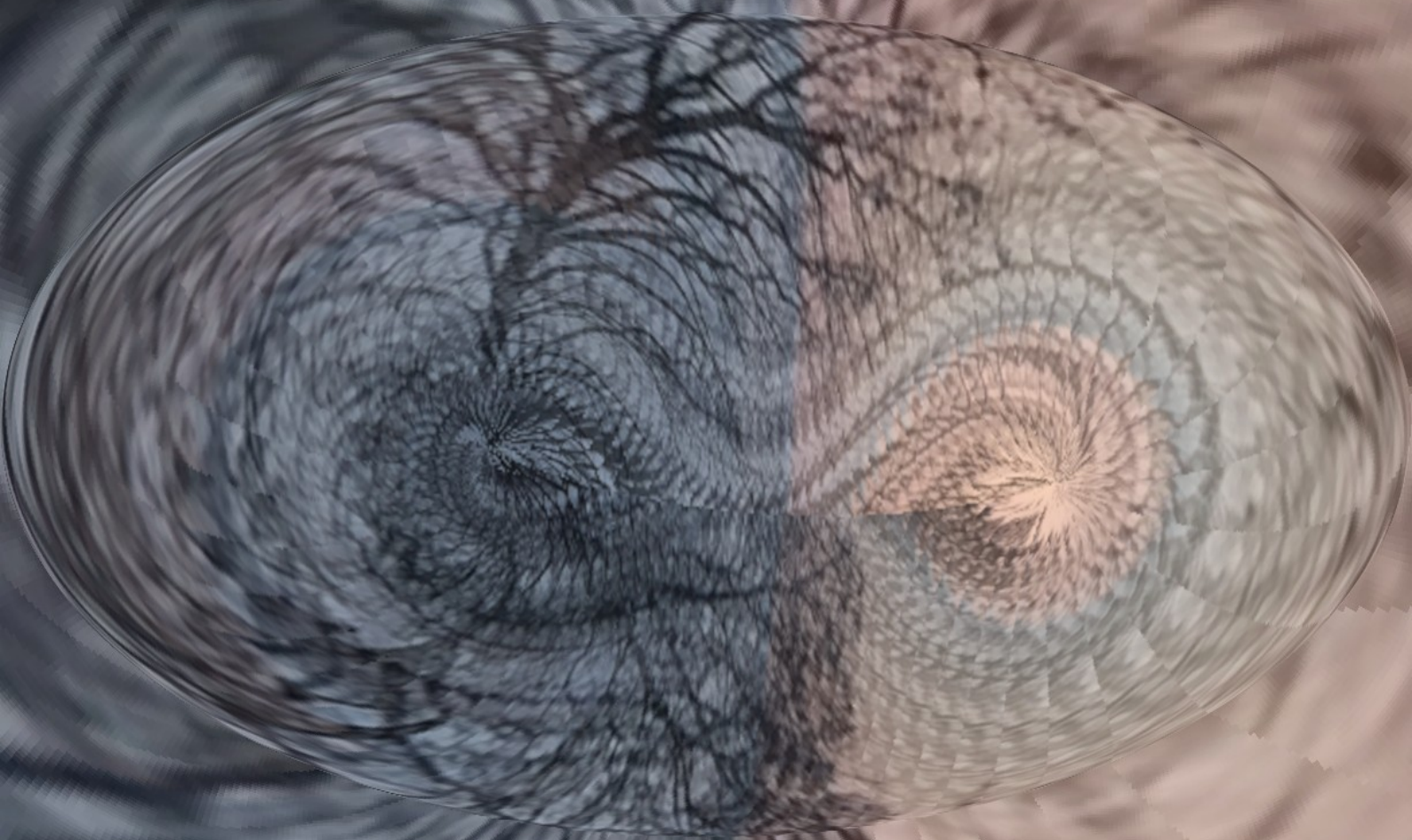


The Monk



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Content

Content.....	3
The Monk.....	4
Part 1.....	4
Part 2.....	8
Part 3.....	12
Part 4.....	16
The License.....	18

The Monk

Part 1

I look at my hands, they are the hands of a man, not old, not young, but withered and tired nonetheless. I am wearing leather sandals on my feet and I am dressed in rags, the remnants of a black robe.

We, this body and I, step from the mouth of our cave and look to the heavens. The weather is gloomy and in that I find myself hoping for rain; it had been a long time since I have felt the purity of rain washing away the filth of my tattered skin with its cleansing touch. I look once more to the sky and judge the time? I cannot tell with these clouds.

I begin to walk the rock strewn flatlands towards the water-well where the faithful leave food for me daily, food that I will not eat, not today. My name is John, I am, or I was a man from a small village called Torrecilla, near Malaga, but I have forsaken all worldly possessions so that I might experience the Divine Principle in the way of Ezekiel; so that I might experience Divine Forgiveness, in the way of David. Sixteen years now I have lived in the desert just outside the crescent shaped range of Mt. Tidirhine near the Medit Coast, sixteen years I have served in isolation, the last thirty days of which have been without food.

I am emaciated, wasted, ragged, and frail, yet today I will do as I have done for the twenty-nine days previous to this one, I'll walk to the edge of the "Angels Well" and tempt myself with the food left there by the faithful, for my sustenance. Though the flesh I wear is weak, the God inside it is strong. Thirty days... I shall go forty like my Lord did in his own desert.

I am alone, alone with my thoughts and my sins, my memories and my fears, in this I walk the well worn pathway, from here to there, as my kind have done for two centuries. In doing so I stop and stoop over to look at a scorpion passing nearby, evil beasts these things, I don't understand why the Good Lord even made them. I should smash the little pest, but I won't because it's not my place to do so, and someday when I am perfected they will cease to be a threat to my flesh, or so I've been told.

Rising to my feet and continuing my trek to the well I become aware of the heat and only then realize that the morning's cloudy respite has given way to the days clear duty; I feel the Sun beating down on me in hammer waves of heat.

Deep within my thoughts I walk and the distance falls behind me like the years of my youth until I realize that I am standing at the edge of the well where it is said, that an Angel of the Lord appeared everyday for two years to a nomad named Ali Abdul Raheem.

It's not true of course, Angels do not appear to non-believers. Others say that Gregory the Nazianzen had a visitation near here though, that I believe. But I don't believe all those other stories, no sir I don't. It's common knowledge in the church that the superstitious faithful will report seeing things that they do not understand and then believe them to be miraculous acts of God, for that very reason the church discourages the miracle business.

"Ouch!" I grunt as I step on something sharp, which I am sure has bruised my heel; I lean over to inspect my foot, it's fine. I guess I shouldn't have removed my sandals, but, as we all know, suffering is that which builds faith, even my Lord embraced his suffering and so too must I. A bruised heel, an unblemished soul.

I decide to kneel in prayer and give thanks to the Lord for allowing me this life, and I ask, as I do hourly, for forgiveness of my transgressions... for I am a great sinner among men.

Upon completing my prayers I lean over and pick up a nearby stone and begin to strike myself with it, first on the chest, then on top of my head and finally on my face. When I am delirious and exhausted and blood covers my hand I fall to my face in the dust where I lose consciousness and sleep.

I am snapped awake by the biting of ants, I hastily brush them off and cross myself, I am grateful for the pain. I look around me, then skyward and notice that above me is a noonday Sun; the clouds have now been completely burned away by the power of heat, much the way that our sins are burned away by the fires of suffering.

Off in the distance I see dust being picked up by the now increasing noonday wind and driven towards me like a herd of animals. Quickly it comes, I steady myself and cover my face as it blows past me leaving parts of itself on my person; it passes in an instant and I am befuddled by the fact that once the whirling dust has passed over me that there is no wind behind it, not even a wisp. Curious I think as I brush a thin film of sand and debris off my tattered robe.

Normally there are no birds this far away from the grass lands except the scavengers, but today I notice that sitting atop one of the well-stones is a small sparrow, the type found in my homeland. He is supping from food left by the faithful; I am amazed at this and sit cross-legged where I generously watch him for an unmeasured amount of time.

It is as if this little feathered miracle does not even know that I am here, he seems oblivious to me as he pecks away at the bread splayed out before him. A sparrow in the desert... this I sense is significant; but in what way? Then my heart leaps as I contemplate the possibility that I am dead. I am disappointed to find after careful inspection that I am not.

I sit for what seems to be the longest time watching the sparrow at the well when movement off in the distance catches my eye. It is then I notice that I can see the figure of

someone walking purposefully in my direction and towards the well; I can tell by her walk that it is a woman and that she is carrying something, probably a water bag across her shoulder. I suspect that she is one of the faithful who brings food here for me, however as she gets closer I can see that I am mistaken. She is not carrying a water bag, but is instead carrying a book, but what would a woman be doing with a book? The bird continues to eat and I continue to watch without movement, in spite of the numbing pain in my legs.

After what seems to be an appropriate amount of time the woman arrives at the well but passes it by to stand directly in front of me. She looks into my eyes as if looking through them, yet says nothing. I return her stare after looking her over from head to toe. I notice that she is wearing a sheer white garment that sensually reveals her form; my only thought is that the Sun would burn her to the bone in it. I look at her feet and notice that she is barefooted, yet her feet have no trace of dirt or even dust visible upon them. She looks familiar to me... I seem to know her, yet I don't.

"I am from far way," she says with a heavy accent, one I could not identify, and then she adds "The Watchers have sent this to you."

With those words the woman at the well hands me what I recognized to be the book she carried. Bewildered I pull the loose binding flaps and open it... page after page I turned until seeing, much to my chagrin, that all of them are blank. Bewildered I look once more into the woman's face as if the answer to this mystery might somehow be found there, but no answer comes. Without a word spoken between us she takes from her shoulder a small leather pouch and likewise hands it to me; the pouch contains quill and ink.

I started to ask her the purpose of the things which she had brought me, but a knowing came to me in the form of words unspoken and I understood that I was being told to write the story of my life, for purposes beyond my ability to understand. Then the woman added vocal words in unison with the unspoken words by saying "Your life cannot be lived in peace until you have put it into words. Your life does not exist until it has been written of." Then she pointed towards the sky and disappeared. It was then, in that instant, that her face was revealed to me unclouded and I saw clearly her almond eyes; I fell to the ground and wept.

With the dust and the tears covering my prone body and face I stretched myself out in the manner of David's own plea for forgiveness. I do not know how long I lay upon my belly but when at last I rose the Sun was low on the horizon. Only then did I realize that I had fallen into the deep sleep of a man without food, and my stomach ached as a reminder of my need.

I rose to my knees and then to my feet where I walked the last nine steps to the Prophets Well and pulled from it the gift of life. It was then that I remembered the sparrow, my eyes searched for him but he was gone. Upon closer scrutiny I noticed that his little bird body had savaged the bread that had been left for me, only then did I notice

the cheese and the rotten fruit strewn around the edge of the well; I lamented that the scavengers were feasting on the labors of the faithful... hasn't it always been that-a-way!

Kneeling in front of the water well I remembered once again the Angel who had come there to bring me paper and ink, I remembered my lover and my heart ached so deeply that it hurt worse than the pains in my legs and back and midsection. I remember her eyes in every fantasy, in every dream, in every thought... she was my goddess, and she was my sin. I wanted to weep but I hurt too much for more tears.

Off in the distance I saw clouds gathering and then closer to me I saw a small brown lizard and I wondered about the significance of my existence, and I remembered the secret, which is that Time is karma.

I turned to make sure that the book and the pouch were real and not some figment of my delusions, they were, in fact they were sitting exactly as she had left them. I wondered why she had walked halfway across this barren desert to deliver them and I thought about her words concerning my life being important, only if I put it into words.

Looking out past the rocks and off towards the mountains to the West I reminded myself that much of the day had passed and that nightfall would arrive before I could make the entrance to my face, my penance. With that in mind I dusted off my clothing and gathered up the things that she had brought me and began to retrace my footsteps along the pathway that had brought me here. I did not eat from the bountiful gifts of the faithful at the Angel's Well; sorrow would be my only sustenance for the day.

It is said that the souls of the men like me cannot leave this place until the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. It is also said that those of us who devote our lives to penance gain, in the end, complete forgiveness for all our past sins. It is said that to suffer until death is the greatest of all acts of repentance... and I believe it to be so. It must be so, or I am doomed to spend eternity in Hell fires.

Strange is not the word for what that walk back to my grotto could be called, for no more than halfway back did the phantasms of my brothers begin to appear beside me, walking this way and that, proving to some that to die in penance is not a guarantee of salvation. Praying as I go I try to ignore them, but this proves impossible because they now seem to be following me, escorting me along my path. What had started out as one then two had now become a cadre of things unmentionable, so that by the time I arrived at the entrance to my cave there were perhaps a hundred or so phantasmal apparitions at my side, yet as always they did not follow me up the incline nor did they breach the mouth of my cell. When I reached the entranceway I turned once more to look at them but they were gone, and I doubt my sanity, for many such delusions have I had these past for years. I climb the slight precipice in front of me and enter my cave.

This cave that I have called home now for these past sixteen years has a rather small opening; in fact, it requires effort for me to enter. However, once inside it is quite spacious in that it is four steps wide, seven steps deep, and probably that high. In it I have no chair, no table, nor do I have a bed, I only have The Book, and now I have parchment and ink.

Part 2

It is rumored by the local nomads that I have command over the serpents and other creatures, but it is not so, and to know the truth concerning it one only needs to look at the welts from the ant bites on my upper body. However, I will say that the animals here do not seem to fear me, nor do they try to avoid me as they once did. Maybe a simple explanation is that over the years I have come to look and to smell more like them than a human. At any rate we have arrived at a peace for which I am eternally grateful, and yes it appears that even the serpent has come to believe the truth of The Book, which states that the lion and the lamb will someday lie together.

In what serves as one of the corners of my cell there is a flat stone about a hand high and about a chest in size, can't imagine how it arrived there, but it did so and so I put the parchment and ink atop it. This of course causes me to once again contemplate the Origin of Reason behind the giving of these so rare and precious of gifts to a creature such as I.

In standing I stumble slightly, then move once again to the mouth of my cell and crawl through the opening; I find it poetic and interesting to contemplate the fact that I can only leave the darkness of this cave and gain the freedom of an outside world by first getting upon my knees; the story of my fall condensed to a simple reality. I am beset by the ironies of my life.

The evening air is crisp and sharp as the day's heat is replaced by the nighttime cold; I marvel at the complete and beautiful silence of my wilderness surroundings. I look skyward, knowing as I do that the stars are watching over me as always; even when I do not have the sense to appreciate them. I rub my hands through my thinning hair and contemplate the day, the month, the year, then I laugh at the vanity that caused man to create his calendar, knowing as I do the man's calendar is nothing more than a creation used to measure the only thing truly important to him, the length of his life. This place however is beyond such things, here time has no purpose and therefore it has no hold upon men like me. It is said that it is also that way in the other dimensions such as heaven, that there is no death and therefore no time to pass, just a living without an end.

I sit and begin to meditate while listening first to the stars, then the creatures, then the air, and then nothingness. After countless years of practice I am quickly deep within myself, while there I ask for knowledge and still my mind as I listen and look for whatever visions might come. However, the only images that I see on this night are images of her. Truth be known, she haunts me even still, and my curse is that I love her above even God Almighty. I can't help it and to lie about it won't make it any less of a sin.

I fell in love with her when we were only children, I the younger. In that love I watched as she grew into womanhood and then watched her as she was claimed in marriage by one of the elders of our village; her husband was old, twice her age and had

lost his first wife in childbirth; now he claimed the one I loved as his second. I was devastated. That first night of their marriage was torture for me, imagining as I did the consummation of their vows. And when I could no longer stand idle in my thoughts I took my skinning knife and crept to his home.

Silently I used my blade to lift the bar where I crept inside, and there in the backroom I saw her standing naked before a small wooden table cleaning herself with a white cloth. This was not the first time I had seen her this way, but it was the first time I had seen her naked as a woman. She was a goddess and my breath flew from me leaving me stunned and mesmerized... and then I saw him asleep on his furs behind her.

Attracted by my presence she lifted her face from the bathing bowl and cast her eyes upon me, and with no effort to cover her lovely body she hushed me with one finger to her lips, then stayed me with a hand; it was then I saw him move, and it was then that I saw the curved warriors blade in the light of the fire. She looked to me with terror in her eyes and stayed me once again with here hand.

He called her to him and I watched as he lay her down without a word and mounted her. As he did, her face turned towards me and our eyes locked onto one another in a love that could not be broken, even in passion. I watched her and she watched me. Once I made a move to lift my blade, the look of terror in her eyes caused me to halt my intentions. He finished with a grunt and rolled off her; she then turned her back to me, and I understood her unspoken words; I left her and went back to the place of my birth.

The following day I watched her from a distance at the river washing herself, and though my heart hurt from the previous night's memories, I loved her deeply, nothing could change that. When she had finished bathing she took the path back to our village and it was then that I intercepted her. Alone we walked, alone we talked, until at last my courage found determination and I expressed my love to her for the first time. She told me that she knew of my love, then she took me aside, and there in the brush beside the pathway, I knew her as a man knows his wife. There she told me of her love for me as well. But Alas, she was the property of another, and that could not now be changed.

The men in my family have peculiar eyes, they are wide-set and the color of a gray cloud in the sunlight, and later that year when her first child was born, he too had them; the eyes of her husband are dark and I knew that her first child was mine. I knew that we, brother and sister, were bound by more than our love for each other, that we were bound by a very dangerous forbidden secret.

Our mother was always wise and in this matter she was no less so, and one day as my love and I were in the act of togetherness, she appeared before us. When her anger subsided she made me see the truth of the fact that, should we be caught, as she had caught us, that it would mean the death of us both, and probably death as well to the child she intuited to be mine. Even in our protesting that we would not get caught, I knew the truth of her words and in the face of this knowledge I left the only home I had ever known

and began to wonder, I had fifteen summers and was a man in all ways except one... I had yet to kill in battle.

I walked the earth for many years after that, so many in fact, that my hair started to turn gray, but in all that time I never loved another save for her, for the memory of her was sufficient to sustain a man like me for eternity.

Long ago had I taken up the cross, and long ago had I been an abomination to it, yet I had no where else to turn except towards a forgiveness that even if it came I would have trouble accepting. And long ago was it that I first saw our son as a man, a teacher of men, but not a man of the cross like me, but a man of something else entirely.

I first became aware of him through the rumblings of other church brothers; they spoke of a heretic from the village of Torrecilla-- my village. When they spoke of his name my knees went weak, for I knew there could be no mistake, it was a name I knew well.

I asked for and received permission from my Bishop to seek out this heretic to try converting him and in doing so bring him into the merciful fold of our Holy Father. I did not confess our relationship to my confessor, nor to my superiors, and I later concluded that I had kept the secret of it not for his benefit, as a better man would have done, but out of a fear of something that I had yet to identify. This and more concerning this inevitable meeting with my son did I contemplate as I walked the three days needed to reach the place of my birth, once there I found him, my son, teaching ten young men just off the main square, not far from where he had been born.

He was sitting atop a cut of wood about an arms length long and was wearing what I can only describe as the plainest sun-burnt brown robe I had ever seen, in fact it was so faded and wash-worn that it actually looked comfortable in comparison to my own rough-spun garment. Around his neck he wore not a cross as the priests do, but instead he had a thin piece of rope with a slip-knot hangman's noose at the end. I noted that both he and his clothing were meticulously clean.

His hair was unfashionably long and he sported a shaggy beard that hid what I could tell were otherwise handsome features. His eyes were steel gray and a little too far apart giving him the romantic look of a wandering prophet; his face was unmistakably mine.

In his movements I saw that he had what appeared to be uncontrolled spasmodic jerks; It appeared as if he were normal and in control of himself one moment, only to have that normalcy shattered by a twitch or a jerk of his body the next, which seemed to affect his facial expressions, causing him to look shocked each time it happened in the manner of someone surprised by the touch of something hot. I noticed that there were times when he would only jerk from the neck up, like someone popping their neck. Other times he would close and then blink his eyes uncontrollably only to stabilize and be fine for a few moments after that, as if nothing were amiss. I quickly came to the conclusion that if not

for the fire and intensity of his words it would have been impossible to do anything other than avoid him, so painful he was to watch.

After quietly standing in the shadows for what seemed like an eternity I was at last invited by one of the ten young men I took to be his followers, to come forward and sit with him on a bench next to the south wall of the merchants square. I sat.

After a bit of time in which I was lost in my thoughts, contemplations, and memories I was snapped back into real time when I realized that all of his followers had looked to look at me.

"Father!" he said to me. "You are my father, right!" he added.

"Yes, I am a priest," I responded.

He smiled as his head jerked to the left, then said, "Oh I think that you are more of a father than you want to admit... father! And my mother... she is well."

A brief silence ensued where our eyes were almost lovingly locked together, then he brought the attention of his students back to the issue at hand with a clap of his palms and went about his lesson. It was at this point that he chose to tell me a story so horrible that I feared even the hearing of it, but I sat as though in a trance as he began to tell his own heretic version of the Creation.

He began his story by telling his students that in the beginning there was only Heaven, space without form, a purely spiritual realm comprised of nothing, a dimension void of Thought. He told his disciples that all of the Heavenly Beings were part of this One Nothingness and that in this nothingness, even though populated by the heavenly masses, that no Thought existed outside of the One Thought.

Then, after a measure of eternity one of the heavenly beings had a Thought independent of the One Thought. He thought about being part of the heavenly masses, part of the One, and then he wondered what it would be like to be separate, to be "Alone" and in the power of that independent thought, the one word became three "I am, alone."

With that first independent thought came an explosion of thoughts to follow, thoughts about self. This was not a bad thing, only a different thing, or so it seemed. However, since thought is a creative force, with that thought, no matter how innocent, came the creation of the Individuality and with Individuality came Separation, something Independent and something different. And in that difference came the end of Social Oneness and with the end of Social Oneness came the beginning of Originality.

With the beginning of Originality came the birth of Wonderment, and with Wonderment came the birth of Questions and the birth of Question came the birth of Opinion and with the birth of Opinion came the birth of Good and Evil, and with the birth of Good and Evil came the birth of the Great Deceiver... God.

Part 3

Now God, being the creation of the original thought, which was "Alone" began to put meaning to the thought "I am alone," and from that thought "I am alone" came the Desire for companionship, and with that desire came a desire driven thought "I am not alone," and in an instant the One was Two, and Two was whole, and whole was of the second heaven, (the heaven of thought). The One evolved into the Three, the three was a child of that human thought. All was well and a covenant existed between them... for a time.

The creative powers of thought however cannot be denied, and so it was that the Child wondered who was the greater, the Child or the Father; believing that if the Father was dutiful that the Child would be greater in the end. This thought however caused a separation from the Father who understood the Beginning in ways that the Child did not, and a divide formed.

With these words, my own son halted his story, wiped his brow in the manner of a man hard at labor, then turned his attention to me and asked, "So, father... who do YOU say is the greater, the Father or the Son?"

I turned my face to the left and stared momentarily off into the distance recognizing the play of his words and knowing full well should my answer be "The Father" that he would remind me of my sin in his conception, and if I answered "The Son" then I would be lending credence to his heretical words. So I pulled my answer from my religion and replied, "The Father and the Son are one in the same." He burst out in roaring laughter at my words, then pointed and twitched in unison while shaking his head as if in disbelief at my perniciousness.

So, what you are saying is, if the Father sins, then the Son sins without fault of his own? Oh father, you and your whole religion are so far from the truth of this that were it not pathetic, it would almost be humorous... and what saddens me, is that you do not even know it."

"The Bible is clear on this point!" I responded in typical priestly fashion.

"Oh, is that so! And just who is it that you think wrote YOUR Bible?"

"Why, God," I explained. Again he smiled, but this time he didn't jerk or twitch, but held my gaze for the longest, then replied, "We shall see about that... Father."

Without another glance in my direction he returned to his students, who by now had become aware of something deeper going on between us, then continued on with his lesson; but I knew that his lesson was crafted entirely for me.

He went on to say that because the Child had expressed a question, that he was challenged by God who thought him rebellious. Then, my son, the heretic, told his

followers a story so horrid that I dared not even think on it much less repeat it to anyone else, for I knew that to do so would bring the wrath of the Church down upon him and with it a blasphemer's death.

For years afterward I refused the telling of this story, but now however I am compelled to share it with you exactly as I remember him telling it so long ago. Here is what he taught on that fateful day.

After the original Thought other thoughts followed, and with each successive thought came a result, a creation; soon the heavens were full of Creatures of creative thought; not Thinking Creatures, but Creatures of Thought.

Being that Thought is creative, Thought is therefore energy and energy is never-ending and can never be destroyed. Therefore Thought is eternal, perpetual and can be accessed by any conscious being from the first to the last. So it was that a full third of the beings in heaven, when coming across the original question, also innocently wondered who was greater, the Father or the Son. Opinion was once again created. Opinion created Questions and Questions were considered lack of Faith, and lack of Faith was Sin, and Sin was Separation. As a result of this, one-third of the Heavenly Beings had sinned, and were therefore separated from the non-sinners, were banished; banished beings who had feelings of resentment, and resentment gave birth to defiance.

Being that God was of the Spirit, God and the Holy Spirit remained in the first and second heaven, while the Son and those who thought like him were cast out and into a third heaven, separate from the first two.

Since this third heaven was separate from the first two it had to be different than the first two, so where they, the first and second heavens were Spirit-Form, or Spiritual, this new heaven was un-spirit-form, or Solid-Form, in essence it was physical, a place ruled by Touch as opposed to Thought. In this, the third dimension, the dimension of banishment, it is Touch which creates.

In those days the Third Dimension lay uninhabited by creatures save those which had arrived from the heavens, they were alone and then they were not.

It was then that the fallen gods saw evidence of life in the manner of Water, then Earth, then Fire, and finally Air. Within each of these elements formed a being; a water Being, an Earth Being, a Fire being, and an Air Being. The Third Dimension itself took on the form of Life and after that, Life took different Forms.

The dominant Form of life in the Third Dimension was the evolution of the four elemental primary Forms: Water, Earth, Fire, and Air. This evolution of the Primaries gave Life to a fifth Elemental called Hu. Now the Hu was a physical combination of the original four Primaries. The Hu combined Water and Earth into form, then gave that form life through the warmth of Fire and nourished this warm form with, Air. The Hu was Water,

Earth, Fire, and Air, combined. The fallen gods watched and waited, awed at the splendor of Life.

The first Hu became Form, that Form is what we now call a Body. The first Bodies were neither male nor female, they were not sexual creatures. However, the Third dimension was a dimension of Touch and so it was that the Son Touched the Hu causing the Hu to become Man... HuMan. After the Son touched the HuMan there came the WoMan, like yet different from the HuMan.

Being that the first human beings were now male and female they were completely physical in all manner of the word. Where they had once been non-physical entities like their predecessors the Elementals, they now were not, they had physical bodies complete with reproductive organs and the Desire to use them. They multiplied in Pleasure and they multiplied in Pain.

Before the creation of the Hu's physical body, sustenance was unnecessary, but the male and female body required food. With the need for food came the need to kill. At first the Hu only murdered the plants, this lasted for many generations. But the Son, in a moment of compassion, gave the Humans command over the Element of Fire. The Hu used that command over fire to heat their body and then to heat food and then to turn the other life forms into sustenance... the son wept!

With command over the Element of Fire the Hu soon gained command over the Element of Earth and he altered it to suit his needs. The Hu now toiled the earth, killed its creatures and cooked them with Fire... Hu became human, and humans became the rulers of the four elements... the Son was so distraught that he left the Earth for the faraway places.

The Third however remained, observing with great interest the new humans.

The first humans were as of yet unperfected as a result of their sparse numbers. In time however, the genetics of the first humans spread far enough apart that they evolved from cave dwellers, of low intellect, into those of a higher intellect, becoming Hunters and Gatherers. The Others, the Third, interceded and Touched them in the manner of the Son, and the humans became "Like us!" the Third exclaimed. And the Third Desired them and took them as they pleased... sometimes in horrid fashion, and they came unto the human daughters and had children with them and they loved them. These offspring children were the first humans born without the defects of in-breeding and were therefore intellectually superior to the original Humans.

Love was new, and Love was Powerful.

The Third, like the Son, were creatures of the first two dimensions, only banished into physical Form. To return to the first two heavens only required the repentance of their sin, "The lose of Faith." However, with the advent of Love, the Third, no longer desired to return to the heavens, they loved that which was here and Desired to be with

that which they Loved. Love became the Choice. And the more Love they had the less spiritual they became; and the less spiritual they were, the more physical they became.

With this increase in solidity came the loss of telepathy. With the loss of telepathic communication came the need for physical communication... Spoken Words. At first those words imitated the clicking of the insects, then the grunts of the ape, then the roar from the beasts of the fields. And so it was that Sound and Thought became married and gave birth to Words; Words were Sound. The ability to produce Thought decreased and the ability to make Words increased.

Now that humans were advancing intellectually and genetically, due to their mixing of bloodlines with the Others (the fallen angels), they too gained a certain mastery over Thought through Sound and Word. Soon thereafter the subject was broached about who was greater, the Father or the Son and in this sin come to humanity, the fruit from the tree of Good and Evil had been eaten, in form of Opinion.

Most of the humans believed that the Father was greater, however, some of them, though small in numbers, believed it to be the Son, and Religion was born into humanity.

The Heretic I call son, then went on to reference to the Book of Job in the Old Testament Bible, emphasizing the part in the story where Satan was in heaven, conversing with God. As the Biblical story goes, God calls to attention the Faith of Job who believed in the superiority of the Father, to which the Devil responded by pointing out that the only reason that Job was a man of such stellar faith was because he was protected by God because of his Choice.

God responded by pointing out that Job was of his (the Devil's) world yet he chose to believe in the Omnipotence of the Father, the One God. After much discussion the Bible tells us that it was decided that Job's faith could be tested and it was, however, in the end he remained true to his belief in the omnipotence of the One God's superiority to all other gods. After the epic life of Job was over, time passed and things continued for humanity as if Job had never existed; choices were made, Religions were formed, and non-believers were annihilated. Time passed and passed again.

Once the Devil was in the presence of God and as always the subject of humanity was at the forefront of their discussion; God was proud of humanity and let it be clearly known to the fallen angel through his countless blessings on them, showing that he favored them highly. For God so loved the world.

Division reigned on the Earth as Religion itself became divided and soon humanity lost its faith in the gods completely and began to worship the ideals of man disguised as the ideals of the Three, and in a few generations humanity had fallen far from the Tree of Knowledge. Once again God summoned the Son to heaven and there he accused him and condemned him saying that the falling away of humanity from the Faith was the fault of the Son. The Son argued that humanity was evil in and of itself, not as a result of anything which he had done, but God disagreed. In anger the Son told the Father that he would do

as God thought right, that he would return to the Earth and present to humanity the perfect ideals as outlined by the Father's own directives, that he would do exactly as God wished and then bragged "I will even tell them that the Father is greater than the Son." Then he followed that up by saying, "They are animals Father, just watch and you will see!" Then he left heaven and came to Earth.

Part 4

The Son was born on the earth in a place called Israel, there he grew into manhood. In his manhood he was perfect; he taught peace and love; he taught them the power of the Father and he professed his Father was greater than the Son. He walked on water and healed the infirmed, he was the greatest among them all... and they killed him for it. After his death, the humanity that God had tried to save, turned upon the One God and began to worship the Son, saying that he and the Father were One; completely missing the reality of the Omnipotence of the Father. The Son having proved his point concerning the nature of humanity wept for the shame of their actions, in his shame he could not bring himself to return to heaven after resurrecting, nor did he gloat at having ultimately won the argument about who was the greatest; he simply vanished from the Earth, leaving humanity to their own devices.

It was here that I could no longer bear the weight of my son's sinful teachings and I left that place; never again did I see his tortured soul or his lovely face ever again.

So appalled was I by his blasphemy that I returned to the Abby where I had been given lodging and there I knelt in prayer and tearful supplication, begging for the soul of my child, knowing as I did that the sins of the son are sins of anger resulting from the sins of the father. "He is only angry at me!" I told God. Then I put myself to the switch until my back bled and the pain of it so great that I fell unconscious onto the cold stone floor.

In that state of unconsciousness I dreamt of my sister and she came to me. I took her into my arms and I looked into her almond eyes and I loved her the way a man does his woman. In my dreams I was not a priest, but a man. In my dreams I was not a failure, but a lover. In my dreams she was not my sister, but the other half of me. In my dreams she completed me... but I did not live in my dreams, I lived in my world and in my world I was a sinner and in my world I had abandoned her.

When I regained consciousness I went to Confession, but I did not confess everything that needed absolution... how could I? Instead I told only of my dream. I hid the story of my sister and I hid the truth of our child.

After evening prayers the Abby requested my presence in his chambers and there he talked about the young heretic. It was then that he told me my mission to bring about a conversion of the young heretic was now irrelevant because an excommunicated and soundly insane ex-priest had gathered together a cadre of followers and had put the young heretic to the death of stoning. I was stunned into silence and then I wept for him and the Abby thought me a saint, for loving so deeply a sinner of his magnitude. Before I left on pilgrimage I heard told that the last words of the young heretic had been "Tell my father that I love him," words of repentance they said... but I knew better.

The sun was unbearable yet I sat like a statue and counted my breath. I do not know how long I sat this way but it must have been for a goodly length of time for I could

feel the sun baking my blistered back like flat-bread on an oven-stone. Just as I was near to losing consciousness I heard a loud singing in my ear, so loud, in fact, that I was compelled to open my eyes in an effort to stop it... when I did, there standing before me, was the only love of my life. She was radiant and looked as I remembered her in childhood. "Why haven't you written our story?" she asked.

So great was my remorse that I could not respond in words, but that did not seem to matter because she heard my thoughts "Because it is a story about evil," they said.

She smiled and then said, "Evil. How can there be evil in love!"

"This I do not know, mi amor," I said in words, suddenly finding my voice. Then added "But it is true non-the-less. We sinned and the result of that sin was blasphemy... you are innocent, but I am the father and the sins of the son belong to the father. I do not know why this is so, but nonetheless it is. No my love, I'll never put the sins of our family to paper... those sins will die here with me."

In silence we stood and looked deeply one upon the other and then, as if God himself were sending us a message, a small butterfly came and lighted softly in the space between us, looking lovingly at the both of us, one then the other.

She at last broke the silence that I suddenly found laying between us like covers upon the nuptial bed of our queer life, "It will not die here, with you," she said.

My eyes and ears snapped to attention as the possibilities of her words clawed there way into my consciousness. She continued. "We have a granddaughter and she will have a child who will have a child, and that child will bring the Church to its knees by publishing a list of its sins. He will carry your crazy eyes, my passionate heart, and the angry blood of our child to the steps of the Church, thereby forcing them to relinquish their control over an uneducated flock. This absolution will happen because of the fact that our sin, as you see it, has given birth to two others, first our son, and second, you taking the cloth as a man of God. And those sins, as YOU call them, resulted in the murder of our child, a child whose own bloodline will never forget the injustice of that first murder until many years later when that same bloodline, yours and mine, will bring forth another priest, one that will bring the light of truth to untruth."

"This is the way of God, my brother, my lover, my priest. God sometimes uses things we humans consider sin to HIS purpose." My lover looked to the North and then smiled. "I love you brother," were her final words, then she was gone.

I sat upon a flat rock and watched the sun set over the rocky desert in front of me. I counted nine different blues in the sky that night and I saw the stars in their quaint twinkling language, and just before I toppled over and into the arms of all knowledge I saw her again surrounded in an aura of golden light.

In that light she opened her arms and smiled as I apologized for not writing the story of our live, then she said "Don't worry my heart, you will."

I pop awake to reality of my bunk, the walls, the bars on the window, and my wife's picture on the wall... from it she is smiling at me with laughter in her almond eyes.

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