

Intentions:

The Intergalactic Bathroom Enlightenment Guide

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Portal Crash!

The Grey Dude says it all started in the time before this Universe was created, in a place called The Exegesis. Exegesis is a noun meaning a “critical explanation or analysis.” It's especially used in interpretation of the scriptures. Since these Grey Dude thought balls are a kind of cosmic scripture, it's the closest word I could find to relay the idea of a place that makes clear what is obscure.

The Exegesis thought balls are the most difficult to interpret, and they are nearly impossible to describe. Imagine a long piece of yarn, so long you can't see the beginning or the end. Imagine looking down toward one end of the yarn. It's not pulled taught; it's a little loose. Imagine it oscillating, ever so slightly, a barely perceptible wave form. Each time the yarn oscillates, a Universe of Thought is blasted through your head. You feel like the back of your head is raw and exposed; you feel like you had contact with something illimitable and amazing. And then the next wave form hits you. Infinitely different than the first, it barely registers before the next arrival... and then the next ... and the next...

What strikes you the most is that these wave forms feel like afterthoughts. Somehow you know they are throwaways. Cosmic garbage. Beautiful and complex, but somehow flawed, somehow missing something essential, somehow imperfect. An assembly line of mostly rejects, this yarned wave form transport system keeps churning them out. Once in a while a wholly absolute and flawless Universe of Thought rolls by, too fast, too mystifying to grab hold of. You try to

focus backwards, to bring it to the front of your mind, but it's long gone, only a tiny hum, getting lower and lower, finally vanishing. The Perfect can't be contained by your mind.

And somewhere early in the thought ball, in the same breath as “cosmic garbage,” it knocks you in the gut: one of the reject wave forms is our Universe.

In the Beginning...

In the beginning The Exegesis was. And within the Exegesis, the entire Universe that is Ours was created. Now the Universe was without shape and empty, and darkness was over the surface; but a Spirit of The Exegesis moved over the outer regions of the Universe. It was dark. And the Spirit said,

"Let there be light."

And there was light! The Spirit saw that the light was good. So the Spirit separated the light from the darkness.

But during the separation, a problem occurred. Some of the darkness seeped back into the light—it's not easy keeping them apart—and the Spirit discarded the Universe. It was just one of billions created in that moment. Young spirits need the practice...

As the Grey Dude relays this story to me, I wonder how much of it I understand, how much of it I see in symbols that only touch on a fragment of the underlying meaning. The place of Exegesis seems real from my interaction with the messages. Somewhere far away in time and place and yet timeless and everywhere all at once.

I keep changing the way I look at the Exegesis. I keep changing my description. Nothing feels acceptable. If I place the messages in the context of religion, I fail. If I place the words in the context of science, I fail. It doesn't even fall somewhere in between, and my intuition tells me that I need to levitate to a frame of reference for which I don't have a concept. A place outside of dimensions. A place without darkness or light. A place that is pure thought and laughter and fire without flame.

When I first started seeing the Grey Dude, I thought I was insane. When he started telling me to write this story, I decided that **he** was insane. How can anybody write about the Universe? This is the Augean book, the Grey Dude is my Eurystheus, and I write and write and write and the story is still at the beginning, I'm still atoning for the sin of thinking it was even possible.

I have got to be the worst person on the planet to tell this story. The Grey Dude should have picked more of an intellectual, less of a dreamer, more of a regular person, less of a self-imposed social outcast. Didn't he realize that the story would get mixed up with my experiences? Didn't he realize the story would end up half mine, and half his? Didn't he know I didn't have the words and the knowledge to make sense of the pure science of some of it? Didn't he know the philosophical and theological mysteries within the messages were beyond my grasp?

Half in this world and half in the other is where I have ended up, and my interpretations are like that too: partly “alien” and mostly human. Even worse, they are mostly American, white-chick, middle-class human. They are only my own one-sided ideas of what these messages mean. I apologize to you for my misunderstandings in what follows, and I apologize to the Grey Dude and his group of anarchist renegade aliens from the far-off future for no doubt messing up an important story. I can only do the best I can do.

Wave Form I

Every time a Grey Dude message repeats itself, I know that I haven't been listening. Sometimes it means that my interpretation is too anthropomorphic, and that I am trying to match it too closely to my memory bank of human experience. I'm forced to break it down into its essential sensory and conceptual bits of data. Hopefully the resulting description paints a fair picture.

Pretend that you had a dream of driving a pickup truck through the barren plains of New Mexico. Now pretend that it's the year 1133, and you have lived your entire life in a small village near Rome. How would you tell this dream to your friends? You could only reduce it to the colors and shapes and textures and sounds and smells and movements and emotions within your dream. You wouldn't be able to know where your dream took place. You wouldn't be able to name the strange vehicle of your dreams. Your description would have to be careful enough, and detailed enough for anyone of your village to get a glimpse of that other world. And since you were driving the pickup truck, you couldn't even draw it for your friends! You could only guess what the overall shape might have been. You know that your recountal would not give the dream justice. You wouldn't understand the purpose of the truck, though you may guess. You might not even guess something so basic such as the truck sits on wheels. And even though this dream would be unsettling, and seem like a place and a time so far away and maybe even not of this dimension, it's still Earth. It's still within a mere thousand years.

I'm afraid to tell you this story, this History of the Universe. The messages have repeated so many times that I have lost count. Repetition is failure to me, and I am embarrassed that I still don't understand. In the recent months, the messages have spaced out. Whether I am doing a good job in my interpretation, or whether the Grey Dude is plain sick of explaining the History to me, I am grateful for the reprieve.

As the Grey Dude has begun fading, his History messages have taken on an urgency that is beyond anything I have come across. Beyond fire drills. Beyond tornado warnings. Beyond the pushing stage of childbirth. Tell the story! Tell the story!

Wave Form II

Built out of nothingness.

That's the first mind bender.

It's like a mathematical symbol that becomes something real.

It's like the sprinklers turning on, over a patch of dry ground.

It feels like you can almost sense a physical vibration. And then only a tenth of a tenth of a tenth of the tiniest time factor tinier than a nanosecond, you feel the vibration. It grows stronger and you realize it's being controlled by something. No - wait a minute—it's by someone. Someone vaporous, someone strictly notional. Someone who is a vibration. A sentient vibration. A Spirit of the Exegesis.

The Spirit feels young, and maybe this is her first Universe. She feels feminine to me, nurturing, careful, emotive and expressive. In my mind's eye she allows the vibration of the new Universe to expand. It happens so quickly, but she moves with the practiced grace of an Olympic athlete, all muscle and beauty and form. Sheer intuition, no anticipation of event.

Her sentience is unusual. It seems to sprout from a point amidst her vibration, and this point of knowing travels from one side of the Exegesis to another, and

as it shifts location, so does the center of her vibration. I can tell as I write this that I'm making it more complicated than it is. I feel as if there is an equation that can be assigned to her vibrational function, which could explain her mind-shifting powers, but the math is just out of my grasp.

She creates a Universe that is stunning in its symmetry and balance. It's so thin. This surprises me. It looks like a disc of the finest and most delicate china, set off with a pattern of spikes and curves. If you look carefully at the curves, you see that they are made up of pygmy spikes and curves, which are made of itsy-bitsy spikes and curves, and the pattern continues down so far that you are afraid you will drown among the fractals.

I don't know it's Our Universe yet. The speed and agility of the Spirit mesmerize me, and I try to fit in this message with the conventional explanations of where the universe comes from. I can't.

As the Universe grows, the vibration takes on new characteristics. I can feel a rhythmic hum beneath the surface. It rises and falls. The resonance follows a hyperbolic curve, beginning at a low level, and building in intensity until the tension is one threshold below unbearable. I feel it in my toes, my knees, behind my thighs, and in my chest. Like an unsatisfying sexual experience, it brings me to the level before physical release and lets go. But not all the way. It begins

again at the leftover level and builds. My physical resistance grows each time, and I surmise the Universe gets stronger and stronger.

Sparkling droplets appear on the spikes surrounding the rim of the disc. They seem viscous, filled with fluid. I can't look directly at them; I feel that they would hurt my eyes. Drops so luminescent that they contain all color. Brighter than the sun. More radiant than a diamond. Somehow sharper than the points they sit upon.

The globules start bulging with more glitter, and one by one run down the edge of the spikes into the center of the disc. The drops mix together like raindrops in a barrel. The Spirit extends a vibrational finger and twirls the space around the collected drops. I am so taken with the brilliance of the fluid that I almost fail to notice the mood of the Spirit. For one brief moment, she is no longer the antelope of the void, but more like a high school student laboring over a chemistry exam. That is, when the student hasn't studied.

The leap from intuition to measured intent crosses an uncrossable chasm, and the young Spirit falls in. In her nervousness, she makes the fatal mistake of collecting a minuscule layer of darkness around the light. The separation is not successful, and the Universe is forever marred with the mix of light and dark, good and evil, fun and boredom.

She shrugs her shoulders. It's all in a day's work, after all, and new Spirits make mistakes. She knows that someday this Universe will have inhabitants, and they will suffer for her folly. She also knows that the Universe can be fixed one day, but only by itself, by the parts therein contained. She finishes the job, but is careful to create a barrier around the Universe. One wouldn't want such an imperfect world to interact with the rest of the Exegesis. Not yet.

The sight amuses me. Spirits can make mistakes? There are messed up Universes out there? I laugh out loud; it tickles me. But because I allow myself to get lost in the description, and because I am trying too hard to fit the story with what I have learned in my religion and with what I know from science, the Grey Dude zaps me between the eyes.

Oh yeah. It's Our Universe.

Wave Form III

I bet you are thinking I am certifiably insane.

I might be.

I wish I could tell you that I've never had a paranormal experience before the Grey Dude appeared three years ago. I wish I could tell you I've never had visions or heard strange voices. I want to be achingly normal in this book, so high up on the curve that I melt with the sky and fade to the color of the clouds. But I do stand out, like a disk-shaped UFO against the night sky on a cloudless night when Venus has already set. It's my voice that speaks the messages. They don't come to me in a storm of words, tiny individual drops of rain from the sky. They are the fog: unpenetrable, dim, swirling, cool and damp. If you swish your hand through the fog and try to grab it, you'll end up empty-handed. If you sit quietly and let a little mist settle around your shoulders, you will have the evidence you seek, but it will be mixed with your sweat.

So I am forced to tell you about my life so you can try to determine where my ideas end and the real messages begin. I need to be accountable for these messages. I'm embarrassed to tell you my stories. You'll use them to measure the veracity of my claims, and I will come up convicted in the cosmic court of law. So be it, so be it.

My paranormal life began the winter of 1978, the winter I was thirteen years old and saw an orange UFO.

“Do you love Mike in Mr. Adamski’s class? Truth or Dare.”

I took the dare. The four other girls at Terry’s sleep over giggled with anticipation. They knew that Helen would make up an outrageous dare for me. We were in constant competition, the nerdiest of the eighth-grade nerds. We both played double reeds; I was the bassoon player in the band, she played oboe. Both of our fathers were educators. She was a pampered only child; I was the oldest of five daughters. We were consistently ranked number one and two in our grade. I was number two. Helen had unfair advantage—her father was the principal of our Junior-Senior High School, and I was convinced the teachers gave her extra points on essays and reports. She was Greek and exotic, all dark eyes and long black hair. I hated that she was smart and beautiful and had expensive clothes. I was smart, too, but my definition of beauty didn’t include my yard-sale hand-me-downs and long Roman nose. I didn’t care if my friends knew that Mike was my soul mate of the week. I wrote his initials next to mine on all my paper-bag bookcovers and sent big-eyed looks toward the percussion section whenever the band director worked with the brass. I took the dare so I could outdo Helen.

“Take off your nightgown and run around the entire yard. And you have to sing The Love Boat theme song.”

It was 3 a.m. on a cold December night in a small town in Western Massachusetts. Terry came from one of the wealthier families in town, and her backyard was huge. She had tennis courts and an inground swimming pool. A good foot of snow covered the ground, and I shivered at the thought of my bare feet crunching through the third of a mile perimeter.

“Can I wear my boots?”

“No.”

Helen would make me suffer, as was her right.

I slowly lifted myself out of the beanbag chair, walked to the sliding door, and began unbuttoning my pajamas, plotting my revenge. I hesitated for a moment before running outside. The blast of air was colder than I anticipated, and I lowered my eyes and ducked my head close to my body and ran as fast as I could toward the edge of the backyard.

“Hey! We can’t hear you!”

Helen knew that I hated The Love Boat and all television except for science documentaries and Dr. Who. I started singing loud enough for the girls to hear; just soft enough so that it wouldn't be obvious I didn't know all the words.

A thin layer of ice covered the snow, and the weight of my naked body made a pattern like a broken windshield on the ground below. The light from the open door spread out partly into the black of night, and I turned my head to see if my friends were watching.

I stopped. I was panting, drawing in frigid air through parched lips. It hurt to breathe the wintry air; my feet were stinging from the coldness and sharpness of the ice. It had only been a few moments but already every inch of my body was shocked from the exposure. For a split second, I contemplated returning to safety and warmth. I decided to keep moving, but before my feet registered the decision I saw it.

I called out to my best friend, Kim, the fire chief's daughter. My voice echoed; it sounded too loud for the scenery and I was afraid Terry's parents would wake up and scold me. Kim stuck her head out of the door, and she looked in the direction of my pointed finger, toward an orange, diamond-shaped object in the sky.

The diamond traveled westward, just skirting the tops of the pine trees at the edge of Terry's yard. I saw Kim and the girls gathered together at the door,

watching it. It was huge. You know how UFOs are often described as football field sized? I always thought that had to be an exaggeration. The vehicle was even longer, and so tall that I could not see the top from my vantage point. Glowing bright orange from within, every point on the craft was illuminated. No light fell on the ground, and the yard remained dark and full of shadows.

I ran back to the house, this time much faster, much more sure-footed than before. I grabbed Kim's hand and pulled her outside. She looked terrified but followed my lead. No one spoke a word. All of the other girls, with the exception of one, filed out behind. They didn't seem to notice the snow beneath their bare feet; they weren't concerned with my nakedness. Acting on some unspoken agreement, we made a beeline for the center of the yard, to the point I had stood before.

Terry's back yard was only slightly bigger than the blazing structure. The nearest neighbor was a half-mile away. The object was silent, and it floated as if it were weightless, making tiny movements like the motions of a buoy in water. Past the ridge of trees it glided, over the pool, over the tennis courts. We were mesmerized, not afraid, not talking, not pointing. Our heads faced upward to meet the orange glow.

As it got closer, I realized that it wasn't diamond-shaped exactly, more like two pyramids connected at the base. It passed so near to us that I could smell it, an

odor of burnt leaves and eucalyptus. I remember being surprised that there was no wind from its motion. The air was still and heavy. My ears popped at least three times, and I was thankful when I heard Kim shift her feet. The object was so silent that I was afraid I lost my hearing. The last thing I recall was thinking I could reach down, pick up one of the pinecones littering the snow, chuck it at the object and hit it. It was seamless, no sign of rivets or patches or entry ports.

The next morning my friend's father stared at us and looked at each of our faces closely. Everyone but the girl who stayed indoors was sunburnt.

None of us discussed it after that night—we didn't even tell Terry's father. It was as if it never happened. I didn't forget about it, but I didn't talk about it. Like a moment of intense privacy, it didn't make sense to bring it up in conversation. The memory faded along with our friendships. Only Kim and I remained close, but even in our daily afternoon study sessions and evening phone marathons, we never broached the subject.

Five years later I was at my high school graduation party. The town was still small, and nearly every one of the ninety-nine people in my class was at the Wood's house, drinking and dancing. Kim clutched her stomach and ran into the bushes to vomit.

Something about the way the moonlight streamed through the bushes, the motions of Kim's head, the dirt on the ground and the smell of the dew brought the memory alive and I blurted out

"Hey, do you remember that slumber party at Terry's house?"

The memory shocked Kim's stomach into submission and she raised her head.

"The one where we saw the UFO?"

We gathered all the other girls from Terry's party together and we all remembered bits and pieces of the strange event. We argued about the size of the object, the color, whether we went outside, and how it all ended. I didn't sleep at all that night, and my parents rolled their eyes the next morning at my insistence that I saw a UFO five years before.

No one believed it; my friends stopped believing it, too. Refusing to give up the memory, I relived it over and over before falling asleep. My dreams were cluttered with slips of images of orange pyramids, silent tornadoes of snow and pinecones surrounding them.

Wave Form IV

The Grey Dude keeps trying to show me the size of our Universe.

It's too big for me to see, too long for me to measure, too wide and much too deep for me to feel. If I try to imagine the edges of the outer rim, I somehow end up back in the center. The Universe seems to loop over and through itself in an infinite number of places; a repeating, spiraling pattern like the Fibonacci sequence, yet bound by a specific size, and bound by a specific purpose. A box in which you can stuff everything you own and still fit more; a mansion you can see from the air, but when you are inside, each door opens into an endless succession of rooms and doors; a repeating number like $1.999999999\ldots$ that never quite reaches the upper limit of 2.

When I dissect these Universe messages, I feel them in my body. My head feels like the upper limit of the Universe box, my toes feel like the lower limit. My arms reach out from my sides and I feel the expanding occurring at that exact instant in time. It's so fast and even as it shoots through each finger. I can't feel the limits on the sides, but I intuitively know they are present, and the expansion swirls and loops to find virgin space. Somehow my body captures the essence of the messages so much better than my mind can. I get frustrated with my descriptions, they aren't accurate, they don't say what my body savors.

Like a stuffed animal a child grows tired of, the Spirit discards our Universe, and her attention is captured by the sparkle of a newly forming macrocosm. I feel an ache in my limbs and my heart like separation anxiety. Lost at the mall, abandoned on a doorstep, images of reaching out and searching for my own mother, a primal urge for connection resides in the pit of my stomach.

Our Universe is deformed, abandoned, and forgotten.

We are a Tarzan of the Exegesis. I think that we are one of many, but I am not sure. The Grey Dude only shows me the workings of our own Universe; the others should not be a concern of mine. Like a response to stepping outside into the cold night air, the Universe appears to get instantaneous goose pimples, little dots of color fairly even sprinkled across its expanse. There is an overall pattern to the bumps. It looks like the pattern of molecules under an electron microscope, brilliant swirls and buttons of reds, blues, greens, and yellows, elevated against a sea of black. The bumps feel like a systemic reaction to some nervous system, but when I try to locate the center I see that the system is open, any minute point acting like a cerebral cortex, sending willful signals across the divide, acting on signals sent from every other point. There seems to be no thalamus, no grand central station that sorts out and relays the thousands of incoming and outgoing impulses. These bumps make noise, and the sounds speak to me on such a deep level that I cry every time I remember this message. It reminds me of whale songs, low and vibrating, otherworldly, intelligent and knowing.

The sounds are important. The Grey Dude keeps telling me this, but even after a year of wondering about it I still can't understand even a portion of its importance. The music is our life force, and as I write it I know that I am both right and wrong in that statement. It's beyond life force, something so integral to our being and the beingness of everything surrounding us that we can't see it, and we haven't developed the words and the concepts to intellectualize it.

The Grey Dude shares with me a micro-snippet of the music from another Universe, and my mind nearly explodes. It is, quite simply, the most beautiful thing I could ever imagine imagining. If the sounds of our Universe make my eyes tear, the sound of this unknown place bring forth tears from every cell in my body. I wish I could tell you what it was like but to tell you would be like speaking the name of God; it would be Exegesically blasphemous. It lasts only a second. I try to recall it now, probably the five hundredth time I have tried to bring it back, but it is the only volume missing from my message encyclopedia. The Grey Dude must have encoded it with a time release factor, only one show per customer. I know that my memory further reduces the initial effect and I only remember that it was something extraordinary, something whole and complete.

The Tarzan yell of our Universe.

The etheric symphony of the other Universe.

Now I understand the immensity of the Spirit's mistake.

I wrestle with that word. Mistake. I feel like we are a mistake when I interpret these messages, like an unintended, unwanted pregnancy. The Grey Dude doesn't call us a mistake, but my heart and mind feel the separation the Universe felt, like the child who grows up abandoned by her parents, and though she may have new guardians who tell her she is loved and even chosen, she senses something unresolved and broken in her heart. She has the cells, the genetic make up of her mother and father, like we have the sound-life-force-bumps of our Universe, and our searching beyond our dissatisfaction, and ourselves with our life, and our yearning for answers is our unresolved and broken hearts.

Wave Form V

My hometown in New England was small, primarily composed of third and fourth generation Polish and Italian families. Most of the townspeople worked at the State Hospital, an institution for the mentally handicapped. We lived near the escape siren, and when a patient left the grounds, the siren blew like the warning signal for a tornado. Old ladies would lock their doors, afraid of the “retarded.” Our house sat across the street from the library, a quarter mile from the town common. My parents purchased a beat-up Victorian mansion; it was over 200 years old and runaway slaves hid in a secret room under the stairs during the time of the Underground Railroad. The neighbors swore the ghost of the previous owner haunted the grounds. She hung herself in the dilapidated barn in the backyard, the victim of alcoholism and small town gossip. The light from the single candle she placed in the loft flickered in the middle of the night, said the neighbors, and her moans hid behind the wind during winter storms.

My friends attended St. Francis Church like I did, and though all of us were from devout families; my family had the reputation of being the most Catholic of all the Catholic families in town. My parents were convinced that I would be a nun when Thomas Merton prayed over me as a sick infant and whispered to them that some day I would see visions of unearthly origin. My father recounted this story as he drove me to visit Catholic colleges and convents during the weekends of my teenage years.

When I think of my parents, it's always my father's face that appears. He liked to tell the story of how, when I was born, he was so excited to see me pop out.

"It's a boy! Barb, it's a boy!" My dad was thrilled; nothing could make him happier.

"Uh, Mr. Calabrese, that's the umbilical cord..." the doctor replied.

My dad encouraged me to follow my interests and I took up music and amateur entomology, the study of insects. He pushed my sisters and me as he would have pushed the son he wanted; just being good at something wasn't enough for my father. We had to be the best at whatever we did. When I brought my report card home at the end of the sixth-grade, my father ignored the A's in English, math, social studies, and focused on the one A-. In science. He turned to Mom.

"I thought she wanted to be a scientist."

I never got another A-.

My father was a loving man, but I never saw my mother disagree with him. I used to wonder if they always had the same thoughts, the same ideas, the same needs. By the time I started school, I noticed I went out of my way to avoid conflict with my father, and found myself echoing my mother's patterns of agreement. His hold was mystical, he always had a thousand good ideas and a

thousand better ones to explain why they were so good. A tall, dark and handsome Italian, a natural ham, my dad commanded everyone's attention at every family party, at every church event. More positive speaking than Tony Robbins, more spiritual than the pope, failure wasn't in his vocabulary, and that expectancy rolled out and carpeted the rest of the family.

I didn't find out my father's big secret until I was an adult. At the age of eighteen, he flunked out of college. Smoking and drinking and gambling took the place of studying and classes, and my father left school in disgrace. The first in his family to make it through high school, my father couldn't tell my custodian grandfather and shoe-factory worker grandmother that he failed. He ran away and joined the Army, and romanced and married my mother while he was stationed at Ft. Knox. I can't picture my father smoking, drinking or gambling. He never touched a cigarette, never picked up a beer while we were growing up. When my father first told me this story, my first thought was "so what." He had made something of himself, had worked hard in the Army, worked his way through school, and had a Ph.D. in Education by the time I found out. None of those months so long ago had any bearing on where he was at that moment. But as I watched my father tell the story, I saw the shame in his eyes, and behind the sparse words I knew there was much more I would never hear.

I was smart like my dad. I inherited his long nose and long face and his sense of the absurd. He wanted to make sure I didn't inherit his failure, too, and I was

given academic and spiritual hurdles higher than any Olympic athlete. When I inevitably failed, I wasn't chastised, just ignored, and I became passionate about breaking any set record that I could so that I could find the love he kept hidden for success. While my friends were watching Star Wars and holding hands with boys at the roller rink, I was doing brain transplants in ants and attending charismatic Catholic prayer meetings. I never knew what a boy-girl party was like, but I got to see old men and women see visions of Jesus and speak in tongues.

My parents dedicated me to God: I would be everything they wanted, a scientist, a philosopher, a spiritual seer. Or so they thought. My grades and performance in school along with my daily dose of church kept my parents out of my hair. They didn't see into the secret world in my mind, a world I hid from them. I read every book I could find on topics like Big Foot, the Loch Ness Monster, aliens, ghosts, psychics, you name it. I was the kid in your school with the weird obsession with science fiction. I was the kid in your school voted "most likely to be Spock." I had those telepathic experiences where you just know what someone is thinking, where you just know someone is staring at you.

In my secret mind, I thought that this is how life is supposed to be. That little kid practiced reading people's minds and predicting future events. I played with tarot cards. My sisters and I waited every Saturday night until my parents left the house for their weekly date. The second the station wagon left the driveway we

whipped out our secret, homemade Ouija board, dimmed the lights, lit bootleg baptism candles, and held seances, hoping to bring forth the spirit of the previous home owner. I had a fascination with Marian apparitions and would spend hours in the church watching the statues, hoping to see tears, or better yet blood pour from their eyes. I wanted a sign from the spirit world. I wanted something that would move me beyond having to have the faith of my parents.

But all that “enlightened” activity didn’t make me a better person. It didn’t make my life easier, either. My life became a total mess. Somehow I found myself on the other side of high school with no idea of who I was and no idea of where I wanted to go. I spent so many years as a studious, good-girl, nerd Catholic that I woke up in the middle of college feeling like I’d reached the summit of Everest only to realize I had to hike down, already damn tired, and the other side was so much uncharted territory.

I had glimpses of the other side, like when I was kicked out of the Girl Scouts for setting up a side business outside my tent during our camping week. Kim lined up boys from the Boy Scout camp across the stream, and we charged them a dollar each for a French kiss. The coolness of the night air, the thought that we may get caught, the way Brian the Eagle Scout’s lips and tongue felt against mine as he pressed his body close was heavenly. I would have paid him the dollar. Between the two of us we made fifty-three dollars before old Mrs. Knight rounded the corner on the way to the outhouse, her mouth falling open, cigarette

dropping, at the sight of Kim hunched over to kiss a short scout and me stuffing another dollar in my official green and white shirt. The Catholic in me feels guilty telling you this story, and even guiltier when I admit it was the most spiritual experience I had up until that point.

I studied entomology, then chemistry, and then math at the Local University, skipping classes to attend meetings of the sci-fi society. In a perpetual haze, I wandered the campus during the day trying to make sense of my life. There wasn't anything obviously wrong. But like so many other young adults, I was in the middle of a sea of thirty thousand, feeling absolutely, positively, and completely alone. A rumble just under the surface of my perception was always present, an itch I couldn't reach. Remembering my stolen moments with the Eagle Scout, I thought I could answer that primal call for connection with a boyfriend. The siren call of true love coaxed me against the rocks.

I dropped out of college mid-semester, ran away to Puget Sound with my boyfriend Randy, got pregnant, got married. I found myself managing a Knights of Columbus trailer park on Black Lake, far from the place I called home, with a semester full of F's on my permanent record and a baby on my hip. I was eighteen years old.

Randy was as grounded as they come. I fell in love with his red hair and his sense of humor. Four years older than I, he was the son of an Air Force

survivalist trainer. Randy could fix anything that was broken. He loved me because I was so different from his previous girlfriends. And I liked sex. We didn't start as friends, we became immediate lovers, and nothing else seemed to matter. His friends hated me, my gypsy style of dress, my loud hyena laugh, my way of discussing every subject to death. My friends hated him, the way he would emotionally withdraw, his silly puns, his love for dumb movies. Everyone pointed out that we had nothing in common, but we rolled our eyes as countless other young couples have done.

Whatever captivation the paranormal had on me evaporated. Making a living, making a baby held my immediate attention. I cooked, I cleaned, I made flies for the fishermen who frequented our campground store. Randy and I rode the trailer park paddleboat around the lake every night. I worked as a talking, dancing pig at the state fair. I loved being poor and struggling. We ate only potatoes and green beans for an entire summer, and picked illicit strawberries at night when the farmer down the road was asleep. We walked the railroad tracks of western Washington in bare feet through the summer and fall. My parents' inevitable disapproval didn't matter to me, life moved forward, and for a time the rumble beneath the surface of my heart seemed to fade like the roll of the cargo trains headed for Seattle in the distance.

Wave Form VI

The man was a stranger. He loomed over me, repeating the same words over and over, only I could not hear him. My body set my mind free, the fight or flight instinct. I could not fight anymore, beaten, held down on the damp ground at the edge of the woods, a knife at my throat, my clothes ripped off. Straining to hear the words, but my ears were with my body below. I could not hear him. "What," I tried to say, repeating the same words over and over in my mind, "what are you saying?" All of my concentration was channeled into the simple act of understanding what words his mouth formed. But he could not hear me, or did not care to answer. No place to run, just out, out and up, floating above the scene. He dropped the knife.

The doctor at the women's center examined me naked in the middle of the night. His eyes and hands and cold instruments covered every inch of my body. I held my breath. It felt like hours.

"When was your last period?" he asked.

I was silent, I didn't remember.

He didn't remember to give me medication. He touched each mark on my body, each small cut, each bruise, wrote things down in his chart. I talked with a

policewoman who scowled at me and asked why I would walk near the woods alone.

I wanted to sleep.

“Could you describe the rape for me?” he asked.

I was silent.

The hardest thing I ever went through, those nine months. I was alone in labor, I was all alone for hours, and the nurse called me weak when I asked for pain medication, a fire burned my lower back with each contraction. She acted even more unsympathetic than Randy who I knew hurt nearly as much as I did. He didn't know how to do anything other than hide from his pain. We didn't know how to comfort each other.

And I wanted time with the baby after the birth, but they wouldn't let me have it. I saw only a glimpse of her—of her eyes so green and alive like mine, her dark wavy hair—before they snatched her away and sent her to live with a foster family until the adoptive family signed the papers. They put me in the worst room of the maternity ward, a room cold and metallic, purely functional without comfort, and I felt like I had done something terribly wrong. I was just a kid, and didn't know that I could ask for something better. The next day I lay still in my steel bed,

and they wheeled me into a cozy and cheerful room with another new mother. Friends and family came to admire her baby, bearing flowers and baby clothes and candy. My stay was a secret from my family, they lived many miles away and my tongue refused to say the words when I talked to them on the phone. I lay alone; my body ached for my baby.

A hospital worker in pink and blue came into the room and announced it was time for us to have our baby's picture taken, and I was too grief stricken to explain and she kept telling me it was ok, it was free. She thought I didn't have money for photographs, I looked so young and poor. I needed to explain it, over and over again, to everyone I saw for weeks afterward. I had two stories: the real one, and my cover story that the baby had died during birth. Retelling the rape each time I explained why my belly now appeared flat and I held no baby in my arms tore at my heart and I was silent.

Wave Form VII

It makes sense to me that our Universe is dark and light. I see so many dark things in my own world, so many things that I don't understand. Sometimes I think I am grasping at straws, using these strange encounters as a means of creating order in my life where a chaotic and unhappy mess has been left. Every time I think those thoughts, the Grey Dude delivers the same dispatch. I am reminded again that we are adrift in the Exegesis, closed off to all others, closed in to ourselves.

The Universe continues growing inside of its boundary zone, and begins to take shape. I don't care what shape it is. My interest is the darkness. I try to squeeze my brain as I squint my eyes, while wondering why darkness is so dark, but the physical effort doesn't help make an answer pop out. A hazy brightness covers up the dark parts. I wish for psychic sunglasses to cut down on the glare. The Grey Dude tries again, pitches me a thought ball, one that is curved, nice and slow, easier to hit.

This time the darkness is easier to discern. Breaking into tiny pieces, melting like dirty snow, the darkness blends with the light. I notice for the first time that the light doesn't capture the same brilliant diamond shine as it contained at the creation of our Universe. It subsists as slightly less white, a little duller, like a pair of briefs gone through the wash one too many times. Star stuff, planet stuff, people stuff, eggplant stuff, that not-so-light light is our physical essence. I shrug

my shoulders, sanguine at this revelation. Why should it matter if we are physically defective? We don't seem to notice our deficiency, and besides, the important thing is the spiritual side of life, anyway.

Another portion of the message breaks loose. And oh. Damn. What arrived in bits and pieces over a period of months turns into a completed jigsaw puzzle in my mind. We, who have been separated from the rest of the Exegesis, who have been left to find our way alone, are created of a mixture of dark and light, every part of us, every tiny piece, our bodies, our hearts, even our minds. The physical and the spiritual both spring from this diluted light, both are distillates of each other, mirror images of almost-but-never-reaching-good existence. Spun from dirty light, our Universe is cloudy and murky and full of uncertainty. And so are we, beings of the dirty Universe. We have hearts that yearn to be golden but have a coating of rust, and our motivations and thoughts and words and understanding will always be veined with seeds of iniquity.

Frantically, I search for a drift of pure snow, light untouched by shadows. I find none. I study the skin on my hands, eyeing for patches of darkness, scared in knowing that my failings will never end.

Wave Form VIII

Four years and another baby later, I found myself back in school, studying physics. Randy and I had moved to a college town in the Midwest, an earthy crunchy granola kind of town, where young and old alike engaged in both perpetual academics and basketball. We lived on the west side of town with the rest of the working class and graduate student population. Old wood-framed homes with gravel drives sat close to the road, one by one slowly giving in to vinyl siding. The neighborhood housed as many cats as people, and I sat on the front porch solving differential equations on hot summer nights watching groups of children chase after fireflies and ninety-year-old Cecil next door take pot shots at the cats with a salt gun.

I was just a lowly student working at the cyclotron facility, my academic career mainly consisted of taking courses by examination, sneaking into the grad courses, and hanging out around the smart students, hoping to pick enough up to fake my way through. My childhood dreams, my orange UFO, seemed so far away. I observed and measured and hoped to one day rationalize through my new religion of science all those crazy experiences I remembered from my past.

My little piece of the puzzle at the cyclotron facility was designing the magnets used in the accelerator. In fact, the magnets carry the most important workload. They change the direction of the particles in the beam so that they collide with the nucleus of an atom, lying in wait at a calculated target point. The nuclear

physicists decide exactly which of these collisions are the most interesting ones to study, and then they design and build the equipment necessary to select only the appropriate set of scattered particles for observation. Powerful computers analyze the data from the collisions and, one hopes, provide new insights into the nature of the constituents that make our world and the forces that act between them. The experimentalists can be guided by the predictions of various theoretical models, which in turn can be tested by comparing them to the experimental results.

The experimental scientists worked on the lower level of the cyclotron facility, the theorists worked on the upper level. Thrown in with the underground bunch, I soon discovered that each group thought themselves superior, each group convinced that they were the caretakers of the real science. After months of lugging heavy equipment from one end of the building to the other, welding pieces together, designing and redesigning and testing and redesigning again, (even breaking several toes when a lump of rotating aluminum slid off the lathe, careened off my radiation detector badge and onto my sneakers), I began to side with the experimentalists. Some of the theorists seemed out of touch with the physical reality of their mental wanderings, and they often held unrealistic expectations of timetables to produce a viable experimental set-up. The theorists got the best press, the best offices, and most importantly the best beam time. Theorists and experimentalists even looked different; theorists wore classic nerd gear - the pocket protectors, the button down shirts, the chinos, the shorter hair,

and the experimentalists sweated in the heat of the basement in their long hair, their shorts with multi-functional pockets and tie dye T-shirts.

Designing magnets might sound complicated, but it's a simple art. First you collect the experimental specifications, which show you how the scientists want the magnetic field of your magnet to look like. Sometimes they need a steep field profile, one that hits the particles from out of the blue with a blast of Gaussian force. Sometimes they need something more subtle, a gentle rise of magnetic power that coaxes the particles in the correct direction. You start by estimating what your magnet would look like, taking into consideration the specifications desired and your past experience with similar specifications. You feed the parameters of your design into a computer program that calculates a field map, and out spits a topographical chart showing the magnetic field at any point near your magnet. You make adjustments and do it again, and again, and again, finally reaching something that approximates the desired outcome, but never quite matches it.

"Why's SHE talking?"

I was at the weekly Friday morning meeting for the K600 ring. The experimental scientists, all men, dismissed my septum magnet as too expensive for the ongoing ring project, and dismissed me as flighty and inexperienced.

“Oh, to hell with them,” I thought.

Fighting the charges would be fruitless. I didn’t have the connections, the kiss-up attitude, or the gender that would garner the respect I saw them grant other students. Worst of all, they were right. My magnet was the work of several weeks plotting field charts and painstaking recalculation, finally resulting in a smart design that combined permanent magnet material with the standard copper coils. The thing was so damn big that I calculated it cost a cool \$200,000 to build. I knew this, knew economics drove every project, but foolishly expected an intellectual pat on the back for an ingenious design.

I crossed my arms and in a display of showing just how much I didn’t care what they said, I feigned boredom by yawning, and started to close my eyes.

At that moment, the room in front of me—the overhead projector, the desks, the blackboard—started fading away before my eyes. The space in the room tore open and I saw the whole universe, and even all universes, and everything inside those universes. Although I saw them separately, I knew there was no difference between a blade of grass and a cow and the sun and me and the solar system and a tiny dust particle on the other side of eternity.

The cow was a Holstein. She turned her head to look at me and gave a moo. Her breath was hot and heavy, the smell of cut grass and cow spit. She resumed

grazing, and within her four stomachs were the makings of galaxies and washing machines. The sun shone over a beach where the land cascaded in waves to the sea. A fish flew in the air, puffed up and illuminated like the Goodyear blimp, it slowly circled inside and outside of a nebula.

There was an order to the vision that I couldn't place, like a fractal gone mad, like a dream you almost remember. Everything connected with everything else. A futuristic Salvador Dali vision with colors so vivid and pure I knew they came from no artist's palette.

Time stopped. The vision froze. I reached my arm out to touch the cow.

"Yes, Prudence?"

My arm whipped back into place and the room snapped back into view. The circular seating arrangement hadn't changed. The smell of chalk and dust and ionization was just as I remembered it, and my best friend Mark winked at me across the room. Mark's wooden chair was tilted back on its hind legs, his feet on his desk, barely supporting his hefty frame, his dissertation work stacked beside him, like a statue who has kept watch through summer, fall, winter then into the spring. The expression on his face told me he didn't see the cow.

I apologized for raising my hand with no question. The scientists rolled their eyes in unison. The head experimentalist droned on and on. I stared straight ahead, fighting back the tears, fighting the feelings of humiliation and confusion. I kept the vision secret. Whatever it was, it caused me to eventually leave the cyclotron, to leave my science, and to wander the world for a while, trying on new experiences.

Wave Form IX

Grey Dude thought balls breathe in my mind like living M. C. Escher sketches. They expand and contract, depending on where I draw my focus. Infinite complexity exists within each message, and the closer you zoom in, the more detail you see. You can focus on any portion of any message, and follow one simple thread through the past, to the beginning of time, and forward through the future, till the end of all time and space, till your breath runs out. I try to find a moral framework within these messages, but I can't find evidence of judgement on people, events, beings. They simply are.

Millions, probably billions, of years pass through my mind. Galaxies well up from the dirty light essence, millions, probably billions, of them. They form large chains across the vastness of space, meeting in places, then swirling into a living, breathing fractal. Some kind of an invisible grid stretches in all directions. The pulsing fractal of galaxies snaps to place within the grid. A force of attraction, not magnetic, not electric, holds the fractal to the hidden structure with an elastic tension. It feels slightly loose, as if someone didn't screw it in tight enough.

The secret framework creates the mystical sounds the Grey Dude once let me hear. It has an amazing regularity; all right angles and straight lines, so much unlike the fractious order of curves found everywhere else in nature. The network is intangible, yet essential. Without it, the entire Universe would collapse upon itself. It fills the entire enclosure, existing in a place of fixed duration. I get brain

strain at this point, like every new physics student studying Einstein's theories of general and special relativity. Time is space if you look at it the right way, and the Grey Dude stresses that the boundary of the Universe is a duration boundary, and when I complain that it feels physical to me, the Grey Dude thought ball answers, "yeah."

Picture the Universe like the Sears Tower. You can see the framework that supports the structure. It is built of angles and straight lines, all held up with nails and screws and pipe and wire—a tall edifice, strong and static. And yet, within this structure there resides a flurry of chaotic activity, an endless parade of people in and out, thinking and working and visiting and wondering. People buy tickets; they ride the elevators; they sightsee; they talk to their friends. Some people work at the tower; they take lunch breaks; they talk on the phone. The activity is literally endless; it has no boundary; it could be truly infinite in nature. Still, everything has an overall order, no movement seems out of place, and from the security cameras one can see the patterns of motion. It swirls and circles and fills every corner of the building, but it never runs out of space. Yet the structure that holds all of this activity does not move, has a great integrity, and one day will outlive its usefulness and collapse.

The galaxies grow old and die. New ones sprout to life. A huge ant farm of cosmology, tunneling and moving and hoarding and building, the Universe supports so much life force my head spins to contemplate it. I watch through

time, like a home movie on fast forward, until I hit the pause button because I spot something interesting. A blazing beacon of light cuts through the haze, somewhere far away from my vantage point. This is not dirty light. It's true and clear.

The beacon sits inside of a decaying galaxy, it revolves around a sun. A planet! For the first time I realize that the light that makes up the fabric of our space is conceptual, not literal. It relates to life force, to consciousness, something beyond both of those things. And this planet somehow broke free of the darkness; it managed to wash itself and now sparkles in my mind more luminescent than any star. I mentally shake the Grey Dude. Hey! How did this happen? How did this planet get to be clean? I want to know so badly. I am selfish; I want to wash myself spotless. The message holds the answer; it always does, so I take a deep breath and concentrate. It answers: Intent.

The planet must be like the Garden of Eden, untouched by sin, beautiful and lush, gorgeous naked entities must roam the grounds. But when I move in for a physical look, I see that beauty is not skin deep. The surface is barren, cold and harsh and dry. No plant life that I can find, no sentient beings living in spiritual nirvana. The most achingly beautiful location in the Universe at this moment is a dust ball.

Too confused to see the theme running through the larger universe, I press the mental play button again and watch as the galactic expansions occur. It lulls me to sleep, repetitive and too complex to understand. The repetition begins to speak to me, and I start seeing a new pattern emerge. New flares appear, first one, then four, then too many to count, finally washing out over the invisible morphology like confetti cast at sea. The flashes respond to each other, singing a round with the absolute light of the Exegesis. Somehow they cured themselves of the pain of mixed substance, and somehow they did this with intention.

Wave Form X

The ladies called themselves the Sunday Night Shimmy Club. We met in the recreation room of the senior center, where the flickering florescent lights gave a disco-ball caste to my belly dance classes. The floor, wooden with worn black shuffleboard lines, creaked and groaned in time to the music, which ranged from Persian to Billie Holiday standards. Particle research was the furthest thing from my half-gypsy mind. Instead of breaking things down into tiny pieces, I shimmied and shook, creating unison within my body, feeling the earth beneath bare feet; my arms reached for the upper limits of the atmosphere. My ten students ranged in age from 68 to 94; they loved the pleasures of the dance, and they begged to learn all the exotic moves of dancers at the local strip club all-nude revue. The air conditioning system of the senior center had been broken for years, and the perspiration from exercise would mix with the ladies' talcum powder, creating a rose-scented, velvety, shimmering patina on their skin.

With unpolished and jerky moves, the Sunday Night Shimmer Clubbers had rolls of fat jiggling higher than their hips, homemade polyester polka-dotted belly dance costumes that didn't hold back overflowing bosoms, and blue hair bedecked with more ornaments than Rapunzel. When they danced, I felt the floor leap to meet their feet, and the hot stale air surrounding them seemed to gently pull wisdom and genuine happiness from their bodies. The music morphed with their motions and I saw them somehow between my eyes, in the middle of my cyclotronic vision, creating nebulae when their hands circled, wisps of water and

darkness and sand flying between our rec room reality and this unknown place of mystery. The music would stop, and I would hold my breath until they sat down, beads of sweat dripping from their chins as they chugged Gatorade and homemade sweet tea. The floor finally releasing its hold with a shudder, I waited for the room to stop breathing so I could begin again.

I was the teacher; I was the expert; I was paid money for my work. But I would have traded places with any one of them in an adrenaline-assisted heartbeat. I wanted to be content like them. They mixed with each other, with the room, fluid and graceful underneath their stumbling inexperience. They already weathered years of heartache and friendship, saw loved ones grow old and die, learned to be comfortable in their aged bodies. I was so far from them; I wasn't comfortable with the physical world. I felt like an island in the midst of a constant ocean, separate from everything and everyone. They had already migrated from the islands of their youth.

Randy withdrew further into his world of conservative politics and home maintenance. I changed too many times, too quickly for him, from college student to dancing pig to housewife to physicist to belly dancer. He needed stability, someone who could manage his business and take care of the house without yearning for the stars, someone who wanted to float down a gentle stream, not someone who needed the rapids. He began working longer and longer hours to avoid spending time at home. What we loved most about each other in the

beginning became what we hated most about each other in the end. We divorced, and though we promised that we would be friendly through the legalities, it wasn't nice, and it wasn't easy. It couldn't be, I had fallen in love with one of Randy's friends.

Daniel was a harpsichordist, a philosopher, and a carpenter, the opposite of Randy in most ways. Tall, and dark, black hair and facial features that reflected his Polish and Turkish ancestry, Daniel drove me through the backwoods of southern Indiana every Saturday. Windows rolled down, we discussed UFOs, Lock Ness, Big Foot—all those topics I loved and had forgotten—while the live oak-lined roads flew by, red clay spraying underneath my car. Daniel's personal philosophy took a big picture approach. He made sense of all kinds of behaviors and social patterns in an elegant way, using rational thought and logical deduction. This method of painting a picture of the world was new to me. No leaps of faith were required; if the evidence didn't exist, the hypothesis was null. Daniel called himself an atheist, and the first time I heard him use the word, I flinched. Though I viewed the dogma of my Catholicism with some suspicion, church, with its incense and kneelers and post Vatican II hymns, was my home away from home.

He left books out for me to read on Aristotelian philosophy, objectivism, and historic reconstructions of Jesus' life. Reconciling the differences between the church of my parents and Daniel's reading list and common sense arguments

was impossible for me. Theological discussion, historical debates, all mixed up with lazy redneck small towns on summer Saturday afternoons became my new life. Seeing the world through the eyes of a logician, released from the need to believe, I married Daniel two days after my divorce was final, and we lived together with my son and daughter in his house in the woods.

Daniel liked to test my limits. Driving through Tulip Trestle, he asked me if I were afraid of heights. "Certainly not," I scoffed, though I secretly was terrified of standing on anything taller than my five feet eight inches. We pulled off the road on one side of a valley forged between two rolling hills. The road perched halfway up the sides of the hill, the valley was rich and green, cows grazed on grass and bales of rolled hay, a creek winded through vale center, directly below the old railway trestle, the town's namesake. Tulip Trestle was the oldest, longest, tallest wooden railway passage in the country. It rose hundreds of feet above the ground with a full half-mile span, a relic of the 20s when the trains would carry Al Capone and his gangsters along with sickly wealthy women to the hot mineral water spas at Baden Springs. Now the track was worn through in some places, but still structurally sound. Cargo trains clamored over the trestle several times a day, shaking the valley, shooting sharp slivers of creosote-soaked wood to the ground, far below.

"Let's climb to the top."

Daniel pointed to the point where the trestle met the granite outcropping at the top of the hill. Grabbing points of granite, slipping my sandaled feet into crevices, I pulled myself to the train tracks. Scores of teenagers had been here before us, graffiti marred the tracks and the rock, broken beer and whisky bottles littered the ground. Sitting at the edge of the rock, I raised my hand over my eyes and surveyed the area, marveling that this decaying vestige could hold tons of moving slag and coal. My arms were sore from pulling myself up, my left big toe was bleeding, and I had scratches on my legs from the rough climb. I stood up to scope out an easier trail down the hill.

Daniel pointed to the other side of the valley, where the track faded into a speck on another hill.

“I’m glad you’re not afraid of heights, Pru! Let’s walk across the trestle.”

Damn. Caught in a lie, I had to act fearless. There were no side rails to hold on to, to keep me from falling. Each crossrail connected to the I-beams at least two feet from the next, nothing separating certain death from my feet but the sky. Taking several deep breaths, I stared straight ahead at the other end, and slid one foot in front of the other. I managed to get twenty feet when my stomach spun and fell through my feet. My progress was arrested by my terror; I wanted to grab something, anything; the wind whipped around me, threatening my precarious position. Daniel calmly continued to stride in front of me, he didn’t

recognize my abject fear. With a dancer's cautious reflexes, I eased forward, feeling the wood sway and rock beneath me. Halfway across the trestle, I made the mistake of looking down, in the space between the tracks cradling my feet. Vertigo weakened my knees, my arms trembled, and panic ripped through my chest when it occurred to me that a train might be approaching. The stream below was a thin thread, the cows just spots on a green carpet. I stared at the largest cow in the field, and in my mind I said, "Moo." She turned her head to look at me and gave a moo, a plaintive cry, mimicking the drawn out bleat in my head.

I became a fixture in my Salvador Dali vision, a breathing part of the trestle, sharing the same space as ghost trains from eras past, sharing the wind with the waving grains and the granite. I saw the women from belly dance class skip across the trestle in the place between my eyes, caressing the structure with their feet, their hands, turning cartwheels, leaping from I-beam to I-beam, the trestle holding their weight, moving to catch them, anticipating their motions. For a moment, I became one of them, giving up the decision to understand why they could do this, instead feeling it, living it, melting with the trestle, until we both were a creosote and bird-pitch covered, sandal-wearing entity, reaching from the ground to the sky, running along the ground till we tickled the soft bristly flesh of the cows and ran our limbs through the cool stream. I ran across the remainder of the trestle; I knew I could not fall—I was the trestle. I wasn't afraid of the physical anymore.

Wave Form XI

“What about our planet?” I ask the Grey Dude. Based on my own complex motivations, I know our home planet must consist of the essence of dirty light. I see the Earth forming in the mind of the Grey Dude’s message, tiny pieces of light collecting together, pulled toward each other in an attraction stronger than the force of gravity. Millions of years pass in a second, a dingy ball of dirty light circling the sun. Some of the light turns to terrain, some of the light is liquid, a fountain of water pulsing through the center of the sphere. The world turns from blackness to a rich blue as this water pours out, over the surface. I search for the moon, but the sky is empty.

The murky ball hiccups, a contraction that pulls the ball closer in upon itself, then expanding to its original size. At the moment of hiccuping, the ball releases a plume of vapor like the ring of smoke from a cigar aficionado’s mouth; it rises above the surface of the orb, slowing swirling and blanketing the surface, rising until the tension of attraction exactly equals the force of expansion. The vapor lies suspended in the air over the planet, a cozy patchwork comforter.

Sometimes objects fall from the sky, through the vapor, onto the surface. As they approach the atmosphere, a signal of energy flies directly from the firmament to the object, and a kind of equilibrium is reached. The object belongs to the world now; its light is our light.

The Earth decides to give birth, and tiny organisms spring from the soil, covering the surface of the planet, condensing on the dirt like the morning dew. Intention, this was Intention, a deliberate act. The planet has a personality, I discover at this moment, and I see the joy radiating from the center, how the simplicity of birth brings wholeness. Each new cell carries a code, a representation of the dirty light. It feels like a vector, a quantity with a direction. Invisible signals travel across the surface of the planet in waves, like the motion of fans in the bleachers during a home run. The closest emotion I can compare the combination of feelings of the planet and the cells is Thanksgiving dinner, a feast of family and food and happiness and activity and creation and good will, bloated and content.

Under the surface a hum resonates: echoing, pitching, and rolling. It's a quiet hum, no one notices. The hum collects some of the signals, storing them like chipmunks preparing for winter. These are the precursors of decision, all the tiny intentions of every particle. When a critical mass is attained, the hum energy escapes and the globe—in a moment of deliberate action—belches a change. Some changes mar the surface with cracks and shivers, some gently create cellular mutations. Nothing is random, nothing is truly chaotic. Earthquakes, tidal waves, the movement from small cellular existence to the complexity of plants and animals. Each of these is a chosen, deliberate action, the combined desires of each section of the planet.

I think about our bodies, whose cells work with precision under the direction of both our brains and our encoded data. Becoming ill is not a random event; it is a reaction to a series of decisions we have made about coming in contact with other potentially sick human beings, about non-nutritive food choices, about negative mental states. We mistreat our body, and our body gets our attention with an all-out attack on our senses, a deliberate action. Our bodies react to stimulus, they don't act on a whim. And our bodies are a reflection of our world, made of the same material, formed from the vapor and the dirt and the unclear light, every cell in our system responds to the call of the wild. The Ash Wednesday blessing, "remember man that thou art dust and unto dust thou shalt return," echoes this message of the Grey Dude.

Intention, intention, I repeat the word endlessly. It becomes my new meditation mantra, and I wonder if this is why the same species will spring up in an evolutionary quantum leap on opposite sides of the planet, why laboratories in two different countries announce the same discovery at the same time, why new diseases can sprout from two separate locations at once. I still don't understand what Intention means, whether it is a form of focusing on a result, whether it is wishful thinking, whether it is something altogether different and more mystical. I hear people complain in the grocery store, and I want to shake them, to wake them up. Hey! You're making waves! You're changing the world! Watch out, this may start a tornado! But I am silent, too embarrassed to share this

understanding, too unsure of my interpretation and the Grey Dude's ulterior motives to do anything but cringe.

Walking on the beach at night, I feel the wet graininess underneath me, and for a moment the cool brown sand, the water, and my feet are one. The water and sand travel up my legs, chilling my thighs, ocean brine sloshing inside the cavity of my body, till I am reborn a mermaid. Images float through my mind, watery pictures of sea plankton and silt, and at once I comprehend that my mind is the mind of a dolphin, a mermaid, a whale, a seashell, a grain of sand. I am part of everything I touch or see or wonder about. My cells speak to their cells, we have Intention together. Right now our Intention probably keeps me breathing, keeps the waves rolling, the dolphin leaping. Somewhere in the Caribbean a conch shell has fantastic dreams of my particleboard desk and aging computer, feels my hopes and dreams; we share our earthly existence. A child yells to her parents in the distance and my scales and fins change back into sand-worn flesh.

I live amidst a planetary conspiracy, now knowing that my innermost secrets spread with each breath I exhale.

Wave Form XII

The senior center closed for renovations around the time that my students perfected their abilities. Months passed, Daniel and I grew familiar with each other, the humid Indiana summer gave way to a frigid winter, the coldest on record. Since the trestle, life, the change of seasons, and a logical husband had worn away the cosmic connections. Daniel and I started a small publishing company, and then I tried my lone hand at web design. All transitory, just temporary experiences while I sorted out what the intersection of realities that made up my life meant. Being fed a diet of rationality took its toll on me; I quit my church, I began seeing the fallacies in the conclusions I had drawn about my experiences. I decided there was no meaning, I had fallen victim to a cosmic joke. Nothing was connected; the mystical cow only an illusion. The big orange football field in the sky was the mass illusion of six overly excited, exhausted girls. My trestle reverie was brought on by fear and exhilaration. I was alone in the universe, no God to hear my prayers. I cried myself to sleep one winter night, and wished for greater understanding, some way I could be intellectual and objective and still keep my mystical experiences.

I woke up in the middle of the night and sat straight up in bed. Chanting? No, singing. The noises I heard were faint. I breathed in deeply through my nose, trying to decipher if it was incense or perfume I smelled. I looked at the clock. 2:30 a.m. The noise stopped. Quiet filled the room again; I must have heard the stereo in the next apartment.

"You will soon find out what you are going to do."

The voices were loud and insistent. They chanted the message, like the narrative done by a Greek Chorus. Several voices, all women, not quite in synch with each other. One voice trailed behind the others, high pitched and wavering.

"Daniel, wake up!" I shook my husband. "Did you hear those voices?"

Daniel stared at me through sleepy eyes. He hadn't heard anything.

I didn't know what to say but then at that moment he made it hard for me to think as he leaned over and softly kissed the side of my mouth. His hands caressed my shoulders as his lips brushed the side of my face. A soft moan escaped my lips as he kissed my ear then neck. I closed my eyes.

I could feel the stubble of his chin and upper lip tickle my soft skin.

I wanted him to kiss me; I wanted to forget what I had heard through my sleep. I wanted to feel his lips on mine, his tongue on mine. No more etheric visions and voices, only the reality of the physical, the world Daniel gave me. His brown eyes became a blur as he leaned in and took my mouth into his. I felt drunk as he

kissed me deeply with his tongue. The room spun around me, voices still echoing in my mind, hands stroking my breasts.

I could feel the muscles ripple beneath his shirt as he lowered himself over me. Our bodies pressed hard against one another, the heavy weight of his body on mine, my hands in his hair, we became one like the meeting of dancers with the floor, trestle with the ground, my feet with the beach, my mind with the mind of a cow. The rhythm of our passion drowned out my confusion.

I drifted back to sleep, but it was fitful and restless.

Wave Form XIII

“Why don’t you use the word ‘gray?’ Barbara asks me.

She has heard so many of my message interpretations. She understands that our universe is dirty. She rather likes the idea. Barbara doesn’t believe I meet with the Grey Dude, but she believes I believe it. Last year she broke up with her true love, a tall, dark and gentle Pakistani man, her lover of several years. I never saw a more perfect couple. They met in college. Barbara loved his intelligence, his sense of humor, and the way he played with children. I only had to look at Junaid looking at Barbara to understand the depth of his emotion for her. She irritated so many people, they were caught surprised. Under her statuesque figure, under her long black curls and porcelain complexion, she was gruff and direct, a salesclerk’s worst nightmare. Barbara intimidated everyone but Junaid. He sidestepped her every barb with kindness and patience, and she found herself smitten. She didn’t want to fall in love with Junaid. He was Muslim. She was Jewish. Both were committed to their tradition and religion, and when they graduated, Barbara told Junaid they had no future together. Though she sounded calm and her words were coated in steel, I knew that Barbara wished they weren’t caught up in a modern day saga of Romeo and Juliet. Telling Barbara that some things just are sad due to our dirty nature is telling Barbara there is a reason for her loss.

“I mean, come on Pru, a dirty mix of white and black is gray. Light and dark, white and black, it’s gray, gray, gray. I never hear you say it, it’s like you’re avoiding the word.”

Her whisper holds an edge. I burp my young son. We spend the evenings talking about men and Grey Dudes and politics, Siamese cat on her lap, baby at my breast.

I am avoiding the word. Gray is such an easy word. Gray can be more light than dark, gray can be more dark than light. But the dirty light isn’t gray, even though it is composed of lightness and dark, blackness and white. The dirty light is an amalgamation; dark rocks and dirt mixed with light cement, like a New York sidewalk, all bright lights and fancy stores and streetwalkers and drugs. Artists instinctively know this. They use colors like purple and blue to paint the color gray, they know that gray does not occur in nature.

Barbara isn’t convinced. We live in a society that celebrates grayness, all the shades between fundamentalism and liberalism, the shades between African American and Caucasian, between fat and thin, gay and straight, old and young, good and bad. Another late night academic argument, we sit and pet our sleeping little creatures, my son drools, her cat purrs. We stare at our laps, endless parades of grayness march through our minds; abortion, capital punishment, environmentalism versus technology.

Barbara raises her head first.

“I think I get it. It’s like this: I’m a good person. Junaid’s a good person. We were great together. That’s the light. But somewhere a long time ago someone decided that my kind and his kind were incompatible. That’s the darkness. My decision wasn’t gray; it was clear, black and white. I couldn’t have children without a stable family religion, it just wouldn’t work. That’s the sad part, I can’t be with my love. You know, Pru, it’s always like that, isn’t it? You can always figure out what you think, deep down. You always know what is right and wrong. Maybe someone else sees it differently, but they have a right and wrong, too. Maybe it all depends on how much darkness surrounds you.”

I never looked at it that way. How much darkness surrounds us now, I wonder. A fight breaks out in the street below our apartment building. I hear the sirens of the police, I hear young men swearing. Silent tears fall down our faces, each of us crying over the angst of youth, over our lost loves, over the darkness.

Wave Form XIV

The record cold temperatures of winter bore dry air, the kiss of death to the handmade harpsichords Daniel owned. I filled the humidifier, willing the soundboards not to crack , wishing for an end to the long cold misery. The ground froze solid, insulating the earth from everything on the surface. Covered in long cotton underwear, multiple sweaters, hats, gloves, scarves tied around our faces, we were insulated from each other, relying on words to get our emotions across. The winter broke me, too cold to work, too cold to think, my dreams froze, becoming icicles, eventually breaking free and shattering on the ground. Daniel suggested a move to a warmer climate, someplace where work was plentiful and living was cheap, someplace where we could awaken our dreams with the heat of the sun and the healing power of gentle rains.

We pulled up our roots and transplanted in Atlanta. I don't know why we chose this city, I never lived in a city before, with its constant car noise and exhaust fumes. We added another boy to our brood, and were expecting another. I spent my days changing diapers and writing web site code in an urban apartment on Roswell Road. We lived on the top level of a five-floor building, and mixed in with the angles and concrete and asphalt outside were sky-high magnolia trees and a shiny green creeping veneer of kudzu.

The apartments were once luxury accommodations, open and spacious, with an inground pool and exercise room, built in a garden setting close to the

Chatahoochee River. Now, thirty years later, Roswell Road slithered around more aging strip malls, car washes, mattress stores, and auto dealerships that the eye could see, a veritable tacky temple to capitalism. The apartment complex was home to lower middle class African-American families and illegal aliens from Latin America. We were one of only two caucasian tenants, and they stuck us in adjacent apartments in the back of the compound. The pool sat perpetually closed for repairs, the exercise room, graffiti initials sprayed on the door, stayed locked for fear of gang activity. Some families crammed up to twenty people in a one bedroom unit, so poor that they kept the windows open instead of running the air conditioner, and tomatillos, onion and corn cooking smells and Tejano music invaded my senses, making it hard for me to sleep at night.

Late one night, creating the Highland Hardware web site, I felt generations away from my past life. The circular saw blades in the hardware catalog looked like small UFOs, hovering above a wood paneled background, floating with prices and sizes and quantities listed next to them.

Hypnotized by the rows of blades on my screen, I imagined clicking on the ripblade, a harsh blade with deep gullets, flat-topped anti-kickback teeth, and an aggressive twenty degree hook. It was the perfect blade for creating crop circles out of impossibly high and sturdy rape seed fields, the consummate blade for ripping out the unconnected pieces of my heart. With so much to make sense of, so many hardened thoughts, I imagined that one ripblade would dull before

finishing the job, I would have to order two. Then, between bursts of Emilio Y Rio and squealing cars outside my window, I caught a few faint words from the documentary playing on television in the next room.

A military officer with a high nasal voice called himself an Obi Wan Kenobi, a true life Jedi Knight, a trained psychic spy able to see into any moment in time and find out the answers to any mystery. He could view and taste and touch things remotely, from the exact location of Saddam Hussein to the Ark of the Covenant, using only specially conditioned corners of his mind. No Chinese puzzle was too intricate for his telepathic fingers, no kryptonite held his mind at arm's reach from his assigned target. His estranged wife couldn't understand his vision and left him to travel the universe in search of his obsession, the ETs.

The ripblades fell from my thoughts. But the music outside my window reminded me that I was stuck in a city of racial divide and genteel manners, most likely thousands of miles from the nearest psychic spy training facility. But I was wrong. The place I had moved to for no good reason, the place that kept me up at night with energy wholly of the Earth, was the one and only city with a civilian training course in the art of experiencing other places and worlds with only your mind.

The belief that our life extended beyond our bodies took root in my mind, covered my rational doubts and suspicions, like the kudzu which overtook every nook and

cranny of the southeast with no care of what lay beneath it, choking everything in its path.

Wave Form XV

Intention, Intention. Capital “I” Intention. I look up the word to see if I am capturing the spirit of the message, and find what I am looking for: firmly fixed, concentrated. It comes from the Latin *intendio*, meaning “a stretching out.” Envisioning the Earth stretching out its concentration, firmly fixing in its sentience the idea of life, I can see the cells spring forth. I am pleased with myself for figuring out this concept. Smug and mentally exhausted, I fall asleep, heavy and unthinking, the sleep of the dead.

No! An alarm clock rings smack in the middle of my head, a cacophony of doorbells and buzzers and church bells and gongs. No! The Grey Dude isn’t kind in his correction, he seems to favor an impartial analysis. When I feel especially proud of my interpretation, he makes sure I know I do NOT know with a celestial slap across the face of my third eye. I try again. Intention, Intention. Capital “I.” Somehow I know the word is right. I delve into the definition further, into the message deeper. Losing myself among the tangled threads, I pause and take a breath, but instead of the nitrogen-oxygen mix I am used to, I suck in the dirty light. It fills my lungs, warm and familiar, with an aftertaste of eucalyptus and sunshine.

Infused with the essence of my creation, I begin to see the problem. I can’t see through the condensed vapor of light and dark because I am the problem, a zillion swarming cells of amalgamated intention. Small “i” intention, I am. How

can a plankton, amidst the flotsam and jetsam, fathom the entirety of the Atlantic ocean? How can a flea, perched under a forest of shaggy hair, grasp the entirety of his host Airdale? How can a woman, made of dirty light, imagine what it means to shed the darkness? "You're whining," whispers the thought ball.

Think, think, the Grey Dude berates me. He knows I've done the research, he knows it could be in my grasp if I only noticed it sitting in my hands. Intention, intent, purpose, object, goal, end, aim, objective, what you hope to achieve, to attain. Reciting as many synonyms as I can remember, over and over, into a pattern of repetition, I forget to think. The answer starts to surge, my cells echo the cells of the plankton, the cells of fleas, I forget that my body, my being, holds answers.

I stumble into the world of medicine, stumble into the truth, what little of it is available to the commingled likes of me. The medical definition: the course or manner of healing of a surgical wound. Of course, that's it, that's Intention, that's Exegesimal and Universal Intention.

Wave Form XVI

A car honked in the distance. The class was held in a conference room of the Holiday Inn next to the freeway. The room stretched from one end of the hotel to the middle point, gusts of cool air blew in from under the doors. We sat on folding chairs at the front of the room; later we would spread out to the desks along the wall.

My fellow students, all sixteen of them, seemed normal, from the ex-presidential press secretary to the psychologist and the retired nurse. We were here to learn to be psychic spies. One woman, a tall, middle-aged, vivacious red head with dangling crystal earrings, cornered me to talk about her alien implants. She carried twenty-eight of them, some in her head, some in her feet. She explained that every time she ran a stud detector up and down her body, the light would flash at the implant locations. She stared straight into my eyes, her right foot tapped as she spoke. I nervously glanced around the smoke filled dining room of the hotel, fearful that someone would hear our conversation.

I kept falling asleep in my chair during the lectures, wondering if this was some kind of mind control experiment. The modus was stupefyingly simplistic; I couldn't see how these techniques could lead to omniscience. You drew automatic squiggles without thinking. You poked them with your roller ball pen. You wrote down impressions of things, and if you didn't have any impressions, you made some up.

“This is bullshit,” I thought. “How could drawing squiggles on paper and poking them tell you anything about the universe?”

After the first several days of class, I had spied on endless mountains and buildings, Hitler during a political rally, the Wright brothers’ first flight, and a mythical group of beings from the Urantia book called the Midwayers. Each time we began a new exercise, we were not told where we were sending our minds. Our data was supposed to answer that question and it would be our proof that we were acting as cosmic intelligence agents. But I didn’t see anything. I didn’t feel anything. I couldn’t see the answers in the other students’ work, though most of them nodded their heads when the answer was revealed at the end of the drill as if they were there, as if they felt the wind of the Wright brothers’ contraption as it took flight.

Maybe I was trying too hard. Maybe the others were engaged in self-delusion. I was embarrassed and mentally tired. Work. It was just damn work, tedious, boring, uneventful, and about as non-cosmic as the water stains on the cheap hotel carpet beneath my feet.

An assistant casually dressed in muted tones handed out the next exercise. I sat at my gray desk, surrounded by gray partitions, paper on a gray desk pad. I poked and prodded my crazy squiggles and forced impressions and I started

describing like every other session during the week. It wasn't long into the process that I started feeling sick to my stomach.

"Hmmm, something's flying in the air."

"It's big. No, huge. And heavy, lots of momentum there."

"It's cylindrical. It's like a rocket. It's going up. It has people inside. Not a lot of people, like 4 or 5, and it's men and women."

"Whoa - there's an explosion!"

My pen flew across the page as if it had a mind of its own, and I no longer stole flustered glances around the room to see if anyone was watching me.

"They're feeling sick like they're falling. They are falling, something's burning, they are falling, they know they are going to die!"

And between the tiny flashes of dead bodies and scattered pieces of wreckage and the cold, cold sea I threw up all over the work spread out in front of me.

The assistant informed me I had just viewed the space shuttle Challenger disaster. I knew then it wasn't bullshit, and those etheric Greek Chorus voices echoed their sentiment again in my mind.

Just thinking about it brings it up again, and I feel those feelings, those feelings of falling, of knowing you are going to die and I know in my heart that I blended for a short period of time with Christa McAuliffe and the other astronauts. I knew Christa's mother, and talked to her several times a week while her daughter was the teacher in space, training and waiting her turn in the shuttle. She was the librarian in the town I lived in. I watched the explosion that day — everyone in Framingham Massachusetts did — but I never dreamed that I would end up living it myself so many years later.

Wave Form XVII

I guess most things get worse before they get better.

If Intention is a healing process, if Intention will eventually reunite us with the rest of the Exegesis, then why the hell is life on Earth so screwed up? I feel the Grey Dude roll his eyes at my failure to see some bigger picture. He moves me to a mental time and place that seems so alien and far away from my bathroom. It smells strange but vaguely familiar; it looks strange but something in the back of my mind tells me to drop an imaginary ball. Ah, 9.8 m/s^2 . Gravity is the same as Earth, yet the skies are black and the ground beneath me feels like a soft and spongy gray-colored material unlike any other upon which I have stepped. Intuitively, I know this is Earth; this may even be the street on which I live in some distant future.

The Grey Dude tells me the story piece by piece. Why is this thoughtball so linear? I see the rise and fall of plants, of insects, of amphibians, of animals, each following a burp of planetary Intention. Nothing is surprising to me, patterns follow the evolutionary path I expected to see: fits and starts of change, one grey dude day an ameba is swimming in the primordial soup; the next day a simple bug is crawling on a newly formed beach, eventually a web-footed creature flies over tall grasses. I'm sort of bored by the narration. I don't know a lot about evolution, don't know much about dinosaurs, and don't really care what the Grey Dude is saying.

Around the point I expect to see the early primates morph into early humans, I see something I just can't believe. The Grey Dude shows me the planet as a whole, swirling ball of white and blue, little apes and bugs and frogs and big wooly things below, and out of stage right flies a cube. A literal cube, perfect squares meet perfect squares. It's huge, much bigger than a football field, more like a small city. The cube is the color of a thunderstorm; all muted greens and dark blues mixed with humidity and electricity. It stops suddenly. Diving into the atmosphere somewhere above what is left of Pangea, it hovers over an area populated by primates and mammals.

From the ground below, parts of the cube stick out of the clouds over lush grassland. Not a sound emanates from the structure. I feel that it is trying to be secretive, that the cube holds a sentience primarily concerned in this moment with concealment. Why would such an advanced object care about being seen by mammoths and jellyfish? Oh! The cube is more aware of something far away from here; an intelligence that is scanning the area with a wave of invasive energy that slowly rolls toward us. I sense the cube make a split decision.

Clearly this thing didn't come from Earth. It came from stage right, but the Grey Dude doesn't let me see the origination point. I'm drawn into the cube. I can't make heads of tails of it. Everything is distorted, the sides, the ceiling, the floor. I think it's one room. I can't tell. The Grey Dude pushes me, accelerates the firing

of my synapses, and for an instant I can see into what I think is another dimension. The room evens out into many small areas separated by opaque curves as wild as Medusa's hair and tubes that show both the inside and outside at the same time. I think the cube is a spaceship of some sort, but I see no electronics or consoles or monitors, only the wild morphing of translucent material. In one section, which reminds me of a corner because it is the intersection of several dome-like shapes, a jettison of sparkly points twirls like a tornado in four, maybe more, dimensions. This is the operator of the cube, an entity of some sort. The entity is upset; the emotion feels so close to human upsetness that I like this being right away. The being seems genderless yet so familiar that my mind rolls through all of the people I have ever heard of or ever met, trying to find the similarity I feel. One image keeps popping to mind, a line drawing of a goofy man smoking a pipe – the prophet of the Church of the Subgenius, Bob. Why the entity reminds me of Bob I can't exactly say. The being seems to possess an inner sense of collegiate goofiness and left field truth and rebellion. I give the entity that name: Bob.

The Grey Dude stops leaning on my mind, and Bob's inner spaceship reverts to a spatial enigma. The cube still hides in the clouds. I notice the ship moves in a way reminiscent of Bob's motions, a shuddering circular pattern. It mesmerizes me, nearly lulls me to sleep. Months later, reliving the movement has become my nightly mantra, like counting sheep. It speaks to me of human heartbeats, of the sway of a baby in her mother's womb.

A puff of air bellows from the sky. Bob flies out of the top of the cube like an alien cannonball. I can not decide if the trajectory is intentional. Bob lands on the grasslands and I am surprised to hear a thud. Bob is just a string of lights, little sparkly points, and no connections visible between them. I estimate Bob's height to be around twenty feet tall, and maybe half that size wide. I try to count the points of light, decide that fifty is about right. It's hard to get an accurate count, the sparkles fade and pulse, fade and pulse.

Bob needs to hide something. The Grey Dude tells me this, and mentally points to a group of primates. Hairy and brown, muscular yet small, the apes don't move. They appear to be frozen, caught in a tableau of grooming each other and eating some kind of fibrous plant material. Bob twirls through them, alighting upon them like intergalactic Christmas lights. Bob's lights begin to flash in a sequence, like Morse code. The sequence repeats once, then twice, three, four, five times. Each time the sequence repeats it quickens and the flashes get brighter. Bob imparts a message but I can't decipher the meaning.

Bob moves away from the primates and flies away from my vantage point, barely skimming the ground below. The grasses flutter beneath Bob's passage, as if the floating lights were capturing the wind and forcing it downward. I hear silence from another area of the grasslands, a hush like the dead of night. My mind wanders back to the wave of energy propelling toward us, like a giant searchlight.

It has nearly reached the outer limits of our solar system when Bob and the cube disappear.

The apes resume their activities. Some months later a few give birth. The babies are not quite like their parents. Their heads are larger, they grow taller and swifter, their feet and hands are more elongated. The difference is more than physical. An undercurrent of self-awareness arises; these creatures are not made of pure Earth stuff. Their cells don't match the Intentional rhythms of their surroundings. It's as if they have an alien component, a piece of somewhere else, where the Intentions follow another path. These early people are not wholly of the Earth; it's a palpable difference. They feel out of synch with their surroundings.

As these unusual children grow older they meet others like themselves from neighboring areas of the grasslands. Nothing is unusual. They mate, they eat, they gather. Time passes, and each generation is slightly different physically than the one before. The element Bob added grows stronger with each mating, and after a time I see in these people a tangible disconnection with the Earth. A rage is building under the surface, and where there was once harmony between cells, a tug of war develops between the Earth-like quality of being in the moment and a search for something outside of themselves. Because they own both sides in this struggle, they aren't even aware of its existence.

The Grey Dude weaves the entire story of humanity from this event.

Wave Form XVIII

Once you decide you're a psychic spy, talking with angels and aliens isn't far behind.

The evening after the day I viewed the Space Shuttle Challenger disaster my life begins a new pattern. Every night. Night after night. Week after week. Month after month. One year, two years, three years.

It's 2:30 am. I wake up, sit up in bed. I have to pee. I throw the covers over my body, step out of bed. The floor is cold. I walk the short distance from the bed to the bathroom. I step into the bathroom, into another world. The air smells of rotting oranges, cheesy cologne, something putrid, layers of scent; it stings my nose and eyes. The hair on my arms and on the back of my neck stands on end, my stomach tightens.

In the corner of the bathroom, in the glow of my alien-head night-light, in the space between the toilet and the tub stands a Grey Dude. He smells awful. Short, thin, mottled grey-blue-orange, he faces me, stares at me through eyes of pitch and reflective glass. I can tell he's alive, he makes micromovements, smirking at me with a tiny mouth, the edges barely turned up. I can't tell if he is naked or if he is wearing a full body suit of the same scaly material as his skin. I see no genitalia, but he feels male, feels alien, feels scientific and dangerous.

He is scary. I like him.

In the moment our eyes meet, he passes me a message. A thoughtball. A non-linear package of information, completely finite, completely limitless. It hits me in the chest, an array of instant knowledge. The message takes less than an instant to arrive, and the nights when he stays past the transfer, he doesn't move, just stares at me enigmatically. Whenever he stays longer than a minute or two, I shift from side to side, having to relieve myself, wishing he would go. He never seems to notice my discomfort.

He disappears instantaneously, nothing left behind but the telepathic message, the memory of that terrible smell, and two tiny footprints in the bathmat, one print deformed as though he was the victim of a childhood farm machinery accident.

I feel my way back to bed, spend hours dissecting the messages. I end up using my remote viewing skills of description and analysis to pick them apart, trying to arrive at the pure, unadulterated overall thought, but I know that what I perceive is always biased by my experience, memories, and beliefs. But more than the messages, my mind works on a problem that seems to me somehow more confusing, more enigmatic, more complex.

Is he real?

Wave Form XIX

Grey Dude lets me sit with the notion of Bob the alien for a few days. I still wake up at 2:30 am, still feel my way through the dark to the bathroom, still stop at the sink before I reach the toilet. Grey Dude isn't there. Three days in a row. This is it?! This is the entire history of the Universe?! At first I wonder if I somehow missed the ending. Did I fall asleep before the last installment? Questions turn to anger turn to worry for the Grey Dude turn to worry over my mental state. Mostly I feel cheated. I want to know how the story ends; we were just reaching the good part! It's not fair, it's not fair, and it's not fair! I gave up months of sleep, months of dreams and peace and regeneration. It's not fair.

Did you ever try to send a telepathic message to someone? Did you ever squish your face up and force thoughts to sprout from where you imagine your third eye to lay? I do this now, call the Grey Dude to me, and beg him to return. I'm like a five-year-old at bedtime, begging for just one more story. I bargain with him in my mind. I tell him I'm willing to undergo abduction. I'm willing to stay up later during the night, for two hours, three hours; we can start earlier if he likes! You don't even have to show up, I reason, just send me the damn thoughtball over the distance that separates us. After fifteen minutes I give up. My forehead hurts from the constant contracting of my muscles. I lie in bed and think about how crappy my telepathic skills are.

He appears again three nights later. He doesn't explain his absence.

Grey Dude starts up where we left off, with no recap of events, no further explanations. I wonder if my telepathic message brought him back. He doesn't answer this thought. He starts right in with those early humans, the ones carrying the Bob Factor. I see them again, living, breathing, eating, moving, like the unsuspecting victims of a National Geographic camera operator.

Something in the message captures my attention and I focus on another group of early humans. They are living, breathing, eating, moving. They don't seem different in any way; I wonder why the message points to them. I peer closer. No visible difference. Then another group comes into my view and I see them living, breathing, eating, moving. Three separate groups. So what? I can tell this is another one of those moments I am out of proper perspective. I zoom out. They look the same. I zoom closer. They look the same. Somehow the message tells me they are different. I smell them. They even smell the same, an earthy, pungent smell reminiscent of sweet sweat, rainfall and clay. It's a nice smell.

Different, different, different, different, I repeat the word out loud, then silently in my head. Over and over again, until it loses all meaning and sounds like gibberish. I give up. It's 5 am.

Hours later, sometime in the late afternoon, I drive to the grocery. In the parking lot, in the space next to mine, two girls wait while their mother unlocks the car

doors. The girls eat M and M's and look at me. I look back. Identical twins. The same black curly hair cut short frames their faces, identical cocoa skin, matching yellow and neon green short sets, two pair white sneakers with candy cane striped laces. They look at each other and giggle, shoving each other out of the way as the car doors open, fighting for front seat. Same. Different. I begin to see the answer, and as I push my cart through the isles of Kroger, grabbing oatmeal, apples, canned corn, spaghetti, I sort out the next episode in human evolution.

Those groups look the same, they smell the same. But something inside of them is different. Another piece of the message opens, like a flower. The Bob Factor is only present in one of the groups. I stop in front of the egg display, lean on the bright red handles of the shopping cart and stare at my feet through the metal grid. I'm confused. I thought the Bob Factor was the force that turned apes into man. I melt my consciousness with each of the groups in the message, like I do in remote viewing, and feel their thoughts, their essence. The difference is subtle. The group carrying the Bob Factor is the group who feels slightly out of place, whose cells don't quite match the rhythm of the earth surrounding them. The other groups have a harmony with the land that is breathtaking in its simplicity and calmness.

I'm embarrassed at the way I jumped to conclusions. I assumed that the original groups that Bob infected were the only groups that develop into humans. I didn't even bother to see if any non-Bob-infected groups were in the past messages. I

saw the group, I saw Bob, I saw the event, I saw the development from ape to man.

It's what you don't see that bites you from behind.

Wave Form XX

I gave up my web design business in order to work more closely with my trainer. Courtney was approaching middle age, gaunt and tall, with an almost childlike exuberance. He wore a canvas outback hat, and later students at his institute would call him Indiana Jones behind his back. He was the only civilian trainer of psychic spy techniques at the time, having been trained by one of the ex-military practitioners. He wrote a book about using this secret technology to talk to Jesus and Buddha, to spy on grey aliens and Martians, even Adam and Eve. He taught political science at an expensive private university; having tenure allowed him to indulge in metaphysics.

A Transcendental Meditation Sidha, Courtney stressed the importance of a settled mind. Some of the students in the classes, many of them advanced meditators themselves, read his book, and were learning to be psychic travelers so that they could become future Earth Diplomats to a cosmic equivalent of the United Nations, the Galactic Federation, with their new telepathic skills.

Each time I practiced, I gained greater clarity, higher levels of detail. I couldn't name the targets, but psychic spies weren't supposed to name things. The object was to become lost in the minutia like an agent of the IRS, leaving everything dissected and properly recorded. If the target was the Great Pyramid at Giza, then I felt the graininess of the structure's sides, I intuited the pyramid shape, I sensed the oldness, the feeling of death and entombment, smelled the camel

dung nearby. My session would show crude drawings of triangles, labeled with words like “hot,” “crumbly,” and “ancient.” If I ran across an Egyptian or an American tourist during my mental wanderings, I proceeded to execute a “deep mind probe” which gave me the thoughts, psychology, and emotions of the individual.

Courtney cultivated a small group of us who were dedicated to this remote viewing, and we began to catalog a new mythology of Earth. Courtney’s previous research indicated that we lived with Martians in our midst. Refugees from a planet whose atmosphere was ripped away by a comet millions of years ago, they lived in the bowels of the Santa Fe Baldy mountain. The Grey aliens rescued some of the Martians during the devastating event, and trucked them over to Earth, but an Earth of the future. The remaining Martians burrowed under the Face on Mars, and kept their culture alive for a time when they would be welcome to roam the Earth in peace. The Greys time traveled; they were advanced in technology, in telepathy, and most importantly in spirituality. They visited and abducted us in order to help us attain the next level of enlightenment, and to warn us about impending environmental devastation. One day the Martians would send a flotilla full of their remaining people to Earth; one day we would all coexist in peace. As institute webmaster, I posted our results for the world to see on Courtney’s web site.

I wandered for months in “subspace,” the name Courtney borrowed from Star Trek to describe the twilight zone between physical reality and our true spiritual nature. Filled with aliens, angels, ghosts, other remote viewers, subspace was an etheric tunnel connecting the here and now with any target of the past, present, or future.

Leaving the world around me for subspace was wonderful, like finding a pool of clean water in the middle of a hot desert, so cool and clear and delicious that you lap up more than you can handle, and you become unbalanced with an ocean stomach, water sloshing from side to side. My psychic ocean stomach was fed from an overflowing tumbler of Martians, Greys, and crop circles - all the enigmas we could think up.

The pen became my freedom. It let me explore worlds I would never have otherwise seen, from distant planets to ancient times past, forward in time and beyond any artificial boundary set up by man or even by my prior mind. I escaped from the outside world to these new lands, hoping to erase the chains I felt constrained me, hoping to find deeper connection with beings from places so unlike the earth to replace the connections I couldn't find in my own life.

I started to identify with the state of remote viewing so closely that my dreams lost their beginnings and my days lost their ends. I floated from moment to moment, half connected with earth bound reality, the other half taking

subconscious notes on alien spacecraft, the pyramids, and the secret inner workings of the government.

It didn't help that I was jarred from slumber with a perverted repetition; my waking hours state of consciousness was near a sleep deprived constant theta state, and the imagery grew in intensity. Living in Dreamtime, dreaming someplace beyond even that, I thought I had awakened to reality.

Wave Form XXI

I am intrigued with the Bob Factor. The early humans who carry the factor don't seem physiologically different from those who are not carriers. I try to ascertain a difference in intelligence quotient. There is none. No emotional differences, no different dietary patterns, my mind scours the thoughtballs for a quantitative measure of what the Bob Factor represents.

Confusing matters even more, some of the BF+ humans mate with BF- humans from other groups. When a positive human mates with a positive human, the offspring carries a slightly stronger factor. When a positive human mates with a negative human, the offspring carries the factor in a lessor amount. It doesn't seem to matter whether a father or a mother carries the factor; the essence passes down equally.

Years passed, humans evolve; the Bob Factor increases in some groups, decreases in others. Some isolated groups across the lands remain Bob free. The Grey Dude tosses me a thoughtball containing the entire spectra of human evolution from those early days until today. Most humans of today carry a good amount of the Bob Factor. Some humans do not carry any. With the passage of time, a great difference springs up between those who carry the factor and those who do not. The heavily BF+ groups live in big cities, drive fancy cars, fly in jets, eat canned corn and processed cheese, watch television, carry mobile phones, surf the Internet, wear polyester. BF free humans still live off the land. All levels

of Bob Factor in between equates to the amount a person uses and advocates technology, holds reverence for the land, spends running around outside versus engaging in couch potato activities. I'm not surprised when the message reveals that Ralph Nader has less Bob Factor than Bill Gates.

I notice again that this factor does not equate to any type of intelligence; BF+, BF-, humans have a wide range of mental ability, seemingly completely unrelated. The humans who had a greater concentration of Bob Factor developed tools sooner than BF free humans – not because they could, but because of an inner drive, a desire.

I'm still confused as to what this Bob Factor consists of, how this Bob Factor acts. It's minute; I can't see it when I look at the person carrying it. I start to think it is somehow spiritual in nature, until the Grey Dude instructs me to feel the ground, to compare today's ground with early human ground. I can feel the Bob Factor in the dirt! The factor is physical; it passes into the ground with each body we bury, with each skin cell we shed. I assume this is some kind of genetic coding held in our cells, but my knowledge of biology limits my understanding.

I think of a young lady who, for two full years, lived among the leaves of a beautiful oak tree as a statement against strip forestry. Or the college friend who traveled to Nepal with the Peace Corps and now plants potatoes and cabbages at an organic farm cooperative. You know people like these, too, people whose

nature it is to care for nature. I wonder if they hold less Bob Factor in their cells than canned-tuna-eating, computer-hacking, and nail-polish-adorned me. I love nature; I go running on the beach most mornings, love to swim, feel the sand squish between my toes. Sometimes I pick up garbage on the street. I once contributed to Green Peace. I never use products tested on animals. I voted for the Green Party candidate in the last election! I create a litany of my best Mother Earth moments, trying to convince myself that I am Bob free. But I can't. I feel the restlessness, the urge to conquer the world sometimes. I cringe and remember when I've eaten fast food in plastic-coated wrappers and drank fancy coffee out of Styrofoam cups. So many times, so so many times, even though I know in my heart and in my mind it harms our planet.

The Grey Dude shows me how we're just junkyard dogs, pure mongrel, mixed up mixes of light and dark, and Earth and Bob. Part of us moves with the inherent intentions of the earth. Part of us pulses and longs for the planet of Bob. Mother Earth and Father Bob each pull on us, creating tension like that between parents seeking custodianship in the courtroom. Somehow our stronger attachment is to the planet we stand on. I feel it's the closeness of our mother that lulls us to sleep, wakes us in the morning, requires of us a discipline of responsibility and learning how to take care of ourselves and each other. Our absentee father doesn't send child support, doesn't make his visitation schedule, but something in our hearts calls out for the freedom he represents. The original Disneyland Dad.

The Bob Factor moves with a hidden intention, but I see so clearly that this intention is not in synch with our surroundings and not quite in synch with the Bob Factor in each other. I feel like an important ingredient is missing. When you forget to add baking soda to your chocolate chip cookie batter, they don't rise. They sleep on the pan, slowly baking to death, hardening, never bulging with promise. It doesn't matter if you add extra vanilla or butter. It doesn't matter how great the dough tastes. If it's missing, they remain inedible duds, and that's how we feel when I search these messages. Half-baked. Unable to reach our potential. Something in the hidden way Bob made his split decision to seed our ancestors left some of us high and dry on the plains of Pangea.

Bob made that split decision in ultimate haste as an enormous wave of energy swept the sector. Try and try and try as I might, I can't make sense of that wave. I only know it moved with amazing force like a billion hydrogen bombs combined with millions of tornadoes and thousands of gallons of burning gasoline. Yet, as the wave covered every inch of our galaxy, it left not one molecule out of place in its wake, as if it were some kind of strange and palpable illusion. I watch it roll through our planet after Bob's abrupt exit. Kinematically, it is like a nutation, each portion of it showing an irregular ebb and flow. The motion is as quick as a flash; my mind blinks as I try to interpret how this wave can occupy the same space and time as our earth, yet be as mystical, enigmatic and vaporous as thought.

The wave holds a curious intention. Like a police officer chasing an outlaw, it seems to be blowing a whistle, waving a gun, and yelling:

“FREEZE YOU BASTARD!”

Wave Form XXII

“How could you believe this stuff?” you’re probably wondering.

It’s a good question, really the only question anyone could ask. I wish I could teach remote viewing to everyone reading this story. You can’t understand it any other way. It’s an experiential thing; it’s a faith you build up, little by little, like building an expansion bridge that traverses between two distant mesas. When you stand on one canyon ledge, you can’t imagine ever being able to cross the deepness below you. That depth is like the skepticism you carry from our conventional culture, from your mom and dad’s beliefs, from your religion. You build your bridge in small sections, dragging material from far away lands, mixing cement, erecting cranes to carry your load. This is the process of learning remote viewing; you take small pieces of belief and lift them up. Sometimes they weigh on your shoulders, and you perspire and feel the temptation to give up your task. When your bridge is built it’s such a relief you just walk across, the deepness below you becomes academic, and the other side isn’t obstructed by fog anymore. Your feet touch the ground on the other side, and it’s as firm and solid and strong as the ground you left behind.

I viewed simple things at the beginning, like the Eiffel tower. As I write this, I am holding a session I did three years ago in my lap. I turn the pages, and it’s like I never left Paris. In my mind’s eye I saw fleeting glimpses of steel and angles, a structure tall and somehow transparent. I knew I was in a foreign country; the

people at the structure felt aloof and snooty. Many were smoking cigarettes. The atmosphere was urbane, casual, historic. The data came to me in small packets; I wrote descriptive words like “pollution, city, tower-like” in a column down the middle of my paper. I described small vehicles carrying passengers nearby. I remember this. I remember this session, the smoke and the attitude. Somehow these bits of the target burst out of my body then, and I feel them bursting out now. I can almost smell that city pollution, it’s like a memory of a smell, the memory of the angles and steel, towering above me, people craning their necks to see the top. The data is closer to memory than physical reality, but it’s strong enough to excite me, three years later. Part of me wanders Paris while I type at my desk today, and part of me is still caressing the stark metal sides of the Eiffel tower, marveling at the wonders of this foreign land, when you read this.

Sometimes the data in a session is less revealing. I look at my session on the first flight at Kitty Hawk with the Wright brothers: Two men pushing something along a beach area. Two men, older than me. The colors yellow, brown, black, blue. Windy. Cool. Wet. Sandy. Feels like a race.

This is the extent of my Kitty Hawk data. This session, too, floods back into my memory. I remember staring out the window, feeling disconnected to the data, just wanting it – please, please – to end. A full hour of my life given up, virtually nothing in return. Extracting the data was like pulling healthy molars from your

own mouth. Painful. Difficult. Pointless. After the session, when the monitor told me the target was the Wright Brothers, I shook my head.

“No, no,” I pointed to my paper as I spoke. “This is modern, this is two guys in a stock car race. No WAY is this Kitty Hawk. Just look at my sketch. Come on, look at what I deducted – Nascar, Paul Newman, racing, Indy 500!”

In my mind’s eye I saw the rakish grin of Paul Newman, saw him tooling around in his racecar, cap perched on his head, the gleam in his eye. I felt this man was smart, funny, sexy, a bit of a rascal, a bit of a ham. Of course it was Paul Newman. Of course.

Deductions are the conclusions your mind makes after gathering data. You write them off to the side of your work, and then you drop your pen to disconnect the subconscious desire to make more conclusions. They are written to the side of the page because they are not considered data. They are throw-aways, pieces of your own intellect trying to make sense of the intuitions. Your intuition whispers “vehicle, moving, someone inside, someone cheering on.” Your intellect decides and screams “car race, Nascar, Indy 500!”

My sketch showed a couple of boxy objects lying on the ground, beach in the background, a complex car-like vehicle in the foreground with a pattern of intersecting lines superimposed. One man with a funny hat sat inside the

vehicle. One man clothed in a long, buttoned down coat was running along the ground beside the vehicle.

My monitor handed me an old photograph, taken at the original Kitty Hawk flight. One of the Wright brothers sits inside the prototype plane, beach in the background. The plane has boxy wings covered in latticework. Two boxes lie scattered on the ground. The other brother runs along the side of the plane, waving his arms.

I was there. I wasn't there. I was there.

You end up convincing yourself you're there. You're there. Of course you're there! You weren't in a yellow submarine. You weren't in a hot air balloon. You weren't in the midst of an ancient Celtic battle. See the beach in the photo? See the beach in your sketch? See the two men in the photo? See the boxes? See the funny hat? Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's one little brick in your belief systems bridge. You start with straw and mud, barely hardened, barely able to step upon. You end up with steel cables, concrete and stone, complicated arches, a proud edifice, nearly earthquake safe.

Like the move from lighting matches when your parents aren't home to sneaking cigarettes behind the school bleachers to lighting up a joint in your college dorm room, the move from the verifiable to the esoteric took little addictive jumps.

From Fort Knox, where I saw piles of gold guarded by bored men in uniform and one man kept idly swatting at a fly swarming about his young, handsome face. To The White House, where the energy of power and control overwhelmed me, and an aging important politician flirted with a young girl, troops of military people standing guard. To NORAD, where the sensations of secrecy and military intervention pervaded every perception. NORAD is where I first encountered other remote viewers, like silent vaporous census takers, watching, writing down notes. Then on to Area 51, the secret government installation at Groom Lake, Nevada, where I experienced a feeling so odd, so unlike anything I ever encountered before that I wrote down the word “alien.” The known mountains, the dry lakebed, the underground facility – all the verifiable portions – were detailed in my session. But my focus was on the “alien” feeling, the circular vehicle associated with it, the vehicle that moved in indescribable ways, that popped and shook and disappeared before my ghostly eyes.

Do you know what the truth is?

Do you know what reality is?

I thought I should be able to discern that. I thought I was cutting past the bullshit and seeing things how they are. But the act of remote viewing is the act of holding up a mirror to your inner nature, and everything you write down on that session paper is filtered through the most amazing and huge barrier system that

you've built up inside. I couldn't see this for the longest time. I thought what I was doing while remote viewing was accessing some part of me that was pure, that was unaffected by my cultural conditioning. After all, wasn't that why you did things like draw ideograms instantly, and move through a complex matrix – so that your conscious mind would be occupied and the “real” data, the truly intuitive parts of our nature would spit out answers from someplace hidden?

I believed that.

I was an ass.

Wave Form XXIII

Somewhere far away from Bob and the ominous wave a community convenes. The terrain is land-like; more a floating island made up of clouds so dense you could walk upon them. The beings sit – those with a butt – on wide chairs with high backs and arm rests. The buttless people stand, or lie down, or make themselves more or less comfortable in their shape. One person is lying on the clouds, a funny shriveled up small dude - green, slimy, and frog-like. He's like a magnate; everyone defers to him in a strange, reverential telepathic way. The chairs rest on the clouds. They are covered with thousands of intricately carved wee windows and doors, each a doorway to a place I can't see. How can these folks squeeze through those teeny doors? The chairs look damn uncomfortable.

The Grey Dude shows me this group, tells me that he is one of them. The night I receive this message, the Grey Dude is not alone. For the first time in our relationship he brings along a companion. The Grey Dude's friend is taller than I, nearly as tall as my ceiling. He looks like an elongated brown version of the Grey Dude with skinny pretzel legs and arms. His color is brown, the brown of a silty riverbed, the brown of dried and decaying fall leaves. He looks shiny and hard, as if someone sprayed him with shellac. His gender is impossible to tell, and I find myself again comparing my incomprehension of the unknown to the human male.

The Tall Shiny Dude exudes the charisma of the Buckingham Palace Guards. He stands perfectly still, almond eyes staring straight ahead, one step respectfully behind the Grey Dude. I instinctively know he's an engineer of sorts, a technician, someone who is good with his four-fingered hands. His joints are exaggerated compared to ours, as if he has arthritis on a grand scale. The Tall Shiny Dude is absolutely motionless, a grotesque statue. He leaves no message behind. I wonder why he's in my bathroom.

The Grey Dude's message is complex. He and Shiny come from some place far away in time and space, the land of floating cloud-like material and ornamental chairs. This place has a special name, a name I can't grasp. Something about it reminds me of the Continental Divide – a stretch of high ground from each side of which flows energy, life, truth, and justice. Sort of the Intergalactic Bat Cave.

"Are you Batman?" I want to ask the Grey Dude but the second I wonder is the second I'm disappointed. The Grey Dude is not Batman, he's not Catwoman, he's not even Robin. He's the historian, the storyteller of the group. He watches, he waits, he follows directions. His sense of being is so aligned with this group that he breathes their past and future, he dreams their stories during the night, he repeats the messages over and over until his existence is a pure conduit of intent. A teeny-tiny bit of Grey Dudeness escapes in one of the messages; he used to be funny, someone who liked to make people laugh! But now he's

serious, he's all business, his eyes don't show any mischief. He passes on these messages from beyond with every cell of his body.

I remember remote viewing Niagara Falls. The power of the water energized me, buoyed me up, high above the Falls. The air crackled with electric potential, and I felt the awesome, unstoppable strength of the water. 150,000 gallons a second. I remember viewing Hiroshima, watching the mushroom cloud rise up from the ground, tons of ash hurling into the atmosphere. Megatons of energy. Both times I cringed, slammed between the eyes by the enormity of force. Both times I was humbled and felt so small, as insignificant as the speck of dust under a fruit fly's foot. Yet the potency behind both experiences added together could not match the sheer almightiness of intent behind these Grey Dude messages, these messages originating from the Intergalactic Bat Cave.

The Bat Cave is a dark and secret place of hiding, a gathering place, a resting pad, a meeting hall, and a permanent residence for some. It resides outside of our galaxy, this much I can tell. The Grey Dude keeps telling me something about the temporal location – where in time the cave exists. Despite many, many repetitions, I still don't comprehend. The closest explanation is that it exists "all at once." Everything in the Bat Cave has already happened; everything in the now, in the past, in the present. It all happened at once, a long time ago, today, and tomorrow.

Part of this message is covered in shades of purple and orange, so different and vivid and exciting compared to the typical stark delivery of every other message. It's a feeling, like love mixed with reverence and fierce protection. The Grey Dude loves someone! The special little slimy frog dude! His love blankets Froggy, the kind of pure platonic love you hold for a revered teacher. Ah, Froggy is the Batman.

The Grey Dude and the Tall Shiny Dude leave my bathroom together. I blink; they disappear. I imagine them shrinking down to the size of a gnat and flying through an interdimensional porthole, finally squeezing through a minuscule filigreed door in the chair next to Froggy. They inflate. They sit. Maybe they eat a snack. Grey Dude seems so much more vulnerable as this message unwinds. He once laughed. He loves Froggy. He sits on decorated chairs. He starts to feel almost human to me.

The Collision Chamber

“Through me is the way to the sorrowful city. Through me is the way to join the lost people.”

Words from Dante, words from my life.

I used to envision hell as a place of absolute emptiness – no love, no joy, no companionship. But now hell to me is the six-month period of time the world overhead became a giant cyclotron, leaving behind a wake of spirals and dead ends and shadows – not the paths of subatomic particles, but a shattering wake of death and disillusionment.

Millions of miles from Earth, a rotating ball of ice and rock and gasses hurled toward our sun, like the beam of electrons through an invisible linear particle accelerator. Hale-Bopp was one of the big ones, a comet you could see clearly with your bare eyes as it approached our sector of the Solar System. It had unusual properties; its tail seemed too bright, its body too large, its movements too uncertain. Some people thought they saw a double nucleus through its haze – two spheres engaged in a tango beneath cosmic disco fog.

Some ancient cultures and present day late night radio talk-show hosts considered comets harbingers of doom. Art was one such radio host. Five hours, smack in the middle of the night, most nights of the week, Art interviewed the

uninterviewable – assorted ex-military remote viewers, ghost busters, ufologists, spiritual mediums, fringe scientists, and conspiracy theorists. His voice was low and gravely, his interview style simple: he repeated the last thing his guest said, and the conversation continued:

“And so, Art, uh, the black helicopters chased me through my corn field.”

“In other words, the black helicopters chased you through your corn field,” Art repeated.

“Yup. But when I pointed my .45 at them, they turned to the East and flew off, and that’s when I saw the mutilated cow, and Art I never saw anything like it, no sir, never saw anything like it at all.”

Art’s sponsors catered to the late night crowd; he hawked an herbal impotence cure – which he swore worked for him – and assorted survivalist products like water filtration systems and self-motorized flashlights. Art’s following was so large – in the millions – that just one appearance on his show would sell thousands of your books, book a year’s worth of your metaphysical classes, and get you a headliner position at the next New Age conference.

There was an ebb and flow to the show, a cycle of predictions, excitement, then predictions unfulfilled. And what predictions! Art’s guests talked about ET

landings sure to happen in the Arizona desert, new maps of the world revealed in dreams, and inevitable Y2K meltdown. Art had a box of metal he referred to as “Art’s Parts” – alleged pieces of the 1947 Roswell flying saucer crash. You’d think it would be scary, all that talk of extraterrestrial abductions and upcoming death and chaos and destruction, but it was scary like Halloween ghost stories.

Listening in the dark, in the night, all huddled up in bed and scared for the moment, believing absolutely every word you heard, you let Art take you to someplace dreamlike, but you would wake up in the morning with a snort and a laugh at yourself for getting so carried away the night before.

Courtney appeared on Art’s show one summer night and shared his remote viewing inspired vision of God. God was a million colorful points of light, Courtney said, tiny pieces of you and me that exploded in his mind’s eye and left him with intense inner joy. He told this story from his heart, you could feel his sincerity and tenderness as he spoke the words, and even jaded Art was moved by the vision. It was one of those moments when you heard out loud for the first time something you always knew but never had the words to express. Courtney’s charisma leapt off the airwaves and into your lap, and a tidal wave of remote viewer wannabes flooded his institute throughout that summer and into the Hale-Bopp fall.

I helped Courtney prepare for the next radio interview by putting together an Internet presentation on the plight of the underground Martians. Our group of

viewers worked with each other over speakerphone, day and night, to churn out pages and pages of incredible data. We worked on every project in the same manner – by single blind tasking. This meant that the viewers did not know what the target was – be it the Martians, the Face on Mars – and the monitors, who guided them through the session, did. The monitors followed Courtney's instructions carefully. They made sure not to give any of the information away to their viewers by asking only non-leading questions and keeping voice inflections to a minimum, like the parents of inquisitive children in the days leading up to Christmas. Because of our controls, we trusted this data, even though it was astounding, even though our viewers had but a few months experience.

Hundreds of Martians were still trapped under the Face on Mars, waiting, waiting, waiting for someone to remember them. Someday they would arrive on Earth in a grand flotilla of spacecraft and join their brothers and sisters holed up under New Mexico's Mt. Santa Fe Baldy, where the Martian Priesthood held meditation sessions and the Martian children wasted away without proper nutrients and sunlight. I know this must sound incredulous to you, but we not only believed it, we cared what happened to them. They felt real in the data, and they became as real to us as our Earth bound friends, even closer than our friends because we spent more time with the Martians. We read their minds, knew of their terrible struggle, saw them ration food and water, saw them cradle sick infants. We desperately wanted to help and would have done anything we could – arranged

clothing drives, sent cookies and bandages to Mt. Baldy – but something amazing happened that altered our galactic path.

What happens next is my version of hell, and I remember it like a dream, from someplace outside of my body where I can watch the cyclotron run. Cyclotrons work by accelerating particles and beaming them at a suitable target, producing a nuclear reaction. Subatomic particles are too small for us to see, so we use the reaction at the target to find out what secrets these particles hold, how they act under certain conditions. They leave traces behind them, little ghostly footprints like the footprints of the Grey Dude on my bathmat. In order to focus the beam so that it will hit the target, you use magnets along its path to move the ions in the proper direction.

The comet Hale-Bopp was the ion beam in this heavenly drama. It was too far away to see clearly, too far away to understand, and like the invisible electrons whizzing through a particle accelerator, scientists had to watch for remnants and reactions in order to piece together some kind of truth. For several months, the Internet was abuzz with one Hale-Bopp conspiracy theory after another. Many of Art's listeners sent in pictures they gleaned from NASA's web site. Some of these photographs were intriguing – they showed a comet with two “eyes,” a comet ejecting strange blobs of material, a comet much too bright and too large with unpredictable motions. If you do a little research, you can see some of these

images. The comet looks so sheer and beautiful, like an otherworldly bride walking down a deep blue-black carpeted isle.

I fell in love with Hale-Bopp. I read everything I could about the comet. I knew its path and all of its known properties. I waited impatiently for the day it would pass closest to us. It couldn't escape solar gravity; it flew toward the sun shedding fire and space fireflies. We hadn't yet put Hale-Bopp under our psychic microscope; there didn't seem to be a reason to do so. The anomalies of the comet appeared to be regular mysteries of science – questions that would be answered through the painstaking toil of hypothesis, experiment, and conclusion. The comet would have to hide behind the sun like a child behind her mother's skirts before it reached perihelion with Earth.

The night of the Art-Courtney-Martian radio show my phone rang. It was Dee. We had been chat room buddies for months, talking daily about remote viewing, celebrities, recipes, extraterrestrials, and sex. Her alias was "Wolf," and she was brusque and funny. As cunning as a wolf; she would go forth in the Internet wilderness alone and circle the best gossip, howling when she found it. I imagined her to be tall and muscular with the strong and fierce features of the animal with whom she identified.

Months later, long after the comet Hale-Bopp had passed, we would meet face to face at an old-fashioned roadside diner in Houston. Tiny, with a pixie's face and a

gravely giggle, Dee was like a chain-smoking elf next to the stocky, Santa Claus-like figure of her fiancé, Chuck. He stuck a pudgy hand out to greet me, and I jumped when I saw his thumb giving off an eerie red glow, like a middle-aged overgrown ET. Ah. A fake laser fingertip. Chuck loved practical jokes, and he kept us in stitches with stories of his wild and crazy talk radio career while we ate greasy eggs and potatoes with ketchup. Chuck loved astronomy, too. As the comet approached the sun, he spent clear evenings on his back porch peering into his telescope pointed at Hale-Bopp, snapping image after image of the comet.

“Pru, I know my photo is real. That’s no star. I had to back down from my position, but I know myself it’s real.”

Chuck stared at me from across the wooden table. He wasn’t laughing anymore; his voice was low and deliberate. Dee told me before we met that he’d aged ten years over the past months. Her voice cracked with emotion and frustration as she described how he wasn’t eating and was barely sleeping. The waitress reached over my shoulder for my empty plate. Her dark eyes peered through yellow frizzy hair at Chuck.

“Honey, you ok? Your eggs ok?”

I glanced down at his plate and realized he hadn't taken one bite. He waved the waitress away and shrugged his shoulders with a comment about how he was so busy talking he forgot to eat. She shook her hair out of her face. Her mouth turned down at the corners as she walked away from the table, her angular body sagging under the weight of her tray. Her eyes as she left held sadness and concern for a regular customer fading in front of her. I stared back at him and understood then that the dark circles under his eyes and the slight shake in his hands were not normal.

We stared at each other across the table for a long time. The ceiling fan above us wobbled as it spun, and I found myself breathing in rhythm with the whir-wobble-whir-wobble above me. Looking into Chuck's face was like looking into a fun house mirror. His head was round and wide; mine was oval and narrow. His hair was thinning and grey; mine was a dark unruly mess. But something beneath the surface was identical, something aching and hurt and tired and frustrated and fallen. It was the comet still breathing inside us, the comet still hurling through space, caught on two pieces of film.

It was one of these images Dee called me about those months before. It was two weeks before Thanksgiving, and the summer had finally died in Atlanta. The evening was rainy, much colder than normal. I sat at my desk wrapped in two afghans to keep warm, staring through the one brown leaf clinging to the oak tree outside my window to the Martians dancing in my mind's eye.

“Pru. It’s Wolfie. There’s something you have to see. Chuck got a picture of the comet and there’s something next to it. Here, I’m gonna send it to you.”

Dee sounded almost frantic. I heard the mouse click over the phone and I clicked my mouse in turn to download the image in my email. The image is simple and splendid; the comet flies toward the camera, the corona streaming behind like an aura of black and white cotton candy. The comet isn’t centered in the photograph. It sits to the left, near the border of the frame. Chuck’s attention wasn’t on the comet. His eye drifted to stage right, to a strange Saturn-shaped object chasing Hale-Bopp.

I didn’t know anything about photography then. I looked at the picture, at the Saturn-shaped object. Later Art’s listeners would vote on a name for this object, and it would come to be known as Hale-Mary, the vaporous apparition-companion to Hale-Bopp. As bright as the comet, and nearly as large, the object seemed to have a disk of light surrounding its center, a flared moonbeam poodle skirt. Dee explained how Chuck scanned star charts to find the thing, but nothing in that sector of space was known to be so bright, so big, so Saturn-like. Chuck prepared to announce his finding on Art’s show while Dee and I talked. She wanted the remote viewers to look at this marvelous object. So did I.

I hung up the phone, picked up the phone, and started dialing Courtney's number, but stopped. Something inside cried out that this must not be real, and I dialed Daniel instead. His mother was ill, and he had flown to Michigan to help her a week before. I liked being apart from him. Every time I spoke of the Martians or the Greys or the Galactic Federation, he shook his head and spoke with the authority of the philosopher. His heavy black eyebrows would move close together, and his stare would be unwavering.

"Maybe it's real, Pru. I believe many things are possible, but there's no direct evidence for this. There's probably tons of life out there, but all you can say is you don't know for sure."

Daniel was not a remote viewer yet. How can you tell a non-viewer what it's like to feel the grainy sides of the Parthenon, to smell the briny foam of the Dead Sea, to taste the president's birthday cake? You can't. You can't. You can point to your session data, but to the uninitiated it looks like the shattered remnants of an ancient clay pot, each piece a different color, many pieces missing, and not enough pieces found to recreate the original artifact. I lived in frustration with Daniel's laissez-faire attitude and with my inability to make him see my universe of thought. You know what you know in remote viewing; the experience oozes through your pores, and for every word you write down as official evidence, there are twenty more you can't articulate. More than once, heck, more than ten times I

wanted to shake him and tell him it was real! It was real! Damn it, Daniel, those Martians **are** under that Mountain!

Yet it was Daniel I called first.

“Pru, it’s just a photo. It’s probably a star or an artifact on the image. How well do you know this Chuck?”

I mumbled incoherently. I started feeling embarrassed. He sounded preoccupied. I heard pots and pans in the background and his mother’s voice calling his name.

“Well, maybe there’s something there. But it’ll turn out like everything else, Pru. There’s no way to prove it unless it lands on the White House lawn. But, thanks, that’s interesting.”

I realized then why I called him. I wanted to offer up proof of something heavenly, proof of sentient galactic activity. But Daniel’s reasonable comments irritated me, and I found myself beginning to believe the realness of the object on the basis of this one digital image alone, like it was a litmus test of my faith in the paranormal. I offered thanks for his opinion. We told each other how much we missed and loved each other and made kissy noises over the line, but when I hung up the phone my first thought was “fuck you and your atheist sensitivities.”

And then I called Courtney.

It seemed the institute's finest hour was imminent. Art began his interview with Chuck, and in just an hour and a half Courtney's turn would start. The viewers were called; some of them roused from sleep. They meditated in preparation for another cosmic jaunt. The monitors were faxed the official target: The anomalous object near the comet Hale-Bopp. I couldn't participate in the experiment, I had too much web work to finish before Courtney hit the airwaves, but I already knew in my heart the object was real, a UFO visitor from someplace fantastic. I drew the blankets around me tight as my body shivered from anticipation.

The sessions rolled off the institute's fax as Courtney's interview commenced. I wanted to drive through the rain to the institute to see the data come in, but my children slept soundly upstairs. The radio audience sat transfixed. I listened to Art repeat Courtney's words. They discussed the military history of remote viewing, Courtney's work in political science, and the institute's activities. I knew the audience needed to hear the background, but I felt anxious and impatient.

"Come on, come on," I silently projected, "tell me about the data."

The commercial break kicked in and Art extolled the virtues of sending fresh flowers. Staring out the window, I watched as the wind picked up and bent the oak. The last leaf flew off the tree, spiraling to the ground.

“And now, folks, we have something special for you. You heard Chuck talk about the strange Saturn-like object in his photograph of the comet Hale-Bopp. The good doctor, here, has sent his remote viewers to find out what that object is.”

I held my breath, could feel the millions listening holding their breath, and even the wind died down in order to hear the results. The institute’s fax was barely audible behind Courtney’s voice. I heard the papers rustle as he described the data. He ran the data together in front of the radio show listeners, like a made-up bedtime story where you don’t know the outcome until you arrive.

The viewers described the icy and rock and vapors of the comet first, but the data quickly focused on Hale-Mary. The companion object used the energy of the comet Hale-Bopp to propel itself through space. It came from someplace far away. It was enormous; four times the size of Earth. Hollow and metallic, it carried thousands of invisible sentient beings. Courtney sounded sure and energetic. His voice rose with excitement as he described the plans of the beings. They traveled to Earth to help us achieve a new level of enlightenment.

I knew it. I knew it. I knew it. Instead of growing more excited and anxious with this incredible knowledge, my heart slowed its beating, and my breathing became regular.

You could practically hear Art's eyebrows raise in amazement. The people calling into the show seemed a little edgy, a little nervous. Art warned the crowd, using his standard disclaimer.

"Now, folks, if you have any young children listening, you may want to have them leave the room."

Courtney and Art mulled over what this meant to the human race, and Art sounded like Daniel when he shrugged, "We'll find out soon enough if it's true."

The next two weeks passed like a giant birthday party with balloons, streamers, cake, and presents. We stayed on the phone for hours, deconstructing the data to death, discovering new nuances in our sessions. The institute received so many new students that our waiting list was soon fifty people deep. Courtney elevated my position to institute vice president. Hale-Bopp drew closer to the sun, spinning a wild cocoon of silver vapor, finally passing into the solar shadows.

My email box overflowed with email from men and women concerned about the silent companion. I prepared a standard reply for these questions, a letter that told a little about remote viewing, a little about Courtney, and a whole lot about our data. Two of these inquiries stood out at the time. One was an email from an odd person who asked if the companion would raise us to the level above

human. I sent the standard reply. The other was a phone call from someone who claimed to be a famous astrophysicist that I had once met in school. He had images of this companion, and did we want to see them?

Hell, yes! The images arrived by overnight courier. Five rolls of film dropped out of the package, and I brought them to the local developer. Our conversation repeated, over and over, in my head.

“I have some images of this companion object. It’s there, it’s real. I want to show you these, because I believe you are on to something. I’m afraid of what these mean; I can’t talk about them publicly yet. I’m afraid for my family. I’m lining some things up, and I’ll come forward with these in a few weeks, but I can’t talk about them now. You must promise not to divulge my identity until I say OK.”

I gave my word.

“And another thing. This object is giving off an unusual radio signal frequency. I’ve never seen anything like it, and it scares me.”

He sounded sincere. He sounded afraid. He spoke so quickly that I had to ask him to repeat some of his words. The connection was poor, and it sounded like he was calling from a payphone outside of a gas station. I could hear cars drive up every few seconds, the rush of a highway behind him.

“Please. I’m sending you these because I want you to see what you have seen with your mind. Please do not make these images public. Please. I’m not ready yet to speak openly. They are for your use only.”

And then he hung up. I wanted to ask him why he decided to send them to us, why he believed in our data. I wanted to ask him if he knew anything else about this companion. I wanted to know how many others knew about this, but were keeping it secret. I would never discover the answers to any of these questions.

The film gave only five usable images; the rest could not be processed. They show the comet in a pale ghostly light, the companion object glowing brighter than any star. The first time I saw these pictures I cried. I want you to understand why this was so important to me. It wasn’t just another questionable photo of a comet. It was proof that our remote viewing data was real. We had no method to validate our theories of Martian politics. We had no way to catch a Grey alien. We couldn’t travel to the Galactic Federation with a video camera. With only a stack of sessions on targets like the Eiffel Tower and Kitty Hawk that allowed us to see the correlation between our psychic evidence and verifiable reality, we could only say that we could use our minds to go where man had gone before. It still took a leap of faith to say that since you can view verifiable things and be accurate and consistent, you can view **anything** and be accurate and consistent. Now we held absolute proof in our hands that our dreams of monsters and

miracles sprang from the same fountain that created Istanbul and the Titanic. I had yet to see Hale-Bopp with my naked eyes, but I thanked the Universe every night for sending its messenger our way.

Our research intensified. We tasked everyone from students to the professionals with the companion. The same data appeared each time: a huge mechanical hollow object following Hale-Bopp headed for humanity, carrying loads of ETs, carrying a message of peace and awareness. We thought we were the magnets of influence for this heavenly beam, dipoles, which would focus the attention of the occupants of the strange companion, coaxing it our way. We didn't know we were the target.

Sometime in the midst of all of this, the Grey Dude issued a warning: Do not talk about these photographs.

Like all other thoughtballs, this one was difficult to interpret and I explained to Courtney on Thanksgiving Day that I might not have the proper translation. But it was too late to talk Grey Dude semantics. Art's special Thanksgiving evening show was already advertised. His first guest was Whitley, a famous "experienter." Whitley wrote amazing books detailing his encounters. He met short grey shapes at the foot of his bed. They performed odd procedures on him with complicated surreal equipment. Whitley spoke eloquently about his strange bedfellows and how they gave him telepathic messages of how our environment

was wasting away, how nuclear war could break out. Whitley was bigger than life, one of the poster children for the science of ufology. He looked like a grandfather, all rotund and tall with gentle hands and a hearty laugh. I liked him. I worked briefly for Whitley as his webmaster, organizing his new web site. Like all new sites, his was plagued with problems, from email trouble to the possibility that someone was hacking into his chat rooms. We gamely muddled through and were just beginning to approach some sense of normalcy when the Hale-Bopp hoopla began.

I was Art's second and final guest. The thought of speaking in front of millions of people was terrifying. I felt uneasy about discussing the photographs. We emailed a digital copy of one to Art. I circled the companion in red ink. Lying naked on my bed at two in the morning, I ate a bowl of cereal as I waited for my turn on the phone. Whitley spun magic gold with his words, gold that wove around your heart. He told of his own emotional response to the possibility that beings would visit us soon, he asked the audience to meditate with him on the meaning of it all, to meditate together to bring about a peaceful resolution of this drama. I was so mesmerized that I forgot I was next. The phone jarred me from my rapture and I jumped, spilling milk and oatmeal squares all over my legs, all over the bed. I grabbed the phone and Art asked if I was ready to go.

I didn't have time to grab a towel, and the food soaked into the comforter and dried on my legs as the interview wore on. Art continually mispronounced my last

name, and I was too timid to correct him on air. In my mind I heard the Grey Dude's message, so I tried to be careful in my language – careful the way Daniel would be.

“Now, this is all anecdotal evidence, as I can not show these photos to the public.”

I carefully went over our tasking procedures, how we looked at the anomalous object in our viewing, not the photographs themselves. I brought up my lack of expertise, my unfamiliarity with photography. The only time I let my guard down was when I discussed the data, and my voice took on brightness and certainty and probably an evangelical tone as I relayed the story of the sentient little fellows hitching a ride on the great comet. The show was a sensation, and the story spread like melted butter, into every crack and crevice in the Internet. I promised the listeners that the mystery astronomer would soon come out of the closet and break the chains of conspiracy and silence.

But he didn't.

We waited for days, then weeks, and when no mystery astronomer stepped forward, the backlash was fierce and unrelenting. Art released the digital photo I sent him and within twenty-four hours it was said to be a grand and horrible hoax.

We were accused of taking an image off of a university's web site and doctoring it to look as if a companion was present.

We couldn't defend ourselves. If we released the negatives, it would be apparent which observatory took the photographs, and we could be accused of stealing the film. Releasing the name of the mystery astronomer would open us to denials, then a libel suit. We shut up and stayed shut up, even though our friends dropped like flies, our students dropped like flies, and the rumors grew out of control. Whitley fired me as his webmaster, and he never spoke to me again. My parents accused me of belonging to a cult.

I was in my eighth month of pregnancy, and the accusations and speculations brought me to the point of early labor several times. I cowered behind my computer, too afraid to show my face, too afraid to talk to anyone. Courtney took responsibility for the situation, and I was grateful. We waited for it to blow over. We waited for Hale-Bopp to come closer, to finish circling the sun, for the companion to show up. I didn't know if our images were real, but I knew our data was as real as you and me.

By this time I visited the companion several times in my own remote viewing sessions, and I could hear the echo of the entities cognoscence ping through the domed interior of their mothership. There was a grid-like structure outside of the sphere, and I felt it rattle under the pressure of the solar wind. Like the Martians,

these beings were part of my clan now, and I wondered what their plans were, and how we would greet them when they arrived.

Chuck faced his own Hale-Mary problems. Experts used star charts and telescope diagrams to show how his image was an optical illusion, just a star in disguise. Charged with playing a practical joke, Chuck faded from view, and his increasing depression would eventually cause Dee to break up with him. When the dust settled, an army of NASA scientists, university astronomers, Internet gossipmongers and professional skeptics had declared the companion issue dead.

The issue wasn't all that died. Part of my heart died, too, when the sun spit the comet from its penumbra, and Hale-Bopp drew close enough to see with the naked eye. No companion followed the comet. I stood on the balcony of the hotel where I first learned remote viewing. I was teaching another institute class, just a small handful of people who didn't drop out with all the negative publicity. I leaned over the rail and squinted. I had to arch my head uncomfortably to see over the trees, and the iron railing dug into my chest and left rust stains, like a bloody imprint, on my dress. And there she was, more beautiful than any photo, even though the street light above me hid some of the comet's rich color. Hale-Bopp scintillated in the twilight, like tinsel in the glow of tiny white Christmas lights. This was the only moment I ever saw Hale-Bopp with my own eyes.

As I stared into the night sky one of my students pulled on my arm.

“Have you heard the news?”

The color drained from my face, and I had to sit down on the cement floor of the balcony as she told me of a cult of odd people in Southern California. They committed mass suicide, 39 of them in all, in order to join the Hale-Bopp companion. They wore identical black sneakers and wore purple capes. They carried rolls of quarters in their pockets. They called themselves Heaven’s Gate, and they left a video for the world to see. In their last words they spoke of reaching the level above human.

I never looked at Hale-Bopp again.

The Heaven’s Gate members left printed material that absolved everyone of their own, deliberate choice. They made the philosophical distinction that whether or not the companion was real didn’t matter to them.

It was real. It wasn’t real.

I was there. I wasn’t there.

The comet had completed its cyclotron run. High above our solar system it would be easy to see that Earth was the target, easy to see the magnets of faith and pride and spiritual searching affecting the delivery of the blow, easy to see the spirals of death and decay – 39 suicides, Chuck's depression and break up with Dee, my faith, Courtney's reputation – sprawled in the comet's wake.

It was hell.

Intention Interlude 1

Light streams through the window in front of my computer. I ponder the body of messages, stare out into the street. Random cars pass by. A teenager carries his skateboard under his arm. Everything feels disconnected. What is Intention? I call up the Grey Dude, imagine him in front of me, and try to feel his being, try to see him in the sunlight, like the therapy sessions where I face an imaginary attacker to discover what I've hidden under the surface of my memories.

Every message has an urgency, a sense that something is important, something needs to be heard, something needs to be healed. Is this intensity Intention?

No. Not quite.

I try again.

Is Intention something like affirmation? If I say 'I am beautiful' over and over, and look in the mirror and imagine that I believe I am beautiful, a hundred times, a thousand times, and I begin to believe it, is this Intention?

No. Not quite.

I am stumped. I know Intention involves, well, intention. And healing. But the mechanics elude me. I know I hold the data, but I feel like I am holding a mixed-up Rubik's cube; all the squares are in my hands, but I don't know the sequence that creates order.

"Look."

My imaginary Grey Dude begins to take form in front of me. The particles in the sunlight swirl together like a paranormal dust devil, moving, rising in unison like the smoke from a cigarette until the shadow of an almond shaped eye appears.

"You don't understand because you are still sleeping."

No. No I'm not. I'm awake; I'm sitting in my office. I just ate oatmeal. I can pinch myself, see? I feel my feet on the floor. The floorboards are cold.

"Your body may seem awake. Your mind may tell you you're awake. But your being is asleep, the sleep of the dead, and your body and mind are only shadows. Wake up!"

The dust dissipates. I see no footprints on the floor.

I want to wake up. I don't want to be a shadow. What is Intention? Why am I asleep? How do you wake up?

The teenager passes my window again, boarding back home, flying fast on his wheels. His shirt is red, the same red of the pick-up truck keeping pace next to him. His wheels hit the cracks in the sidewalk and make a noise like the slap of the ocean hitting the land. The rhythm matches the beats of the Elvis song blaring from my neighbor's radio. My heart tries to match the rumble, but gives up too soon. A half-hearted attempt.

I shut the drapes.

Wave Form XXIV

For two months prior to the Hale-Bopp saga, the messages followed the exploits of Froggy and the Superheroes. They hold a meeting. It seems to last forever, and the Grey Dude tells me that yes, in fact, it does last forever. Time is distance, and distance is time. And there is no such thing as distance; there is no such thing as time. Ouch. It was more brain strain that I could handle. I couldn't believe I once begged the Grey Dude to come back. I felt the same way I did during my first partial differential equations exam. I stared at a page filled with unfamiliar squiggles and symbols and my blood ran cold when I knew – oh I knew – I could never pass this course and I remembered how I pressured the teacher into allowing me to be his student.

I began ignoring the messages.

I was sick and tired of those visits. I was sick of waking up every night. I was sick of spending so much energy and life-force on decoding those blasted, confusing, idiotic, damn alien telegrams. I was spending more time on those communications – that no one could verify and no one could see or hear but me – than I spent on my husband, than I spent on my children, than I spent running or writing or cooking or anything else that MADE ME HUMAN. I'm not a computer! Resistance may be futile in the land of the Grey Dude, but I'm an American and I wanted my freedom.

The Grey Dude still pulled the sleep from my eyes every morning at 2:30, and I trudged to the bathroom under some unheard, unacknowledged command. Civil disobedience was my only option, and so I accepted the messages under protest, but I refused to think about them.

Yeah. That'll show him.

The thoughtballs piled up inside my mind like the cans of on-sale tuna fish in my Grandma's spare room until the night of the Heaven's Gate suicides. I could not sleep. My heart raced, my mind raced, and I wanted to stop the feelings of guilt and sadness and futility. Daniel tried to comfort me; he grabbed me close from behind, and threw his leg over mine as a sign of love and protection, but I rejected his affection and tossed and turned in bed, grabbing the blankets, throwing the blankets off, jumping out of bed. I sneaked down the stairs to my office and turned on my computer, but I realized I didn't want to hear any more accusations, any more rumors and gossip. I was so cold and my head ached as if someone in the house next door was operating a Pru voodoo doll with a hundred tiny pins stuck in the back of the head, in the neck, and around the jaw.

I spread a green velvet blanket on the carpet and fell prostrate. I prayed for the souls of the dead cult members. I prayed for my own soul. I didn't direct my invocations to God; there were too many Grey Dude messages between Him and me. He was perfect, how could he exist in our fucking dirty Universe?

I closed my eyes. A snapshot of something huge and spreading with exhaustive jiva overpowered my vision. I thought this was the companion, haunting me with the ghosts of 39 odd cometary hitchhikers.

It was not. This was the wave sent to capture Bob.

It was as if the thoughtballs overloaded on PCP and broke free from my mental handcuffs. It hurt. Legs heavy, arms heavy, head too heavy to move. I fought it; I fought it hard, like a black belt telepathic test against Grey Dude's Bruce Lee. I squirmed on the green velvet blanket like I was in the throes of a devil's orgasm, like launching out against a mental rape. I couldn't fight the vision, and I found myself transported to the Intergalactic Bat Cave. I huddled in a corner, a quivering, sobbing, bleeding mess of a human girl.

What I saw next confused me, and it confuses me still. In the midst of the Meeting That Lasted Forever, in a moment with no time and no space, Froggy looks at the Grey Dude, the Tall Shiny Dude, the Snake-Like Trumpet Dude, the Buttless Dudes, and the Dudes Who Look Like Bloated Pumpkins. They look back at him, a fine, level stare. Clearly an unspoken agreement has been reached, but I don't know what it is. They sit upon their fancy chairs, and I feel a breath rise up inside of them, a breath of plenary unison.

The Grey Dude vacillates, a hesitation like the folly of the young Spirit of the Exegesis. He shoots a look in my direction, a look that speaks of love and longing and a little bit of fear.

Everyone explodes.

Wave Form XXV

The institute barely survived the Hale-Bopp drama. Our classes dwindled in size from thirty-six students to twenty students to eight students until finally there were no students left. The comet became a time pointer for the institute. We talked about the times “before Hale-Bopp.” We talked about the times “during Hale-Bopp.” We were left living and remote viewing in a post Hale-Bopp apocalypse, desperate survivors of a cometary impact.

The official institute party line was that the companion disengaged from the comet during its journey behind the sun. Our data indicated this, showed the companion thrusting into reverse and parallel parking into a secret spot behind the sun. We saw this in hindsight, after the comet sneaked out of the sun’s rays, after the mystery astronomer refused to show his face, after the thirty-nine suicides. We weren’t welcome anywhere by then. Art swore on air that he would never interview us again.

We kept the little story of companion’s strange journey into hiding to ourselves. Knowing this data was enough for everyone at the institute. Everyone but me. I felt like someone bombed my bridge of belief systems and sent me flying into a dark abyss filled with cold swirling sewage. My mind split in two: it’s there, it’s not there.

You're probably thinking that it served me right, aren't you? You're probably thinking anyone who believes this shit deserves to take a plunge south. I have to be honest and say that I have those thoughts, too, and sometimes think them when I read about someone who channels the Pleidians or relives their past lives. I think "what a nut!" I think about my redheaded psychic spy classmate who carried twenty-eight alien implants. What a nut! I think about the Heaven's Gate bunch. What a group of sorry nuts! In my snooty, intellectually snobbish mind I am above such nonsense. I am a scientist! I am smart! I am not a nut!

Yeah, right. I meet with a Grey Dude in my bathroom most nights. I smell his dirty-diaper-rotten-orange cologne; I've taken photos of his tiny warped footprints in my bathmat. I've been to Mars and it felt as real as the memories of my visits to my grandmother's home. I've met the Buddha and felt his warm and love and his deep sense of impermanence. I rode a wave of pure psi energy into the deep recesses of a mothership following a comet, and lived to tell the tale. And I told it to eighteen million people over talk radio.

All you have is my story – my words, the way I phrase things, the way my voice rings in your mind as you read these words. You don't have my interaction with the experience, my full spatial, temporal – plus something timeless and spaceless and something physically knowing – interaction with a bizarre non-local reality. I want to show you what it felt like to remote view the Hale-Bopp companion.

Imagine sitting in a gray room – gray walls, ugly gray carpet, even the smell and sound of grayness. This is the institute’s training room, and this is where I learned remote viewing, where I skidded from mountains-churches-angels-bullshit to space-shuttle-explosion-hell-yes! Imagine a six-foot long brown folding table in front of you – the kind of table you find along the walls of conference rooms in low-rent hotels. The table faces the wall, and you face the wall, your butt shifting uncomfortably on a gray metal folding chair. You can’t see the remote viewer next to you, because gray partitions separate each workstation. A dull maroon rubber desk pad sits on your desk, slightly off center. To your right is a pile of copy paper. It’s the inexpensive kind, the type that sticks together and feels mildly slimy to the touch. In your hand is a standard issue black roller-ball pen. Everything screams “cheap!” The sheer dullness of the place makes you sleepy.

The monitor barks out the coordinate numbers. These are just random numbers, written on the target held inside the manila envelope tantalizingly out of reach on the table in the center of the Training Room of Ultimate Boring Grayness. The monitor makes you nervous; you don’t want her to walk past your cubicle and peer over your shoulder at your data. You copy the numbers down – fast – and your hand makes an automatic doodle in the upper left hand of your paper. This is your ideogram. The pen skips after the last number and the doodle forms a

half-square – two straight lines meeting at a nearly ninety-degree angle. This ideogram represents manmade structure.

You take the pen and force it into the paper, probing the doodle for details. The monitor asks you if the ideogram is hard or soft. It feels hard to you, hard like the time you viewed the Titanic. No words I use now are going to convince you that the paper feels hard like a huge metal ship, but oh yeah, it does. I didn't believe this either when I sat through my first lecture, didn't believe it until I viewed the first time and damn if the paper didn't feel semi-soft, like there was something there, something with a little give, something with a little texture. That first target was a snow covered mountain and I jumped a little when I realized I was poking my finger into the very snow at the peak of Mt. Everest.

You do this same procedure again. And again. Three times total. Each time the ideogram is a little different. The second doodle is a circly-que, like a cursive "e." This represents sentient beings. They feel so soft, nearly transparent, like your pen would move through the very molecules making up the paper in front of you. The third ideogram is erratic, like a mark you scribble to scratch something out. This is the symbol for energy, and you tell by the force that took over your arm that this energy is strong, much stronger than the beating of your heart, stronger than a car, than a bus, than a jet plane. While you are comparing energetic things to get a handle on this, you realize you are viewing some kind of a vehicle.

The word “viewing” is a crazy word for these actions. You haven’t seen anything yet. You pull out another sheet of paper and you start smelling, breathing in through your nose, waiting to sniff something that isn’t gray. And you do. You smell an ozone scent, like the smell of a thunderstorm. It burns your nose a little, and you rub your nose with one hand while you write the word “ozone” on your paper. You pause, strain your ears, and try to make out any sounds. And you hear something. A rumble. A rumble and a crack like a thunderstorm.

Oh. This is a storm. You are convinced that you have the keys to the envelope. You move your hand to the side of the paper and deduct the word “storm.” You drop your pen. You try to forget the storm. Your mouth waters as you probe for tastes. Yuck. Something bitter and dirty and metallic fills your mouth, as if you licked a grease monkey’s belt buckle.

The session moves forward with bits and pieces of an unknown scene. You don’t notice the monitor peering over your shoulder. She watches you write down “black, blue, the color of rain, something enclosed, something vibrating, wispy, like clouds, like the Titanic.” Whoa, you feel a bunch of people inside a huge metallic structure. There sure is a lot of vapor around, as if the structure is immersed in water. And it feels cold like an iceberg-infested sea. You shiver.

“Deduct Titanic! Drop your pen.”

The monitor pulls you from your trance with her staccato instructions. You feel jarred from sleep, as if an alarm clock woke you from a fuzzy dream you can't quite remember. You write down "Titanic" and you drop your pen. You try to forget the Titanic. You have a hard time doing this.

Fits and starts. Fits and starts. You keep working at the puzzle like your aunt at the card table in her basement, never taking her eyes off the disconnected jigsaw pieces, forgetting the world around her. Once in a while your monitor taps you on the shoulder, corrects your technique, like your cousins tapping their mother on the shoulder wanting a popsicle from the freezer. And like your aunt, you resent the intrusion, you know you almost had the missing piece in your mind.

The story evolves over the course of an hour and a half. You've taken the first exit off the highway of gray and headed straight into the void of space where you feel the momentum of a huge ball of rock and ice. The ball gives off vapor in a pattern like a swarm of bees around a hive. The structure hides in this vapor, keeping close to the ball. When you write down the word "hiding" you are struck by a thought that this structure literally thinks for itself. A structure that thinks! You wonder if this is a computer. You deduct computer. You try to forget about the computer in your mind.

By now you are completely engrossed, and completely perplexed. How can beings be transparent? How can there be thousands and thousands of beings

inside of a flying structure? How can a structure think? You begin to see images now; images of gridlines surrounding the structure, images of hundreds of hallways that shine as if they were made of mirrored glass.

And then, if all of this wasn't enough, the beings surround you. You feel them inside your mind and they take form before you. They look like ice sculpture. They whisper sweet nothings in your ear.

"We're here."

"We are coming to bring peace and enlightenment."

"Don't be afraid of us. We come in peace."

Though it all sounds like a cheesy sci-fi flick, you write these words down. You make a note that the beings spoke to you. It feels quite natural. The session is over. And you are surprised and not surprised to hear the target.

What surprises you the most is that you believe it.

Wave Form XXVI

The explosion guts the Intergalactic Bat Cave. Only tiny frog bits and grey bits and chair bits are left behind on the cloud-like floor. I am totally stunned. I want to cry, but I'm not quite in my physical body, so I shutter with weird telepathic tears like a fish flopping on land after the tide has gone to sea.

The Grey Dude is dead.

My God, the Grey Dude is DEAD!

I can't comprehend this; how can he live to tell me this message?

Did you ever have a time when you were a kid and you thought you lost your parents? Maybe you were at the grocery store and you stopped to look at Fruit Loops with a super secret decoder ring inside the box. Maybe you turn around, scheming to convince your mom that you looooooove Fruit Loops and swear-to-God-cross-your-heart you're gonna eat the whole box, though you secretly hate them. And maybe you're only five years old and when you turn around your heart drops to your feet because your mom has moved on to the produce section and you can't see her. And maybe you run down the aisle, down the next aisle, down the next aisle until you are crying and running and shaking and you know your mom has left the store. But she hasn't, you just can't see her, but you don't know

this, you don't understand yet that moms aren't oblivious and they just don't leave.

This is how I feel when the Superheroes exploded, and I panic, truly panic inside my head, inside my library of messages, and I flail from wall to wall through the giant labyrinth archive like Theseus running from the Minotaur. Only emptiness takes up the space, emptiness mixed with superhero tidbits and particles of fantastic furniture. Nothing, nothing, nothing left. I can't find my way home, so I scan the horizon to plot an escape route.

The wave chasing Bob roars away from me, engulfing everything in its path, spitting it out unharmed, looking for the crazy alien Johnny Appleseed. I see Bob's super-dimensional cube in the distance sneaking around in the vicinity of Earth. Bob sees the wave. I can feel his fear, feel him make a split decision. Why is he afraid?

Something pulls my mind in another direction, into the Dimension of Bobs. It's a crazy place, all angles and curves that look like angles and corners where corners shouldn't be. It's worse that a fun house filled with mirrors – it not only looks horribly distorted, it smells distorted and I feel a strange clicking in my heart. The temperature is something beyond hot and cold; I can't identify the sensation.

I don't like the smell, and my nose feels upside down. I look down at my feet. I want to see the floor. But I don't have feet! I try to locate my legs, my arms, but I am a series of dots and curves and tunnels and light. Tiny pieces of corners zoom through my tunnels. The light looks like liquid, looks like crystal, looks like wire. I am like Bob here.

Bob twinkles underneath a moving corner and I get a creepy feeling I'm being watched. The corners have eyes. The Grey Dude once told me about corners – that they were windows out of other worlds, like mirrored walls where we could be watched without seeing our watchers.

Bob holds a tiny secret box in his hands. Of course, it doesn't look like a box in the Dimension of Bobs, and he doesn't have hands. I only know in my mind and in my heart that he holds a box, a little prison, a safe, something square and locked and private. In this dimension Bob's box looks like a pipe cleaner broken up into small pieces mixed with raindrops and yes, more corners. I can't see what is inside.

Bob is worried about something, this much I can tell. He is apprehensive, he feels like a fugitive from justice. I know the wave chases him, but I sense another entity angry with Bob. By now I've forgotten that I'm lost inside of a Grey Dude message. This place seems so real to me, and somehow my body responds to

the pulses and corners and bits of wire like the urges of a salmon swimming upstream.

The box is so intriguing. Bob keeps it close to his corner. He fidgets with it, opens it and sneaks a peak inside. For a moment he looks like a cat with his paws in the fish tank; his expression narrows and he sneaks a glance around him, he slightly smiles. The box is stolen!

I see the box in its original location – a place far away from our plane of existence. It's the Bob Dimension in all its fullness – all orderly angles and corners, the complete opposite of the fractals and curves of our nature. I like this place. It feels homey to me, my body reacts strongly, and I feel myself trying to rearrange into a new combination of Pru. It's a familial feeling, like the happiness and wonder of finding a true love or meeting your estranged sister.

I once traveled to London, and though the British spoke the same language and looked just like me, I felt lost and alone the entire length of my visit. I made new friends, taught a remote viewing class, hiked through farmlands of Wiltshire looking for crop circles, placed my hands on the monoliths at Stonehenge, and began to feel the underlying current of humanity that fills every part of our Earth. Yet I knew it would take me months to adjust to this country if I were to move there. But in this first moment of the Bob Dimension I feel at peace, feel like I am home. Something restless in my heart finally sleeps.

I like the angles of this place. I like the corners. I like the structure. I like the buttons and wires and molded metal-like textures. It's so, so, technological! I find nothing primitive in my field of vision, everything holds intricate order. I don't understand this place. It's complicated and alien. I can't give you a good analogy because I've never come across anything even remotely similar. It's a place of stark order and weirdness, yet it feels more comfortable to me than my own soft bed.

A Master Bob overlooks one segment of this dimension. He twinkles slowly and his motions are exaggerated, as if he is caught in molasses. He is the Keeper of the Box. I still don't know what's inside the box, and now, two years later, I still don't know. I only can tell that it's something integral to the Bob Dimension, it's something that we don't need in ours. It's what gave us the Bob Factor, and thus is responsible for cars and factories and orthodontics and processed cheese. Master Bob collects this material and stores it away in this box. He keeps a new box now, a box only partially full of strange stuff I can't identify. The Grey Dude's message tries to make clear that Master Bob is a keeper, not a security guard. He watches the box, he loves the box, he is more a collector than a policeman. He never worried about facing a thief. Thieves are mostly unheard of in the Bob Dimension.

Master Bob looks just like Bob, just like me – a crazy quilt of chaos forced into order. His scintillating lights move in the same not-quite-spiral pattern. He emanates intelligence and common sense and something I don't have a word for. I'll call it "cornering" – a sublime ability to undergo an eclipse. He melts down to a vanishing point in the exact center of any corner and Poof! He's gone; he breathes the reality of some other place, some other time. All Bobs move this way between dimensions, but Master Bob's capacity for cornering surpasses all others. He is the Picasso of cornering, the ultimate cubist.

The Grey Dude's message insists that all beings from other places use cornering. Can we do this? I wonder. The Grey Dude laughs at me, points at me, asks me who I think he is, and tells me I am still sleeping.

Master Bob eats a snack. I see little pigmy wires of fever fly into his corners, and his nimbus brightens in response. He waits by his box of secrets. He feels content. I just love Master Bob! I want to hug him, to be hugged by him. He doesn't notice me staring at him, or maybe he doesn't care. Something about Master Bob makes me laugh and cry at the same time, and I feel the bounciness and delight dolphins must feel when they leap through the waves.

Bob grabs the box and his cube and runs like hell out of the dimension. He's not adept at cornering, and when he falls into our space his head hurts, his eyes hurt, and two of his lights are fractured and don't twinkle. It's a rough sport. I think

I hear him swear a Bob Dimension swear. I don't see Master Bob's reaction, and my heart clenches in my chest because I know I will never see him again.

The cube shimmers and shakes, a veritable blender of corners and stolen goods. The wave tumbles closer, and Bob starts to sweat. The cubeship jumps and spins at his thoughts and dives through the clouds surrounding Earth. This is the event I once saw in another Grey Dude message. I see Bob open his secret box and sprinkle his stolen goods over the people below. A few animals mingle with the people and they are sprinkled, too.

The wave yells out! An anguished cry cracks the sky like thunder, like the trumpet of the angles. It's too late.

And then I understand. This wave of Intent, this wave that permeates everything in its path like a cosmic ray searchlight, isn't just a wave. It's my dead Superhero friends, turned from mass to wave form, rolling through the universe, eventually dissipating, melting into nothingness.

I think I see the Grey Dude's shadow within the wave. He looks backwards with regret and love, the way a mother looks at her wayward grown children.

They exploded in vain.

Wave Form XXVII

“It’s just you and the paper, baby.”

Remote Viewing is a lonely discipline.

The pieces left behind me in the wake of Hale-Bopp led a trail straight to an invisible barrier. Everyone I loved lived and dreamed on the other side. I could see Martians, talk to them, learn of their metaphysics and childbirth rituals. But I couldn’t produce them on demand for anyone, anywhere. It was all in my head.

All in my head. All in my head. Some things that reside in your head are based on things that once were physical, that once were real – things like memories of your dog, your first bike ride, the smell of fresh cut grass. One summer my parents piled us into our rusting blue station wagon and we headed for Cape Hattaras. I remember the saltiness of the air, the way the wind blew our tent over, the cry of the seagulls as they dove close to our grill to steal our hotdogs. I can tell you this memory, describe the night the rains came down, filled our little tent, and my dad forced us to pile back into our car and listen to him read a book based on a movie about a boxer. My sisters and I gave him dirty looks, but the lightening surrounding us prevented our escape. If I told you these memories, you’d believe me. We’d laugh together. You might have some funny vacation you took as a child that you’d share in return. But if I told you about the time I visited Buddha, about my memories of his warmth and understanding, the way his belly

rolled over his thighs, the odd smell of cigars and toast that I smelled on his breath, how he turned around and welcomed me to his subspace abode, what would you think?

One month we concentrated on an Interdimensional Portal near Earth. It was between Mars and our planet, and it moved along an orbit around the sun. It looked like a diamond-shaped tunnel, and it gave off waves of unusual energy that swirled and spiraled and turned in upon itself. When flying saucers piloted by Greys and Reptilians would travel through this transforation in space, they would be stretched out into grotesque long, flat disks, only to be launched upon reentry.

The Portal belonged to the Greys. They built it from bits and pieces of energy, to smooth a transition from their dimension to ours. Blue lights surrounded the opening. My sketch of the Portal looked like a steel radial tire. I drew ghosts – dull colored ghosts with huge eyes – moving inside and outside of the tire.

Another month we saw a terrible potential future. A tactical nuclear bomb would be shot from the shoulder of a Serbian terrorist. His silver hair stuck straight out from his head like an aging punk rock star. He was evil, pure and simple. His goal was to take out the United Nations Building in New York City as retaliation for something the UN had done to his people. He hid in the brush near an old wire gate, and he carried the weapon in a shiny black suitcase. His face was ruddy. He was an angry old man.

We looked at this event in response to a Grey Dude message about a huge wall of fire near a city on the water. Many Grey Dude messages foretold future events, but they never made much sense. After the Hale-Bopp episode, the Grey Dude seemed to whisper I Told You So, I Told You So.

Do you know how hard it is to continue justifying something you can't touch, something you only know deep in your heart?

I couldn't keep it up.

While the rest of the institute concentrated on the day the flotilla from Mars would arrive, I spent late late nights reading everything I could about the science behind psi functioning. My mind was splitting in two. Part of me knew these things were real – I felt them, I FELT them. But I couldn't make you see them, they existed in my mind, and maybe nowhere else. I wanted to find some hint in my research that would make it easier to digest. I didn't. The science of parapsychology isn't even considered a science yet by most hard scientists. There's no hypothesis to test. No one knows what causes someone to know something they shouldn't know.

All we held was a magician's bag of tricks. I started to fall apart inside.

To make matters worse, I was falling apart outside, too. My marriage to Daniel limped along like a ship scraping against the rocks. The more immersed in remote viewing I became, the more I created a moat with alligators around myself, with a drawbridge you couldn't cross unless you saw the aliens. And I began losing the hearing in my left ear, an unfortunate situation brought on by stress, by childbirth, by Hale-Bopp.

It was the ultimate isolation.

I left the institute a year after Hale-Bopp, an angry one-eared woman.

Wave Form XXVIII

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again...

The night after I feel Froggy and the Superheroes explode in my head, the Grey Dude appears in my bathroom. He's alone.

Dude! You're alive!

I'm sleepy and startled at the same time and my yawn turns into slack-mouthed wonder. Before I get a chance to register the reality of his apparition he zaps me with a thoughtball and disappears. I stare at space in which he stood. I knew he must live in some sense, because the wave happened so long, long ago. He's alive; he isn't alive. It gives me a headache to think about it, the same feeling I got when I was eleven and my dad cocked his head and asked me with a sly smile to consider what existed before the big bang. Oh.

I can feel that the Grey Dude is trying so hard to get me to see the larger universe. Time is space, and there is no time. I start repeating this to myself, hoping the mantra will chip tiny cracks in my rigid thought, leaving a crevice into which enlightenment can seep. The message is clear: everything happens at once, not only in the Intergalactic Bat Cave, but in my heart, in my mind, in the whole, huge, entire expanding universe.

I just don't get it. I'm in my early thirties. But this moment today is the same moment I lost my first tooth, it's the same moment I began menstruating, it's the moment I lost my virginity, and the moment I married for the first time. It's the moment I married for the second time, and the moment I learned remote viewing. It's the same moment I met the Grey Dude, and the moment I eventually die. It all happened at once, in the same first breath as the universe was spun and the same last breath as it decays. Time is as simple and profound and as enigmatic as birth.

Obviously the Grey Dude doesn't experience time the way we do, I think. But he pokes me in the space between my eyes, forces part of the message to unravel and I see that he does experience time the way we do. But he experiences it all at once, and it's how we experience life. We just don't see. I don't believe it.

So the Grey Dude tells me the story of how the wave of exploded body parts didn't pan out, and so, in the exact same burst of Intent, the Superheroes concoct another plan to wipe out Bob's mistake; they create a Gigantic Spaceship of Disruption.

I see this spaceship tethered to the Bat Cave. It's spherical and huge like a small planet, but the inside is hollow. I can't tell what it is made of, but it looks synthetic and strong. The outer skin is the color of eggnog and dimpled like a golf ball. There is only one way inside – through a tiny hole much smaller than a pinprick. I

figure the Superheroes must use their decorative chairs to shrink down and then they corner their way into the center.

The Grey Dude shows me the inner workings of the Gigantic Spaceship of Disruption. The name scares me, and I wonder if he and his friends are shoving the ship full of missiles and grenades. No, no – the Grey Dude seems perplexed at my limited understanding – the ship doesn't DO anything, it just sits in place.

One, two, three, four.... So many instruments and control panels that I lose count. They don't look like control panels in a space shuttle or a plane. They rise from the floor, funky hooks and chains that remind me of medieval torture devices, and it's only the message that tells me these weird attachments are used to pilot the sphere. Everything in my line of site is a vibrant shade of lavender, literally everything. A row of lavender decorative Bat Cave chairs floats past me. I wonder if these will be placed somewhere or if they will always float. The ship is enormous from this vantage point, and I realize it truly is the size of a small planet.

This vessel seems so familiar to me. The grayness of it, the softness of it's surface, the sandy, gritty texture. I feel like I've seen it a hundred times in my dreams. I try to force out a memory of this place, try to find it in an old message, in a snip of a daydream from childhood. The Grey Dude ushers me outside again, and I see that the skin of the ship is growing. It looks like grey-green

moss, all lumpy and full of air, but when I touch it, it crumbles and falls from my hand like a dry sandcastle.

Froggy lies on the floor of the Bat Cave. He's still slimy and bulbous, and I notice for the first time that he has tiny red spots on one end of his body, like little froggy chicken pox. I can see his body expand and contract, expand and contract, as he breathes. My breath matches his. My chest rises and falls, rises and falls, with this rhythm of the Bat Cave, and for a moment time suspends and I feel a thousand years old, maybe a million, and my body gathers a glimpse of the timelessness of nature. I smile – I am a child again, a grown woman, I am a vibration like the Spirit of the Exegesis. It only lasts a second.

When I look away from Froggy, the Gigantic Spaceship of Disruption is gone!

Where is it? I think it's still there, just rendered invisible, until the Grey Dude taps me on the shoulder and points to a place I know well. Earth. The sun has set, and the sky is dark and full of wonder. This is the Earth some generations after Bob leaves, years after the wave crashes. This is the Earth with the same stars I recognize in the sky, all somewhat off center, as if someone didn't set the dial to the right number. This is the Earth of the early History messages, the Earth missing its moon.

I hear the birds and the insects below; their music wells up from the surface of the land like a living flare. The earth feels gentle and nurturing, like a mother nursing her newborn baby. I feel her cradle the life on her surface, sending out whispers of love-steam-vapor-warmth and caresses of wind and cool rain. The animals respond by growing, howling at the sky in harmony, sleeping while dreams echo between their minds and the inner core of the planet.

I feel the hair on my arms stand on end and the crickets and owls stop singing, stop still in their tracks. A noise louder than thunder cracks open the sky and the earth beneath my feet shifts and rumbles and rolls. I feel a terror stronger than the time I first met the Grey Dude, more fearful than the time I was held down and brutally raped by a stranger. Something wells up inside the Earth; something rises up like the steam inside of a pressure cooker. This is no simple earthquake. My body trembles in response to the dismay emanating from the center of the planet. Something outside of this place is creating chaos, something not from the Earth is pulling on us, trying to tear me away from here, tear me and the insects and the animals and most of all the newly seeded Boblings from this place.

It's the Gigantic Spaceship of Disruption.

The crack of sever thunder announces its arrival, and the vessel corners into the firmament above Earth. And then I see what I failed to see in the Intergalactic Bat Cave: this is our moon. This spaceship from another time and another place is

our moon, but it is still smooth and gray and new. The Superheroes pilot the moon into an orbit perfectly synchronous with our world.

The Disruption begins.

The force of the entry rips water from the surface of the planet and raises the earth from the seas. The Grey Dude shields me from much of the destruction; he senses my racing heart and my shaking limbs. Why are they killing us? Why are they drowning the plants and animals? Why are they making the Earth shake and shimmy and gyrate in a perverse belly dance? Why? Why?

The Grey Dude plants the understanding in my head – an image of a mighty rain, the concepts of history and cleansing, and I begin to see. This is the Great Flood of the bible, sent to cleanse the Earth, sent to clean up after Bob's mistake, to rid us of the Bob Factor.

The moon is a spaceship from another time and place. A ship of disruption. The moon, whose face I stared at as a child, wanting to visit, wanting to touch her surface. The moon, whose being seemed to be our sister, was an agent sent to kill us all, was a hollow ocean greyhound filled with torturous controls and superhero beings. And she stares at us with her best face forward, her profile forever hidden in darkness, the tiny door to the Other Places safely tucked away in shadows.

I know that the Bob Factor doesn't die with the Great Flood, and I wonder why. I remember the stories of God and Noah and the Ark. A tiny piece of the thoughtball opens, like a jeweled case studded with brilliant diamonds and emeralds, and I experience something so profound and dear that I feel naked telling this to you.

In the midst of the terror, in the midst of the storm that lasts the full cycle of rotation, in the midst of the swelling of the waters, something presses on the side of the Earth, presses against an invisible barrier, like the boy in the plastic bubble who can not fully touch. A force. A force like a hand, like the blink of an eye, like a Fourth of July sparkler. A beautiful force, so gentle and firm, like the touch of your mother, like the voice of your father, like the innocence of an infant.

I can't see or feel this force beyond the barrier; I can only taste the repercussions of its actions. Pure Magic happens. A group of men and women feel the motions against the barrier, and something in their minds and bodies lights up, lines up, like iron fillings against a magnet. They hear wondrous words. They see visions. They know something far far away, something removed from them, cares deeply for them. They listen to the urges growing within their bodies, they build shelter, they gather animals and food, and they ride out the storm in a dinghy that by all rights should collapse under the pressure. But the force holds them up, keeps them floating, keeps them focused and unafraid.

Something in my heart turns on when this force moves against the barrier. An incredible longing and acceptance moves through me like divine wind, like electric current, like a hawk diving in the sky.

The Superheroes try to kill us all, we who are part Earth, part Bob.

But something soterial, something wholly concerned with our Universal salvation, won't let them.

Intention Interlude 2

I start slow again, you are so hard and I want you so much...we can't take slow anymore.

I run my hands over your ass, pull you closer, try to pull you through me.

You like to watch. Resting on your hands and knees, you bend your neck and stare between our legs. One groan. Then another. We echo each other; the noise raises me to a fever heat.

I'm so focused. Focused on your expression. On the growl under your surface. On the sharp thrusts the way a jockey whips his horse to coax her further.

I want to come.

"Roll over."

My voice is low and heavy. We roll over in a heap, legs tangled. Your cock is still inside me, still hard, I feel a pulse. I sink into your heart, suck on your neck, move my hips in our own special rhythm. You grab my breasts, pull my nipples.

I am no longer myself. I am raw energy, an infection of fire and I want to come. I am intoxicated by your smell and I want to come. You catch my infection and you

want to come. We feel it inside each other and our pace races and my head flips back and I arch my back as my cunt contracts, pulls you tighter, I scream your name and you can no longer hold back.

We are a symphony of noise and sweat and salt and sugar, all animal, sheer Earth, all Intention.

Wave Form XXIX

Lynda was only four foot nine – all poofy platinum Texas hair and rhinestone clothes. We learned remote viewing together; she was one of the few viewers left after the Hale-Bopp fiasco. She was in it to communicate with extraterrestrials. Her dreams were littered with half visions of open windows and strange owl-like eyes and the sensation of gently floating above her bed. A retired nurse, she lived in luxury in an exclusive subdivision of Dallas with her younger husband.

“Pru, I believe you. But no one else does. Come on, I have to see the Grey Dude. Tell him I want to see him too – you need another witness.”

Lynda was insistent. I tried to explain that it didn’t work that way, I couldn’t arrange a meeting the way you order a burger and fries. But she was so persuasive. She wore me down. For weeks I strained my brain each night before sleep, asking the Grey Dude to visit Lynda, begging him to show up in her bathroom and toss her an introductory thoughtball. One night she felt a charge like static electricity in her bedroom and her husband – a skeptical doctor – saw a shadow flit along his side of the bed. But no Grey Dude. No thoughtballs.

Time for a bathroom pajama party!

It was the obvious course of action. Lynda drank an entire six pack of coke and two cups of espresso. She ate an entire bag of crystallized fake peach slices.

She loved those peach slices. I wondered how her Lilliputian body could manage that much sugar and caffeine. With an Indian blanket over her shoulders and another bag of candy in hand, she settled into my bathtub. She wore a long white tee-shirt with a colorful sketch of a lacy bra and panties with a garter belt on the front. I arranged pillows around the edges of the tub and left her lying in state, like a kewpie doll in a porcelain coffin, reading a book about crop circles. I crossed my heart, swore I'd wake her if she fell asleep.

I had a hard time falling asleep. I kept calling out to Lynda.

"Hey! You ok in there? You want company?"

"Shut up! Go to sleep! He's not gonna show up if you're yapping!"

I counted sheep, I tried meditation. It was only eight o'clock! Lynda figured that the earlier I got to bed, the more soundly I would sleep, the sooner ol' Grey Dude would show his face. She wasn't taking any chances, didn't want me to lie awake in the wee hours of the morning. I flipped onto my stomach and stared at the flowers on my pillowcase. I wanted to talk to Daniel, but Lynda banished him to the basement couch. This was girl's night in. You didn't cross Lynda; you didn't question her actions. She had that effect on people.

My eyes eventually grew heavy and I fell into sleep, into strange dreams of bathtubs filled with artificial peach slices dipped in sugar. And then it happened. I woke up. 2:30 am. Tired. Had to pee. Bad. I rolled out of bed. As usual, the Grey Dude wasn't on my mind. I staggered to the bathroom. It's always a surprise to see him, and my body reacted strongly. The hair on my arms stood on end, my stomach grew weak with a pulse of fear. He looked at me, threw me the message, disappeared. I shook my head, sat on the toilet, started peeing and shook with confusion to see Lynda in the bathtub. Asleep. Fast asleep, a tiny thread of drool snaking from a corner of her mouth.

Oh damn.

"Why didn't you wake me up? Why didn't you shake me? Damn it, I wanted to see him. I was awake until two, and I just don't remember falling asleep. I was wide awake, too."

Our only consolation was that the Grey Dude left his footprints for Lynda to measure, to photograph with her professional equipment. She could smell the odor of cheesy cologne and rotten oranges, too, and she told me it reminded her of something antiseptic. She couldn't identify the odor, either. Picking up toys, bottles, books, anything in the vicinity, she tried to recreate the footprints in the bathmat. Her excuse was that she wanted to be able to tell anyone who asked that there was no way I could fake the footprints. But I didn't believe her.

I cursed the day I ever told anyone about the Grey Dude.

I cursed the day he first visited my bathroom.

Wave Form XXX

The Grey Dude saw me at nine months of pregnancy, through multiple hairstyles, in pajamas, out of pajamas. He'd seen me through weight loss, with dark circles under my eyes, with colds and with bruises. I must have appeared as a chameleon in his eyes. Over nearly three years his stance never changed, his eyes never moved, his color stayed a constant blue-gray-orange.

One early morning the Grey Dude looked different.

His skin was swollen and puffy, and his coloring appeared more mottled than usual. The familiar stench was nearly absent, and I found myself drawing in deeper and deeper breaths, trying to find him in my lungs. I felt as though I could see through him, as though he was fading to nothingness. Is he sick? Is he dying? The message he inserted in my mind didn't say.

The Grey Dude continued with his History of the Universe. For the first time I see something that's always been there, something I ignored. Every message sprouts from the same location, like the nerves that feed off of a giant brain. The tree of recorded life, the library of oneness, the intersection point of reality, my mind searches for the exact right description of this place. Nothing is exactly right – it's something much bigger and better and cooler and deeper and explosive.

It's the point of all time, the point of simultaneity, the one moment that Is.

Everything happens at once, and these messages draw out into infinity an essence that is infinitely contained. And in that one instant of reality, those crazy suicidal, homicidal Superheroes move to plan three. They choose eleven scouts and send them to the moon, to the center of the Gigantic Spaceship of Disruption.

These scouts are chosen for their ability as storytellers, for their Intention, and for their willingness to give up any connection to the Intergalactic Bat Cave. If they accept this mission, they can never, ever return. Never. Ever. They will forever be fugitives from a far off future and a far off past.

So what? Really, now, dudes, time is nothing to you and you feel this second like every second of your existence. What's the big deal? My thoughts sting the Grey Dude. After all, he is one of the scouts.

I see the Grey Dude inside the moon. He sits on a floating lavender chair. He's reading a book, but the words on the pages are three dimensional – they jump off the page and morph into pictures and thoughts and emotions. It's still biblical times, and he has a long time to wait. I want to know what kind of a book this is – history? Romance? The Grey Dude tries to show me, but I don't understand.

The other scouts mill about eating snacks, playing games, reading books. They like a game that reminds me of charades. They act out Great Moments in Intergalactic Bat Cave History. Some of them have a real sense of humor and they laugh and laugh when the Tall Shiny Dude reenacts the time Froggy got stuck inside a chair window and started swearing and sending thoughtballs like daggers.

THIS is the inside of the Moon of Destruction? A bunch of aging alien superheroes reliving their glory days?

Soon it is time for Scout Number One to take position. This is the only scout who feels remotely feminine to me. She looks like an upside down pear with three eye-like protrusions. The Superheroes give her their version of the thumbs up and she corners to the Earth, to a location that feels Middle Eastern and marvelous. She waits by a well until an old man arrives, carrying a pail to draw water. I watch in amazement as a familiar scene unfolds. The man drops the pail; his brown and gnarled hands shake in surprise and terror. I can smell his fear, can see his vocal cords contract, and try to scream. The scout disappears. She doesn't corner back to the moon, she moves into a cliff and her cells take up the same space as the red clay.

The man runs, runs up a hill, stumbles on jagged rocks, the stones tear his robe. He grabs his wife, makes wild motions with his hands, tries to tell what happened

but no words escape his lips. He is mute, he can't speak at all. He picks up a branch and makes marks in the dirt, draws the funny pear-shaped scout, points to his picture, points to himself. No one believes him. No one understands him.

He is cautious the next day as he returns for water. And the scout is there once more, a fruit-like sentry, and this time she imparts a thoughtball. I can see it hit his mind, and an expression of amazement crosses his face, smoothes out the wrinkles. Someday he will speak again, and his voice will carry the story of an angel who stood by the water.

And so it goes, scout after scout, time after time, human after human. I see the Bird-like Scout give the History to a young boy on an Egyptian barge. He only receives two messages before a tall man with gold rings around his biceps kidnaps him, slits his throat for speaking words no mortal should know.

An old woman in ancient Asia receives the History. She speaks to a wise sage sitting under a tree; he nods his head in approval. He continues to sit, and his thoughts fall through his mind like leaves in the Autumn.

I see the Tall Shiny Dude speak to three small children in a field. He brings a long lavender cape from the moon and drapes it around his shoulders so his grotesque form won't frighten them. The elders of their village don't allow them to spread the History and they and their words are kept locked inside a church.

The Earth responds to the interference in the only way she knows how. She bursts with Intention, bursts with knowledge only she holds, knowledge that lies in our cells. I see a man rise up from the Earth, preach a message of tolerance and love, watch him interact with the Spirit of Earth, follow him as he touches men and women and they receive the power of Intention, see him die as we reject the message. Son of the Earth. Son of Man.

In a flash brighter than lightening, my very own cells work in unison, see the larger universe for the first time. It's a story as old as time, as black and white as our makeup. Everyone – the Bobs, the Superheroes, the Earth – thinks they hold the keys to salvation, the method that brings Intention. They work outside of each other, each in secret, each with Intention Not Strong Enough. The divine force beyond our Universe allows me this moment, allows me this understanding, and I see what they are too stubborn to see.

Pride goeth before a fall.

Wave Form XXXI

If at first you don't succeed, try try again...

What else can a one-eared angry split-minded woman remote viewer do but start over?

And so I gathered my thoughts and ideas and the few friends that remained and started a new remote viewing business, one that would focus on science and rationality – a combination of the mysterious and the sane. I told everyone I didn't believe in all that crazy Martian stuff. I told everyone we were tapping into mythology, collecting tidbits from each other's brains, anything but describing what was real and full. I told everyone Courtney was crazy. I wrote an essay about the errors of my ways, about the realization that the Hale-Bopp companion was a figment of our overworked imagination, and I posted it in a public place so that everyone would know I was smart, I was rational, I was sane. I made fun of the viewers' beliefs. I shut the heck up about the Grey Dude, pretended I was normal. I wore my science like a badge of honor, flashed it at my family and friends. Super Psychic Cop.

I wasn't nice. I didn't let anyone close to me. I kept my inner thoughts in such a secret place that I couldn't find them myself, like wandering in the Sahara, searching for water, forgetting you have a flask in your backpack. My rampage against the past continued.

Dying inside, dying inside. I should have blamed myself for the heartache, for the broken dreams, should have seen my obsession wrapped around my body like a shroud. It took little nibbles at my soul, a bite of humility, a sip of compassion, a gulp of humanity.

One humid afternoon I sat on the cedar rails of our back deck and told Daniel I wasn't in love with him anymore. My voice was cold and direct. A caterpillar inched up my arm. It startled me, the tiny legs felt like velvet, felt like the touch of a lover. Daniel stared into the yard, at the treehouse we built together. He wanted to try counseling, to try working on the problems we ignored for so long. We didn't make love anymore. He called me Prudence, not Pru. I liked to be called Pru.

"No, Danny. No. I need to be able to express my ideas. You know what? Every time we discuss things you take over the discussion. You always know what's right. You're always right. It drives me crazy. I want to be called Pru."

Daniel was right about remote viewing, and Hale-Bopp and the dangers of speaking truth that springs from an undiscovered artesian well.

Atlanta no longer felt like home. There were too many memories of the institute, of Hale-Bopp, of a marriage dying, a life choking in the grip of alien kudzu. I

packed my family and my computer and moved as far away as I could to California, to a small town on the coast. Daniel moved too, somewhere north of my little town, just far enough away that we could settle our memories and begin to find ourselves among the palms and canyons.

My band of viewers looked at normal Earthly verifiable things. We studied endless buildings and known celebrities and politicians and boring objects like the flyswatter hanging above my desk. The ranks thinned as time wore on. What fun is targeting things you already understand?

My heart was dying. I felt old. I knew it was time to give up the farce. What fun is being sane?

Faith is something you know without proof, something that runs through your veins like holy blood, something you pull around your shoulders for comfort when you are cool. Science is hard, a knife in your back, a mirror that enlarges your pores. Remote viewing, aliens, Grey Dudes, Histories of Universes – oh these are things somewhere between faith and science. They reside elsewhere, a place humans probably don't belong.

In the middle of my time in the desert, smack in the center of the place of greatest unknowing, on the third evening of a five day remote viewing course – the last I was slated to teach – a miracle happened.

It was late at night, a night in the spring. I glanced at Mark. He slept so soundly, like a puppy, his legs twitching under the sheet; a lopsided smile sprawled across his face. I loved the shape of his head, the freckles that covered every square inch of his body, his blue eyes like butterflies. He wore his hair short like a military man, and his red hair wove two patterns like crop circles in the back of his head. We were lovers.

The idea of the Grey Dude frightened Mark. He told me how he prayed for me, night after night, asking God to protect me from the strange demon alien. He didn't understand my nonchalance, the shrug of my shoulders when Grey Dude was mentioned. Mark never had a paranormal experience. I think he wanted one.

I never understood Mark's work. He drove an hour to a large computer corporation every day. His work was his demon, a worm that never dies. When I asked him how his day was, who he spoke with, what he did, he would turn his head and speak to me of the latest news in Ufology, the amazing bigfoot story he heard on Art's radio show the night before.

"Fifteen years as an engineer. Pru, I've worked at this company my entire adult life," he would reminisce, "and I still don't know who I am."

I didn't know who Mark was, either, his secret life was a scab I tried to pick. We had no friends in common; we played no games, made no plans for the future, two stragglers on opposite sides of the bonfire of reality, trying to reach out for each other, trying not to be burned by the unknown. But sometimes I lit a torch and threw it at Mark, trying to make him see the fire in my eyes. Sometimes he threw a molotov cocktail at me. It didn't take long for us to be covered with festering third degree burns.

I accused Mark of caving in to boredom and habit. He accused me of breaking my promises, refusing to use common sense. We were both right; we were both wrong. One horrible night we faced off in our bedroom. The sky was dark. Little flickers of flashlight from the tent outside bounced off the windows, grinning, fading like a Cheshire cat. Twelve people camped inside and outside the house, invitees to a two-week remote viewing wingding I concocted in a fit of insight and desperation. My goal was to build a team of scientific viewers; maybe a group who could help me understand the depth and temperature of the gulf of unknowingness around me. Mark was furious.

"How the hell can you invite all these people into our home?"

His frustration gave his red head more staccato, and he punctuated his diatribe with jerky hand motions.

“I don’t understand you, Pru. You don’t know how to be in a relationship and you don’t know how to be open with me. There are three people in this relationship and one of them isn’t Daniel. Do you know who those three people are? Do you?”

I winced. I was embarrassed. I was sure my guests heard his ranting. His voice wasn’t loud but it reverberated inside my head like the time my mom chewed me out for stealing a quarter from her purse. I shook my head and held my breath. No, I didn’t know who the three people were. Me, him and the Grey Dude?

“It’s me, you and the voices in your head.”

The night of the miracle the windows were open in our bedroom and as I drifted into slumber the coyotes howled on the distant mesa and the wind through the palms sounded like someone wrapping Christmas presents outside. Mark snored beside me.

A loud noise woke me up. It sounded like a mighty trumpet, and it barreled across the sky, moving from West to East. I could tell the direction it moved due to the Doppler shift, and as it approached the trumpet’s pitch became lower and lower. I raised my head, glanced at the clock. It was only 11:19 p.m. My mind whirled through possibility after possibility. Plane. No. Fireworks. No. I never

heard a sound like it before. It sounded like a death wail, like the trumpet of the angels, like the horns that ripped through Jerico.

Deathly afraid, I hid my head under the pillow and pulled the corners tight into the mattress. My mind had made up its mind: BOMB! BOMB! BOMB!

I braced for impact. The trumpet in the sky disappeared. Somehow I fell asleep immediately, then awakened ten minutes later to the faded sound of the trumpet in the distance, fading, fading, fading, then nothing. I raised myself on my forearms, looked at Mark beside me. His eyes were wide and focused on the open window; his mouth hung wide in an expression of death.

“Pru, did you see it the second time?”

He heard the trumpet. He saw the trumpet, a huge triangular monolith in the ocean above the house, three swirling lights facing the ground. It moved slowly over the house, slowly away past the canyon ledge, into the stars, into infinity.

Wave Form XXXII

How long is the History of the Universe?

I wish I knew. It's so so long, been so long, been over three years of nightly visits. I want it to end. I want to sleep the sleep of my children. I don't care about the History anymore. The story grows old inside me, grows mold and icicles.

The Grey Dude tries to wrap it up, night after night, but I don't hear him. My mind is stuck, a broken record, a lounge lizard with the same corny pickup lines.

Hey Dude! Come on; just tell me how it ends, that's all that matters. Do we get out? Do we? Do we?

The Grey Dude doesn't answer me. He continues the story, retells it some nights, repackages it in pretty paper with exploding planets and a hole in the Universe and someplace near an outer edge that is triangular, not the spirals and ellipses and fractals of ordinary nature. I don't care.

The Earth grows older, grows to our time. The Superheroes continue their scouting, the moon sits still in the heavens, the Tall Shiny Dude reenacts the time the Big Grasshopperish Dude cornered into the Bat Cave by mistake. He rocks his body back and forth to mimic the disorientation of Grasshopper. It's my time

now, it's our time, the moment in the one moment where we live and breathe and work and play and love and hate.

The Grey Dude points to the horizon. The Time Horizon. This is something he's constructed for me, like a sock puppet a teacher uses to teach her children how to brush their teeth. Man, it's far away; I can barely make out the people and places it contains. I zoom in closer, like a movement in remote viewing, like turning up the magnification on a microscope.

A big ant farm!

No, no! The Grey Dude rolls his eyes and turns the message around in my mind. It's Earth! A place that looks suspiciously like the White House Lawn.

And the aliens have arrived!

How funny! I start laughing and can't stop. Of all the proverbial archetype locations! I scan the Time Horizon, look for other landings, and see that this is the first overtly public landing of a UFO.

It's the Bobs, landed, in a cube much bigger than the original Bob Cube. It has spires and fireplaces with smoke rings and a velvet carpet leading to the door. The Secret Service laid the carpet. It's a dark red color, plush and gentle. The

Bobs leave the ship, at least twenty of them. The Master Bob is part of the procession, and he has hidden under his clothes a secret little box.

The Bobs still twinkle and sparkle, still look like a gaudy suburban Christmas display. They have no form like ours, but they place clothing over their form and it's all wild and wacky like a reverse Emperor with No Clothes. They glide and pitch into the Rose Garden and you can feel them smile through the roses at the President. It's creepy. All dark suits and ties and no faces.

Master Bob opens his box. He doesn't realize we can't see it under his clothes and it takes a good hour before the confusion subsides and the box is produced in the open. It's a magical moment. Our story appears before the President and his men and women. It rises in their thoughts and they look at each other with surprise and stupefaction.

"No way!" the President exclaims. He's a simple man. I'm disappointed. I'd rather see a woman in the role.

Master Bob opens and closes the box like an accordion and the story moves through the bodies of the Rose Garden people. They see Bob seed the lands. They are shown charts and graphs and all kinds of human measurement things in order to comprehend the situation. I am one of them during this message, and I feel like a kindergartner who has just been presented with the alphabet, the

keys to the written word. The Bobs feel patient and kind and loving, kind of like parents or nursery school teachers. But something nags me, won't let me rest.

It takes me a full two months to figure out the problem. I relive this event over and over and over. I see it from different angles. I watch it from the perspective of the President. He isn't shocked. He knows that aliens exist and he knows they visited Earth, been visiting us for a long time. He knows they were somehow involved in our genetic past. I see a woman, a judge or lawyer, who stands taller than any other person in the garden. She is nervous and wonders if this isn't a bizarre con job. She knows of what the government is capable.

The Bobs gives us super technology, super Bob Factor prime stuff. There are machines that eat the air and spit out megatons of energy. There are devices that shatter disease and create mental harmony. I feel like I'm in the middle of a trade show.

The most wondrous thing is the bodily effect these Bobs create. It's the same feeling I held for Master Bob, the same reverence and love and desire. Everyone feels it! The world pulses in recognition and something in our cells switches on.

It's the biggest block party in the Universe! Men, women, and children dance and sing. Churches scramble to reinterpret scripture. Something restless inside our hearts falls asleep. Dad is home!

But the feeling that nagged at me nags at me still. Why didn't the Bobs tell us that Original Bob stole the box? Why didn't they tell us we were a mistake?

The Superhero Scouts in the moon are not amused.

Wave Form XXXIII

You can't fight destiny.

The trumpet in the sky blasted reverie into my conscience. I'm awake! A root took hold inside me; an original clipping of Atlanta-remote-viewing kudzu and it began to send shoots and branches though my heart, all the way to my brain. What lived in my mind as a duality of being began to merge into a composite of faith and science, being and measuring.

I tasked my viewers with the Hale-Bopp companion again, this time with better scientific controls. By this time a scientist at NASA published a paper with CCD images showing the comet with a shadowy companion. He postulated that Hale-Bopp had an unusual double nucleus. The news hardly created a stir.

I expected to see an unordinary comet with an ordinary double nucleus, maybe the flavor of sentience that often spews from non-living (as we see them) objects. But no, our data was exciting and different. The companion breathed through us again, rode back out of the sunset and onto our paper, a glorious cometary accessory with hooks and arms and canisters and curious energy. Those elusive beings invaded our senses again, spoke words of love and peace and enlightenment. With more viewers on the project and the luxury of time and reflection, the data molded into an amazing story of a capsule sent to monitor and defuse harmful rays emitting from our sun. The companion left the comet

and moved into a solar orbit smaller than that of Mercury. It spit out small metallic canisters that collected environmental data, recorded it, then swooshed back into the capsule for analysis. The data was relayed to a far away place, a place no viewer could understand.

I wrote a formal report, peppered it with “maybe this reflects,” “perhaps this means,” and other non-committal phrases. I began seeing our work as a fusion of the inner knowing and the outer proving.

It felt good.

Wave Form XXXIV

For two years the Grey Dude keeps his true identity a secret. I don't think to ask him who he is underneath that skin, under those eyes black as November. Sometimes people would question me about him.

"Hey, what is he – an alien or something? He might be a hologram, you know."

A psychic told me the Grey Dude was an Atlantean.

I assumed he was the same type of being you heard about carousing in flying disks in the middle of darkness, the same kind who sucked people up into blue beams like spiritual flashlights that divide the sky into two nights. I thought he might ride with a whiplash tumble in the orange diamond I saw as a teenager. I had no preconceived notions beyond this, and thought these beings could be physical, might be interdimensional, probably resided in our subconscious as submerged fears.

Most people thought the Grey Dude was a portion of my higher self, an extension I could feel but couldn't see like the false limb pain experienced by amputees. I wasn't sure, still am not sure, even though the Grey Dude told me his name and where and when his heart resides.

One evening the Grey Dude starts a message. I won't call it a thoughtball, because he hands it to me one piece at a time, like a spread of intricate h'ordoerves over the course of two weeks.

The Earth continues to change after the Bob landing event. Our Bobness is beautified; we give into it fully. I see cities rise from swampland, the disappearance of sickness, and a global prosperity moves from the level of idea to reality. The cities are built upon new standards. So many angles, so many corners fill the streets, spill out into the woods and beaches. The fractals and twists of nature give way to helixes made of miters and folds and rhomboids. True curves and convolutions are anti-Bob, and so eventually all hidden holes and trees and meandering streams and even the coastlines are replaced by fractured angularity.

The Bobs like the pyramids. They get to stay, stranded in the sands for eternity. After a hundred thousand years they still stand, though their sides gain deep erosive pits and depressions.

In time some of our art fades into the past, and millions of pictures and sculptures are put away, burned, painted over, until we see corners out of every corner of our eyes.

Can you imagine a world where no one ever needs to work? This is New Earth, Planet Bob, a place of rest for the orderly and angled.

Can you imagine poverty fading to an ancient tale of an ogre who terrorizes children? This is Planet Bob, our old planet, no longer an Earth, but a shiny, graying sphere covered in concrete and steel and materials I can't name. It looks futuristic and cool, efficient and smooth, and I see families travel and play in ways we once dreamed in science fiction.

Can you imagine this place wrapped in parallelopiped cellophane, tied with a cut diamond ribbon? I can't find a single curve outside of our own bodies, the curve of a woman's thigh, a woman's breast, the biceps of a man, the cheeks of a child. We are still reminded of the easy crescent of our mother when we glance in our rectangular mirrors.

Small groups of people across the world protest our continued disconnection with the Earth. They advocate overthrowing the government, killing the Bobs, smashing the dams holding back the ocean, bombing the New Center of World Government, which is in the center of Colorado. It figures. Colorado is square, the most knock kneed-shaped state.

The granola folks don't get far in their plans. The Bobs are impervious to gunfire and handcuffs. The people of Planet Bob no longer endure fatigue and hunger. Why go back? After several generations the earthy crunchies are gone.

The Grey Dude fast-forwards past many events. I see a horrible impact, a great fire. I see the Bobs leave the planet, corner back into their own Dimension. They live now through us, see through our eyes and the grains of sand below our feet hold memories of our fathers. Thousands of years pass, then hundreds of thousands. It flies too fast for me to catch.

More aliens visit our planet, some from other lands, some from other dimensions, all wholly from our Universe. Some are kind, and take just a cool drink of water before they continue on their journey. Some are mean, and wars break out between humanity and the Leopard Spot People. The Leopard Spotters look like green jello with orange circular markings. They scoot along the ground like giant slugs, smothering any living creature in their path. One war lasts three thousand years.

Even insects and birds and animals are affected by the Bob encroachment. In time the cockroaches and ants look like boxes with legs, and birds are the color of Bob, that is no color at all, nearly transparent flying critters of angles and fluttering soft feathers the shape of computer chips. In one million years the birds

die, and even the cockroaches die, and their scattered remains are pin pricked and encased in smooth glass.

Leopard Spot People? Square birds? Are there really Bob aliens? I know much of this is metaphor. My mind struggles to put these odd stories into language.

They start at a point deep in the pit of my stomach, rise through my chest, and I spit them out like bad medicine.

Odd stories. Odd stories. I remember a time when I called a group of thirty-nine searchers odd, and my face burns in embarrassment. The stories are odd; they hold angles and corners and twists and turns, pieces of Bob, pieces of Earth, all pieces of me. Pieces of me. That's what they are. Pieces of me. The unknown. The unknowable.

The messages are a spiral galaxy, the Andromeda, our own Milky Way, a barbell-shaped galaxy on the other side of the Universe, a word from afar, a place untouchable, with massive momentum and stardust. I am a space probe, sent to gather data, and my arms and legs are extensions which capture sensations and emotions and ideas and relay them to people in a sterile box, people who have to measure results, people who put conditions on my data.

I would give you cold evidence if I had it.

Wave Form XXXV

A police officer called me one cold January day. His name was Peter, and he worked as a street detective in a sun-baked city in the Southwest. He sounded sad and tired; years of crime and misdemeanor were handcuffed to his voice. He told me I taught him remote viewing. He asked me if I remembered him. I didn't. I said I did.

A person was murdered and his department had no direct evidence against a suspect they were holding captive. They knew the alleged perpetrator was guilty – policeperson's intuition clicked in, told them what they needed to know, didn't tell them enough. Could I help him? Peter recalled the First Rule of Remote Viewing: Don't tell the potential remote viewer much of anything.

I viewed the murder.

I felt the coldness first. It raised the skin on my arms, and though I had already written down many words – like dark, asphalt smell, a heavy whacking noise – it was the first thing I was certain existed at the target site. So many feelings drew off the coldness. I heard feet on pavement, and briefly glimpsed a lace-up black military boot. Someone was coughing, an old man. He was dressed in expensive clothes – a red striped shirt and pleated trousers, wing tip shoes - and I knew he didn't belong in this location. His hair was soft and white. I stared at the image of

his hair in my mind's eye, and I fixated on this one piece of the puzzle, wondering if he blew his hair dry or if it naturally fell in gentle waves over his ears.

He felt sweet, the type who pats dogs on the street and cares about children.

Dapper and rich, I wrote down. Was prosperous in business. Likes to walk. Likes fried food. Likes to watch golf on the television.

And then WACK!

WACK! WACK! WACK!

The breath is knocked out of the old man with one punch. Then two punches, three, four, five, six, seven. I counted seven blows to his body and face. I kept writing. I was stunned; I expected a gun shot or a hit and run car accident. I expected something quick and meaningless, not something deeply unsettling and personal. My heart skipped a beat, then two, and the air was hard to breathe in as if someone placed a square of cellophane against my lips. The moment I was ready to crumble, Lynda barked out a command.

“Focus on the area surrounding you. Describe the physical location and any people watching the event.”

Thank God for my monitor. The tightness in my body released and I acted like a psychic detective.

“Ok. I see trees along a street. It’s a city street. I can see an electric power plant in the distance. Lynda, do I have to deduct ‘power plant?’”

“Yes, deduct that. Drop your pen. Now keep looking. What’s directly in front of you?” Lynda asked.

“A sign, like a bill board. I think it’s for Coca-Cola. Hey Lynda, it’s really dark and cold here. It’s nighttime, I’m sure of it. Can I stop now?” I wrote as I spoke.

“No, Pru, you can’t. Stop whining! Now, what’s behind you?”

“Darn it. Ok. A porch. Like a house porch.” My head hurt.

“What kind of a house?”

Back and forth, back and forth. Lynda had to use ten words to gather two words of my data, small pieces of colors and temperature and shapes of the horrible event. We painted a picture together with broad strokes in the air between us, giving way to essential detail, a fine grained snapshot of a time and place cold and sharp with pain.

The old man was beat to death by a young drug addict. Blow after blow sunk into his head, into his face, and into the dark space around him. The addict was young, but his face was lined and gray. Red marks covered his arms, and his fingernails were dirty and chipped, a bit long. He wore a black T-shirt embossed with the name of a heavy metal rock band. I could see this clearly, and while the young man's face was still etched in shadows, I could count the stars on the back of the shirt and list every city in the world tour. His left arm held the old man against a late model car while his right arm moved on violent autopilot.

The victim's green sedan sat splattered with blood on the side of the street. I saw a fleeting glimpse of a prostitute in red boots and a leather-fringed jacket fucking a john. They moved like robots on a sagging wooden porch, condoms and cigarette butts littering the floor. I could hear the man's breath quicken, heard him groan in pleasure and relief.

Lynda moved me into the mind of the perpetrator and for a few moments we breathed the same space. His brain crashing and foamed and mine felt like it would explode. His adrenal glands were frayed like a pilled sweater; this was something I recognized from numerous other forensic targets – the brain and mind of the heroin junkie. I tried to wake his mind. I wanted to know who he was underneath the riptide. But the real person thrashed beneath the surface, adrift in a sea of restlessness, too far away to rescue.

Seeing through this young man's eyes opened a floodgate of pain and sorrow. I didn't know where I ended and he began; we were one organism split into two bodies. Each pounding blow to the old man's head brought forth memories – of being raped, of the time I sat on my sister as we wrestled and she cried to be released, of people I hurt, of people I tried to forget. Somewhere within his lifeblood was potential unrealized. It was palpable, nearly formed enough to hold.

But wait. Was that me?

Two eyes stared back at me, and the murderer let go of the old man. I left his mind.

The old man died, and his body lay in the dirt beside his car. The junkie rolled the body over and searched for the wallet. The man carried it inside his shirt, close to his chest. I heard the echo of footsteps carry the murderer away. Silence. Sweet silence and cigarettes filled my nose, brought me closure.

Peter was grateful for the report. It was an old man, he was beat to death, it was a red light district, and the power plant lit up a corner of the night sky. They kept their suspect in custody. He wore a black T-shirt with stars and memories of music. They looked for the two potential witnesses and they found a woman dressed in red boots and fringed leather. She gave a statement.

Peter called us angels. He told me that sometimes the Universe sends you an angel of hope.

I remember my moments of violence and hate, brought to light under the guise of doing good. I know in my heart that I am no angel. I'm all dirty light. And I want to change.

Wave Form XXXVI

I used to think the Grey Dude might be an angel. The messages were angelic, heavenly, a History of Everything, a suitable dispatch from the all-knowing. But as the History unfolds into eons beyond the Landing Event, I see the truth.

One of us.

One of them.

A human. A Bob.

The Grey Dude is a human from Earth so Bob-factorized that he lost the ability to think and feel in curves and waves. Thoughts of stone corners and ledges, thoughts of echoes of what once existed reverberate through Planet Bob, through the almond eyes and thoughtballs of the Grey Dude.

We are the aliens.

Wave Form XXXVII

Randy and rape and Daniel and Hale-Bopp and remote viewing and angelic trumpets and grey dudes and froggies chipped pieces from my heart. I felt heavy and old and moldy and gray. I could save the streets of a city from a crazed drug addict, but I couldn't save myself.

I contemplated death. Poison, gun shot, swimming out far into the shark infested ocean - I thought about how easy it would be to die, to live as a brand new person and maybe not walk into the same stupid mistakes. Maybe a life without a Grey Dude. What if?

I didn't know a body could hold so much moisture. Tears kept coming, kept falling out of my eyes and onto my nose, onto my legs and hands. I sat in my car in a strip mall parking lot, and my pain fogged the windows and left me so cold. I was alone.

And then a miracle happened.

Another miracle rose out of my tears and reminded me that I owned a catalogue of miracles in all different shapes and sizes. Miracles of children and life and science and magnets and relationships were engraved upon my flame and respiration. Why did I forget them?

I felt something move over my body, press on the top of my head, and sink inside of me, through all of my pores like lotion made of light. Pure light. Light pressure. Simple. Strong. Like the voice of a mother, like the touch of a father, like the innocence of a child. The force outside of our Universe. The Hand of God.

It didn't quite touch me. The force moved in a different space than ours, but I felt its love and compassion and even something cold and stern rub the outer shell of our prison, telling me to wake up. Wake up. You're still sleeping.

I didn't recognize it, but in that moment my left ear regained its hearing. I would wake up in the middle of the next night with the sound of crickets and stardust ringing like cathedral bells in my ear. Wholeness.

And in that moment I saw something simple and strong. The light. Pure light. The light of being, of forgiveness, of understanding, of laughter, of tears, of all that we hope we are. This light surrounded me and moved through me as if I belonged in the light, as if this dirty girl who left piles of disasters like a trail of crumbs behind her belonged in the light.

I belong in the light.

The light echoed through my body and sent signals to a mind locked inside of a brain. And I understood what I couldn't see in the efforts of the Superheroes or the hubris of the Bobs.

If you focus on darkness then darkness you will see. We are as light-filled as our mother, the Earth, and as light-filled as our father, the Bobs. Our hearts have room for curves and sticks, for light and dark, for science and faith.

Acceptance.

Intention.

Intention Interlude 3

The History
hides Intention
there is no voice waiting to answer
no voice willing to teach

think little of
the way your cells mix with sand
and pass names back and forth

remember the smell of fire
and thunder
the way rain falls through you
and melts the sky

The Prescription

The longer the History gets, the more I see and the less I understand. For every story I tell you in these pages there are hundreds, thousands more I have chosen to keep quiet. I am the wrong person to tell this story. I look for signals and road maps to point the way to my own salvation. All kinds of interesting billboards scream out as I pass down this road, but I ignore them. I am a selfish bastard.

Someday, four million or so years in the future, I'll probably be a grey dude, too. Will I be a corner-embossed sheep of the New Bob Republic?

The Grey Dude shows me the human race, his race, and I shudder. We have precious little individuality left in this future, clones of clones of clones, little people who are connected in thought and desire like a troupe of practiced ballerinas, who no longer know they could stand up and jump and twirl like a teen-aged girl at a school dance. Everything is gray, the color of near-death and apathy. Gray. We are gray on the outside, but it permeates the inner man. If I turned the future you inside out, you would look the same. A piece of gray meat – tasteless, old, boring.

I look at humanity in our time and see the inevitable. We all know we could dance like hell, but for most of us it takes a crisis. But then I see us through the Grey Dude's eyes and it's like watching sparklers and roman candles and bottle rockets on a holiday much bigger than the Fourth of July. Wow! Our individuality

startles me – the way we all have secret dreams, the way we know what we like to eat and drink, the emotions that light up the sky when we see the ocean or the birth of a child.

The humans of the future devise a sneaky scheme to harvest our goodness and sparkle and haul it back into a future of grayness and static. They fly through the portal near Earth in ships made of thoughts of what the Earth was like in our time, ships of disks and curves and mounds like breasts. The ships disappear when the grey dudes refocus their attention.

Harvesting uniqueness, they work by night with strange tools and blue flashlights. We are our most creative in silence; our dreams siphon our sincerity and color. They suck us up into circular rooms that they think-build to comfort us, to bring out our Earth side. They would rather work in rooms filled with sharp angles.

How many people are taken up? I think maybe a handful, maybe a few hundred, but the Grey Dude answers no, much more than that. No stone is left unturned, no azygous features left to die alone. We have all been taken up.

I remember a night in my childhood when I awoke to see my Lone Ranger and Tonto dolls spinning like tops in the moonlight. The curtains fluttered through an open window and I saw a wispy hand read for my blankets. I hid under the blankets and wouldn't peek out until I felt my sisters bouncing on my bed. I

remember telling my mom about this ghostly hand and she told me I was dreaming. Yes, you were, nods the Grey Dude, they want you when you dream. They want the parts of you still of Earth. Someday they hope to learn how to reject their Bobness and become partners with our planet once more.

He uses the word “they” when he speaks of his brothers and sisters of the future, and I see that he holds more than a little disdain for their actions. He gives me a small message one night and disappears. I don’t understand this thoughtball well. It uses emotions I never felt, those moonstruck emotions from the crack of doom. I see the Grey Dude apart from his family and friends, brooding like a teenager, mulling a fantastic escape. I see him steal thoughts like water and mold a fantastic ship of corners. He flies out of the grayness and into some new time and place.

He meets up with others. These become the Superheroes, rebellious aliens from another time and place. They want to save the Universe, to usher in a new age of Intention. It feels anticlimactic to me. Doesn’t the Grey Dude see that his agenda is nearly the same as his peers?

No. No, it’s not, he answers. Humans give up. They give up! They don’t care about change. They take science and honor it like a statue of Thor. There’s no more room for wonder and fun. We don’t want to be that way anymore. We want

to change what happened, and if we can't change what happened, then we want you to reject the Bobs.

I recognize a temper tantrum in the thoughtball, and I recognize something else – a mirror of me at my lowest, an image of a being sick of being sick, a being stuck in a Universe of dirty light. The Grey Dude doesn't see the light that burns inside of him, the light that tries to shake him awake. He can see what was, what is, what is to come. He thinks he's awake. But he sleeps like clay and sediment, still tied to the ground.

Maybe what the Grey Dude says is true. I don't know how to tell. I know what you're thinking: Remote view it! You're foolish if you think I haven't. Everyone describes the Grey Dude in his or her data. He's a small parapsychical sensation, a teacher, a storyteller, a great old man, a funny crusty creature. Viewers smell his odor and see his footprints. They tell me he arrives in a huge mothership. They tell me he likes the moon. They know he has friends in high places. Sometimes he speaks back in the session, and some viewers report eyes black as jet hovering over their paper.

Is this real?

Is the Grey Dude real?

We see our future in our dreams, scattered memories of a time in the one moment, dark eyes, expressionless faces, and behavior so conservative and corporate that it feels alien. Why do we give in to this?

I wrestle with an answer to these questions. But it's the same questions thrown like darts at us from the moment of our birth. We ask why? And our parents tell us stories they heard from their parents, from the news, from books and neighbors. Sometimes we look inside ourselves for answers, but if our knowingness doesn't match with the wisdom of our culture we discard it, stomp on our intuition, keep it bottled up and ready to pop like a pressure cooker out of control.

I can't tell you this is real. I can't prove that I am real. I feel that my story is silly, that it provides false answers to the yearnings of my own heart. It's the ultimate reason the Grey Dude appears in my bathroom: The History is just plain shit. And if we rely on outside opinions and stories for our enlightenment, we are doomed, too.

I can only offer you up my own opinion now, and so here it is, the official Prudude theory of everything and all and salvation, the true meaning of Intention:

Just be you.

Time is Space. And Space is Time.

And Time Does Not Exist. And Space Does Not Exist.

There is only one Grey Dude message that scares me.

He gave me this thoughtball early in his History of the Universe. At the time it felt like a hiccup, like a mistake of a message, as if the Grey Dude passed the wrong note to me in class. I think he tried to take the thoughtball back. I felt it almost recede from my mind, like something was tugging on it, like someone was trying to distract me with something shiny and new – that first glimpse of pure, undirty light. Like a young child I took the bait and forgot all about the strange and unsettling wrinkled note.

A couple of years later I finally revisited this message, and Oh Damn and Shit and Fuck and Hell and all words heavy and powerful and four-lettered.

Oh. Damn.

Once I heard a beautiful story of how the Universe was just a dream of the great Buddha, and when he awoke the snails and butterflies and planets and galaxies and yes, even we and our memories would fade as he stretched and smiled and greeted his dawn.

When I was young and Catholic, I was taught that when we died our souls were judged and sent to Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell. To get to Heaven you had to be good, follow God's laws with your body and your heart, and – rule number one – believe that Jesus died for your sins, that he was your skeleton key to the gates.

Atheist friends of Daniel's told me that death was the end of the line, there was no round trip purchase available, and no refunds. Daniel himself fancied that we left our bodies and traveled the astral plane, reincarnating over and over, as rich men, poor men, thieves, wanton women, mothers, priests, learning different lessons each incarnation.

Grey Dude theology made as much sense as anything else does. In a way it made more sense to me, because it answered questions I always had about love and light and darkness and belief and work. It was comforting, too, because all we had to do to make it to the Exegesis was to have Intention. God helps those who help themselves. It didn't seem easy, but it seemed like something we'd eventually figure out. Some parts of our Universe already understand. Why wouldn't we some day?

But that sneaky little Grey Dude messed-up thoughtball rolled into my head one afternoon while I sat at my computer desk, peeling an orange. The message was short. It was simple. I didn't struggle with the interpretation. The Grey Dude cries in this message. Even though I knew he died in the Intergalactic Bat Cave

explosion, even though he was alive and was my friend, even though he read a funny book inside the moon, and even though these things all happened at once, right now, so very long ago, my blood ran cold.

The little funny Grey Dude who seemed so sure of everything, so cocky that he could pass along an entire History of the Universe without blinking, so aware of the non-existence of Time that he saw everything that ever was and would be happen in less than an instant, cried.

“Why’s he so sad?” I wondered. I panicked, because I wondered if this message foretold my death. But it didn’t, not entirely.

The Grey Dude cried because he didn’t know if we made it out of Exegesimal purgatory.

He didn’t know if we gathered enough brilliance and fire.

He didn’t know if we were stuck forever in a black and white Universe.

He didn’t know.

And he cried over this loss of final awareness, a deep anguished Grey-alien-mixed-with-human cry more intense than the sobs I made into my pillow those

long months after I was raped, more intense than the emotions I carried with me after I remotely viewed the ovens of Auschwitz.

But he knows all moments in our Universe.

He knows we don't make it.

We are doomed.

He knows.

I stared at the orange in my hands. I couldn't think. I cried, too, but it was more an echo of the Grey Dude, as my mind was still reeling from the shock. Some of my tears landed on the meat of the orange. I peeled off a piece and brought it up to my face. So beautiful and vibrant. It smelled fresh, like a rainbow, like the outdoors, like a garden. It was symmetrical. So perfect. So perfect to my dirty eyes.

I remembered the mysterious force that ran a hand along the sides of our Universe.

I looked at my perfect orange.

I have hope.

