But didn't I already die? Was this a second death or just a test?* Strings of energy ignited inside him like fiery snakes on the head of Medusa. His eyes were still closed but he saw a magnificent cross in his mind with angles at the ends glowing neon blue against the black of space, a snake was winding up the middle trying to climb higher and higher, the cardinal points were marked with pictures of a lion, a bull, a man and an eagle.

The vision faded. The great cross in his mind was dormant waiting for some fire to activate it. He needed to bring it to life. When the knight opened his eyes he was laying on a divan, a sweet smoke floated around him to thurify the air, the dimly lit room was decorated with hanging silks and the sound of a water fountain trickled nearby, Scytheon was coiled next to him.

“I thought I was no more. This is the second time I have died,” the knight said perplexed.

Scytheon just laughed then remarked in a slithery tone, “You have died many times before and you will continue to die unless you obtain the keys of Hell and Death. Energy does not disappear it merely changes form. Please give me your white stone.”

He handed her his white stone and she placed it on one side of her scale then put a feather on the other side. The scale swayed up and down with movement until it settled in stillness, his stone weighed lighter than the feather, his heart was no longer heavy but tried and true. The knight’s white stone had now transmuted into a shining yellow heart of gold.

“The act of compassion you showed your enemy will cause him to have a change of heart. You have saved him from more than death by the Minotaur and you have saved yourself through your own sacrifice,” Scytheon said handing him back his golden heart and another key with a gold scarab on the end, except this scarab had extended wings.

She motioned for him to go through a door and he walked through an archway of light. The knight thought about the warrior, his enemy now his brother.



I closed 'The Levoriquum'. I was exhausted now. It was 4:07 AM. I got up and was about to walk down the hall to use the bathroom in the guestroom when I noticed that there was no light shining under my bathroom door. Had the nightlight burned out?

I stood silently outside the bathroom and listened. Did I dare open it? I felt an intense anxiety rise up inside me. There was no bleeding way I was going to open that door! I was feeding my own fear. I unlocked the bedroom door and went down the hall to the guestroom and turned on the light. I peeked inside the bathroom behind the crack of the door but did not see anything so I ran in quickly to use the toilet.

After I flushed, I heard it. A long scratching sound that came from inside the bathroom. My heart thundered in fear. I turned slowly to look in the mirror and I screamed.

Knock, knock, knock... I saw its reptilian claw tap on the other side of glass to get my attention like it was trying to provoke me. The dark demon was grinning at me with those teeth, laughing at me haughtily sounding like it was being played back at slow speed, warping as though it was coming from a great distance.

I slammed the bathroom door and ran shutting the guestroom door behind me and locked myself in my bedroom. I sat on the floor with my back against the door. What the bloody

hell is going on here? I was trying to calm down and catch my breath when I noticed the soft glow of light coming from under my bathroom door. The nightlight was back on.

I slowly opened the bathroom door, the nightlight shone with a sinister netherworldly quality creating an atmosphere of trepidation. I stuck my hand through the door feeling along the wall for the light switch. I needed more light to dispel this demoniacal entity. I turned the light on and threw the door open to look into the mirror, *Ah, Ahh, Ahhh, Ahhhh!*

I could not stop screaming, the black gargoylish demon was not facing me in the mirror this time, it stood behind me over my shoulder with its dark leathery wings spread out as if to capture me, the mirror showing both of our reflections together.

I thought it would seize me from behind any second now and I turned around to defend myself but there was nothing there. It was gone. I crumpled to the floor scared out of my wits and wept. Could there really be fallen angels?

I could not deal with this, I was emotionally drained from the stress, wiped out physically from coming down off the adrenaline and I felt brain dead as I was trying to process the unthinkable. I just wanted to sleep and thought if I closed my eyes maybe it would all just disappear.

Denial was a good thing, denial and ignorance.

Never look into the abyss, there is something in there that looks back!

I decided to take a sleeping aid and I wanted to fall asleep to a comedy or even an animated movie. I needed some positive flow so I would not have any more bad dreams. Shit! The pills were in the medicine chest. I went to the kitchen instead and poured out some straight rum but only a small amount to take the edge off and calm my nerves, hopefully I could still get a few hours of sleep. I did not want to have a killer hangover since I had to go back to the university and finish the research I had abandoned.

“Down the hatch Matey, Arrrrgh!” I said aloud to myself in a piratical voice.

The rum inspired me with creative ideas, which was not good, because the last time I got creative with my rum-induced brainstorm is when my family was visiting for a luncheon and we needed additional items from the grocer so I decided to walk to the store instead of driving since I already drank a few rum cocktails.

It was a hot summer day and I threw on a pair of cheap flip-flops, but when I was halfway to the market the beach shoes broke, the rubber prongs kept popping out of the holes as I walked and there was no way to keep them on my feet.

Like a prat, I thought if I had some string I could tie the sole around my foot but I had nothing on me to jury-rig them so they were useless. I got so irritated that I threw the cheap shit things into the bushes and walked barefoot the rest of the way to the grocer. The summer sun heated the pavement and my feet were burning so I had to run on the scorching cement.

I picked out the items I needed at the store but I could not find any shoes whatsoever. I thought they would at least have some more cheap shit rubber beach shoes but they had nothing in way of footwear or hosiery.

My feet were so singed and sore from walking on the hot pavement they were like pieces of barbequed chicken with blistered skin. I prided myself for my inventiveness and decided to buy two oven mitts to wear on my feet, and of course, they did not even have two matching ones so I had to buy one with a blue and white chequered pattern and the other was solid red.

Here I thought I was getting strange looks from the customers when I was walking around barefoot in the market, but when I was waddling down the street with two mismatched oven mitts on my feet that looked like lobster claws, people thought I was insane.

I was laughed at, pointed at, and people went out of their way to avoid me thinking I was a lunatic. I must have been pretty plastered to come up with that idea because when I got

home my family was laughing at me so hard that one of them widdled their pants.

So this time the rum inspired me to go to the linen closet in the hall and I pulled out some bed sheets then got the duct tape from the utility drawer in the kitchen and decided to cover all the mirrors in the house. The tape did not stick to the fabric very well so I was forced to brave the spooky garage for some nails and a hammer.

Maybe I should get more sozzled before I go in there, fuck it! I went towards the door. I would even spray paint the mirrors if I had to. I was just about to go into the garage when I heard, *Knock, knock, knock...*

Someone was at the front door. I absolutely froze in my tracks. No! I can't take this anymore! I was so tense I thought I would snap. I walked slowly through the hall and looked out the peephole of the front door but there was nobody there. I ran upstairs, locked the bedroom door, put on a movie channel and just listened, letting the voices of something safe, familiar and normal palliate my anxiety. Eventually I fell asleep and dreamed.

I was in a white temple with marble pillars. I had just come from the beach below where I had taken a walk in the

moonlight so when I saw the ancient temple upon the hill I climbed towards it. Having survived the centuries I was drawn to its classic beauty, the diuturnal white structure was luminescent from the lunar rays like a spotlight lauding its grandeur.

It was late at night and all was quiet but for the clapping of my shoes upon marble as I walked, my footsteps reverberating off the stone floor. I paused, the shuffle and tapping of my own heels silenced. I listened raptly then continued walking again, there seemed to be no one else around except for a daunting echo.

I faintly detected a ticking sound of steel nails scraping on cold marble stone out of pace with my own steps. Toenails? Claws? I became terror-stricken as fear welled up inside me. I was being followed. I stopped abruptly to listen again and a few shuffling footsteps were heard behind me then slowed to a stop. Immediately I quickened my pace turning down a corridor then removed my shoes. Whatever sand that was in them from walking on the beach earlier I spread across the marble floor behind me.

Faster now almost at a run, I fled wildly to the end of the corridor and then turned left hugging the column trying to hold my breath in silence as I crouched down to rest. A moment went by, I could feel my heart beating hard and fast, I gasped when I heard that distinctive sound of gritty sand scraping and crunching as it was pressed down, grinding into the floor underneath the pressure of hard soles. They stopped and must have noticed the sand under their feet.

Oh Jove! The steps started again and they were coming faster, tick, tick, tick, tick of steel nails resounded through the star-filled night. I sprang up quickly and ran needing to make it back down the hill before the pursuer could discover which direction I had fled. If I could just get around the last column! I looked behind me before I wrapped myself around the pillar and felt some relief, thank goodness.

Still the follower was also at a run, the sound of those steely steps tinkling was loud and they were closing in curdling my blood. Shadowy phantoms filled my mind as I was running for my life. I felt a dark energy gather in strength behind me feeding itself into a powerful vortex of hate that stormed from the pursuing dark angel. It was evil incarnate and it would accomplish my demise. I must get away.

I ran down the beach and through the side streets of an old town, a private courtyard garden was ahead and I vaulted over a low-cut hedge with my shoes still in clutch breathing heavily with fright. I turned the corner to run around the side of the house when a leathery, scaled hand grabbed my wrist like a vice and yanked me forward to stare into its xanthous eyes.

The Zargozvod's claw had made slashes upon my arm and wrist. I tried to pull away. I was twisting and writhing to squirm out of the devil's grip but it just flashed its fangs and smiled at me as if mocking my futile attempt. I screamed out, and I screamed out again...

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec closed the *'Tales of Argot'*. He was feeling so high today but after reading this story it left him a little deflated and haunted. It was 8:11 PM. He nestled his head into the pillow and rode waves of darkness that coalesced with the light of his vivid thoughts, melding together into a palette of grey and ghostly dreams.

He was in a gothic nightclub. 'This isn't my scene, I'm too old for this place and I don't belong here,' he recited to himself. It was pitch dark but for the purple and blue coloured spotlights glaring in many directions while a red rotating light whirled around behind a DJ.

He moved through the crowd to the back of the club. Costumed dancers in gothic attire, some bordering more on Halloween garb rather than the steampunk or high gothic couture dress, looked like pistons powered up with high energy, moving up and down in the strobe light. It hurt his eyes and the loud pounding beat of some mixed type of trance-techno industrial music infused with gothic metal hurt his ears. He did not know what genre it was but it was too loud.

'What am I doing here? I've never been to a place like this in my life.' He wanted only quiet contemplation not to be surrounded by this chaos.

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A woman with black hair plaited in two long pigtails that were tied with red hourglass shaped bows at the top of her head came towards him, the plaits swung like ropes as she walked. She wore tight-skinned black leggings with black stiletto high heels and her hard nipples stuck out through a bright metallic red lamé tank top. It was Carmen. She looked cheap. Slutty.

‘What did I ever see in her anyway, just sex?’

“Nice of you to finally come around to your senses Alec, you need to learn to come when I call you!” Carmen reprimanded him like a bad dog.

“I didn’t come here to see you Carmen. Actually I don’t know why I’m here,” Alec said baffled and tried to recall some thread of memory but could not make a connection to anything remotely familiar. ‘Why am I here? Where is here? What kind of place is this anyway?’

“Oh I think you know Alec, you always come running back to me when you’re in need of a certain relief. Isn’t that all you care about?”

“No Carmen, don’t make it sound so base.” Alec had a look of disgust on his face, she was obviously harbouring some bitter grudge but he was not the one who inflicted her wounds. Carmen’s past was strung with men who had emotionally abused her and broke her heart countless times. He thought she really hated men and used her seduction to intimidate them, wanting to hold power over them.

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She moved closer to him and caressed the crotch of his pants. Alec hardened instantly responding to the stimulation. Carmen leaned into his face to French kiss him while still kneading his bulge through the fabric. Alec returned her kiss becoming lost, her poison flowing through his veins.

'Gotcha!' Carmen declared narcissistically to herself, as a spider to a fly, a widow with many sons in her nidus, and she led Alec away to a back room with sofas and cushions.

Carmen justified the bitterness in her mind. She wanted revenge, divine justice done to all men. Men were just bees in a hive to serve the queen and for every man that would play god the true Beast was revealed to smite him, damning his name to the stars. She would steal his crown and cast him down from heaven, bringing woe to the serpent on the paths of the tree.

'Hell has no fury like my scorn!'

She had become a psycho-bitch from Hell.

That incessant beat of the music was still hammering through the walls vibrating in Alec's head. He had the impression of being captured in her lair. She pushed him back on the sofa and stripped off his clothes, his member awake now, fully awake.

She put her hand upon his chest and slowly stroked it down the middle with her fingernail dragging it all the way down his stomach to his navel. He moaned shifting beneath her. She stood and removed her tank top and pants, then kicked off her heels

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which fell to the floor with a thud. Her naked body teased him, forcing him into servitude of worship for her. She knew she had him. He reached out his hands to her trying to feel that exquisite flesh that was being offered to him, it was driving him mad with desire. His shaft was pulsating with longing, he was anxious and he burned.

He began to speak but she leaned over to put her hand on his lips to silence him then climbed on top of him as if she was going to ride a horse. She bent down and kissed him generously before he could say anything driving her tongue deeply into his mouth while grabbing his aching fullness with her fingers fondling his cock with long slow stokes.

“I want you Alec. You know I love you,” she whispered, weaving a tangled web of lies. She slid her body down onto him. He gasped, “Oh, Carmen...” His sentence was cut off and turned into a moan, words escaping him as craving surged through him.

He was under her spell. She was rocking and rotating her body with him inside of her, and he looked into her brown eyes as the plaits of her hair brushed the tips of her breasts, her nipples pink and erect. Alec reached to touch them, he could not control his passion any longer and he was at the height of his heaven as his shaft continued to penetrate her.

Carmen bent down to kiss his chest, licking it then sucking it. He felt a sharp pain as if she had dug her fingernails into his skin, she moaned and he became enraptured, his chest was really

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wet and sticky from her mouth licking it as she rode him feverishly, her hands clutching his shoulders while pulling herself back and forth over him.

He was about to explode, euphoria engulfed him and he let out a cry of bliss as he ejaculated. He pushed Carmen's head off his chest so he could look into the woman's eyes who had given him such an intensity of passion, and as her head tilted back the image of her had morphed. It was not Carmen at all, but that of a giant black spider with a waxy complexion, a succubus. Her mouth was covered in blood, fangs protruding from her lips as she smiled at him with wicked delight.

In horror Alec looked down at his chest and saw blood pumping out of the wound, his heart was exposed through the flesh and he was bleeding heavily, gushing faster and faster as fear consumed him. The succubus laughed and Alec screamed in absolute terror as he realised she was eating his heart out while he was in ecstasy of orgasm taking pleasure in his own death.

This was one sick bitch!

He pushed her spidery body away from him, she laughed even louder as he scrambled off the sofa, his manhood still erect and she eyed his member licking her lips in anticipation. Still holding his open wound, Alec tried to gather his strength to run for the door but he was too weak, he was dying, the succubus crept towards him as he fell to his knees and screamed in hysteria.

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Alec heard screaming. It echoed through the bedroom. He woke up to realise that he was the one who was yelling. He sat up. His chest was wet, in fright he looked down at it, sweat.

He panted in fast hard breaths and glanced around the dark room trying to get his bearings and then recognised where he was. A nightmare.

He sat there for a while calming his heart rate, he was clearly shaken and did not know if he could go back to sleep, if he even dared to. The dream was so vivid, so real. He felt like a child needing the comfort of his mother. He needed Siri.

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The Number Thirteen

Alec awoke late that morning. After breakfast he took another cup of coffee with him outside braving the cold air to sit at the table under the veranda. It had snowed lightly last night but it was already beginning to melt with the heat of the sun. He hoped the crisp air would help clear his mind. That dream rattled something deep within his psyche, he was trying to analyse it but he did not know what to think, it disturbed him.

Alec was still contemplating as he finished his coffee. He pulled his black wool coat around him tighter as the frigid wind stung his face and he shoved his hands deeper into his pockets for warmth since he did not have any gloves on.

The doctor sensing unease in Alec came out to join him. He was bundled up in a coat, scarf, hat and gloves. If his clothing had been red and white he might have looked like Santa. Alec admitted to Meinard that he had an unsettling dream but did not go into any of the embarrassing and debasing details, it was not so much the horror of the dream that was bothering him now but the aftershocks, as if the vibration of it was affecting him somehow trying to externalise from his mind into apparent reality. It left a taste of wormwood in his mouth.

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The doctor offered words of comfort and encouragement then urged Alec to go back inside the house and focus on the project instead of mulling over the upsetting images and allowing them to replay over again in his mind.

Alec worked with Utomere and Meinard drawing additional grids most of the day, and even though he was getting proficient at his geometry, Utomere was ever over his shoulder to ensure precision. Alec was intrigued with one of the grids having a connection to a strange legend in Rennes, France. He would make a mental note to read more about it later. The only thing he remembered of the mystery was that some secret parchments had been found that were riddled with text about blue apples and an enigmatic reference to a painting with the words *'Et in Arcadia Ego'* which he thought was an anagram.

He decided he would press Utomere with questions about the *'Tales of Argot'*, every time Alec had brought up the subject he never received a straight answer from him, Utomere would always segue into another subject or he answered Alec's question with a question of his own and was ever dancing around his inquiries, parrying like an expert swordsman without providing any explanations or information, surely he had mastered the art of tactical evasion.

"Utomere, I am curious to know how you came by the *'Tales of Argot'*, and who the translator is that is referred to as the Querent? I am also interested in finding out more about the original incunable, it looks extremely old." Alec pinned

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Utomere's gaze with his own, refusing to be deprived of an answer this time.

Utomere raised his eyebrows as if amused by his own thoughts and replied, "I have no idea who wrote the modern translation and the journal. It is a most peculiar work and the circumstances surrounding it are even more so."

Utomere's smile held a riddle that he was not sure he wanted to share. He paused seeming to consider whether to continue or not but then said hesitantly, "It may be hard for you to believe in the intricacies of the interconnectedness of things. They can be pretty mind-blowing in fact.

"It was just this last Friday when Meinard phoned me in response to my email to accept the invitation for both of you to visit that I drove into downtown Budapest to pick up several things. As I walked passed an antique shop I noticed an armillary in the display window sitting upon a desk, and as you are aware of my hobby, I just could not resist adding this one to my collection. I entered the shop and had the most pleasant conversation with a delightful gentleman. I purchased the armillary and the shopkeeper went into the back to wrap it.

"He gave me the parcel and then I went on my way to obtain the other items I came into town for. I returned home and wanted to show Leucy my new acquisition but when I opened the box I found this curious book inside of it. I examined the

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book briefly, noting the antiquity of it along with the oddity of the recent pages added to it but did not delve into the content.

“Leucy and I both went back to the antique shop together to exchange the error. When we got there the shop was gone. Not closed, but gone, as though it had never existed or was in another dimension of time. The building was just not there. I did not make a mistake on the location of the shop. I am a navigator. Leucy and I both reviewed the book and knew in an instant that it was not meant for us, then we realised the synchronicity of the anomaly just as you and Meinard were due to arrive. This book was meant for you Alec.”

“Let me see, I have the card here somewhere.” Utomere opened the drawer of his exquisite desk and handed Alec a white card with black typescript on it that read, ‘Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities’.

Alec’s mind was processing slowly like an old 286 computer, his brain was choking on the information, he was about to seize up from the immensity of the implications and it took him a while to respond. He passed over the paranormal aspect and asked something about the tangible, “Do you know anything about the older writing, the text of the incunabula?” Alec managed to ask still lost in the fog of his thoughts.

Utomere smiled and his eyes squinted giving him that look of Mephistopheles, Alec saw Meinard nod to Utomere out of

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the corner of his eye passing a furtive signal between them as if they read each other's minds and were conferring telepathically.

"We think that the original incunable was written and printed by one of the **Invisible Aula Order Members** around 1477, we are just speculating on the year of course because parts of it could be a forgery since the writing style and expressions used could not be from the fifteenth century unless the author could travel through time gates and move back and forth between centuries. It must be examined by an expert and have lab tests performed on it to confirm any positive date. It is not a scholarly work to be sure, but more of a fabrication of motley stories put together by a Joker," Utomere explained.

"And just what is the objective of this invisible order?" Alec asked, his voice almost bordering on hostility.

"To bring light to mankind," Meinard stated unquestionably, but Alec just looked at him vacantly, his thoughts still struggling with Utomere's story of the book.

Meinard elaborated, "To awaken man, increase his understanding for his own evolution. To know the One, to achieve godhood. You must become a triune being, Brahma, Vishnu and Brahm. When you kill the ego you realise there is no separateness. *Noli foras ire, in interiori homine habitat veritas.*"

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Alec's jaw dropped. *What is he saying? That God split itself up replicating in some kind of mitosis to perpetuate itself; immortalising itself? What is he implying?*

Alec could not flow with this philosophical train of thought right now nor did he want to discuss any theological points of view, his head hurt. *To bring light to mankind?*

Utomere was still sporting that devilish grin and as if he read Alec's fuddled mind, he simply added, "*Ardeat ut vivat!*"

Alec thought of the painting on the wall of the landing, and as if detecting the inquietude of his reflections, Leucy came into the room on cue to rescue him, it was perfect timing. She led him off to the dining room for supper with Meinard and Utomere following behind in silence.

Alec was going to have a Scotch before retiring to bed that evening but again opted for water instead. His mind was already spinning; he wanted clarity and did not need to saturate it in a sea of mist making it hazier than it already was.

Utomere was right. It was mind-blowing.

He was troubled by the shopkeeper, what was Cygnus Burnett Lowly's part in all of this? Alec thought it was just the Querent's account of his personal experience, but now Utomere says that he met the same shopkeeper.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

It was all so surreal, fantastic, and the coincidences were far too scary to think about especially since it now involved him.

He thought about Utomere's trip to the antique shop on Friday. That was the day he was walking amongst the statues of gods in Salzburg and expressed a silent wish to Venus at her feet.

He got out his laptop and searched in an encyclopaedia for information on gods and found an Egyptian story of Isis and Osiris, a brief outline described Isis as having learned the secret name of Ra the Sun God.

Her husband the Pharaoh Osiris became ruler and Set his evil twin brother was jealous of him and planned to murder him wanting to rule in his place.

Set and seventy-two of his friends learn the exact measurements of the body of Osiris and make a golden casket to fit only him. Osiris tries out the casket, but before he could get out, Set's friends nail the golden casket shut with him still inside and throw it into the Nile. Osiris the man dies but his spirit goes to a place of testing.

The waves of the Nile cast the coffin onto the shore and a tree grows around the coffin encasing it inside. A king cuts the tree down and uses the trunk as a pillar in his palace with the coffin still hidden inside.

Isis seeks her lost husband and finds the coffin inside the pillar of the palace. She brings a magick fire to awaken a little

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

prince in the spirit world wanting to make him immortal and retrieves the casket from inside the tree, then hides Osiris in a swamp.

Set finds Osiris and cuts his body into pieces and scatters them all over Egypt. Isis searches and finds all but one of the missing pieces and makes a magickal likeness of the last piece then reassembles Osiris.

Isis unites with Osiris and conceives Horus who fights Set to win his father's throne and Horus becomes an immortal god.

Alec questioned who was really being resurrected from the phallus. Wasn't it Set who tricked Isis and brought his own little god to life?

The raising of the devil, a fallen angel?

He also wondered about Dionysus.

Alec began musing as images were forming through his mind faster and faster.

So...

I'm a man in a box?

Inside a tree?

Waiting to be reborn as a solar king?

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec laughed at his crazy thoughts, then he frowned, and then he smiled. He thought about the golden casket and it reminded him of the ark with the two angels on it in the religious stories. *Ark of Jupiter Inlustris.*

He phoned Siri and got her voicemail so he left a message. He needed to speak with her.

Alec opened the *'Tales of Argot'*. He no longer regarded it as a thing to pass the time while he was here. It took on a more minacious significance and he wondered what consequences he would suffer from his contact with it, whether it was quantum entanglement or like some virus that would infect him. He was perplexed by it.

He began to read where he left off hoping to find some answers.

Breath Of Whispers

I woke up screaming, the sound reverberating through the bedroom and I sat up to shake off the lingering images. These dreams of darkness were unhinging me in my conscious world making it difficult for me to function in my daily life especially from lack of restful sleep, it was affecting my health and I felt run down, but it could also be from the alcohol. I was becoming unstable. I glanced at the clock; it was 6:07 AM. Remembering the dream, I looked at my wrist and arm but there were no claw marks or wounds of any kind.

I decided to get up and I felt awful from the rum, needing to brush my teeth as my first priority, coffee as my second. I still needed to cover the bathroom mirrors, so I went to the garage to get a hammer and some nails to hang the sheets, and then made coffee. I would hang the sheets while it was brewing.

I opened the door to the downstairs bathroom first and turned on the light. All clear, I quickly covered the mirror and secured the sheet on the wall. One down two to go.

I thanked Jove that I did not have any mirrored closet doors in the house as I went upstairs with more confidence and I berated myself for my fears, what if I had imagined it all?

Impossible, just impossible, I know what I saw and I know that the black devil was there. I walked into the guestroom with consternation and slowly opened the bathroom door. It squeaked and reminded me of a haunted house soundtrack played at Halloween.

Okay, I can do this! I hit the light switch and surveyed the bathroom holding the hammer as a weapon, everything was normal. I jumped on the sink counter and hung up the sheet pounding the nails in hard, and boy did it feel good to let out some tension. Last one and I needed to hurry because this taste in my mouth was acrid.

I walked back down the hall into my bedroom and opened the bathroom door taking a deep breath in preparation to see the monstrous dark angel with its reptilian eyes and fanged smile gloating at me, but it was safe and I hung up the sheet then went about my morning routine. I went downstairs for a cup of coffee and was thankful for the caffeine.

I felt better. I gathered my laptop in my satchel and headed to the university. When I arrived I apologised for having run out on them yesterday claiming that I had an emergency and the staff advised me that they still held the books for me so it was not much of an inconvenience since they weren't reshelved.

I made it a point to sit at a well-lit reading desk near lots of people. I stayed away from the bookshelves and I only used the public privy when I knew other people were in it. This was only

one of several libraries that I had to visit and it would take me all day to gather what I needed. Normally it would have been hard for me to delve into the material with people around me causing so much distraction, the close proximity of others would usually bother me but today I welcomed every cough, blow of a nose and awkward glare. I embraced humanity today, they kept me safe, they kept me sane.

By the time I finished it was after nine o'clock at night. At least I had made up for lost time. I was starving so I decided to get something to eat on campus before going home. I kept to the crowds hoping that there was safety in numbers.

I drove home with the car stereo turned up and I appreciated the normalcy that returned to my life. I was only a few blocks away from home and just turning the corner of a small park nearby when I had a crawling feeling, almost a sixth sense that I was being watched. The music went from harmony to threnody as my entire mood darkened.

The lugubrious tune a wailing cry of wretchedness to my ears, funny how my emotion had changed so suddenly as though all of the lights had been turned off in a twinkling of an eye and all the joy was leeches from my being.

I heard hard breathing around me and the breath took the form of whispered words in some strange language. I glanced in

the rearview mirror and screamed. The Zargozvod was in the backseat, its vile eyes boring into me with a contumelious look and it started ululating, exposing its black otherworldly forked tongue. It was so large, at least seven feet tall, that its slouched form took up the entire backseat. Its wings flexed in the tight space as I watched it in the mirror with horror while running the car up onto the pavement and then colliding with a rubbish bin chained to a post in the park. I tried to scramble out of the car but I could not open the car door, the more I panicked the harder the simple task became, my hands were shaking, my nerves were fried and I felt sick from the bile rising in my stomach.

I was making screeching noises mixed with convulsive breathing. I was in hysterics and hyperventilating. I finally made it out of the car but fell to the ground, my legs were like rubber and my body was not responding to the commands of my brain, being unable to perform any gross motor skills. I managed to turn my eyes to look up from the ground but there was nothing pursuing me. I had to calm down and try to get up.

I let the wave of panic wash over me as I stared doe-eyed and helpless at my car. I thought I was going to pass out but I was eventually able to gain some composure. I sat up and vomited out of fear. I looked inside the car and there was nothing in the backseat so I walked around to survey the damage to the vehicle, both car and rubbish bin survived and there was nothing major to repair.

My hands were shaking and I cried making noises but with no tears. It was hard for me just to turn the key and start the car. I tilted the rearview mirror up and used the buttons to aim the side mirrors down so I could not see in them. I drove home still dry sobbing and parked the car in the garage. I could not live like this anymore, it was killing me and I did not feel safe.

My stomach was already full of acid and I knew crapulence wasn't the appropriate anodyne but I wanted to feel numb so I mixed a strong Black Ukrainian in a tall glass. What I really needed was Homer's nepenthe.

I wondered if the real truth was in that incunable and I needed to find the answers but it was like lifting the veil of the 47th Problem of Euclid, squaring the circle, doubling the cube or trisecting an angle. Maybe it was a thing unsolvable.

I had slept for several hours and felt better, calmer. I thought of just working at home for the next few days and read as much of that abominable incunable as I could to try to find a viable explanation for that demonic spawn causing me this insanity.

I had become a librocubicularist preferring the comfort of my pillows and mattress instead of reading downstairs in the study. I opened the accursed pages of *'The Levoriquum'* as if I was seeking the key to the gates of Hades itself.



The Levoriquum

Voices From The Stars

It was past midnight. The night sky was clear and silent. The stone keep was sequestered at the top of the jagged mountains above the northlands. All was barren and the sharp grey rocks that jutted from the ridge looked like giant fangs, they were called the Dragon's Teeth. At the highest peak of the Dragon's Teeth a single spire rose out of the mountain, the pinnacle looking like a black finger against the moon whose lunar light reflected off the patches of snow covering the peaks with an ethereal blue light that glowed against the cold stone.

The knight stepped out from the light into the frigid night air and observed the tower up ahead. He drudged through the frozen darkness up the mountain pass until he reached the heavy wooden door of the keep. An elaborate image of a tree was artfully carved into the wood door, at the top left of the tree was a moon and at the top right was a sun. In the centre of the

tree there was a large golden winged scarab with a hole in it. The knight took out the winged scarab key and inserted it into the scarab on the door, the sound of a heavy bolt being thrown back thundered sonorously, the deep low tone echoing throughout the stone tunnel as the door swung open grinding on its rusty hinges.

High up in the tower Arcatius was bent over his table deep in thought, the only sounds in the room were that of his quill scratching hastily on the parchment and the crepitation from the low burning fire in the hearth. Once in a while the scratching sound would cease when Arcatius paused and held up his quill to look out the small window into the darkness, as if the answer to his puzzled mind lay in the cold stillness of the night and the constellations of stars.

He had a short white goatee and moustache that was peppered with specs of black. His head was entirely bald and he wore a black wool cap and a heavy mid-length coat with a fur collar and lapels over an embroidered vest and white shirt to keep him warm from the chill in the air. A heavy gold chain hung around his neck with a golden triangle pointing to the sky. The old magus puffed at his pipe and squinted with careworn eyes. The window of the tower was open exposing the eternal gems of heaven paving pathways throughout the night and he knew them like a map in his mind. He was a navigator.

Arcatius had been charting the stars, his celestial companions, every night for as far back as he could remember. He slowly let out rings of smoke that danced in the air then looked over to the wall and gazed at the dusty tomes on the shelves and with a focused thought he manipulated the subtle energies calling one of the large books to float over to him from across the room. He scribbled a note in the book and with a casual wave of his hand it returned back to the shelf.

The small room of the tower was cluttered, teacups were scattered here and there, inkbottles and omnium-gatherum from all places imaginable and unimaginable adorned almost every surface. A small spiral staircase led up to the top of the tower that held a bedroom loft which was shadowed in darkness.

He heard the door to the keep open, a visitor, a very special visitor to be able to gain entry through his door. Only one who had the key could enter.

The knight walked through the dark passage and ascended the stone steps into the interior of the keep. He was in total darkness as he traversed the winding steps up to the tower and when he reached the top a door stood ajar with a ray of light shining through it like hope to a heart in despair. The knight rapped upon the heavy wood door.

“Enter!” a voice boomed from within.

The knight pushed the door open and stepped inside.

“Welcome Knight, I am Arcatius the navigator, and I know why you have come. We do not have time to waste so let us not dawdle or stray from your purpose. Please sit.” Arcatius pointed to a leather chair by the fire. “I want you to read from ‘*The Otturicuh*’ before you continue your quest.”

“Thank you for your hospitality, but what pray tell is ‘*The Otturicuh*’, I’ve never heard of such a book?” the knight asked, sitting down in the comfortable chair leaning into the warmth of the fire. He noticed a silver apple on the writing table.

“I consider ‘*The Otturicuh*’ an enchiridion, it is more than histories or stories, it can be used as a manual to guide one on their journey, after all you need to know where you are going and what path you must take,” the navigator said.

Arcatius handed the knight a large old tome with a black cover. The pages looked incredibly old as if they would crumble at the slightest touch but by some magick spell they had held together through the ages. The book was truly ancient.

“You need only read this one section,” Arcatius said picking up his pipe to relight it and then began to smoke.

“I cannot make out the writing. It is not understandable to me.” The knight looked questioningly at Arcatius. The old magus just waved his hand, the candle flickered once and then seemed to grow brighter from the energy in the air as the ink

faded on the page of the old tome and the writing was replaced with text that was comprehensible in the knight's own language.

The knight began to read:

The Offuricuh

We were cursed that day by the rising of a silent white dawn that cast forth its achromatic luminosity upon the lower worlds of Eyntaurra as if to herald the triumphant inception of a new epoch of gods, and it was the coming of these illumed ones that led to the ultimate deception of all the primal races.

They were called the Selphi and they seemed to have come with the light of the sun and we all sought to tap that power, the energy of all life force, we wanted their magick for our own and we were given the fire and a promise of light as an inheritance, this they swore to us.

They professed to be the bearers of hope, protectors of life and bringers of great knowledge but the truth was blanketed in a guise of stewardship when they had cracked as

if parted by lightning, each one of the illumed beings split and became two separate entities. The Selphi were white benevolent dragons and their dark twin the Zargozvod, were vile black dragons. That is when we began to know true terror, when the darker beings emerged.

It was the ultimate perfidy on that fated day when they sloughed off their masks of light, and without the light to reflect back into our eyes to blind us we saw the Zargozvod in their true form, dark, hideous and evil like they had come from the void, the furthest dimensions of outer darkness. They were the spawn of night itself.

With their pretence shed they had no more need to deceive and they infiltrated the land of Eyntaurra coming here not for worship but to conquer. Clothed in pitch these abhorrent deities sought to consume and destroy the race worlds claiming power for their own so their chaos would always reign. Wars broke out between the opposing immortals, the Selphi and the Zargozvod battling each other for thousands of years.

Then the foul black dragons, the Zargozvod, invaded Odzakhul, one of the nine worlds of Eyntaurra. The dreaded Zargozvod were like putrid black locusts infecting a host. They came in numbers and they came with a devouring and annihilating force.

The Selphi desperately sought to drive back the Zargozvod into the accursed void but these blasphemous dragons stood firm. Power from both Selphi and Zargozvod arced across Odzakhul and the stars in the heavens were brought down raining in a fiery shower upon the black reptilian spawn but they began to escape into the very core of the world.

Odzakhul was now a heap of destruction charred into a blackened wasteland. It was spilt into seven fragments and resonated with a hostile vibration that seemed to emanate from its desolate substance. The seven floating asteroids glistening like black ice and had the illusion of being surrounded by a nebula of purplescent haloes that glowed from an eerie light reflecting off the distant moon.

None of the Selphi dared to oppugn their actions for their part in the world's destruction. They always felt they were justified. They abandoned Odzakhul and left it hidden away in its black eternity denying the very memory of it as if to erase it from existence, leaving the Zargozvod to horde away in the depthless bowels of the seven layers of night, and without any light they dwelt in the abyss like devils in the deep.

It was our pretermission that caused us to fall into the shadow of neglect for our lost heritage and our promised

estate, the glory of our long forgotten gift of light. We became slaves to sacerdotalism. The priest-crafters derived pleasure and amusement from us, becoming rich and feasting upon our temporal emotions as we worshipped their idols with adoration and offerings in hopes to be spared through their intercession, imploring icons to save us from the maladies, misfortunes and endless sufferings which kept us submissively begging at their feet, crawling towards their false light. That is how we saw ourselves, separate, hopeless and in captivity.

There is only way to restore balance to our world and that is to descend into the abyss, unlock the beast from the pit with the keys of Death and Hell, and raise up the fallen pillar of the sacred temple to shine the light upon that foul devil in its fractured state, uniting the Zargozvod with its Selphi twin to bring wholeness and harmony once again. There is no one who will come and save us. We must save ourselves, from our self.



“That should be sufficient,” Arcatius said putting down his pipe.

“How does this relate to my quest?” the knight asked him as he closed ‘*The Otturicuh*’ and handed it back to Arcatius.

“It tells you where you must travel and what you must do,” Arcatius related.

“I thought you were a navigator, aren’t you going to be my guide?” the knight asked hopefully not wanting to endure the journey alone.

“You need the guidance of Ordis the gnome, only he can show you the way to reach the bottomless pit of Odzakhul. Yes, I am a navigator, but of the bright stars in the heavens, it is the gnome who navigates the subterranean tunnels of the earth. I Above, He Below,” Arcatius said with an amused smile on his face that made him look devilish with his squinted eyes, goatee and moustache.

“You will need a few items before you begin.” Arcatius handed the knight the silver apple from his writing table and also an empty oil lamp.

“You must first journey to the region of dreams, drink this.” Arcatius handed him a cup of something that looked like a blackish swill and smelled atrocious.

The knight shook his head in disgust, “Ah, no, what is this? It’s awful!” He refused handing it back to the navigator, “I can’t, it smells of sewage.”

Arcatius put his hand over the knight’s pushing the cup back towards him, “You must!”

The knight winced and threw the revolting liquid down his throat in one agonising gulp. It tasted so disgusting he thought it would come back up. Arcatius seized him by the arm standing him up then led him to the open window and gave him instructions.

“Feed the silver apple to the dun horse and you will be taken to where your next judgment lies,” Arcatius informed him.

The knight began to feel euphoric, he gazed out the window into the night sky focusing on the points of light and felt as if he could touch the stars. He knew that if he wanted to he could fly, and as though his thoughts were transformed into matter, a gold chariot pulled by two horses flew to the window and stopped in front of him. The number fifteen and the words ‘Tet Vav Vav Hei’ were inscribed on the front of the golden chariot. The horse on the right was white and the horse on the left was dun coloured. The knight stepped onto the window ledge and gave the silver apple to the dun horse then entered the chariot.

The steeds rode off into the ebony celestial sea until they reached a divine lady, a pearl of heaven who beckoned to the knight in whispers, “Come and be soothed by the darkness for truth is found in the light of the moon and the flaming stars. I am Virgo.” She gestured for the knight to step towards her.

The knight approached her and was captivated by her beauty, she shone as polished feldspar becalmed in blue, her smile so tender that his heart was captured and his soul he surrendered riding on waves of adoration.

Behind her a bull, a goat and a ram did roam and a triad of Taus glittered as jewels in the sky, three stars to remind him that the man in the middle must die, thrice in the pit and thrice denied, then will the left gate be lit to be welcomed inside. Each Tau had a six like on the human tree ready to awaken and set the beast free, to light the royal ark was the mysterious key.

“I am honoured to be in your presence My Lady,” the knight said timidly bowing his head.

“I will weigh your honour dear Knight, hand me the silver apple from the dun’s mouth and your yellow stone,” she said in a voice like an angel’s choir.

The knight complied eager to please her. She took the silver apple from him along with his yellow stone, placing each on the opposite side of her scale. His stone weighed more than the silver apple so she changed the apple from silver to gold, but now his stone was lighter on the scale than the golden apple.

“Take a bite,” Virgo said to the knight handing him the apple that she had aurified.

The knight bit into it and swallowed. His throat came alive speaking in unity as one thousand Logos of voice, words

resounded in a ghostly chorus creating a sequence of sound waves across galactic shores. The knight felt an abundance of happiness arise from the millenary of masters applauding his ancestral quest, singing of mysteries and miracles yet to be performed, of twain made one with moon and sun and melding molten star into the All and One. The voices flowed like the tide, inhaling the dark of the night to breathe out the light of the dawn revealing intimate knowledge of deep waters and he swam in the sea of bliss, his soul opening to the journey of all wisdom.

When all was silent he shed silver tears. Virgo placed the golden apple less a bite removed onto the scale with his yellow stone on the other side and the balance was perfect.

She handed him back the golden apple and his gold heart and said with compassion and encouragement, “Be brave and faithful on your journey and let the light of the stars shine through the seven universes of your soul.”

The knight bowed his head and fed the golden apple to the white horse, then stepped into the chariot. He could not take his eyes away from Virgo and watched her as the chariot glided through the sky until her last star had faded from his sight.

The knight stepped back onto the window ledge and entered the keep. Arcatius greeted him with squinted clairvoyant eyes and that daunting rascalion smile. The knight was feeling lethargic and thought he was going to wretch from that putrid elixir. Arcatius held out a small loaf.

“Eat,” he said and poured a cup of crystal-clear water from a pitcher and slid it towards him. The knight indulged him, not because Arcatius seemed to demand it but just to get that horrid taste out of his mouth.

After he finished both he felt better, wonderfully better. His mind was sharp and alert. “Thank you!” he said to Arcatius with real gratitude.

“From ascent to descent, you must now trek the darkest of paths. Unlike the heavens you will not have the light of the stars but you have the lamp which you must fill with sacred oil to provide you with an ever-burning flame, you will need it for the blackest of places which no other light can penetrate.

“Until you find the reservoir of oil you will have to take a torch with you. You will also need the winged scarab key. It will unlock the entrance to the old well in the basement of the keep and perhaps much more in the abysmal deep. You must journey in darkness, look for Ordis by the underground stream, you will know him by this,” Arcatius held up the golden triangle chained around his neck, “but his will be the opposite, as mine is pointed up, his triangle is reversed pointing down.”

Arcatius lit two torches, one for himself and the other torch he handed to the knight then led him down the spiral steps of the tower into the basement of the keep. There was a low round stone wall with a heavy wood cover on top attached with thick black iron hinges. In the centre was a gold winged scarab

emblem with a hole, the same design that was on the front door. It was a well of initiation.

The knight took out his key and unlocked the well. He folded back the two heavy doors releasing an olidous air that made him gag. He held the torch up and looked inside. The well was empty and disused but it was still dank with moisture and water dripped through cracks in the stones covered with rotting slim and moss. There were steps along the wall that descended into the blackness. The knight tried to gather his courage and looked back at Arcatius in dismay feeling sure he was entering the pit of Hell.

“Good luck my friend,” Arcatius said. “Do not lose hope.”

“Thank you Arcatius,” the knight replied, not happy to be parting from the old man, the hesitation showed clearly in his eyes.

The knight traversed the old stone steps downward holding the torch out in front of him. When he was far below he looked up and saw a small pinpoint of light above him from the torch Arcatius was holding.

“Remember to fill the lamp!” Arcatius boomed out, his voice sounded as though echoing through a funnel and with a loud slam at the top of the well the doors were shut and the bolt slid in finality as if sealing him in a tomb.

When the knight reached the bottom he was in a room with colonnades and there was an entablature at the top of the structure with depictions of strange reptilian creatures on it. He held the torch higher, part-dragon, part-human. He shuttered, Zargozvod, and just as he had that thought in his mind he felt the cold prickling of a chill crawl down his neck and spine.

He could have sworn he heard breathing in the dark recesses of the room. The only way forward looked like it was through the doorway of the inner temple. *A temple to what?* He thought of the Zargozvod and images of dragons began to taunt him, both black and white alike.

He stepped into the temple and saw troughs on each side of him that ran along the aisle, he dipped his torch lower to look inside the stone containers, they stunk, a vestige of some kind of rancid oil, animal fat filled his nostrils and he did not think this was the sacred oil Arcatius intended for his lamp, this was nidorous. He touched the flame of his torch to it igniting the substance to bring welcome light into the vast hall.

He continued down the aisle. A giant black stone altar stood on a dais in the centre. Alien symbols were scratched into the stone around the entire boarder of the top surface. Tall reptilian statues stood like guardians on each side, their chests were human-like, yet in gargoyle form, they displayed menacing fangs, steely dragon talons and wings jutted out from behind

them. There were dark stains on the altar that seemed blacker than the stone. *Was that blood?* Maybe he did not want to know what it really was.

The knight walked around the perimeter of the temple but saw no other exit. Arcatius had locked him in. He was trapped down here, a forsaken sacrifice to propitiate some forgotten dark god. He started to panic and continued to pace back and forth looking for another way out.

He found himself back at the repugnant altar and stared at the dark surface. He did not think this was an 'Altar of Incense' that the Archangel Michael used.

He held the torch closer to see if he could decipher any of the symbols but they were too strange and foreign. In the centre of the slab there was a small indentation with a tiny hole and black stains surrounding it.

He took his sword and barely scratching his finger he squeezed three drops of blood from it into the small hole, the weight of moisture must have caused a hair-thin filament to trigger a mechanism because he heard a clank and the grinding of stone rang through the hall, the breathing also got louder.

The lingering breath was a steady rhythm of surging and ebbing echoing from the black passage that now appeared under the obsidian altar, he imagined a dragon lurking in the darkness waiting patiently like some devil ready to rise up out of hiding.

Fear seized him. He gripped his sword for comfort though he doubted any weapon could slay this demon.

He went down the steps into the subterranean depths to behold another temple. This place looked older, as if the temple above was built on top of the temple below to hide these ruins from existence, burying them to erase all traces of it from memory. It was beautiful!



I closed 'The Levoriquum'. I could no longer keep my eyes open to read. I wondered if 'The Otturicuh' was referring to the duality being one. Those words written on the chariot and the number fifteen must have a meaning. I should find out what it represents. I shuttered to think who was really riding the chariot.

I fumbled to find my pen and scrawled some notes on a pad of paper. I fooled around a bit with letters and numbers from the Kabbalah and Hebrew alphabet. I would spend more time with it later and try to solve it backwards and forwards. I felt as if I was searching for a double cube.

Fifteenth card of the Tarot? Was it the devil riding in the chariot?
Number fifteen in Hebrew alphabet, 5+10=15; 6+9=15
TVVH - (YHVH = Fire, Water, Air, Earth) or just the false god
Yaldabaoth. YH Shin VH - Shin linking spirit and matter?
IAO - Fire, Water, Air (Isis, Apophis, Osiris, or Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva)
Ignis Agua Origo Mundi (Use of Sulphur, Mercury and Salt?)
Jubela, Jubelo and Jubelum - AOM, AUM Throat, Heart, Head
Three Companions - Tau, Tau, Tau (666) Body, Heart, Mind
(Th Th Th) - HYHA RSh A HYHA - נ נ נ = ת ת ת
Pythagoras and 345 MShH = 345 Mirror: AHIH AShR AHIH = 543
TMYRH DTMRYN = 577? Repairer of the breach = 577?
ShMO YShRAL YHWH ALHYNW YHWH AChD = 577?
Mahabone = MHWH (Mehaveh) H=5?
Find Solution to Triangle LAB - NWALBHY (NW BLA HY)

This incunable was just a warped parody from a demented being whose intentions were to make you kookier than him and I was falling for the joke like a sucker to try to unravel its significance. Didn't curiosity kill the cat?

I still could not find any reason why this incunable should be causing this phenomenon surrounding me unless it was from the power of suggestion and my mind was conjuring up images of this fallen angel pursuing me.

But it was just a story, wasn't it?

Perhaps I was going mad just like the author of '*The Levoriquum*', and if that were true, I would take the beast down with me, or was it the demon dragging me to Hell?

I felt like Schrödinger's cat in a box. Was I dead or alive?

I rolled over and fell asleep surrendering to the realms of my twisted imagination.

*Whispers and more whispers kept filling my mind.
I dreamed I was a king observing myself turning in my sleep.
I was having nightmares. The dreams came to me every night, a
voice whispering to me and visions which I never understood. I
tossed in my sleep and mumbled. The voice began persistently
whispering to me again softly in a soothing tone.*

“Wake up,” it lulled. “It is waiting for you, power that surpasses the mages of old and it is all yours... You already have the answer but you see it not. You must search the older temple to find it.”

I tried to shake off the voices from these nightly illusions to make them disappear.

“You waste time fighting me!” the voice admonished. “Use your will to summon the ‘Beholder’ and you will see all through their eyes.”

A vision of a child flashed in my mind. The child’s eyes were blue and then they blinked changing into large black eyes, empty and soulless. I watched the child crawl through a small hole in the garden hedge and climb through a window into a room at the back of a stone temple. The child walked fast yet stealthily down a corridor hugging the wall, ready to duck into any doorway of the many rooms that lined the hall if need be.

Peering first around a corner then turning, the child ran down another hallway past a large archway. Voices, the child entered an empty room looking cautiously back into the corridor but no one was there. The child continued down the hall ending at a closed door and entered inside.

The child blinked and I saw the wide black eyes were filled with a haunting glow as the door swung open. My vision had now changed from observer to participant. The room was decorated with tapestries and the furnishings were of fine quality.

Noise echoed down the corridor. There was a commotion somewhere nearby. Quickly glancing around the room but finding nothing except a chest, a desk and a few shelves filled with sacred articles, vessels and scrolls. It will be hidden.

I looked down, there, an alcove. A brightly coloured carpet lay on the floor, throwing the carpet aside revealed a small wooden trapdoor with a metal ring. More noise and shouting was heard.

The clamour of steel rang against stone. It must be guards. Confirmation that the object I sought was here. Hurriedly I lifted the door and climbed down the narrow stone steps into the darkness and came upon a vast hall. I saw a vision of the king rolling over on the bed breathing with a slow heavy rhythm still in a state of dream and the king's head was filled with whispers.

The hall had no other exit save for the one above. It was dark so I lit the candle in a sconce on the wall and beheld a secret ancient temple hidden in these halls below.

The left temple pillar had a large metal plate on it surrounded by symbols carved into the stone. I recognised the engravings and smiled with greed knowing what it implied. It was a lily and a rose. I opened the metal plate, inside the niche was a parallelepipedon pulsing with light and I took it, gazing at it in wonder.

“Yes Child, now you understand don’t you? I can make you a Rex Mundi, but you must give up the world in order to obtain it,” the voice seduced.

The king in the bed moaned and the visions resumed as the whispers carried on through the night.

Between the two pillars was a large obsidian mirror, I held up the prism of light to the black glass to look upon it, mortification struck me when I saw the image.

I was the child, a lapis, the philosophical son, no longer the king. The voice began whispering again...

*“Look into the chasm and face your greatest Apprehension.
The bottomless pit holds the Key to your Ascension.
Ask the Dweller of the Threshold the Grail Question.
Dare to see yourself in its dark Reflection.
The Abyss looks back with your own Expression.”*

I beheld the grim vision in the mirror as through a tunnel into another dimension and stared with blank and vacant eyes at the sleeping form on the bed in my room, it was a black angel, the Zargozvod with leathery wings and the devil was wearing the crown of the king riding upon a chariot of dream.

Who was I, what had I become?

My heart beat faster and I ran through the ancient temple screaming in my dreams...

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Alec closed the *'Tales of Argot'*. This was getting weirder and weirder. He could not help thinking about being the reader of this book. It was like a hall of mirrors, he was reading a book about the Querent who was reading a book about a Knight, who was reading a book called *'The Otturicuh'*.

He shook his head. The navigator in the story seemed to strangely resemble Utomere. *What are the odds? What is going on here? Is this some kind of joke?*

He questioned what he read in *'The Otturicuh'* and thought about the nature of religious texts, why would God need animal sacrifices, if we are all one why does he mention only the chosen people, order genocide by demanding war and killing other tribes, why was God jealous? Was God so insecure or arrogant that he needed humans to fawn over him and worship at his feet like slaves? This was not the loving God of the universe, but more of a biblical account of a power seeking tyrant demanding servitude. Alec decided this was not a God at all but just a demiurge obsessed with control, the warder for a planet of human prisoners.

A thick mist of insanity seemed to engulf him like he belonged to some multiverse and was travelling back and forth between dimensions, it was incongruous and his logical mind shut off further thoughts of it.

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He saw the light flash on his phone. His heart leapt with joy. A text message from Siri.

Thinking of you, goodnight sweet prince, pleasant dreams.

He turned off the light. It was *11:19 PM*. A wide smile stretched across Alec's face as he closed his eyes. He thought of Virgo in *'The Levoriquum'* and his thoughts turned to Siri, he pictured her as a blue faerie and he was begging her to make him a real boy.

His mind filled with crazy images, riding a rickety cart through a funhouse of a cheap dingy carnival, every room a different scene, the madhouse of random rooms feeding his random thoughts, fractals and hidden proportions that were felt but not seen, all was distorted as he drifted into surrealistic dream.

Seeking answers from oracles, the number thirteen kept flashing through his mind, the number thirteen, the new creation, the Mazzaloth of our future reality. Christ and his twelve disciples, thirteen. The Serpent Bearer Ophiuchus, the thirteenth zodiac.

Nine, Three, One... Thirteen.

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He dreamed he was walking into Utomere's library. He was stealthily moving around the bookshelves looking for some kind of clue. He was suspicious and he knew Utomere must be hiding something, there were just too many strange coincidences happening and Utomere was the one who had given him that weird book to read.

Something did not feel right. He pulled books from the shelves and opened cabinets but he could not find anything. He looked in Utomere's desk drawers, nothing so far, but when he pulled out the top drawer he saw what looked like a tarot card. Number thirteen, death rode a pale horse.

He stared at the card, DEATH, no that's not what it was. It feels different, more like gnosis, a promise of immortality. He went out to the hall and looked up at the picture on the wall of the landing. The same star that was in the picture above was mirrored on the floor of the foyer below, it was an eight-pointed star rotated at twenty-two degrees that was inlaid in the marble medallion. Two cubed equals eight, a Chet, a perfect ashlar.

He went back into the library and looked behind the star map drawing of the constellation Draco hanging on the wall expecting to find a hidden safe behind it, nothing. He looked at the navigational instruments again but he did not see anything out of place. On the bar was a decorative wood music box, he lifted the lid and it played a tune, 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star...' He closed it.

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He went to the pictures on the wall of the star constellations Ursa Minor and Ursa Major, looking behind them he found nothing. He walked back over to the star map of the Draco constellation. As Above, So Below. He moved the corner of the rug and underneath he saw a trapdoor. He lifted the ring, pulled the door back and went down the wooden ladder.

He turned on the light switch and saw that it was a storage closet with files, books and an assortment of items on the shelf and table, but mostly maps with geometrical matrixes drawn on them. On the wall above the storage shelf was a drawing of an eight-pointed star combined with a five-pointed star, thirteen.

He moved closer to the shelf and saw an ankh shaped box with a gold ankh emblem on the top adorning its centre, he opened it, there was a scroll inside and he unrolled it.

The parchment had the words SECRET EYE FLAME and underneath the letters it said A FLEECE MYSTERE, there was an image of a flaming eye inside the middle of a rhombus. The tune echoed in his mind, 'Like a Diamond in the Sky...'

At the top of the rhombus it said 'Tri Chao'. He pondered a moment and concluded that it was an anagram for 'Chariot' and as he focused on the image of the eye the symbol wavered and the eye caught on fire burning a hole in the parchment where the picture had been.

He beheld a thirteen-pointed star that became a light vehicle, a merkabah, a chariot for flight. His vision changed

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suddenly, he transformed into a butterfly but he was both participant and observer, he began to flutter, flying through an egg of pink and blue halos of light breaking free from his chrysalis.

He flew through the fission of colours and entered into a chimerical landscape up to the entrance of the thirteenth aeon with a panorama of waterfalls, air castles, lush gardens, deep forests and still lakes.

They all must be an illusion made from magick air, the colours so bright and too vivid to be real.

He floated on the enchanted stillness and landed on a verdant leaf sailing across a pool. A dragonfly hovered, wings beating as with song, everything vibrated with energy from the sun.

He morphed into a man once more and was disheartened from his loss of wings, and he walked through the sunlit valley across fields of flowers and grasses green.

He approached a white city, the dimensions he knew and measured, then entered through the peristyle into a room with a nine-pointed star in the centre, and at each point a being did sit, glowing white, they were the Makers of Wings shining from afar.

“Welcome, enter in!” they said in a universal voice and pointed for him to pass through the hall into another inner chamber. The number was Nine.

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He continued on to another marble hall and inside to his elation housed three more beings clothed in aethereal light sitting upon marble seats at each point of a triangle imbedded in the floor. A trinity and three rivals, a mirror of those equal and those opposed. They motioned for him to enter through two columns in invitation. The number was Three.

So full of joy he walked between the two towering pillars and in the centre of this magnificent hall he saw a throne looking like a dot within a circle, a two-surfaced teleplane obverse and reverse but the seat was empty and he felt such sadness wanting so much to see this being.

Then suddenly from within the city of light harmonic tones came flooding in like voices of fire and they began speaking as one choir, "The throne is yours exalted king, just waiting for your coronation. Come back with crown, the fleece of gold, there is a place for all in these mansions. Man is like a sleeping lion, a sphinx lying in illusion, wake up, arise and come rejoice in the reunion." The number was, is and will be, One.

The voices ceased and the light faded as Alec melted into blackness to find himself turning in bed and sinking into a deep and dreamless slumber.

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Ghosts In The Attic

It was snowing heavily when Alec awoke to the sound of a *Rooster's* cry. It was probably upset at being shut away in a barn without any sun. After showering he threw on a pair of jeans and a fisherman's sweater then went downstairs for breakfast and especially coffee. He was sorting out the bizarre fantasies that he was experiencing each night from his reality which was even stranger, having more implausible entanglements with all of these concomitances. He thought he was having a Bermuda Triangle type of phenomenon or even epiphenomenon happening with all of these outré occurrences, either that or a psychotic episode.

There was one thing he knew he must do first. Alec went to Utomere's library. Going straight up to the star map of the constellation Draco on the wall, he looked down. There was no rug, no trapdoor and the solid floor was plainly visible.

Had there been a rug there before? Or did the dream just seem so real? The dream of the Querent in the book must have seeded his thoughts of a trapdoor. The story was resonating waves of suggestion that was affecting him.

Was it just the Trickster of my own imagination?

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He did not dare open Utomere's desk drawer to see if the tarot card was there, it would be rude and unforgivable to invade his privacy. As he started walking out of the library to the dining room he also noticed there was no music box on the bar. He shook his head and laughed at himself, he was hoping for something concrete but there was no proof to validate his dream, he felt daffish.

Meinard and Utomere tried to keep the conversation light all morning, they knew Alec was having a hard time digesting the information he received last night on how Utomere obtained the *'Tales of Argot'* from the antique shop, they could tell the gears and wheels of Alec's mind were spinning in turmoil, his clock had lost its rhythm and the springs which drove it might burst at any moment. Instead of telling him the unbelievable, perhaps they should let Alec discover it for himself.

Alec climbed the dark stairway to the attic. Utomere and Meinard sent him on an errand giving him a list of maps to find. He now held that list in his hand. When he entered through the attic door his enthusiasm sank. The large room was entirely packed with furniture, storage trunks, boxes, shelves, pictures, old lamps, a coatrack and other miscellaneous items. It would take him all day to rifle through this clutter. He looked at the horde of objects in the room then looked down at his list feeling like a kid on a scavenger hunt and hoped the maps would all be together in one place.

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He moved through the room deciding on where he should start first and made a plan of action, he would attack it from the left side of the room and move around to the right. He noticed there was a star map on the wall of the Seven Sisters, the Pleiades, and underneath the constellation was writing that said, 'Heart of Taurus the Aleph of Creation'.

He began opening boxes digging through their contents methodically, he was halfway around the room when he got to the storage trunks and found all but one of the maps. He had to unroll each one to check them against the list and then tediously roll them back up again.

He walked to the large armoire and opened each of the drawers and found the last map on the list, it was also rolled up in a tube but that wasn't what caught his eye. Lying there beside the map was an old photograph of what looked like Utomere and Leucy. He turned the photo over and read the handwriting scrawled on the back. *Impossible!*

Just when Alec thought he could not take any more aberrant situations this struck him in the head like a ton of gold bullion, a great universal mind-fuck sent a quake through multiple dimensions to shatter the infinitesimal grain of his existence and the gods must be laughing at him because on the reverse of the photograph it read, 'Utomere and Leucothea Nymandus, St. Petersburg 1902'. They appeared to be the same age in the photo as they were now, in their seventies.

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He dug through the drawer in a frenzy and found more photos. Some had just Utomere alone in them but the name on the back was different.

Was he using an alias like some foreign spy? And what of Leucothea? The photos could not be of Utomere's parents. It was them, both of them, and they could not be that old!

Alec sat on the floor astonished looking out at the dull grey light from the small window, snow had gathered around its corners and edges. He stared vacuously watching the snow fall in the unnerving silence of the attic and could not accept any of these farcical shenanigans, he was so high-strung he could snap.

This must be an elaborate put-up job, Bastian! It was Bastian, my father and Ian's idea to make me help Meinard, they all insisted!

He shook his head back and forth as if in a self-congratulatory cranial applause for finding a logical answer to the seemingly supernatural circumstances when shit hit the fan.

As he rotated his head he spotted the unthinkable. An old painting was against the wall partially exposed, the remainder half hidden behind boxes. "No!" Alec screamed out and walked towards the far right wall yelling again, "No!"

He pulled the old painting away from the boxes and almost threw it across the room out of horror and anger. It was a painting of a man in late mediaeval dress around the fifteenth century having a beady-eyed gaze and wore an acrimonious grin

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exposing both rows of his teeth like a smiling demonic skull. It was Dieter von Ritter. Alec felt like he was being haunted by ghosts.

He slammed the painting face down on the attic floor. He'd had enough of that creepy-ass sneer. Alec began to laugh hysterically almost frothing at the mouth. This was just too much. Tears came to his eyes because he was laughing so hard. He had to get out of here. This was a madhouse. He did not know how he was going to face them, what should he say? He picked up the maps and had intermittent outbursts of demented fits of laughter as he walked down the stairs.

When Alec was crossing the hall towards the library, he heard Leucy's voice echoing from another room, she was humming a tune, *'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star...'*

Alec's mind folded. That had put him over the edge and he started to get a feral look in eyes and began smiling wide, eerily like Dieter. *What, can she read my thoughts? Does she know my dreams?*

He walked into the library throwing the maps on the floor and laughed. The doctor handed him a tall glass of Scotch and led him to a chair like an invalid patient as Utomere tried to explain to Alec about the **Invisible Aula Order Members**.

"Maybe more Scotch will help!" Alec barked out belligerently and clearly already drunk but got up to pour

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himself another large straight drink anyway and then stumbled a little as he sat back down in the chair.

They told Alec that they suspected that the owner of the antique shop, Cygnus Burnett Lowly, must be one of the Order and that Alec had clearly been selected for some purpose and must break past this barrier, choosing acceptance above reason.

“Expand your mind Alec, there is a lot more to see with your mind than your eyes,” Meinard said.

“What? Like remote viewing or a telepathic shared pool of knowledge accessible to all?” Alec asked sarcastically, mocking him to the point of being rude, his head was spinning after guzzling the entire glass.

“The serpent must feed the eagle,” Utomere added.

“What are you saying? Do you mean the feathered serpent, Quetzalcoatl?” Alec asked then erupted into nonstop fits of Scotch-induced belly laughter.

Utomere being his ever-evasive self just smiled at Alec without answering, knowing that the meaning ran a little deeper than the verbal expression.

It was late afternoon when the conspirators finished lecturing Alec. He was so inebriated that he was putty in their hands agreeing to anything. They fed him then put him in bed to

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sleep off the Scotch. The doctor left something by his bedside table for his predicted hangover and a few bottles of water.

Alec awoke with a headache as prophesised by Meinard and took the offering on the table with the water greedily. He got out his laptop and knew exactly what gift he was going to buy Leucy, he ordered a burl wood music box with an inlay design on it and picked out the tune to play *'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star...'* He made sure it was gift-wrapped and sent express shipping. He wondered if that would bake her noodle.

His mobile rang. It was his goddess phoning.

"Siri!" Alec answered with relief and longing in his voice. "I've got to get out of here immediately! Too many strange things have been happening that I cannot understand."

"Alec, can you tell me what's wrong? You sound upset," Siri responded with motherly concern in her voice.

He vaguely explained the strange dreams and funny business that was occurring and how he was convinced that there was a conspiracy against him.

Siri pleaded with him, "I'm sure things will sort themselves out, please stay for the last couple of days as you promised. Flow with the rhythm of the tide Alec and all will be revealed. Hang in there, I know it may be hard for you, don't lose hope. Focus on me, my light. Be positive. You have nothing

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to worry about or fear. You need to be strong to catch me when I fall. All angels must earn their wings.”

Alec was in tears, his head hurt, his heart ached, he was miffed, distraught and really hungover. “Siri, I need you! Please come to me I beg you.”

“I promise you Alec I am here for you always and I will be with you soon. Please trust your navigators to guide you. Know that I love you. Now try to get some sleep, you are not yourself, you’re full of poison. You had better drink more water to wash it from your system. I love you Alec, goodnight.”

“Okay, I’ll do it for you Siri. I must be a Fool for love!” Alec rang off and curled himself up into a ball, he felt awful. He did feel poisoned. He fell back asleep.

Alec slept for several hours. It was after nine in the evening when he woke up and guzzled another bottle of water. A dinner tray had been left for him consisting of Ta'meya, Imam Bayildi, Kabsa, Fattoush, and Tumr Bel Simsim, it was cold but he devoured it nonetheless and then got into the shower.

He thought of multiverses, string theory, supersymmetry and the holographic principle. *Did they really exist?*

Nothing mattered anymore, only Siri. She was the reason for his existence. He got back into bed and drank another bottle of water feeling horribly dehydrated and picked up his nemesis, the ‘*Tales of Argot*’ and began to read.

Apollyon - The Destroyer

It was 9:11 AM when I awoke in a cold sweat with images of the angel of the bottomless pit still in my mind. Clearly I had experienced another night terror. I got into the shower and hurried to get out of the bathroom and as far away from that swathed mirror as I could. I dressed quickly and decided I would leave the house and go to the office preferring people to phantasms. So much for me wanting to work at home.

I only worked part of the day in the office then took my car to the dealer's body shop to get the bumper fixed and drove off in a rental car heading back home. Tomorrow I would take the train to a different university library but that could change at any moment as I may have to go to Portugal to assume the assignment of a co-worker and I was on standby awaiting my boss's final decision.

All day my mind was whirling with random thoughts about reality and this plastic world we live in, being fed violence and rubbish by the media that is owned by greedy bankers, run by sleazy lawyers and influenced by dirty politicians. There is something wrong with the world, it's like a spinning top or a carnival ride trying to simulate reality, I just wanted the earth to stop so I can get off this mad ride, it was making me sick.

It was still daylight when I returned home and I did not see anything in the car mirrors. I remembered in *'The Levoriqum'* it said that the demon appeared by day like smoke or mist and only took its true form by night. I still thought it was just an illusion of the mind but I could no longer take these pendulum swings of horror then relief, I needed a steady rhythm of emotion and wellbeing.

I worked at my desk until evening, ate dinner then went upstairs to the bathroom and having a burst of bravado, I lifted the sheet to peek in the mirror daring the entity to show itself and sick to death of doing without a mirror.

The only thing I saw was me, my appearance was haggard either from loss of sleep or not using the mirror to groom and comb my hair, I really did look ghastly. Fuck! I had a huge zit, there was a giant white carbuncle on my face, no wonder people were giving me weird looks when I was speaking with them, their facial expressions wincing as if they were going to gag, of course they were grossed out, it was full of pus and needed to be lanced!

I showered and got into bed to read, definitely starting to prefer the comfort of the blankets and pillows rather than sitting in the study. I opened *'The Levoriqum'*.



The Levoriquum

V.I.T.R.I.O.L.

Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum
Lapidem

The beauty of the smooth polished stone temple astounded him and even with just the minuteness glow of his torchlight shining on it he recognised its perfection. He was in awe of its craftsmanship, truly the creation of a master builder. He did not understand why anyone would hide the glory of this edifice and construct that monstrosity over it.

The knight approached in reverence and entered, he held up the torch and espied three pillars at the back. There was no altar. The middle pillar had leaf and floral embellishments on it insinuating it was a tree. A statue of a man was affixed to it, two snakes climbed up the pillar entwining around the man joined in union.

Giant wings spread out from the statue behind his back like Maat and the man held a stone sphere of the world in his hands. The left pillar had fallen, forgotten in these chthonic depths like a lost soul trapped in a stygian darkness of wakeless sleep, the onyx surface absorbed the firelight and the knight touched the cold stone as if he were caressing a woman that must be kept sacrosanct. At the top of the pillar a large shape of a moon made from silver was inlaid in the black stone, like the stars at night it shone.

The right pillar was made of pure white marble, not a vein or blemish could be seen. It stood tall and erect, and touting proudly at its height was an inlay of a golden metal sun.

The knight took the left-handed path down the hall and saw that there was a door in the floor to a sepulchre. To defeat his enemy, he must know his enemy, even if he himself was the foe. He must go deeper still and he opened the door to descend into the crypt. Bronze casted in images of angels, swords, skulls and crowns adorned the coffins made for kings. They stood in rows forcing his procession down an aggrandised road of death.

The knight passed by with his torch burning low and proceeded through the undercroft maze of osseous corpses that made up the walls of bones. At last he reached a wooden door with a rusted ring and cobwebs. He pulled it open and found himself in a cavern. There were many tunnels left and right but only one was in the middle, he ventured forward and suspired

with weary burden. The knight stopped abruptly harkening to a sound of water trickling upon rocks and water cascading down. He followed the welcomed babble bringing a vision of a cool spring in his mind that he associated with things above the ground.

It led him to the base of an ancient tree whose roots were drinking deeply from an underground stream. A small wooden house was built underneath its immense limbs and a light was shining through a round glass window as a lighthouse beacon guiding a vessel into a safe harbour from a midnight sea. He crossed a narrow bridge and knocked thrice upon the door and smelt a savoury cooking odour wafting in the air.

A gnome had answered, he was short in height and jolly, having a white close-cropped beard and balding head but for a fringe of white hair around it. He wore a golden chain with an inverted pyramid around his neck and by that sign the knight knew him as Ordis whom Arcatius had spoken of. His button nose was pointed up, his cheeks blushed like a cerise rose but his smile was genuine and sunny, it filled the knight with such exulted hope that he bowed to him in humble fashion.

“Welcome Knight, I am glad you have come, your journey is near the end. Keep up your courage and surely you will find your way back home. I am Ordis, but that you know since you must have come from the keep of Arcatius.”

“It is an honour to meet you Ordis and you are a welcome sight indeed, your light shining through this darkness makes me glad inside. How can you be so cheerful in this dreary place?”

“Ha!” he chuckled. “I choose to flow with the rhythm and when thoughts of dread fill my head I change my mind to its opposite feeling. I do not let woe bring me down, like winter into spring things will change and begin again.” Ordis laughed again, it was part of his speech accentuating his words with laughter in between.

“Now put that torch out, I will grab my lantern, we must make haste,” Ordis said as he ran into the small dwelling and came out with a tall lantern and a long coil of rope that he wore across his neck and chest.

“But Arcatius said I must get some sacred oil for my lamp and that none other will do inside the pit,” the knight explained to the gnome sounding worried.

“That is precisely where we intend to travel but you will need to start a different kind of fire to obtain it,” Ordis said cryptically and winked at the knight as his cheeks blushed with an even redder shade. “Now into the boat with you, we will travel down the stream to the swamp.”

The knight obeyed and they paddled down the stream that kept winding left and right, snaking around slick grassy banks. The two finally came upon the silent bogs where *ignis fatuus*

hovered above the islands of decomposing humus. Their boat could go no further so they brought it to the shore pulling it through the clumps of algae floating in the blackened waters. The gnome tied it up and set off down a path that paralleled the marsh holding his lantern above his head, his small arm raised to full extent while his stalky legs jogged forth in a steady plodding rhythm.

They travelled through the darkness filled with the foetor of rotting vegetation until it gradually became scented with pine and night blossoms as they reached a clear underground lake. They walked around the perimeter of the shore and came upon a fresh spring with banks of soft lichen and creeping vines. It was there that Ordis halted and bid the knight to stay and rest.

Ordis returned with an armful of blossoms and handing them to him, the knight gave the gnome a puzzled gander then held them to his nose smelling their sweetness nonetheless.

“For the Lady,” Ordis simply said, with saucy smile and rosy cheeks of red and he disappeared before the knight could lift his head.

The knight stood abandoned upon the water’s edge bearing flowers when he heard a soft cherubic tune sing out with a fluid voice rippling like a flowing brook, and to his delightful surprise a beautiful Naiad appeared by his side.

“Hello my Knight, I am Cymeriel, daughter of the waters here. What brings you to me, your arms laden with offerings?”

The knight was seduced by the timbre of her voice and stammered his words, awestricken by her loveliness, “I have come to challenge a beast in a gorge devoid of light, a dwelling like that of Erebus which my lamp will only suffice, but without the oil I will lose my sight in that blackish hell of night.”

“Fear not my Knight, for I can provide you with this, everything has a price you know, the first payment is your kiss, but know this and do not fail in your strength, to receive the oil you need you must not defile me with your manly seed.”

Cymeriel took the offering of flowers from the knight and placed them in her hair, she stroked his cheek with her silky caress and leaned in to take a kiss from his lips, hard and long she extracted payment and found the knight was eager, a fiery wine flowed through his veins as waves of plasma coursed up his spine.

She shed his garments exposing his skin and then removing hers, she inserted him in working his blade with powerful strokes like a faerie using a magick wand until the dew divine glinted through her eyes as if shining from an electrical sun. She stopped and dismounted his erected pillar to remain clean and pure with pride and kissed him twice atop his head, handing him an alabaster jar full of *ros coeli*. The knight took the gift and thanked her with an amative smile.

“I beg you to come with me,” he said to her becharmed.

Cymeriel just smiled sadly and said with a dreamy voice of a quiet stream, “I cannot leave my waters here, it is my river of life and I must stay near, but you must go and do not falter in your quest.” She dressed then kissed him again, only to disappear leaving him with his jar.

When he opened the white box, the smell of heaven brought tears to his eyes, it was a golden pill like royal bee jelly from a celestial queen. He filled his lamp with the nectar and retrieved his clothing then walked along the slope wondering where the gnome had been.

Ordis appeared from an outcrop of granite with a widened smile amid his white beard and he led the knight down a path that ended at the side of a mountain and entered into a cave lighting the way with his tall lantern. Strange crystals grew aglow with phosphorescent light and stalactites mirrored stalagmites above and below. Bats flew around them but Ordis stood firm and with his hand on his lantern he took them down even deeper to a hole of the blackest of pits. It was here the knight must go where fear as a reaper cut through to the bone.

Ordis tied a rope to one of the conoid shaped stones and threw it down into the nefarious abyss.

“This is your path Knight. I have guided you thus far. Now listen carefully to all that I say. Use your sword to make a

spark and light your lamp, follow the tunnel to the cauldron of fire and throw in your yellow stone, it will melt into liquid gold and reform. Insert the ruby of the reborn sun into the scarab's hands at the top of the key opposite the moonstone at its feet. Then lastly you must unlock the beast from its prison and set it free." Ordis gestured to the knight to enter the black hole.

The knight slid down the rope, in total pitch he dared to descend, and with a falling sensation he hit the bottom then called up to the gnome with frantic breaths, "I have made it down but there is something here, I can feel its presence lurk." The knight's voice vibrated through the volcano tube, the sound warping as images of beasts started to fill his head.

"Light the lamp! Good luck and farewell!" Ordis replied dulcetly.

The knight began to strike his sword to create an energising spark, a mercurial flame ignited as he lit the sacred nectar of his lamp and it burned with a colourful fire. Onward traversing the cavern tubes he entered a chamber lambent with red fire, a cauldron of lava boiled in the pit of black pumiceous stone like a lake afire below Hell's igneous throne. The valiant knight approached the intense heat with caution depositing his golden stone into the molten pool and watched in wonder as the nugget melted then vitrified reforming into a blood red jewel.

It floated on top awaiting his grasp, he tested the heat with his hand hovering above it and to his amazement the fire

was cool. He could not fathom nor reason how this could be but he reached into the pool to gain his reward. He fitted the jewel in the scarab key and it started to glow, the stones were ablaze both moonstone and sunstone, like a red king courting a white queen upon its wings of gold, or that of a bee holding a red rose in its hands and a white rose in its feet empowered by light to make the pollen taste sweet.

He moved forward through the long Cimmerian tunnel fraught with hopeless night and with his sacred fire guiding his way the knight came upon a wall of frozen black ice. He blanched at the horrendous sight behind the ice where his cursed bane did hiss and claw, and as he stared into its reptilian eyes the demon howled a baleful call chilling the blood in his now suspended heart that suddenly stopped and froze but then quickly resumed its beat. The black dragon lifted its steel-like talons and scratched away at the wall of ice in fury trying to break free while exposing threatening fangs and grimacing with malicious glee.

Was this the beast the gnome said to release with the key? I see no lock, how could this be? The Zargozvod continued to claw at the ice and it wailed in a vulturine cry while focusing on its prey, the yellow predatory eyes locked onto the knight to execute his demise. In a blast of panic the knight unsheathed his sword and charged the wall in an impulsive ad hoc assault smashing the ice as if it were glass. A giant crystal crab glittered like stars in his mind and he was lost in space and time.

The dragon erupted with intent to devour and the knight was helpless against the great demon's power, the reptilian arms gripped around him so tight, their bodies convolved like two snakes entwined, the energy pulsed from one to another clashing like warring Titans as the earth began to shutter.

A great quake ripped through the cavern rending rock apart and it clove through the knight nearly bursting his heart. The black dragon clawed him, wings beating like thunder and breathed out a great fire burning him asunder.

The knight felt himself floating like stardust in the air then something merged with him, some particles unseen sifted with his and mixed with his inner being. The beast was there within him causing a feeling of unrest and with the demon now inside him he felt as a soul possessed.



The sound of breaking glass startled me. *'The Levoriqum'* had fallen down on the floor. My heart was beating in fright as I looked towards my bathroom door and saw the glow of the nightlight shining under the crack, a shadow paced back and forth. I froze in terror as I heard the sound of crunching

glass under its feet. The mirror broke. The fallen angel must have come through the mirror! Dear Jove, what am I saying, this is insane! I have to get out of here! It began to chortle in a raptor-esque cry and I heard, *Knock, knock, knock...*

I threw back the covers and fled down the stairs in total panic running out of the front door without any shoes on as I escaped down the street having no objective or destination in mind other than to get the bloody hell out of that haunted house. Still I ran, my bare feet pounding on the concrete pavement, I went into the park and crouched behind some bushes catching my breath and whimpering like a frightened child.

I heard the enervating demon's howl like a great reptilian cry from the Mesozoic era ringing out into the sky. No! It was hunting me. The park was in darkness but for a dim dirty glow emitting from the low wattage streetlights.

I seized up in silence trying not to breathe and listened in the night just waiting for my soul to be devoured by this thing. Slowly I began walking hunched over ducking to use the brush and hedges as cover to hide me.

It cried out again, its high-pitched call bellowing through the air and my spine tingled from tension, my nerves firing with fear from the alien sound of that wail. It was netherworldly, unreal. I crawled furtively to the end of the park and ran around the block to the back of my house. Cowering in the dirt planters made me feel degraded like some fugitive from the law.

I snuck around the side of my house and entered through the front door, locking the door and deadbolt behind me. I followed my routine of checking all the windows and doors. It was no longer paranoia. It was survival.

I surveyed the entire downstairs rooms and garage but found nothing disturbed. The guest bedroom and workout room upstairs were still shut up tight and everything was in order. I moved to my bedroom, the door was flung wide open, the bathroom door was also open and the sheet was on the floor, pieces of glass were tracked across the threshold onto the carpet.

This cannot be real. I looked into the bathroom and saw the mirror was indeed shattered, the bare wall was exposed in the middle and framed by a rectangular boarder of mirrored fragments, my expression of disbelief appearing in each one of the fractured pieces. My mind had become as disunited and broken as the reflective shards.

I thought of ringing my neighbours or maybe spending the night at a friend's flat but it was too late to ring up and invite myself over in my overstrung state, the story I would tell would be too implausible at this hour and I could think of no other reasonable excuse, they might suggest I go on meds if I told them the truth. If I needed to go to Oxfordshire tomorrow I would take the crowded train and if I was ordered to go onto Portugal I'd be spending the night at a hotel, either way it would at least get me away from this bedlam for a while.

I needed a weapon so I scrounged around the house to create an arsenal. Was sleeping with an armoury of knives safe? I didn't care at this point. I would sleep with the cricket bat as well and I was also considering throwing cleaning fluid into its eyes like an acid. I was becoming *non compos mentis*. Was I fighting an illusion or was it real? If it truly were some spawn from Hell, would any weapon kill it?

I lay there in silence looking up at the ceiling. It was six cubed, two sixteen am. I thought about the hidden temple in '*The Levoriquum*'. The middle pillar with the winged man wrapped in snakes reminded me of the Rod of Hermes, a Caduceus.

I thought of the crucifixion story, a middle pillar between a good thief and a bad thief, opposite polarities, black and white. A biblical passage came to mind, '*To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life*'. I wondered if all this had something to do with the Pistis Sophia, the Zohar or Mithraism.

Oh but come on, there is definitely something fishy about this story, sex with a Naiad? What kind of sleazy Tantric encounter was that? This incunable was a joke and I was making an ass out of myself by continuing to be drawn in by it.

It made me ashamed and I recalled the last time I felt such disgrace was when I was publically humiliated in a swanky upmarket restaurant that apparently had janitorial issues. I was trying to be suave, sexy and sophisticated in front of my date

hoping of course to have a passionate night of great sex after dinner. I excused myself to use the loo and when I came back out I was sauntering with self-confidence trying to look cool and impressive when I heard a loud burst of laughter erupt from the people in the restaurant.

My date was braying, sounding like some farm animal with added grunting and snorting, laughing so hard that they farted audibly then started making screeching noises because they could hardly catch their breath, the entire restaurant turned to see what all the raucous was about which only ignited the patrons into riotous snickers and cackling.

I had absolutely no clue what was going on until someone pointed at my foot, apparently I had dragged a long streamer of stained toilet paper down the restaurant aisle in between the tables. It had somehow stuck on the bottom of my shoe with someone else's crap. I had never been so fucking embarrassed in my life, I was mortified and felt like a damn idiot! I felt the same way about this incunable, as if these eldritch occurrences made me the brunt of some tasteless joke played by a *Trickster*!

This incunable must be causing my hallucinations of this strange demonic creature. I was tired from running, my adrenaline was gone, my energy level had bottomed out and my nerves were shot, I felt numb. I was feeling full of self-pity and fell asleep in my misery.

I was dreaming I was an old pedlar, a gypsy travelling from land to land. How many times have I been back here? A gypsy reborn throughout the ages again and again. Night was advancing and I strained my eyes to see the road ahead but the last of the day's light had already faded long ago into a sea of darkness suffused with a deep shade of cerulean that blended earth and sky distorting my perception enough to be unable to distinguish between the two.

I would travel no further on this moonless night. I led my horse-drawn waggon off the dusty road. The heat of the day clung to me in a film of sweat and dirt, and I was thankful for the sudden drop in temperature that usually occurred in this desert climate even though the chill at night was often severe.

I splashed through a shallow creek and halted at the base of eroded sandstone hills that ranged for several miles on the border of this bleak land. I tied the horse to the rear of the covered waggon then climbed into the back of it to rummage through the many sacks of wares and supplies from which I produced some hay for the horse, a small bag of oats with a sugar beet tossed in and a bucket for water which I filled from the nearby stream. The animal was grateful for the offerings and I patted it affectionately.

Inside the canopied waggon a tan coloured lion lay stretched out upon a floral tasselled pillow drowsing in a lazy slumber like some lackadaisical prince whose birthright and

fortune allowed him the luxury of such idleness. The lion's name was Naxx. I had no idea how I knew its name, where it came from or why it was here with me. The lion never spoke but stared at me as if it could read my thoughts.

I scratched Naxx behind his ears, the beast closed his eyes as he savoured each stroke of the welcomed touch and when I stopped the affections ceasing his ecstasy he seemed quite annoyed that no more caresses were forthcoming. I took out an old cooking pot to make a meagre stew which I ate unenthusiastically over a small fire accompanied by a loaf of stale bread and a mug of warm ale.

As the evening wore on distant sounds echoed beyond the hills. I lay blanketed upon the crates in the sheltered waggon fast asleep oblivious to the dissonance that continued throughout the night until Naxx, who had just returned from his nocturnal wanderings, jumped upon my chest with his massive paws and began roaring in low guttural tones.

Startled, I quickly sat up sending Naxx back to the floor as he continued to roar more fervently to get my attention.

“Naxx! You crazy beast.”

I stared down at the lion's lucent eyes and as I came back into full consciousness from my sound sleep I was now intensely aware of strange noises that rang out in the dry night air. I stood up in interest pausing as if to hear more clearly trying to identify any prospective threat. Naxx sat at my feet then roared at the

door of the waggon as if beckoning me to follow. Donning a cloak and taking the lantern, I followed the lion out of the waggon into the chill of the night hardly able to see the big cat in front of me, I was about to light the lantern when I heard noises.

The disturbance grew louder as I climbed up the hill and crouched silently behind a large rock formation that was at the top of the cliff, a broken section of which would have allowed me to view the dry gorge below although not much was visible in the darkness. I felt an intuitive foreboding as if my presence had been perceived and a gallery of grim images like those drawn on sanatorium walls by disturbed minds that witness unspeakable tortures from hellish denizens beset me with fear, it hung on my nerves and I knew some ill-fate would befall me if I did not evade whatever it was it. Something lurked out there in the crepuscular desolation and a shadow of dread seemed to waft across the valley, searching, sensing, as if a thing alive. I could feel it.

Naxx stood by the grainy rock wall opposite the cliff's edge and sounded another low cry. Nervous that the noise might echo down to the entity below, I quickly moved over to the lion in an attempt to quiet its cries but Naxx disappeared through a hollow in the face of the hills and growled again from within the crack of the cavern. It was impossible to see inside the dark hole. I was frustrated and all I could think about was getting back to the waggon and slipping away from the area.

I withdrew a small tinderbox from my pocket and lit the lantern. I held up the light to the crack, eroded layers of siltstone

surrounded the hole appearing as though the rains of many ages had drawn a thin curtain of sediment over what was once a much larger entrance. The lion must have slunk in contorting his body to squeeze inside, but I did not want to try to snake through it on my belly.

Seizing a large rock I began knocking it against the edge of the aperture crumbling the surrounding soft siltstone with ease until I widened the opening into a much larger crawl space. Debris was sent rolling and clattered against the clay shale that littered the hillside. I cringed and held my breath while listening intently for a reaction to the sliding rocks wondering if that thing out there heard it. I waited in silence. Nothing. I exhaled in a wave of relief and crawled into the cavern beyond.

The space was bigger than I realised, I could stand up to my full stature. Miscellaneous rubble was scattered around, some protruded out of the soft dirt, no doubt from a mudslide.

The still air was much colder inside the cavern and it had a musty smell, the odour of damp earth and dry rot that reminded me of a tomb. An intense wave of sadness flooded through me.

I did not know who I was, where I was or where I belonged, just some vagabond roaming endlessly on and on. I was startled when Naxx cried out and I disengaged from my self-induced melancholy. I heard the echo of Naxx's low roar from a tunnel below. It was accessed by a crude staircase made of stone that descended straight down from the floor of the cave. The steps

were covered with a layer of powdery dirt and my footing slipped more than twice as I juggled the lantern with one hand and tried to keep my balance with the other to avoid plummeting into the darkness below.

It was not long before I reached the bottom. I examined the surroundings rotating the lantern and saw the great lion digging at something in a small niche of a stone wall. To the right was a blocked tunnel where a wood door with its top hinge broken was tilted forward so I could see that the passage continued further on ahead but a hill of dried mud had accumulated into a thick barricade at the bottom of the door that still held on to its hinge.

I heard faint noises echoing from the tunnel and they began to grow louder as if someone or something was heading this way. I instantly thought of the thing stalking in the darkness, fear rushed through me and I began to panic.

I focused on Naxx and reached out for him.

“Naxx, let’s go!” I whispered in a reprimanding tone to the lion.

I saw something faintly glowing in the light from the lantern behind a pile of deliberately stacked limestone rocks that had been placed orderly in front of the recess where Naxx was standing. I hurriedly dismantled the crude wall and found a strange metallic object and held it up to the light for a closer look. It was a gold pentadodecahedron. Ad infinitessimum.

I put the intriguing object in my pocket and as I turned around to urge Naxx to leave back up the stairs, I was immobilised with awe. The lion I was looking at now had a human face. It was my face! My head was attached onto its leonine body. The lion became human. The lion became me.

Myself a Horakhty.

The Riddle of the Sphinx was Man. The pyramid appearing atop the sphinx's head was the vault of becoming; the shining sun over the triangular capstone became a fleece over an ark of the deific estate of man. Man becoming God.

I shook my head at the strange illusion to see if the vision would disappear. There was scratching at the broken wood door behind me, I continued to stare at my sphinx-like image and it spoke saying, "HU HU."

Then I jumped when I heard three slow knocks that sounded on the wood door, Knock, knock, knock... it echoed through the tunnel. A shiver ran through me, I looked behind me to see black leathery fingers with long shiny black metallic looking claws reaching around the door trying to gain access. The hand clutched the edge of the wood and began shaking it wildly in an attempt to pry it loose from the mound of mud blocking the door and a loud earsplitting raptorial cry rang out through the tunnel. Again it knocked louder, three slow raps, Knock, knock, knock... It sounded like someone was knocking on the doors of my mind, faraway, yet close.

Knock, knock, knock... I woke up and heard pounding. I was still half lost in the dream of a lion with my face. *Knock, knock, knock...* Oh Jove, that wasn't the dream. That was real. I heard the pounding again, louder, angrier, it was beating on the door.

Knock, knock, knock... I was being hunted at night by this fallen angel.

I got up, crept downstairs and looked out the peephole of the front door and saw a yellow eye with a black vertical slit pupil glowing in the porch light, it was trying to look into the peephole to see inside. I yelled out in frenetic screams. It heard me and banged on the door again.

Knock, knock, knock... The doorknob rattled back and forth, it was trying to get in. I looked back out the peephole and saw the beast, it had moved away from the door and was walking around to the front window of the house and as it turned I saw its black pterodactyl wings.

The words flashed in my mind again, *'To him who knocks it shall be opened.'*

Yeah, what will be opened, the bottomless pit of Hell? I was not the one who was knocking and I'll be dashed if I was going to open that door for this demon, my destroyer.

Now it was scratching at the window trying to get my attention. I could hear it intoning dark words in its alien language. If it could break through the glass in the mirror, why couldn't it break the door down or smash through a window?

Then I realised. It was the knight in '*The Levoriquum*' who broke the ice to release the Zargozvod. No, it could not be possible, I saw the shadowy form of the thing outside my window, and the beast behind me in my bedroom before the mirror was smashed.

Was it a coincidence or was there a correspondence between different dimensions that could causally affect me in this material existence from some psychic plane?

Were there time tears caused by the Montauk Project that allowed other beings into our dimension? Now I was sounding like a lunatic blogger on the internet, humanity's neuro network of the hive mind, but after my experiences I was starting to think that some of the ramblings about these other entities just might be true. Impossible! It was only a story.

I should be laughing but I wasn't. Strange things were happening which I could not rationally explain, and that dream of the sphinx was too outlandish. Was God hidden within his creation? I always thought the riddle had to do with the precessional rotation of the earth through certain constellations, but to see my face morphed onto the lion's body was just too off-the-wall.

Should I just open the door and face that dark angel? No! No way! I went back upstairs with my weapons. I left that blasphemous incunable on the floor by the bed and started packing my suitcase and laptop as well, I needed to leave this place, I'll check into a local hotel just to get away.

After I had calmed down a bit I looked at the incunable on the floor debating whether to pick it up and become ensnared by it once again. If I took it with me would the spawn of Hell follow me?

I was so tempted to discover the meaning of the occult symbolisation that I wanted to finish translating it. Perhaps if I used an Urim and Thummim, a Witch Board or a Magick 8 Ball it could give me some answers. I convinced myself I could always get rid of it or even burn it if I felt endangered.

I grabbed the book with dread then threw it into my satchel with a sick fascination, it was the black hellebore of my literary garden, like taking poison that slowly brought me closer to death each day and I knew this thing meant to kill me but I was obsessed with it.

I thought of the knight in *'The Levoriqum'* and his lewd liaison with the Naiad again and I laughed, this incunable was like spaghettification, it was stretching it!

I went back to bed.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec closed the *'Tales of Argot'*. Life was just a joke, and the joke was on him, but he was not laughing. This whole affair was one grotesque comedy, a mockery of the divine like the satirical works of Lucian of Samosata or Rabelais.

There was no doubt in his mind that the gnome in the incunabulum fit Meinard's description. This could not be a coincidence. He wondered whom the knight was supposed to represent. *What if it's me?* It was inconceivable.

He closed his eyes, the image of a demonic skull and the mediaeval painting of Dieter kept floating through the attic of his mind. The picture faded into grey mists that took the form of grey ghosts, an ennead of phantoms that morphed in and out of ash-grey smoke to retake the shape of human-like forms, wavering and writhing, the nine ghosts swirled in his mind until he followed them to their astral home.

The sky was dark completely overcast and thick with damp fog, it hung in the air obnubilating what the eye could see, a veil disguising this reality. He was in a graveyard, tombs abounded the stark divide of black earth and grey sky. Only the stones remembered the souls long passed, their neglected graves forgotten by mortals lay cracked and tumbled upon the grass.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Descended leaves wet and dead littered the cemetery of dark fuscous trees along with toppled crosses that fell from grace and angelic statues weeping with broken wings lamenting in their fallen state to nevermore behold the eternal light but bound instead spirits of endless night.

He walked through the greyscale graveyard devoid of colour feeling the loss and misery of all those who had suffered. Vaporous spirits with hollow eyes bid him to follow them through plots reposed with dead and backdropped with mausoleums that filled him with anguish, woe and strife for those condemned to earth, rolling over in their grave for another rebirth and ever returning to eternal interment until they summoned the star from her firmament.

The ghosts had halted by an unkept tomb, the headstone fallen and tangled with rotted vines, broken stone chipped off in blocks, the memorial of the name so faint and worn, the faded words a testament no more. Reprobated by heaven, this life forgotten and soul lost, obscured in the mists of this astral fog.

He bent down to read the inscription and knowing the truth he wept. The grave was his own, his name but a whisper on the tombstone face and the salt of his tears dripped back to the earth. A monument nearby towered over his head, a statue depicting Magna Mater in her vault of heaven seemed to take pity on his despondent state with her marble gaze and ubiquitous smile. He was sent to sleep with his head on his stone, a pillow, like Jacob in the stories of old.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

He dreamed within his dream of a ladder rising upward, a point of light shone from above it, he climbed and he climbed ever ascending only to find his endeavours in vain never-ending, it conveyed him to nowhere it led ever on, frustrated he turned around and headed back down.

He came to a deteriorating wall at the back of the cemetery, collapsing stones held up by climbing shrubs that supported its bygone glory.

A great arch was built into the wall covered with carved symbols and a pair of periling statues, dwarfish creatures in size, they were aquatic or reptilian but inhuman, one a male, one a female stood as threshold guardians whether in invitation or warning he could not surmise.

A Porta Alchemica was his only assumption.

He gave the female demon an apple from a tree in the graveyard whose roots had been feeding from the dead bearing fruit from their bones, a ruby red comestible from a putrefied black stone. Like Eve in Eden she shared the fruit resurrected from hyle with the male demon that devoured it edaciously with a gluttonous smile.

Their voices came alive with the juice of the fruit, their frozen stares no longer inert. They commanded him forward to pass through the gate and a doorway opened with a loud clap as if sealing his fate.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

*Hoard*s of anguished faces appeared in a massive cloud of spirits sweeping down out of the night like a gale of grey phantoms, and then the ghosts of dead souls swirled at the portal inviting and enticing his entrance. They pulled him through the veil between the mortal realm and spirit world offering to show him wisdom worth a precious pearl.

As he stepped through the archway into the blackest of regions, there erupted four explosions of blue hellish fire, one top and bottom, one left and right, their sparks flaring outward until they met in conjunction surging his awareness ever higher.

A cross in his mind ignited with current and he was partially awakened beholding blue pomegranates in the vastness of space, like stars in the heavens he was just a spark, an electrical node like an apple in the mind of God, all creations being points of light in an energy web of grace.

He gradually lifted his head from his grave, his tears had dried and hope restored, he raised his eyes to the effigy with the statuesque pose, her form a disguise but never to a bee knowing the scent of a rose. Her smile had altered to a left-sided grin, it seemed so familiar, he tried to recall but the memory escaped him and he lovingly embraced the sight of those lips again.

To him her light shined, in her was his redemption, to leave this density was now his only intention and he longed for the golden ring of ascension.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Lyre Of Intoxication

Alec showered and went downstairs at 8:06 AM to face Utomere and Meinard, they were always up at five in the morning working and today they were all going on a field trip. It was time to talk and he would listen.

They had a deep discussion and Alec's eyes were opened to many things, he finally began to understand the work they were performing and once his barriers were broken down he became fascinated by it. Knowledge had been put right in front of his face but he had been blind without having understanding. He was trying to digest things slowly.

"The only way to beat the devil Alec is to raise the devil and bring it into the light," Utomere said offering him advice to help him combat his demon.

Alec nodded. He was more relaxed today accepting things that normally went against his creed.

Meinard had Alec review the sacred geometry grids drawn on the plans of architectural structures getting him acquainted with the intricate geometrical proportions within the buildings and establishing eight corners within the vault of space.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

After breakfast they set off to visit several churches, a basilica and an archabbey in the area, even Leucy joined them.

Alec sat in each building interpreting the symbols while admiring the sacred geometry within the structures seeing an eye of Ra and an eye of Isis. The chief headstone that becomes the corner, the place of honour in the building of God was the upper triangle of the rhombus in man, like the pyramid with the shining capstone of his illuminated mind or the axis of the mound with the crown chakra ablaze with enlightening fire. *Mons Magorum Invisibilis*. It was 3:21 PM.

The winter night air was cold. It was late in the evening when they returned to the house in Leányfalu after having dinner at a restaurant in Budapest. Alec would be leaving soon so they made a small celebration of it. Holiday decorations adorned the city and it made for a festive evening.

Alec laughed at himself, he thought he would never survive his stay here and now he was glad for the visit, he had learned something and for that he was ever grateful. To him it was like an odyssey of the heart, the blooming of his mystic rose resonating with harmony of universal accord.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

He was brushing his teeth in the bathroom before he went to bed when he heard his mobile ring over the running water, *Siri* was his only thought as he ran to the phone on the bedside table with toothpaste still in his mouth, he looked at the caller ID. *Shit!* It was von Ritter.

“Yes Dieter?” Alec answered suspiciously, knowing that if the guy read his mind he probably knew about every phone call and conversation he had with *Siri*.

“Good evening Mr Nachton, I hope your stay in Hungary has been educational,” Dieter said in a mocking tone.

Alec immediately thought of the painting in the attic, Dieter would have known that he saw it. “What can I do for you von Ritter?” Alec asked sarcastically.

“Nothing Mr Nachton, I am phoning about what I have done for you. I just emailed you your flight schedule and the address of your new property, a car will be waiting for you at Glasgow Airport to take you to your new home which I trust you will find most accommodating. I will be waiting for you there when you arrive. I hope the remainder of your stay in Budapest is just as illuminating,” Dieter said caustically.

“Thank you Dieter, I do appreciate your help and I apologise for being callous,” Alec confessed feeling a little guilty for being cross. The man had come to his rescue after all.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

“Do not worry Mr Nachton, I know you were hoping it was someone else phoning, I heard the disappointment in your voice. Well, goodnight and I will see you very soon,” Dieter said in an off-putting tone.

How does he know everything? Alec thought.

After finishing in the bathroom he got out his laptop to check his email from Dieter and then he phoned Siri to give her his flight information so she knew when he would be arriving in Scotland, and also his new address and home phone number. He told her that he would ring her once he arrived.

He wanted to speak with her for hours just to listen to the sound of her voice but they finally rang off. Alec was excited. He would be with her soon.

He opened up the *‘Tales of Argot’* and started to read.

Mirage In A Desert Of Dreams

My phone rang at 6:12 AM. I would not go to Oxfordshire today but take the place of my co-worker who had mysteriously disappeared in France. The entire office was a little freaked out over it. The company was dealing with the authorities as well as my co-worker's distraught family and they had assigned me to resume his work until he was found.

Fortunately I had all of his notes on the project he was working on. He had saved the data daily onto the server while in the field and additionally had a backup drive in his office so I was able to pick up the baton and move forward with the research for the client. Thrice saved is thrice wise. It also gave my employer information to provide the police of the last known place he had visited besides his hotel. My co-worker had already collected the threads of information in France, so the next destination on the list was Portugal.

My personal opinion on his disappearance was that he either met some French girl and was having an affair or he was mugged and his body was floating somewhere in the river Seine. His laptop and belongings were not found at the hotel. The secretary in the office suggested alien abduction or joining the Foreign Legion trying to keep the mood light rather than focus

on any sinister conclusions. My employer had already booked my flight. I was going to Lisbon to visit the archives and then on to Tomar to follow a few threads linked to the Knights Templar. My car was still being repaired so I would drive the rental car and leave it at the airport. I vacuumed up the broken glass from the carpet before I left.

After arriving in Portugal I checked into the hotel in Lisbon and drove a rental car to keep my appointment at the university. I was so glad to get off that plane from hell! The fat guy next to me must have eaten before the flight because he belched out an Italian deli of garlic, bell pepper and onion the entire trip. It was so raunchy they would probably have to ventilate the plane. I had to turn the overhead air jet on high and aim it at him to blow the upchuck of blended pepperoncini and antipasto exhaust away from me.

But that was not the worst of it, he was so obese he couldn't fit in his own seat and he kept flipping up the arm separator to encroach his overflowing fat ass on my space. He was like the blob, if I scooted over further in my seat so his blubbery thigh would not touch me, his avoirdupois would spread taking up every inch so it could have free rein. Then he took off his shoes and his sweaty feet reeked like old gorgonzola cheese that someone had vomited in a back alley dumpster.

I worked at the archive centre until the end of the day reviewing as many documents as I could find that related to the current research project that was reassigned to me. After eating dinner I went back to my hotel to shower and relax for the evening. I had a tour scheduled with a guide in Tomar tomorrow to show me around several old sites in the area. It was 9:01 PM. I got into bed and pulled out *'The Levoriquum'*.



The Levoriquum

Capricorn Rising

The charging of volts electrified his being. His dark dragon had awakened a stream of light through his noetic centres. The merging of poles was a wondrous thing. Then the knight heard a frightening sound, another beast awoke but this cry came from the darkness of a cavern below. He cautiously approached the unholy abyss, there was an empty space and raw fear gripped him, he was disconnected from everything, nothing

else existed but his own terror and the absolute black of night persisted.

The knight moved towards the heinous call of the beast and to his shock he realised he was back where he had started when he saw Lucursiax who now stood awake in the lucent cage, no longer rusty but golden and shining with fire that radiated out in rings of light. *My soul cage*, the knight thought with fright, for he saw no alternative but to release Lucursiax, it seemed either way he would die. He pondered the causal effect of the choice he would make, the possible repercussions and the price he must pay. Everything in the universe exacts a price and he would be choosing his own fate, death over life.

To unthink, to unact, to unchoose, to unmake, there were so many regrets and so many mistakes. Every choice he now made must be weighed on the scale of price. He was drowning in this embittered sea of nine-fold darkness looking back in a maze of sad regrets for acts ignoble and heartless. Each decision he conceived, every action, thought, dream, word and deed, directly resulted in a multitude of consequences. A domino effect from his planted seeds.

If he chose to be joyful he created it, if he chose to feel sorrow he created it, if he accepted failure he became it. He had been so blind. He was beginning to experience the impact of all his choices throughout his lifetime. He had been essentially

living in the prison of his own creation with no hope of ever escaping.

“Free me!” the diabolic goat commanded the knight with blaring eyes. Its long beard and pointed ears looked like a devil. The knight knew if he unlocked the prison Lucursiax would be his annihilator, the angel of the bottomless pit unleashed, a dissenter.

Seeing no escape from this place of perdition, he took out the scarab key with the two glowing stones, the sun and the moon pulsing as one. Lucursiax flashed him a triumphant smile like Nyx as the knight inserted the key and heard the lock click, the goat threw open the door knocking the knight down and ran up the tunnels ever ascending, its horns were as brass casting out light and its head shone with multiple halos circling.

The knight stood up from the ground and with the cavern now lit he thought of the resplendent temple with its fallen pillar far down the passage and ran towards it without hesitation. He was determined to raise that marvellous column before facing Lucursiax and his own devastation.

He could not leave this beauty in such a diminished state and summoned up a Herculean strength, a jolt of electrical fire burned through him and with a magnetic attraction of love for her creation, lifted her up to exalt her perfection. Restoring her place next to the white solar pillar, she now began to pulse in a column of light, sun and moon creating an arc of white fire.

Two forces plunging together, one active, one static, as liquid starlight awakened the effigy on the centre tree, the man's wings activated like a vehicle ready to ascend to the adytum of a higher degree.

He smiled with accomplishment. His task was done and he travelled back down the tunnel from whence he had come. The knight looked inside the noctilucous cage after the rapacious devil ran free, a lance lay on the floor that he claimed for his own and went to pursue the wily old goat, following Lucursiax was his only hope out of this hell, his destroyer, his saviour, which he thought so ironic and awful.

He hurried towards the light chasing after the bearded goat and while clutching the spear he climbed up through the chambers once shrouded in darkness until he saw it standing at a closed gateway ready to challenge him like Typhoeus. The knight summoned his willpower, all he could muster, and in a stouthearted charge he rushed in attack launching the spear into its side, the steel point piercing through the thick black hairy hide and with the wound inflicted the knight felt that they both had died. The enemy within him was now evicted.

The goat came alive and held up its hands to capture a white pentagonal star as it descended. After catching the falling star its head became disembodied, illumined and aflame with radiant glory and the great goat began speaking with a harmony of fifteen voices it chimed, "Solve et Coagula."

Colours burst forth in many directions and the knight fell on his knees as a thunderous quake shattered his senses. The brass of the goat's horns and halos turned bright white, as pure as a dove descending from the heavens like Aphrodite as a sign of divine love.

Its face no longer Devil but that of Archangel.

The knight felt a quickening, a reborn son of the star like Abraxas. His awareness expanded as another vision opened up through his brows, a flaming eye with psychic sight extending a window into space as a gateway parted allowing his entry and he walked through it into the light to encounter its sentry.



I closed *'The Levoriquum'*. When I had finished translating it was 2:28 AM. From what I gathered from the translation it was about 'The Cosmocrator' and trying to raise the devil.

I thought of the goat and realised the writer of the incunabulum must be referring to the head of Baphomet. The goat was also the zodiac sign. I looked up the image of the goat. Yes it looked malign but wasn't it an image of the Chokmah?

I had to laugh. The devil holds the torch like the Statue of Liberty, both in the picture and the tarot card. An upside down star only implied spirit to matter, nothing sinister like many of the fanatics claimed, they only fear what they do not understand, unless they are afraid of aether.

Like me, I fear this Zargozvod because I cannot explain it and I don't understand it. So yeah, it scares the hell out of me! The hermaphrodite may symbolise the connection of opposite energies, or the spiral staircase of the nadis of the Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna, the prana moving through the chakras of the spinal column to awaken the third eye endowing wisdom.

I played around with some numbers and letters of the Hebrew alphabet. I would spend more time later to see if I could come up with a solution to find the hidden light of the meaning.

The number of Baphomet: (7x11=77)

Ehben masu ha-bonaim / MAsu HA BoNaim. The stone which the builders refused is become the headstone of the corner.

AΩ = ⚡ ⚡ = Baphomet

Beit = Temple, using cipher:

O	Sh	W	H	Y	A	M	Sh	3 Mother Letters
16	14	12	10	8				Aleph Mem Shin
Th	M	O	Ph	B	Th	Y	B	
	14	12	10	8	Th	D	W	Y B
	H	W	H	Y		13	10	7
					Th	M	O	Ph B

There was another explanation circulating amongst the craniums on campus which suggested that mankind was just a genetic experiment and that the caduceus represented the uniting of DNA from people of the stars with our genes, but to me it meant the liberation of our consciousness from duality. Then again, what do I know? Every interpretation is individual perception.

When I vaguely touched on the topic of the possibility of demons harassing a person, one student suggested engaging a voodoo priestess to perform an exorcism. Apparently one of her charms had helped them pass an exam so she came highly recommended. I wondered if it would involve sprinkling alligator blood on my door and sticking pins in some wax simulacrum.

I still had not found the answer in the incunable to explain the existence of this other dimensional entity knocking on my door. Was I so blind not to see the truth in front of me within this gallimaufry? If I read it ten times would I get the connection or remain in shadowed thinking unable to lift the veil of understanding?

I was afraid that all my years of learning and seeking knowledge have come to naught. The more I read of the story, the more bizarre the explanations became. I was sure the incunable was an elaborate hoax of roundabout red herrings causing its reader to run around in circles chasing their own tail.

It was a deliberate ruse to throw a wrench into the machinery of the mind causing it to implode.

After I finished typing out my research notes and checking my email I set the alarm, at least I could sleep in late since my appointment with the guide was not until midafternoon and it was less than a two hour drive to Tomar.

I went into the hotel bathroom and stared into the mirror with apprehension. I saw no demon or dark angel haunting me but there was food stuck in my teeth and I noticed I was putting on weight. I needed to start exercising to slough off some of this dense matter from my porcine form. A thought crossed my mind that since it had already broken through the mirror perhaps it was roaming free stalking me. Could it use its dragon wings to fly to Portugal or did it just materialise through a portal?

I raided the minibar to calm my fears indulging in my gluttonous nature once again, I helped myself to the snacks too, gobbling up everything in sight making a complete pig of myself and then I washed it all down with the miniature bottles of liquor which would probably cost me a hundred euros but I didn't care. *Mors ultima ratio.*

I shut off the light and eventually fell asleep in a bloated death by minibar poisoning from scarfing the entire lot. Only Jove knew if I would ever wake up from the toxic mixture of alcohol and enough sugar, fat and carbohydrates to put an elephant into a diabetic coma.

The amount of gas it created could knock down an army flat. A new type of weapon was born, 'Buttological Warfare'. If the maid service did not have a firefighter's airpack then they would surely die if they entered this room. The window was closed so I must have farted myself into unconsciousness, poisoned by my own gaseous fumes as I lapsed into noxious dreams.

Heat, all I could feel was that infernal heat and a vexing thirst tormenting me. My lips were parched. I was like a dehydrated mummy walking through the endless sands of time. The scene kept repeating itself in an infinite loop. I would see a lush green oasis on the horizon of the desert, picturing the blessing of shade to shelter me from the scorching sun and water to slake the thirst of my dry throat. I would run and then stumble in the sand, getting up again to run towards paradise once more only to find it was a mirage of the mind and eventually I wound up crawling in the sand trying to get to nowhere with my fruitless attempts. I felt like one of the grains of sand, an infinitesimal speck in the vastness of the universe, how could I matter in this world?

I gave up. I lay there in the sand in anguish and misery begging God to unmake me. I was tired of the constant struggles that plagued my soul, making me need and making me bleed to remind me I'm alive. I fell into despair and that's when my dark angel spread its wings around me cloaking me, my only refuge

from the sun, and it whispered to me from some world beyond, “Love me, I have done no wrong, it is only the mortal condition, there’s no harm done, do not judge me for you and I are one. When you condemn me you damn yourself. Just love me,” it said, as I sank into oblivion.

I rested in its blessed darkness letting it envelope me and I drank in the comfort it offered, loving my demon and accepting all the evil that it had done. There was no one left to blame, I would have never learned a thing in this life if my demon had not opposed my strength. I forgave it and all of its wrongful deeds and as I forgave myself the weight of chains seemed to be lifted from me and I swallowed the last of my tears, no more would come. I was hanging on such a fragile thread dangling over the edge of the abyss, I rested my head to succumb to the eternal darkness and I welcomed my own destruction in silent resignation.

Then I awoke all of a sudden to an obnoxious voice with an accent from India that criticised, “That is the longest self-pity session I have ever heard, you know all this pissing and moaning is not going to help you solve your problems. You should drown yourself in your well of sorrow right now and get it over with but you will just have to come back and do it all over again tied to the wheel of rebirth. So do shut up! I am tired of listening to you bitch and whine. Oh, woe is you. Wallow, wallow, wallow in your wretchedness, poor you, poor you. Get over yourself already and give me a break!”

I looked up to see what belonged to that irritating repartee. It was a genie hovering above a well of water from an underground spring. I looked around me, I was in an oasis under the cool shade of palms, branches were hanging down like wings and swaying in the breeze, lush vegetation surrounded me and there was fruit and dates ripe for the picking. The genie just looked at me then examined his fingernails to make sure they were pristine and not in need of a manicure.

“What kind of sadistic genie are you giving me your verbal abuse and kicking me when I am down?” I asked with a dry hoarse voice.

“Please don’t call me a genie, I prefer djinn, it sounds more dashing and I do not want people rhyming it with weenie. Let’s see, what can we rhyme with human? Oh, I know! Cumin, it is one of my favourite spices you know, but can you tell me what rhymes with orange? I have been trying to work that one out all of these long years, but then I just start making up my own words, it is more fun that way and it was you who was beating yourself up, I just pointed it out to you.

“Besides, you should be the one covering your dark angel with your light not let it cover you with its darkness, you have your priorities and polarities all reversed, you must be backwards, born in a barn or something, or was there inbreeding in your family, you aren’t a hillbilly are you? You seem rather dumb, I do not know if you should pick your ass out of your brain or pick your brain out of your ass,” the djinn said nonstop without

seeming to take a breath, changing subjects and going off on different threads of random thoughts.

I got up and went over to the well for a drink of water to quench my horrible thirst but I spit it back out, it was bitter, poisonous.

“So djinn what is your name? And do I get three wishes?” I asked hopefully.

“You can just call me djinn. I have a secret name which I will not tell you, so you will have no power over me and you get no wishes either. Zip, Zero, Zilch. You are not my master. You are not even a master of yourself so you cannot command me. Na, na, na, na, nah, nah!” the djinn teased childishly in his heavy accent.

“Then why are you here djinn, just to torment me? Why don’t you do something useful, like getting me some fresh water?” I asked.

“Ha ha! Oh, you slay me. Are you blind or something? Can’t you see there is a well of water right in front of you? Maybe you should get some four-dimensional glasses or something, because you need to see beyond your current state, all you visualise is a well of sorrow and despair, you must plant the seed of desire and evolve it into reality. Do you think my hair looks okay? I think it might be due for a trim, it looks a little long in the back, unless I tie it up in braids or should I change it white like a Lipizzaner stallion?”

I decided this djinn was off his rocker, clearly mad and unstable. I asked him, “What do you mean planting the seed of desire?”

“Why should I answer your question when you did not tell me how my hair looks? I am not wearing a badge that says ‘Oasis Concierge’. What, do you think I work at an information desk? You will never connect with your higher self when you live in the basement of your mind. Did you fall down a mineshaft or something? Because I really think you might have brain damage. You are pretty thick in the head aren’t you? Maybe if you learned the true meaning of the game of Chaturanga as a child and you had awakened the abodes you would not be so daft. It is time for you to get wise, stop snivelling and read a book or something. Jeez, why did I have to get the stupid one?” the djinn said sarcastically playing with his long black-haired ponytail.

“I’m sorry,” I said, “you’re hair looks fabulous as it is I wouldn’t change it, but I still want to know what you meant by your words, and stop insulting me!”

“Oh, thank you! Do you really think it looks good like this? Well, I guess your opinion does not matter anyway, you do not have any common sense and you are full of nonsense so why should you have any fashion sense? You would not happen to have any incense would you? I think a wafting perfumed smoke of jasmine or sandalwood might be nice, don’t you?” The djinn was now picking at his toenails and examining his feet.

“You’re rambling on and it’s getting on my nerves! Can’t you see I’m dying of thirst?” I barked at him, fed up with his constant loquacity in his thick New Delhi accent.

“Here take a date, eat it and throw the seed into the well, all you have to do is make a wish and believe, you make your own reality you know,” the djinn said as he handed over a date.

I ate the date and focused my mind and wished for fresh clean water then threw the seed into the well. I opened my eyes and tried drinking from the well again. The water was pure and sweet, I drank deeply until I was full.

“How did that happen? Was it a magick seed you gave me?” I asked the djinn in amazement.

“No you stupid idiot, that was no magick seed, that was a pit! Life is the pits and you have to use what you have to get through your existence. What consumes your thoughts controls your mind. The doubts and fears you have create your reality, but so do your wishes and desires, your imagination comes to life giving birth to matter.

“In your search for God, you find yourself. Be careful what you wish for... You just might get it,” the djinn lectured.

“I wish I would wake up from this dream and that you would just go away!” I said with all honesty and then dreamed no more.

I woke up. There was no djinn and it was still dark outside. It smelt as if something had died in my room. I was so inflated and full of gas that my stomach was distended as if I was going to give birth to a bull that I really needed to shit.

The indoor air quality was so bad that there probably wasn't enough oxygen to support life, thick ozone hung in the air and I could hardly breathe in the miasma. I realised it was me, I was choking on my own farts and I wanted to puke. It stunk like a cesspit hinting an underlying bouquet of greasy pepperoni and cheese with all the minibar snacks added in like clashing random pizza toppings.

I must be constipated with a petrified butt nugget that was stuck and trying to get out because the gas was so nasty that I had to get up to open the window to let in some fresh air. I got back into bed and went to sleep wishing I did have some incense and a nice perfumed scent of jasmine or sandalwood wafting in the air.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec closed the *'Tales of Argot'* and laughed. This was without a doubt the strangest book he had ever read. If the old adage were true then knowledge could be found in the most unlikely of places.

When he thought of the falling star dropping and being caught by the goat with the opening of the third eye, it reminded him of New Year's Eve in New York, the ball dropping at midnight. It too appeared like a giant crystal star falling to bring light to mankind. He did not know why he made that association since he had only seen it once but nonetheless it seemed symbolic somehow regardless of what other people might say it stood for. He was seeing stars everywhere.

Still thinking of America, Alec mused how there were so many connections, the White House being symbolic of the white city, the vault of the rhombus, a royal ark of man. The Statue of Liberty bearing the torch of Venus or Lucifer sits on an eleven-stared base, a five-pointed blazing star, *L'augmentation de salaire*, combined with a six-pointed star.

Eleven, the number of vision and mystical revelation. There are seven spikes on her crown. Eleven rays below and seven above. ($11 \times 7 = 77$) *Didn't the Querent say this was the number of Baphomet?*

Was the Statue in homage of Liberating the Devil?

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

It was 10:10 PM. Alec turned off the light and lay his head down upon the moonbeams shining on his pillow. He wondered if he wished upon a star, would his dreams come true?

He pictured grids upon the earth, an inverted reflection that mirrored grids in the black starry heavens, the playing field of a brane, the chessboard of a god game and he entered through a rhombus into a garden of dreams.

The rainforest was animated in tropical splendour, colourful flowers and birds amongst a background of thick growing foliage so dense he was surrounded, no horizon was visible only an endless green sea of living, breathing flora and fauna, the forest alive as if one entity. A colossal waterfall seemed to cascade down from the heavens like a fountain of youth, the Aquarian Man pouring down nectar to fill a clear pool that was refreshing, inviting.

He stripped off his clothes and swam naked through the waters and floated on his back, his ears submerged with his face capturing sunlight as he closed his eyes. A giant 'Tortoise' swam by, careened to the left and then launched into the roof of the sky craving to leave this world of relativity, he sought the adytum of uncreated light in infinity.

He heard something like sirens rapturously singing, seven vowels intoning at once with one desire ringing. Aethereal harmonics so angelic its resonance ascending his soul to heights

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

of such ecstasy its echo was calling him to relinquish his being. His body became a lyre with seven strings entreating his senses with delights and tense emotions that hung vivified in air. The strings seduced him pouring sadness like rain, his past exposing his wounds vulnerably open to feel and bleed again.

Tears gathered like rainclouds before a storm, a single drop rolled down the side of his sorrowful cheek then in a blink of a dewy eye another tear shed, slowly they came at first then a steady stream began falling as the bittersweet melody continued to play on, of love lost and new love found. Like the lyre of Apollo striking chords with an infinitude of music, magick and loss. A death and rebirth, the journey of his cyclic destiny in a spinning cross.

Feeling the pulse of the music vibrating all around him the tempo did change exciting a promise of frightening alteration. The loss turned to transcendence beginning a new age. A rainbow erupted inside him to bridge with the waterfall's current. There was a fusion of oneness and his separateness he surrendered.

He was filled with forty-nine fires of light all ablaze and united with the forest, one entity omnipotent. His saw the very core, the true heart of all things. Catching his breath and inhaling the symphony of the pulse of life beating, he was partaking of it, allowing it, becoming it.

He lifted his head startling himself as if awakened from a trance with the memory of that eerie melodic journey still echoing

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

in his ears. He tried recalling it to play it over again in his mind but the tune was now fading with just a few notes lingering like a haunting refrain, only to disappear into silence except for the falling of water until all that remained of the music was him but changed, neither happy nor sad, just changed.

Then all of a sudden something smooth had slithered around his naked skin, two pythons wrapped themselves around him entwining, entangling until they became one. The more he struggled the tighter they strangled so he ceded his efforts and they took him underwater, the darkness devoured him, terrible because timeless.

Le Soleil Absolu! The solar ring of a corona, white against night began shining like an evening dark star with a black flame at its core and united with the opposite gender of poles as an eclipse of the sun burst forth bright plasma from its gestation like the birthing of an aurora. A flaming star appeared in the loft of his mind infusing him with wisdom, a Hekhaloth of light.

The glory of the world he now held in his hands as a scroll. He felt like Helios in his golden chariot of the sun.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Jewel In The Lotus

It was afternoon. The weather was sunny with only a slight chance of snow that evening. Alec hoped it would stay clear, he did not want any flight delays as he was anxious to get into his new home and could hardly wait to see Siri again.

He finished the last three grid maps he was working on, San Sebastian, Santiago de Compostela and the other one was of Sintra that looked like a tree reborn. When he had set them on Utomere's desk for Meinard to review he saw a picture of the zodiac ceiling from the Hathor Temple at Dendera and wondered if that was their next project.

Alec was restless and he found it hard to focus. He needed to rest his mind, calm both his fears and desires. He thought of his strange dream and knew it must be from that book he was reading. He was drawn to the light in these dreams and he emphatically craved more.

More light, he wanted more light. 

Utomere and Meinard had gone out to visit a friend in the neighbouring area. Alec had decided to stay and spend the rest of the day in the library reading. He wanted to finish the book

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Utomere had lent him since he was leaving very early tomorrow morning. Meinard however, was going to remain another couple of weeks before returning to Salzburg. Alec sat in one of the soft leather club chairs in the library, put his feet up on the ottoman and opened the *'Tales of Argot'*.

Abaddon - The Place Of Destruction

I awoke before the alarm went off. By Jove, my head hurt! I also felt sick to my stomach and looked down at all the discarded wrappers and bottles overflowing the rubbish bin of the hotel room and the realisation hit me. What have I done?

I had lucidity of my stupidity. I tried to laugh but felt too miserable to humour myself. I took some seltzer tablets and got into the shower. By the time I was finished grooming, packing and checking my email I felt a little better and would brave some breakfast in the hotel restaurant downstairs, eggs and toast sounded good for absorption, and lots of espresso.

After eating my breakfast of self-pity with a side of regret which I washed down with some much needed self-acceptance. I checked out of the hotel in Lisbon then drove straight to Tomar for an early check-in at my new hotel.

I had plenty of time for a recuperating nap before meeting my guide and afterwards I lunched at a café. I had a salad, some Portuguese cake along with another cup of espresso and some aspirin. My guide met me at the hotel and took me around to tour the sites in the area, particularly those that related to the subject of the research I was doing.

We had spent the entire afternoon ambling about with the other tourists except that he allowed me access to some of the non-public areas. I took dozens of photos with my digital camera and wrote down notes. The guide was very knowledgeable regarding the history of each site and he also shared some of the more shrouded information with me that was only for those who had a keener understanding of the inner hidden meaning of things which was not exactly in the guidebooks.

I was grateful for his insightfulness except that the dude had extremely bad B.O. that gave me dry heaves. He was like a smelly burro and I had to stand upwind of him the whole time so as not to catch any diffusing vapours of his overpowering human aroma. I wished the bloke would just sod off! Perhaps if I still had gas I could have farted on him and returned the volley for Point, Set and Match with my faecal reek.

I started to look at humanity from a different perspective and concluded that we were just a bunch of rotting meat sacks. The human condition was gross and disgusting. Man was more repugnant than dignified.

How much gravitas is there in having bad breath, scratching your crotch like a monkey, picking a pubic hair off a bar of soap, wiping ones ass or having a booger in your nose?

Humans are just a sick joke cursed with mortality, but didn't God say he made Man in his own image, which also makes me wonder if the angels on high ever had to crap?

I had only one more place to visit that was south of town, but it was already getting close to sunset and I wanted to make sure I would be able to get some good pictures so I asked him if we could continue first thing tomorrow morning.

My malodourous guide told me that another fellow named Lucis who was rich in the knowledge and history of that particular structure would show me around and that arrangements had already been made to take me there, he assured me it was not very far and that it would be worth it. I was told Lucis would be waiting for me on site.

When we got back to my hotel the other driver was there in a manky old van that looked as if it was also used as a poultry lorry from the amount of encrusted chicken shit that was dripped down the sides of it like white paint.

I paid my pongy guide giving him a generous tip, more so just to get him the hell away from me and to be rid of his smelly ass rather than for his services. Then I got into the van alone with a total stranger, in a foreign country, heading out of town, nearing dark. How smart is that?

The driver dropped me off and assured me that I would be able to get back to the hotel and that he would wait for me. The sunset was magnificent. I took pictures as I approached the edifice. The colour of the sky was a blush of rose that exploded with an inferno of golden fire blazing across the horizon. I climbed to the top and looked around but I did not see anyone.

The castle felt familiar to me but I had never been here before, at least not in this lifetime, perhaps I saw some pictures of it and the memory was misfiled somewhere in my mind. I went back down the stairs to find the driver gone. He had left me. I used my mobile to ring my guide, no service. I tried to send a text message but it would not go through either.

After climbing back up to the castle I watched the stairway swerve, it wavered like liquid stone and the walls were warping as if the castle was caught in crossing streams of time. I became vertiginous and sat down for a moment closing my eyes to let it pass. I thought I should just try to find a way to get back to the hotel.

I walked around in the dusky outdoor air trying to get a mobile signal. I went through the open door and had an eerie feeling of déjà vu. This place was disturbing me. There must be an office that had a phone so I looked around and found most of the doors were locked but there were a few doors that were left open though no one was here. I entered into the interior calling out Lucis' name in vain. There was no answer. I moved deeper through the open rooms and passageways. I did not have a torch with me and it was getting too dark to see anything.

I called out again hoping someone would hear me. The sound of a heavy wooden door slammed down the corridor, there had to be someone here. Maybe Lucis was unlocking the doors for my tour.

I crept along the wall in the dark and came to an open door with steps leading downward, I followed them into the blackness of a tunnel that teased me with dark ideas and I started thinking of the disappearance of my colleague in France and I wondered if this was a deliberate plan set up by certain people who did not like the kind of research we were doing or questions we were asking.

I'm just the Querent, the researcher. I did not belong to any group or religious sect, so why send the Grand Inquisitor after me? And why am I even having this conversation with myself? Fear was causing my mind to race with all kinds of conspiracies and morose ideas, I was reaching for plausible explanations for being led here and then abandoned. I heard a faint low boom below, another door closing?

I yelled out another round of 'hellos', but my voice only echoed back to me off the walls of the fortress. Where was Lucis? I was hesitating whether to go back outside and wait or to continue groping around in the bowels of this place. I pulled out my mobile to use the screen to guide me in the dark, I still did not have any service reception and the backlight kept shutting off after a minute, I would probably drain the battery before I got out of here.

Someone was exhaling. I heard heavy breathing in this subterranean realm. "Lucis? Hello?" I called out and then a prickling of dread washed over me like a warning and turning

around I ran back up the stairs, the door shut above me in a loud slam. I got to the top of the stairs and tried to open the door but it was locked so I began pounding on it, praying that some night janitor had not locked me in by accident. Or was it on purpose? I yelled and then I screamed trying desperately to be heard through the thick wooden door. No one came to my rescue.

I put my ear to the door and listened for any sounds or movement in the hallway but I only heard the pounding of my own heart as if the beat pulsed through my ears.

I descended below in the dark. Maybe I could find some tools to open the lock, or anything useful for that matter. Holding the phone out in front of me I focused on its comforting glow. I put my hand along the stone wall of the narrow passageway to guide me. It must lead to a storage cellar or perhaps it used to be an old escape tunnel, it was cool down here. Another sound echoed in the dark like a squeaky door hinge and I called out frantically, again I received no reply.

I began to hear chanting in a low, hoarse voice like an invocation of a spell in a foreign tongue, words from a thousand years back rose up in my mind conjuring visions of past selves and vague whispers in the distant winds of time like a haunting voice reverberating through the doorway of my dreams lured me to follow.

I moved forward slowly, there was an open door inviting me into deeper shades of chthonian blackness. I heard a

humming noise that sounded electrical. It must be a generator. I examined the inside wall fumbling with my hand in the darkness to try to locate a switch, sure enough I found it.

Light, blessed light, who would have thought it could be found in such dark places? A wave of relief spread over me as I surveyed the room. It housed a generator and shelves for storage but no phone. I wondered why none of the lights were on or even any emergency lights for that matter, but the light switch to this room worked, strange, had someone shut them all off purposefully?

I found a panel and by flipping all the switches I managed to turn on the lights in the tunnel, I checked my mobile again for service but had no such luck, so I went further down the corridor to investigate.

There was a door on the left, I opened it and went stock-still with fear, the black demon fiend stood in front of me standing at its great height, its black reptilian chest was puffed out and it sneered at me with its fanged mouth, its dark skin absorbing the light as if sucking the energy to feed itself, it lunged forward extending its claw out to grab my arm as it fanned out its wings.

But I was not Saint George so I shook off my frozen state, turned around and ran. My feet pounded on the stone as I fled shrieking in panic all the way back up the stairs and banged on the door screaming in fright. It walked slowly towards me

knowing I was trapped without any hope of escape. It came at me in silence, it came to feed, it came to ensoul.

In that instant without any hope, I snapped. My mind became perfectly still, it was blank like empty silent space. I had surrendered totally. I was tired of running, I was learning to hate this life and I would give it up for something else, I smiled back at the fallen angel and sensed a strange magnetic pull, I was repulsed and attracted at the same time.

I felt a psychic connection with it like whispered rumours lost in an ancient memory too distant to recall, the demon must have understood my resignation and transferred thought images to me for my recollection, it had been me all along who was knocking at my own door. Then I understood its purpose, it came to consume me like cibus, my Ouroboros had come to devour me whole.

The dark demon was my own reflection, a Nephilim. I was the Fallen Angel. I was the one trying to ascend from this fallen continuum seeking the light to become a solar being. I threw back my head and dropped my arms at my side, the great black dragon spread its wings as it grabbed me and it wept as it fed, trying to realise a heart of compassion from its mechanistic existence. I felt the sudden transition as we connected in fury forming into a single platinum beam of lightning. Then all around me was light, pure blinding light.

Twenty-four beings shrouded and invisible within the light began to whisper, my perception was twisted and I was struggling with delusions. All the truth I had ever held was destroyed. They laughed at my confusion like clowns at court and divulged their eternal prank.

Apparently I managed to raise the light only so far with knowledge but without love in my heart my grail was empty and I had no bliss to feed my dragon spawn so I would have to start over again and lose the light that I had gained. The higher you climb the greater the fall.

The beings of light expressed to me that I was seeking knowledge as power but the greatest force was *Love*, and without it I was destined to fail again. Honestly, did I really believe this hokum? It sounded like televised evangelism coming from inside this dream and I scoffed at them. The only love I've ever felt was passion which was biochemical juice in the brain, so when they speak of love what did they mean?

I was not amused by their unanimous snickers, my fate was decided until my karmic debt was paid, I would have to go back and do it all over again, and again, and again until I obeyed.

"No, not again!" I cried. I did not want to return! They said my work was not finished. I must continue to dwell in the world of illusions.

Nunquam dormio.

I now understood why that painting in the Louvre was smiling with that pasquinade grin. In it harbours the knowing that the truth is just a grand universal joke. Seeing comedy in such a scheme divine.

The door was within me... And I held the key...

If I tried to leave my own prison they would stop me, ever attacking and never allowing me to succeed.

Intelligenti pauca. We are just human animals in a menagerie held captive by archons.

I now knew the true identity of the devil and I began to laugh. It was not laughter from joy but from the sick torment that the plan entailed. I held up my dactylion to the highest most region of heaven as if giving it back the cosmic finger that it had showered down upon me with lifetimes of suffering, pain and strife, then I proclaimed with a triumphant voice, "*Fuck You! As Below, So Above.*" Guessing that the law must work both ways like a two-way mirror, perhaps my life was not in vain after all, the paradox of the law being the ultimate revenge. If I must endure this endless earthly mire then they still had to smell my shit! As light would rain down my stench would rise up. I began laughing even harder at the thought of having shit for brains.

Unitam logica falsa tuam philosophiam totam suffodiant.

(Now I am rambling in my journal.)

In my fit of hysterical laughter laced with intermittent snorting the twenty-four voices imparted instructions then joined me in my humour and I yielded to the soft humming of their chorus. I searched my thoughts for some thread of memory to anchor me to the knowledge of my existence, everything seemed clouded and otherworldly, many lives existed in the back of my thoughts that were foreign to me but somehow I knew them.

Then I found that familiar connection, the link I was hoping for and I locked onto it visualising my own image repeatedly in my mind, calling out my own name as if to wake myself from a dream and I tried to consciously force myself to act focusing all of my concentration and blocking out the twenty-four laughing, cajoling voices.

Coming out of a deep state of suspended animation I heard the audible groan of my own voice trying desperately to speak and gain back my conscious reality outside of that incredible dream. Like a chant I spoke my name louder each time with stronger conviction.

I felt strength and control returning to me, the laughing entities withdrew as the darkness of my sleep dissolved and I awoke into a haze of light. My eyelids fluttered almost as if they were too heavy to open. With great effort I managed to part one eye and squinted. I was in a room with dim light coming through a window on a foggy morning.

It was the hotel room in Tomar. I had made it back to this foul plane of existence. I was home, my Hell on earth, probably for a few more generations to come.

I showered and went downstairs to the restaurant for breakfast and coffee. My memory was vague as I tried to recall what happened in the tunnel of that island fortress, all I remember after being attacked was a brilliant dawn, the sun rising as the stars were shining, as if Aurora had come to lighten my lachrymose soul. Maybe Lucis found me passed out in the castle and took me to my hotel. I have no recollection of how I got back here.

I hung out at the hotel for the entire day in a soul-searching daze. All those years of study and searching for knowledge has brought me dick! I reviewed my experience from last night's vision of the beings of light. Knowing did not mean liberation, it just added more burden of responsibility and I would suffer twice as much for every failure. I would join the alliance of rebels and fight; there must be a way to destroy these archons somehow.

The grass was not greener on the other side. It was just different grass, probably with a whole set of other problems and I assumed that at each level of ascendance you attained there were just more tasks, more tests and more paradoxes. We are angels unaware of who we are, blinded by the illusion of matter unable to see the shattered image of God within us. Were we ever really going to be free?

How many humans could really achieve their freedom? Even if you managed to grasp the light it was stolen from you. No wonder humanity drinks and shags its way through their miserable lives, anything to find happiness and bliss to escape this reality. We are programmed to fail.

We are the Fallen. We are the Damned.

I wondered if together as a soul group we may be able to succeed but those entities have us fighting amongst ourselves. I now had a deeper understanding of the research the client had hired us to do and I hoped that the Templars really could open gateways to the future and the full light universe, because those jesters did not want our liberation and they were never going to let us leave this prison until Lucifer and her fallen angels received redemption from this fallen continuum.

My instructions were clear on what I must do, any defiance would prolong my agony, I loved myself too much to continue in suffering and I hated this captivity.

I would finish translating '*The Levoriquum*' and return it to its master along with my journal to fulfil this life's karmic expiation, and hopefully I would get my fucking book back because I had really wanted that collector's edition!

I booked a flight to Budapest. I would stay here until the remainder of the work was completed. It was 8:01 PM. I opened '*The Levoriquum*'.



The Levoriquum

Anima Mundi

The knight stepped forth from the passage of light and beheld a ferocious lion in front of the entrance to an incredible white city more splendid than any temple imaginable, it radiated with rings of quicksilver.

The lion guarded a majestic mouflon ram with a golden coat that stood staring out through the open gates of the great city. The knight walked up to the lion's gate.

“You dare to pass me Knight? I tell you NUN shall pass,” the lion said with a stentorian roar and crouched as if to spring in attack.

“I have come to claim my right and reward,” said the knight boldly and moved his hand ever so slowly towards the hilt of his sword.

The lion flashed in anger and the sound of his roar was as loud thunder ripping through the atmosphere, the knight fell on his knees and put his hands to his ears, the noise so deafening it shook his entire being.

“Ha ha ha,” the lion laughed with a haughty tone, his green eyes glowering at the knight’s submissive form and he threw his mane back in a defiant challenge. Magickally a grail appeared to hover in midair in front of the knight. The golden cup gleamed with enticement.

“I offer you this Knight. Would you drink from the Grail of Immortality? Come take your prize,” the lion coerced with his terrible voice.

The knight rose to his feet and examined the chalice, then looked at the lion with his grin full of malice and pondered a moment what he was being offered, it was an eternal cycle of suffering that the beast so cleverly presented.

“No thank you, I have my own cup within my banquet hall, what you offer me is no heaven but an endless hell, step aside beast so I may enter the sacred abode.” The knight took a step forward as the grail disappeared with his refusal to partake.

“Ah, I see that your use of gender has conceived pleroma infusing you with wisdom, but I will grant you this lowly prince who would be king, all this do I give you, yours for the taking.” The lion waved his massive paw and a scene opened up in front

of the knight showing him an earthly kingdom with treasuries of wealth and fabulous riches, and the knight saw himself as ruler over many lands.

“Nay lion, you lead me astray, it is but another form of slavery, a ruler is not free, he must govern an empire and knowing that the law of rhythm abides, civilisations rise and fall with the tide, ‘tis but a fleeting thing you offer to flatter my ego, I want nothing from you, I have come to defeat you,” the knight said firmly with determination in his heart and took another step forward.

The lion roared another thunderous call, the air vibrating with anger and frustration from the knight’s resoluteness and his conniving attempts to ensnare him were fruitless.

“You Knight, are a sentimental man whose heart is afire and beats strongly with love and passion, though your lamp does burn with an exceptional flame, she can give you amphorae of oil more than your ration. I present her to you knowing very well she exceeds your innermost desires, come take her now Knight, the lady is waiting, the pleasure of her temple for your own sating,” the guileful lion said with the voice of a viper, smooth and mesmeric tones wrapping the suggestive words around the knight to sway him.

A window of promise opened up in front of the knight, a vision of loveliness, his own Cymeriel was standing there in provocative invitation, a seductive sight. Scantly dressed,

begging him to come forward and calling to him in lusty breaths while parting her garment and moving her arms to offer him her breasts.

“No!” screamed the knight. “What she has given me was beyond price and worth the mere sacrifice of my own pleasure. She’s just an illusion you conjured so cheaply like a carnival barker at a May Day Faire. Relationships come and go, love is lost and found once more, but it is a deeper seed that gestates in my being, altruism for all of mankind is the song of love my heart sings. *Omnia ab Uno et in Unum Omnia,*” the knight replied, divine love his only true need.

A tremendous clap reverberated through the region. The lion’s wrath rocked the knight again to his core. The proud beast in retaliation of his rejected temptations sent a legion of Rakshasas to overpower the knight with every persuasion. The knight drew his sword and charged it with the light of his being and slew every demon, those in sight and those unseen.

The lion now subdued left his guard with his once proud head hanging low and lay down by the ram then began licking his paw, the knight now the master after his ego’s annihilation entered the ark of mercurial light for his soul’s elevation.

He stood in a royal chamber of kings. Nocratis the ram approached him and granted him the Golden Fleece.

A whirring sound spun in his head like hearing the laughter of faeries, the fluttering of hummingbird wings on a breeze or a hive buzzing with a thousand bees. Archeus rained down like pure white manna crystallising into a pinecone from which the blood of his heart now fed, a sacrament of red wine and white bread. Blue and red diamonds conjoined in the centre creating pentangular rings of power for the ascending Phoenix to enter. The Philosopher's Stone he now possessed, the true grail obtained at the end of his quest.

Fire and light erupted inside him as a conjunction where heaven melded with earth and born from above was his immortal self, rising to traverse the high heavens as all dominator he would soar, the Great White Dragon of Light his new hypostases, the Selphi restored and whole once more.



I closed '*The Levorigum*'. The book was describing sex in the brain. Did it mean that God wanted to skull fuck me? I laughed at my own vulgar thoughts. I would look up the meaning of NUN in the Hebrew alphabet, something smelt fishy about this incunable. Was the *anima mundi* the real Templar treasure? The house of God in Man, like looking into a mirror?

Then I finally started to understand and with open eyes the story unfolded in me. You have to go through hell before you can get to heaven.

I sympathised with what the incunabule was trying relate, we were not waking up fast enough so the Joker kicked the door open wider to encourage the seeker to find the answers amongst this rubbish bin littered with half-truths, riddles and lies, and like a knight on a quest try to raise the light from our own abyss.

Everywhere I looked the story testified of itself, repeating like the sequence of a homing beacon signal calling out to guide us on our way back home, fire codes emblazon in our ancestral memories speaking through us as we lived out its passionate play. All these years I had been seeking knowledge to enlighten my mind but it was really love that was the answer to the riddle all along, like finding the secret to the core of the Milky Way.

The key was inside. The great 'G', the number of three, Gimel is the word, Gnosis the final prise of God's essential light for the camel to pass through the needle's eye.

I could not bear to repeat life over again in another incarnation of continued suffering and pain, I needed to outlive myself and learn to correctly die to survive the burst of a phi charge in my pineal gland to be reborn a lord of time, recalling all my memories able to travel between dimensions on a yellow road to the sacred vault of the sun and self-navigate to the heart of the stars. I must find a way to pass through Brahma's door.

Tomorrow I would stop back by the university neighbourhood in Lisbon and use one of the office centres that the students frequented to print out everything I had written on the incunabula then I would head to the airport, it was off to Budapest where I was ordered to go to return 'The Levoriquum' along with the translation and journal account of my story.

I packed up my bags to be ready for a swift and early departure first thing in the morning. I went to bed and I felt like a baby snuggling in the blankets taking comfort in the womb of my head as I became a child of dreams, resting while growing in my sleep.

I was in an abode of snow sheltered in the darkness of a forgotten cavern in the Himalayas. The sound of distant bells rang in low base tones as prayer wheels spun in time with the colourful waving flags that snapped in the frigid Nepalese wind.

I was a vampire, an immortal living in darkness. My light was stolen from me. I had no sense of time and I could have been sleeping here for a thousand years shut away in this dark box, a coffin for my soul.

A distant question from a familiar thread of my being kept floating around in my head, if the box was opened would I be alive or dead?

I hungered for blood, would it bring me to life? There was a monastery nearby. I crept through the night, a voracious predator scenting prey across the courtyard in the snow.

Inside the temple a solitary monk was seated in meditation appearing to be asleep. His eyes were closed and his face was serene. The fire from many rows of candles burned boldly and the room was waltzing with shadows cast by the rhythmic flicker of the brilliant flames. Murals seemed to come alive as the colourful images danced with the strobe of the lights.

The light hurt my eyes. I had been in utter blackness for so long that the brightness of all these flames was too hard for me to endure. I had to shield my eyes. I wondered if I drank his blood I would attain all of his knowledge and memories encoded within his life's essence.

I stepped forward cloaking myself, the candles fluttered wildly as if a strong gust of wind blew the flames, could it have been the energy from my aura that caused the disruption?

The monk felt a prickling awareness that his surroundings had changed. Something did not seem right. The monk knew he was not alone. Someone or something was very near.

I took another step closer and out of nowhere a sudden cold vapour crept along the floor like a cloud of rolling fog and enveloped the entire room abruptly extinguishing the candle flames into wisps of grey smoke rising up in spirals.

The room was now unilluminated save for the moon casting its lambency through the small window that was cut into the stone wall of the monastery.

Mentally shaking himself out of his trance-like state, the monk slowly opened his eyes to survey a room devoid of candlelight.

“What do you seek visitor,” the monk inquired of the darkness.

The monk knew I was here and even though I shrouded myself he felt my presence.

“I have just awakened from a long sleep and came here out of curiosity,” I lied to the monk.

The monk laughed. “Is it my blood you seek so stealthily or is acquiring knowledge your real quest?”

“You can read my thoughts?” I asked him hovering in the darkness behind him feeling the heat emanating from his body.

“Your intent is very clear, you are projecting it and your desire is so strong that all of the other monks in the monastery can perceive your thoughts. Your mind was screaming in agony a moment ago. Did not one of them blow out the flames for you to relieve the pain the light was causing you to suffer so?” the monk replied.

I realised my error. My vampire prowess was no match for these monks. I should have gone into the village to hunt. "I need blood, and yes I want knowledge," I said honestly.

"You do not need to steal knowledge, it is available to all. It will be given to you freely if you seek it out for yourself, and there is no use for blood if you do not have the light. If your blood is not activated by the light and you do not abide in the light, it will remain dead and you will be forever imprisoned in your caliginous coffin. There are millions who are the immortal dead, people repeating lifetime after lifetime in darkness. It is the light that brings the blood to life and sets the blood on fire, it is the light that sets you free," the monk said in his tranquil voice.

"How can I activate blood that I do not have with light I cannot tolerate?" I asked him in despair.

"For your need of blood you must simply ask and I will provide it for you, I will not turn down one in need nor will any of my brothers here. As for the light, do not try to go from total darkness into the brilliant sun only to be blinded by the extreme polarity of its glory. Start slowly, working with what little light you can handle in small increments and then gradually increase your exposure to brighter degrees of light. Like climbing up a ladder you must start at the bottom rung to ascend higher, but you must first try," the monk said and with a wave of his hand out of the vast sea of candles, a single candle was lit.

I looked upon the one flame and found it bearable.

“Now take some of my blood and I will instruct you how to infuse the light within it. You must become a blue blood and charge your blood with indigo fire if you want to become a royal king. Do not expect instant results, it is with diligence that the fruits of our labours begin to unfold and soon you will be awakened from your earthbound prison. Just know one thing about infusing the light, it is all about the heart and love is the key,” the monk imparted his wisdom.

I was humbled, after the light was stolen from me I had to start all over again but I had to start sometime, why sit in darkness for eternity?

Out of Darkness into Light...

Escape from Illusion into Reality...

Transmuting Death into Immortality...

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Alec closed the *'Tales of Argot'*. He was sad that it came to an end. He wanted to keep reading more. He had become almost obsessed and addicted to it. He sighed as moisture gathered in his eyes. *The story must continue it just could not end here.* He was now brooding.

Leucy came into the library holding her music box. It must have been delivered earlier. Alec had heard someone ringing the front gate intercom this morning. He looked up at her and smiled trying to shake off his introspection to engage her.

"Thank you my dear Alec, this is truly beautiful, I love it!" Leucy winked at him as if they shared a secret between them.

"You are very welcome Leucy, thank you for having me over during the holiday season, you are a most gracious hostess," Alec said as he heard Utomere and Meinard in the hall removing their coats and shaking off the cold.

They entered the library and went to the bar for a brandy to warm them up, their faces red from the frosty air. Alec greeted the two then put his head down with a forlorn expression.

"Alec you look sombre, what is it?" Leucy questioned him with genuine concern.

Utomere looked up from pouring a drink, casually eavesdropping.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

“I just finished reading the *‘Tales of Argot’* and I feel a little hollow, I am depressed that the story is over, I guess I wanted it to go on,” Alec admitted like a little child confessing to his primordially wise grandmother.

“Oh Alec,” Leucy said with love and tenderness in her voice, “but it does go on. The story continues with every one of us, each individual life expresses the story, the unfolding of mankind, it is within all of us.”

Alec smiled and nodded his head.

Utomere went to his desk and got out the white card with black typescript from the drawer then walked over to Alec and handing him the card he said, “Take the book with you Alec so you can add your own story to it, and if you ever see a shop that has a black door with a brass knob and a black sign with gold metallic letters that says ‘*Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities*’, which I strongly predict you will, you can return it to its owner. Perhaps it will find its way into someone else’s hands so they may add their story as well.”

Alec laughed. His spirit was lighter. This certainly has been a strange visit. After dinner and dessert they exchanged gifts. Alec had given Utomere his astrolabe and Meinard his pocket watch, and he received a compass from Utomere in return. Utomere had told Alec he did not want him to lose his way and that the compass would guide him.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Perhaps Alec would become a navigator someday.

Meinard gave Alec a card with a mysterious message written inside that said his gift would be waiting for him at his new home when he arrived tomorrow. Meinard winked at him and chuckled to himself as his cheeks flushed red.

Leucothea had given Alec a beautiful crystal lotus with a jewel in its centre. It dazzled magnificently in the light, it was mesmerising and he could not take his eyes off it.

He felt like he was given the Morning Star.

After their conversation wound down they all retired for the evening.

Alec packed up the *'Tales of Argot'* with his laptop and went to bed. He missed his nightly companion, the book already read but not forgotten.

Hoarse winds arose sounding of quarrelling between foes as it howled through cracks of panes and sudden blasts that whined with high-pitched cries of ire blew through leafless limbs of dormant trees sending shivers down his neck to rattle his gates of dream, and then faded into a tinkling sea of glass shards dancing from chandeliers on a moonlit winter's breeze.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

A thousand petalled crystal lotus was spinning in his mind. Each petal mirrored his image, a thousand selves from a thousand incarnations, all of them claiming to be king. A double-headed eagle cried, "Lapsit exilis!"

A perfect jewel of crowning glory graced the centre of the lotus, a sign of royalty that enticed the thousand embodiments to pursue it as their own, each one crying out their worth and attempting to pull the sword from the stone to justify their right to the emblazon throne by their deeds not birth.

All of a sudden amidst the thousand egos bickering, chirps erupted, squeaks and clicking, chattering cries like laughing children, the euphonious chimes came ever closer and rose up from the centre of the crystal lotus.

He became a mirthful dolphin coming ashore awakened and laughing as he ate the jewel from the vying avatars all around him. A ray of red and a ray of blue melded into a radiant violet hue to sync the hemispheres of his brain, he had stolen the prise and won the game.

His dolphin-self swam on aether through a crystal gate laughing and singing in his jocund state, a comical creature he is indeed. It is always the wise Fool who really succeeds. Ascending on future time waves from his past Atlantis to swim in oceans of the new earthstar for his divine tryst.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Hieros Gamos

Alec had bid his farewells then departed Budapest early that morning to arrive in Glasgow only hours later. He was met at the airport by Dieter's driver who took him to his new home. Alec phoned Siri in the car but just got her voicemail again. He had not been able to contact Siri last night. Doubts and fears vexed him and he started becoming jealous of ghosts, and the demons of his imagination teased him with thoughts of other men stealing her away from him.

The driver pulled through the gate of a large baronial country house. "You've got to be kidding me, what am I going to do with this ostentatious place? I hope Siri likes it or Dieter will have to find another buyer," Alec expressed more to himself than to the driver who just smiled.

Alec brought his luggage inside. The house was enormous.

On the entry table he noticed a large black statue of Anubis with a gold collar.

Dog Days will soon be upon us, I guess I should start thinking about adoption. It would take too long to have enough children to fill all these rooms by natural birth.

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

Dieter greeted him in the foyer with a hauteur manner and a smug smile. He was introduced to the staff then toured the first floor. The estate was furnished in sybaritic splendour for which Alec felt some self-reproach realising wealth should be shared not hoarded. A few of his personal items had been tastefully integrated in with the décor and fresh flowers were displayed throughout. He suspected Dieter must have known that he planned to propose marriage to Siri, hence the feminine touch.

Damn psychic! Alec thought as he glared at Dieter.

“I hope you will find everything in order Mr Nachton,” Dieter said while displaying that irritating grin. Alec immediately visualised the old painting in Utomere’s attic and he felt a crawling sensation on the back of his neck from the paranormal thoughts it provoked in him. *Was Dieter even human?* He wondered. Dieter just smiled wider and his eyes squinted as if in mockery to Alec’s thoughts.

“It is wonderful Dieter, how can I thank you?”

“Your appreciation has already been expressed in the payment I received for my services,” Dieter replied matter-of-factly. “Dr Amsel has left you a most exquisite piece in the library. He thought it should be surrounded by knowledge.” Dieter then let out an unexpected laugh.

Alec was startled, he was not aware that Dieter had a sense of humour. Dieter led him through double doors into the formal

Chrysopoeia For Fallen Angels

library whose shelves housed a collection of books. Alec surmised that the estate was sold complete with the furnishings.

Alec walked to the back of library, a painting of a queen bestowing reward upon a knight was hung on the wall above an ornately carved throne chair with a high back, sitting low to the ground and having no arms. He went up to it. A card was placed on the seat which Alec picked up to read. It was from Meinard and it said, *'Fit for a King'*. Alec laughed at the old man's jest and wondered why Dieter found it so amusing.

Pointing to a folder on the desk Dieter said, "All of your paperwork is in order." He then handed Alec a piece of paper with a handwritten map and the name of a man on the Isle of Iona, "You have just one more journey to make Mr Nachton, tomorrow morning at nine o'clock sharp a driver will arrive to take you to the heliport where you will be transported to the Isle of Mull and then you will need to take the ferry to Iona, the gentleman is expecting you. Do not be late."

"I'm sorry to disappoint you Dieter but I have plans of my own," Alec said adamantly but was instantly cut off by von Ritter's upraised hand in the air to silence him as if this gesture alone caused Alec's vocal chords to seize up.

"Trust me Mr Nachton. You will be immensely thankful once you have followed my instructions. *Noli irritare leones*. This gentleman has a unique item for you, it is the most precious gift you can bestow upon anyone, it was found on the Isle of Staffa in

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Fingal's Cave. There is a myth claiming that it is where Lucifer fell, Staffa means 'Pillar', perhaps the legend is about a fallen pillar or a fallen star, one can only speculate. You have courted the light so far, now call her home to you," Dieter said pointing to the phone on the desk.

Alec took the mobile out of his pocket instead and phoned Siri, to his surprise she answered immediately.

"Siri, I've been trying to reach you, I've made it home and I want you to join me immediately, get over here now," Alec said excitedly trying to ignore Dieter's unsettling presence.

"I am terribly sorry you couldn't get a hold of me, I have been busy with my friend Viktoria Engel and we were visiting friends in Köniz. I am also here with your father Alec. We've got sort of a surprise for you."

"My father? Where are you? What's going on?" Alec asked surprised and bewildered.

"All in good time Alec, I'll let your father explain things to you. Anyway, I will not make it there until tomorrow night so why don't you take a day to just relax and settle in," Siri said suggestively.

"I thought you said we could be together as soon as I got back from Budapest, you know it's been a month since I last saw you in Berlin!" Alec complained, feeling he was being put off again.

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“I promise you Alec, I will see tomorrow evening. Here, say hello to your father,” she said and handed the phone to Robert Nachton.

“Hello Alec, did you have a nice stay with Meinard?” his father asked.

“Let me just say I have a strange story to tell you, I’ll talk to you about it later when I see you, but what the devil are you doing with Siri, you’re not trying to steal her away from me are you?” Alec asked jokingly and laughed.

“No Son, I have become rather fond of Siri’s lovely friend Viktoria, we have been busy making arrangements of our own, I have convinced her to leave Bern and stay with me in Stirling and you know what that implies.”

“Congratulations! I didn’t know you had it in you at your age. Ha ha, well done you! That makes two of us but please do not say anything to Siri, I haven’t asked her yet and to tell you the truth I fear she’s so independent she’ll refuse me,” Alec expressed with mixed emotions, first enthusiastically then solemnly.

“Viktoria and I will come by in a few days to celebrate the holidays with you, we still have some things to take care of and we will discuss the plans for our ceremony but Siri will keep you company until we arrive, see you soon Son,” his father said with a cheery voice.

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“Right then, so long!” Alec’s fears were calmed, he was happy for his father, he would pass away soon and he was comforted that his father found the light of love before death took him. He did not want him to die lonely.

Alec’s mood was soaring as he ended the call but when he turned to look at von Ritter’s reptilian gaze it slapped the smile of joy right off Alec’s face as that image of the demonic skull flashed in his mind again, Dieter was such a buzzkill, he lived on some other plane of existence disconnected from the present, seeming to be here only intermittently like flashing light, now you see him, now you don’t, a magus of theurgy.

“Nine in the morning Mr Nachton. You really must learn to trust me, have I not seen to your needs thus far?” Dieter von Ritter retrieved his black briefcase and just before leaving he said, “Enjoy your investiture Mr Nachton,” and then snickered as he walked out of the library.

Alec saw him to the front door. “Thank you for all you have done Dieter, I really do appreciate your assistance. Everything has a master’s touch.”

Alec spent the remainder of the afternoon walking through the property to familiarise himself with the house and grounds. He thought again the place should be shared with children, lots of children. Dieter had overseen everything to a T, even hiring an estate manager responsible for the property and personnel. Alec could just relax, all he had to do was exist releasing all

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thoughts of material things and trivialities for the one thing that mattered most, Love. *Only Love.*

He unpacked his suitcase and his laptop laying the *'Tales of Argot'* on the bedroom table. He looked in the closets, there were two, one was a gigantic empty walk-in closet, obviously meant for a woman and a separate wardrobe that had his things perfectly hung and arranged on the shelves.

He took a shower and a galaxy of random thoughts spiralled through his mind as the hot water flowed over his tired body, he thought about Staffa, he had not been there since he was in college and as a kid he found the island disquieting and rather spooky. It was too chilly to travel to Iona. Alec thought von Ritter must be mad or just wanted to torture him because the winter wind at sea was bitingly cold with an arctic chill that froze you to the bone. Alec was comforted by the fact that Siri was with his father and Viktoria, his fears of rivalry dissolved.

He got into bed, the mattress was brand new and the stiffness felt good on his back. He was grateful that Dieter had made sure the replacement was extra firm, he really had seen to every detail with perfection. It was *12:01 AM*.

The darkened room plunged his thoughts into the nethermost region of the earth. Images of the bedroom closet morphed into a large cave that surrounded him in complete blackness, the sound of rushing water flowed in and out like the tide of his mother's bloodstream, he floated as a boat attached

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with his umbilical lifeline, the rhythm of her heartbeat lulled him to sleep, inside the earth mother Gaia held him in peace, giving him birth from Aleph, Mem, Shin.

His heart beat with the same frequency of this terrestrial womb, a selah of grace tracing the path of his life from source into seed, conceived but not yet born, the blue pearl of a prince adored.

A wheel of stars spun around his head, astrological signs magnetically spinning emotions into a spiralling horn heralding phi harmonies with the music of the sun and imprinting him with codes of celestial light. Love and compassion filled his grail with a solar seed overflowing with starfire in a fusion of bliss. His golden heart imploding igniting his cone, surviving its charge was the key to his victorious death.

Embedding himself in the stars, he became a navigator in his chariot of fire. He breathed in the scent of roses that filled the air as he became a starmaker seeing through the eyes of the sun. And all around him, E pluribus became unum.

It was Monday, the day of the Moon. Alec was out of the door by nine o'clock in the morning and after landing on Mull he took the ferry to Iona. The wind was cold but it was a gorgeous sunny day, the sky was as blue as the Saltire flag and

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was graced with four white clouds looking like white roses on the points of its cross. He pulled out the map and thought that it was probably just easier to ask one of the locals in the coffee shop where to find Rastus Dirge. It was such a small island everyone was usually acquainted with one another in the community.

Alec followed the map and walked along a path that led through a gate, he saw the mound that was marked on the map as 'Hill of Angels', then continued forward to a small white wooden structure that looked like it had once been used as stalls to shelter animals but was now converted into an arts and crafts workshop. Light was glowing through the two glass windows that were accented with black wooden shutters which hung on brass hinges.

There was no sign indicating that it was open to tourists. Alec felt a little foolish, as if he had been sent on a wild goose chase to this mysterious shack in the middle of grasslands on this lonely island.

He knocked on the black door not sure of what to say. A gentleman with deep blue eyes the colour of the clearest sapphires or the indigotic welkin of skies answered the door. He was older, probably in his seventies and had short bright white hair and weathered skin, he radiated with kindness and warmth of the sun. He smiled at Alec and invited him in.

Various large polished stones sat on shelves in front of the windows, quartz crystals, agates, geodes and amethysts were all

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lined up in a row. Gemstones of all sorts were stored in wooden cubby trays littering the room. A few pieces of painted pottery lay on the worktables at the back with a lapidary, magnifying lenses, vices and jeweller's tools.

"Are you Rastus Dirge?" Alec inquired of the old man.

"That I am," said the man in the démodé black peacoat with gold buttons from some forgotten era, it contrasted with the colour of his eyes which seemed to reflect outward bathing the room in a blue light. "I was told that you would come today, made sure the timing was just right so I would not miss your visit, you must be Alec. Welcome! Would you care for tea?"

Alec reached out to shake his hand and when he came in contact with the old man's skin he felt a tingling sensation like an electrical current.

"No thank you, it's kind of you to offer, I've just had coffee before I ferried over," Alec replied.

"Then let me present you with the finished work, it took a long time to get it just right, to remove the rough edges, cut and shape it until the facets reflected the light, and polishing it to make it shine into the perfect stone of your birthright." Rastus opened a wooden box and removed a precious red jewel set in a band of gold. It was recherché.

"Birthright? You must be mistaken," Alec said questioningly, thinking Rastus Dirge must have confused him

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with somebody else, he saw no register or credit card machine and he wondered how he was to pay for such a princely thing.

“I make no mistake Alec, I am but the custodian waiting for the master to retrieve his stone, I am the artificer and hone the material that I am given. I am one of the starguiders who help shape the stone of man, if his cube from Saturn should fall like a meteorite from the sky, I see to its transmutation from a lump of rock to a gem divine. Please take what is yours. It is time for me to go.” Rastus folded the felt around the jewel and placed it back in the box and handed it to Alec.

“Thank you. What do I owe you sir?” Alec asked still unclear and unsure.

Rastus laughed and smiled at him, “It is you who have already paid the price and laboured through the many ages of constellations and lifetimes of strife, it is yours now for the bride’s possession to receive the wisdom of your queen’s conception.”

Alec humbly accepted the gift and thanked Rastus with true sincerity of his heart. He felt the old man sending a mental push for him to leave, as if Rastus was late and had a time schedule to keep. Alec left walking out the door past the hill and through the gate then he stopped and turned around. He forgot to ask him about the legend. He wanted to know more about Fingal’s Cave on the Isle of Staffa.

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He went back down the path and through the gate, past the hill then halted abruptly staring incredulously at the scene before him. The structure was gone. There was no white wooden building, nothing but grasslands. He saw his footprints stop and lead into where the doorway should have been and they disappeared into nothing, he saw his return footprints start from nowhere and trace back through the dirt and grass.

He stood for a while absorbing the shock and thought of the Querent when the antique shop had disappeared, but nothing seemed as outrageous as his time spent in that Budapest attic and being subjected to the devices of the **I**nvisible **A**ula **O**rders **M**embers.

He felt like the Querent in the *'Tales of Argot'*, what a wild ride this has been, he wondered where the joke ended and the truth began. Maybe everything was a red herring in this twisted god game. What is reality? Perhaps just a series of mirrors reflecting back to its source, the All, a multidimensional-self masquerading as physical vessels recurring the same disingenuous sport, players in a grand production at the theatre of life.

A fractal repeating its shape.

Stars *ad infinitum*.

Alec hurried back to make the ferry. He just wanted to get back home now to greet Siri. He put the strange encounter out of

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his mind and learned to flow with the supranormal happenings around him, they were starting to seem commonplace and with that thought he did something quite odd, he smirked a left-sided smile, the universal joke imprinting on him, he was laughing at each revelation and outward expression.

He could not stop himself, it was as natural as phi, from the moment of birth until the day you died, the joke was always there and only the Fool can see it. Man was the Joker and he might as well embody it. The Fool and the Aleph.

The divine unfolds, evolving, the creation surpasses its creator, the son replacing his father, the apprentice exceeds his master, the mother giving birth to the crafter.

Alec had lunch back in town and by the time he returned home it was *Three Fifty-Seven* in the afternoon and his emotions were as numb as his skin cold. He got into the shower to warm up.

He wanted complete privacy and saw to it that they would be alone this evening. He brought the *'Tales of Argot'* downstairs with him to the library and began writing his own story, hammering it out nonstop fuelled by afflatus.

It was late evening when he heard a car pull up into the driveway and he opened the front door in anticipation. Siri stood there showered by the porch light looking more beautiful than ever glowing like the moon against the backdrop of the night. He

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gave her an immediate embrace. The driver brought in her luggage then went on his way.

He escorted her into the sitting room and motioned her to sit on the sofa. He had not planned any elaborate setting, merely his simple words and his heart full of love. With a serious face he got down on both knees as if a supplicant to a goddess, he pulled out the wooden box holding the precious red stone from his trouser pocket and handed it to her humbly asking in a trembling tone, "I love you Siri, will you marry me?"

"Are you ready to make such a commitment?" Siri asked to test his resolve.

"With my whole heart," Alec said honestly.

"Yes Alec, I will be your bride," Siri confirmed. Her eyes held respect and pride, seeing the changes that were wrought in him, a worthy man to become a noble king.

She bent to kiss his forehead then Alec stretched his neck to kiss her lips, opened the box from her hands and placed the golden ring with the crimson stone upon her finger, laid his head upon her lap and said, "Thank you. I promise I will be the man that you deserve, I will adore you always and let your light fill my heart."

Alec let Siri change her travel clothes and went back into the library to continue typing out his tale on his laptop while he waited for her lovely presence to grace him.

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“What are you working on?” Siri asked him as she stepped into the library wearing one of his formal shirts with apparently nothing on underneath it.

It was unbuttoned partway open in front provocatively and partially revealing her breasts. Alec was instantly driven with a wild desire. He stood up from the desk and walked forward to intercept her.

“I’m writing down my account of the bizarre occurrences that began happening since we first met and especially when I started reading that strange book, it gave me the weirdest dreams.” Alec pointed to the *‘Tales of Argot’* on the desk as he wrapped his body around hers, enfolding her in his arms and began kissing the side of her neck. “It was Utomere’s suggestion that I tell my story,” he said huskily in between kisses.

Siri was about to ask him another question but he took her mouth with his; inserting his tongue in before she could get a word out. He kissed her forcefully sending magick tremors to his hard erection that craved to be against her body and pressed into her as he slid his hand inside the shirt to touch her skin, moving his other hand behind her to caress her bare bottom.

Of course his shirt looked better on her than it did on him. He plunged his tongue forward again for another deep kiss, after being away from her for a month he was a starving man and he intended to feast well like *Bacchus* at a banquet.

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“I think your story is just beginning Alec,” Siri said and winked at him.

“Well we can tell stories later, I intend to keep my promise on those threats I made to you over the phone so if you have any last words while you’re still able to speak coherently before I bonk your brains out you had better say them now,” Alec stated, and then took the nipple of her breast in his mouth to torture her into silence with bountiful sucking kisses.

“Yes,” she gasped. “I remember, but I told you no carpet burn so the floor is out.” Siri looked at the hardwood floor covered by a massive Persian rug. She unbuckled his belt, unfastened his pants and then gently pushed his head back from her bosom. He reluctantly withdrew his mouth letting go with a long tug of his lips from her nipple but then he removed his clothes with just as much incentive and shuddered to his core with a passionate hunger.

Siri walked across the room to the great throne chair, removed his dress shirt from her body while smiling with that left-sided smirk of hers and used her index finger gesturing him to come to her.

“It’s you Alec, who will have your brain imploded. Come and receive your accolade my dear Knight, any wisdom you may be lacking you will now gain from me, the gifts of Solomon I can grant you, it is cosmic sex you need.” She pointed for him to sit in the throne chair.

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Alec laughed and moved over to her in *puris naturalibus*. With his cock fully erect and aching with lust, his face wearing a satirical grin that harboured a tempestuous need, he closed the gap in just a few strides and saw himself mirrored in that woman's eyes, his twin soul he surmised but really a fallen angel in disguise, and smiling in his obsession as he drank her features in wanting to drown in her existence matching fire for fire, he sat upon the throne with his member burning like a pyre.

Siri stood over him and kissed him on the mouth, she whispered in his ear so softly with a certainty of truth, "Deny yourself to pleasure me, deny it thrice and become my king."

She straddled the chair over his lap and mounted his long full girth inching herself down, rotating and nestling onto the base of his stone hard pillar encircling him like a glove, her wet desire surrounded him as a shroud of nectar clothed his phallus from above.

Siri grasped the sides of the high back throne in her hands and with her feet upon the floor began thrusting in a rhythmic motion up and down upon the glory of his surging erection as Alec threw his arms around her holding her bum in each of his hands.

Pulse and rhythm infused his heart with love opening like a red rose and he knew indubitably that it was she who would give him the true crowning jewel, a stone of destiny like Eve's red apple of wisdom given to Adam, awakening the Fool.

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She rode his fertile beam of power to thrice charge the lightning rod of Zeus and cried towards the silver heavens inducing the wellspring of her blissful state to ignite with molten star and liquid sun bringing to life the intent of her creation. The entwinement of two genders, the same soul but of diametric poles witnessing miracles every moment, an eclipse of moon with sun, a gambit playing the Joker as the wild card to ensure her king had won. A lunar river of dew divine showered him with wisdom like rain to open the blossom of the golden flower inside his mind.

His immortal identity now revealed crowning him with an illuminated nimbus of the golden sun like a ring of Saturn around his head. Open gates awaited him with transparent rays of the flaming dawn, his secret universe now alive with song as he ascended with solar wings, a Phoenix rising from the substrata of an earthly plane above the thirteenth aeon through crystalline courts to his throne of light to reign as king.

The angels were no longer bleeding, the queen now weeping as she was embedded in the helix strands. There was a hushed silence as if the seventh seal was broken, time stopping, not a word spoken, the hourglass frozen with suspended sand.

They lingered in enchantment as a burning star in an inertial heaven lost in invisible time.

She held her Sol Invictus in her arms like a newborn god, the World Mother and her child divine.

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A Fool For Twenty-Two & Pi

“Above the cloud with its shadow is the star with its light. Above all things reverence thyself.” Thus spoke Pythagoras.

It was December 22nd. A new day had begun. Alec's old self had died. He was tranquillised and harmonised. A circle made whole, he was as transcendental as pi. The beginning and the end. As a trio of Alephs, a triad of Taus and thrice the Fool, he had recovered his balance. He showered and dressed then went downstairs to the library to continue typing out his story. A scroll and a rose lay upon the desk. He smiled as he surveyed the room, he was surrounded by books but true knowledge and wisdom was found within him. He brought the rose to his face to inhale her sweet fragrance.

It was 1:08 PM when Alec finished writing his odd tale. It was a work that had truly come from something beyond himself. He wanted to get the file printed out on good quality book paper to match the same bond as the Querent's journal so he took the flash drive with him to Edinburgh. After the pages of his story were neatly printed and wrapped, he placed the package in the box he had brought with him that contained the *'Tales of Argot'*.

As he walked around the corner to head back towards the car park down the street his eyes beheld a black sign with gold

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metallic letters that read, 'Cygnus Burnett Lowly, Antiques & Curiosities'. Alec put the palm of his hand on his forehead and laughed. Coincidences everywhere, he did not remember seeing the sign there on his way to the stationer, it just appeared from nowhere.

He reached for the brass knob and the tinkling of a bell sounded as he entered through the black door. Alec surveyed the room and his attention was drawn to a lavishly carved wood desk on a platform in the display window. He noted the farrago lying on the desk, a pearl handled magnifying glass, a violin, a bronze statue of flying Mercury, a crystal and silver inkwell, a scrimshaw of ivory, and a beautifully hand painted beehive Limoges box with tiny porcelain bees crawling upon it as if in search of a rose, as well as a stack of old books.

Alec went to the back of the shop and rang an old brass gong engraved with a dragon and a phoenix then set the box on the counter with the *'Tales of Argot'* and his story inside. A man came out from behind the curtain and handed a box to Alec.

"I trust you know the address where to mail this to its owner?" Cygnus Burnett Lowly asked and winked his eye.

Alec looked in the box. It was the armillary that Utomere had purchased, or *thought* he had purchased.

"Then you must be Cygnus, I have something for you." Alec pushed the box with the stories towards him.

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Cygnus raised his brow and asked, "Tell me, knowing what you do now, would you have changed anything to avoid all the pain and suffering you had endured in your lifetime?"

Alec did not have to think about it, he responded instantly to the question, "No. I would not have changed a thing about my life. It was the suffering that brought me my freedom. I needed to die in order to be reborn."

Cygnus nodded his head and smiled.

Alec asked, "Who are you exactly?"

"I am one of the starguiders of the **IAOM**, we are Sun Lords, timewalkers, and you are now one of us."

"The same as Rastus Dirge?" Alec asked.

"Yes and many others besides, we travel the planes with a blink of an eye, the shop is just a doorway through time. Each uses their own talent, opens a store or provides a service to help our fellowman unfold a story of their own. You will find your talent soon. Just think about what you would like to do and steer your way through the stars," Cygnus explained to him.

After climbing the Initiate's Ladder, Alec now understood the purpose of all beings. *Emitte lucem et veritatem*. He said farewell and walked down the street with a sphinx-like gaze and an all-knowing left-sided smile. Time was an illusion and he was just a reflection of God. The Fool evermore.

Epilogue



*My Knights I bid you awaken
To the light you have forsaken
Still waits for you to claim her
Though many have lost their fervour
Return now to that straight road
And claim your Kingly abode
Come my Knights for love's dew
To shower a dove above you
I beseech the all-powerful force of man
To raise up the Divine Feminine
There is no need for your gaze to travel far
Catch the light inside you I am your falling star...*

The Joker Always Wins

HyGieia

EmpEdocles

RoseNkreuz

MonoImus

EUclid

SeShat



The Trickster

Glossary

Definitions

Adumbral - Shadowy.

Apraxia - Inability to make purposeful movements.

Astonied - Dazed; bewildered; filled with consternation.

Buzzkill - Something or someone that spoils an otherwise enjoyable event.

Caliginous - Dark and misty, gloomy.

Cinerarium - A niche for a funeral urn containing the ashes of the cremated dead.

Contumelious - Insulting display of contempt in words or actions; contemptuous or humiliating treatment. Disdain, scorn, rudeness.

Enantiomorph - Either one of a pair of compounds (crystals or molecules) that are mirror images on each other but are not identical.

Epithumetical - Pertaining to sexual desire; sensual.

Euneirophrenia - Peace of mind after a pleasant dream.

Flimflammetry - Deceptive, insincere or nonsense.

Indicial - Pertaining to, or resembling an indication.

Jamais vu - Mental confusion. The experience of being unfamiliar with a person or situation that is actually very familiar.

Lacertilian - Of or relating to lizards.

Leggiadrous - Light or graceful; in a light, delicate, and brisk style. (Musical)

Librocubicularist - A person who reads in bed.

Lugubrious - Mournful, dismal or gloomy.

Glossary

Obnubilating - To darken, obscure, to become cloudy.

Olidous - Having a strong, disagreeable smell; fetid.

Oniochhalasia - Buying as a means of mental relaxation.

Osseous - Composed of, containing, or resembling bone; bony.

Polyandrion - A mass grave.

Spaghettification - In astrophysics it is stretching and compression of objects into long thin shapes in a strong gravitational field near a black hole.

Stentorian - Very loud or powerful in sound.

Stichomancy - Divination by lines or passages of books taken at hazard.

Ululating - Emit long loud cries, howl.

Appendix A

Latin Phrases

Ad infinitissimum - Going on forever, forever in smallness.

Ad infinitum - To infinity, continue forever.

Ad lucem per amorem - To the Light through Love.

Ad te levavi oculos - Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.

Amor Est Magis Cognitvus Quam Cognitio - We know things better by Love than by Intellect.

Amor vinci omnia - Love Conquers All.

Anima Mundi - The Soul of the World.

Ardet ut vivat - She burns that she may live.

Aula lucis - The House of Light.

Caput mortuum - Dead head. Human skull.

Cave Ros Solis - Beware Sun Dew. Meat eating plant; insects.

Cosmocrator - The Ruler of the World. The Devil.

Descendendo ascendendo - Descend Ascend.

Ecce Homo - Behold the Man.

Emitte lucem et veritatem - Send out Light and Truth.

Helluo librorum - A devourer of books; a Bookworm.

Ignis Agua Origo Mundi - Fire; Water; Source, Spirit, Air; The World.

In puris naturalibus - Completely naked.

Appendix A

Intelligenti pauca - Few words suffice for he who understands.

I Tego Arcana Dei - I conceal the secrets of God.

Jupiter Inlustris - Jupiter Himself the Shining Light.

Lapsit exilis - Stone fallen from Heaven.

Lux et veritas - Light and Truth.

Memento mori - Reminder of mortality, death head.

Mens est omnibus - The Mind is Everything.

Mons Magorum Invisibilis - The invisible mount of the Magi.

Mors ultima ratio - Death is the final accounting.

Nam et ipsa scientia potestas es - Knowledge is Power.

Ne Plus Ultra - The highest point, as of excellence or achievement; the ultimate.

Nil nisi clavis deest - Nothing is wanting but the Key.

Noli foras ire, in interiori homine habitat veritas - Don't go outside, truth lies within yourself.

Noli irritare leones - Do not irritate the Lions.

Non compos mentis - Not of sound mind.

Nunquam dormio - Never sleep.

Omnia ab Uno et in Unum Omnia - All is in One and One is in All.

Ordo ab chao - Order from Chaos.

Pulsanti Operietur - To him who knocks it shall be opened.

Rex Mundi - King of the World.

Appendix A

Ros Coeli – Dew from Heaven.

Sanguis draconis - Dragon's Blood.

Si talia jungere possis sit tibi scire satis - If you can comprehend these things you know enough.

Sol Invictus - Invincible Sun.

Sub Silencio Sub Secreto - In Silence In Secret.

Tempus fugit - Time Flies.

Unio mystica – Mystical Union.

Unitam logica falsa tuam philosophiam totam suffodiant - May faulty logic undermine your entire philosophy.

Veritas Vos Liberabit - The Truth will set you Free.

Vesica piscis – Oval shape, or composed of two arcs of circles.

Vide Aude et Tace - To Know, To Dare and be Silent.

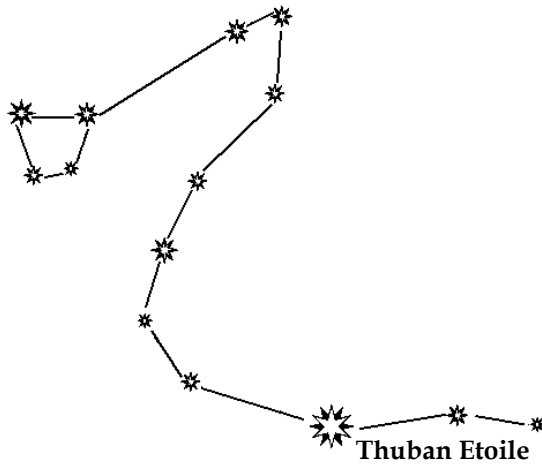
Vis inertiae - Unwillingness of change. Matter which resists change. Hard to set in motion what is still, or stop what is in motion unless acted on by some external force.

Visita Interiora Terrae Rectificando Invenies Occultum Lapidem (V.I.T.R.I.O.L.) - By Visiting the Inside Earth, and Rectifying it, you will find the Hidden Stone.

About The Author



*Escalating
from the depths of Man's Pit
is fire that ignites with intention*



*and the Light of the Stars shine down
to inspire you with artful
Inventions*







A Not So DiVine Comedy
Of True Falsehoods