THE MAN WHO KNEW MARY

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THE MAN WHO KNEW MARY

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The novel, *The Man Who Knew Mary*, is a fancy of science and art. It is a novel of analogy and simulacrum, of coincidence and synchronicity.

Beginning as an ethnobotanist, John Whitney, the central character through whose consciousness and unconsciousness the relevancies of the work flow, ends as a simple chaste husband-protector of an orphaned girl whose time for giving birth is imminent.

There is an expedition into southwest Siberia undertaken by a team of eight scientists. From all parts of the world the men come and meet at Khandhad, a city at the rim of Asia.

This surface reality is seen as through old varnish, or as through a haze of the hashish the scientists constantly smoke. What is more clear and more cleanly visualized are the stances taken by the dramatic sets of dialogues into which the character-actors enter. These dialogues build and thicken and a theme emerges: There is a wondrous correspondence between man and certain organisms in the world of botany. These dialogues are evidenced by rich mythological, Biblical, and linguistical allusions, and by turns of word plays botanically and humanly sexual.

It may be said that the novel is signally a novel of words in the sense that words are seen here as male principles which want lodging in fertile matter to impregnate. This implanting by words is the manner of the Immaculate Conception and the manner, in a mystical poetic sense, of parthenocarpy - reproduction in the plant world without sexual union. Such parthenocarpy is common in fungi. It is through one species of mushroom, the *amanita muscaria*, the divine mushroom, that John Whitney comes to his personal annunciation - words of mission into his ear spoken.

Following a great storm the expedition is abandoned. One scientist, an Englishman named David Hailender, after an agaric eating ritual, rushes out into the wind and snow. Whitney attempts a rescue, but because of the ingestion of the agaric, fails and falls himself unconscious in a forest of birch. Here he receives the vision which signals for him the beginning of his mission.

Whitney convalesces at an outpost while the other scientists return home. A letter comes for Hailender. Whitney takes it and learns that a girl is coming to Khandhad to meet Hailender. She is homeless and pregnant.
The pattern which has been building Whitney begins to realize. He must go to Khandhaa and take the girl. This is a fully conscious, fully intentional act, taken to bring the design to full focus.

The girl comes and Whitney takes her to a university somewhere in the western world where he had, before the expedition, scheduled a series of lectures. While working on the fifth and last lecture and in heavy use of hashish and opium, the pressure of the underlying design pushes to the surface and, whether succumbing to the force as something from the outside or falling before the workings of his own imagination and belief, Whitney falters and drifts irrevocably away from his science and enters into a nether-land of a poetic fancy controlled by distant and near memory and by acute visual perception. Whitney comes to his particular set of attitudes by what he had heard and by what he sees in the girl.

He believes in the Immaculate Conception; believes it has happened in the girl. He believes he has discovered the way of the intimacies between Mary, the mother of Jesus and Joseph, her husband-protector. Whitney focuses, finally, the full design. The cycle has come again to be lived. His role is to be abeyant, to be forever aware of the sexual mortality of the girl in his charge but to be forever abeyant.
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CHAPTER I

A MAN OF SCIENCE

Dr. John Whitney, ethnobotanist and member of the abandoned 1872 Spring World Congress in Ethnobotany and Afghan Frontier Delimitation Expedition, rode quiet and passive back to Khandhad. Obsessing and suspending him was a marvelous abstraction. His mount followed in the trail of a great white horse held tightly by a silent Kirgis man in a cossack hat and soft fur boots. Each verst toward Khandhad brought Whitney closer to the proof of the authenticity of his vision. That it all had been an hallucination; that in the spell of the amanita he had seen what no man could possibly have seen in normal consciousness in no wise, he struggled to believe, struck at the import of the vision. There had been a phenomenon. There had been a registering of data.

The Kirgis guide dismounted and took his horse aboard a raft. Whitney followed and below a furious cascade where the water deepened and slowed they crossed the river Tom. Whitney held the reins of his horse and stared back to the far bank. Then he turned his head to the prickling dewy scatter of the river's cold mist. His vision blazed with a white sear, twisting, stretching from one bank of the
river to a point just beyond the extreme peripheral range of his stricktered eyes.

If the girl comes to Khandhad seeking a man by the name of David Hallender I should not consider that over much in itself. The man had said a girl was meeting him there. . . . ("I must get back to Khandhad. There is a girl coming there to meet me. I was to meet her much later, after the expedition. For some reason she is coming early. I must get back.") . . . she is homeless.

The raft strained at the heavy ropes and dug in against the grain of the west-flowing water. It logged its way toward the men on the bank pulling the rope-lines. And if the girl is with child? What then? Would I consider that a proof of the vision? No, not yet would I. If she agrees to go with me in Hallender's stead? Then? Not enough . . . yet.

They crossed a dry bed of a once mighty river where black, rounded, flat stones lay like pieces of a giant's game and where to their right towered a wall of soft velvet rock in whose black clefts there hung greening fringes of yellow-flowered moss. If the girl is beautiful and if she says she had slept with no one, should I then believe? If the signs unfold, one and then another? And I, if I do believe, would I not, in time, come to dishonor what the belief charged? It would come to be too much. I would break.
On and on they rode toward Khandhad, taking meager meals and sleeping in makeshift camps. The weather was cold. On the third day there was a cutting, bone-chilling rain. She may indeed be with child. If so, there is nothing to that. There are many. And should she say she has slept with no one, I will answer her with doubting silence. "But I am with child, sir!"

I will reply, "Yes, of course you are with child, because I received a message in a vision or because a man lay between your legs and his seed hit you and you conceived?"

On the evening of the fifth night they saw the lamps of Khandhad. They camped. After a short ride the next morning, they came to the outskirts of the town. The two got off their horses and here was an exchange - to the mongol John Whitney gave a leather vest and received a pyramidal piece of flint capped in brass. Then the man took the ropes of both horses, mounted one, and rode away leading the other. He rode back east toward a band of orange that streamed under the morning sun. John watched the gallop. He turned and entered into the town. The Belock Lodgings. She would meet David Mallender at the Belock Lodgings on Friday, the twelfth of April. By his calculation it was the morning of the ninth of April. He would take rooms and wait.

The 1872 Spring World Congress in Ethnobotany and Afghan Frontier Delimitation Expedition had ended in death
and abandonment. It would be an opprobrious chapter in a career and for the others who had returned to their homes it all was best forgotten. There would be restoration. There would be for them a healing. But for John Whitney the expedition was the climax of an unknown but fortuitous preparation for a beginning which lay ahead.

The expedition officially began on February twenty-eight, 1872. From India, Europe, England, and Russia the botanists came and the last leg of the journey, by train from Kriszt to Khandhad, had taken seven days. There were five changes of trains and at each change the number of the party grew - at Paris, David Hallender, Ona Koyoto, and John Whitney; at Berlin, Danel Demmerle; at Bialystok, Otto Kruger and Jamal Haverli; at Moscow, Lars Mornersson and Dmitri Capplemanov.

To Kybeyshev and Karagnada and Kriszt. To the rim of Asia.

At Khandhad the party of eight scientists disembarked and were greeted by four officials in red and black uniforms and helmet-shaped hats. There was a lengthy reading of a formal welcome and courtesies all around, and simultaneously, there began the unloading of baggage and the restacking of it on a large unharnessed sledge. The ceremony over, personal valises were claimed and then the men were taken inside a station house where began the unraveling of procedural interviewing, credentialing, and local sanctioning for the journey in.
Whitney lingered a moment to warm himself at a large Russian stove which stood in the center of the public area of the station house. He looked into a small room adjacent where Capplemanov and Mornersson sat talking to two of the officials. Whitney walked to a window and looked out at the town. He had expected spire, dome, light-latticed gates, and geometrics. But all was merely squalorous, a heap of stones. A covering of light snow hid nothing of the marrow of the town's ugliness. Whitney turned from the window and looked again into the small room. Capplemanov and Mornersson had opened their valises and were displaying papers. The officials held forms and one offered out a pen to Capplemanov.

The room was warm. Whitney removed his great coat and went to a bench and sat down. He wished for coffee.

At one of the windows Haverli and Koyoto stood looking out.

Koyoto asked, "Have you been to Ghant? A despicable place. This view reminds me. All rubble."

Whitney saw Haverli's lips snarl as he turned away from the steamy glass of the window. He noticed Whitney watching them. He then turned back and swiped at the glass.

"I have. I was there in '68 for a conference, which was, incidentally, given up after two days. There were no accommodations. And it all was poorly planned."
"Yes, I remember. There was quite a roar over it."
"What of our business here? Do you know how long we shall be here, in Khandhad?"
Koyoto answered, "No. Capplemanov will not say."
"The man is quite evasive. Well, will they feed us? Or coffee?" Haverli looked in at the four in the official's room.

There started a smoking from a ruin of rust ringing round the stack near the broad top of the stove. A man came out from one of the other rooms and attempted a repair.

Whitney slid down the bench away from the stove and smoke. He watched Haverli. Haverli was a ferret of a man with glasses and a line of a carefully trimmed mustache. On the train Whitney had overheard him talking to Mornersson about Hippocrates and Galen. Whitney knew the man was first rate as a botanist. Whitney had read his books and listened to him lecture once at the Sorbonne. Mornersson, Whitney learned as well that night, had only recently come back to his science after a long period of time at a care facility in Sweden. There had been some mental debilitation, but by his words restoration of health and faculty had been complete. If he had lost color or weight, both had returned. He was a giant of a man with a giant's ruddy, jovial face made bulkier by his full beard. From Whitney's associates at the Société Mycologique in Paris he knew of Mornersson. Mornersson's scholarship had been respected and there was a general wait for the resumption of his work.
Koyoto wore a long black cloak with a full hood. He lingered at the window and commented again on the town.

"A place of enchantment. Go to a small village in America. Say the name Khandhad, say it is an outpost for travel into the great ranges of Asian mountains. 'Ah!' the provincials will exclaim and dream a revival of their youth's sentiment for romance...

Koyoto had been in London - for what purpose Whitney did not know - and had come from there with Hallender to Paris. Whitney was not familiar with his work, and the Hindu apparently knew nothing of his.

By the time the last man cleared it was dark and they were all only interested in what genuine rest and what measure of comfort they might expect for the next few hours. They were hungry and exhausted.

They walked out of the station through the snow, clustered behind a guide taking them to food and lodgings. Kruger said, "The twenty-eighth of February? Time to begin a journey into mountains?"

"Necessarily. Before the thaw. We had hoped to time everything just perfectly." The answer came from the lank, white-faced Capplemanov who had been designated the team leader. He had been to Pamir before, although in the area more to the northeast of the projected exploration.

He lived in Petersburg. He wrote and occasionally lectured.

Whitney had heard him one night on the train engaging Koyoto. "I was there, at Nineveh, when that great evil
city was unearthed. Twenty years ago, it was. I made a
trek from Mesopotamia across to Palestine. Abram's desert
trail. I was yet romantic at thirty and believed the waters
of Babylon still flowed, believed one could yet stumble over
the stones of Jerico's walls, there was to be found ash from
Samson's fox-fire, honey yet in the carcass, that Bathsheba
still walked to show herself to the king. How many sons of
Judes had stables of Arabian white horses? I sought evidence
that the mother of Jesus was Indo-Aryan, looked for a link
that took her back two thousand years before her birth, a
great-granddaughter of those invaders. . . ."

And to Kruger he said, one long night an hour out of
Kybeyshev, the Austrian had tempted the Russian's memory,
". . . and you were thrilled just by hearing names - vezind,
quicksilver, galague, musk, silk, lignam slices, cubeb, ama-
mum, amanita, pearl, dove's eggs, bhang, mandrake. . . ."

Kruger did not want to come. He had rejected the
appointment twice but finally accepted. He had wanted to
go to his cabin - he owned land in a very remote area of
Austria - to finish a work of fiction begun years ago and
stashed away. Kruger was their linguist. He was a slight
man with heavy tan eyes and close-cropped white hair.

Demmerle, from Dresden University, had been quiet
throughout the journey. He read and slept, and apparently
took no notice of their harsh accommodations. Although,
Whitney was certain, he was gentle, the man had mean slitted
eyes the color of sandstone. He was bald except for patches
of hair at his ears. He was fully bearded with yellowish-grey hair. And like Mornersson, he was of tremendous size.

The Englishman, David Hallender, with a Roman hawk nose and full mouth, Whitney had caught in a strange situation one night on the train. It had been perhaps an indiscretion on his part but Whitney had listened - he could not keep but listen for Hallender was distinctly audible and sitting just ahead. The train had stopped and all the preparatory steaming had begun. It was the dead of night and the coach was quiet. Whitney saw a matchlight and heard a rustle of paper. The voice was soft and plaintive. Hallender was reading aloud to himself. She will come to Khandhad upon word of your return there. She will require your care and protection. Take her to a rural place. . . . Hallender blew out the match and eased up in his seat, Whitney presumed, to replace the letter in his pocket. Although he had listened Whitney was in no wise interested in Hallender's letter. He had been attentive only out of an exhausted stupor that would not allow sleep. Whitney shut his eyes and clenched them. Then he heard Hallender speak again, in the car darkness, as the train lurched forward into the wet fog. I will have to give up everything . . . could I do that? . . . waste my science?" Whitney became for a moment attentive and wondered at the Englishman's words. Then he had slept.

Whitney shared that first night at Khandhad rooms with Mornersson and Haverli. There were three cots and a
washstand and pitcher and bowl. Haverii was the first to sleep. He had been a glutton at their supper. Whitney watched him, fitful and digging at what Whitney supposed were fleas which had early infested Haverii's fat white legs and arms. There was a look on Haverii's face as if he searched in his sleep for the solace intrepidation sometimes brought.

Mornersson was sitting on his cot, an open book in his hand.

"Turn down the lamp for Haverii's sake." Whitney said. He smiled at the big man who reached for the lamp base.

"We should know more about everything."

Whitney nodded his agreement. There had been some talk at supper, although Capplemanov would not verify it, that they would go by horseback to Kunitex and then by river north to Neviansk.

The third day after their arrival at Khandhad the scientists were on their way toward Kunitex. It was a pleasant three-day ride. The weather was mild and windless. The camps were made in good spirits. The guides were expert, congenial, and much less primitive than Whitney expected them to be. They were given to instructing anyone who found interest in their food preparation, brewing, bed making and sheltering, and fire making. At night they told camp tales. Late, with Whitney drifting into sleep, he
could hear their voices low, softly mellowing and fanning
from out the circle of stones about the fire. Their pipes
steamed and the men laughed quietly. Hailender had been
the only one of them not sharing in the general cheer. He
remained distant. He ate alone and drank enormous quantities
of the brick tea.

At Kumitex the men were delighted to find a formal
greeting party. There was music and it was then before
their supper that Capplemanov finally told in some detail
where they would be going and more of what they would be
after. There had been changes and the Russian had been
reluctant to admit them. Now, in the spirituous atmosphere,
as he had evidently surmised, his disclosures were not ques-
tioned. Although there were doubts and a coming of an
uneasiness and not a little suspicion, there was nothing
expressed. Hailender was preoccupied, sitting blankly.

Whitney was only mildly alerted by Capplemanov's
words but very attentive to Hailender. Whitney knew him
to be troubled, and by something extraneous to their jour-
ney. He remembered the night on the train, Hailender read-
ing the letter. The others, after momentary exchanges of
quizzical looks, took up again their pleasantness. When
Capplemanov finished there was a scatter of polite applause.

They were given beef in a thick soup with cheese,
barley breads, sauces, and plenteous quantities of tiny red
onions, whole and piquant in a vegetable mash. The men
finished their supper and followed with tobacco and liquor
and beer. There was an hour of talk. Then a pause and an
exchange of tobacco. Whitney took hashish from Koyoto's
leather pouch and feathered it into the wide bowl of his pipe.
The men lingered at the table. There was a languor.

Out of the thick smoke Haverli asked Whitney, "Have
you, Dr. Whitney, finished your book on the hallucinative
mushroom?"

Whitney shook his head. "No, not yet." No, that
is in my trunk, stored at the Société. In progress, but
merely waiting completion. "I hope to finish it after we
return."

Koyoto savored his pipe, caressed it with his lips.
"There is, of course, a rich symbolism in the mushrooms, par-
ticularly in the consciousness--altering ones, a rich poetic,
cultural, Biblical allusiveness. Are you dealing strictly
... chemically?"

"Yes." Whitney only recently had come to ethnology
and he was yet unsure of it. He was not especially taken
with it even though his father had been an expert in the
field--though it was not called ethnology then, but just
the writings of Galen, Hippocrates, Pliny, Discourides, and
the others--and had given the young boy books and had spent
long hours in dialogue with the boy. There was for him now
more security and personal definition in the chemistry of
botany. He could only believe his selection for the Congress
expedition had been for his abilities in identification, classification and organic-chemical analysis.

"For my part, I am entirely fascinated with the literary aspects of plants, which, at base, is entirely psychological, particularly the medicinal plants, the extraordinary roots and herbs and fungi. The mind plants, should I say. But I am not surprised that I am so interested, so caught. I had an entirely boggling, marvelous experience when I was fourteen. It has been for me a kind of touchstone, though professionally I have gone beyond it. An ad\vocation. . . ." Koyoto offered, expecting encouragement.

The Hindu waited.

"I would like to hear of your experience, Dr. Koyoto," Hallender lifted back in his chair, coming out of his distance and arousing his limbs, stretching and pulling at his wrists with his hands.

Koyoto began and held them with his story, his voice a rich palette of color and harmony.

"I was fourteen. I was sent by my guardian to a bordello to announce my manhood. I had been in the care of the kindly man and his wife since I was four. My real parents had died and my foster parents had given their only son up to a religious order believing him to be of a greater kinship to God than most men. But to continue - I entered the garden of the bordello through a low arch, ducking to do
so. I walked under a projecting balcony and out to the
garden. There were wildly curving paths going hither and
yon everywhere and fascinating, beautiful young women in
pastel dresses as transparent as gauze trod the paths. Others
paraded in pairs on the lawns. Others sat in societies by
shallow pools beneath canopies of plane trees . . . suddenly
there appeared a scald of light. I turned away and toppled
back trying to avoid the blinding glare. I lost my balance
and fell behind a latticed screen and into some bushes. I
lost consciousness . . . and thereupon came the vision. The
third in the sequence. Each slightly at variance with the
others, but essentially the same. . . .

"There came running a strapping girl fully sexed and
entirely without covering of any kind. She ran, holding an
immense mushroom over her head, straight-armed, like a torch
light. The plant had just been ripped from the ground by its
roots - rich black earth clung to the roots and there was a
boggy sweet aroma. The cap of the plant was a blaze of red
flecked with cheezy scabs . . . behind her came an old man
dressed in professorial robes and catching at his doctoral
bonnet to keep it from failing. In his hands were a peit of
lamb's wool, one small crock, and one larger pot with a
pestle rattling around in it. As the girl passed directly
in front of me the old man caught her. They fought comic-
ally for the plant for a time and then seemed to reach an
agreement, for he stepped back away from the girl and
released his tentative claim to the treasure. She lay down
and curled her legs out ... and with a sharp gasp of breath, plunged the menhir to the hilt up into her vulva. She worked her lower body around the plant and gave a shudder and fell back, her head in a swoon.

"The old man knelt, grabbed hold of the roots of the plant mingling with the sopped hair of the girl, and slipped it out. Straightway he placed the plant in the larger pot and began grinding away at it with the pestle until it had become juice and mash. Next he placed the lamb wool over the rim of the smaller crock, made a shallow depression to catch the pour, and emptied slowly the full contents of the larger pot into the pocket of wool. The filter allowed the juice to pass through and strained out the pulp. He waited a short while and then tossed aside the wool and peered into the crock that had caught the juice.

"As the girl began to come around and show again some life the old man lifted the crock to his lips and drank down the juice in one swallow ... at once he threw off his bonnet and his robes ... and flew away. ... The girl grabbed at the discarded clothes, apparently ashamed, and covered herself with them. Then she ran back from whence she came.

"I awoke out of the dream and immediately sensed that only a few seconds had passed. Now, out of the dream, it seemed I had only stumbled, had fallen back behind the screen and into some bushes and had, at once, gotten up, to resume my walk. There was absolutely no sense of passed time. ..."
Hallender was eager. "Did you continue on with the assignation?"

"No. I retreated and left the garden. I went home and lied to my guardian telling him I had indeed become a man that day. After our dinner that night I went to my room and made a vow— I would read all of my guardian's books to find the meaning and the cause of the vision, or the dream. It had come three times in that space of four months. I set down with paper and pen and drew a schedule of my anticipated free time—there would be, of course, my formal studies which I could not abandon— but there would also be a great deal of free time. I would fill these hours with a private investigation into the nature of the vision. I made a list of all of father's books, noted their length and evident difficulty, and slotted them to my schedule. I began the next day and kept at it for three years!"

Haverli bade a goodnight, followed by Mornersson. There remained Hallender, Kruger, Cappiemanov, and Whitney listening to Koyoto's account.

Koyoto went on at Hallender's urging. "At first I managed eighty to a hundred pages at each interlude. I read everything— philosophy, psychology, Greek natural science and astronomy, literature, and religious texts. At the end of the first six weeks I was reading two hundred pages of material at each sitting. That increased to three hundred. By year's end, in each scheduling period, I could complete
a full book. In those three years - God! did I hold fast to the schedule. - I must have read a thousand books."

"Did you find what you were looking for?" Haverli asked.

"Of course ... I found it during the first year."

"Why did you keep reading?" Haverli asked again.

Koyoto leaned forward toward the fire and stroked his nose with two fingers of his left hand. "I didn't want to find it - should I say - I didn't want the answer to be found anywhere else than in the one book. It had to be a singular experience. I did not want it hawked about. I read to find it not repeated."

Hallender asked "... where Dr. Koyoto?"

"In the Rg Veda, Dr. Hallender."

The Hindu smiled at Hallender who sat sunk deep in his low long chair. Hallender seemed to Whitney to be a man who had much to tell, but if there was from him a story or more from Koyoto Whitney would not hear it. He got up and left them and went to his room. The others followed.

The next morning they would leave Kumitov by sledge and plan to reach Khotash station - twenty-six versts north-by-nightfall. There they would go by river barge to the mining town of Neviansk.

In the greyness of a cold wet day the six horses slashed their way like smoking machines along the frozen road. There had been drifts and deadfalls but they covered the distance by mid afternoon and at supper time were housed
at the Khotash station on the steep bank of the Sereoural River. The outpost was manned by a man and his wife, both hulking figures. She seemed to the travelers a kindly enough woman, concerned that all were comfortable in the rooms and well fed. The man was a mute gesticulating slowly, incessantly with his hands and eyes.

Whitney was put in a large room with Koyoto, Mornersson, Hallender, and Kruger. He took out a small leather-bound diary and began writing. Hallender was asleep on his cot. Koyoto read. Mornersson and Kruger went downstairs to ask for a kettle of tea. It was a snug room with an iron stove chuck full of wood burning with a kind of figgy odor. Whitney experienced a feeling of warmth and his writing flourished.

After their supper of white salmon and a syrupy strawberry pudding, replete with garnishments and black bread, Koyoto and Hallender had drawn together to complete, or engage in an installment of, their conversation of the last night at Kumitex. Peripheral and taking too much tobacco and cigarette Whitney had listened.

Hallender began. "I have not had dreams, except the forgettable ones, nor visions, except those confusions after taking the drug morphine for my pain in my lower back and side."

"A wound?"

"Yes, bullet in the side. Hunting accident at our manor in the Midlands. Many years ago, but I can't rid
myself of the occasional razor-like, disabling pain. I take the drug in my arm — very small dosage."

"... have you escaped addiction?" The Hindu's voice was suspicious.

"Fortunately I have." Hailender emptied his tumbler of ale and drew closer to Koyoto. His hands wiped at his hair pulling it back in oily feathers. Eyes alternately bright and rheumy and high forehead. Roman centurian in Nazareth longing for the olive groves of his little village.

"Dr. Koyoto, in ordinary situations, no tobacco, no spirits, no morphine, completely, apparently in control, I am seized and propelled to a scene but have only an intimation of the scene. It is as if one force insistently desires that I stand and visualize the picture; the other force, countering, screens my vision with a tantalizing curtain. Just as the curtain begins to part I lose the vision. I have absolutely no suspicion of what the scene could be. But I am aware that if I could make out the shapes and activities clearly, I would see something at once completely familiar. I would see, possibly, myself."

Koyoto tied a braided thong of leather to his belt and fixed to the end a tarnished pocket watch, his brown fingers pulling the thong through the oval grasp of the watch and snapping a simple knot. He released the catch and the metal cover lifted slightly. He pulled the cover back and responded to the time.

"It is late Dr. Hailender. Should we..."
Halloender grabbed the Hindu's arm. "There's one more thing I must tell you. There's a girl I am to marry after our work here. She is to meet me at Khandhad when we return there. I don't know the girl, never have met her. The marriage was - should I say - arranged. Her father and a friend of mine in London. She had been in a cloister of some kind and was told to leave. There's more to it and more yet that I don't know. It seems enough here to say that I have a pervasive sense of foreboding about this journey."


"There is no feeling of vocation about us. We seem to have little concern for our objectives. And what those are is uncertain. Capplemanov really says little. I have an impulse to think we are not here at all for the expedition, but are here gathered for some other purpose. I want to resign my place and go back to Khandhad. I feel impelled to contact my friend in London and make those necessary arrangements to reach the girl and take care of her." Hallowender was positively shaking now. Perspiration beaded his brow.

"... and your visitations to the strange perimeter around the hidden vision?" Koyoto was slightly patronizing.

"... is some way correlating to that sense of urgency I have to reach the girl. There is imminent some phenomenon. I want you to sponsor the release from my responsibilities. Talk to Capplemanov for me. I must start
back tomorrow. Do this for me, Dr. Koyoto."

Koyoto looked directly at Whitney to see if he had heard. Whitney acknowledged that he had, by nodding.

Hallender saw the exchange. "I don't mind Dr. Whitney knowing. Will you speak to Capplemanov?"

"Tonight?"

David Hallender got up from the chair and walked to the fire, leaned on the stone mantle, and repeated his words. "I must start back tomorrow! She is likely to come to Khandhad early."

Koyoto went over. There was a comment from Koyoto and an answer from Hallender. The man from Chandernagore left the room and Whitney sensed that Hallender seemed slightly less anxious. Hallender took more ale into his tumbler and drank it down. He walked to the door and Whitney, slightly drunk, wished him good fortune. Whitney had no doubt he would go and prepare his drug. As he watched Hallender enter the hallway Hallender's hand went to his side and his smooth walk became a slight limp and then a halting hobble. No, Hallender could not make the journey if he wanted. He obviously is an afflicted man, physically and possibly psychically. Capplemanov will surely give him the release. Even without Capplemanov's permission, Whitney looked for the man to leave the group. There will be possibly a great deal of difficulty for him - getting back to Khandhad. It had not been easy, this far in, even with the sanction of the Congress. To go back out? Who could say?
CHAPTER II

A RECORDING OF IMPRESSION

The next morning they were aboard the Neviansk mining barge steaming north and Hallender was with them. Cappelmanov had given the release but had advised that better travel might be made by going on to Neviansk. This Whitney learned from Kruger.

Kruger had said, "I would have thought he could have made his way directly back to Kumitex and then to Khandhad. Surely he could have hired a sledge. Why go on?" Whitney agreed.

The barge made twenty-five versts and anchored at dark. On the west bank of the river lay cultivatable land; on the east were high, wooded hills. The snow was fast disappearing - in some places entirely gone, in other spots deep yet in wallows. The day had been gloriously bright - a day without clouds, with a soft breeze out of the larch and birches uttering an early season, with a hint of yellowing sap running up from the roots of cranberry lining the river. Hundreds of black birds had followed the barge and nested in thick white stands of aspen. A moon yellow as a mellow harvest sun rose in the eastern sky over the hills and hung overhead and was a source of the light Whitney needed to write in
journal. He was out on the deck. Several of the miners on board going up to Neviansk had early on coaxed Demmerle and Mornersson into a game of cards. There was some good-natured laughter from Demmerle. Whitney was pleased to hear it. Demmerle had been so grim.

What Hallender had said concerning Capplemanov's failure to significantly define their objectives Whitney felt was valid. He was beginning a sympathy for Hallender. Or is it that I only know little - the others more? Whitney recalled a sentence or two from his letter of appointment. ... into Pamir and north. There will be eight including yourself, Dr. Whitney. We want to get you well into the country before the spring rains and right at ice break-up. We are interested in the cultural continuity, particularly in agriculture but in wild food gathering too - between the most primitive methods of the Kurgis people and those of the Indo-Aryans, taking Linschotens theories about the Indo-Aryans for one control and your observations during the expedition for the other.

Dmitri Capplemanov of St. Petersburg University has been named the party leader. He... (Whitney satisfied himself with a feeling of patience.) We have only really just begun. I suspect a lengthy general meeting when we arrive at Neviansk.

Capplemanov came up from below to join Kruger and Koyoto. The three sat on a long wooden bench bolted to the rail on that level of the barge. Their voices lifted and reached Whitney as he wrote in his journal.
"Could your bordello - when you were fourteen, Dr. Koyoto - be as romantic as you made it seem?" It was Kruger's voice.

"Could any place be?" Capplemanov added.

"Is any enchanting garden as beautiful when you leave as when you first entered? How romantic is the name Siberia, are the names Himalaya and Jerusalem. A predilection of man. . . ."

"To want to believe things are better than they really are."

"Perhaps, but have you considered that the judgment that, at last, points to the differential between promise and reality may be much less than neutral so that the reality is maligned and lived through without proper credit. Jerusalem is romantic - not because of the name, but precisely because of the heaps of stones, the hovels, the stables, the trafficking people. These things are pointed to by those who stress the polarity and it is always the reality that is impugned.

"Another example. I have an idealized woman promoted by her inaccessibility. My desire grows. Suddenly she is available. I go through the banal scene with her. The comparison. Now, is she - after - the same? Have I destroyed desire? If I see one flaw, presumably she was greater when untouched, when yet ideal because there was no knowledge of the flaw. But I say it is for reasons of the flaw that she is ideal. So my fantasy is replete with goats blasting and manure sticking to the feet of the shepherds in the Jerusalem
hills. Mary was appointed and told because in her raw sex was the strongest, her menses the most powerful and, at times, her sexual desire overwhelming. These are perfections. Perfections are misunderstood. The way the word is ordinarily used means a distancing and guarantees a constant frustration. A naming of the dissentient position as perfection admits nothing in the world can satisfy. 

Whitney was surprised to hear these words from a Hindu. But are not our thoughts of the ideal yet of the earth? Koyoto knows of the perfection in the other world. But could there be for him here, as well, a paradise? I agree with his rebuke of the word perfection - if it is of the earth.

Koyoto had all attention. "The foolish Christians were not able to enjoy their sexuality, or the sexuality of the classic writers, so they allegorized everything of the flesh. It is too delicious for the soul to think of a parting, opening vulva - it becomes a Moses parting a frothing, bleeding sea. If Augustine understood literally would he not need to be cleansed, would not he need - as he wrote - to run to Ambrose's allegorical descriptions? God loves the human soul but a wall is between. Meet at the mulberry tree and we will die there, to live. Daphne runs from sex of the male and cries to her father who makes a cross of her. The other transformation is the apotheosis of beastly sex and this is Christian as well. During the middle ages there were waiting ladies who, I take it, rather enjoyed waiting. There was
an apotheosis in waiting, in playing their games. The knight
could wear the ladies cloth impaled on his lance but did not
wish to impale with his sex her hairy cloth. Unrequisition was
the supreme experience. 'If I could hold, Oh lady, your shirt
to my face and sleep. Oh blessed trade for that which was
implanted into the shirt.' Savage lists were fought for
possession of a silk that had been held between a lady's pliant
thighs through the pre-tournament night."

Kruger noted "But there were vicious rapes in the
stables by these knights and the great castles were traps for
animal-like sexuality. Or there were kindly affairs between
the lord and the peasant girl."

Kruger answered "So much more then was the apotheosis
needed by the man. If it were extreme it were a wash and a
soporific. 'If I could feel when I do come to spread your
vulva, Oh, lady, that Pharaoh was on my heels and my rod, by
God, gave me the power to move corporeal water - that would
make me forget the blind rut with the common-roased girl.'
A man of our own day says, 'I got up, the aroma of her on me.
I wipe at my fingers and face with a white cloth. I will
counter my hurtle-down with apotheosis.' There is another
ploy and my own people are skilled at it. This is the pur-
poseful self-denial of the sexual climax or the refrain from
completion of the sexual series. These men want to watch and
chase uncatching. They want to extend their desires. To be
unsatisfied is a devious satisfaction. They imagine exquisite
resolutions. They perhaps fondle the girl and make foreplay moves that elevate lust higher and yet, still higher. They out-tantalize the water that tantalizes Tantalus. They want to hold, to wait for the fortuitous moment, to make a sound, finally when they do make the sex contact, in the coital friction, a sound that only Kolyma wolves could hear."

Capplemanov got to his feet and walked to the rail and peered over into the water. He said, "I think of Keats. 'Bold lover... though winning hear the goal - yet do not grieve; she cannot fade...'"

"No, he isn't grieving. The swain loves the frozen posture. He is ever green and ever burning and will spend his eternity at the supreme pitch." Kruger answered and then asked, "Was your vision a sublimation of a kind, Dr. Koyoto?"

"No, I think it was a shred of ancestral emotion. Perhaps I was that robed professor in another time. And the drink of the Soma brought me death. I left behind my old body and soared away."

"And what is Soma?"

"The juice of the amanita muscaria, the divine mushroom, the bull of the RG Veda."

Capplemanov, at the barge's rail, clenched his pipe in his mouth. There were silver streaks like darting arrows in the water. The moon was entrapped by concentric green circles. There was a hint of snow in the air. Whitney appreciated a deep plum-colored mass of jasper cropping out
of the hills on the east bank. Then his eye followed the sound of a small animal swimming in the dark spaces between the silver darts.

The Russian knocked his pipe against the steel railing and spoke. "When an undergraduate I wrote a paper on The Grecian Urn. My speculations were much different from Dr. Koyoto's. I had it that the swain had caught her once before and the chase blazoned on the surface of the urn was not a representation of the moment before the first seizing but a second chase. Had he not reached her before and known the pleasure of her goods he could not be at her on the urn. The remembered ecstasy was enough to lure him into the impossible situation."

Kruger answered, "I like that very much, and we might think of the girl as Daphne. If she ran from Apollo certainly she would from a mere mortal." There was a quiet.

Whitney mused on his own in their lull. Perhaps the man is running to tell her that she needn't run, that she is all right for nothing.

Kruger broke the silence which was only broken before by slapping water and a moaning low mind. "Perhaps the swain has learned hope. Something I watched several years ago may be a parallel to a steadfast hopeful chase. I was at my cottage in the mountains. There had been heavy rains. My roofing was old and needed repairing. At the first break in the weather I was on the roof to assess the damage. I
was about to climb down when I heard a splash in the rain barrel under one of the eaves. Still on the ladder I leaned back my head to see around a slight overhang of the roof. I could see the barrel three-fourths full and two small rats in the water furiously struggling to stay afloat. I saw a wood shingle on the ground beside the barrel and guessed the curiosity which had proved disastrous for them had taken the pair to the top of the vat, out on the shingle which had been balanced across the rim, and into the water. Both rats would alternately scramble about violently and then rest until their weight began to bear them down. As soon as their heads went under they began thrashing again. After a while the larger rat seemed to lose his strength and his sinking - before tearing to get to air - deepened. The smaller animal seemed yet interested in asserting his right to escape death. He struggled in gulping rounds, brushing the blackened staves of the inside barrel with his oily coat, allowing the partial sinking only for a moment. The larger sank deep and only at the last second would he kick his four legs and twist again to reach the top where he gaped his mouth. His fangs gleamed in his red maw.

Suddenly the smaller quieted and without protest sank like a leaded weight to the bottom of the barrel. At once I came to an understanding of what had happened. The larger rat had adapted a suitable defense for the predicament in which he found himself. He had found a method that drove to the limit his survival time. Like a long distance runner he
hoarded his strength until it was absolutely needed. I knew, however, whatever his marvelous strategy, that he could not last much longer. I thought it fitting that he should live so I climbed down the ladder and walked over to the barrel. I found a bucket and scooped him up out of the water and released him in a gentle cascade by the corner of our cottage. He lay curled on his side and then jerked over to his belly and scampered through a break in the stone foundation.

"As he did so something occurred to me. The smaller rat, less physically endowed perhaps, had given up and was drowned while the other, by fortune of his strength and endurance, had escaped death by water. But it all had been a staging for a significant set of questions and musings. What if the larger rat were saved right at the precise moment of his sure drowning? And then, immediately following the rescue, were replaced into the water. What would be his reaction? Would he go at once to the bottom, where he would have gone without the saving hand and not having time for recuperation or, would he initiate a new phase of his life-extending technique, finding from some source a new strength and from the saving hand a hope? Hope that he, if he struggled, would be lifted up again by the same hand. If that were true, if the rat had indeed learned hope and if that hope gave him access to a reserve of power, how long could his struggle last before he would lose all hope and sink to his death?"
"... and how long could the swain chase? As art, for eternity; as a man - or rat - only for a duration." Koyoto looked across the river to far bank.

The moon had spun a covering and had dropped away from the green circles. There had been lavendar during Kruger's account. Now blackness hung the sky close down upon them. There was no silhouette of conifer against the sky and it seemed to Whitney sure that they were in for a snow. The wind had grown unpleasant and ran at them from a notch in the hills to the northwest. There was a prickle of sleet on Whitney's flesh below his eyes. He felt elusive a joy he wanted to entirely know. He felt prodigal yet had not looked upon the wine when it was red.

The trio below Whitney's perch felt the approaching storm and collared up. They finished their pipes talking more quietly and in tones indicative of that strange sadness that comes when it is accepted that a night's fellowship must be ended. They passed up steps.

"Are you turning in, Whitney?"

"When I have finished my tobacco. A storm likely?"

"I believe so," Capplemanov answered, "Have you talked with Hailender this evening?"

Whitney shook his head. Kruger and Capplemanov followed Koyoto's cordial goodnight. They threw back the door of the steel house and went inside.

Whitney smoked, then went to his cabin for his extra sweater. He got his bedding, and went back out to bunk on
the deck. He would take the sleet full faced for a time, and then roll under a broad-decked boat and sleep under its pitched and swelling breast. The boat hung in ropes, held up by pulleys. "The boat takes capsized sailors in its hollow, elongated cup. Am I poetic now?" Whitney whispered and lay awake beneath the grey downing of fluid ice.

The next day was uneventful, 30 versts. That night they pulled again to the shore to anchor. After supper Hallender went up and paced slowly the prow of the barge. He held the rail with his left hand as he walked clockwise, with his right walking back. Up river, all day, he had sat at the rear of the barge staring into the unfolding waves of the wake wringing his hands and sweeping back his long black hair with his fingers or snapping his head to the right to clear his vision of the dark pelt blown in his eyes.

At supper Whitney thought of the girl Hallender would meet back at Khandhad. Whimsically Whitney invested the unusual arrangement with an even more arcane significance. He thought of the girl going from place to place in that god-forsaken Khandhad town looking for Hallender. And she in fragile health and needing his protection. She is desperate, lonely and afraid. People will not take her in. . . .

Whitney's fiction making did not hold him long. He shifted and listened to Demmerle, Mornersson, and Haverli conversing as on a debate opposing Capplemanov, Kruger, and Koyoto.
"It is Science versus Literature then."

"... and we must champion Science?"

"Absolutely!"

Kruger and the two with him appeared playful and conniving. Kruger spoke, "My friend, Demmerle, neatly divides the world - literature and science. Perhaps there is a tripartition more able to teach us the reasons for man and his supreme goal. Should you win this debate here at supper, only the directorship of material things shall have been won. Let us say that science promotes understanding by way of addition and is teleologically posed. Science is cumulus. Let us say that art argues for the way to understanding reached by husk, by unfolding to reach the heart, and is perceptionally posed. Art is eliminative.

"Now let us add a third - and end our debate!"

Kruger continued, "There is the way reached by Grace. It is a pre-ordination and an inevitability not entirely passive. It is, I believe, as science, teleologically posed. Grace is being chosen and choosing. Ratiocination will be the method for the first, altered or differential consciousness for the second and some kind of communism and insistence on individual and collective enhancement the way of the third. There are no easy ways though - except perhaps in the second position using consciousness-altering drugs and there only in the negative capability to receive the understanding. In the translation of the vision, in the restoration of equilibrium, there is only the memory and the felt power of the vision."
The task of making concrete that which was felt and that which was remembered looms ahead for the man when he returns to what we have called the normal state of consciousness.

"The translations must be made. Merely receiving is not enough. Science seems to be making the best translations at the present time. Man must know more, become more, to make effective use of the omnipresent Grace. Art has drifted to questions of form and its grip on meaning is loosening. Perhaps art will soon have its place in the tripartition taken away and will become not a way to understanding else but only itself."

Demmerle seemed absorbed and pliant. His furtive eyes usually playing at the corners now held on the Hindu soft and child-like. ". . . science and grace. The old combatants again. . . ."

"But a grace more man-centered, more focusing on man becoming like the Source, becoming enfolded and over-flowing out and into the territories of other men and received graciously by those who, as well, flow out and enfold. There is created a new organism and each element is enhanced as part and enhanced as whole."

The next afternoon a woman came on board. They docked at a small village and she was standing with a group of people in front of a station house. A member of the barge disembarked to take her baggage. The captain escorted her up a rickety ramp and onto the barge. Quickly she was shown quarters. She wore a saffron-colored silk dress,
purple velvet gloves, yellow shoes, and, curiously, glass necklaces and bracelets. Whitney learned later she was the wife of the Neviansk-doctor. She was much older than her gaudy attire pretended but she was, Whitney thought, a lovely woman nonetheless. That night he heard a light singing coming from her compartment which was directly on the other side of his outdoor writing deck-place and outdoor bunk by the lifeboat. There was a small window facing the west bank. A silver cast quickened the mirror of the water. She walked past the window and her shadow spun and was garbled, then disintegrated in the rippling sheen.

He had looked for her at supper but she had evidently taken her food in the privacy of her compartment. Whitney snuggled in his coat. It was the kind of night that brought the albino snow-fur to every limb and twig, every skeleton shrub, every glassy rock, and he knew, should he sleep out again, his decision would be severely tested. It would be very cold. He would awake beneath a frosty, grave-coverlet and the steel deck of the barge would seem a new promenade for winter wraiths who forsook their organic haunts for iron.

At supper would she have shared the green tea with him? She would have, he decided. He would have asked her why she was returning back to her husband alone. Traveling alone in the wilderness. ("In pretense of a visit to my aunt I left my husband to see a physician to verify what I have suspected and what is not of my husband. But there was
nothing! In thanksgiving will I softly sing tonight as I prepare in my compartment for my night’s sleep.”

There would be another festivity of some kind at Neviansk, Whitney understood. Some official recognition would be made there of the journey—this, by the mining company and a Russian district officer. Capplemanov had told them at breakfast. There would be a ball, music, and a scene from an opera.

Whitney thought of Hallender, remembered the night on the train, the Englishman reading his letter.

Overnight, though Whitney had been comfortable enough in his sleeping roll underneath the boat, the temperature had dropped to below zero. By mid-morning the barge ran into thick ice. Kruger remarked to Capplemanov that it was not the overnight freeze; that obviously the river was not free of ice before. Capplemanov seemed annoyed at the comment and put on his heavy coat to go outside to talk to the barge captain who stood on the deck with several crew members looking north upriver. As he went out the door Capplemanov stopped and explained, “But we had reports that the river was free to Neviansk though frozen solid north of the town. I don’t know how we should get up there now.”

About an hour later Capplemanov returned inside to tell the men that they might leave the barge and go by sledge, though there was some difficulty in that because the way was upland and over a divide in the mountains, not ordinarily troublesome if the weather holds clear, but if there were snow
there might be danger. There was an informal discussion. It was the consensus that they should stay aboard the barge. Then the captain came in and told them that the trip overland should not take more than three days and that the ice-lock could last a week or ten days.

The opinions divided. Then all agreed to go by sledge. Capplemanov and the captain left the barge and topped the bank and walked back to a post station passed earlier. They returned to say they had found a man with a capable sledge and six horses. He would come the next day.

The wife of the Neviansk-doctor asked to go with them. Capplemanov would decide that. Whitney was not against it. Who was the young officer who asked for the clandestine meeting with her and who gave her a fright and a hard knot in her belly? And she, fears unsubstantiated, now eagerly looks to that reunion with her lawful husband with promises to herself of fidelity and contrition.

There would be no outside sleeping that night. The circles again housing the lunar disk turned red. Ice crystals in prismatic agitation forecasted storm and they, the next day, would go by sledge over a divide.

Capplemanov talked to David Hailender who took the news violently. He threw his glass at the door of the dining compartment and raging with curses went out. Whitney looked for the man to break out into a run back south.

The rest of them were resigned. Whitney felt that he alone empathized with Hailender's sense of imminent calamity.
and understood his anxieties to return to Khandhad. Mornersson opened up a bit and shared a dialogue with Haverli, both finding the emergency liquor brought up by the captain much more satisfying than the Russian ale. Whitney took a corner to write, on the floor, sitting on rolled blankets. The wicks were up and burnt a thick buttery flame.

Then Mornersson breaking the sombre mood, uncharacteristically commented in a cavalier fashion about Whitney's journal-keeping. "Whitney will not let anyone read what he has written, though I have almost begged."

Haverli ignored the specific import of the comment, but seized the general. "The whole course of recording impressions is quite complex. There are the pure impressions as they are, whole, not fragmented or made grist to slot into categories, or made typical by the state of the receiver's mind and emotions."

"How should we say then, Haverli, the process runs? First, an impression. Next, the impression made typical by thought - a remove, the first. Then, a recording, or should I say, the decoding of the impression that has just been made categorical. . . ."

". . . the second remove."

"Yes, and if Whitney here, waits until he is older to write of this journey, he will write of the second remove, not the journey."

"I follow you, and that account would be a third remove. Then, if someone reads the account and paraphrases
it, that would be a fourth."

"... and a third party attempting to understand the paraphrased material would be in a fifth removed position."

"There is a kind of Gestalt which may be said to be the sixth remove. Now, here is the essential question - are the higher removes the farther from the truth, from the essential base experience?"

"But we have made a summary understanding the sixth remove. It appears that science would hold that there is greater understanding the farther from the experience - each remove is an opportunity for a greater and more accurate truth. The idea of addition. Art would hold to the opposite view - that the reality can never be approached except in the first, raw moment. And every art work is a feeble remove.

Haverli drew out a piece of paper and made a design of the removes, each level a ledge held by penciled arrows. Haverli held the paradigm for Whitney to see. As they talked they added dimension mutually to the first tentative markings.

"Your son, Whitney, will read of this journey at the sixth remove - no! There was no third party at the third remove, and you are not writing this in old age - so... Oh! I am all mixed up! Let me have more of that confusion-al stuff!" Mornersson was gay, drinking, chummy with Haverli.

Kruger, who had joined the two at the table mid-way in their dialogue, fondled the slim bottle of vodka before
pouring a small dash into his water tumbler. He looked at the drawing the men had made. "Let's go back to Capplemanov's idea - by the way, is he with Hallender yet? I saw the two on the deck sitting on that bench by the rail."

Kruger got up and went to the door and opened it. "By God. They are out there. Hallender seems appeased, calm now he is. I admit a bit of a fright, seeing him like that."
The man who had told them of the drowning rat came back to the table and swigged down his vodka.

"I want to get back to the idea of Capplemanov's youth, the Urn business. If the lad chases the lass because he had caught her previously and if he, like my rat, learned hope perhaps there is something similar to their experiences and the operation of the evolutionary march. Perhaps there is hope in evolution too. Perhaps everything has been done and each organism gropes for, is unconsciously driven by a hope to achieve something echoing what had transpired first as an archetype in time's infancy. Think of time as a depilatory, razoring in thin shaves down to the core. Under the belly and buttocks hair of Magdalenian cave-girl is the girl at the chalet at Kumitex..."

"You are jesting with us, is he not friend Haverli?"

"Of course. Yet, the idea is provocative. If I have it right, Kruger, there is the perfect form... say, here. I draw a circle. Immediately after or almost simultaneously - that means the same thing, doesn't it? - well
after, the form takes on its antithesis and then, in evolution, there is a husking of that form, pulling off layer after layer so that the original, perfect, primary form can, at last be revealed - at some millenium, at some Omega point. Evolution reveals what was. So there is no change, only unmasking! No . . . not even in humor can I hold the supposition. I would have to claim that the mermaid was all scale once and her top half, by evolution, had been skinned."

The three men toppled their heads together toward the center of the table and laughed heartily.

"We can't accept that way of talking about evolution, so we go to something different, to another way of talking." Haverli carefully folded his paper with the drawing and placed the piece under the wet bottom of the bottle. "... we talk about evolution in another way - as interminable flow toward increasing complexity. Fins become arms and quadrupeds bipeds."

Kruger, apparently in a humorous retaliation for the way his depilatoric theory had been laughed away, broke Haverli's words and with mock grimness said, "... and rear sexual union becomes face to face union. That must be a sign of evolution as well. There should be more complexity involved, more consciousness, more intention, more purpose, more caring, in that position than in the more animal, primitive manner."

Kruger broke into a laugh. Mornersson held his seriousness.
"Of course. That comes as a coincidence. Are you serious this time, Kruger?" The Austrian nodded though there was yet a trace of a sly smile at the corner of his mouth and Whitney thought he winked at Haverli.

"It is time I was. And it is as you say, a coincidence. If you tell me you have been struck with the analogy between the Abbevillian tendency in fashioning stone axes and variety in sexual intercourse, I shall say that between us there is a rare correspondence."

Kruger's manner was such that Whitney could not detect sincerity or frivolity. Mornersson answered him. He was mildly excited.

"There may be. There may be, friend. Tell me what you speculate."

Kruger was ready and made them believe that he indeed had thought about the matter before and there was nothing extempore in his first comment.

"All right. Face to face sexual union was first experienced as a figurative utilization. It represented, possibly, the first poetic fancy - for the use of the face-to-face position, turning the hairy girl from her rear - to posture, is to make use of another face. The rear is the primal face. The girl's face is the second face, the front of her body. This modification, or doubling of the usable surfaces of the female, came as a concurrence with the doubling of the effectual axe-head utility from mono-faced stones.
to bi-faced stones. The Abbevilian is the name given for the particular characteristic of doubling. Early Paleolithic..."

"... The missionary posture - that's stupid, there certainly were no missionaries - the face-to-face came after the development and regular use of the bi-faced stone axe!"

This was Haverli's question. He picked up an alternative before Kruger could answer. "Or, the bi-faced axe came after the man stumbled over the girl one dark night in the cave, and lay, and liked it, and propitiously, because of her rutting season - perhaps that was not bred out - and because of his ripe lust, they copulated face to face."

Mornersson compromised. "Or, simultaneously developed."

"Well, there could have been, of course, no flow into frontal intercourse. That is, the man, didn't go from front to rear in stages, poking his way around her, over buttocks, over hips, moving around in the pass of thousands of years."

"No."

"It was just done, once, one evening, night. The day before it wasn't done."

Kruger's voice was gathering quality and pace. Marvelously he led Mornersson and Haverli along his interpretation. Socrates.

"If so, my good friend, Haverli, evolution has little
to do with flow. Your fin to arm is not evolution but merely flow. Evolution occurs when there is a break in the flow. Evolution is something happening all-at-once. What do you think of the sex and stone axe analogy?

Cleverly Kruger took his auditors back, disarming them. Haverii edged out. "I can't visualize primitive man experimenting with sexual positions. A stumble, as you suggest? I believe he would have scrambled up, would have recoiled at once, a creature frantic to restore normal equilibrium. This, dominant over his sexual appetite, which probably wasn't rampant anyway. The man only walking across the floor of the cave."

"Let's take another tack. Assume he makes his front to front connection. Would he have considered the experience to be identical with the common rear entry? Would it have felt different to him?"

"I believe, Kruger, he would have thought it a new experience. Her vulva as penetrated from the front would probably have been thought to be a new sex fount. What say you Haverli?"

Haverli nodded and Kruger continued. "So, if the position were stumbled upon and there was no recoil but consummation, the rear would not have been abandoned and replaced, but kept, along with the new frontai play. Both faces, both founts, could be used. And . . . there is no evolution here."

"But it seems that the use of two faces of the axe-head is a progress over use of only one. But as you say,
perhaps this is only flow. Of course, it's only flow."

"Well, the assumption of a causal relationship between consciousness of the possibility of multiple stone faces and the consciousness of sexual variety is easily given over. I do think there is a formal similarity, a congruence, in the way Paleolithic man used his tools and in the way he used other things. He saw, I believe, similarity in the form and in the function of tool and sex. The axe is a T-shaped instrument. The T is an ideogram for a man and woman in coitus. The cross-piece of stone is her splayed legs, in typical stylistic exaggeration; the verticle line of shaft is the phallus. The axe strikes, the man's organ strikes and hits home. There is pounding. . . . If the stone is analogous to the female genitals, and if the male has used, commonly, one side of the stone and one side of the woman-the rear; and when he begins to chip away at the stone to make a second face, he could well be prodded by some mysterious poetic inclination to draw a parallel. He listened to a message from a stone, put his ear to the stone, licked it, made noises back to it. Turned to the woman and turned her."

"That must be evolutive!"

"I am not sure. Sometimes I think that there were only three moments of evolution - the moment of creation, the moment of life, and the moment of thought. Remember, I mentioned that something was done at once, one night? And the moment before it wasn't done. I want to believe that
evolution happens only when there is a discontinuity of the flow. Energy is a groping mechanism that only by blindly flowing fails to guarantee advancement. There can never be a new thing without a chasm to cross - a chasm however slight. Perhaps only a tiny hiatus of time. Life is brought to the propitious moment of becoming by flow and by that which had existed before and was not life. And it is significant to note that the lapse between the three moments progressively has shortened. There was an infinity of time between nothing and creation, a shorter time lapse between creation and life - stones to living cells, and a much shorter time between life and thought. Here, let me use the paper.

Kruger lifted the bottle of vodka and withdrew the folded paper. It was smoothed under his palm and turned to the clean side.

"I'll draw a large pyramid to illustrate my idea. Now a large hunk of it for nothing, a smaller piece for that which was created and in-organic, a smaller slice for life, and yet a smaller slice for thought - advancing to the peak."

Mormersson, suddenly leaping to his feet, cried out.

"Ha! Look! You're trapped!"

"Damn! Indeed I am. Do you see it, journal-maker?"

Kruger lifted up the paper so that Whitney could see his drawn pyramid with lines across. Whitney had anticipated the failure of the model but did not voice his discovery. Whitney acknowledged receipt of seeing Kruger's drawing.
Kruger snapped the paper and slapped it down on the table. "Squirm out of this . . . can I? I make these lines and each has to be drawn closer to a line than that line was to the previous line! That must be because I said there was a diminishing of time lapse for each phase. No, I can't get out of it. That is, if I want to use this model."

"That is correct, Dr. Kruger. If the time lag decreases, there is, in each interval marked by the evolutive moment, less surface. The point can never be reached."

"Wait! Did I say I wanted to reach the peak?"

"We assumed you wanted to. Why else use the pyramid? You intended to take us to the point. You yourself used the word Omega. That must be the peak."

"That was relative to the husking thing. But you are correct. I did intend that. But it is really elementary. Merely a play thing. Zeno's Paradox. But the pyramid is an apt form for the evolution we are talking about. Proper for teleology."

"Do you expect an evolutive moment, Dr. Kruger?"

"If there were three such moments - as you suggest, what might be expected of the fourth moment? What follows thought? All of our human activities, our civilizations and art and science is only flow from the first thought."

"... but a flow that perhaps is nearing an end and is gathering to break - a tiny hiatus of time. Difference now by kind, not degree."
"Do you think so?" Demmerle asked.

"No. But I feel it."

There was a feeling of encasement. The barge rocked slightly. A hum from the metal of the compartment seemed to scatter the failing oil lamp light. The trio fell silent. They drank. The piece of paper was a crushed wad. The men were satisfied with their talk, but there would be no more. The thick oil in the lamp was only a skim on the curved bottom of the lamp bowl, the wick a white curl sticky, curling and twisting out of the butter of the whale.

The three rose, said goodnight, and went out. Haverli left behind on the table his scarlet sash, a silk piece usually worn at his neck to ease the wool chafe of his heavy high-necked sweater. A scarlet sash but a grey-blue shadow on the table, yet from a sick-yellow light, yet in a white-washed room become dingy, dirtier toward the floor.

Whitney felt poetic. He would find a bit of delight in ellusiveness. Color obeys a principle only in the womb or in the sky.

He felt strangely literary, classical in his poetics.

The chase on the Urn is a memory scene. Perhaps he, personally, did not catch her before but surely there was in him a memory, out of some depth, of the catch. The three touched on it and talked better than they knew - back, the import of their words - to origins of the fin, to Daphne, laurel-ed to her waist, a mermaid of the forest, half-

metamorphic, becoming the female who bears the wood of the...
lower cross and who crowns the head of the emerging victor with her encircling thorny, matted ventrix.

The poetics were a kind of husking for Whitney. He sorted through, down to a density thrown down upon him to get him back to primal perception. He flowed into it without struggle.

And the scene on the Urn is a discontinuity. How well they talked - but touched where they should have pressed. The discontinuity, on that marvelous jug, is frozen and does not give way to the new thing. But freeze is antithetical to discontinuity in that the break is so imperceptibly halting that there yet appears a visible warm flow. Shall I surmise that it is this paradox that defines all art? In this way art stops time, makes the invisible world visible. And birth stops time, that still moment, makes the invisible womb-lover visible, and proves immortality and effectual uncorruptibility of flesh - finally!

So I have a syllogism-

(a) The results of a conception is identical to that which follows discontinuity.

(b) Discontinuity equals an experience of art.

(c) The results of a conception follows an experience of art.

Another conclusion-

(d) Art, birth, and discontinuity are the same.

His mind wheeled free of his exact science.

And Kruger's teleology. His three phases - creation,
life, and thought. And his imminent fourth phase. Shall the
earth take another shudder? Be implanted another time?

Whitney thought of the shudder of creation. Thought
of the thunder that brought life out of the womb of in-organic
creation. Thought of the burst that came with the first
thought - a crossing so slight! yet in the atom of the cross-
ing a universe of power! He loosened.

Was it not a kind of annunciation? First made to a
trembling void? Then made to a trembling Rock? Then made
to a trembling son of great-grandmother eolithic? And then
made to a trembling girl at the well in Capernaum? Where
there is annunciation there is God - where annunciation dis-
continuity. The call is an interject by pre-design or recogni-
tion of fortune.

There is no longer a question of evolution but now only
how things relate to it. Things are evolution. Man is evolu-
tion that knows of itself. There is one, and only one,
tendency. Up to now, however, man has been more consciously
aware and promotive of cyclics than he has of evolution or
teleology. The structure of his mythology and religion pro-
claim "the coming around again" - the re . . . re this, re
that - reincarnate, relive, revolve, return. His shrines,
temples, tombs, arenas were built to say cyclics, to par-
ticipate in cyclics, to interpret cyclics, to predict the
round return. In the cycle is man's greatest refuge. Man is
inclined, inescapably to secure himself in some repetitious
rhythm . . . rhythm, circle, the egg, the circled notch for
sleeping paleo-man, the womb, the eye, a woman's breasts, her
round sex. Whence the tendency to evolution? I write there
is one tendency and that of pointing forward - as an arrow; and,
yet, I admit the refuge and those inclinations to be secure in
the nestle of the re - as a circle. Some men sleep. Other men
go out and turn away from refuge, tear the circled form and
burst free. They wing with the arrow as Odysseus winning back
Ithaca with his bow - arrows through the O's. In going forth
in great adventure man fulfills his purpose. If he is stalled,
walking circles like a tethered horse, he is discontent and an
idle king. When is man more desolate when idle, stalled, held?

Perhaps there is a synthesis - an inexorable progress
yet cyclic. Perhaps the rounds come around and each new
beginning is just a wisp ahead of the previous beginning. I
have an image of spiraling advance. Evolution by cycle. A man
steps out of the ash of the dying cycle, his head in the dawn
of the next, his hands groping for the hold. He pulls up and
away and leaves a patch, a pattern, for others to follow. There
is a covenant.

The great new evolutionary adventure. . . . There was a
clanging of a metal door.

Capplemanov and Hallender came in from the deck. Whit-
ney noted Hallender. The Englishman appeared to be at peace.
Capplemanov's counsel had quieted and calmed the man, restored
a semblance of reason. The Russian's words brought a color to
Hallender's cheeks and a light to his eyes. They moved through
slightly scuttling chairs. There were snatches of words.

"... Neviansk."

"... arrive, you. ..."

"... the girl. If she is with child ... if you can't shake that portent. ..."

"... but for some reason, I am filled with a kind of spirit and gladness. ... I can't say. ..."

"Are you yet writing, Whitney? You should turn in. We're going by sledge, you know, tomorrow."

Whitney nodded to Capplemanov. The two men passed through and shut the door behind them. Whitney wondered. His poetic ambling was unfamiliar ground. He felt an uneasiness, an excitement.

There was just a half-inch of flame when Whitney put away his journal and went to his cabin.
CHAPTER III

A DENSITY OF TALK

The man came with the sledge and six horses the next morning. The animals were heavy and blanketed with their own long hair - pearl sheen with streaks of a maddering yellow in the mane and tail. This yellow rimmed too their eyes - agate white, yellow, and olive. They snorted steam and stomped the light snow. The sledge moved ahead an inch or so. Since the morning call which was made in a fairly clear and open atmosphere there closed over the men's industry a mizzling rain mixed with sleet. Gone was the sulphur of the crepuscular dawn and beaking, large black birds turned in the low sky over the barge. Outside the mesh of the loading work on the small shelf of shore Whitney noticed the regimented, dainty pawprints of a fox in the new fall of snow. At intervals, crossing, leaping the track of the fox, large furry pawprints of a cat danced and expressed an unlabored pre-dawn curiosity that Whitney imagined, held him staring at the floating ironworks. The prints disappeared in a morass of cattails.

Whitney remembered his botany and diffused it with abstractions. In one soft brown tube-like head of a cattail
there lay kinetic a half-million seeds, sufficient to impregnate a nation of lush soils and in each tube an intruder in his white-silk cocoon waited. Caterpillar in mycorrhizal intimacy. Cattail and Lymnoecia Phragmitella. There was a fellowship of those who have waited through the winter. Eggs, seed, buds, and men want days and weeks and months of bitter cold. Without the cold all the warm days of spring came wasted. There was a proper preparation. To be abeyant was to know hope - for seed.

The dense evergreens loomed black and green and began to tip as the wind brought pressure and deposed the birds from their royal turns. Their wing tips splayed like fingers gloved in raven and rilled with a glisten of oil.

The plan now, Whitney was told, was to go back, perhaps three versts, and take a road - which ran from the river sledge trail at a point just a verst north of a post station - east through a gorge - where they would have to scuttle among great masses of rock - and north, ascending, to a high valley, where-upon they would twist through a high pass and then down a gentle slope and out to a plain for a race 3 ¾ versts to Neviansk.

"These are not high mountains. Let us hope the roads remain frozen and the snow delays for two days, or three. We should not mind a snow once we get to the plain on the east side. The pass is right there - not far. You can see the road, there, coming up just ahead of those clusters of rocks."
There was no canker in them that they had to make the change; neither was there cheer. The preparations were hindered by talking pairs who faithlessly waited for others to plan provisioning and loading goods. Most of the weight was on Capplemanov and they allow him to bear it. Whitney thought it out of some vindictiveness for being so secretive.

"Damn me! Are we botanists? Has anyone mentioned botany, yet? I don't feel our journey is taken. I feel incubative, where talk of botany is premature, where a requisite of philosophy and art, evolutionary speculations and religion must prevail - until we 'begin'. Does anyone feel that way?" Kruger said, working on the sledge, the only real help to Capplemanov besides Hallender.

Hallender now seemed to Whitney not the same man. He was quite composed, quiet, worthwhile. He chummed with Capplemanov and helped the load of boxes - rations, blankets, oil lamps and oil, and assorted trail gear. The personal effects had been loaded atop a small planked extension of the sledge at the rear and roped.

"Now! Now! Dr. Capplemanov," Whitney heard Demmerle's loud voice, "are you allowing her to come with us?"

"It is necessary."

The wife of the Neviansk-doctor went up into the sledge and took a seat in the center of the rear bench. Hallender finished his loading and sat by her. She turned and huddled to him. Her parka was white with a grey face,
his a matted brown fur the texture of horse hair. Her glass ear ornaments tinkled. Whitney heard through her heavy fur head-piece. The cold made pink her cheeks.

The owner of the sledge had sounded his animals, harness straps and thick necklaces, with golden round bells. There was a garnish of clear rings and brittle dashes of complimentary notes. Whitney thought of hulking, impatient, boyish animals in a mood to carry a rural society to a December New England outing at a nearby frozen pond.

The team loaded - the driver in front, Capplemannov, Koyoto, and Demmerle took the first bench; Haverli, Kruger, and Mornerason the second back, and Whitney on the left side of the woman, rode the rear bench with Hallender beneath the tower of canvas-covered baggage behind them. They were given blankets and these they wrapped around their legs. Under her blanket the woman snapped her leggened legs together and swung toward the Englishman, lifting her left hip slightly and its roundness pressed against Whitney's side. She was warm and on her breath was a sweet brandy - the result of having shared Hallender's metal flask which he held loosely in his gloved hand. Hallender watched the circling, blown birds and drew again from the container. She declined an offer of it with a shake of her head. Hallender insisted. She accepted, taking the flask and tipping its screw-top to her bright red lips.

The riders sat low in the box-like sledge. The steel straps of the runners curled fore and aft on each side of the box like the tips of elf shoes. The rig had been carefully
overseen - the harnesses had been carefully oiled and the brass fittings polished; the buckles and fasteners daubed with a white lard; the side planks given a fresh coat of a light sienna oil stain. The seats were backed-up high at shoulder level and padded, seat and back with round tufts of fluffy material covered with fur. There were deep mugs of steaming soup, handed in to the sledge travelers by members of the barge crew. Whitney jotted in his journal, then slid it between the woman's flesh of her hip covered with her great fur coat and his own lank right side. He took his mug and breathed in the muttoned steam.

"Everyone take their soup before we start." Then they were away through the snow.

Capplemanov was telling Koyoto he had been in these mountains before - though in the ranges to the east. The track took them over low hills and undulating ground. In pockets a thick fog hung to the left and right. They passed through a magnificent timber quite clear of undergrowth. Great Siberian cedars towered up a hundred to a hundred and twenty feet over them. The sledge picked its way around the trunks and ran aground several times on outcroppings of rock. Then they pitched upland and slid into a belt of pines and tamarack. Soon after they came to masses of rock. There, all exited from the sledge to lighten it for the horses and to lift and carry where needed. In some places huge blocks lay piled in a rummage of gigantic scatter; in other places
single round rocks like domes sat bald and blocking. The way was picked, reneging the promise to go by the right, retreating, backing the horses, to strike out left.

Once out of this chaos of rock, the horses took up briskly a run of four versts to a small frozen pond guarded by lofty cedars and striated beds of colored shale. There was a rest by the pond. They boiled water for tea.

Whitney felt neutered by the country. Though they had advanced steadily toward Neviansk - from Kumitex - each scene seemed to him to claim an identical measure of mist, sleet, rain, gloom, grey, death birds, black-green trees, frost covered rock, ledges, ice ... distance. Only the horses, with their silver brittle ringing bells and the doctor's wife with her red-rouged mouth lent contrast of sound and color. All else was insular and grey like a shroud.

They rode for two hours after the rest stop, then camped. After food and hot drinks there was an uneasy preparation of shelter. Beds were laid down. There was one last encircling around the fire, then sleep.

Whitney awoke in the middle of the night to see the sledge man inspecting his steeds, looking at their hooves, stroking their flanks. He had made blazing the night's low fire and the circle of light caught him at the ropes which were tied one end at the rear of the sledge and the other around a white single birch. The horses hitched along these ropes stood the early night without commotion in their places,
obeying some law of placement and order known only to them and their owner. They nuzzled the man and allowed him to lift their rear legs. He was satisfied and returned Whitney's stare. He looked at Whitney sitting up in his bedding.

"Do you wonder how I can see to write, why I refuse your offer to come closer to your good fire?" Whitney spoke to the man not expecting an answer. Whitney's back against a cold rock gave him a vista towards the east and a complete view of the little mounds of sleeping people - dark shapeless hulls in the shadows flicked occasionally red and yellow. They slept as they rode, companions by day and by night. The woman and Hallender had found a place near each other at a respectable distance at bedtime, now closed at the pre-dawn. Her head was almost under his outstretched arm. Whitney thought they must have commonly awakened and decided to share blankets. Well it is that they did - a deep cold is upon us. There was no streak of light in the east, only a slight whitening of the dark, grey moisture-laden sky.

There was no longer merely a threat of snow - it was upon them, large dials of fluff setting heavily about the party. The man went to the horses and began to harness them. The bells. An unreal sound, Whitney thought, of bells in the forest, in the overland camp, with snow falling and everything white except the lips of the Neviansk-doctor's wife and the embers of the fire - lips incarnadine, soft flesh alive and hard cellular birch, dead. Capplemanov got up and roused the
others. They loaded quickly and were off again.

They dashed through the cold air. Whitney in his low corner of the sledge managed some protection from the wind pulled at them as they make their way at a good pace over low hills free of rock and tree. They rode over what was in summer a fertile field growing thick grain and what would be, Whitney feared, in a few hours a pitching, drifting trap of sinking, holding snow. The driver knew it - by his manner of driving and shouting. His whip cracked fire above the six horses, his head and neck grey-kaftaned, his body in wolf fur. The men pitched and bounced about on their benches. Hallender and the woman were drawn together under one large blanket and seemed one bundle. There was a privacy now about the men, Hallender and the woman drew apart from the others. There were no dialogues, no trivial talk, no speculation, even the bells were muted. Hallender's flask rattled at his feet on the floor of the box.

The driver yelled and looked up and pointed to a break in the small wood ahead. He swung his arm on, extending it to his far right. Out of the rising land past the trees a definite trail could be seen. It began and ran into the higher hills. It was the mouth of the pass. They would go through it and then on up over the mountain just beyond. It did not appear far and it was not a high mountain. They all knew they were racing a storm.

Harder the snow fell, but there was no wind and so yet no harm. The runners of the sledge skimmed and caught
and exploded. The sledge inclined as they rode the side of a rise. There was a strain and a sound of cracking from the harnesses. The leather stretched. The sledge box creaked and popped, one runner high, one low, a double tilt of the bed - up and sideways.

A break at the wood.

Through, they approached the entrance to the pass. The trail was marked and Whitney saw grooves in the snow, evidence of a sledge just ahead of them, although the grooves had softened and were almost filled. The rails ran on each side of hoof prints. The driver lifted up from his bench and swung his head to see around a large rock. Word was passed back. Kruger yelled, head slightly turned.

"There's another sledge a verst ahead."

The snow became very heavy. At their left, at the lower elevation from which they climbed, smaller trees were thrown by wind. Above them too, the top branches of the firs began frantic slaps. Wind now.

There came another word back. "The driver says there is a post house . . . he thinks he should stop there . . . he doubts we can get through . . . ."

Hallender and his bundling companion came out from under their cover. Hallender leaned forward to talk to Kruger. A sudden gust of wind ripped across the sledge, then reversed and came back. They pitched through. Harder the wind and thicker the snow.
An hour later they were inside a wood house about thirty by twenty feet. The walls inside were covered with several layers of furs and skins. There was one window, with a thick pane becoming encrusted with frost. A large Russian stove sat in the middle of the house glowing, smoking a wet thick haze. The wooden floor was a scatter with clots of matted straw, discarded blankets, and rotting and brittling furs. Above were smoked saplings laced with thick pallets of straw. Fourteen people had huddled at the fire, then had withdrawn into coalitions or privacies about in the house. Still at the stove were the occupants of the other sledge—a tall, thin, toothless man and three young women. The man's head sunk under his helmet-shaped fur and velvet hat, his old body draped beneath a black, thick-clothed cape. The females were Mongolian. They appeared surprisingly slim in their white sheepskin coats. Hoods thrown back, their heads were dancing frolics of plaited coal black hair, their faces gay, wide, musky mouths red, eyes dark, green earringed. Coats opened at the front, they wore glass bead necklaces, striped silk blouses, broad red sashes at the waist and chemises flowing loose into trousered skirts, into muffed boots.

"Whores going up to Neviansk for the miners. Like us, caught by the storm."

Whitney sat with Koyoto on a long bench that had been fastened along one side of the house. They had unloosed their parkas and sat leaning forward, hands between their spread
knees, elbows resting on their thighs. They caught for air, gasping. About the house were sounds of people coughing and shifting to escape the mash of smoke.

Advance slants of the coming gale tested the north brace of the house and then careened away. An hour. Then the mountain storm, a bouran, was upon them in incremental fury. The house shook and seemed to lift and then fall back and tilt. Whitney felt inclined, pushed back. A roar came at them. A cataract of wind.

"Now we're in for it." It was Haverli's voice. He sat across the house from Whitney. Whitney saw dimly through the smoke the man throw his greatcoat about his head and turn to Capplemanov who was sitting near him.

Haverli continued. "How long do these things last?" His voice was almost a yell above the roar. The Russian shook his head. Demmerle sat with them, apparently without care, bareheaded and writing in a small notebook. David Hal-lender sat with the Nevianski-doctor's wife in one corner. Mornarsson was down in his bedroll, working below the smoke for sleep. Kruger stood at the window. "The animals will freeze to death."

The sledge men already knew.

Koyoto grabbed Whitney's arm. "Look..."

At the stove the old man held a small clay bowl. Whitney saw him take a leather pouch from his coat and from it take out fingerfuls of some feathery material and dash it into the bowl. He spat into the bowl repeatedly. With his fingers he
pushed at the material in the bowl. His fingers worked until he had formed a sticky ball.

"He's making a quid of agaric. He has no teeth to chew. It is usually the women's task to chew the quid. They will not do it for him. Come. Have you swallowed agaric?"

"No."

"Come. We'll ask the old man for some shreds."

"Whitney and the Hindu scuttled to the fire. The circle of four parted.

"Agaric ... amanita. ..." Koyoto gestured to Whitney and then touched Whitney's chest, his own chest, Whitney's mouth, his own. The old man threw down his leather bag on the floor. Koyoto took it up and opened the drawstring. He held it for Whitney to see into. Therein lay cheesy shreds of a yellow and black delicate material. Koyoto reached with his fingers into the bag and withdrew, careful not to drop a shred. He handed the fluffs out, toward one of the women.

"Will you chew a quid for my friend?" Koyoto motioned with his head at Whitney. Without hesitating, knowing, the woman took the agaric shreds and placed them into her mouth. She tongued the material to the back molars and began chewing with her mouth slightly opened. Coralloid womb. She choked at the smoke and gagged as a pocket of air coming from her lungs was blocked by the gummy quid. With her left hand she felt the buldge at her cheek. She chewed and rolled the quid, collecting its gum and not swallowing it. Adhesive. Making a
wad, she breathed heavily and Whitney noticed a mealy, sweet smell on her breath. She opened her mouth wide, took out the wad, and offered it to Whitney. It lay in her hand glistening, hot.

"Take it." Koyoto encouraged. Another had been chewing for him and he put his own cupped hand to her chin. She spat out her work into his palm. It lay, a snarled, ovoid, wet ball in a cortina of mucous on his dark hand flesh.

"Take it, John." Whitney picked the wad from his chewer's hand, his thumb and forefingers as a beak. Forceps withdrawing the head. "Take the quid and swallow it whole. Watch."

Koyoto opened his own mouth and inserted the agaric. His mouth closed. He threw his head back and swallowed, his eyes closing. Whitney weighed the mouth-manufactured bit, dancing its pulp and stickiness in his curled fingers.

Kruger, from the window-watch, walked toward the circle at the stove. The gale assailed the house, slashed at it. A tremendous, sustained roar gorged all audible space. The snow powder sifted, driven, and puffed into the house like wisps of shot flour. The stove blazed. Wet locust. Whitney's eyes rheumed. Tears flowed from the red rims. He rubbed at his eyes, his fingers coiled around the agaric.

"Take it down, John." The Hindu touched his hand. He leaned his face close. "There will be an hour before the intense sexual excitement. It will come and hold, tearing you, until you take one or two, or all three of these Mongolian
beauties to a corner and there make a beast of yourself. But before that there will be an hour of exquisite civilization and beauty making. Words. Allusions. . . ."

Whitney took the quid and swallowed.

"Kruger. . . ?" Koyoto asked.

The Austrian shook his head. Whitney felt the wad oozing serous at the base of his mouth. He gulped, sinking his head, fighting the failed swallow. Then it broke down and he felt it sinking. He tasted sweetness, the woman's mouth water. At once he was seized with an urge to taste the mouth of the woman first hand. He wanted – it was a perverse thought – to suck moisture out of her mouth, to be intimate with the moistures of her body. He reached for her with his eyes and found she had bridged already. She held her cloak open slightly to her sides. Her body, in striped yellow and blue silk was full, soft, and stretching. Warm flesh beneath silk.

"You have noted the simulcre, Dr. Whitney, between the mushroom and all aspects of procreation. . . ."

"Only the obvious," Whitney said.

"Not the Biblical? not the Classical? the Vedic?" Whitney remembered the Hindu's account of his vision – the girl with the mushroom rod, the professor who flew away.

"No. . . ."

David Hallender got up from his companion and went to the fire. He sat, legs crisscrossed, his parka unbuttoned and thrown back. No invitation, he grabbed at the pouch on
the floor and pinched a generous mass and handed it to the third woman. Her black, arrowheaded eyes glowed out of the smoky gaze. Soon her mouth worked and Hallender sat, peering at the squat of the coaling stove.

Koyoto said, "From the beginning. . . ."

Hallender's quid was mashed, rolled and tongued and given to him. He swallowed. Kruger watched. He listened and waited. Koyoto continued--

"The Eurasian iceman hunts the boundaries of the woodlands for nuts and berries and edible plants. A girl walks beside him and pulls at his fur cloak if she sees something. They are tired. There is proof that the girl will mother beautiful children someday. Her thighs are beginning to slim. She will shuck most of her hair. She is Magdalinian and someday her eyes will be blue and her hair will become shiny and soft. But this night they look for a camp. They lie down and she curls in to him. Overnight their camp is encircled with little spotted pucks. They awake and gaze upon the miraculous plants with wonder. Then he rises and makes urine near where they have slept. His flesh is hard from the pressure of the fluid. His own flesh is capped like that of the plant. He holds himself and makes the eye-sign of thinking. Watching the flow of urine he thinks of the fungi, like him erect and like him the night before, hidden in the fur of earth. As I am, he thinks. And the first analogy is made. Then he will take the fomes fomentarius, the airy growths that burst into flame at once with the slightest spark, and compare
it with his own rise in the night when the camp girl with her hairy spine and vestigial bones pushes back, rutting against him."

"And pharmacology is born," Hailender said.

"Pantherinas, impudicus, leaning cock mushrooms, Shakespeare's toad..." Koyoto's voice rose over the roar of the storm.

"... that under cold stone
Days and nights hast thirty-one.
Swelter'd venom, sleeping got
Boil thou first in the charmed pot."

And what is the divine Soma in the Rg Veda but the juice of the Amanita? In the parturition of this plant is the cosmographical order. It begins as an androgynous quid. A crucible of creation. The primary material emanates from the quid."

Kruger spoke softly, "The shape of the phoneme U."
"... in aqueous medium."
"Its own mycorrhizal intimacy."
"... aqueous, the water upon which God's face moved.

Do you feel the agaric, Whitney?"

His body lightened and he pulled away from his head the parka hood. Whitney was slightly afraid.

"A cupola of primal dew... The red poppy that is set afire by germination."

"The Holy of Holies... Tabernacle..."
"A Silurian pod mother rock... a limestone still.
... Cro-Magnon of the Dordogne sucking the hole in the cave
rock for water. . . . The sacred baptismal font."
"Celtic cup in eternal fill."
The Hindu and Kruger traded allusions.
"A tide water pool that fills the sea. . . ."
"That tastes of flesh and honey like under a tongue
. . . a garden burst husk and tuft."
"The silo for ambergris,"
They laughed. Whitney was drawn in, caught in their poetry. He offered, "The crystal in geode."
"Yes, Whitney, a whirlpool and a fecund porch . . .
container of the dove-pea . . . the Sarcophagus: Aries-sur-tech, The "Holy tomb of the Holy bodies."

Whitney saw flesh, "pinkish-gray, unpolished, but
glistening marble . . . cell . . . mystic almond."
Koyoto's eyes shone, "and the lamb wool filtare of the RG Veda, radiant Padma-lotus."
"Cone, Yoni, where Jonah hid."
"The vdlva is called the nuptial couch of heaven."
"A reed basket for Moses."
"A manger for Jesus."
"The triangle that is all things . . . the tent of
Kedar and the tent curtains of Shalmah."

Then Koyoto's arms outstretched. "The mushroom
begins to split open. The second phase. He came up out of
the water and he saw the heavens torn open and a spirit like
a dove descended upon him. . . . The cap breaks through the
the volva and tears the mesh. Remains of the torn pellicle cling to the glans. Two sexes now, through the boundary that now marks the chapel female and the Son of God male. Head first out of the beginning. Implanted with the sacred substance."


"Tree of Jessie, blossoming in one night. . . ."

Whitney remembered Pliny, "Pliny says, 'The volva is produced first, and afterwards, the little mushroom is like a yolk inside the egg; and the baby mushroom is just as fond of eating its coat as is the chicken. The coat cracks when the mushroom first forms; presently, as it gets bigger, the coat is absorbed into the body of the footstalk. At first it is flimsier than froth, then it grows substantially like parchment, and then the mushroom is born. A membrane surrounds the young nub like an outer skin. Through this thin membrane the stipe, coming, breaks and there the gold glistens as dots. The remnants of the torn pellicle cling to the cap!"

"Good! Whitney."

Koyoto was feeling the agaric, "Yes, then it erects. A tower capped."

"A mainstay of the sky." Whitney's words eased out, "A new thing in Bethlehem,"

"Seed planter. . . . Seeker of Indra's belly."

"Spotted like a leopard."

"Lapis Lazuli in red and white."
His father and Galen. Blood and semen.

"Jacob and Esau . . . the cross +.

"Pollux supports Castor."

"Interstice between the thighs."

"Sumerian HAL, Kruger's linguistics."

Koyoto swung around to look at the three women.

"The Rg Veda speaks of three filtres - the erected cap of the plant, the wool of the lamb, and the belly of Indra. Through the three filtres must pass the sacred substance which brings first co-habitation and then identity with the gods. You did not know what you were chewing. The Rg Veda . . . . Those Gods with a commanding glance laid the germ. . . . Swell by God's word in thy stalk, in thy shoots, in thy stalk, in thy shoots. . . . The Gods have placed the Soma on the mountain top at the navel of the earth. . . . Soma! A storm cloud imbued with life is milked and clothed with the firebursts of the sun. . . . Soma flows like milk from the distant Mountains and enters the belly of Indra. . . . To enter the belly the Soma must pass through the dazzling mesh which is the second filtre.

"Now listen. . . . The sacred substance is brought down on the rays of the sun and enters the phallic pileus through the first filtre, which is the glans, or cap volva-emerging, of the plant. The plant, in this quick moment, shudders at the implanting of the sacred Soma and bursts in erection and shows a blazing red cap with a thousand knots.
"The Amanita, the thing you took in your mouth, takes the rays from the home of the gods. The substance enters into the emerging cap of the fungus and is transformed into an intoxicating drug which then lies just beneath the skin. The white cheese on the glans is a sign of implantation. The canopy is the first filter. The juice must pass through the wool of the lamb, which is the second, and then enter the belly of Indra, which is the third. . . .

"King, having the filter for chariot, he has attained the victory prize. A thousand studs, he conquers puissant renown. . . . Light comes to the plant and from the plant light. Make thyself pure with the stream from the sun . . . O Pávamana! Thou inebriation rivals the subtlety of flames . . . Soma, the wise, possessed of divine knowledge. Father of poems, Master-poet never yet equalled." Koyoto paused.

Kruger leaned and put his hands to the stove. Crashing, the bouran slammed at the house. "Linguistically and, taking some of Koyoto's imagery, Hebrew Kotereth, a mushroom word in the Old Testament, 'mushroom-shaped capitol of a pillar.' The mushroom erects so rapidly. The Sumerian UKush-TI-Gil-LA, bolt-gourd mushroom. Bolt, or knobbled shaft. The key to the kingdom. GI stem so that LI-Li-GI/ush. Two parts of the volva split by the GI stem. Phallic nomenclature by the primitive mind . . . association . . . Tammuz-girls whose purpose in life was to stir the male organ to favor the womb. How fleeting: how continuous were their services. The plane tree and its soporific shade under which the goddess Inanna,
in her sleep, received the gush of Shukallituda. Zeus mates Europa here under the plane. Hebrew for the plane tree, (Armon) from the Sumerian AR-GUN, Mount Hermon, the phallus that holds the sky, an axe-shaft in the groin of the sky.

Drill, bore BAAL, the pounder of the womb, grinder of the treshing floor of Araunah. Pollox supports the canopy of Castor. Biblical strong men, James, John, the Boanerges - Sons of thunder.

The Amanita is both Persephone, the vulva; and Kore, the emerging serpent who thrusts into Persephone."

Whitney clung to his science. "The Amanita contains atropine and muscarine. Atropine is a poisonous white crystalline alkaloid \( \text{C}_{17}\text{H}_{23}\text{N}0_3 \). Muscarine is a quaternary ammonium based \( \text{C}_{8}\text{H}_{19}\text{N}0_3 \)."

"But more, friend," Koyoto's lips glistened, "The sacred juice must pass through the wool of the lamb, which is the second filtre. The lamb that grows the wool shudders at the implantation of the sacred substance. The filtre catches the pulp but lets the chalky liquid through to run down into the belly of Indra, which is the third filtre. This second filtre is like a garden fledged over two halves of the world, split in gentle two, a gentle furrow of mother earth. Seed-taker socket to the ball, a whorl of a spindle, a cake of figs. As Kruger says, the lamb makes the great phoneme \( \text{U} \). The lambs wool is contacted by the fingers of the Officer, who feels the wool spread over the lips of the vat... Thy filtre of radiant hair has been spread over the limestone hole, where
the charioteer rides into the Dara of night and sinks in the western sea like a red poppy. . . . The butterfly veil is a sacred strainer and flutters on the lips of the casket. . . . Strain and purify the sacred juice, O Agni!! . . ."

Kruger's turn. "Na'imam, sweet and pleasant, and very grateful. SILA, juncture in Sumerian. The cap carries the word of God. The word is flaming spittle, sacred, and will be a burning torch in the womb after it passes the filtre of wool, the second filtre. Sumerian SIG is hair or fleece. DARA is dark reddish Sig. The vat is EN*DARA, a possessor of SIG.

"This second filtre is fleece turned gold when the sacred implant passes through. It is then worthy of questors. It is a rare chalice." Kruger finished.

"All things are found in the sacred forms of the sacred mushroom." The Hindu summed.

Whitney burned within. "The amanita, the fly-agaric, contains a pigment of red crystalline glucoside and muscarufin."

The old man sat, bewildered, shaking his head. The three young women were silent, courteous, biding before some settlement, money for embrace.

"These people know tales, marvelous things. . . ." Koyoto said.

Kruger nodded. He spoke directly to the old man in a language Whitney did not know. Whitney felt thick-tongued and his head felt compressed. A surge of strength ran his legs down. He flexed his thigh muscles. His penis began a slow gorge, as if unfolding, peeling out, loosed in some incredible,
imperceptible motion. Inevitable. Agaric.

Koyoto burst into laughter.

Hallender's face grew darker. The smoke paled to an umber in the room. Whitney's attention narrowed. Hallender's face thinned and his cheek flesh and lips twitched and puckered. He too laughed, softly.

Koyoto's head was black-sweat, his face in fox-fur, "Now, we agaric eaters will become silent. Voices will tell us to arise and go out and do great deeds and search in the snow for a message. Voices from our past will haunt us. We will see spirits. Scenes will unfold. There will be marvelous coincidences. What has happened will happen again. There will be an unbearable delight when thinking of young women. We will feel tightened.

"Then, we may lapse into unconsciousness and the agaric-spirits may take us through various worlds and show us strange sights. There will be a vision in trees, spirits will be in plants. We will sleep out the storm as these people do the Siberian winters . . . yes, old man, quickly tell us tales. We cannot understand you, but speak, let us hear words. Quickly, before we queer." Koyoto touched his own stuck-out tongue, then gestured to the old man.

The old man smiled, toothless. He sucked his black gums and began speaking. His voice was a rasp, moist and serrated like rims of leaves.

Whitney's mind whirled in a compression. Funnel to a focus. There was a hit and to him came an awareness of a
precinct where he was in some different, some strange sanity. There was no dizziness, no disability, no sickness or poison in him, but he was somewhere at some other border. He heard the old man's voice, but his story came from Whitney's personal past. Whitney rummaged through for the tale, summarized the unknown words as the old man spoke. Whitney condensed, got the essence. Her name was mud-girl. Her breasts were so beautiful the spirit of the north covered them with mud to keep men from quarreling to possess them. She lived in an underground cave and a serpent guarded the entrance to the cave that was at the base of a clump of birch. Ememqut, with agarics in his belly, slew the serpent - in the roots of the birch and went down to her. He made her lie down and he put hot stones on her body. The mud cooked from the heat of the stones. Ememqut took away the baked clay and looked at her. Her breasts were swollen from the heat of the stones and great tears of joy ran down Ememqut's face when he saw their beauty. And the girl took the baked earth, the perfect bowls baked on her body, and collected in them Ememqut's tears. Then Ememqut took her to live in his house.

The old man left off speaking, then began again. Whitney heard words of a heart that was swallowed by a whale and the heart turned ambergris in the belly of the whale. Whitney eased back and re-lived next a comical story of a Cossack man who turned to his own buttocks and asked them why they laughed at him. The Cossack had ten white bear teeth in a necklace. He ate three agaric caps and his buttocks turned and ate off
the poor fellow's hand. The old teller of tales grinned
toothless and his eyes were bright blue.

One of the women, perhaps the youngest, leaned toward
Hallender and spoke. Again, this time in the girl's words,
Whitney felt the haunt. The story focused in a precis.

_Yeltalman, a pretty girl-child, said, "Take me with
you, old man. I am pregnant, but I slept with no man." The
man looked at her and found her desirable. Straightway he
whistled and three reindeer arrived and carried Yeltalman and
the man where the sun was warm and where they would be safe
and where the girl could raise her child. Then the girl's
time came. They went and arranged a feast. They saw Cos-
sacks come with gifts. A Kurgis man came with silver. They
played games, urinated very far, wrestled, and the babe lay
peaceful in the hay of his bed in the wood house.

Whitney chilled and leaned closer to the stove. A
circle of faces rimmed the red-hot tub. Tilty, black cylin-
ders of stack, rickety to the blackened ceiling. Haze.

Whitney spoke, his voice dreamy, slow. "The story of
Yeltal . . . man. . . . Her virgin conception, a parallel
to the mushroom. Yeltalman, too, was parthenocarpic, huh,
friend Hallender?" Whitney thought, partly, momentarily clear-
ing, "What of the girl you were to meet back . . . at Khand-
had? Have you forgotten?"

Whitney's lips puffed, pressed together. His mouth at
the corner lifted. "... and Mary, parthenocarpic as well."
Koyoto and Hallender now looked lifeless. Their eyes sickened with an orange serous. The drug had not worked on Whitney the same way. But there was something else that was working. An uneasiness flooded him. There was a portension. Whitney felt pulled. He remembered back to Khandhad and tried to focus on the events of the journey to this point, attempted a reaccounting of the talk. He sensed a vague pattern, import to their conversations. There was a common thread. There was a chain more than mere contiguity. What was it? Why?

Hallender scrambled suddenly to his feet. He turned about, his eyes bulging, a hulk in his great fur coat. He threw up his hands as if protecting his face. He stood as in a listening, facing the circle at the stove. A horror swept his face and held. He rushed for the door and wrenched it back. The bitter winds, pressured at the slatted frame of the door, hammered in, slammed back the door. There was a deafening roar. Hallender was blown down. The wind drove into the house, ramming viciously. Hallender got up and backed to the door, his legs braced. He backed a step, then wheeled about. Once more he turned to look at the stunned occupants of the shelter. Then he ran out.
CHAPTER IV

A QUID OF AGARIC

The sledge driver from Khotash, who had bounded up instinctively when Hallender threw open the door, rushed toward the opening to force the door back, against the wind. Kruger moved quickly over to assist. Whitney got to his feet, crouched, then hurled himself toward the onslaught of wind. Whitney faced out and yelled at the figure of Hallender driving apparently aimlessly through the snow out into the darkening early dusk.

"Fool!" shouted Kruger.

Whitney yelled again out to Hailender. He fixed his parka about his body and head and broke out of the doorway into the deep driven snow about the shelter house. The wind circled, pulling, pushing at him. Ahead, Whitney could make out, through the blinding white and dark greyness, Hallender's hunched stumbling form swaying and then jerking as he fought his way. A great gust of wind broke Whitney down to his knees. Deep in the snow he lifted his head and looked ahead to a swell in the snow field and the beginning of a forest of white birch beyond. He saw Hailender hold at the top of the rise, lift his arms up toward the trees, then pitch over and
down and disappear. Whitney straightened up and felt immediately the agaric in his belly sear and take his breath. Whitney plunged through, following, and on to the top of the rise. There he looked down to see Hallender some ten feet below prone in the snow. Hallender's upper body was wedged between two tree trunks, his arms outstretched directly over his head.

Whitney edged a step down the slope, then took another careful step, and then scuttling in a half slide, half quick stutter-step, worked his way down the incline to the downed figure.

Again Whitney felt the agaric working, searing through him, running a burning through the myelian wires of his body to every extremity. Whitney grabbed at the Englishman and turned him over. The moistures of Hallender's eyes, nose, and mouth had become dark ribbons of ice and lay like raised veins on his face. Whitney felt his senses mix. There seemed an odor in the whiteness of the bitter cold. The look on Hallender's face seemed to Whitney something that could be heard. He tasted the sound of the roaring wind.

Whitney ceased to pull at the lifeless body and let it sink back again in the powder between the crotch of the two trunks. He looked around, back up the rise toward the direction of the wooden house.

Suddenly Whitney saw a glowing at his right hand out of the corner of his eyes and past the fur rim of his parka. He looked full in the direction of the glowing. There came a
gold flare at the base of a large birch an arm's length away. Whitney fell back. He stared, grabbed at his middle with both hands, and then in what was a lull in the storm, created a figure of a beautiful woman blazing in the tree with long flowing hair and naked breasts. The woman lifted her arms to him.

The soft agaric broke into bits inside him.

Whitney raised up to his knees before the figure and put his hands in front of his face. His ears burned and large swirls of snow ran at him and fluttered icy-white doves before his eyes.

The woman spoke. His ears created the words.

"She is the mother of God. You may not know her. But you must take her and protect her. This man dead in the snow, this man first meant for her, has refused his second time. You must be a surrogate and take her for him and be to her what he was almost two thousand years ago. He is dead in the snow. You will live in her warmth, a warmth that will be snow to your desire. Come, take my breasts with your hands and mouth and I will know you have accepted. Come, John Whitney..."

Whitney reached for the figure. His fingers created a warm softness.

"Take them... and accept. Forget me. Let the pattern unfold. You are subordinate. Live Mary's annunciation. Your annunciation must be quiet, unknown.

Whitney fell, unconscious, the agaric burning his last moment of awareness."
Kruger and the sledge driver found him minutes before he would have frozen to death. Hallender was dead, covered by whipping snow, his body a white, ripped mound. They left Hallender in the cradle of birch and managed to get Whitney back to the shelter house.

The storm lasted through the night and most of the next day. At sunset of the second day it was over. A bright yellow red disc dashed a chromic crimson on the white mountains. A deep purple alternated in horizontal layers with the sunfire in the sky. The sun thickened in the madder and a steel cold sealed the house in a transparency of ice.

On March 22 the 1872 Spring World Congress in Ethnobotany and Afghan Frontier Delimitation Expedition abandoned their mission and entered into the small village of Kumitex by sledge.

There had been a rescue sledge sent from Neviansk. The young women and the old man went on to the mining town. The scientists decided to go back.

Whitney was left at Kumitex. In the frozen house Whitney had lain in a soft delirious fever. The journey to Kumitex had worsened him. Now there were outbursts and the fever deepened.

There was a nurse at Kumitex. She spoke English.

"He can't go on with us, can he?" Kruger, deeply concerned, asked.

The nurse said no. "Will you too stay, with him?" Kruger shook his head.
For ten days Whitney lay in the fever. At the eighth day he drifted for a moment into consciousness, then sank away. There was a crisis. It broke. He came out, and the nurse washed him and took off his beard. She waited in the room in a chair by a window.

He moved his eyes. Clear vision at once. He saw her leaning at the sill. "Am I back in Kumitex?"

The nurse, startled, relieved, got up and went out. She returned with a bowl of broth. She was in a grey, linen dress with long embroideries in pattern. At her waist was a wide, black sash. Her blouse was layered. She had thin, black browhair and ice-blue eyes in sockets, arrowheaded in shape, points at the nose. She sat the bowl on a table by the bed and went to open the window.

"Yes, you are at Kumitex."

"Who are you?" Whitney asked, wondering at her perfect speech.

She turned. She looked at him. "I am Alina Machek. I have cared for you. Ten days."

"A nurse here? Am I that fortunate?" There were white bandages on his fingers.

"I travel the small villages. I come here to rest." She edged toward him. His muffed hands reached for the bowl.

"Eat only a little. You will be sick." His fingers worked.

"How did I get here?"

"They brought you. A sledge from Neviansk. They went back to Khandhad."
"They gave up the expedition?"

"Yes."

She watched him spooning. He took the broth slowly, his fingers awkward. "How much agaric did you eat?"

He remembered the sweet, hot morsel.

"One."

Whitney thought her lovely. Her thick, light-colored hair had been tied up in curls about her head and strands had come down and whirled in long, spiral turns about her shoulders like chambered shells in sand by whispering seas.

"Stay with me. . . ."

"I have."

"No. I mean stay with me . . . with me." He was taken by his own simple expression. He turned away from her look. He did not know her ways. He turned back.

"I am sorry."

"I must go up to Khotash station. A woman there is ready to have her babe born. I will be back in two days. There is a man here who will cook for you and will be here if you need him. You are well now. You must get stronger . . . you would not want me now."

The woman's hand went slowly to the front of her long skirt. She touched herself, in front, pressing lightly.

"Wait two days. Here, I will leave you this powder in this bag."

She went out and about an hour later he heard noises. He had eaten and there would come in the rhythm of his
sleep that night a normal pace and ordinary dreams. It had
been a long time since he had had a woman. It would be good.

The next morning he awoke rested and stronger. He
drank coffee and took a bit of hashish into the bowl of his
pipe. Dr. John Whitney waited for her return.

He was fourteen years again. His father's voice,
Aquinas means by Claritas that a thing is. It is that moment
when we admit that a thing is what it is and not anything
else. That the loud buzzing, the purple ribbons, the flour­
ishing fruit tree with the striate gash that runs cold sticky
sap, the odor of peat or musk, the star that is the earth, the
tawny-yellow fungi, the silky fibrils on mother's face, the
mucuous chambers of wombs, floating combs of seed tassels, the
taste of certain plants, the taste of flesh, the surprise of
the first frost, the fact that falcons have silver-green
tongues, are existents is enough." Claritas wants too that
which other men, unobserving, call the extraordinary. Seek
no easy fulfillment in the easy world of the imagination and
supernatural, John. Accommodate the commonest of objects and
find in them the amazing and the wondrous. Nothing wondrous
is apart from the natural. Hippocrates, your favorite, says
the divine is the natural. There is no distinction. Is
there, son?"

"No."

"Plants must have air, but want too the warm snug of
soil around its roots.


"Father, this soil is like sponges that grow in the ocean."

"Marvelous! Look how it lifts and yet holds its every particle up, refusing to mash down. You can't press it down to stay, John. You will see growth here in just a few weeks. Take these seeds. Spray them along small gullies and cover. There will be mounds here of parsley and spearmint, sweet cicely I think too. What did I put in the seed pouch last fall? We can't tell now. Let them all grow together in this airy medium... already, here, John are the tender stalks of wild garlic and winter onions and all these emerging growths are fungi that need no seeding and these perennials come back after the winter from roots that warm and swell with the spring rains. The nature of seed and germination..."

"Son, have you finished Galen?"

"I have. It seems to me that he is flawed and contradictory."

"How is he contradictory?"

"He says, 'that which is grows, that which is not becomes.'"

"Go on."

"The implication is that that which is not, I take it to mean dead things - he mentions bags, garments, houses, ships, or the like - in the process of their making undergo genesis..."
"... because their form has not yet come to completion."

"Yes, and he calls this artificing towards appropriate form genesis and he says that the word growth belongs to that which has already been completed in respect to its form. How, father, could a tree be said to grow from a seed, or, Galen mentions, how could a child be said to grow from semen and blood? If Galen is right would we all not then grow as merely larger masses of a concoction of semen and blood?"

"And you think he is contradictory because he also says that nature does not preserve the original character of any kind of matter?"

"Yes, father, Galen says that and also says that growth is the extension in all directions, that growth begins only when the form is complete, and then, there is an enlarging of all parts. Is the tree form complete in the seed? Is the child's form complete in semen and blood?"

"Galen must believe that there is an invisible, completed form in the seed and that some force or spirit nourishes and enlarges the form."

"But there is obvious change..."

"Perhaps he believes there is a pre-form, identical with though appearing nothing like the mature form? How is it that mushroom comes into being without seeding, lad? There is no implant but there is conception..."

"... and where, then, does that plant get its form? Where does it get its life?"
"From God, lad. God's voice."

Alina. Her menses would be like sweet bitumin. Pitch and rose. She would carefully wash. He would not have minded.

Father's words. What did they mean? There came to Whitney a try for an appraisal to set those words in place, but the try aborted and fell back. His mind was all pulp, recovering, neurons, settling, niching in the pulp.

Father it has disturbed me. . . . You said that Aquinas meant by Claritas that a thing is and not another thing. I have always felt that you somehow lived by that definition and that we could learn from it, that it was a significant way of seeing the world, that we would find truth in it. Yet, father, I hear you lately making fantastic analogies and you say this is that and you give stretched meanings and make foreign allusions and evoke titles and names I do not know. Is it the loud buzzing? no, it is the vibrating agony of pellicles torn. Is it the purple ribbon? no, it is the garnish of lavender rolled and laced. The flourishing tree with the striate gash that runs sticky cold sap? no, it is the slaver of running Apollo, rapine, chasing Daphne. The peaty odor, the ointment out of some deep chamber where ambergris is found. The silky fibrils on mother's face, hair on the surface of a Magi's honoring gift. The star that is the earth, an emissary. The tawny-yellow fungi, man's sex. The mucuous chambers of wombs, tryworks. Floating cotton, each tiny Christ. Taste of certain plants, a sign received by
the mechanisms of taste and ingestion. Surprise of frost, that each man believes he will live forever in his son. That falcons have silver tongues, that . . . father are you listening?

Alina had left him with a bit of opium in a packet made of velvet. He stuffed his pipe with a rich burley and dashed the opium on top the tobacco. It filtered, salted, through. He fired the bowl and went to the window. He looked up into the night sky. Melted moon-white and black. He thought of musky gelatines, bitumin, and sweet sticky cream. There was no blend in the color, only a marbling, distinct, a thickness in the black, an emanation of a field of force from the white. There is a method of communication that sends bare. Lightning. Fire. Vision. Spittle-God's word, a virgin pregnant through her ear.

He went to the bed and threw off his gown, and naked beneath a light quilt, he slept. An hour passed of moonlight.

He was slightly aware of a presence in the room. He smelled laurel. There was a rustle of clothing and the blanket over him was moved away. He felt warmth and a vivid sensation of a hand upon him. His head filled with a breathing of cane and bog. There was a salt in his mouth. He felt a pleasurable excitement centering in the flesh between his legs.

"Alina . . . "

She lay down beside him and kissed his mouth. In the bright room he looked down and saw her hand holding the
white obelisk, daedalian and capped like a mushroom. She caressed him and at once a hot lacteal gushed up and throbs flooded her hand and fell through her fingers. The soft fur of her breath sank through his skin.

He was passive, yet structured. The woman dabbed at her hand and his flesh with a cloth. He got up from the bed and went to the window.

The moon would not pass, but held, intercepted. Around it was a wheel of silver with spokes of oyster turning green at the perimeters. On the landscape had been a drop of lactescense and wash and uncompromised black. All was windless, hush. Whitney opened wide the window. There was a purr. The firs swayed lightly against the creamy backdrop. There was a vibring of tendril.

Alina came to the window. Her little feet made no sound on the wood floor. Her breasts were small and peaked and he thought of pale primrose and wet places under conifers and underground bog and frondose woods and beeches and creamy gills. He thought of the smell of mild milk and the smell of densely tufted hypholoma, purple tinges in the sky and weeping sobs in the rain.

They stood and looked at the mountains and the moon.

For a time they talked. She told him of Mongols in the sexual embrace on horseback, racing for bright yellow banners tied at a line. She told him of her uncle who said the sex word to her once and put his hand between her thighs and fingered her until she squirmed. Whitney heard her
laugh softly. "He roared with laughter, patted my bottom, licked his fingers, and then rode away on a great white horse. I ran to a gully beneath some alders and cried. I was afraid I would have a child."

There was a green canescence in the hills footing the mountains. Alina came to the window closer. Her lips in profile were white hyaline and just inside the lower swell lay a purple dough and tiny pools of ticky wetness. Her salmon tongue coiled and touched the dry line of her upper lip and curled back into the coral womb. He reached for her, the white coils of cloth at his fingers frayed and stringy, his fingers warming and feeling again. He placed his mouth on hers. Rich and piquant was the taste for him. He caressed her. She touched him. Soft wax. Tube vesicle.

He turned away and thought of the agon Zimri, who after five in one night, yet took a delight at sun's rise with Cozbi bath-zur, the long-thighed Midianite girl, and knew her until he was like an addled egg and she like a furrow filled with water. A silo of seed. There were lascivious postures. Cozbi begged surcease, smiling.

The tiny muscles of Alina's nostril rim flared. Eternal wolf, rapine in her fur. She led him to the bed and put him prone before her. She roved over him and took soft honeycomb in her mouth. She looked up. Whitney thought mushrooms. He marveled at the stipe, apricot-white, venosed, with raised, lateral veins on the flaxen surface, annulus slightly a scar two inches below the gills, the top velvet, daedalic, purplish.
He pulled from under her and turned to massage her flanks and down the cage of ribs back to where the flocci grew daric and imperceptible on the skin of her rump. He drew across the field of belly that swelled with her breathing to the umbilical omphalate and down to the sulcated campanula, pilosed with rich aromatic hair, and in the rugose crenate and wrinkled, red, rufous, purple-brown, and too, primrose-pale where the nub, a small harpoon, puckered up out of an umbo of the center ribbons. Alina. Spore-taker. Gleba deep and infuldibuliformed where the serous made the flesh glisten in dots. Viscid. Acrid in young specimens.

His lips searched. A moment. Lightly up to her small, powdery breasts. Then again to the gray lavender middle milky way, lips coursing like tendrils to Lucifer's morning star, the Devil's nub. There was a shift of her coccyx. She splintered, a myolian shudder and her hand dipped and curved and hung at the side of the bed.

She lay released and quiet for a time and then got up and filled Whitney's pipe and brought it to him. He pulled the bedclothes to his waist and sat upright. He fired the tobacco. She leaned across him.

"What will you do now, John Whitney?"

"There are lectures to give at a university in the late summer. I was to give them after Pamir, after a successful expedition. Go and tell what I saw, what I learned. Now...?"

"Will you tell me of the storm."

"A storm..."
"No. What you saw there."

"What do you know?"

"Only a little. What you said in your fever. About the man Hallender ... going out into the wind."

John looked away from her. "I can't remember anything else."

She sat up. "There's a letter for David Hallender here. It came shortly after your party left here for Khotash station."

"For Hallender...?"

"Yes, do you want it?"

Whitney pressed her side with his hand. "Yes, get it please."

Alina put on her gown and went out. From the girl. He knew. She returned and placed the letter on the bed. He opened it and read the simple English. Four sentences and a fragment. The letter was not signed. He put the letter down and stared away, past her, past the mountains in the window frame.

"I must be leaving. Will you find me a man to take me at once to Khandhad?"


Whitney withdrew inwards. Lean and mute he rode to Khandhad, the contents of the letter a spur at him, driving
deeper into an abstraction of wonder and doubt, where every intention toward solving the design of the events of his life failed.

At the outskirts of Khandhad Whitney exchanged gifts with his guide and watched him ride away toward the sunrise.

He waited at the Belock lodgings in Khandhad. He was fragile. He dare not advance. **Wait back. Wait for the sounding.** There was a darkness holding him to the room. He dare not force understanding. There was an unacknowledged realization he would not tell himself. He would not allow himself to speak aloud, or think to himself the acknowledgment. He held in the room abstracted, distanced from the unfolding pattern—events and words of river and snow trail to the stormed house, words from his childhood; all, a kind of apology for a conception of a marvelous nature. In him was a mix and a reluctance to sort through.

She would come and tell her story.

Still the vision at Pamir failed to fall through to realization. There had been a phenomenon and a registering of data. But where was it? Why had the vision stalled? What filter had it yet to pass? All was white blaze and roar.

On April twelfth the girl came. There had been sounds on the landing outside his door. He had looked out and saw no one. He heard a door closing above him. He waited. But one serial sound brought another and then came a soft rapping. He went to the door and opened it and there, with hand withdrawing from contact of the cold wood, coming to her face, she stood.
There was a grey linen shawl about her head and a heavier, grainy wool wrap draped over her shoulders and wrapped about her. She wore a long dress of layered cloth. She wore mittens and was carrying a cloth valise with a wooden handle.

"... Doctor Hallender. ...?"

Her voice was a vulnerable whisper. Her lips barely moved. Whitney stood transfixed in the doorway. The retinas of his eyes blanched white, hurting. The figure of the girl before him blurred and the vision at Pamir, in the storm, fell through and completed itself. Whitney knew at that moment what he had seen, what he had done. He saw again the woman in the tree glowing, and saw himself, a kneed worshipper and before her in the bitter wrath of the storm, hearing, heeding the words. She is the mother of God ... take her and protect her ... live in her warmth ... come and I will know you have accepted. ...

There was a rush of a quiescence, a settlement of seeking, of a kind that comes when a connection is made and a link is closed. Whitney closed his arms about the girl and drew her into the room and shut the door behind. She had found her protector.

The mission he at once understood and could not refuse. The abstraction of doubt fell away from him. No quizzing was necessary. The weave of that part of the design cleared, threaded with certainty. His hand led her to a wooden chair. There was a lostness in her tentative moments, surety in his.
"I am not David Hallender. . . ."

"I was to meet him." Bewilderment.

"No. He can't come. I am here in his stead."

"... in his stead. I don't understand. I don't know you."

"You did not know him. . . ."

"I know he was to take me."

His hand reached for her, touched the shawl, began to pull away the woolen rim. "I will take you."

Deep, violet lashes lowered over her dark eyes. Her head tilted slightly but the shawl did not move with the movement of her head but came away in Whitney's grasp. Her hair was deep umber with streams of sienna. It was rich hair, thick, formed. He looked at her face and dropped his eyes slowly down to her fur-lined shoes and up again to her white stockings and back to her face. She would not look at him. She would not speak. Her mouth was rosed and full, her nose thin and planed, straight, puffs at the pink sides. She breathed quietly. Her body did not move.

He repeated, "I will take you . . . and your unborn child."

There was a compliance in her silence.

There began, in the next few hours, the rudiments of aquaintenceship. It would be a simple arrangement, primary, non-answerable. Whitney refused more memory of the vision, of Pamir, of anything past. An immediacy sealed him.

He brought her food and sat with her. There was a kind of phatic understanding. For five days they remained at
Khandhad. At night Whitney lay awake beside her and touched her face and hair.

On the sixth day Whitney told the girl that they would be leaving Khandhad to journey west by train.

"There is a university. . . . I am to give lectures there."

On April 17 they boarded for Kriszt, the first connection of a long journey.
CHAPTER V

A GRANDEUR OF NATURE

It was a pencil drawing of a mushroom shaded lightly with pastel colors. The mushroom arose out of a thick tangle of roots, leaves, and woodland scatter. The stalk of the plant was pitted and attenuated downwards toward the serrated roots. High on the stipe, or stalk, near the underside gills, was a ring of loose flesh and tufts of gathered fibrils. Cobweblike veils were effused between the stipe and the gills. Clinging to the gill-fans were frosted flocci. The cap of the plant was a broad, milky-pale umbo, slightly of a primrose color, as a hint, as a breast. The margins of the cap, near the underside, were wooly, shaggy. The convex swell of the cap was dented slightly in the center and in the dent was a nub, like the head of a tiny harpoon. It was the mushroom, Lactarius rep.

John Whitney pulled the heavy, tannish paper away from the square piece below and revealed the mushroom Phal- lus impudicus, another drawing. The roots of the phallus were attached to a white mycelial cord which ran as a ribbon to near the bottom of the paper. The stipe of the plant was long and thick and looked cartilaginous. The head was as a glans
and looked honeycombed and was covered by a blackish-olive spore mass. The entire plant except for the dark shade at the tip of the glans was colored tawny-yellow.

There were two other drawings in the hastily sketched collection of four - the Amanita muscaria and the Clitocybe odorata. The Clitocybe Whitney touched with a tracing finger. The cap of the plant was orchid and apricot and seemed to glisten. A little head protruded from the center of the cap, which was as a wavy leaf, a pod and hymenium. The amanita was capped in light scarlet and budded with little cheezy warts and patches. The cap was perfectly hemispherical and the roots were thickly matted with hair.

He sat deep in his desk chair and the dark pencil loosened from his fingers and slipped, skidding on its point, and rolled across the relaxed curved thumb of his right hand to lie and quiver to a still, marginal to the graphic lactarius.

"Caricature . . . botanical caricature." He shuffled the drawings and touched the amanita, finding it one paper below the Clitocybe.

". . . this, the poetical mind, the amanita. This Clitocybe, the female, the phalbus, the male; and the lactarius, the milk. Not a parallel division, but . . . look, how this one rears up, this one promises enfolding, this one one eternity, and this one offers its breast."

Whitney's voice was low. The girl would not hear him.
He turned to the window and stared at the spray growing to translucent stones on the window glass and heard the tech tech tech of spaced raindrops on the slate roof of the window bay. He lit his pipe. In long draughts he pulled the familiar smoke of the drug into his head and lungs and held its burning ice. Whitney was softening away from the demands of his science, softening into a seeker of comfort, drifting for some marvelous padma. Basket of reeds. Float primitive, like Moses, drawn into a deep cup of the Pharaoh's daughter's hand. Pitchy bitumin in the reed.

Whitney's vision blurred as he dropped back from a focus on the brass-jacketed firemaker sitting atop a small pile of papers. There was a grey gauze. Filtre. He let his head tilt back and out of the fuzzy arc of the dim lamplight. He opened his mouth to exhale the smoke, but he tasted through the hash a mealy, sweet, farinaceous agaric, wadded with the mouth water of a Mongol girl.

He heard in the other room the girl's washing sounds. She would, when finished and dressed in her gown, come in to the larger end of the room by the fireplace and sit in the large chair. She would come in and try reading a bit of English from the books he had selected for her. Sometimes he would leave off from his writing and read to her. When he didn't, she would tire of the reading to herself and fall asleep in the chair. That had been the pattern.

He stretched up and back in his chair drawing deeper on the stem of the pipe. His writing of that early evening
had brought him closer to the finish of the fifth and last Brinton Drake lecture. The officials of the university had been curious. He saw that in their eyes, but they were tactful and questioned him little about Pamir. Since he had come early they had encouraged him to a leisurely initiation to the preparations for the lectures. Whatever you need, Dr. Whitney. They had been surprised that a girl came with him. A cottage . . . rather than rooms . . . Yes, it would be better.

He had persisted and had kept his lectures true to his science, honoring the appointment. But each lecture had been more difficult, more strain in the attempt to fix in the center, to focus on objective science and not want to drift or want to give in to drift. He felt the geometrics now, narrowing aperture, increasing pressure as the peak of her time approached, proportionate to the time of birth. Hurtled, discarding the vestments of botany's intention, he felt propelled toward the concentration of a dilating womb. Decline of one structure; ascension of his new mentalwork.

His drawing had been a sustained giving in to the drifts of memory, images, and free-association that were coming more frequently and were distancing him from his science and from the objective disciplines required by the Brinton Drakes.

The drifts were haunts; they were vivid recollections of Pamir, recollections of the rich allusions worded by Kruger and Koyoto, around that stove with the gale throwing at the wood house and the bright black eyes of the Mongol
girls laughing - laughing, and their mouths watery from chewing the agaric. These allusions, Whitney had begun to voice. He felt compressed to a singleness. Coming from; going toward.

His pipe burned to a cold ash.

He pulled the handle of the lower desk drawer and rummaged through. There were cans of tobacco and at the rear of the deep drawer a small white cotton sack. Whitney found it and brought it up and set it on the desk by the brass firemaker. He felt the soft bulge of the sack and peered inside, drawing apart the ruffled, stringed hem at the top. The sack was full of dried whisks of mushroom flesh. He had not opened the sack since Alina gave it to him at Kumitex. It was a memory piece and with the firemaker in brass, a totem.

He pulled the drawstring tight and fingered again the fatness of the white sack. He edged it away to his left with the back of his hand.

Then he reached for a tobacco can in the drawer and set it on the desk. He opened the lid, reached in, and filled the bowl of his pipe.

Pact: Take the girl - protect her.

Early on, she looked to him in those dependencies of the orphaned and lost. He had cared for her meticulously, unbroken, straight through from Khandhad to Eddington and she accepted his care, allowed his careful ministration. She had slept in his arms, leaning upright in the train seat as they steamed slowly across the plains from Kristz to Karagnada. There were nights in lodgings. He took her to rooms, left
her and returned with food. He sat awake, looking through windows, hearing her sleep and manufacture the child. Master Whitney . . . I am with child.

"Yes . . . do you say you slept with no one?"

So naturally did she come under his care. Out of Keybeyseh he wrapped her in a blanket he had bought from an old woman. The car was dark, cold. His hand had lingered in contact with her face.

There began for him a shock of contentment, a strange ease and a sense of a beginning of a long pause. His sense of peace grew as they traveled west and north toward the channel where they would cross to England. He felt the peace strike him sure and covering. Wordless, he glowed in a soft phatic atmosphere with her. There came a shared knowing that needed only silence. He accepted simply the chain of events. His was a primitive participation, a non-ratiocination, in what had been given him. He took nothing of a measure which would enable him to find out the probable in the extraordinary events. There was simply an agaric intoxication and following hallucination; but there was more too. There was an incredible serenity and the energy of a seeming repetition. He could recognize the beginnings of a wondrous simulacre. He took it all and sought no disproving. He would let her live the life of it. His life now. This beautiful child.

But she was not a child. Her eyes were not those of a child. Neither was she girlish, in her soft laughter, in her tight sobbing, often, the nights in the cottage with
Whitney.

Not a child. He thought of her as a woman because her breasts were filling and she carried a child. All of these things admit of no certain explanation. They are hidden away in the grandeur of nature.

He heard her softly singing. She finished. A clothes sound. She came in from the bedroom and went to the fireplace. She lifted from the mantle a small book.

"Will you read to me tonight?"

The small desk lamp provided a thin mantle of light for his writing. He turned down the lamp at her words and left the room in a melting lambent - flicker from the lamp and glow from the fire in the fireplace out in the larger end of the room where the girl stood before the fire.

It was almost midnight. There was a soothing in the atmosphere of the room, a mistiness if moisture were deep orange color and blue powder. Outside was a blossom-bringing rain. There was a run of blue metal on the window glass. Mottled throws of shadowy clots fluttered, waved, and hung in the air like spiders. Other casts stuck themselves on surfaces like fluid disks with grey centers and pastel, fibulous edging. From the right of his desk came the light from the fire. The firelight created all black and gold nova about the room and tantalized in licks the mushroom handbook Whitney held in his right hand, and on the desk the paper pad at his left, the white cotton sack, and the firemaker.

She asked the question and her voice trailed, cords
humming, lingering on the last of a breathy, dental T. She held the priority of audible space and did not seem to wait for his answer.

She took up the book in his silence.

Perhaps, he thought, his peace had come and held because he had turned from committing himself to a full appraisal of her. He had not been ready for a full knowing. It had not been propitious that he know. There was something in her that would have overwhelmed him should he know prematurely.

Her fingers were long and pale and she seemed to him to pose with her hands, holding the book, as if hired for a worker in stone. He had given her to read only some simple things in English, for she knew only the rudiments of the language. Her native tongue he had not heard her speak often enough to place. He guessed: Aramic of the mountainous upper Galilee. He would say she came from there and be done with it.

He knew his Brinton Drake appointment had not been unanimous. The committee surely had discussed his selection at some length. He knew the Russian Eukalov was preferred, but for some reason unknown to Whitney was second-placed to the young botanist from the Société Mycologique de Paris.

There had been a promulgation of Whitney's career almost without his stir. He had been promoted by his colleagues at the Société, his former professors, and by his published work. The honors began coming - before Pamir. The Brinton Drakes he had accepted eagerly. He would go to
Pamir, share the acclaim that would surely come as it had for the dozen such journeys sponsored by the World Congress, come to give the Brinton Drakes, do spectacularly well, and leave at the peak of his career.

The first four lectures had been given. They had been speculative and yet expertly grounded in the traditions of ethnobotany to satisfy even the chairman, Alexander - Euka-lov's champion. Whitney had seen Emory nodding - Whitney's strongest voice. Emory had seemed pleased. Smiling, he had apparently been in agreement with what Whitney had taken as his hypothesis and obviously gratified that Whitney had extricated himself in the fourth lecture out of the self-entrapment of the third. The vice-chairman, Leichester, had seemed content enough. The others, rational and silently prudent.

There remained the fifth. He would deliver that and leave Eddington with the girl. He had no idea what he would do next. There was a scatter of offers. Some were very important. He knew he must find a place for her and the child and make a home. Some university quiet. Go back to the Société.

The girl began reading at a place marked by a carmine ribbon. The pages of the little book, in her hands, swelled up from the crease and feathered to either border. Whitney thought of words implanted, words realized through her eyes.

He smoked and drifted.

He had not been to Central America . . . he would take her there, wait for the child, and make the acquaintance
of an eater of the sacred mushroom and find, in a mud cave, a passageway to the Amazon, and through another route pass under the sea and come up under the ice in the Gulf of Anadyr, at the other side of the world. . . . they would trade with the reindeer people — trade a jungle girl for amanita, Amazon jaguar for Taiga deer, abortificant for intoxication. . . . They would find a wooly mammoth in a wall of ice and another down under soft soil where grew stunted shrubs and perennial mosses. . . . they would find gaseous hot springs encircled with huge tropical fan-plants . . . they would pass birds frozen to limbs, appearing as crystal platings in ice or little encased foetals . . . find whorling nests of gathered berries . . . slide frozen lemmings down cataracts of blue ice . . . see a tiny Chinese lady of the T'ang Dynasty dead in a bejeweled coffin with an enamel and gold disk on her forehead . . . see Bernini's Head of Medusa in the gnarled roots of an overturned spruce. Alders. A girl running.

. . . Finger in the dark triangle of a beautiful Mongol girl, a niece named Alina, after racing horses. . . . Take her down into a gully and then laugh at her and ride away. . . . The alders toss in the wind . . . the uncle said "dambura."

"Thus the soiled fichu is the bestial caricature of womanhood, for in woman." But to the girdle do the fiends inherit, the rest is the god's. Gods look for the dark triangles. Cuneus in Sumer. Why language was invented. Apt. Cuneiform and words. Words spoken into the wedge become
He turned his swivel chair and reached for a folder on the shelves behind him. He opened the brown cover and placed on top the stack of pencil drawings in the folder—his four recent ones. Evening the pages, he then thumbed through the art work—drawings done between writing for the lectures.

Here: nimbus clouds in a glory; great sycamores up-rooted years past by storms, rotting growing glowing lichen underneath; Silurian fossils in mud beds; quaking bogs with gluelike ooze; bleached tusks and spine of an ice-age cat; bubbling boils; spire shaped firs; spruce banking the Tom river; the Altai mountains at a distance; woodland floors of snow and ice; a nest of albino squirrels in a box held by a small boy; yaks standing knee deep in metallic ground mists; yaks in the brutish grit of their hairy coats; stands of jack-pine; balsam poplars; tamarack; white birches; bleak tents; wood houses; a young girl in a bonnet; agaric eaters drinking urine from skin bags; men huddled around an open fire inside a wood house; a storm; a figure in a tree.

"Will you finish the lecture tonight or will you read to me?" The girl asked again.

He stared ahead, the window sounding a pecking with rain at his left side.

Whitney's science was full of the fantastical and full of the stuff of poetry. All along it had been and he had not fully realized it. In the bookshelves behind him were volumes of material—descriptions, terms, epithets, plates, cuts,
sections, drawing, and glossaries from which he could find agents for exotic drift. It was all substance with stock easily turned, subverted from science to a new way of seeing.

He lifted up a thick stubby book - Morner's Observations of the Higher Fungi and thumbed through its pages, moving to the glossary in the back section.

She would not mind if he delayed answering her.

Here: Selected Descriptions - Anastomosing, joining together. Annulus, as ring on stipe of many agarics. Arachnoid, veil or cobwebbed. Apothecium, cup, the fertile collector. Ascus, sac-like bag bearing spores. Campanulate, bell-shaped. Cortina, mucous that clings between the stipe and the apothecium. Crenate, where the edge is delicately waved. Cusp, small head between two loaves of matter. Dichotomous, a fulcrum at the point of the spreading forks. Effused, spread over the substrate. Farinaceous, a smell like meal, the agaric taste. Fibrils, small hairs visible to the naked eye. Fimbriate, with tassel-like edge. Flocci, cottony tufts. Pulbrous, tawny-yellow. Glabrous, free of hair, smooth and glistening. Hispid, short stiff hairs covering the flesh. Hymenium, entry to the fertile asci pod. Infundibuliform, funnel-shaped. Involate, having the edges turned under. Lingulate, shaped like a tongue. Marginate, having an elongated rim. Peronate, sheathed, a stipe in the sheath. Pilose, covered with longish hairs. Pruinose, as if frosted or dusted. Rimose, slightly separated hyphae, the volva. Serous, milky, latex-like serum. Spermatic, a distinctive,


Whitney thought of additions. **They would go perfectly well with what went before.**


He understood more why one form was analogous to another, why one natural growth, in its unfolding toward maturity, was similarly controlled as another, more why one organic aggregate was concolorous to its semblance in form, and that one thing, scientifically realized, was another
thing, extraordinarily realized.

He looked at the titles of the books in the shelves. Ambiguous, paradoxical, more than books; the girl more than a girl.

He took a book down. Then three more. He stacked them on his desk. He took more until he had two towers of unevenly stacked books sitting tilty on his desk. He began replacing them, saying their titles aloud. The girl looked up at his work and attentively listened to his verbal cataloging.

"Renaud's The Mushroom Bolt; Rhetney's Ezekiel and the Red Wheel; Lauther's Evolution and Robinet; Roux's Exhibits; Flore, Siberia; Windengren's Genesis of Myth in Natural Phenomena; Hoare's Rue, the Mythological Significance, and Sumer and Mandrake Semiotics; Mornersson's Diary Along the Whole Length of Asia; and Mycophobia: A Literary Investigation; Dummezil's Lexicographer to the Yukagin; Capplemanov's Norway and Siberia; Borganz's The Seerers Milk; Kopec's Indo-Aryans; MacDonell's Epithets and Tropes; Renov's Psychotropic Plants; Parkrit's Soma: The Three Filtres; Louy's L'Encyclopédia et le props de Science; Tilktomiron's Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms; Hartwiche's Trail to the Siberian Fly-Agaric; Votilla's Ethnologioita Finno-Ugrian; Atkinson's Oriental and Western Siberia; Patkanov's Amanita Death; Enderli's Mycology; Bengaine's Mongols and the Devil Star; and Sorek's Herbs and Medicinal Treasures."

She watched him replace the last book and heard his words, "Tilktomiron's Edible and Poisonous Fungi."
She let him turn back to the desk before she spoke.

"... will you read to me?"

He must answer her. He knew she wanted so much to learn. He looked toward her. "Please give me a moment. Do your reading and I'll come over soon. Are you warm?"

Whitney felt weak. Why had he kept from her, refused her invitation when before he had gladly come to her, held her, and read, as to a child?

He turned to the window.

As to a child... "Mary," Whitney whispered to the nettle rain, "talk to me and tell me all you know. Did not the white dove fly through the clashing rocks? Was not he sent to discover the propitious moment, and unharmed, did not the white dove fly to you and tell you to follow him through? And on the other side were not you, then, changed, to a new thing? What you carried, would not he be the first of the new phase?"

The weight of it was perhaps too great for him. For a moment he was regretful. And the feeling yearned for a commonness. Could she not be a schoolgirl, a young worker in a shop, a farmer's wife with her things about her and babes to come?

Or a young scientist. A woman educated at the Sorbonne or some exotic university in the near east. But I will turn the tables. It will be I who have the mission; she who must find the way to live with me, she who will be full of passion and must hold it, live the strain, adopt a sublimation.
His mind rushed to a forecast of how the girl would achieve her peace and perhaps find some message for himself.

Dr. Whitney, your assistant has arrived. Shall I tell her to come in?

Yes.

She came in and he told her at once that he had a mission. He must father a new science. He could not dally about. He told her and she agreed that their relationship would be formal only, and purposeful. At first she was disinterested in her responsibilities although she performed excellently. But she was not disinterested in him. She thrilled from the start of the association to what she felt was a magnificent presence in him. When his newness became familiar there still lingered in her a preoccupation that often forced her into imaginative drift and daydream. Her work as his assistant was peripheral to her study of him. From him, however, there came no hint of personal interest in her.

As time passed, the work she found neutral gradually took on new life, partly, no doubt from her recognition that she would be a colleague of his and nothing more. They work.

"There are in the **RG Veda** two hundred botanical names. We want to correlate these names with certain vernacular epithets recorded in an account of a journey into the mountains of Afghanistan by Corot in the early part of this century."

"We are re-issuing the **Mycologique texts**."
"These accounts must be annotated."

"We are working closely with the people at the museum. We are trying to isolate the hallucinative agent in the death cap. We think the same agent is found in the clitocybe that grows in Pamir country."

"... and simple plant identification from tropes and epithets in ancient languages - a continuous task madame."

By degrees she began to interpret his lead. She began to anticipate beyond her scholarship. She surprised him with her erudition and perspicacious commentaries on the cryptographic nature of their work. His suggestions became her completion. She seized that which he instructed and made it hers. The enthusiasm which she had earlier denied welled up and out of her. She was open in her attraction to him, although never audacious or a bit of the wanton. She made him understand that she was waiting should he ever want her. She was greatly pleased that he had nothing but praise for her work. She found the satisfactions that came from hard-edged accomplishment. He did not let her ease up - ten, twelve hours a day. His professional reserve never broke. But once, feeling his eye lingering strangely on her, she suddenly looked up. His eyes sealed on hers, then he turned back to his work.

She felt a rising warmth. She was elated. Her adrenal medullar nerve was stimulated. Her adrenal medullar flashed glandular permission to respond - to secrete, to quicken respiratorily, to run, or to stand and confront. Although this part of her nervous system operated beyond her will, it was her will and
her wish that she would so respond because such a visible display would he not notice? She began to feel that she belonged with him. She began to feel intimate with her organic environment that both supported her and conducted reciprocity with her. Her confidence was tempered by the one fact of his continued preference for continence in the relationship.

One day she suggested they might go to the country, take some food and wine. He told her he was writing every night and had a resolution to honor. His counter was too quick, as if prepared, a rehearsed disclaimer. His words were resolved assertions, independent, not relative in answering sequence to her suggestion.

His refusal attended on her intuition that nothing she could do would loosen him. The cool atmosphere of their earliest association was restored. She tried to free her intellect from the complexities of her emotions. She plunged into her work with a kind of defiance and a need for striking back.

Everyone at the Société was certain they were lovers and, before her silent malevolent following his tight, curt decline to go with her to the country, she would have wished it. Now she was petulant, brooding, and sought easy solace in some light drug available in our laboratory. She had loved, before, the way his fingers rolled the microscope to focus. She noted in her book, hair tied up thick on her head, eyes proud, while his words decoded the secret of the cystidia and gill trauma.
"2 c.m. silky, fibrous, centered umbonate, spore type. Elliptical with pedicle, in 5 grams of ferrous sulfate, 50 c.c. of distilled water and .25 grams of concentrated sulfate. Material in fresh condition. Break stipe. Atrophine present. Specimen number 332."

They finished work for the day and drank a little wine left in the lab by a co-worker. They sat and were silent. She abandoned her promise to return his distancing approach to her. She warmed and wanted him to reach for her and touch her breasts. They were alone. But there was no reaching and no touching. His rejection of her was simple complicity to some divine plan. She felt bruised and ill used, homeless and remote. He did not relent.

She was thrown back. Only her own ministration, given to herself by her own soft, gentle hand could restore to her those functions of her flesh she had been so assured of before. She had anticipated that as time passed he would be as a hungering, passion-filled man and soften toward her. It did not come. She had misread. His slightest attention beyond those dutiful, professional acknowledgments were indifferent only. She did not understand why he would go to his rooms and write, night after night.

Then out of a play of her anger and misunderstanding and authentic passion she beckoned another man and he arranged a room at some inn. She seemed greedy in her sexual play with the man. She was demanding and aggressive. The man was delighted and at the same time somewhat of a passive
participant to her exorcism of John Whitney's spector. She exhibited her flesh, turning it and posing lasciviously. He went toward her and drew her down. The act was completed, for him.

She was whispering, her passages clotted, the flow backed up. Her body was brought only to the spill and was swollen and left full. Images in her mind clutched at her words. She thought of narrow, perilous bridges, clashing rocks, stone traps, snapping jaws, cliffs, icebergs, walls, fiery uterine floods held as in a tomb. And all reds turned blue and she became sexually neutral and thought of smoke, of haze the consistency of smoke, of ground vapors enveloping the stumpy legs of ancient food gathers. Her mouth was all starch and cotton.

The man moved away from her. She was dead to him but the flesh that was like the gelatinous components of fruit was displayed and aromatic. He lingered over her. She did not appear to be the same woman. ("It was a mistake, don't follow me..."") He was appeased and full of her and because of that he was casual and he smiled and agreed. ("Yes, Madame, a mistake for you perhaps - but for me...?"") He left the room at the inn. She heard his last footstep. She touched herself with extended arms and curved fingers. Her fingers traced on the insides of her thighs. She lightly stroked the ventrix and marveled at the ribbons that seemed to stand, rigid and exterior, like magnified adnate gills of certain fungi. She was leafed, a feathery nectarrie. She
imagined she saw in her flesh raised veins chocked with blood. She was cold. She brought up a folded quilt to cover herself and she lay under it, waiting to clear her mind of the blockage and investigating those manipulations which would assist in the clearing. Her single curling finger became two. She searched for the index that would tell her of the modality of the man that was John Romanes Whitney. And tell her too of that course that would temper and yet retain her passion for him.

Wet life gathered up around and split over her caressing. Her hair sprayed Medusa-like. There seemed a vaporous circle around her head and on her face was a lambent. There was a pause and a crescendo, a sumptious fire from the coming between her legs. There was an understanding. It took away her anger and her feelings of orphanage. What was before ineffable to her she now surrendered to. She entered into the cyclic mystery that surrounded her. She was full of faith.

She signed back, removed her fingers, and took one last, late shudder. Her disbelief had not harmed. The next day she would take up again her responsibilities and find greatness in them. She would honor the bond. She looked for sleep, smiling, with the tip of her teaching fingers, like cinnamon, just held lightly over the curve of her full, lower, licked lip.

In his imaginative sweep he had given her a woman's identity and a profession. But the imagining was for him a way of seeing his own bewilderment, early on, give way to a
measure of faith. The story he had told himself was a way of realizing his feelings for her. It was as she would have felt; as she would have responded to his playing out his part of the bond should the circumstances be reversed and she the one struggling against the given abeyance.

And it was in his own flesh that the blood pulsed, his own veins raised. His own hand.

He looked at the girl reading. He wanted to continue in his stall and ignore her question. He wanted her to fall asleep. He wanted to look at her asleep, at her color, at her form, her light, and come deeper from the margin to the inside.

"Girl, who will be as Magi? How can I know you?" he whispered.

She had been so silent. And he too. He told her nothing of the Pamir journey. She told him nothing of her past, her early life. They said nothing of the child. Why had he been satisfied with silence? He was passive clay, a stylus at work on him, driving deep in him. Words on a tablet. Sumerian cuneus.

He saw her place the book on the table and look at him. He fell away from her gaze, then looked to her again. She had found her pocket in the chair and had closed her eyes.

At the window yet spattered and ran the rains. The drops, metallic and blue, washed and worked. The thin flood blurred his vision through, to outside where the night before the full moon had hung a saffron globe on the tip spires of
the circle of firs in the yard a few feet from the cottage. His perception through the glass was altered by the rain.

Alteration of perception by water.

... and by the agent in the smoke.

He had smoked three bowls full. The pipe lay in the crease of Morner's book. The ash appeared cold but a thread of smoke curled up from the ash bed and faded near the ceiling. He took the pipe and drew until the bed glowed in the grey waste.

Although on the grounds, the cottage was tucked back in a growth of evergreens and was out of the common way, out of academic travel. Whitney would walk down Beyester street past two large white stone buildings and go on to the library, where he walked through and came out in a corridor and went into Greene Hall where he had a small office. At Green Hall was the small auditorium where he delivered the lectures. He did all his writing in the cottage. The faculty tried to pry into his intentions, to glean for themselves a preview of each of his lectures. He scattered a bit of information. He made brief, courteous appearances at other lectures, seminars, and meetings. He sat in his office for an hour each day to receive undergraduates. He took his mail and went back to the cottage.

There was a fireplace, the large comfortable chair, the large room, and at the end of the large room his writing bay by the large window. There was a bedroom, a bath, a pantry, a kitchen nook, and a front and back porch. It was
for reading and writing and reading-to.

He knew she was consoled in his reading to her. And he told her stories. A week before he told her of the reindeer girl, Yelteliman, the tale created at Pamir in the storm. Absorbed in it, she had clung to him and, when he had finished, she had asked for more.

Should he tell her, now, Alina's account of the time with her uncle and after, going down into the alders? ("... I was afraid I would have a child...") Alina, the mountains of chalk in the moonlight, mortai, rapine.

And there was the deep sensuality of the girl in the chair by the fireplace, and deep in Alina. The lure of the earth was in them both, but in the girl deeper, and it was that he had been afraid of assessing, had been afraid of knowing. Before the girl, Alina was pale, her sexuality pale, and Alina was surrogate only - as he knew he must be for the word that was the girl's lover or as he must be for the androgynous seed that impregnated her own womb. He wondered at her memory that sustained her. There had been, commensurate with a soft hurt in her eyes, but yet often dominant, a marvelous glow. He thought of it now as a memory of that understanding moment when she received the whisper. There had been on her face a maiden's blush and her nostrils had flared and her eyes had gone dreamy as, he surmised now, the spell of the original claim seeped through her. What feeling again in the feminine zone brought the rapture? How was the word felt? Did her body respond at the implant? Did she other than as fertile
seek and gesture and aggressively want? Or was there only a frightful passivity, a following of the white dove through? Did she know the release of the shudder and was it that she had felt during those times of rapture, in those moments of melt and near faint? And she had flowed away from him and had left him reading to a vacancy aloud, or left suddenly, or alone.

And in defense, in those times he remembered Alina.

The girl was not yet asleep. She read by the light of the fire that weakly dominated the cottage room's darkness. She hesitated and moved her lips while reading. The back of her neck was a curve. She had swept her hair to one side and it hung like deep flourishes of nightshade. She seemed to Whitney her own soporific. He felt something frightening in her self-containment. She was so immaculately complete and needed nothing other than that which she had been given.

What could he be by comparison? She who had felt the touch of the torch in her womb from the word at her ear seemed to need nothing but husbanding for the sown plant and protection for the mediation time. What arcane implant, he wondered? What shudder she must have made. He thought of her so pitched at that moment that she needed never a second course. She was a girl who had accepted an anagogical bond. She swelled with that physical beauty necessary to house the divine spirit.

There was a bond for him, but was he immortal as well? He wondered what he was that he was given the care of her. Merely as a consociate? How long could he travel with a star
and not want to touch the body of the flaming path? There was her ripeness in perpetual display, a fullness expressive of her starry nature and reflectuous perfectly of it. He must witness her as a breathing, living, corporeal girl whose biology was as other women. She was as Dioscuri, mortal and immortal. She possessed feminine parts. They were tissue but functional only in conjunction to the great principle her entire body had been selected to design. In her was one flow, one breath, Sophia, one purpose. She was a sympathy of design. In her was joined the supersensuous with the obvious sensuous. Supremely desirable, her body, womanly in every part, yet obeyed nothing of those laws and needs mere men succumbed to. She was controlled and desired only the controlling.

He heard her turning a page. Could he hold the structures of his part of the bond? There was such a power in the primary dream that he had been bathed in a quiet peace. So absolute did it seem that he thought he would never know desire again. His arms would be a house for her growth, her body never a warm enfolding for his growth. But it had been acceptable. Yes, I accept the charge. I will go to Khandhad and wait for her and when she comes I will take her in and care for her.

There could have been in him - four weeks passing with her at his side, breathing on him through the nights, sobbing at his face, seeking comfort in his embrace and asking without speaking questions of birth - an ubiquitous hunger. But he held. His want could have gone beyond mere need. It could have been a hunger so unlimitous and pervasive that the
intensity of it would threaten to ruin him for everyday living. But it was not so. He thought once that a chain of the links of need and fulfillment had closed and came around so that as his need was deep so, in some miracle, as a recompense perhaps, was he the more abundantly calmed and filled.

That had been his answer to the wonder of his quiet.

But now and for the pass of time, he thought what had he for guarantee that he could sustain?

Once, when she was asleep - he had been writing the second lecture - he stole quietly to her side and leaned and knelt down. At her ear, just a touch away from her thick-toothed-combed hair, he whispered.

"There is an analogy. It tells your story in woodland names. There is a parthenocarpy in the woodlands too. There is a plant that grows without seed. It reproduces without fertilization. There is fruit without male seed. This plant grows on the day of fructification. It has a godlike quality. It works miracles and has authority. It is a force that generates itself. The plant is born in extreme agony of parturition. The womb that is the earth . . . demands first fruit . . . but is anguished if the plant is taken up. The god-plant must be taken back, borne back . . . hear these words of mine, Mary."

He was the author of word combinations whispered to her, "Tawny-violet, cross of life, mycorrhizal intimacy with a birch-woman with beautiful breasts, heavenly implant, womb seeded by storm and pituitous dew."
He had found description for her life. Still, he made words into the labyrinth of her ear. Know her by whispering?

"Did you run when you heard the voice?"

Her hair was a filter through which his whispered words lay, wet, at her ear.

"Were you brought at once to the tiny hiatus of time, or were you prepared slowly, by degrees made ready? Were you, a paragon a sexual earth, chosen for what you so naturally possessed, what you were . . . did you run when you heard the voice?"

She stirred, coming awake, his voice running her through.

He touched her ear with his lips. "Can we ever be gay?"

But he knew if they could not, it would not be because of the girl. It was he who was studied, so drawn in and spectrous from the disciplines of his science and from the quick settlement he had made with this new life. He was dark and melancholy and perfect for darkness and brood. His beard had thickened and there were curls of grey lighting out of it. His eyes were moisturous and pale. He would have had beautiful children.

"... did you run?"

She awakened. She heard the wonder but did not answer him.

"You will find meanings and form identical to your own
in a sacred book. Its message is not mummerous, but direct and obvious. Hear these words..."

She turned full on him and touched at his beard. "What do you mean?" He moved back, her hair covering again her ear.

"I did not mean to disturb your slumber. I only wanted to whisper as you slept before the fire."

"What do you want to say to me?"

"I have stolen from the Rg Veda, and I have made up new words. Perhaps you have heard the words before..."

"I know nothing of it..."

He put his hand on her face and turned her head. "Let me, at your ear, whisper. Pretend sleep... Sacred Soma! flow through Mary deep into her belly And issue forth God. O juice of the plant. Sacred word. Thou art a bull who enters into the heart and belly of Indra. You, Mary, are Indra come again. You are the receptacle for Soma. Draw the Soma into yourself by accepting the charge. For in your belly the inebriating juice clarifies itself in the movement of human waters and divine purpose. The orgasmic waves indulate rich in honey. They pass through the dazzling hair between your legs. Yours is the chosen cauldron that takes the horn. Light comes to the plant and from the plant light. You have been made pure with the stream of light From the sun. Ch, Pavamana, thou inebriation rivals the subtlety of flames. Milk the swollen stalks like cows with full udders. Learn from
Indra with the swollen breasts. From the woman resting in the flowing garment in the frozen trunk of the tree..."

So he had whispered to her and she rose and went to the other room. He lingered by the chair, then took it himself and stared into the emberous glow. Two weeks ago.

Whitney put his forehead in a cradle of his fingers. He felt exhausted in the reverie. She slept full, her hands slight on the closed reader, her gown slightly awry. There was pleasure for him to return out of his drift and see her presence, witness it with his own eyes.

He thought of her as a monitor of some great kilnworks. She breathed and maintained sufficient heat to fire and set flimsy clay and glaze the enamel of the rough earth. Her expirations would metamorphize the world. She had taken the grain of sand into her womb and as a mother oyster she laved and coated it - a man child.

He saw her undulate slightly as if rocking. He thought of buried potsherds ruptured out of wombs untimely, cast off the wheel unripe, misshapen, out of time. But hers would be the perfection of the wheel. There was a solid potion in a lave. There were fingers at work while she slept, numinous fingers.

He thought of Renaissance painting seen through old varnish.

The Old Book. Rebekah carried two nations in her womb. Old Sarah conceived. Seed from a canny loin shiver beckons the quimmy lush soil of the female. And the clay
spreads and Old Book designs form out of some necessity.

Did Joseph begat the child, he wondered. A soldier in Nazareth? And seeing the deed done, did God then seize the opportunity to make it all divine? Working through a man? Did he rupture his faith in skirting over these suppositions? Did lowly origins deprecate ends?

He glanced up at the wall clock. One black iron hand had swept past the one. The larger hand pointed straight down. He came up out of the desk chair and stretched out easing his physical strain. A slight mist swept in below the edged-up sash of one window. Little hemispheres of water collected on a book cover. He dabbed at the little hills with a white handkerchief. He closed the shutters and although it was slightly cool in the room he left the window open. He pressed his face on the unshuttered top part of the window glass. He looked through to see a man walking his way across the cobblestones. I won't move until that man passes those stone steps of the building over there. If I am stock still and don't move... (If I could walk all the way to the school and not once step out of a direct line, toe to heel, great fame and fortune would come my way.) ... odd twist to my mycorrhizal theory, associating the success of one activity with the success of another entirely unrelated. I say (in my theory) one accords with another simultaneously and the one is not causally connected with the other. This is no peripatetic randomness. There are mutual influences. Forms know similar forms. Does not the worthy Kepler say
"When a mother is great with child and the natural time of delivery is near, nature selects for the birth a day and hour which correspond to other nativities?"

There was a mix of science and poetry. It satisfied him because it seemed to clarify and move him in to the center.

To other nativities. In the natural growing of one thing there was a divine similitude. There was an entelechy in the mushroom. There were pre-established parallelisms. The primitive hunter and his girl responded to synchronicity immediately as it was observed. They knew more than we.

There! The man is past and I did not move. Not even a blink. The man carried a black, wet valise likely containing, Whitney thought, neat papers on economic products or a monograph on the French poet, Tristan Corbière.

Now fame and fortune. It has already come my way.

He looked at her.

She had turned in the chair. Her waist that was level when he last looked was now cocked and more vertical. The book had been heaved upon the floor by a curdling toss of herself and robe - a turn he could have seen had he not his head at the window. He saw only the results of the turn. The book was paper-splayed on the floor and stood up looking like a spiny fish, gills in an imperceptible fan of the floor of a ribbed sea. Her robe had parted at her bosom and framed a cleavage of vees in shadow. Her legs were yet tucked up, curled in balled sleep and she lay deeper than merely snatching at slumber. Her head was sunk in the crease of the chair...
between back and wing cushion. The wing in the way he saw only the lines of her nose, lips and chin. Her left arm lay along the top ridge of her hip and her hand disappeared behind the fire colored covered thigh. Her other arm was caught between the inside crease and her own relaxed weight.

He turned out the desk lamp. In knee high firelight he walked to the bedroom and turned down the bed. He smoothed the bed clothing and placed her pillow closer to the middle near where he would lay.

He walked back in the sitting room. She was awake, lifting her head at his footsteps, speaking.

"Have you now finished? It must ... be very late."

He stood at a distance from her, his eyes clearing and seeing more, though the room was near opaque.

"I have been watching you sleep."

She did not notice that her gown had come up over her middle thighs.

"... oh! I've dropped it." She cried.

She spread her legs immodestly, in a girlish way, as if in the privacy of her own room at a convent, and looked between them at the book on the floor. Her eyes seemed to lift over her slightly curved belly and then cast down. Her hand reached. From his vantage he and the fire looked in between her thighs and there was evoked, without his intention, the sexual imagery of the mushroom. Glimpse. Plate 276. Morner's Observations of the Higher Fungi. Caprinus recessing, but alternatingly pulsed. Lip-elongated pore with

She brought her legs together and knelt down to take the book. The emberous fire behind her was eclipsed by her bending. She lifted up the splayed reader of the ocean floor and placed it on the warm chair seat. The shadows of her work were long and black on the wall. Her bending dropped away the robe. She noticed and wrapped herself and walked toward the bedroom. Pattern.

He thought of an exhibit, the whole exposition, the entire pavilion of the great Victorian soul of 1851, just past. She was sumptuous glass. The tints of her body had been refracted through coral glass. Whitney's eyes in fantasy promenaded up the great concourse and into her body to the room where the spinning jenny threw a wool over the forming child white hot from the cauldron. The child must be gorged with blood and semen. How else? Galen.

He marveled at her patience, her hold, at the hushing in her. He thought of trying in the night to reach the narrows between her legs. He would place his hand cupped on her belly. Then he would lower his hand so that he could feel her in there, swollen and preparing. She would annoint his fingers with what moisture? When he had removed his hand would she experience the flesh softening, designed to accommodate
continuation? Moist to ease the entry? But she had been early configured. His role was other. She had known the poddy spill that followed the satisfaction of desire and implanted the womb and the flow had concocted and held fast and she began to show the swell of fructification. Prelude in her wait.

He heard her sit on the bed, turn, bring up her legs and lie back. The bedclothes came over her. Tonight, he promised, he would lay tight against her bottom. Through her gown she would feel his hard flesh. Then he would soften dry and velvet and she could sleep. For him there would be a sense of suspension, a sense of stone in wax.

Joseph:

The hum of the desert wind in your ears. The inhale of her fecund musk. Your passion for her neomaculate. Too searing of your promise, so you go away to build buildings, to escape her presence, and when you return you are calmed, by what knowledge? You take her and escape to a safe place.

For Joseph, for him, there was not the radical abstinence of distance. They were with the women, lay with them and fondled them. It was too much for Joseph; he went away. When he returned Mary was magnificent in her beauty, for she was not made in perfection or spirit only. There was a necessity to house her chosen and divine soul in a body corresponding. Whitney knew it could not have been otherwise. Nor could it have been unplanned that the body so faultlessly made to clothe her immortality and blessedness would so then be rapturously desired by man. So it was that she who was so made
in the flesh a fully functional woman must live in the continuous reprimand that in her dualism was absolute-flesh countering spirit - and that she, epitome of sexual earth, must live in her warm, rich flesh always on the other side, in the world of the spirit. She lived a constant and undiminished display and so, without intention, mocked mortal man and raised in him - if he did not know the counter - a great and incessant misery.

Joseph returned and there was something new in him. If not, he surely would have surrendered to the flesh and dis-honored her and the bond. Whitney sought for Joseph's wisdom.

So I, now, would. This very night. The bond be damned. No! No! Do not think on it more. She is with child and I will and can not. My fantasy is my life. If I understood I do not mortify and bruise her soul with my thoughts. I will leave her in peace.

But these were old thoughts. There was something new in him coming to understanding.

He finished the last whole slivers of tobacco, burning them to cold ash. He got up and went into the other room where she was resting. Perhaps she was asleep. He did not know. She was turned away toward the room wall, quilt to her waist, her bare arm slightly bent and resting on the knee mound of her leg. He undressed and lay down with her. He sensed the aroma of woodland and underground bog in the quick waft of bedclothes. She turned her body his way and he thought of the deep chambers of her womb where rattled the
star with white, silky fibrils feeding on glucose and blood, waiting.

There were soft words in English from him, from her - a moment of words, and then they both fell as silent as silent rain. They were as eggs rolled up to rest in the highlands among the rocks, escarped in air but safe and hoarding some ineluctable wellspring. They each were the embryo and the shell.

And the richness of her stirred him. If I got the book now and read to her, would she surrender to a bribe? Let her throw the quilt down and open her robe and pull it aside and lie relaxed and spread. Let her hair be wild. Let me lean down to the foot of the bed and look back up on her.

Give him ten counts and he would read to her standing on a thin ledge over a precipice for eternity.

One. The great sown middle field was uncovered. Her velvet, tomentose cortina was a mound. At her head the Salomian hair seemed alive and brought Herod to terms and emasculated John the Baptist. She was a golden calf and a bronze rendering of Astoreth in white marginal robes. The demenses was a crown. He heard the Sumer crowds murmuring. Jacob came to take Rachel and was given Leah. Jacob remained seven more years for Rachel. He must have Rachel. He took them both. Beautiful Esther took her name from the goddess.

Two. Observe the site chosen for the temple, "The threshing floor of Arannah" where seeds were pounded and ground, juiced out. One would say the temple was the belly
of the city. East, The Dead Sea, was the bowels, mother earth's womb. The gorges leading to the sea were intestinal, or birth canal. Finger the belly of the city. Pestle the threshing floor.

Three. The gorge is the sacred volva of the sacred mushroom. The mushroom is the soil, the sod, the root, the blossom, the bole, the egg, and the fruit. It is both male and female and the observer sees in its growth the union of the elements and a simulacrum of the human female.

Four. The Romans called a man who indulged in labial kissing a crow. John the Baptist sank his lips into the pod.

Five. The ribbons are pinkish-lilac, pilosed in reddish dark hair, striated in the moist center, peaty, acrid in young specimens. Sweet in Mary.

Six. Sumerian GAN meant cone or hemispherical shape like a bowl overturned. Sumerian IA-U/UJA gave Hebrew Elohim, God who sends down his sperm to fructify the earth in the spring rains and who announces the implant in a variety of ways.

Seven. Galen said the semen in the womb sought and ate blood and thus built the fetus. Mushroom grows without fructification, the child without male mortal seed. Explain that! The mushroom needs mycorrizhal intimacy. The woman needed him.

Eight. Josephus said that the quivering root of the mandrake can be made to stand still by pouring upon it a woman's menses and urine. A woman's virginity lay in the
power of her wombs to produce offspring whose excellence derives from menstrual blood perpetually at its most powerful from virgin mothers. Isaac and Jesus. Menses like the resins of trees that leak and grow excellent mushrooms.

Nine. The basket is charged with the breath of sacred incense and sweet spices, stacts, onycha, galbannon, moly, galangale, pure frankincense, aromatic cane, cassis, aniseed, amaranth, thyme, willow, and Siberian honey.

Ten. Out of her will come the fatherless child. Who seeded her? Out of the ground comes the fatherless plant. Who seeded it? Like Joseph, he had found her. She was lost, crying, alone, new, shook at a tiny hiatus of time.

Her participation in his chimera had been only a light touching of his body with hers. Finished with the game, he roused and got up. From underneath the quilt she lifted out a hand to touch his arm. It was as some beginning to a sacramental exchange where she was the intermediary, the vessel through which message came to man, the funnel for the teaching seed that in its pass, clung and was nourished and nourished that on which it fed; and then, in season, according to its time, let go and entered the light of the world and brought light.

He was flushed and wanting to leave away from her and go again to the desk. He looked weakly back to his work, but the glance strengthened him, the old securities working on his mind, filling the vacancy of unhoused flesh.
The function of the mind was to fill the emptiness the body knows.

He walked away and into the other room. At the desk he picked up his pipe. The bowl was cold to his touch. The ash inside was gum, like wet mud in the bottom of a clay vessel. He cleaned it, scouring the inside walls with a small knife, and dropped the deep-brown residue into a small can. He replaced the lid on the ash collector and fired the hashish. He drew and looked for mental neutrality. Inhale the smoke.

His fifth lecture. He sorted through his notes. He found his leaving off place and began a picking up.

It will be a fitting end to the series of this year's Brinton Drakes. They have gone well. I am pleased.

He looked at the title, The Primitive Recognition of Mycorrhizal Intimacy, and read to himself the opening.

Finishing the twenty lines of hand-written script, his face melted to a gesture of a soft laugh. The logic of the piece was in obedience to the precise directives of scientific botany, but it was, although a grand summary of all that was known in the category, ignorant and of little value. It was surface only; there was something deeper.

He leaned back in the chair and stared up through the smoky haze. He waited. Almost an hour passed. He smoked. In the other room the girl slept. Whitney remembered Pamir, remembered the words spoken there. There had been little seeing; it had all been words, words like wedges which sought a lodging in fertile matter.
There was a sound from the other room. Whitney walked slowly in to look at the girl. He paused in a simple watch of her. After a time he returned to the desk, sat down, and looked out through the window.

The rain had stopped and worked in seeps on the splayed limbs of the quince to draw forth the carmine blossom. Rain. The juice of fecundity spoken from God's mouth. In Sumer IA-U/UIA.

To end the series, he thought, perhaps there should be a different kind of Brinton Drake lecture, one designed to bring the incubation of the Pamir-planted words to an end.

He waited, realizing sensorily the rich intimacy of the cottage, the intimacies at work in the rooms, and the marvelous intimacy of the purple hall in the girl in the room in the cottage in the world; and then, as from a shucking, words for an auditorless lecture came forth, gathered, and realized themselves in his mind.

All lesson, all abstraction, is first concretized in form - in a particular, ready-made form. It is not sure that the form was made for the abstraction, to embody it; but we read that the word came first, and if we think of the word as abstraction, surely following, there came embodying forms to realize each word so man might gaze at and perhaps fondle the form so as to know more surely the import of the abstraction. Or if the word was mouthed - made spittle from which all things generate - and came down informed and obligated to work out itself according to some design, meaning follows form. The
archetypal meaning - before form - is here sub-primary and in the divine whose realms will permit no serality and cause and effect relationships; rather, there, in the divine, all things are, causeless, nothing is the effect of. Simultaneousness makes moot discursion.

But in certain phenomena it is possible to trace poetically all chains of contiguity. It is possible to follow cause back, and wonder where our interlude breaks, a tiny hiatus in the continuous flow of time.

A tiny hiatus of time! They talked about it at Pamir. He was merely learning then. When Hominidae thought there was a thundering shudder in the earth. Morphologically, the crossing of the threshold was extremely slight, yet there was a thunder of power and magic. Imperceptible flow would not so shake the earth - a flow of improved mental or physical characteristics. But thought! Was it not itself a kind of annunciation? made to a trembling girl beneath her great granddaughter Sinanthropus in a depth of the edifice where the pendule proved the leap in the idea that although the stalk is continuous, at the leap point oozed some sacred substance in one tiny pore.

... at a tiny hiatus of time. The Pamir words.

Strata is divided by a line of corporate molecular structure, separately composed, different from the structure and composition of that material which makes up the stratified. There is no man in the last strata of the Pliocene, but his first stone chippings of flint are found in the next. This is
not data to prove a theory but metaphor. The implosion that
directed the external manual work, gathering, chipping, was
thought, was reflection turning in on itself. It happened in
a nether-land, in a differential divide of layer.

They talked about it at Pamir and all those conversa-
tions were telling of the pattern. The words were vivid. A
creature couldn't partially think. There could have been no
flowing into thinking as there was flow into the erect, full
standing creature, as there was flow into the use of the
thumb or hand to seize goods. The leap is an all-at-once.
Before it, there was not it.

There were three evolutive moments - creation, life,
and thought. In these we find the discontinuity necessary in
the continuity. There can never be a new thing without a
break in the flow. The new thing is brought to the propit-
ious moment by flow. At the bursting . . . Mary's
annunciation.

. . . at a tiny hiatus of time life becomes a new
thing.

A new thing in Jerusalem, different in kind.

Clusters and serality, Whitney knew, had brought him
to live in the beautiful low mountains of Eddington with the
girl. No single thread held him at one end, rather he was
held by a fan of connections, a radial energy. No single
thread, but long phases of flow and phyletics, a long flow to
a new cycle.

Form and idea, which was first? One or the other,
it did not seem to matter; but there was always a conscious-
ness of the connection between them. Thinking of the mush-
room again, what could he suppose was the understanding of
his gentle ice-man as he gazed at the erect plant with glans?
Was he struck by the similarity to his own flesh? When did he
learn that the plant could be stirred to rise? It was urged
to rise from the ground by the women whose duty compelled them
to walk in the mushroom beds beneath the birches and show their
nakedness pointing down, the channel, and dropping out was some
invisible gum that incensed the dormancy of the plant so that
it wanted to nose up and emerge out of the ground and seek the
source of the stirring. And the women squatted their pulsing
seeders near to the ground and like wands did their tips, like
muffled soft hands, beckon the sacred fruit. Up! Up! And the
daylight edged over the eastern hill and the shadow falling on
the east of the hill fell back, retracted and waited that
pause until the new day.

John Whitney expanded and drifted in the padma of the
phenomenon. Words and seeing.

Castor and Pollux, the Dioscuri, live one day with the
gods and one day in the shadows of hell. Glowing erect, then
wilt.

Hands like velvet gloves, menses like bitumin and
moisterous charcoal, layered and ribboned flesh like coals
in the Mesozoic whose centennial trees and resinous marrows
chocked and hardened into ambergris in the bowels of whales -
ambergris fungacious. The ambergris sucked glucose and honey
and the crystalline brittle softened into lobes and then into lilac and coral and out of the gleba which is the womb the cortin-throbbed dots and lines of virginal dark red blood were caught in the apotheciums of the earth, caught in small mencius pools where wheat ears and corn and house leek and gemmy quantum of daffodil and babes fructify because of a canny closure.

Whitney thought of the sensuous dance and frolic taken by those cultic, wanton girls with their robes around their bottoms, held up over their steamy thighs and silvered fleur-de-lis, velurious combs like starry jasmine.

The fruit is stirred to birth and its form would be all idea, all an abstraction that may be touched. The birth would be a most marvelous touching - a touching of the imperishable, given eternal form by a corporeal girl.

He knew her flesh obeyed the rapine instincts of nature. There was a sensuousness in her, real, resplendent, kinetic, because she could mother and give birth on the earth. That was given; there was more.

Whitney recalled a function of God as the Copula to the world and a description of the Corpus Mysticum of God as a seed implanted in perishable flesh. So the babe would be genitous born, head first out of the beginning and incarnadine sea. Mucous would cling to him and the umbilical ribbon would be anatomy and corruptible cord. Whitney visualized her agony of parturition, the tearing flesh, the heaving ventrix. He heard her cries. He saw clearly the sweat-matted groin and sex pulsed and dilated in unseemly distension. Her flesh would be
pulled inside out, rolled back gelatinous and pulpy, oyster. Her torn flesh would be bloody and smear the head of the babe. Blood would flood the wraps on which she spraddled, knees up, legs in postures that belied her madonnic poses as she sat before him during the Eddington nights.

There was something beyond God. Whitney scoured all sides of the marvel. There was no immaculate birth, he decided. He had lived the weeks with her believing in the immaculate conception and the magnificence of that possibility should have left him extended with a faith that knew nothing was impossible. But an immaculate birth was impossible. To achieve it was beyond God. And because it was beyond Him, He did not desire it. Or, in not desiring it, it was beyond Him.

Birth wants agony and separation.

What is it that birth does not want? It does not want stalled life. It does not want reversal. It does not want to go uncompensated. It does not want the first birth to be so ruptureous that a second conception was frightful or unwanted or unacceptable; so ruptureous that the second seed fails in its search for maternal blood and dies and washes out; so ruptureous that the organ of implant - God's voice or man's flesh - feels not the beauty nor the comfort, is admitted but not housed, and is given pasture but not the close cod. Birth does not want rupture, so she slept closed, and was afraid of wind and rain.

What is it that birth wants? - Birth wants the freeing of spirit imprisoned in matter. It wants the yellow
flowers and heads like mandalas. Birth wants soft midnight sobbing and new things; wants continuous creation along the stalk and...

... at a tiny hiatus of time, wants, wants the cleansing and clearing act pointed by two thousand year lags that want no derivation from known antecedents, but is a sequential, repeating act of divine conception.

Birth wants masculine humus as well as divine word.

Birth wants fissionability and wants the uterine harvest to be kind and slow and wants glory in the deep hurt and wants attention that the treasure was thrown. Whitney thought of the splitting egg, the rape of the seeded womb by hands that coax at the sifting flesh. There! the tear to let out the silken throw, in a mass and whisp and thread.

Some seed split fore and aft, up or down, two ten-drils - one for root and one for stalk.

The child would be like a yellow flower blooming unborn in the purple hall and was before germination a seed floating in water.

Perhaps from her own depths came a lick of fire and the fire penetrated into the seed and the seed sprouted in the germinal vesicle. He asked himself, would that explain the conception? Sometimes he thought that nature - in a billion efforts - coalesced in her all sexual principles and that she was so potent that there arose spontaneously, impatiently, a combustion. Was she so possessed of what was called pneuma that she herself was the male as well as the
female and impregnated herself?

Whitney drifted to the months ahead.

She would give the new life and allow it to grope and grow. He saw her steal softly away from the cradle and let the babe begin to find its own way. Whitney saw the babe wait in its lair until she returned, then saw her draw him up from the bedding. Her absence had been a miniature trial.

And so, on a day, as she unloosened her gown and mothered the babe, would the mother gathered in Whitney's throat. Her swollen breast glowed, in his mind, round but flattened where pressed the bud that was the babe's tiny mouth. After a time, the infant would be satisfied and the lacteal pearls in her milk would gather on his lips and he would purse and push back. Releasing, the babe's sucking mouth yet cupped, Whitney saw her draw her body up and away and linger above the babe, her breast a roving star, a heavenly bowl that was the sky under which he passed into full sleep. And in him would be the tender lave of her milk, nourishing and washing.

Still, there would be a caesura and the lull of the moment would freeze in Whitney's mind. Her roving bowl would not hold one running luminous dot. It gathered itself on the velvet nub and like the pituitous oozes of milky plants, fell and melted a tiny grey spot on the child's clothes.

She would place the babe deep into the blankets and hover her face near his and the silhouette of it would be a nativity, a curve, and an incredible mycorrhizal intimacy.
Whitney saw her stand and wrap herself and then come to the window. He would be there. She would take his hand and guide it underneath her gown. She would not move and breathless they would join. He saw himself caress her for a time until she moved away and went again to the cradle. In the palm of his hand he imagined a sweet moisture. He would watch her singing whispers in the babe's ear and the milk that he had felt and carried away in his palm would dry, as he lingered by the window, and leave a kind of sediment that would fill the deep gullies of his seared hand.

The vision of mother and babe closing in a shimmer, he opened the cotton tobacco sack and withdrew shreds of the agaric and fingered them, dropping the shreds back and retrieving, feeling their texture which was spongy and partly brittle. He wondered at the material. How was it that the plant, in its conception, growth, form, texture, manner, and pattern embodied all that was sexual and as well contained the substance that so altered consciousness and perception that a person could, by varieties of the act of ingestion, experience in an alternative and not substitutive way that reality and that sensory truth which was held in the plant?

Koyoto did not understand that, Whitney thought back. How was it that in drugs neighbor to the amanita man sought to soothe to forget the necessities of sexual life, those necessities that brought their own twilight death?

A death of a kind he knew now he would never know.
The hashish eater suspends time, forgets in the smoke and remembers more, and hangs on some nether lip of Lethe neither becoming nor journeyous, neither beginning nor ending, suspended as artifice, taking his joy of sexuality in mankind's collective flow and fertility.

There was a rush into his being of a marvelous apotheosis, a special truth. He was sediment below the swirl above him, holding. He was the essence of an energy which brought to himself a course of rapture which would be his to share with her.

I will see the world that is in her. It is all.
It all unfolded, cut away for him.
Wondrous. He had heard, now he must see.
Wondrous that a variety of the mushroom should be as Magi.

Wondrous that the flesh of the plant when ingested gave that which was beyond any flesh. But was not that the message told by Him? Eat thou of this flesh and thou shalt have eternal life. The flesh shall melt and in the fall of deep shadow fall back and die, but life would never die.

He could connect now. It had unfolded to the core - the preparation in his childhood, his studies, his science, Pamir. The grounding. He became sure and deep was the understanding. He could connect and it was more than mere chain of event to event.

He pinched at the agaric shreds. As he was a surrogate made authentic, so were the wondrous plants, surrogate
before, now made authentic. Apotheosis of the plant and the effects of the intoxication. Apotheosis of his life with her.

The core of it was revealed, her flesh would part back. He left his desk, carrying the little white sack, and went to the fire.

"Mary..."

He heard her stir in the bed. She answered.

"... come in, by the fire." He was filled in sureness, answered to.

She came in and found him sitting in the chair. He reached for her arm and pulled her to him.

"Sit before me."

Then she was on the floor in front of him kneeling and then clinging to him as he leaned forward to her. Her arms were around him and her head lay tilted at the side of his bearded face.

"Have you seen sand upon the plate... and the forms?"

She knew nothing of what he spoke.

"There is such an energy, that sand sprinkled upon a plate when shivered by sound begins to form certain patterns - you see - patterns - sometimes the wheel, sometimes the concentric circles, other times the hexagonal hive, or the spiral curve - I had not known the true application of the marvel before. It is a compulsive formation..."

He saw her gown only loosely tied at her throat. Her skin glowed before the fire.
"... pattern is the way of nature. Pattern stalls the diminish of energy."

He continued, now in firm control. "... We need to know about pattern and form. Without them the universe would peter out and drain away and life on the earth would cease. The circle is the first form and the others follow and as we partake of these forms - in the greatest amount - so do we ourselves create those energies needed to counter the death rush of the earth, the universe, all. There is a truth that things run down, but pattern, form, symmetry, serality, and the like, cluster to create human magnificence and immortality. We are alive here in this room because of that cluster of pattern and form. They are found in the sand, forming out of the music of sound, of words in your ear."

And Whitney went on, speaking of many, many things. He said that a violin lying still on a table was yet humming and could be heard, and in that way was a remarkable distortion of the senses. Things could be heard, still silent things created sounds, if the man could but hear them. In that way, too, he suggested, sound perhaps had color and the tactile could be tasted. He said that muscles under tension produced sound and that in divine intercourse there was such a sound that only Siberian wolves could hear it. There were sounds out of chambers, out of wombs.

"Words came from trees," he said.

He talked of strange mountain travel, of blizzard and camp. He plunged into subjects without introduction. He
rambled and talked in clusters and then the smoothness of his delivery began to falter. He stopped, as if to gather strength.

"... can be found too in your body. . . ."

Her hand went to his mouth. It held there and then she pressed her hand down along his face through his beard.

"The way you were impregnated, with a word spoken."

He talked on.

He told her that the world of nature was pervasive, that it was not merely present everywhere, but present everywhere in certain forms, present everywhere as certain combinations of forms, certain intimacies, intimacies between forms, mycorrhizal intimacies.

He put his pipe down and taking her waist drew her closer until she was touching the chair seat with the low front of her body. Her eyes were limpid and half-lidded. He traced her nose down each side with the back of his hand.

She eased back, sitting on her legs under her. She let her shoulders relax and drop and her hair cascaded over her shoulders and danced in front on her white gown. Whitney bent toward her. Her head bowed. She watched his fingers begin to loosen the ribbons at the top of her gown.

There was a haze of violet smoke from the dying fire. The violet and the grey from his smoking enfolded and made a thicker smoke that seemed to pulse and become opaque.

He took the gown away from her shoulders and pulled it down to her waist. He lifted from the chair and went to the floor beside her. He took off her sandals. He sensed in
her a giving in, a breaking toward passion.

"How were you shook? In what form did God's word shiver the sand? How his spittle made the quid! From the shreds out of your ready womb, as an agaric-girl, for me, once, made a gummy wad in her mouth one night in a great storm and implanted it in my flesh."

He remembered Galen and his conversation with his father.

She wimpered as she felt his hand upon her.

"I know you. I know you heard the thunder. God began a syllable and you ran, your flesh kinetic, ready to receive. But you were afraid. You, an organism at the tiny hiatus of time where receiving was pregnant, where the innoculation hit, and you knew nothing of it, and yet this night do not understand."

Whitney's eyes glowed ice-blue, out of the ordinary dullness of them.

"There was no prophet speaking to a wilderness, or mere coupling, or aimless toss of sperm ... let me see the grain you love."

She was all earth, tumbling, before him.

He knew why she could so hold her part of the bargain. She had been frozen at a moment, at the tiny hiatus of time. When that intersection was reached in her, she held, never to cross to the other side and become merely flow again. Evolution had frozen at a peak. They had talked about it at Pamir. She had become art and he too, as the swain, had become a
candidate for a frozen artifice to run at her heels in a supreme pitch of passion, never to know the hurtling down.

The floating grey fabric of smoke took on a henna-ish-purple and the fire outlined the girl's body in a curve like a corona of orange light. Her breasts were spread and in the fire were swollen and peaked. The smoke furled above them, sweeping, hanging, parting, closing. Little motes like pollen glistened as dots in the cottage air.

"I want to see if there is a world in you."

He placed his hand on her leg and pulled it away from the other. Her gown parted and the last licks of flame spurted in the fireplace and made a shallow flickering well of red light beneath his gaze.

Fleece fledges the TAB-BA-Li, the Sumer double cone. The Semitic TABBal is John the Baptist, the dipper, the sinker into aqueous medium where the sun, like dye, makes the water purple.

Whitney's memory was razor sharp, turned to the words of Kruger and Koyoto. The storm. He, hearing the words in his delirium . . .

... John the baptizer who wears a garment of hair from the camel, from the double-humped camel, of that hair which was stretched over the two hemispheres of the split cone. ("The third filtre of the Rg Veda, huh Dr. Koyoto?") And John feasted on locust and wild honey. Pod and locust, the same word.

Whitney dropped his head.
"... find what has been found." His mouth, quid-holder, touched her.

He whispered at the filtre, "the medium through which the divine mortalized."

The girl quickened. A particle of wetness. A memory blazed in her body. Her fingers stretched for his head, found him, his breath fur. He sensed a revolve in her, just a minute oblique from her resolution.

And he knew at that moment that it was all to him if she continued on, or recaught and coiled back to her own androgyny. And he knew the scene was singular, an usher into the final run for the completion of the design or for the ruin of the design. Not again, this girl downed and naked, not again in this world, before the fire, in this way held by him, where the second before she was yet mortally uncaught. The memory would be in her now of a mortal catching and any repetition for her would have this memory behind. So never again could the ingredients of the scene be so splayed in this exactness. Never again, until that intersection happened once again and God called a girl and a man to replay the pattern.

She awaited him. Whitney knew all was not God's. If so, Hailender would be beside her and he would be at Eddington locked in his science. There was too a man's choosing - to first take the charge and then to sustain or dishonor it.

The world was there, in her.

A sun. And too near it he was, so rampant the fungal's erection and so delicate before the sun. Solder rolled from
the tip of the glans. Quicker and yet more revolved, more oblique, she began an imperceptible spread of her legs.

Whitney lifted his head. There was a suspension.

As wax too near the sun his flesh began to nest back. It was what he wanted. He had willed the wilt and as he came away, her spreading flow ceased - a tiny hiatus of time - and began to close back, back to a seal forever until time for the throw of the treasure within. Then seal again,

She smiled as wanton as any satisfied woman, her lips thinning, widening her face.

"God was the man who knew Mary . . . only God," he said.

She listened. She was all golden flesh.

Whitney sat up. She covered herself with cupped hands. He spread her gown over her. She caught it and held the garment to her body. She tilted, lying on her side, toward the fire. A glisten of wetness gathered at the down corner of her mouth. Her leg bent, kneed out from under the opaque mask of the gown.

From his pocket he pulled the white tobacco bag and opened it. He withdrew shreds of the agaric and brought them to his lips. He inserted the cheesy bits in his mouth and began chewing. He slowly eased back to the floor behind her and nestled himself to her flesh. He reached around her and laced his fingers in hers.

At her ear, his mouth worked on the fungus.

"Joseph lay thus with Mary, his flesh contained and
eased beside her," he said.

The moisture at her mouth gathered from a thick readying honey and streamed over the swell of her lower lip and weighed to a hanging drop on the floor. He unlaced his fingers and put them to his mouth and spat out the quid into his hand. He reached around her with the quid. She took it in her mouth and held it, then swallowed. His implant. He felt for her breasts, felt her relax back against him.

He whispered, the agaric a sweet meal on his breath, "So Joseph came back from his leaving of her. . . ." He felt her swelling flesh deepen beneath his hand.

"Where did he go, to build buildings?" He spoke and felt into her mouth with his fingers.

"It has been so said, but he did not, he went to learn how to live with her. He found the answer and came back." He said.

Whitney ran his mouth-wet fingers to her hair and held there, gleaning.

"Joseph! The hum of the desert wind in your ears. The inhale of her fecund musk. . . ."

He would give up the Brinton Drakes and take her to a safe, rural place. He would take her where there would be snow and the birth would come in the winter.