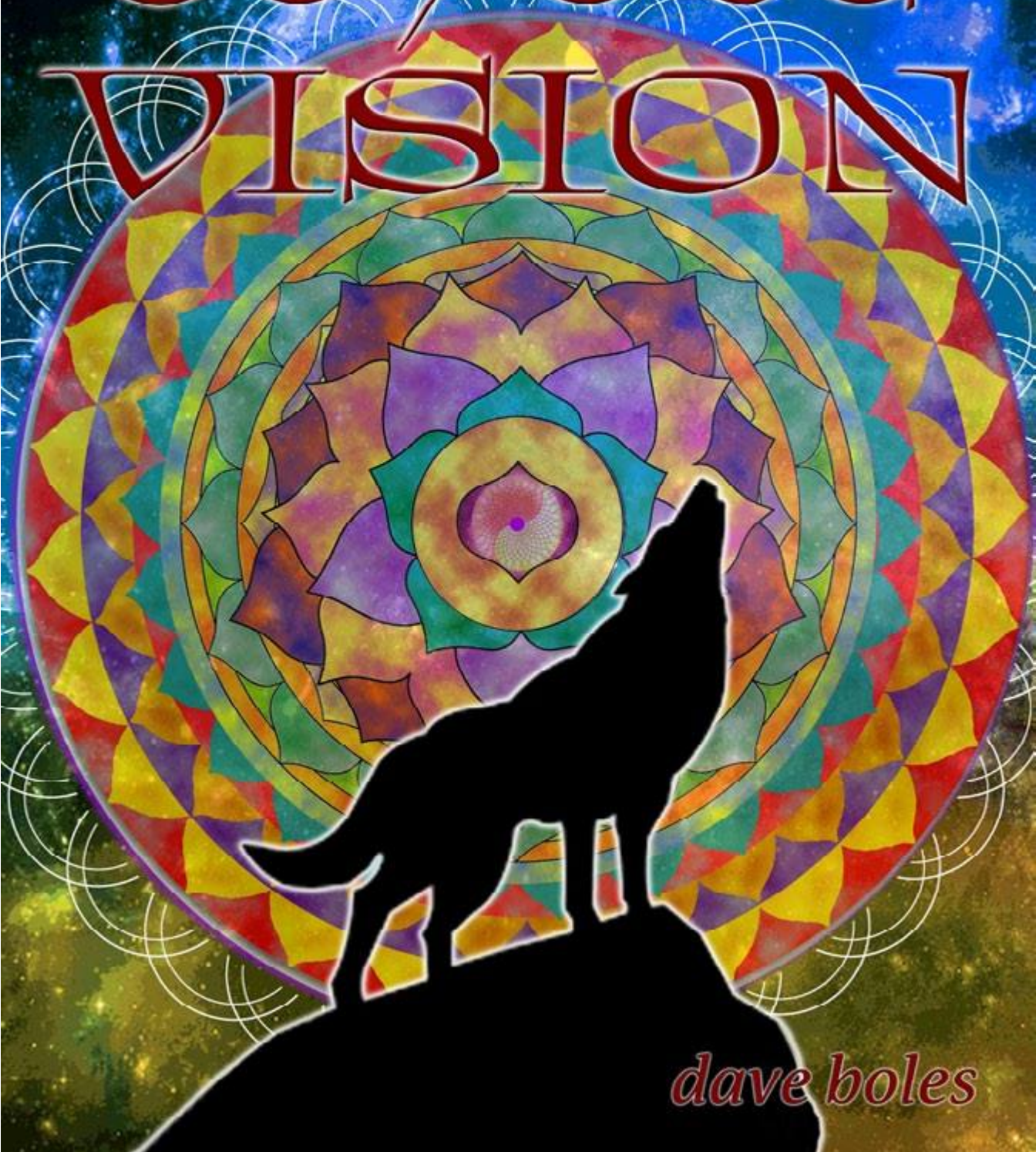


COYOTE VISION



dave boles

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*For all coyotes
yet to be.*

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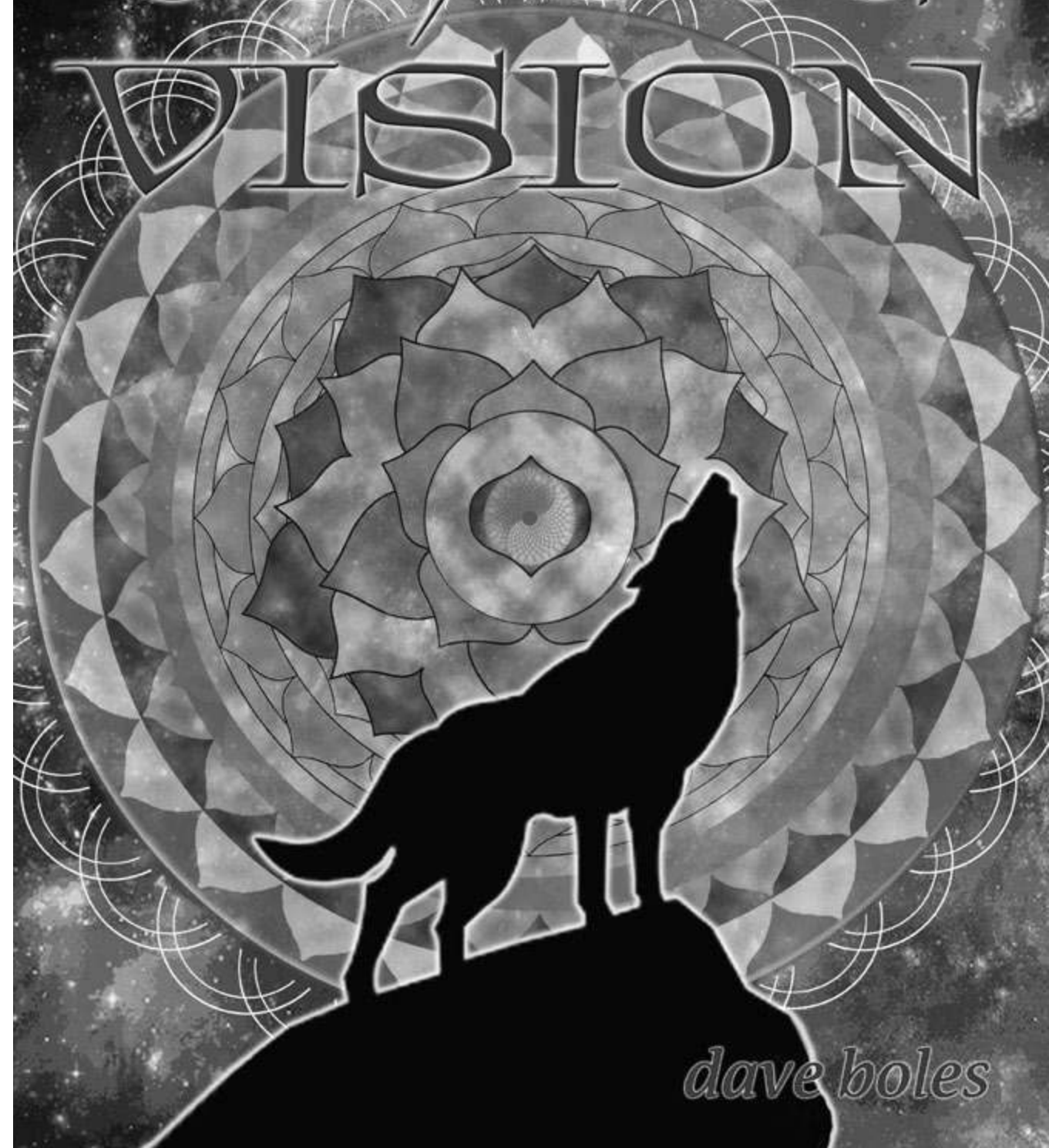
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Coyote opened his heart

to visions

of the ancestors

their memories guiding him

to a knowledge

long forgotten

COYOTE GATHERING

a door opens on the side
of a mountain

Coyote, holding a brilliantly
colored parasol
strolls right in

there is talk
of lights at night
coming from the mountain;
have no fear
and ponder this no further

Coyote is widely known
for his lavish gatherings
up on the mountain top

where all are invited
if they heed his fervent call

COYOTE CAMOUFLAGE

Coyote woke me from a nap
one fine, Spring morning
my hammock had been left unattended
since Winter, it now called for my attention

*I was rummaging around in your workshop
and I found this glorious, neon-pink spray can.*

May I have it?

It took me a moment to comprehend what my
furry friend was asking of me

*i use that paint for my constructions,
are you building something? i asked*

*Building something? No, nothing as pedestrian as that.
I was hoping I could enlist you to spray paint circles
all across my body with this neon-pink spray paint*

Coyote stared at me for a moment
before returning his gaze, fondly, to the spray can

Why on earth would you want me to do that? i asked

*Well, as you know, there are times when I show up
at the local bus stop to wave to the children
as they return home from school.*

*Yes, there have been many complaints
about you doing so. i believe you've been shot at
a handful of times too, weren't you?*

Coyote waved this off with a flick of his bushy tail

*A mere misunderstanding. The children were not afraid,
it was that one soccer mom in the bright yellow SUV
that had the problem. Besides, who drives a bright
yellow SUV anyway?*

Coyote had a point. i had often had the same thought
every time i saw that particular SUV. Who drives a car
with such a hideous color?

*What does that have to do with painting pink circles
all over your body? i asked, wishing to return to my nap
in my hammock, on a fine, Spring day*

Camouflage, he replied. They'll never see me coming.

COYOTE AND SUPERGLUE

the egrets and geese
were creating such a racket
i could not hear myself think

after an entire morning of cacophonous noise
i walked onto my dock
and asked the swan what was going on

*they're upset with your friend, Coyote,
very upset indeed*

i had spoken to Coyote many times in the past
about leaving the waterfowl alone

*he has promised me they are off-limits,
i told the swan. he gave me his word*

oh, no! it's nothing like that

the swan lifted a wing and pointed
across the lake

Coyote is stuck in a tree

sure enough, as i followed swans wing tip
i could see Coyote, stuck, high in a tree
directly across the lake from my dock

i quickly jumped in my kayak
paddling to him as quick as i could

he called out to me
as i neared the shore

*nice of you to finally arrive, he said
with more than a hint of irritation*

why are you in a tree? i yelled up to him

*a better question would be
why do i not come down?*

as usual, Coyote presented
the most logical answer

being somewhat irritated
from all the noise that morning
i was in little mood to banter

*quit screwing around and come down
from the tree, you're upsetting
the entire lake*

his response was immediate and succinct,
i cannot. i'm stuck.

*then unstick yourself and come down,
i have no time for this*

Coyote's voice was small, almost a whisper,
i cannot, i am stuck, to the tree

i stood there, under the tree, a little
off to the side so i could see him

he did indeed seem to be stuck
to the tree

Coyote called down,
*i don't need to hear your laughter,
so don't laugh. it's your fault, anyway*

my fault? i cried out

*yes, your fault. remember last week
when you were raking up all the leaves?*

i had spent an entire week
cleaning up leaves, what a chore it was

yes, what of it? i asked

*and your youngest grandson, who was helping,
asked how you could keep the leaves from falling?*

yes, i remember. what of it?

*you told him that maybe if you were
to superglue the leaves to the tree
they would stay in place
and you wouldn't have to rake them up?*

the entire episode began to come clear

*you tried to superglue leaves
to the tree, didn't you?*

*i was simply trying to prove
whether it would work, or not*

i refrained from laughing as not
to be rude, though a loud chuckle
or two managed to escape

*i can hear that, Coyote called down
it's not helping*

i took a few moments to compose myself

*are you glued to the tree? where did you
find the superglue?*

*my front paws are glued together.
the tube squirted out and now they're stuck.
i got the glue from your workshop,
where do you think i got it from?*

the chuckle kept growing

are you going to help me, or what?

i could not resist

i began to laugh uncontrollably

Coyote angrily called down,
again, not helping

after taking another few moments
and then trying with everything i could muster
not to laugh further, i called up to him

*look, it might be a bit painful,
but there will be no lasting damage.
you are going to have to quickly
pull your paws apart,
simple as that*

i could hear Coyote's thoughts
as he contemplated this
avenue of escape

*again, i called out, it will be
a bit painful, but you'll survive.
besides, you've no other choice*

a shrill howl filled the air,
bounding across the lake,
ricocheting against the hills

Coyote came crashing down
landing a few feet from me

he glared at me as he nursed his paws

*good thing you were not higher up the tree,
i offered*

Coyote merely limped off, not replying
to my attempt at levity

i noticed a small tube of superglue
was attached to his tail

but i was not going to be the one to tell him.

COYOTE'S TATTOO

Coyote went to town
for a memorial tattoo

a portrait of a hedgehog he dated
years ago in college

handing the artist an old,
faded photograph
he pointed to his right hip
and the artist nodded in agreement

it took some time
to shave all the fur

but in the end
it certainly was beautiful.

FIELDS OF NEWS

Coyote rolled about
in a large field of magenta

his great, bushy tail
moving swiftly

back and forth
the tail moved

with no apparent care
or direction

What is the occasion,
i cried out

No real occasion,
was his reply

Egret tells me there
is a war going on, i shouted

Coyote stopped rolling about
and walked towards me

But there is always a war
going on, somewhere

So you felt it best
to roll in a field of magenta?

I considered watching the news
but this is much more informative.

Rolling on the ground is more informative
than watching the news? i asked

Oh, yes, indeed. The bees tell me
they're bombing daisies.

Wiping out entire fields
of flowers.

i have not heard of this,
i told my illustrious friend

Of course you haven't,
was his reply

You need to stop listening to the news
and roll in fields of magenta

That's where the real news
can be found.

COYOTE'S PILGRIM SONG

Coyote once told me
Of bucks in velvet
Writing words of prophets
In a late summer snow

Their heads bowing down
As they wrote words
Of comfort
Love, and Strength

Several owls
An aged beaver
And several youthful magpies
Were witness to their devotion

Their collective scratching
Into the earth
Left fine lines
With which to trap seeds

In the spring
After winters frost
Wildflowers bloomed
Where the bucks wrote

It was an amazing display
Of color
Of hope
Of redemption

Pilgrims traveled
To see such an exquisite display
Coming from distant lands
Far to the East

Their travels being long
Many never saw it
As the flowers fell victim
To rooting pigs searching for food

Coyote opened his heart
To the late arriving pilgrims
Holding vigil with his howls
He described to them the story

Sung his praises
Of bucks in velvet
Writing words of prophets
In a late summer snow

Coyote's still tell this tale
Though the Pilgrims
No longer walk
Along a sacred path

Their world of love
Of devotion
A now bitter place
Filled with pestilence and war

Coyote's words, though
Long into the night
Still fill the air
Reminding pilgrims to hold hope

In prayers they offer
Their thanks to Coyote
Remembering the magic
That all life contains

They chant their prayers
While searching the skies
For the slightest sign
Of a late Summer snow.

COYOTE VISION



PROLOGUE

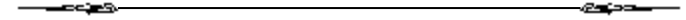
the problem with our current situation,
Coyote stated with sadness

is there are no longer quests to be taken
or magic to be followed

like trying to steer a rudderless ship
in a violent storm, i offered

yes, Coyote readily agreed

exactly that



I The Quest



COYOTE VISION

I

winter had finally come to our lake. the fires of summer
had receded and a deep winter chill taken its place

in the mornings a magnificent wave of fog swirled above the lake,
deciding if it wanted to soar upwards to the heavens or to settle in
hiding the geese and swan that graced its lovely water

on afternoons when the fog had silently moved into heaven's realm
the mirror finish of the surface reflected everything around it
in minute detail. it was a magnificent sight to see

during these times not a breeze was to be felt,
only the stillness of the moment

i heard a familiar voice call out
at once recognizing my old friends voice

Coyote stood in my doorway, removing his long greatcoat
as he let himself in

it had been a while since the wily trickster
had graced me with his presence

i noticed Coyote carried a large, elaborately, and intricately
decorated leather tome. its clasp beaming brilliantly
as he entered my home

what is that you have there? i asked my old friend. *a new book to read
for the winter days ahead?*

Coyote looked puzzled for a moment
before regaining his thoughts

it is not a book, he spoke quietly. *it is a journal.
a very old and ancient one at that*

he drew up a chair next to mine and placed the tome in my lap

inside this old journal you will find encounters with visions of times past

smiling his sly smile, he deftly opened the book
while at the same time keeping it hidden from my sight
not an easy task by any means

*how am i to see these "visions" of times past
if you do not allow me to view the book?*

there was a small amount of irritation in my voice
as i was quite comfortable in my house that evening.
a grand meal of venison stew, replete with carrots,
potatoes, and peas had left me drowsy

the fire had been tended to all day and my home
was as warm and snug as could be. it wasn't that i did not mind
Coyote visiting me, but i was, as i have stated, quite comfortable

*you keep referring to it as a book. i keep telling you
it is a journal. can you please make at least the smallest of attempts
at referring to it as a journal, and not a book?*

the trickster seemed a tad cross and i made a mental note
to no longer call it a "book"

my apologies, old friend. i met no disrespect

Coyote waved my apology away, focusing his entire attention
directly upon me

this journal, he continued, *contains information that predates
the history of man. it has been handed down, generation to generation,
through the ages, so the teaching of the ancestors would not be lost.
it is, indeed, a phenomenal work*

Coyote gazed into the distance for a long while,
a slight twinkle appearing in his eyes as he appeared
to come to some sort of conclusion

are you going to show me the journal, i again sounded cross, *or not?*

ashamed at being cross with my friend a second time
i moved to the wood stove to stoke the fire, adding a plump
log of aged and cured oak to its glowing maw

when i returned i saw that Coyote had laid his journal open
on the table before him, its weathered and well worn pages
glowing in the reflection of the fire my wood stove provided.
the oak log was becoming engulfed with fire and the intricate
dance of firelight upon Coyote's journal was mesmerizing

*here, Coyote spoke so gently that it was almost a whisper, is my journal.
though i hesitate to say it is "mine", for it belongs to all living things.
i am only its current caretaker*

he moved away from the table so that i might fully view the journal.
the pages, as i have stated, were well worn and weathered.
there were subtle, faded images on the pages, almost scratches, if you will.
the more i viewed the two open pages the more the scratches
seemed to form together to make images,
only to vanish as soon as i focused upon them

Coyote sat quietly across from me, watching me with intent,
his very being seeming to glow brighter, then dimmer, with the images
as they appeared, disappeared, then reappeared again

what kind of a journal, is this, i asked with amazement

i could not seem to take my eyes off of the journal.
as strange as it seemed, when i focused on the pages before me,
watching the images appear, disappear, then reappear again
i could see and feel the universe all around me,
as if it emanated directly from the journal

i went to turn the page but Coyote stepped in and stopped me,
chuckling as he did so

*not so fast, my friend. not so fast. you have much to learn
before you can begin exploring the rest of this journal*

his voice seemed to be an eternity away,
a distant echo in the vastness of all that is

i became lost in its echo

a familiar paw reached in front of me and closed
the leather bound tome, its clasp securely fastening
with a sharp, metallic click

in an instant i was back at my kitchen table,
though i could not tell you from where i had returned

there is much magic to encounter with my journal, the trickster eagerly
informed me. *you must learn how to use it wisely. this might take a while*

the fire from my wood stove danced, but not as intensely as before.
i moved to place another log onto the fire when i realized i had
already placed a large piece of aged oak onto the fire

looking at a now nearly burned out ember where there used to be a fine oak
specimen, i looked at Coyote with a sense of wonder

did i not just place a log on that fire? i asked him in amazement

you did, Coyote replied. *though it has been a long while
since you placed it in your stove. it gave off a splendid heat. i thank you for that*

Coyote walked over to his journal, picking it up with a deft lift from his right
paw, while his greatcoat was hanging from his left

*it is late, my friend. i have taken up enough of your time this evening.
there will be plenty of time for you to become acquainted with my journal.
i only wished to introduce you to it this evening. thank you again
for the splendid fire. i can let myself out*

is that the sun i see starting to crest the hill above the lake?
i stared out of my picture window watching the sunrise
in complete amazement at its beauty

*it is indeed, Coyote quipped. your oak log burnt well throughout the night.
i commend you on your wood curing technique*

with that he donned his greatcoat, opened the door, and bid me good day,
all in one smooth flourish

he called back to me as he jauntily walked down the stone path
that leads to our lake;

i will stop by again. soon.

II

i was left both fascinated and intrigued by Coyote's visit,
though truth be told i did not remember much of anything
when it came to looking at his journal

i recalled looking at the markings, the scratches and images that seemed to
flow upon the page, but other than that, nothing

i remembered Coyote bidding me a good day as he jauntily
walked down the path to our lake, telling me he would
drop by again soon, but that had been days ago

something about the whole experience had left me
with a feeling of wonderment, and joy, simultaneously

in time, each day sprang forth, like every other day before it,
as i anxiously awaited his visit

the cold of winter had definitely descended and even though i diligently
worked at keeping my wood supply stocked, it never seemed to be enough

i sat out one brisk morning as the early fog was still lifting,
to split more oak. The pine and cedar were well stocked, but during the cold,
early morning hours, i could certainly use more oak

it was exactly on this morning, as i began splitting oak,
that Coyote chose to come around

hello, my industrious friend, he joyfully cried out, *do you ever rest?*

he chuckled at his question as he picked up and examined
a rather fine specimen of pine cone

this would have certainly hurt had it fallen on your head, he stated
with certainty. *best to keep an eye skyward these days*

would that not be a waste of time? i replied
i cannot recall ever having a pine cone fall on my head

that you know of, he quickly shot back, chortling at what
i assume was some sort of trickster humor

where have you been all these past days, i impatiently blurted out.
i have so many questions for you

oh, here and there, that trail and this trail, you know how i travel

the answer was truthful enough as i had traveled with Coyote many times.
if i were to tell you he walked in a direct and straightforward path,
i would be lying. i have never met a creature as easily led astray as Coyote

Coyote smiled and smacked his lips,
i suppose you have many questions about the other night?

Coyote was, if nothing else, a master of understatement, to be certain

Coyote leaned in close to me, his eyes, piercing.
i could feel heat from deep inside me as he peered into my soul

what do you recall, if anything?

not much, i reluctantly replied. *i wish i could remember more*

Coyote continued with his examination

ah, said the trickster, *i see you felt the universe breathing, alive within,
and around you. very good. very good indeed*

i dropped the maul i had been holding.
it hit the moist ground with a deadened thud

*i don't really remember anything. it's more like a feeling, a sensation.
i remember placing a large log onto the fire, but nothing else,
except for feeling like i was connected with everything and everything
was connected with me. the next thing i remember was seeing the log had burned
down to a large ember and you were gathering your things to leave*

it suddenly occurred to me that even though i had been trying, unsuccessfully,
to decipher that strange night, i had not been able to recall a single thing.
but now that Coyote was talking to me everything began to come flooding back

i remembered the strange sensation that everything was timeless

there was no time, yet, there was. there was not a past, nor a present,
nor a future. it was as if all of time had merged together as one time.
the past merged with the present, which merged with the future, which then
began the cycle all over again. an endless eternity within an eternity of time

i struggled to relay this to Coyote, feeling childish as i did so

excellent! he replied. he had patiently listened to me as i rambled on
and not once did i see him smirk, which for Coyote, was very rare

you traveled a great deal that night, but we will get to that later. tell me, do you remember what you saw on the pages of my journal?

his voice hung on the word “journal” as he waited for my reply

i only saw the two pages, i countered. i can only speak to those

yes. yes. two pages is all i allowed you to view, Coyote reverted back to his trickster self, but what, specifically, did you see on those two pages?

when i tried to recall the memory all i could remember were scratches, lines, moving, swimming, on the pages in front of me

the pages glowed! i suddenly shouted out

they were radiantly glowing with a gold and white light! and the images, they were glowing, too! but they were alternating colors as they glowed

i felt exhausted as i recalled the memory. it taxed my very being in bringing it to consciousness

Coyote had taken quite a few steps back from me as i recounted my memory. he stood watching me as if i were a captive animal in a cage

as he looked at me there were equal amounts of awe and wonderment, mixed in with equal amounts of sadness and empathy. speaking to me in a slow and deliberate voice, he motioned to me to sit down on a large oak round

what you have described most souls never encounter. very few are given the gift to travel time. you are one of those who have been granted this gift. i have suspected you had the ability to do so and have, over time, asked for permission to teach you

teach me? teach me what? and who did you ask permission from?

i could hardly contain myself and heard my questions asked before i realized i had even thought to ask them

you have always been impetuous when it comes to such discussions, why should this time be any different?

Coyote looked up at the sky, letting out a great belly laugh as he called out *i told you he had the gift!* to no one in particular

who are you talking to, i asked. and what is so funny?

it took a few moments for Coyote to regain his composure before he could answer me

well, he answered while trying not to laugh, the irony of you being called impetuous and you immediately taking umbrage to it, for one, and, of course, your question as to whom i was speaking to

what are talking about, i shouted at him

whom, the trickster said with a wide grin. not who, but whom. it's an easy mistake to make. most people make it. as to whom, why the gods, of course!

Coyote was again up to his old tricks

i suddenly found myself grinning and laughing with him

okay, i finally stopped laughing long enough to ask him, what are you going on about? what has any of this to do with your journal?

and right there, under a great oak, the oldest on the lake, with my maul lying on the ground next to me, a few armfuls

of split wood laying about waiting to be stacked,
 Coyote leaned in close and whispered in my ear;
the journal is a portal of time. it allows its reader to have visions of time

i stood rigid as a board as what he told me sunk in.
 a million questions swirled into my mind but not a one took form

i could hear the far-off cry of the swan on the lake telling
 a visiting goose not to come too close to its nest

far upstream i could make out the slap of a beaver's tail
 upon the water, firmly seating the latest addition to its house

a dragonfly flew by and winked at me, bringing me back
 to the moment and Coyote's inquisitive gaze

have you nothing to say? my friend politely asked

how do i control it?

III

i had not been entirely truthful with the wily trickster.
 while i did want to know how to control his journal, i had so many more
 questions to ask. Coyote knew as much and rolled on the ground
 filled with laughter

you want to know how to control it? he stammered out through
 great fits of laughter. *that's all you want to know?*

i had never been certain whether coyote had the ability to cry,
 but that question was soon answered as i watched my friend laugh
 uncontrollably on the ground in front of me, tears of mirth
 streaming down his sharp nose

*well, of course i have more questions, that's just the first one
 that popped into my head!* i shouted

i realized i was shouting, but i didn't care
 Coyote's continued laughter, bordering on convulsions,
 was starting to get to me

okay. okay. Coyote attempted to stop his laughter, only to begin again
 when he turned and looked at me, bringing on yet another round
 of full on hysterical glee

i could no longer stand his insipid hilarity

perhaps i should leave you to your mirth and go make us some tea?

yes, *that would be fine*, Coyote said standing in front of me. *here, let me help you with some of this oak you have split. the fire will be needing it*

we made our way inside with only a chortle or two from the trickster

i went to put the kettle on as Coyote walked around my den,
studiously looking at my book collection

*i have always admired your impressive collection of books
it appears most of your books are about religious history, and philosophy*

he removed one of my most cherished books,
The Secret Of The Golden Flower, by *Richard Wilhelm*,
placing it upon my kitchen table as he examined it closely

i assume you have read this, he asked as he paged through the book

yes. In fact, i have read it several times

*that would explain how you so readily adapted to my journal
i have not shown it to many humans, but those i did show it to
never reacted as strongly as you did*

i knew i was right about you

Coyote continued to be enthralled with my books even as
my kettle began letting out its distinctive scream

you keep stating that, i said. *what are you right about? and why?*

Coyote removed his gaze from the book in front of him
and followed me as i prepared our tea

do you remember the time you raided my garden? he asked,
as i placed his tea before him

i do, i replied with some chagrin

*you ended up speaking with the ancestors and then through them
came to understand both Earth Mother and the spirit world around us*

Coyote eyed me carefully, eagerly awaiting my response

yes, i remember that. how can i forget?

Not too long ago i had raided Coyote's magical garden, consuming his salvia,
sage of the diviners, along with assorted mushrooms and other psychotropic
plants in a haphazardly thrown together cosmic salad. it was an experience
i remembered quite clearly, telling my trickster friend as such

*you went on a wonderful journey, my friend, that's for certain. you met the
ancestors; grandfather bear, grandfather coyote and great-great grandmother turtle.
they taught you about Earth Mother. no doubt it was a powerful experience*

Coyote paused for a moment as he sipped his tea

i was hallucinating and speaking to three burned out oak stumps, i replied

indeed, Coyote cryptically replied

i vividly recalled the conversations i had with the ancestors, though in reality
it was only my acute imagination taking form after ingesting items from
Coyote's magical garden. to this day i still give that patch of ground
a wide berth. i have not returned since

who knew what he was growing there now

as if reading my mind Coyote chimed in with *i still grow much the same as i did before, though i have added a few more items that might interest you*

he turned and winked at me as he took another sip of tea
you should come see for yourself sometime

with mere mention of returning to his garden my entire being shuddered in revolt, only to be replaced with a strange sensation of calm and wonderment

i began seeing the outline of the three burned out stumps, watching them slowly take form of the ancestors once more, viewing it not as a memory, but as an occurrence in real time

excellent tea! Coyote proclaimed, *the finest around! that's what i always tell people; you make an excellent cup of tea!*

Coyote sat across from me, studying me for what seemed an eternity

i knew after you had your meeting with the ancestors, and learning what Earth Mother teaches all sentient beings, you were marked for much greatness. that's why i told the gods you were a perfect candidate for the journal

you mean, your journal, i attempted to correct him

*no, it is merely the journal. as i have told you before, it does not belong to me, i simply have current possession of it. it belongs to all of us.
time belongs to no one, or to no thing*

there was that riddle of time again. Coyote had mentioned it before, trying to explain to me how all time, past, present and future, were actually one time, an eternity of time swirling endlessly within itself. i did not understand this concept and told my friend as much

i know it is difficult for you to grasp, but you really need to look at the universe differently in order to understand it. when you were speaking with the ancestors, were you speaking with grandfather bear, grandfather coyote and great-great-grandmother turtle, or were you talking with three inanimate and burned out oak stumps?

we both know they were burned out stumps, i replied

do we? do we really? were they not real to you at the time? in the moment? when you think back on them, were they not real enough for you to believe they were real? did you not just begin to see them again?

Coyote had risen from the table and stood looking at me. how did he know i had started to see the ancestors take form again? was he guessing? bluffing? but if so, why?

admit it, the trickster challenged me, you've seen them take shape since then, many times, in fact, haven't you? you still feel Earth Mother coursing through your body

i do not have time for this nonsense, i half heartedly replied.
leave me to finish my tea

when you read this book for the first time, Coyote held up
The Secret Of The Golden Flower, *were you not intrigued by it?*

of course i was

why, then, did you read it again and again and again? were you searching for something within the book itself? did the book seem to have a message that spoke to you? one that was, in a word, perhaps addicting?

Coyote left that thought hanging as he gingerly placed another piece of oak on the fire. the bits of dried moss that were still attached to its bark sparkled and flashed as they caught fire

Coyote had asked a most interesting question.

i had, in fact, reread that book many times over in a search for something,
but i was never certain as to what. i admitted as much to him and commented
that his term “addicting” was an apt description

*looking at the titles in your bookshelf i am certain you have read many
books that are similar in thought. correct?*

*yes, you are correct. as you can see i have many books
along the same line. what of it?*

Coyote pulled up a stool to sit and warm himself by the fire

*some might say you study ancient religious theory, or perhaps
sacred geometry, as i noted quite a few of those titles as well*

the piece of oak had fully caught fire and gave off a splendid warmth,
one that radiated throughout the body, warming to the very core

*i have spent a great deal of time coming to understand these things,
i do not deny that*

i did not find his questioning offensive
in fact, it seemed to be putting me at ease

his eyes glowed with merriment as he spoke to me

*the journal is similar to your books, in a general sort of way,
though it is much more vast than those pitiful tomes you have on your shelf
it will take you far beyond any theories about religion, or even the universe,
as you humans like to call it, than anything you will ever read*

he patiently sat by the fire, warming himself, waiting for my response

i cleared my throat a bit as it was suddenly difficult to speak

*how is a book, my apologies, a journal, filled with indecipherable
scratches and scribbles, more vast than any of my books?
i cannot even read the thing! i angrily exclaimed*

you read it well enough to be gone for several hours, he quietly replied

but i don't remember anything of it! i shouted

not a thing!

funny, he said in a somber tone, *i recall you telling me that the pages
were radiantly aglow with a gold and white light. seems like you
remembered something*

upon hearing mention of the glowing gold and white light i was transported
to a seat in front of the ancestors, in a cave that went deep into the ground

*there are many things you must remove from your mind before you can
fully understand,* said great-great-grandmother turtle
her voice filled the cave as she spoke

*we will help you to understand the journal, to control it in as much
as you can control it,* said grandfather bear

i could not see his form but i could feel his breath upon me

things are never as they appear, my human friend. Grandfather Coyote
smiled down at me from the roof of the cave, his voice drifting off

several lexical symbols danced in front of my eyes,
moving in what appeared to be a random and haphazard motion,
while at the same time filling my mind with a sense of supreme order

Coyote's signature laughter could be clearly heard

i looked around and found him still sitting on the stool,
next to the fire, warming himself

i was sitting at my table, my cup of tea empty,
as i watched Coyote smiling at me

i keep telling you, i knew i was right about you. they know it too!

i began to ask a question, though Coyote quickly stopped me

*that is enough for now. enjoy the fire. i will fetch a few more pieces
of oak for you. come, sit here on the stool, it is nice and warm*

Coyote turned and walked out the door, returning quickly
with an armful of wood

i still have many questions, i cried out

yes, you do, he replied

and with that, he turned and left once more.

IV

i did not see Coyote again for several weeks. i was ill with a terrible fever
that only relaxed its hold on me after many strong cups of mushroom tea
while sitting next to my fire under a mountain of old family quilts

fortunately, Coyote had helped to replenish my stacks of firewood,
both inside my home, and the larger stack that i kept outside
on my covered porch. i had nearly exhausted both of these
supplies when my fever finally broke and i found myself in a
half-awake, half-asleep trance, sitting in my favorite chair
watching the embers of my fire glow as they turned to ash

hello, Coyote's familiar voice rang out. *is anyone at home?*

Coyote immediately opened my door and let himself in
before i could answer, as was his custom

you look terrible, my friend, he stated with distinction
*and I am quite certain your home could use a good airing out
how long have you been ill?*

i began to answer him but since i had not spoken in many days,
perhaps even weeks, it took me a few moments to find my voice

Coyote busied himself with opening windows and doors,
all the while excitedly jabbering on about his latest project

*after we last spoke i began thinking about your books, actually,
books in general, and how there have been so many of them written through the
years...how to know which are the "right ones" if you will, to rely upon?*

yes, i have been quite ill, i managed to get out

*so i can see. but you appear fine now, or at least you are past the worst of it
can we talk more about my project?*

having known Coyote for many years i knew it was a question
that was already answered

yes, please, go on about the books

it did not really bother me that Coyote was doing all of the talking
as it was a struggle for me to find the strength in which to carry on my end
of the conversation, if there was a part for me in the conversation at all

*as i was saying, i know you to be a voracious reader, in fact, if words were gold i
suppose i could say you were guilty of avarice, but at any rate, i have known you
to read a great many books filled mostly with history and religion*

why do you suppose that is?

the sounds of his words bounced around and through me as i sat,
huddled in my chair in a somewhat trance-like state

no, seriously, the trickster suddenly stated, *i would really like to know*

Coyote's long, slender nose appeared directly in front of me, his

eyes glowing with the ever-present combination of delight and
mischievousness for which he is so well known

take your time, my friend, i can see you are having difficulties

Coyote had opened my doors and windows allowing a light breeze to sweep
through my home. its gentle touch ran across my face, a very slight,
yet distinctive, caress. i suddenly realized it had been days
since i had opened up my home and the new found breeze, along with the
crisp scents of early Spring, filled me with a renewed vigor

i suppose i am drawn to those books as that is what interests me

*but you and i have had long conversations about politics, or philosophy, even
conversations on how best to build a dock. yet, i find few of these books in your
library. no, without a doubt, the greatest number of your books are of history
and religion. seems a bit odd, don't you agree?*

the trickster had taken a seat at my table and sat smiling at me. hard as
i might try, i could not understand what he was up to, if anything

*you will forgive me, i have been quite ill since i last saw you
i'm not certain that i am up for this conversation*

the exertion required to state this alone was nearly enough to knock me out
i was tired, fatigued, and had no wish to continue the conversation
Coyote could care less

*yes, i can see you are still ill and not up to your usual quick wit, but no bother,
i can talk and you can sit there and simply listen. should i make you some tea?*

i nodded to him that would be fine. he set the kettle on the fire,
his large, bushy tail flicking back and forth as he did so

Coyote turned and looked directly at me. *you recall the journal that i showed you, yes?* he looked at me eagerly as he awaited my response

yes, i told him. how could i forget it?

excellent, he cried out

*i think i will make you a strong herbal tea to give you energy
perhaps some ginseng as well?*

that would be fine. why do you ask about the journal?

a dollop of honey? he asked

yes, that would be fine as well. again, why do you ask about the journal?

54

the trickster brought my tea, placing it on the table beside my chair,
its aromatic steam filling my head with a renewed sense of relief

see, Coyote stated with joy, you are better already

i had to admit i was feeling much better, without even tasting the tea
the aroma alone was enough to lift my spirits

yes, i agree, i am feeling better. now, what about the journal?

*first, let's finish up our previous conversation. i believe the majority of your
books are about history and religion because those are the questions
that you are looking to answer. you have a keen mind, so books
on politics and philosophy are not much use to you, and the few books
you have detailing how to build structures are more instructive
than anything else. no, you have a deep-seated need to understand
the past, not just your past, but all past, as it relates to both history*

and religion, as you believe them to be one and the same. how is the tea?

i was so involved with what Coyote was telling me i did not notice
that i had taken several drinks from the teacup. i now felt its warmth
course through my body as Coyote's words penetrated

excellent, i told him. but again, what is your point?

*would you agree there have been tens of thousands, perhaps hundreds
of thousands, of books written declaring themselves "true,"
when in fact none have been proved to be so?*

i could see where Coyote was going with this as we had been
down this path before

*yes, i agree with you. how can so many books declare themselves "true"
if they are all claiming themselves to be so?*

55

exactly! Coyote shouted with such fervor i nearly spilled my remaining tea

*has it ever occurred to you that these tens, perhaps hundreds,
of thousands of books, they were all written during a
time that is only known, not unknown?*

the trickster had me at this statement
in truth, i had never considered it before

i am not certain if i understand the question, i pleaded in a weak voice

*oh, come now. you are not that feeble-minded, even if you are still a bit ill
you undoubtedly had several days of fever with your illness, correct?*

i nodded that was the case

and in the past, you have had fevers as well, also correct?

*yes, i stated somewhat irritated.
i have had a fever many times. what of it?*

*during those feverish times did you ever drift off and imagine, or perhaps even
visualize, a time before time? a time that was alien to you, a time that you
had never before read of, or heard of, yet it was as real as all
the other times you knew of?*

the air in my home suddenly grew still. there was no longer a breeze.
no gentle caress. it was as if i were in a vacuum

Coyote placed his piercing stare upon me,
as if you pulled back a veil and could see past the world, to another world?

56 as i went to answer him i could not speak. images from his journal danced
brightly before me as a radiant and golden light began to fill the room

the images swirled together and made neither words nor symbols that i could
decipher, but rather, they formed a light sound that when combined
with the golden light, filled me with a deep sense of peace and understanding

there is no need to answer, i could hear Coyote tell me

*i believed you to be ready to understand, but i can see now
there is much more i must show you, before you might be able to understand*

his voice appeared as if he were from another universe. it was muted and soft,
yet clear at the same time. the golden light became brighter as he spoke.
the feeling within me, such a peaceful, understanding feeling, grew until i felt
i would burst and my whole being, the entire universe,
would be consumed by the light

Coyote appeared before me, his mind telepathically telling me;

*you are beginning to understand that which i have been sent to teach you. i will load
in more wood and stoke your fire for you. i will make a small stew for your strength.
please, sleep, regain your energy. you are going to need it*

i felt his presence leave the room

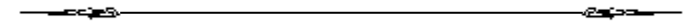
i did not dream of anything as i slept,
not a thing at all

when i woke it was dark. there was a fine fire burning, a stew cooking in a pot
and my home was closed up tight against the cold night air once more

i thought, perhaps, i heard Coyote calling off in the distance

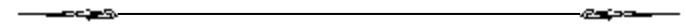
i remember thinking as i drifted back off to sleep,
why was there a veil to pull back? what lay on the other side?

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II

The Sweat



COYOTE VISION

V

Coyote came running up my path
followed by friend squirrel, rabbit,
fox, and a rather large, male mule deer

*there you are, the trickster cried out
we have been looking for you everywhere*

as he rested on my porch, composing himself,
the other animals gathered around anxiously
pacing while Coyote caught his breath

*i was down in the cove, i explained
cleaning out the pond weed*

upon hearing this all the animals stopped pacing
and stared at me

Coyote brushed the whole thing off
turning to his friends

he's a little strange, like i told you, but he's harmless

while the gathered animals snickered at my expense
 giving themselves knowing looks of merriment
 Coyote, now composed, approached me

*the reason we are so excited, and also the reason
 why we were searching for you, is that permission
 has been given for you to attend our sweat*

Coyote and the animals leaped in the air with joy

*can you believe it, he turned to the animals
 he's been given permission to sweat!*

the animals jumped up and down, some spinning in circles,
 the large deer snorted gleefully, bowing his magnificent
 rack towards me, pawing the ground before him

i was left speechless

i had absolutely no idea as to what my trickster friend was up to,
 telling him as much

*i'm not up to anything, he retorted
 do you not realize the monumental importance of this?*

Coyote stared at me for the longest while, swishing his tail
 back and forth, staring at me for what seemed an eternity

perhaps you did not hear me correctly

Coyote cleared his throat and the animals again focused
 on the wily trickster

you have been granted permission to attend our sweat!

again the animals rejoiced, the deer bowed down gracefully

yes, yes, i stammered

but what, exactly, does that mean

for a moment, there was complete silence
 i even believed i could hear the pond weeds growing

the animals stared at me with complete confusion

Coyote turned to them and calmed them, telling them
 i did not fully understand the ways of nature, they
 would have to forgive me and could they please remain
 understanding

they seemed to agree with this line of thinking, milling about
 on my lawn, muttering to each other, once in a while
 looking at me as they smiled a rather unsettling
 patronizing sort of smile

*the gods have given me their blessing
 to allow you to attend one of our sacred sweats,
 surely you remember me speaking of these*

he waited patiently as i struggled with my memory,
 finally realizing that he had indeed told me of the many
 sweats he had attended

forgive me, i said, you caught me by surprise

*i do recall you regaling me with stories of your
 sweats. i did not understand that you were speaking*

*of sweating with animals. i thought you meant humans
were your companions in those stories*

all the animals snickered, friend squirrel gave Coyote
a playful nudge in the ribs

Coyote sighed a deep, long sigh

no doubt, that is what you thought, he told me
in an exasperating tone

*while i have attended many sweats in the past
with humans, i have attended far more with my
animal brothers*

again, all eyes were turned upon me, waiting for
my response

yes, of course, i hurriedly shouted out

*you merely caught me off guard. of course i will
attend your sweat. when does it begin*, i innocently asked

it already has, Coyote said, grinning from ear to ear,
winking at his furry companions

it already has.

VI

we all rushed down the forest path, though
friend rabbit elected to stay behind with me
lest i became lost

not to worry, he called out
i know the way. been there many times

the hurried, almost frenzied pace
was taking its toll on me

it might be fine and well for animals
but humans, at least this human,
could not traverse a densely wooded path with their ease

how is he holding up, Coyote called out

try as i might, i could not see the wily trickster
through the dense undergrowth of the forest

slow as a rock and he's a bit winded, but he's fine, called out the rabbit

i would have attempted to defend what little honor

i might have had left, but in truth
i was exhausted

it was all i could do to continue on,
gasping for air the entire time

we forged down the path for what seemed hours
before i noticed Coyote, the deer, and the rest
of the animals gathered by the entrance
to what appeared to be a large cave

you look terrible, Coyote laughed

*actually, friend rabbit offered
i thought he did quite well*

the rest of the animals gleefully snorted
and danced about
as i offered a kind nod in the rabbits direction

*we will let him rest here for a bit, Coyote told the animals
he will need his strength*

*friend raccoon, you will stay here with him until
he has caught his breath, and then take him to the pond*

Coyote spoke with a most definite authority
and the animals readily listened

*you others will come with me into the cave
and help me prepare*

before i could question the trickster further
he was off into the cave with the other animals

the raccoon sat next to me, smiling
*take your time, take your time,
it will take them a while to prepare*

i sat upon a soft patch of moss and collected myself,
content to "take my time" as the raccoon offered

i finally felt well enough to move on and friend
raccoon led me down a small path
the end of which held a pond of
crystal clear water

*you can drink from here, the raccoon offered
this water is the sweetest tasting water in the forest*

i cupped my hands and placed them in the water
drawing up a nice bit to drink

the water, in a word, was amazing

i could not recall ever tasting such pure,
clear, and sweet water

the raccoon saw me smiling as i reached for another gulp
*told you, he repeated himself, sweetest tasting water
in the forest*

he took a few small drinks from the pond himself
then sat watching me until i had my fill

*if you're ready, he offered, i'm sure they are
nearly finished*

finished with what, i asked

with the preparations, he said with a bit too
much exasperation

he headed back down the small path,
making certain to not walk too fast
lest he lose me

when we arrived at the cave's entrance
he bid me sit back on my moss perch
as he went inside to see if Coyote
might be ready

i could hear his tiny voice call out
to Coyote, but then nothing else

eventually, Coyote appeared at the entrance
walking straight towards me

we are ready, he stated

*the gods have again granted their approval
and the preparations are complete. are you ready?*

without giving me a chance to answer
he took me by the arm and led me inside

i was going to protest
saying i had many questions
but Coyote smiled at me
his wide grin bright in the darkness of the cave

*you may not speak, during the ceremony
unless directly spoken to, understood?*

i nodded my head affirmatively

good, he whispered
you'll do just fine

and with that we went deep into the cave
heading towards a flickering light
that seemed to dance
with a luminous intensity i had not seen before.

VII

we traveled down into the cave
for quite a while

remarkably, it was large and
i was able to walk upright the entire way

it was also a very wide cave as well
not only accommodating myself
but the great stag had more than enough
room for his massive rack

the cave's path ended in a large
somewhat circular room
of which i could not make out
its final size

there was an immense chimney
formed out of the rock
that shot straight up
illuminating the cave with a strange,
brilliant light, as if the sun was directly above it
not once moving in the sky

there were many stones, logs, piles of moss
gathered around a large pit
where the animals were building
what looked to be a rather impressive fire

as i entered the chamber
Coyote swept past me
his great, bushy tail
excitedly shaking back and forth

not too much pitch and sap, he stated with authority,
you'll remember what happened last time
you did that

his comment seemed to be directed
at friend fox, who sheepishly replied
he would never make that mistake again

the rest of the animals snorted with glee
and the stag went back to the entrance
returning with a load of wood lodged
in his great rack

to say i was in disbelief at what i was witnessing
would not do it justice,
none at all. i was dumbfounded

Coyote noticed my slack-jawed appearance,
playfully telling the other animals,
he probably never realized animals
could make fire

this caused a great amount of laughter
causing the stag to nearly lose his load of wood

friend squirrel climbed upon the stags antlers
looking directly at me

*Coyote requested you be able to attend our ceremony
and the gods granted it
because you have shown you are powerfully different
than other humans*

he tilted his head back and forth,
looking at me with abject curiosity

*i must admit, you do seem rather unique, he continued
you've never been known to harm an animal,
growing your food instead of harvesting our meat,
though the fish in the lake would not be so
charitable in their description of your behavior*

a healthy snort was issued from the stag
and the squirrel quickly scampered
back to the ground

i looked over at Coyote
who had been carefully studying me,
watching my every reaction

what, exactly, is all of this, i asked

*i already told you, we have invited you
to our sweat. this cave is holy to us
it has seen centuries of use for just such
an occasion. it is a very spiritual
and sacred place*

*when Coyote told us he had approval
from the gods, a tiny chipmunk continued
none of us believed him, at first*

Coyote chuckled, *well, can you blame them?*

the animals gleefully chuckled as friend rabbit
continued, *but when Mescalito appeared
and said red hawks would be bringing the sacrament,
and that we were to include you...*

*how could we do nothing else
but believe?* bellowed the stag

by this time the fire was roaring
it's smoke drafting up through the chimney
as it undoubtedly had for centuries

as its flames grew i could see more
of the chamber i was in, the strange
luminous light now replaced with the fire's
own illuminating glow

the chamber was cavernous
and filled with images
drawn into the soot on the walls

there were uncountable images,
scrawls, lexical glyphs that emanated
an ongoing story

it was not so much that i could "read"
the story, it was that i "felt"
the story

the markings reminded me of the images
i briefly glanced upon in Coyote's journal

*when Mescalito appeared to us
giving us this task, the rabbit earnestly told me
it was the first time in many, many millennia
that a human was allowed into our ceremony,
to partake of the sacrament that he gives*

Coyote must have seen the puzzled look
on my face, offering a quick reminder to me

*i know i have spoken to you about peyote
rituals in the past. you incorrectly assumed
i was speaking of humans when i did so,
i never said any different*

i nodded agreement as my mind
raced to grasp what was happening

*in fact, he continued, Mescalito created a separate
ritual centuries ago for humans to partake in,
much more simplified, if you will,
than our own*

upon hearing this all of the animals
became quite solemn

*you have proven yourself many times
to be a powerful warrior, in your own
unique way. the gods want you to continue
an ancient tradition that has long been lost*

*why do the gods want me to partake in your ceremony? i asked
to further the bonds between humans and animals?*

*we do not question the gods, Coyote said indignantly,
we only do as they decree. their reasons, their purpose,
is their own. we are here to carry out their wishes*

an intense, flurry of activity occurred
as a kettle of red-tailed hawks
suddenly flew down the chimney!

they seemed untouched by any flame
as they circled the great chamber
dropping small cacti upon its floor

when the last hawk had dropped its cacti,
and as quickly as they had appeared,
they flew up the chimney and vanished,
leaving only the sound of the fire
to fill the cave

i looked at Coyote in amazement
saying not a word

good, he replied, you remember my advice

he turned to the animals, who were now
seated upon the rocks, logs, and piles of moss
gathered around the fire
stating, in a soft tone,

it has begun.

VIII

after the kettle of hawks flew out
and the quiet of the cave resumed
i noticed daylight was no longer streaming in
through the chimney

i was not aware of the time this happened
only that it occurred sometime during the flurry
of the red-tailed hawks dropping their cactus
onto the cave floor

as i looked around at my animal companions
their profiles standing out in the dancing flames
of the communal fire, i noticed they had quickly gathered
the dropped bits of cactus and had formed them into
a large mound at the foot of Coyote

heeding Coyote's words, i did not ask what was occurring
though i did indeed have many questions

friend fox began shaking a rattle that i later determined
was a group of rattlesnake beads placed into a dried gourd

the rhythmic shaking of his rattle soon overtook me
and i sat transfixed by its sound

another sound entered the cave;
a low, almost moaning sound
that accompanied the fox's rattle shaking

i looked across the fire where the great stag was seated
and was both surprised and amazed that it was he
who was creating this sound

the stags undulating rhythm
with fox's quick, sharp rattles
transported me
opening a path before me

Coyote moved towards me from the shadows
offering me dried cactus
from a large bear skull

the rest of the animals anxiously watched
as Coyote gestured, showing me to chew it

i took the cactus, placing it into my mouth

it had a dusty, earthy taste
not unlike chewing on a piece of dried
apricot, though far less sweet than that

Coyote nodded his approval and continued on
moving around the circle in a clockwise motion
until each animal had partaken of the cacti

we sat in silence, the flames of the fire dancing before us
 their shadows leaping to the far recesses of the chamber
 mixing with the lexical glyphs, joining them,
 adding to the already lengthy story upon its walls

there was no inference of time, outside of the fact
 i knew it was no longer daylight

the hypnotic rhythms of the stag and fox
 lulled me into a near dream state,
 one that was comforting and warm

a paw reached out to me,
 it was the raccoon
 offering me a gourd filled with water

i remember taking a drink from the gourd
 as the stag and the fox continued with their rhythms

at once i felt myself flying through the hole
 of the chimney

i looked down upon myself
 sitting around the fire
 with Coyote and the animals
 yet, still, i was above us all

Coyote looked up from where he was sitting
 and seemingly winked at me

two of the squirrels
 did the same, smiling beatifically
 as they did so

their smiles calmed me, as did Coyote's playful wink
 and i continued my ascent past the opening of the chimney
 past the night sky
 past the earth itself

a graceful warmth surrounded me
 as i realized the connection everything has
 to every thing

all animals are connected with each other
 all plants, trees, all matter of life
 are interconnected
 to each other

there was not any one, solitary thing
 everything was every thing, all at once
 everywhere

two exceptionally large, beautiful, blood red
 dahlias, opened up before me

i was no longer in the cave
 nor the chamber
 nor earth
 nor space

i was being drawn inside the florets
 of one of these magnificent flowers
 my body decreasing in size
 as i was drawn further into the dahlia

piercing through the center
 darkness encompassed me

there was not a sound
no sight
nothing
only darkness

gradually, a handful of glowing lights appeared
and with them, voices

at first the lights were barely perceptible
as though they were at a great distance from me

as their intensity began to grow
the voices went from low murmurs
to a communal song

each voice singing their own composition
with all of the voices comprising
one grand melody

if i listened intently, i could hear nothing
but if i merely left my mind open
not focusing on any one thing

i could listen to them all
i could hear and understand
all of them at once

one voice, above the others, greeted me
filling my body with a radiant light

it identified itself as Mescalito,
and thanked me for taking part
in his ceremony

the other voices rose up
far too many to count
offering me their best wishes
thanking me as well

Mescalito's song again became the only song
i heard, as the other voices faded into
a low, background harmony

i went to speak to Mescalito
as i had many questions
but my mouth could not form words

a beautiful set of twin mermaids
swam before me
winding their bodies against mine
softly guiding me downwards

i panicked for a moment,
thinking if mermaids were taking me down
surely i was drowning

but within that thought came another;
the mermaids reassuring me to trust them
to let them guide me

i listened as Mescalito's voice
his song
began to fade as well

one of the mermaids leaned close
whispering in my ear
he approves

as we continued descending
i noticed the mermaid's tales
leaving marks upon the chamber walls

i felt them gently place me
onto its floor

the rhythmic sounds of the great stag
and the fox
began to return

i was able to see a hint of the fire
though that was all i could see

i heard Coyote speaking,
he has done well,
let him rest

and then i felt nothing more.

IX

a perfect beam of light
shined into the cave from the chimney

its pale illumination revealed
a spectacular image, animals of all kinds
entwined together around the remains
of a great fire, its charred timbers
faintly glowing

i attempted to rise
but felt a large, heavy paw
holding me down

you need to rest, brother bear declared
we all need to rest

the great bear rolled onto his side
snoring loudly

thinking he might be sound asleep
i started to raise myself up

i wouldn't move too quickly, a familiar
voice chuckled

it was Coyote
sitting across the pile
of entwined animals
his sharp eyes gleaming
in the pale illumination

he sat calmly watching me
his long stemmed, fanciful pipe
emitting the smallest amount
of smoke from its bowl

it was difficult for me to focus
much less speak

i attempted to question Coyote
over and again, but my words came out
mute

give it some time, Coyote chuckled again
brother bear has it right,
you need to rest

with that he ventured closer
bringing me a large, hollowed out
gourd which contained the sweet
nectar of the spring

offering it to me he paused
before handing it over

drink slowly, he said with authority
do not rush these things

i gingerly took the gourd, lightly
drinking from it

i could feel the waters healing presence
glide down my body

soothing me, nurturing me
until i began to feel whole again

i looked over at Coyote, who had moved
to the side of the cave again

i tried to formulate words
moving words from my mind
to my mouth
then out into the world

Coyote took a long draw from his pipe
letting the smoke out in a majestic plume
that swirled upwards through the chimney

you have many, many questions,
he bluntly stated

sit, drink some more, take your time
there is time enough for all your questions

i felt movement all around me
the animals were slowly waking

i could recall a few animals
 when we began the sweat
 but now there were several dozen
 including brother bear

Coyote again seemed to sense my question
 or i suppose he merely watched my eyes
 before answering,
yes, many friends joined us during the sweat

as i sat up further i could tell immediately
 he was right

a massive pile of animals
 lay on the cave floor
 for as far as the light could reach

*when news spread that a human
 was allowed to attend our sweat
 animals came from miles around
 to be a part of it*

Coyote took another long pull from his pipe

*to say you are a bit of celebrity would be
 doing you a great disservice
 everyone wanted to see for themselves
 how your experience would be*

i took a long drink of the magical water
 feeling its healing power once again
 course through my body, my soul,

my mind, was becoming clear
 telling me i could speak again

*how long have i been here,
 i cautiously asked*

*you have been here for exactly
 three days, Coyote replied*

i attempted to understand
 believing it was merely the next morning

*you had quite the experience, the trickster
 smiled, quite the experience indeed*

several of the animals had now awakened
 and were beginning to move towards
 the mouth of the cave
 waving to Coyote as they did so,
 turning to smile at me
 one last time before they left
 out of sight

brother bear was still beside me
 snoring heavily

*he was tasked with guarding you, Coyote explained
 he was with you the entire time,
 he is exhausted*

as if to emphasize Coyote's words
 the bear gave a mighty snort
 before resuming his rhythmical snoring

Coyote and i sat in silence, listening to
 brother bear snore
 watching the pale illumination
 flicker around the cave,

the animals, one by one,
 slowly leaving the cave
 each one stopping to smile at me
 before they left

visions of blood red dahlias
 began floating through my mind

as i began to focus upon them
 i soon realized i was no longer
 in the cave, i was underwater

a perfect calm quickly came over me
 there was no fear, no thought
 other than the imagery of dahlias
 before me
 as i sat
 underwater

the more i focused on the flowers
 the more i began to feel my breathing

flowing with its rhythm
 i breathed in
 breathed out

the flowers becoming a deep
 rich color, all colors, all at once

the more i focused on the changing colors
 the more i rose through the water
 until i was no longer underwater

i was ascending through the chimney

i looked down at Coyote
 the great sleeping bear

i could see all around me as
 the few remaining animals left

there are hundreds of them,
 i thought out loud

yes, there was, two voices answered
 in perfect harmony and unison

i looked beneath me and two
 exquisitely radiant mermaids
 were guiding me up
 past the chimneys opening

as soon as i was free from the cave
 the sun blinded me
 with its brilliance

the light penetrated my very soul
 illuminating every fault, every virtue
 i possessed

i again felt the inter connectedness
 of everything to every thing

with that revelation of connectedness
 the sun vanished
 and i was once again
 in the dark of space

curiously, space was filled
 with millions of subtle
 glowing colors

a voice spoke to me,
 the same i had heard before
 during the ceremony

you have done well, the voice spoke

we have chosen wisely, a chorus
 of voices echoed

you have learned much,
but it will take a long while
to fully understand it all

there was a collective murmuring
 of agreement

Coyote will help guide you
heed his advice

with that a large, perfectly formed
 dahlia appeared before me

i watched myself exit from within it
 the sound of the voice
 softly blowing against its petals

completely exiting the exquisite flower
 i felt the mermaids
 guiding me back towards earth

smiling to me benevolently
 we passed by the sun once more
 entering back into the cave

the mermaids left me on the cave floor
 directly across from Coyote

i awoke in supplication
 my mind clear, my senses intact

brother bear was no longer with us
 as were none of the animals
 left in the cave

Coyote and i sat across
 from each other
 me in my position of humble prayer
 Coyote still smoking
 his enchanted pipe

you have witnessed many things,
 he spoke

a lot of information has been shown to you
though it will take time to understand it all

i nodded my head in slow agreement

am i still under the influence
of the peyote, i asked

Coyote chuckled

*the sweat, the ceremony, is designed
to break down the barriers
you have been placing before you
your entire life*

Coyote leaned in closely,
gesturing around him as he did so

*none of this is real,
all of this is real,
it is you who chooses
what to see*

at once
i understood him
completely

what do you recall most, he questioned

*what stands out amongst all else that you
saw, heard, or felt*

i watched the merriment in his eyes
dancing as if performing
an intricate dance

dahlias, gods, and mermaids, i replied

is that all? he asked

*my connectedness to everything alive,
my connectedness to the universe
and it to me*

*the knowledge that all
is one energy, one love*

we sat in silence for some time

i could tell by the fading light
it was no longer daylight
night had come again

i laughed out loud, realizing it did not matter
if it was day, or night,

it simply was

as was i

as was Coyote

as are we all

i walked towards
the mouth of the cave

it was time to return home.



Apotheosis

III



COYOTE VISION

X

as i left the mouth of the cave
i saw the forest before me as never before

the subtle shades of green
the movement of light through the trees
even the moss rocks
seemed to glow with an otherworldly
essence

i sat upon the large moss rock
at the mouth of the cave
rejoicing in the beauty around me

it is beautiful, is it not? asked Coyote

extremely, was all i could manage

as i inhaled the magic of the forest
it suddenly occurred to me
we had traveled a great distance

Coyote must have sensed this
as he turned and looked at me
saying, *perhaps you should fly home*

any other time i would have believed
 Coyote was simply being Coyote
 but as soon as he suggested flying home
 i spotted a large hawk not six feet away
 who seemed to be looking directly at me

he was perched on a branch
 in a large digger pine
 his red tail feathers a tell-tale sign
 he was sent by Mescalito

*perhaps you should ask him
 for permission to fly you home,
 i heard Coyote tell me*

i looked directly at the hawk
 our eyes locked in communion
 he seemed to be telling me he would be
 honored
 to fly me home

*i am much too large
 for that bird to carry me,
 i laughingly told Coyote
 while still locked into communion
 with the hawk*

then become the hawk, Coyote told me

in an instant i was airborne

i was no longer seated on the large
 moss rock
 at the mouth of the cave

i was soaring up into the sky
 the forest quickly falling beneath me

i saw Coyote running swiftly
 down a path

the entire forest
 stretched out before me

i was not on the great bird,
 i was the great bird

we, or rather i,
 swept down lower
 to call out to Coyote

but i had no voice other than
 a sharp screech
 which Coyote must have heard
 as he looked up directly at me
 smiling from ear to ear
 his unmistakable trickster smile

a few moments earlier
 i had pondered how far it was
 to my home by the lake
 now, as i flew ever faster
 my home quickly came into view

i circled the lake a few times
 noticing my garden needed attention
 and the dock could certainly use
 a new coat of paint

i did not so much as land
as i found myself sitting at my table
a fine cup of tea before me
with Coyote entering the room

marvelous, wasn't it? he cried out

and i've arrived just in time for tea

Coyote helped himself to a cup of tea
as he sat down at the table
across from me

how was that possible? i stammered

i flew home with the hawk!

technically, Coyote pointed out
you were the hawk. he gave you
permission to join with him
so you might fly home

the sensations of flying
above the forest
of circling the lake
of feeling the freedom
of the air was fresh with me

but, i still questioned, *how?*

as i asked the question i noticed
Coyote's journal on the table before me,
which i had not noticed before

do you believe the answer to be
in my journal? the trickster asked

i sat transfixed by the tome
watching it as it sat on my table
appearing to breathe
as if it were alive

Coyote's question rang in my ears

i moved to touch the journal
but stopped shy of actually touching it
allowing my hands to hover
just above it
feeling its warmth
embracing its energy

at once i heard a rustling
overhead

i looked up to my ceiling
and to my surprise
found the two mermaids
slowly circling above me

they smiled as they flipped
their tails, vanishing through my roof
into the ether

Coyote must have seen my
look of astonishment
as he raised his tea cup to me
stating, *all is real, nothing is real*

i felt his tail curling around me
 he was now right next to me
 no longer sitting across from me

when did he move?

*you will find all you need
 within this journal, but something tells me
 you think you no longer need it*

he slyly winked at me
 as he helped himself
 to more tea

*perhaps we can again discuss
 what you saw during the sweat*

he was back sitting across from me
 his face as solemn as i had ever seen it

*what sensations, what experiences
 did you encounter? it does not matter
 how trivial you might believe them to be
 as they all have tremendous value*

dahlias, gods and mermaids, i replied

yes, you have said as much

*and the feeling that everything is connected
 to every thing, i again exclaimed*

*so you said as well. can that explain
 how you flew home as a hawk?
 or how you saw mermaids
 swimming on your ceiling?*

Coyote seemed transfixed by the tea
 in front of him, staring intently
 into the cup

the journal was still before me
 glowing, breathing
 as if alive

it was alive

a sharp sound awakened me
 from my reverie

it was me, coming into my home
 opening my door
 calling out to Coyote as i did so,

wonderful, you've already made tea!

XI

i sat transfixed by the bizarre situation
before me

i was sitting at the table
talking with Coyote
as i was walking into my home
talking with Coyote

i felt myself being both places
both beings
at once

there was not a lapse in time
nor was there a feeling
of déjà vu

it was simply a matter of
watching myself
watching myself

a flurry of images began running
through my two minds

while i could sense an independence
from one another
i could also sense a combined
synchronicity of my two selves

i felt brother bear's
hefty paw holding me down

i could see friend raccoon
handing me a gourd filled with water

tasting the sweetness
of the water as i drank it

i saw myself at the table
as i walked towards it
watching myself from the table
walking from my door

none of this felt unpleasant

at first it was somewhat disorienting
but i quickly became aware
that we were both one in the same

a grand sense of peace filled me,
both of me as Coyote
at smiling across from me
at the table

i moved closer to the table
and sat where i was already sitting
merging my two selves into one

Coyote reached across and poured me
a fresh cup of tea

i commend you, he stated
on your calmness

at once i understood him

i was calm, serene even
nothing felt out of the ordinary
in fact, everything felt exceptionally
ordinary

i looked upwards and waved
at the mermaids as they re-emerged
from my ceiling
both of them holding dahlias
handing them down to me
as they drew closer

with little effort i drifted inside
the magnificent flowers
both of me, at once

i had separated once again
one of me going with one mermaid
the other of me going
with the other mermaid

wrapped within the soft petals
of the dahlias
the mermaids again swam
through the ceiling

up into the sky
up into space
where they kept on swimming

Coyote appeared before us
though he spoke with
Mescalitos voice

look around you, he told me
what do you see?

i was whole again
there was only one of me
and i was no longer
inside the flowers

i was back in the cave
atop of large pile of animals

i described what i saw to Mescaltio
or was it Coyote?

at once i did not care,
i simply understood they were both
one in the same

i was a part of them, they were a part of me
as we were a part of the animals

the hawk i had seen earlier
called to me from the mouth
of the cave

we again locked in communion
 each of us knowing the other
 and i again
 took flight

we again circled my lake
 and i again
 realized my dock
 needed a new coat of paint

i found myself at my table
 drinking tea with Coyote
 the merriment in his eyes
 lighting the room

he once again complimented me
 on my calmness
 pushing his journal towards me
 as he did so

i once more felt the journal breathe,
 felt its glow warming my soul

*i do not need your journal, i told my friend
 i understand your message*

*it is still a useful tool, he replied,
 continuing to push it towards me*

a playful giggle could be heard
 as a mermaid helped push the journal
 towards me

*this journal, this magic, if you will,
 can guide you further. you have earned
 the privilege of merging with it,
 take it, it is yours. it will help increase
 your vision*

upon hearing the word vision
 a realization dawned on me

i can further answer your question!
 i excitedly shouted to Coyote

*i saw not only dahlias, gods
 and mermaids, but i saw all of
 life, showering down upon the earth
 as if it were rain upon the ground!*

*most excellent indeed! cried my friend
 i was hoping you would say that!*

Coyote got up from his table
 and danced a bit of a jig
 ending up beside me
 his nose against mine

*all of life is around us
 everywhere, constantly,
 he softly stated*

*you are one with the hawk,
 you are one with the mermaids,
 with all the animals, you are one with everything!*

he pulled back from me and eyed me
cautiously

*you still don't believe me, he said
with a touch of sadness in his voice
after all i have shown you?*

*i do, it's just that, but he was quick
and cut me off*

*let me guess, your books, your "science"
as you know it, have already explained
this to you*

Coyote sat back on his chair with a joyful
look in his eye, which was surprising
as i thought he would be a little
angry with me

yes, somewhat, i agreed

*you have shown me tremendous things
of that there is no doubt
but i already understood the concept
of all life bombarding earth from space*

i at once felt foolish, though i was not certain why
as i had indeed come to that understanding
a while ago in my studies

*i'm quite certain you even have a name for it,
Coyote smirked as he asked. Correct?*

actually, yes. it is called panspermia,
i triumphantly announced to the wily trickster

Coyote rolled on the floor with glee

*panspermia, he gasped,
in between great bouts of laughter*

that's what you call it?

well, yes. it is a rather new science...

Coyote stopped his laughter at the mention of
science, again appearing before me
his nose next to mine

*this, new science, is it relatively new?
say, within the past, maybe, last few decades?*

i pushed back from Coyote as i answered him
feeling somewhat superior to him as
apparently he had never heard of panspermia

*yes, it is a new field of study, a new field
of science, if you will*

Coyote stepped back even further
again falling to the floor in laughter

*why do you find this so amusing, i
asked with a fair amount of agitation
in my voice*

*i show you magic and wonders
beyond your dreams
and you tell me you already
know of it, calling it panspermia*

Coyote looked at me
as you might look at a small child
attempting to answer them
as to why there is air

*tell me, Coyote continued,
does this panspermia also explain
how you can fly as a bird?*

i did not have an answer

knowing as much he continued

*did you know an ancient greek,
Anaxagoras, i believe was his name,
was the first to discuss panspermia,
back in your 5th century BC?*

i did not and i told Coyote as much

*you might ask yourself how Anaxagoras
came upon such a theory, especially in
the 5th century BC, when humans were
little more than illuminated monkey's?*

*you were told, Coyote continued,
that you were allowed to attend our sweat
in an attempt at connecting with humans
once again*

*so that we might connect
with the one life form that continues
to resist change, believing they are
superior to all...humans*

Coyote looked completely dejected
at this point, and i felt as if
i had betrayed a great trust

*i'll leave you with your science,
he said as he opened my door*

*we will talk again further,
but right now i will leave you
to contemplate
your immense arrogance*

with that he left me

as did the mermaids

as did the dahlias

as did any sense of understanding
i might have previously felt.

XII

i did not hear from Coyote
for several days and no longer saw dahlias
or mermaids
floating along my ceiling

i did, however, catch glimpses
shadows, really
moving in the distance

i would turn to these shadows
but as i did so they would just as suddenly
disappear

i could not shake the unmistakable feeling
or being connected
to several places at once

of not being watched
but connected
to many places at once

Coyote had left his journal
on the table
not taking it with him
when he left

i studied it for days
never once opening it

i sat with it as i drank morning tea
it kept me company through meals
all the while breathing
on my table
glowing, calling to me
in a language without sound

i pulled many of my own books
down from my library

i searched the Ramayana,
the Mahabharata,
the Epic of Gilgamesh,
the Enuma Elish,
i even opened an old copy
of the Book Of Enoch,
given to me years ago
by none other than
Coyote

in the end
i had no answers

i was left with the journal
glowing
breathing
on the table in front of me

this went on for several days

on the twelfth day i heard a light
tapping
on my window

i peered out the window
but saw not a thing

thinking it was my imagination
i turned back to my table

there, sitting across the table,
as if nothing had changed
was Coyote, sipping his tea

*i see you've been busy
with your studies,* as he waved
his paws about the table

anything interesting? he asked

he motioned for me to sit
pouring me another cup

*how is it that you make
the most finest of tea,*
he marveled

i was too ashamed to say anything
not certain how to
approach the subject

do you think you are the first,
Coyote asked, *to be conflicted
as to what i teach?*

his eyes sparkled with the familiar
mischievous
i have come to know so well

*you have spent a lifetime seeking
answers to questions you are not certain
even exist at all*

he continued, *but when given these answers
the first thing you do is to relate them
to that which you know,
that which you understand*

i did not say a word

*these books here in front of you
on the table, next to my journal
they are all open, yet my journal
remains closed,
why is that?*

as i looked upon my table that did
seem to be an obvious question

many books lay opened upon my table
Coyote's journal
was the only one that remained closed

i do not sense that you fear the journal,
Coyote stated with authority

*you had mentioned to me you did not need
to open it as you understood
everything i showed you*

with this Coyote sat back in his chair
studying me, casually looking through
my books upon the table

*do you, he leaned across the table
really believe you understand?*

a slight movement to my side
was followed by a soft
caressing touch on my cheek

the mermaids had returned

*you have nothing to fear, they
said to me in unison*

then softly whispering,
*you cannot go further until
you understand your previous wisdom
was founded upon lies, treachery
and deceit*

Coyote let out a slight chuckle,
lighting his pipe as he did

the mermaids are wise,
he said between great puffs
on his long, enchanted pipe

in all the time i had known Coyote
and in all the times i saw him smoking
i never once saw him filling his pipe
not once

Coyote blew a magnificent series
of rings that circled the room
landing uniformly
on the mermaid's tails

*let me tell you a story, he said
or, rather, a history*

Coyote leaned back into his chair
and took another long pull
from his enchanted pipe

*humans, such as yourself
have been contacted by me,
or my ancestors, for ages*

*the gods granted us oversight
over humans
many tens of thousands
of years ago*

back when you were all still...

illuminated monkeys, i asked

Coyote chuckled at this

*yes, though that term,
at least amongst the animals,
has been determined to be derogatory*

how so, i inquired

*the monkeys were greatly offended
by the comparison of humans
to them. It was deemed an egregious error
and after much debate, for many, many centuries
it was determined that calling humans
illuminated monkeys
was indeed slandering the good standing
of monkeys and their good name*

*after much arbitration
restitution was finally agreed upon
the disuse of that term being
chief among them*

but why do you still say it, i asked

*habit, mostly, the trickster replied
plus when working with humans
it always seems to provoke a response
when used in just the right manner*

Coyote again chuckled, taking
several long draws from his pipe

the mermaids had once again
swam to the ceiling
disappearing to the ether
as quickly as they had
appeared

several minutes went by
though it seemed as if time had ceased
to exist at all

*if i may continue, Coyote said
carefully laying his pipe on the table
before him*

*throughout time i, or my ancestors, have helped to
educate humans as to the ways
of nature*

*sadly, it always ended the same;
they eventually destroyed themselves*

*what i have shown you is the incredible
magic
of the universe*

*it is within all living things
everywhere, in every thing*

*these books you have looked through
here on the table
were written by many of the civilizations
we attempted to educate*

he looked solemnly at the table
you can see what happened

i had to agree with Coyote on this

in every story, from every culture i had read from,
there existed a great nation, a great culture
that eventually was done in by their
own greed, or simply their own
arrogance

granted, there were a few cultures
 that merely disappeared without a trace
 leaving little, if anything, about them
 but they too were also gone
 same as the others

yes, Coyote answered
 as if reading my thoughts

their arrogance

*that is the downfall of humans,
 their arrogance*

*they believe themselves to be,
 they have always believed themselves to be,
 superior to not only animals
 but to nature itself*

the journal seemed to sigh
 a great sigh
 and it appeared to glow
 just a little less

*i only wanted to teach you,
 to show to you
 that moment when you realize
 you are awake and dreaming
 simultaneously, can be one of the
 greatest pleasures taken for granted
 in what you know as life
 but what nature calls
 your vision.*

XIII

i heard a slight ringing
 in my ears

which turned into a subtle hum
 just below the threshold of sound

i looked around the room
 trying to identify it

you will not find it here,
 Coyote offered

*the noise you are hearing
 is the universe, rather
 it is life in the universe
 all of life, at once, singing*

it was not exactly an
 unpleasant sound
 more like a soft lullaby
 one that wrapped me within it

why are you showing me this, i asked

what is the purpose?

Coyote spoke slowly
*as i have told you, over many eons
 we have attempted to bring magic
 or the knowledge
 of magic
 to humans*

*while i must admit we have failed
 to change any of mankind's behavior
 we have been successful in reaching
 a few souls over the years*

i motioned to the books on the table,
those were the people that wrote these books,
 i stated as more of a statement, than a question

yes, they were, Coyote replied

*in nature there are many substances
 that allow you to peer through the veil
 between dream and awakened states*

*a few have described it as the
 merging of conscious, sub-conscious and unconscious
 i merely refer to it as giving you
 vision*

*i have taken the liberty of introducing
 many of these naturally occurring substances
 into your daily routine*

i tried to think of how this was possible
 but could not easily understand it
 at all

*the water from your well has had
 kava root, damiana leaf, and
 green tea leaf extracts
 added to it for some time*

*they are used to relax you, to put you into
 a calm and accepting state*

*of course, there are also the more potent plants
 that i have taught you to use;
 mushrooms, jimson weed, or Datura,
 and of course, Salvia divinorum
 the sage of the diviners*

*i introduced you to peyote
 during the sweat in order to
 remove you from your consciousness
 so you might better experience
 that which the gods wanted to show you*

you have been doing this for some time?
 i asked with incredulousness

*yes. since that time when you raided my garden
 when the ancestors first appeared to you,
 it was decided then that i should groom you
 in preparation for this knowledge*

*you mean the time i spent hallucinating
 in front of three burning oak tree stumps?*

you know much better than that, Coyote answered

there was a quiet that had settled
about the room

outside of the slight hum,
apparently from the universe,
no other sound could be heard

a mermaid peeked in
from the ceiling
winking at me

what is the deal with the mermaids, i asked

*they were assigned to help watch over you
when I am not around*

but why mermaids, i continued to ask

why not, Coyote replied
*they are wonderful creatures
capable of many things
they have been travelling the galaxies
for hundreds of thousands of years*

*they enjoy the oceans of earth
and when they heard of what i had proposed
to the gods, for you, they insisted on
helping with the entire project*

so i have been a project, i shouted indignantly

a truly fine one at that, he rebutted, almost gleefully

both mermaids appeared
throwing me a kiss as they did

they genuinely like you, Coyote laughed

i had to admit
the appearance of the mermaids
never once caused me alarm

in fact, i enjoyed their company
however short their visits might be

*they have been written about
for centuries*, Coyote told me

surely you have read about them?

naturally, i had read of many instances
of mermaids appearing before people
though i had always thought they were
more of a metaphor than anything else

metaphor? Coyote roared
again apparently able to read my thoughts

they are as real as you and i!

the mermaids gleefully swam
above me before vanishing
once again, through my ceiling

sort of like fairies? i timidly asked

nothing like fairies, Coyote retorted
mermaids are mermaids
fairies are fairies
how is this difficult for you?

Coyote sat shaking his head
 giving me strange, sideways glances
 as he appeared to be in deep conversation
 with someone else

the gods have decided
they were wrong about you,
i was wrong about you,
they have directed me to allow this
education, if you will,
to go no further

Coyote was very solemn

he pulled out his pipe
 a time or two
 but always put it back

he looked over at the journal
 with more than a bit of sadness
 in his eyes

they have said since you refuse
to look at the journal
they wish to keep it from you
i am to take it back

a great sadness filled the room
 it was as if the journal itself
 was grieving

i could feel it lamenting a great loss
 as i watched its glow
 slowly disappear

Coyote, too, seemed to be
 lamenting a great loss

he feebly reached out for the journal
 stopping short of picking it up
 from the table

i am truly sorry it came to this, he whispered
i was really hoping you would be the one

i was left at a loss for words,
 nothing came to my mind

as Coyote gingerly picked up the journal
 i found the courage to ask him one
 last question

why did you believe me to be the one, i asked
the one for what?

look at these books in front of you,
 Coyote said gesturing to the many books
 that lay open upon the table

when were they written, he asked

i took a slow sweep of the table
noticing that nearly every book
had been written centuries before

*that's right, Coyote nodded in agreement
centuries ago*

*despite my best attempts,
and those of the gods, and all of nature
mankind still rejects the basics
of all life*

*that life is all around us, i said
it is everything to every thing*

the journal glowed just a tad more
as Coyote slowly withdrew from it

*everything is connected to
every thing, in all ways, i continued*

*by not acknowledging this
we are neglecting nature itself*

a tiny droplet of water
fell upon the journal
as it slowly opened

the mermaids had appeared
once more, reaching down
opening the sacred tome

i watched, transfixed
as the journal began to glow
its familiar glow

a great white egret
called to me from my window

joining with a host of birds
animals of every kind
raccoons, squirrels, rabbits, deer
the great egret urged me
to look into the journal

the mermaids had opened the journal
laying it flat upon the table before me

petals from two blood red dahlias
fell onto the journal

i peered into the journal
aware that Coyote
with his trickster smile
was sitting across from me
lighting his enchanted pipe.

XIV

a brilliant, golden light
shone out from the journal
as i looked into it

i had the sensation of looking
over a tremendous waterfall
the water roaring down to the valley below
it's massive energy conquering everything
in its path

instead of water, however,
it was imagery that was flowing

tens of thousands of images
hundreds of thousands
all flowing over a thin precipice
that was the journal itself

i felt a tremendous sense
of vertigo, and realized the mermaids
were holding me from behind
so that i might peer into the journal
without fear of falling in

as i gained my bearings
immersed in the incredible flow before me
i understood at once that this
was language in its highest form

while there was an exceptionally large
roaring sound that accompanied the imagery
the sounds of words, of sentences
any articulation of sound at all
was not heard

as i gazed into the journal
looking closely at where the images lay
i began to sense a compilation
of a very long story

i saw the Great Pyramid of Giza,
i saw El Castillo, the pyramid of Chichen Itza,
the Great Pyramid of Cholula,
the Pyramids of Xi'an in China,
the Temple at Angkor Wat

the images went on and on, for what seemed eternity
each image clearly revealed to me
in an instant
then another would appear

great temples of the ancient world
swirled into view
i witnessed Göbekli Tepe being built
many times over
watched closely

as people struggled to build
the great stone wall at the entrance
of Greece's Theopetra Cave

Jericho's mighty walls came into view
Catal Huyuk formed in the blink of an eye
Byblos was seen teeming with people
Varanasi gleamed in its glory

the images were a dazzling flurry
of a history i had only read about
but now i saw them complete
in all their glory

the urgency of the images
seemed to halter
and i sensed a change
in the rhythm of their flow

lexical glyphs appeared on animals
i could not recognize
calling for me to follow them
yet, not a sound was heard

i watched as these animals transformed
into readily identifiable forms
there were animals, birds, fish, insects
of all size and shape

land masses grew and fell away
giving way to vast oceans
before rising again
as entire continents

people wrapped in furs
struggled against enormous beasts
banding together as one to survive
not only the great beasts
but to survive their surroundings
as well

it became apparent to me
i was witnessing the evolution
of our planet,
of our people

i saw vast deserts of sand and stone
incredible swaths of rich jungles
that went on as far as i could see

throughout it all there remained
only the subtle hum that had replaced
the initial roar of sound i heard earlier,
the hum Coyote told me
was the sound of the Universe

a particularly brilliant glyph
began to rise from the journal
i watched as it rose
from the turmoil before me,
rising to rest just at eye level

i became aware this one
particular glyph
was no longer a part
of the journal

fascinated, hypnotized by its brilliance
 i watched it split before me
 turning into countless other glyphs
 all equally brilliant
 until a darkness came over all

i realized i was watching space
 not inside of space, but from afar

i watched, transfixed,
 as planets formed
 entire galaxies formed
 stars, comets, asteroids, meteors,
 dwarf planets, suns, moons
 the entire universe unfolded
 in front of me

i became aware of multiple dimensions

time ceased to exist
 i watched as it trailed off into
 a million myriad directions
 all connected together

yet separate and unique
 tied together
 by one, simple image

a single conch
 held tightly by the
 connectedness of everything
 to every thing

at once it became clear to me
 all that Coyote had shown me
 all i had witnessed
 by viewing the journal
 made resounding sense

Coyote was correct
 when he told me
all is real, nothing is real

i watched in rapt fascination
 as the journal began to close
 the flow of imagery
 appearing to reverse itself

its once brilliant glow
 replaced by a dull
 lifeless beacon that shone
 searching

i tried to follow the beacon
 but no matter how hard i tried
 i could not follow it

it seemed to move further way
 each time i fixed on its position

eventually, i saw the mermaids
 close the journal

it sat on my table
 slowly breathing

as though it was resting

a tremendous sadness
overcame me

i sat at my table sobbing

images of forests, jungles, deserts,
temples, people, animals, planets,
all of it burning into me until i felt
as if i would burst

*you must not allow yourself
to become overwhelmed,
though that is easier said
than done*

Coyote was still sitting across from me
his enchanted pipe releasing the most
marvelous smoke i had ever seen

i watched it rise from his pipe
slowly circling his head
drifting languidly into the air above him
forming what appeared to be
a perfect representation
of a conch

*you planned this all along
didn't you,* i asked my trickster friend

you just needed a little nudge,
he quietly chuckled

*the gods never told you to remove
the journal from me, did they?*

*let's say that they encouraged me
to prod you a little harder
and leave it at that*

i heard the mermaids giggling
as they rose to leave
blowing me kisses
as they left to the ether

will i see them again, i asked

most assuredly, Coyote replied

here, he pushed a cup of tea towards me
i thought you might enjoy a cup of tea

does it have special substances in it, i asked

does it matter if it does, the trickster replied

the journal was now still
laying on my table perfectly quiet
no movement, no glow
simply an inert object on my table
in front of me

is that it, then, i asked Coyote

*you mean, is the journals task complete?
it is. but you are far from finished,*

*as cliché as it sounds
you've only just begun*

what was the purpose of all this, i asked the trickster

Coyote looked at me a great while
leaning over to refill my tea cup
which i could not recall drinking

*as i have told you, many attempts
have been made to enlighten humans
to the magic around them, Coyote
sat back from refilling my tea*

*we are trying once more
with you*

Coyote reached again
for his enchanted pipe

*am i supposed to write about this,
am i to attempt at converting others
to this knowledge*

you can do what you want with it,
Coyote told me as he rose to leave,
grabbing his journal from the table as he did so

*you have had an extraordinary adventure
take some time to reflect on all you've seen
go sit on your dock, meditate upon the questions
that roar through your mind*

*by the way, Coyote added
have you noticed your dock is in need
of painting?*

and with that he left my home

a fine stream of smoke flowing behind him
as he walked down my path

i sat in silence for i do not know
how long

i remember looking through my windows
and seeing the sun begin to rise

i walked out of my door and headed down
the path to my dock, noticing it really did
need to be painted

i sat in one of the old, stuffed chairs
and looked out over the lake

the sun was coming out,
birds were flying
sounds of life filled the air

try as i might, i could not begin
to think as to how to begin

where did i start

what would i say

you'll think of something, i heard a voice giggling

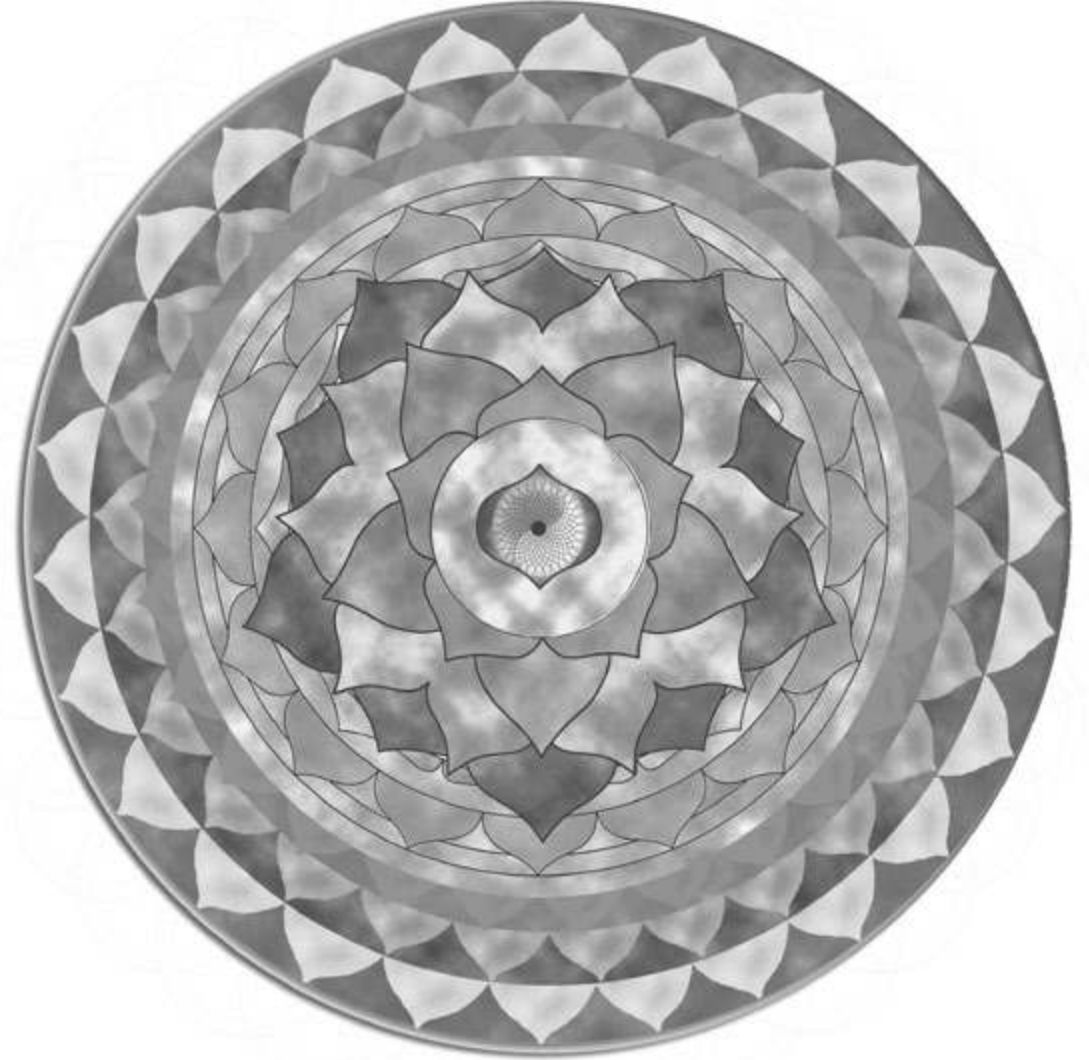
i quickly turned and scanned the lake
but saw not a thing
only a fish jumping
out of the water
to catch its morning breakfast

or perhaps it was a mermaids tale
splashing in the water

was there really
a difference

i pondered this for a while
before noticing

winter had finally come to our lake
the fires of summer had receded
and a deep winter chill
had taken its place.



EPILOGUE

Find the place,

the trickster taught me,

where the sun

rises in the West

and animals

breathe water

for air

where whales once again

become great spaceships

and magic

is the order

of the day.

Other works by dave boles:

Do Aluminum Chickens Eat Metal Feed?

Media Dissertation Of A Balding Man

A Small Answer To A Large Question

ALIVE IN AMERICA: Politics,
Psychedelics & An Illuminated Monkey

CABO DAYS

4th Floor: Paranoia, Depression
& Other States Of Mind

Confessions Of A Black Ink Junkie

15 Days To Slow The Curve -
One Mans Journey Into The
Heartland Of Absurdity

Paths Of Emptiness

About The Wedding

Coyote Magic

OFFERINGS

Homage To A Word

Visions Of A Merciful Land

Excursions Along The Way

WAR



dave (bodhi) boles, works as a Publisher, Editor, Writer, and Designer. Founder of the magazine *Primal Urge*, it led him to create Neural Impulse Publications, Cold River Press, and Bodhidharma Publishing. His publications, editorials, writing, graphic design, and artwork have appeared both nationally and internationally.

An eclectic traveler and artist, dave is known to drift in changing directions at the drop of a hat, having worked as a High Tower Rigger; Long Haul Trucker; Radio Talk Show Host; Renaissance Faire Magician; Costume and Bodice Merchant; a short stint once as a Life Insurance salesman that ended rather poorly, and a Corporate Mercenary for hire.

A devoted collector of tattoos, dave is also a lifelong gear head and speed freak, customizing cars, trucks, and motorcycles whenever he can.

The protege of acclaimed poet and alternative publisher Ben L. Hiatt, dave embraces our ever-changing literary and political structure while continuing to ponder Hiatt's school of Okie Surrealism and how it might fit in with this modern age of high tech.

He has several chapbooks, including *Balding Dissertation Of A Balding Man*, *A Small Answer To A Large Question*, *Do Aluminum Chickens Eat Metal Feed?*, and *Confessions Of A Black Ink Junkie*, among others, as well as many full-length books, *OFFERINGS*, *ALIVE IN AMERICA*, *15 DAYS TO SLOW THE CURVE*, *COYOTE MAGIC*, and more.

Obtaining a Doctorate in Divinity, he founded The Church Of The Illuminated Monkey, where he holds the position of Gringo Shaman.

His lifelong friend, Mescalito, still keeps watch over him to this day, sending a Red Hawk to check in on him from time to time. He resides with his wife, Mrs. America, and a collection of animals at Lake House - the Illuminated Monkey's Home For Wayward Poets And Socially Bereft Humans.

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THAT MOMENT WHEN WE REALIZE
WE ARE AWAKE AND DREAMING
SIMULTANEOUSLY, IT CAN BE ONE OF THE
GREATEST PLEASURES TAKEN FOR GRANTED
IN WHAT WE KNOW AS LIFE
BUT WHAT NATURE CALLS
OUR VISION.

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