

Appendix Two

The Great Work!

The reader will be pleased to hear that the letter hereinafter is not an explication of The Great Work! Rather, it is an Apology to my friends, family, and foes... it is an apology, “a defense” and my testimony as a humanist, agnostic, atheist, and a freethinker, infidel, and esp. as a writer. Every writer has his or her Great Work, or *magnum opus*. Whether they call it that or not. And so to the Critic who might say, “Well, there’s nothing Great about the Great Work.” I say it is the Great Work! I titled it such after an old friend of mine accused me of being a narcissus. Perhaps, I am. Or maybe I’m entitled to think I am the best at something, rather than good for nothing. And to think that I am the best writer of our time, or all time would be a shallow thought. But no one can take my thoughts from me, not even the Gestalt of my story The Secret Society. If I thought the opposite of the above thinking, if I thought myself a failure, no one could ever convince me otherwise, and no one could ever convince the reader.. And to all the Christian readers in the audience, and to all the other believers I say that there will always be jackals in the Kingdom of Heaven, waiting there, to devour your souls!

A Simple Life

I lead a life of simplicity, or at least, a simple life. Because nothing in life is simple... but I strive toward simplicity. How to live a simple life: Get rid of everything you own and walk the streets with nothing but literally the clothes on your back and a pair of shoes for a few days, and then you will know what you truly need in this life.

The Hatchet Man

Thomas D. Freewill decided one day that he was not going to hide who and what he was from society. At the time Thomas lived at The Lodge, a group home for the mentally ill, but this is where society puts its invalids and other undesirables, to keep them safe, or rather to keep society safe from them. It was here that Thomas D. Freewil, in which the D. stood for “Doubt,” decided to come out of the closet as an agnostic atheist. And not that he expected anyone there to understand what it meant to be a humanist, freethinker, and agnostic atheist... No. The people at the group home couldn’t ascertain what this meant, esp. The staff who were Evangelicals and hated atheists. Though they presented a facade that pretended to love everyone and all of God’s creation, they did not in fact have any qualms against persecuting an atheist.

And so Thomas D. Freewill made it known to others through a t-shirt that read simply:
“Atheist.”

Initial reactions to the t-shirt were that it was okay to be who you wanted to be, except, it seemed, an atheist. The fellow residents at the group home couldn’t understand what it meant to be:
“Good without God.”

And it took only a day for someone to label Thomas D. Freewill:
“Doubting Thomas.”

A label Thomas D. Freewill took on with pleasure. Labels used for the sake of convenience by the herd, to pigeon-hole what the masses liked or dislike, or in this case, what they feared. But this was the state in Amerika these days. There were some that Thomas met who operated under the pretense that they were nonreligious, but still believed in God and were not an atheist as was Thomas D. Freewill. But these were what our Doubting Thomas called “Pretenders.” They pretended to be nonreligious but were too cowardly to say they were atheist, or just didn’t want the attention from their fellow humankind that Thomas D. Freewill underwent. No, it was not easy to say these days even in Amerika who or what one really was, at least in the South, where Evangelism was the fashion of the day. But Thomas was not against religion, so to speak, because he had a liking of Buddhist traditions and of Taoism, a spiritual philosophy. Yes, our Doubting Thomas appreciated this godless

religion and this godless philosophy. The idea, too, that “religion is poison” did not appeal to our Doubting Thomas, because Thomas had studied Comparative Religions in college.

Another sore spot to Thomas D. Freewill was the University of Academia, where Thomas had once thrived until it served its purpose and Thomas moved on from Academia after several, several years of lost time being a student. The Doubting Thomas was a student of Comparative Religions and now was a teacher of Comparative Religions through his The Layman’s Philosophy that he worked under. Even at the University of Academia, Thomas D. Freewill encountered being viewed as a deviant for his disbelief, his agnostic atheism. And even after college life, Thomas was accused of having a “fixed mindset,” a crime he didn’t commit, a sin he was innocent of, and it had a penalty he could not endure.

But for now, let me introduce some other characters to the reader who played a role in this fiasco: “The Hatchet Man.”

There was Faith G. Freewill, in which the G. stood for “Grace.” Faith was Thomas. D. Freewill’s wife for many years. Until the Lodge convinced Thomas and Faith to get a divorce so the Lodge could make more money off Faith because she would receive the most for her Fixed Income from the State here in Amerika.

And there was Page Neighbors, whom we will address more later, but for now I will say she was a nemesis of The Doubting Thomas in that she accused Thomas of being a harbinger of Satan and hit him square in the face with a wad of keys, saying: “You fucking Atheist, I hope you rot in Hell!” Of which was not the most original idea when it came to Evangelicals distaste for atheism, but it was what she said when she assaulted our hero the Doubting Thomas at the Lodge.

Next, there was Mr. Frank Manners, or just Mr. Manners who was the Lodge’s resident counselor. It was Mr. Manners who accused Thomas of having a “fixed mindset.” He, too, would persecute poor Thomas with all the power he had to try and crush a defenseless resident at the Lodge. Mr. Manners was a schemer and had hatched a plan to get rid of Thomas D. Freewill even before Thomas had come out as an agnostic atheist, who was also a Humanist and a Freethinker.

Another opponent of Thomas D. Freewill’s was Dick Haggie, a loathsome man, who craved attention and power and control, which he in all actuality, had none. Dick and Jane Haggie, his wife, worked with the resident counselor to alienate the Doubting Thomas from his wife Faith G. Freewill. Little unbeknownst to Dick Haggie was that Faith G. Freewill was loyal to her husband, even after their sham divorce that the Lodge convinced her to make with Thomas D. Freewill.

And, too, there was Gabby Babble and her friend Fig Fable. Both were a few years younger than Thomas D. Freewill. And the two were lesbians, or perhaps bi-sexual. Regardless, Gabby Babble and Fig Fable were persecuted by the Evangelicals; therefore, Thomas took a liking to them. And to the Evangelicals a serious disliking of them could not be hidden.

Another character I will mention is Minister Sinister, a White Christian Nationalist through and through. His hate for atheists ran deep, as we shall see below. Minister Sinister was not his real name, of course, but rather a pen name for a writer on the internet, who wrote the “Flog Blog” which was the short name for the Christian Nationalists Parent’s Guide to the Chastisement of Children, which encouraged Christian parents to beat the Devil out of their children. And these writings could be found on and read aloud on Amerika Faith Radio, or AFR.

Last, and certainly worth mentioning, is Jack Wretch, a dear and loyal friend of Thomas D. Freewill, who had lost his wife Jilt Wretch not long ago to the System, just as Thomas D. Freewill would lose Faith G. Frewill. Jack and Thomas spent many days just hanging out at the Lodge, enjoying life.

All these characters met one night at the Book Burning Bonfire led by a person mentioned earlier in these narratives, Quelle, or Q. as he was infamously known as nowadays.

The days of Thomas and Jack hanging out and enjoying themselves were over, though, now it would be the serious business of the Doubting Thomas and his faithful sidekick Jack Wretch fighting the fight for freedom from the shackles of the Lodge. Jack simply went along with Thomas as far as any reasonable... Really, Jack Wretch was extremely loyal to Thomas and Thomas was loyal to Jack Wretch, so much so that Thomas and Dick went from arguing one evening, to throwing blows. It started when Dick Haggie started ranting at Jack Wretch and this went on for about a quarter of an hour until Thomas had heard enough and told Dick to “Shut his fucking arrogant mouth!” Dick proceeded to tell Thomas to “Shut his fucking atheist mouth.” Whereupon Thomas lit into Dick with a solid couple of punches that rattled the short and stocky Dick Haggie. The two then exchanged blows for a moment more and Thomas wrestled Dick to the ground, got on top of him, and shoved a handful of dirt into Dick’s mouth before Mr. Manners could pull Thomas off poor Dick.

Mr. Manners determined that Dick was “probably” at fault and did not contact the authorities for Dick’s sake because he would have been taken to jail. Thomas, though, refused to apologize to Dick. Saying “that dumb son-of-a-bitch got what was coming to him!” Frank tried again to get Thomas to apologize, but Thomas D. Freewill knew he was in the right, and would admit no wrongdoing.

And so this incident sparked our Doubting Thomas to rebel against the Lodge and society as a whole, as far as the society of Evangelicals he butted heads with nowadays here in Amerika, and in the South.

There was another adversary to Thomas D. Freewill known as Rig. And it was Rig who encouraged Thomas to start smoking cigarettes again. Who would do such a thing these days, anyhow? But Rig was a Pretender for certain. He claimed to be a descendant of Horus, but was more a “horse’s ass” according to Thomas. Rig did influence to start vaping, assuring him it was harmless. Thomas D. Freewill was a bit naive sometimes and Rig took advantage of him with this weakness, not that trust should be a weakness, though. And ultimately it was trust that Thomas started vaping. Either way, Thomas was happy in his new addiction, a new drug, so to speak. But our Doubting Thomas did doubt his friendship with Rig, as he should, and began to separate himself from Rig at the Lodge.

Rig had an associate, I might add, whom Thomas D. Freewill disliked more than he had come to dislike Rig. This person went by Stickman, called this because of his tall and lanky build. Stickman and Rig began to gang up on Thomas because of his coming out of the closet. But Stickman was a supposed Christain, a believer in some God or what not, an Evangelical to be certain. And as most Evangelicals, his entire being was strewn with hypocrisy. Not that Thomas D. Freewill didn't have an appreciation for contradiction in one's personal idiosyncrasies. Stickman was a walking contradiction, though. Stickman always found the opportunity to bring Thomas D. Freewill down. But not down to earth but down as to send the Doubting Thomas off the deep end. And it was the Deep End that Thomas lived, though. The Doubting Thomas in Thomas D. Freewill was happy to go to the brink of reason, but just deep enough to metamorphosize into a spectral and luminous personality. Thomas was searching for his "self," and it was in the Deep End that he had come face to face with a visage of solitude, which he had found in a "black dream," as Thomas called it. A daydream that was on the dark side... something that seemed as spiritual confusion to the Evangelicals, but to the Doubting Thomas it was clear that Rig and Stickman were the equivalent of a couple of jackals, not to be trusted but kept close and watched. For, they were out to devour his soul: to eat Thomas D. Freewill's soul and shit out gold, as Thomas D. Freewill liked to jokingly say.

And it was not that Thomas even believed in a soul, perhaps, but only in a figurative sense. Thomas was more a believer in Nothingness, a state of not-being, of non-action and a world of complementarity of opposites as he had learned from Taoism and Heraclitus... He was on the Path to Oblivion, a thoughtless nothingness that Thomas believed was at the heart of our existence. The Evangelicals, like Stickman and even Rig and esp. Dick Haggie and Mr. Frank Manners -all of these individuals were floating around trying to avoid their shadows, their alter-egos, but Thomas D. Freewill embraced his shadow and was thankful it was always there with him, following him, unshakable. There is comfort in the certainty of your shadow, of the Other. But Rig and Stickman were lost in nothingness, and would return to that from which they had come: from nothing we come, and to nothing we return, thought the Doubting Thomas.

And while Rig and Stickman were persons that Thomas D. Freewill associated with, they weren't his kind. Thomas had a friend, Grace Cousins, who he had grown up with and still kept in touch with, and Grace was Faith's middle name, and she was more formerly known as Faith Grace Freewill.

Thomas and Jack, though, were on the same level, on the same playing field as actors in this world. The two spent many hours each day just languishing, taking it easy, and simply hanging out as friends typically do in this world. And they were of this world, not some fantasy of a world to come beyond death. This subject, though taboo to most, was a general topic of discussion among the two comrades. And Jack Wretch would never encourage Thomas D. Freewill to smoke cigarettes as his nemeses did. Jack, on the other hand, -Jack's biggest "bad influence" was limited to coffee and energy drinks: this was the extent of Jack Wretch's bad influence. Jack also liked to reminisce about the time he went to Farmer's Market and bought some magical beans, but we'll save that for another time and place than here.

Anyhow, Thomas and Jack liked to drink coffee and energy drinks whenever they could scrounge up enough money to buy one of these items. Thomas took to selling his book collection even to purchase these drinks that were a luxury item at the Lodge. Thomas, though, never sold a book that he hadn't already read, inside and out. The one thing Thomas D. Freewill would not part with: his Master Copy of what he called, The Great Work! This was a collection of Thomas D. Freewill's own writings that you as the reader might have heard of.

Regardless, the Doubting Thomas had many good things going for himself even at the Lodge, that most of the other residents had none of; except, Dick Haggie, who boasted about his sketches and writings, in which the stories weren't even typed and the sketches were not digitized, either. So Thomas offered to help type up Dick Haggie's work and digitize his sketches. This was before the brawl happened, and part of the reason it happened was because Dick resented that Jack Wretch delivered the message from Thomas D. Freewill that he would not be typing up any more of Dick's stories. Thomas made this decision because of Dick's failure to pay him the fee they had agreed upon, which was just 10 cents per page, and 50 cents per sketch to digitize them. Thomas felt this was a fair rate considering that Dick Haggie got to keep a third of his benefits of his Fixed Income; whereas Thomas and Jack only got to keep a measly \$20 of their benefits Fixed Income. Nevertheless, the Doubting Thomas was seen as the villain for supposedly over charging poor Dick, as Mr. Frank Manners put it.

But accusations always seem to follow Thomas, esp. accusations about his integrity which was questioned simply for the fact that he had come out as an agnostic atheist, who was also a Humanist who was “Good without God,” and a Freethinker, who practiced freethought, as well. This title may seem a little long-winded, but it was necessary for Thomas D. Freewill to state exactly who and what he was. And also by freethought, it was meant that Thomas D. Freewill exercised opinions that were formed free of the typical outside influences of politics, religion, etc. Thomas D. Freewill was indeed a free-spirit. He lived by the Layman’s Philosophy he had developed being acculturated to Globalized Culture at the University of Academia. Thomas had abandoned the idea that Academia was for the betterment of Amerika, and its dream.

The idea that Academia was for the betterment of Amerika was an “either/or” argument, a false bifurcation, or a false dichotomy, that is. It was believed that Academia either made one a better person, or it did not. But Thomas argued that there was a third option: that by attending Academia without a degree, he was free from the ideology that the government and society and other institutions placed on attending the University of Academia. Indeed, Thomas had attended for some 10 years while avoiding getting a degree completely. This subtle defiance set people into confusion, though. How could someone not want to finish and be a lifetime student as Thomas D. Freewill had dreamed. The reality was not as glamorous: Thomas would be indefinitely “betwixt and between” being a student but never quite an Alumni, which he disliked the idea of.

He disliked the idea of being an Alumni, though, but in reality Thomas could have probably been okay with having become an Alumni. A person’s ideology seemed to mislead them in general Thomas thought. It was better just to avoid any deep thought on any subject, in fact. Thomas esp. thought this way about religion. Religion, the word derived from the Latin *religio*, which meant “to come together” seemed to divide people rather than to bring them together. So, deep thought was useful, or at least had its uses in everyday life. But in general, reflection on too much was useless, such as debates about which was a better coffee: Papua New Guinea or Jamaican Blue Mountain. This type of thought, or train of thought, so to speak, is a useless endeavor, and set to derail from the second one starts to engage in it.

The matter of our story here is, though, to echo what Thomas D. Freewill and a Professor, Dr. Critic. Thomas encountered Dr. Critic at the University of Academia long ago. The Doubting Thomas, who would be 50 years old soon, had been out of the University of Academia for 20 years now reflected on his discussions with Dr. Critic often still. Another professor Dr. Wit was more to Thomas D. Freewill's liking than Dr. Critic due to the fact that Dr. Wit was a generation older than both Freewill and Critic. And he had better insight into what would later be Thomas D. Freewill's magnum opus: The Great Work!

The controversy that surrounded Critic and Thomas was a story Dr. Wit had praised both the allegory and praised the explication of it. What happened was Critic, the hatchet man behind this story, -Critic dismissed the allegory as the work of a naïf and that Thomas was not the wordsmith he thought himself to be. Thomas responded to this with a livid attitude. An attitude that was understandable. The story was titled: The Box.

But Thomas, as furious as he was, wrote another allegory: The Secret Society.

In the piece of writing, Thomas wrote about a man and his unrelenting effort to get revenge from an invisible and unknown nemesis, which was a misuse of authority. The story never comes to fruition, or at the hero of the story R. never resolves his predicament or achieves his goal of revenge. Anyhow that was what irked Thomas, a professor who cited that to Thomas that "the invention of the unknown demands new forms, and a professor who admired experimental playwrights, but judged Thomas D. Freewill's experimental allegory was not worthy of thought.

One day, Thomas took his writing The Box to Dr. Wit who understood the intricacies and nuances of the experimental allegory. It is quite well that the whole fiasco amounted to nothing except a misunderstanding. Though, it wasn't a simple misunderstanding but a piece of writing that gave Thomas recognition from the University of Academia as writer of the year at the University of Academia which sent the Doubting Thomas off the deep end. And it took more or less 8 years for Thomas to recover his confidence as a writer.

Thomas D. Freewill came out of the woodwork after 8 years and was now deciding what to do with The Great Work!

Thomas was quick to regain his composure and complete curiosity as he previously in the group home years at the Lodge. Thomas bypassed the opportunity to publish his book, and he wrote with a sense of purpose.

All in all, Thomas was satisfied with his deconstruction of 'The Great Work!' because he was the one to save it by being critical of it himself. Critic never took back the stance that 'The Box' was worthy of thought, but Thomas proceeded to follow his path of writing, good or bad, and straight and crooked as Hericlitus had said and his path of obscure vision of the art and craft of writing.

Thomas D. Freewill was critical of Amerika, of its influence on Academia, and of its conflict of interest with evil corporations and their political agendas for monetary gain. Mammon and his minions made certain that a political divide cripple Amerika, and the influence of Evangelicals through their disregard of separation of Church and State. As well as the Evangelicals grab for political favor, which they claim is because they are in God's favor. Nothing could be further from the truth, though. Evangelicalism had at its core the bureaucratic and institutional nature of evil to grapple with before its Church was acceptable to the herd, and the herd went head fashion off the cliff of reality into the deep end where it was only spoken about with apathy and indifference. These two things, apathy and indifference, would be the status quo of people's thought and action someday soon. That is. if the End Times didn't come and sweep up the Evangelicals away in the Rapture. Which wouldn't be happening until the Age of Water far off into a future generation who would have forgotten about us, except that it would cast the first stone to set in motion the self-fulfilling prophecy it so dearly wanted, but a time in the Cabalah that speaks of the Second Coming of Christ not of the land that is coming, but the land that is constantly coming. And one has to take this quip to mind, for the narcissism of our Zeitgeist casts into our future an inexhaustible shadow of shadows.

Thomas D. Freewill had been in the group home for a few years when he was assigned a position at the Underground Library, and Thomas was put there by the Automata. The position was given to him under the pretense that he would be in charge of late fees and the resale of donated books. But if a person had a late fee, or book fine, The Underground Library was a private library, and a person could only use the library if they were a member of the Automata. And to be a member of the Automata, one had to attend the University of Academia. Thomas put down in his application that he had attended the University of Academia, but didn't tell the administrator for the Automata Society who did the hiring for the Underground Library.

But nothing was said about this anomaly that Freewill the root of. The Automata Society knew that Thomas had not finished at the University of Academia. Thomas was to be interrogated and searched before he entered and left work each day. And soon, time went by and Thomas didn't concern himself with this oddity of him not finishing. One day, though, the Automata sent an agent to conscript Thomas, but he was all too familiar with the agent because of his experience with the Gestalt and familiarity with Academia. Thomas could remember vaguely with a distorted memory, the time he spent in Backwards, Amerika.

The Great Work! (original)

What follows is a little nostalgia for you, the reader. It comes from an old friend and acquaintance Gusto Wily, or Gus, who told me, Wade Bridges, a tale from the Underground. Gus and I, and our other friend, Rob Cash, -we were all from Backwards, Amerika, which was a few days walk from even the peripheral limits of Aion, the Great City. And there was our “ lady friend:” Ms. Gabby Babble. And it involved her and Gus in what we now remember as: The Great Work!

“I was in search of the Stone by the River, the legendary stone: a white powdery stone that was said to be on the banks of the Omen River, that, as you know, runs through Blackguard. And you see, Wade, one day I found what I thought was it... Hell, I knew it was the Stone, by the fact that it looked like a “Moon rock,” as Gabby Babble put it. I was expecting it to be “red Sulphur” and I would get this because of heating it. But I ain’t gonna give ya’ any technical jargon: it was the legendary Stone.” And Gus paused.

“I had done all the leg work, and tested it... well, there are problems with testing longevity. First, I needed an opportunity to test it, and I hadn’t yet had this opportunity. Until, while at work formulating the Elixir, I may have combined it wrong with certain drugs and lost my mind one afternoon with Gabby Babble. You know well that we were seeing each other temporarily. Hell, everyone now has seen Gabby Babble naked, not just you and I. Beats me why old Ward even wants her. Anyhow, she took my pistol and told me she was going to throw it in the Omen River. I took this as a sign, without any better judgment and under the influence of the Elixir, which was basically the Stone heated until it turned red by combining it with beechnut mast oil. This acted to extract the agents from the Stone. Then, I added THC extract (using beechnut mast oil in one batch, and moonshine in the other), and I added some psilocybin, as well, as a cathartic. Anyhow, Gabby Babble not only threw my gun into the Omen River, but just before that, she downed all the damned Elixir! And this sealed her fate: I took her and drowned her. I held her by the neck under the water in the Omen River until she was dead. I left her ass in the River for some time, so I knew she was dead. And I figured I had killed her so the least I could do was bury her.

I dragged her dead ass out of the river, and I gotta feel sorry for her so, I tried to get the water out of her lungs, and it had been nearly an hour since she had been in the OmenRiver: Well, after I got the water out of her lungs, that crazy bitch came back to life!

I call this the ‘residual effect’ of the elixir: it is an extension of life, somehow.” Gus told me.

“And so,” Gus continued, “I had taken the liberty of keeping a written journal of my experimental transmutation of the Elixir, so that I could reproduce it accurately. And luckily, Gabby Babble didn’t have a memory of me killing her sorry ass, or at least trying to kill her, until she came back to life... Well, that was the Elixir I had come to you and old Rob with, when the Malady had hit hard in the Great City. Who needs a vaccine when you have the Waters of Life, the Elixir of Immortality, and the

nostrum for all our addictions, present and past. The Great Work had paid off. And so I kept taking it, but Gabby Babble didn't. So, when Ward came down with the Malady, I took the opportunity to experiment further. I just watched, though, and by observation I saw the sickness overtake Ward but not Gabby Babble... at least not to begin with. But the Malady, as you know, lasts for 14 days, and on the 13th day Gabby Babble became ill.

"Now, this of course is because Gabby Babble was over or past the Residual stage of the Elixir, and so it was that I discovered the first Key to the dosing of the Elixir. I was at work on my observation and documentation, which I created a Cipher, which I have already given you in the letter I sent you to announce my visit. Here is the actual Key to the Cipher, which will give instructions on the formulation of the Elixir after the sublimation of the Stone." And Gus handed me an envelope, which was slightly weighted by the message within it.

"As for the Stone, you will know it when you see it, and by heating it to the specifications therein the Key, it will turn red, which is how I thought to 'hide it in the light' as Rob's old man Wit used to say. That is, I had decided to shroud or veil the Stone in Myth and it became what you have heard as the Legend of the Blood Stone, which is the process of transmutation the "residue" around and from the Runestone that lies here in the valley, up on the Catechism Hill. Now, it is true that it is a Runestone, and as for the runic inscription, it says "Nimrod's Valley," which is like others found far away from the Great City of Aion. But the important thing is, it doesn't say, as I put it into the mouths of the Cabalists -it doesn't say "Blood Stone." And the peoples who left the Runestone were not Christians, but Pagans. Anyone who knows about the Stone, knows that it comes from what the Christians call God, and who you and I call the Creator, though, this understanding Him as the Trinity is a misnomer, to say the least." Gus paused.

"But before I go on, get you a snort of this batch of Elixir I brought along." And I took a drink from Elixir. It was not my first drink of the nostrum. It had a bite to it, not unlike whisky but also like laudanum: it was pure delight in its effect, but as far as taste went it was rancid.

"Good medicine, huh?" Gus chuckled.

"Yeah." I said. "Now what about this Runestone business, this is the first you've confessed this to me, though I suspected the Cabalists were chasing shadows."

"Well, the Runestone was a myth I created to deflect or misdirect attention from the Stone. It has been said that the Stone's substance was, that is, its physical substance was and is abundant and made in general of "red Sulphur," that is Sulphur and mercury. Now those idiot Cabalists bought the Myth and Legend of the Blood Stone hook, line, and sinker. As the saying goes... they gobbled it up in their blinded state. I wasn't looking for the Stone, but I recognized it. Gabby Babble wasn't looking for the Stone but didn't recognize it. Too bad for her, huh? Well. I took, as I say, the opportunity to complete the Great Work, and in doing so I have reached God, as people say. Really, I mean, I haven't met Him,

but I am on another level, and you, since it was you who led me down the crooked path that is made straight by the Elixir of Life, the Waters in the Valley of the OmenRiver that I found amid murder. But God, as the Christians say -well, Wisdom spared me the misery of iniquity, and gave us all, you Gus, Rob, and I, and even old Wit had a taste and a bit of immortalityNow this is all grandiose thinking one might say, but I tell you, hell, it even gave Ward and Gabby Babble, a taste of the everlasting: the Waters of the Omen River found in the Stone through its sublimation into the Elixir of Life. Now that may sound like a mouthful, but that is how the sages spoke of it, and that is how I learned to think of it. Because, you see, Wade, it becomes in the subliming of the Stone a way of thinking, just like you learned a way of thinking at the University.” Gus went on.

“And to answer your question, at least, partially, I learned of the Stone to hide it in the light, at least its discovery. It is said the Stone is everywhere, so where is it? Well, it’s on the River Omen, but that’s the only place I’ve found it so far.” Gus said.

“But had it merely fallen from Heaven, or is it born of this Earth? These might be better questions for Wit. But I know the stories, and you do too, but let me state them here for the record, and state them as I understand them. Now, this might sound like the rambling gibberish of a Nostrum Anonymous meeting, but it’s a story about stories, and how I understand and relate to them. Now, also, people have said that to use the Nostrum (that is, the Elixir) -to use the Nostrum is a choice. Well, yes, it is a choice that is made for you, though. And by what mojo is it made? I say it is this: the choice to use any drug is made by the Creator, and no one else. Not by man alone, and not by man at all. Now the Christians will say it is Satan who pushes the hand to strong drink and hard drugs.” Gus was livid.

“Well, now what is the story, Gus?” I asked the question he was seeking.

“The Runestone residue is a falsehood to cover up the truth of the Great Work: the Stone’s gone, and may or may not be found again, and if it is to be found, it is to be found on the River Omen, as I’ve said. It hides there in the light; it hides there in shadow. It is the light, not the Way, the Truth, and the Light as the Christians have thought. That just leads back to God and Death. To be set free of Death, simply sublimate the Stone as I have included in this ‘written manifestation’ of the Great Work. You’ve ingested it both figuratively and literally, but not as a metaphysical truth.... Am I talking riddles here? Yes, that is the point of the Stone and the Great Work: to seek and to find.”

“And to Conquer God and Death, right, Gus, my old friend?” I asked. “But we have been here alive and all the rest besides you and I and Rob are dust: what then is left but suffering?” I asked Gus.

“Well, don’t worry brother! That’s why I included psilocybin in the Elixir, and a good chug or two every 12 days will do the trick!” Gus and I both laughed, and then Gus continued his animated tale of the Great Work.

“So, you might wonder, Wade, how long can we go on like this? I mean, are we truly immortal under the influence of the Elixir, or do we just think and feel we are? And while that is and may always be a

perennial concern of the Stone, it is a valid inquiry. Though, it is of course one I don't have an answer to yet, nor do I foresee such a conquest occurring. It is our nature to die, and the Elixir merely prolongs life. Now through the years the question has come up, too, again and again: Why? I mean, why this, and why that, and what have you as concerns the Stone and the Great Work, but don't concern yourself with such things old friend. You and I and Rob were put here to do the Great Work, and in doing so we outlived the Malady, but other than that let us be glad of the truth that we know. We know, Wade. We know that there is a Stone, and we have drunk from its Waters. So let me continue with what the sages of old call the "Spiritual Perspiration" of the Great Work. That is, the Stone is sublimated through heating it in the waters of the River Omen, water from the River Omen, anyhow. So even if the Cabalists would have been able to harness certain things from the Runestone with Blood Stone residue, that wouldn't and didn't and shan't do it because the process does not include heating it in the waters from the River Omen, much less the exact amount of water and the degree of heat." Gus told me.

"Regardless of that, the Cabalists want to put "the sauce" in it, and one can, but not to the degree that you can "tweak" on it. More than anything, it is just as well to add caffeine or cacao leaves to the Elixir." Gus continued. "Moreover, my spiritual perspiration can be found in the Rudimental."

"What's that, Gus?" I asked.

"The Rudimental is the manifesto of the Great Work, and I've written only to conceal it. There are clues on how to reveal it, unveil it from secrecy, but they are hidden in the letter, and you must use the Key and the Cipher to unlock them, as I fear telling you would not simply do in the tradition of the Stone. People have said the Stone is a preternatural substance, but it is not otherworldly, merely misunderstood, to most folks, anyhow. You and I know it personally, for those who want and desire the Stone are envious of us, Wade. I worked hard to preserve the traditions, but at some point, there is only reality. The Cabalists are still 'tweaking' on the masses' ideology that one can extract from 'the blood stone' the Elixir of Life, while it is not up on the ridge in the Runestone, but down in the Valley along the Omen River. Now chances are that it could be found by the Runestone, but the Cabalists have already torn apart the Runestone and got nothing. Now the Mind Scientists think that they can find it somehow in the same factoid." Gus continued his tale of the Great Work.

"Truth is, that Mercury is what the Alchemists and the Cabalists think the Stone is derived from. And it is said that it is derived from removing the Blackest of the Black pitch and leaving only the white and resplendent Stone that bears the blood red veins of the red Sulphur and it is extracted with the Clouds and Mist. Put in the simplest of layman's terms: I have found that a man can take the Stone and heat it in water from the Omen River until the pitch is gone, and it then is pink. I add THC from cannabis flower using Beechnut mast oil to extract it. I then add cacao leaves, dried psilocybin mushrooms of choice, and ground coffee beans, which I steep in hot Omen River water, and then add some

moonshine of desired amount. Usually, I put the steeped mixture into a gallon of moonshine and let it set for a week.”

“Awesome!” I said.

“Oh, yes, indeed, Wade. And that’s basically what you just had a snort of a minute ago.” Gus went on talking. “Now there are more technical things to be done with the Stone, but that is all in the letter. The important thing is, that it is safe from the pilfering fingers of the Mind Scientists and the fumbling fingers of the Cabalists. Now that we have the Elixir, which I have left some 24 gallons, or about 2-4 years’ worth depending on how much I produce... But we will survive the Malady. One more thing I will mention, our mutual acquaintance Log had found a Stone, as well, but the idiot he is, he doesn’t even know it. So, I have him convinced to trade it to me for the recipe for the Blood Stone residue from the Runestone, as he thinks it true just like the Cabalists. Hell, if I’d him I would find Sasquatch shit and put it in it for longevity. Log would believe it.” Gus laughed. Anyways, I think I can get another 24 gallons of Elixir with the Stone, he’s trading me. I’ll give him a little bottle and tell him it was an earlier less potent formula, that way he can survive the Malady. Just out of pity, you know. Well, that’s about all I got for you. If we can just find more of the Stone, we can make a fortune if this Malady continues. But we’ll see what develops and becomes of it. Either way I will probably outlive Methuselah” Gus took a big drink from the Elixir.

“The important thing is, Wade, the Great Work is complete, and I’ve managed to hide it in the open light of the World. Now let’s have a drink!”

Gus and I, enjoyed the excess of the Elixir of Life, which if anything, makes you feel good in a World that is not always too good to a fellow human.

“I was in search of the Stone by the River, the legendary stone: a white powdery stone that was said to be on the banks of the Omen River, that, as you know, runs through. And you see, Wade, one day I found what I thought was it... Hell, I knew it was the Stone, by the fact that it looked like a “Moon rock,” as Gabby Babble put it. I was expecting it to be “red Sulphur” and I would get this because of heating it. But I ain’t gonna give ya’ any technical jargon: it was the legendary Stone.” And Gus paused.

“I had done all the leg work, and tested it... well, there are problems with testing longevity. First, I needed an opportunity to test it, and I hadn’t yet had this opportunity. Until, while at work formulating the Elixir, I may have combined it wrong with certain drugs and lost my mind one afternoon with Gabby Babble. You know well that we were seeing each other temporarily. Hell, everyone now has seen Gabby Babble naked, not just you and I. Beats me why old Ward even wants her. Anyhow, she took my pistol and told me she was going to throw it in the Omen River. I took this as a sign, without any better judgment and under the influence of the Elixir, which was basically the Stone heated until it turned red by combining it with beechnut mast oil. This acted to extract the agents from the Stone. Then, I added THC extract (using beechnut mast oil in one batch, and moonshine in the other), and I added some psilocybin, as well, as a cathartic. Anyhow, Gabby Babble

not only threw my gun into the Omen River, but just before that, she downed all the damned Elixir! And this sealed her fate: I took her and drowned her. I held her by the neck under the water in the Omen River until she was dead. I left her ass in the River for some time, so I knew she was dead. And I figured I had killed her so the least I could do was bury her.

I dragged her dead ass out of the river, and I got to feeling sorry for her so, I tried to get the water out of her lungs, and it had been nearly an hour since she had been in the Omen... River: Well, after I got the water out of her lungs, that crazy bitch comes back to life!

I call this the ‘residual effect’ of the elixir: it is an extension of life, somehow.” Gus told me.

“And so,” Gus continued, “I had taken the liberty of keeping a written journal of my experimental transmutation of the Elixir, so that I could reproduce it accurately. And luckily, Gabby Babble didn’t have a memory of me killing her sorry ass, or at least trying to kill her, until she came back to life... Well, that was the Elixir I had come to you and old Rob with, when the Malady had hit hard in the Great City. Who needs a vaccine when you have the Waters of Life, the Elixir of Immortality, and the nostrum for all our addictions, present and past. The Great Work had paid off. And so I kept taking it, but Gabby Babble didn’t. So, when Ward came down with the Malady, I took the opportunity to experiment further. I just watched, though, and by observation I saw the sickness overtake Ward but not Gabby Babble... at least not to begin with, but the Malady, as you know, lasts for 14 days, and on the 13th day Gabby Babble became ill.

“Now, this of course is because Gabby Babble was over or past the Residual stage of the Elixir, and so it was that I discovered the first Key to the dosing of the Elixir. I was at work on my observation and documentation, which I created a Cipher, which I have already given you in the letter I sent you to announce my visit. Here is the actual Key to the Cipher, which will give instructions on the formulation of the Elixir after the sublimation of the Stone.” And Gus handed me an envelope, which was slightly weighted by the message within it.

“As for the Stone, you will know it when you see it, and by heating it to the specifications therein the Key, it will turn red, which is how I thought to ‘hide it in the light’ as Rob’s old man Wit used to say. That is, I had decided to shroud or veil the Stone in Myth and it became what you have heard as the Legend of the Blood Stone, which is the process of transmutation the “residue” around and from the Runestone that lies here in the valley, up on the Catechism Hill. Now, it is true that it is a Runestone, and as for the runic inscription, it says “Nimrod’s Valley,” which is like others found far away from the Great City of Aion. But the important thing is, it doesn’t say, as I put it into the mouths of the Cabalists -it doesn’t say “Blood Stone.” And the peoples who left the Runestone were not Christians, but Pagans. Anyone who knows about the Stone, knows that it comes from what the Christians call God, and who you and I call the Creator, though, this understanding Him as the Trinity is a misnomer, to say the least.” Gus paused.

“But before I go on, get you a snort of this batch of Elixir I brought along.” And I took a drink from Elixir. It was not my first drink of the nostrum. It had a bite to it, not unlike whisky but also like laudanum: it was pure delight in its effect, but as far as taste went it was rancid.

“Good medicine, huh?” Gus chuckled.

“Yeah.” I said. “Now what about this Runestone business, this is the first you’ve confessed this to me, though I suspected the Cabalists were chasing shadows.”

“Well, the Runestone was a myth I created to deflect or misdirect attention from the Stone. It has been said that the Stone’s substance was, that is, its physical substance was and is abundant and made in general of “red Sulphur,” that is Sulphur and mercury. Now those idiot Cabalists bought the Myth and Legend of the Blood Stone hook, line, and sinker. As the saying goes... they gobbled it up in their blinded state. I wasn’t looking for the Stone, but I recognized it. Gabby Babble wasn’t looking for the Stone but didn’t recognize it. Too bad for her, huh? Well. I took, as I say, the opportunity to complete the Great Work, and in doing so I have reached God, as people say. Really, I mean, I haven’t met Him, but I am on another level, and you, since it was you who led me down the crooked path that is made straight by the Elixir of Life, the Waters in the Valley of the OmenRiver that I found amid murder. But God, as the Christians say -well, Wisdom spared me the misery of iniquity, and gave us all, you Gus, Rob, and I, and even old Wit had a taste and a bit of immortality. Now this is all grandiose thinking one might say, but I tell you, hell, it even gave Ward and Gabby Babble, a taste of the everlasting: the Waters of the River Omen found in the Stone through its sublimation into the Elixir of Life. Now that may sound like a mouthful, but that is how the sages spoke of it, and that is how I learned to think of it. Because, you see, Wade, it becomes in the subliming of the Stone a way of thinking, just like you learned a way of thinking at the University.” Gus went on.

“And to answer your question, at least, partially, I learned of the Stone to hide it in the light, at least its discovery. It is said the Stone is everywhere, so where is it? Well, it’s on the River Omen, but that’s the only place I’ve found it so far.” Gus said.

“But had it merely fallen from Heaven, or is it born of this Earth? These might be better questions for Wit. But I know the stories, and you do too, but let me state them here for the record, and state them as I understand them. Now, this might sound like the rambling gibberish of a Nostrum Anonymous meeting, but it’s a story about stories, and how I understand and relate to them. Now, also, people have said that to use the Nostrum (that is, the Elixir) -to use the Nostrum is a choice. Well, yes, it is a choice that is made for you, though. And by what mojo is it made? I say it is this: the choice to use any drug is made by the Creator, and no one else. Not by man alone, and not by man at all. Now the Christians will say it is Satan who pushes the hand to strong drink and hard drugs.” Gus was livid.

“Well, now what is the story, Gus?” I asked the question he was seeking.

“The Runestone residue is a falsehood to cover up the truth of the Great Work: the Stone’s gone, and may or may not be found again, and if it is to be found, it is to be found on the River Omen, as I’ve said. It hides there in the light; it hides there in shadow. It is the light, not the Way, the Truth, and the Light as the Christians have thought. That just leads back to God and Death. To be set free of Death, simply sublimate the Stone as I have included in this ‘written manifestation’ of the Great Work. You’ve ingested it both figuratively and literally, but not as a metaphysical truth.... Am I talking riddles here? Yes, that is the point of the Stone and the Great Work: to seek and to find.”

“And to Conquer God and Death, right, Gus, my old friend?” I asked. “But we have been here alive and all the rest besides you and I and Rob are dust: what then is left but suffering?” I asked Gus.

“Well, don’t worry brother! That’s why I included psilocybin in the Elixir, and a good chug or two every 12 days will do the trick!” Gus and I both laughed, and then Gus continued his animated tale of the Great Work.

“So, you might wonder, Wade, how long can we go on like this? I mean, are we truly immortal under the influence of the Elixir, or do we just think and feel we are? And while that is and may always be a perennial concern of the Stone, it is a valid inquiry. Though, it is of course one I don’t have an answer to yet, nor do I foresee such a conquest occurring. It is our nature to die, and the Elixir merely prolongs life. Now through the years the question has come up, too, again and again: Why? I mean, why this, and why that, and what have you as concerns the Stone and the Great Work, but don’t concern yourself with such things old friend. You and I and Rob were put here to do the Great Work, and in doing so we outlived the Malady, but other than that let us be glad of the truth that we know. We know, Wade. We know that there is a Stone, and we have drunk from its Waters. So let me continue with what the sages of old call the “Spiritual Perspiration” of the Great Work. That is, the Stone is sublimated through heating it in the waters of the River Omen, water from the River Omen, anyhow. So even if the Cabalists would have been able to harness certain things from the Runestone with Blood Stone residue, that wouldn’t and didn’t and shan’t do it because the process does not include heating it in the waters from the River Omen, much less the exact amount of water and the degree of heat.” Gus told me.

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Weltschmerz

Rot Worldly had come to Amerika by train from the Hinterlands in the Far North, a place of dense and dark forests that Rot had left to join the main body of Amerika to the South. Rot Worldly left his home in the Hinterlands in the Far North to travel by train to the main body of Amerika. Instead of it being a land of prosperity, full of job opportunities, Rot attended college, dropped out, and became part of the mindless rabble of thousands upon thousands of homeless people in Aion, the Great City, and the capital of Amerika, the Great Nation.

Rot, who came from a place where homelessness was not seen, but only heard of second-hand on the news... Rot learned first-hand that in Amerika, nothing is free: especially if a man doesn't have a certain status, such as land, home, or vehicle.

Rot, who had lost the rest of his money he had saved in college, became one of the homeless rabble easily enough. The people he had just a few days ago observed from the train with their backpacks... The thousands of thousands of the Herd, who now went herd fashion off the cliff of reality.

Rot Worldly admitted that once a hardened atheist, and then an agnostic, had come to know God as a homeless man.

And it was about this time that Rot learned about a Day Center called Pathways, which indeed was just a Day Center... At night, there was no overnight shelter: there was nowhere for a person to rest... ever. Much less, have a sound place to sleep.

And the only way to safely sleep, and legally sleep, was to sleep right in the middle of the sidewalk. But after Rot was reported and mistaken for being dead, he was forced to continue to walk (and that's what being homeless amounted to was a lot of walking). After being mistaken for dead, Rot was forced to walk endlessly, day and night, until he at last got to rest at Weltschmerz homeless shelter.

At the Weltschmerz shelter, Rot was allowed to sleep at last, but at the price of being monitored by a Watchman, a man or woman, who "watches" over the residents at the homeless shelter, Weltschmerz. To avoid the Watchman during the waking hours, Rot walked to the Aion Public Library everyday and rested and slept and ate on the banks of the Omen River. And at the Aion City Park beside the Library, Rot met Rich Wordsmith whom Rot got to know a little, until he was introduced to the Reverend Sinister, a former acquaintance of Mr. Rich Wordsmith's.

Rot, for the record, did not panhandle for money. Some say it may be his work ethic that got in the way, some say it was something else. But nevertheless, Rot never took a dollar from anyone except his fellow homeless people. Fellow men and women of the Herd, who didn't mind sharing what little they had with Rot. Not that Rot thought begging was wrong or offensive in any way, just that he thought himself not brave enough to do it.

Mr. Wordsmith told Rot that for society not to use him, Rot had to make himself useless. Rot, thinking upon being useless, makes himself this by living outside the Aion Church in an old Dog House. Rot may have not been brave enough to beg for a dollar, but he was brave enough to be thought of as a Dog.

Rot Worldly, now treated as a dog, which had earned him the nickname, "the Dog." Rot was then treated as a dog so much so that he forgets his status as a human being. And upon being thought of as a dog, Rot Worldly was then abused like a Dog.

Rot, in fact, feared he would be "put to sleep" like a Dog, and exterminated from this world. Out of this growing fear, Rot Worldly took a dose of End-it-all, a dose of Euthanol to end one's misery was a concept of the future, the euthanasia of the invalids and wretched was a fantasy of societies from the beginning of time, to the end of the end times.

Rot Worldly had the following epitaph inscribed on his gravestone:

"Here lies Rot Worldly: A man who lived and died as a mere animal, a Dog."

Naïf

Is this the price we must pay for eternity, this pain and suffering, the happiness of life shattered and molded again, this pestilence called time? Yet it urges us on. As individuals we know that our existence is no more premeditated as if by accident, that chances of this conglomeration of pieces that make up our whole existence are only one time, and no more. How can I not know this? I feel that there is an ineffable passion that urges the artist on; one in which he is being watched by time, and he has a vague notion of when he developed this passion, a point when his initial expected feedback was not, "You are a genius!" No, at least it was not this way for me. I rose above a naïf in my being to a writer, but an artist? No, not at all. And I lie there dipping into that same blood of my rebirth from being a naïf. Time creates more change than reason. And so it goes with the creation of writing. Nietzsche said that he wanted to say with one sentence what others would say in a book. Well, I have tried to write hundreds of books in the Box.

There are larger themes that run through the Box, but I believe they are merely the grounding of it in time and place, cultural ambivalence. There is as I have said, a birth and rebirth, symbolic of Christian mythology that pervades my society. But also there is an essence of Buddhism, Eastern thought so they call it. There are multiple levels of interpretations that are to be conveyed –and perhaps my interpretation of my own work is the only way that you can fully experience all that was to be conveyed through this medium, as metonymy would say, through the pen.

But there are multiple levels of interpretations. The effect is more of a labor than anything. Art is a process. Creation should not be the problem, but communication. When I write, I consider the problems of communication. Grammar, vocabulary, poetics, -these things are developed through practice, through labor. Aldous Huxley said that Art has its morality, and that this morality is analogous to our own ethics, as beings. And that remorse is felt in the same relation to our bad art as our bad behavior. I feel guilty if I have not conveyed my meaning, but the practice comes from not trying to fix mistakes you have already made in previous works or performances, -but one must not make that mistake again, and that new work will keep your art alive. Well, my practice has been in putting multiple meanings to different motifs that are parallel to each but under different themes. If I place an object in a space, but not to be symbolic, -yet it is symbolic just by the very nature that it is a symbol; so then, is it symbolic because it yielded it so, or can I dictate what is symbolic and what is just...fluff. The answer is quite simply no because there is no filler, no prologue between books. I believe I understood Nietzsche's madness quite well, that we must be concise, that I must put a book into a story. And it is written to be read this way. There is a socially constructed ethic to the criticism given to a certain work, to the question of the depth of meaning conveyed. As a writer I watch my blood, pilfered through, and I lie awake at night and feel that remorse I spoke of before, but for no reason except that you know that everyone understands this ethic of Art, this ethic of criticism, and I

accept that this is what I have to do. But there are a lot of things that I don't want to do, but this, to put myself at the mercy of your knife slicing through my blood. There are far too many starving artists as well for me not to lay awake at night and fret. What pestilence plagues us also keeps us alive.

For me, there is no passive voice; there is no middle ground. I must do what I do, say what I say at the cost of my family and friends. There is a solitude that I have tried to touch upon; this is not just an interpretation, it is a naïf striving to be a being. Dostoevsky said in his *Notes from Underground*, that this is no longer writing but a form of corrective punishment. Perhaps it is. Punishment for our bad art and bad behavior as beings. Life, I find, is innately tragic. Life, all life is a tragedy as it passes, -I believe we can find this in Art. There is a price that one must pay to be an artist. You become quite deviant to society. You become one of the Others, an outsider, alienated from your own culture, trying to express yourself to; and there is a reason, and that is because to create entails that you bring about change, not reinforce old ideas under new labels. Oh, I suppose that some people fall prey to the caricature that fame is a sign of genius, or this mythology in our culture of misunderstood genius -hah, what idiots. It is more of a delusion than a misrepresentation, genius and fame. Does the unknown artist die the same death as the famed? Can we imagine this death? And if so, I believe this is the torture, this punishment through pain that the artist must go through. That each time I produce a new piece of work (and it is a labor), I must die another death.

Macabre. That is what it is, my writing. But I suppose there is a reason for this. People have asked me what I write about, but not why. When I was young, I used to read such books as *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies*. Either way, the significance of when a book is read, as far as what was going on in one's life, that one can relate to that story, and it is the blood that gives writing life. It, writing, must speak something of Humanity, or it is just fluff, something to start a fire with. And when I say that it should speak something of Humanity, I mean that its message should strive to convey, in any way, and to be universal in its message. It will be grounded in time and place, culture, but that is how we get culture, through the reciprocal relation of art and time, its interpretation called History. -Macabre. My writing, that is what it is. We are subject to our demons; they are our shadow. I was twelve when I learned what death was. And it led me to that sense of urgency of inspiration, and that feeling that as soon as a thought entered my mind, it must be worked out, then immediately written down; for, just as I know I will only have this life, this lucky lottery ticket, I also know there are thoughts that can be lost, very important thoughts, -and I search for them still.

It is hard to explain how there is comfort in darkness. In a sense, one becomes that shadow, some mockery of the real being behind these socially constructed veils. The *Field Guide to Demons* suggest a method to identify the basic demon:

An incorporeal spirit: disembodied, ghostly, intangible, spiritual -this is its method; this is a sadist play the artist must act upon, his stage. Effect is what matters, it is conveyance. This medium is what the artist subjects himself to; this medium of writing is what I must humble myself to. The artist is no master, he is subjected, he is at the mercy and limitations of a physical medium. It is easy though to hide behind obscurity, and it is hard sometimes to determine whether an artist expresses himself through the medium, or if the medium expresses the artist. The demon can do this, he can shadow himself in the guise of a story, through fiction.