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A Story Unfolds

Towards the end of the summer of 1985, after having poured the foundation for our new home in the country, I was rudely awakened one night by an ominous dream—an all too familiar one in which the life I have been leading comes to an abrupt end. As I stand there, on the precipice of utter darkness, I am struck by the brilliance of the light that seems to emanate from deep within the dark side of my being.

“What are you going to do now?” Asks the source of this great light, in a voice that permeates my whole being.

Immediately, I wake up feeling as if I’m being called to do something else with my life. What, I don’t find out until later that fall when I permanently injure my back on the job. No longer able to pursue my present livelihood as a carpenter, I begin the search for what I’m going to do with my life now.

When my old high school counselor suggests, in a dream, that I go into the electrical field instead of pursuing my latest whim to become a writer, I enroll in a training program for electricians at a local vocational school. Shortly thereafter, I begin to feel as if I’ve been led astray when, in yet another dream, I run into my own potential as a writer in the form of my dead brother, Scott.

Shocked, I ask him, “What the hell are you doing here?”

He replies, “I’m a writer.”

“You’re no writer,” I contest.

“You’re no carpenter either,” he yells back as he disappears.

So did I awaken to the new direction my life seemed headed.

At the time, reality for me was a wife and a four-year-old son to support, besides a house note and other bills to pay. Confronted by the ever-worsening condition of my back and bank account as well, was I forced to see the folly in my choice to

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pursue a career as an electrician. Reluctantly, did I seek out the only work I could find—given my background in construction—as a building inspector.

A year at this job only seemed to bring me greater dissatisfaction, for building inspection simply did not meet my deeper emotional needs.

Left wondering if any job in today's market could meet my needs, I am dropped off, in a dream, on some deserted island in the South Pacific where I am confronted, one day, while musing over the possibility of returning to school—should I ever get out of this mess in one piece—by that same permeating voice.

"Why do you refuse to write?" It asks me.

Astonished, I wake up more convinced than ever that I should be writing instead of what I'm doing. Still I resist for some reason.

"Why are you so afraid to write?" Asks this same voice in yet another dream, later that fall.

Obviously, some fear was keeping me from writing then. Was it a lack of confidence in myself? Or was it a fear of where the writing might lead me?

Stymied for the time being, I stewed over the matter until the following summer when dissatisfaction with my job reached an all time high. With no other recourse, I finally turned to writing as I begin to keep a journal.

My first entry is a dream I have that night, in which I find my self scrambling to get away from the huge hound into whose backyard I have strayed. Having roused its master as well, in the ensuing commotion, I duck behind a car parked nearby, only to be confronted by the same truth that has been dogging me for some time now. Since the truth no longer poses such a threat, I finally get up enough nerve to stand up and introduce my self to the lady of the house before she exposes me for what I really am.

"Hi! I'm a sick writer," I proclaim as I cough up the half-digested body of a red and white frog, less the head and limbs, to prove it.

Alarmed by such behavior, she darts off to fetch the resident monk. Because she has finally taken an interest in someone outside herself, she is healed, along the way, of an infirmity that has afflicted her for many years.

I too dart off, but in the opposite direction. Ducking inside the door of a nearby blacksmith's shop, I find its smithy hard at work, pounding out a long slender piece of red-hot steel on his anvil. As my attention focuses elsewhere, I spy the woman and the monk standing opposite me near the rear of the shop. Having obviously set off all kinds of alarm bells within the monk as our eyes met, I finally wake up to what it is about me that he finds so alarming.

Alarmed by my inability to see what condition my condition is in, I wander off, one afternoon shortly thereafter, into an imaginary meadow where I catch sight of the most beautiful white horse, I have ever seen. As I pursue this fantasy further, I

find my self flying across the meadow on the back of the white horse. I'm in heaven. Exhausted, I flop off the back of the horse to catch my breath. As it saunters off, I lay down in the grass to rest. When I spy the horse again, I see, riding upon its back, a white knight who strikes such fear into my heart, I am effectively jettisoned from this visual experience before I can get a closer look at him.

When, three days later, I find myself alone again, I manage to slip back into the vision where I'd left it. This time, I'm not so afraid of the white knight when I see him, for I realize that he and I are somehow connected. Called to appear before a very old man whose form, with the exception of his head, remains hidden from me, like the Wizard of Oz, within a thick swirling mass of wind and cloud, I am overcome by an incredible fear as I look beyond the long white hair and beard blowing wildly about the angry features of his face.

"Humble yourself before the Lord," commands that same permeating voice ere I can flee.

With that, I fall face down to the floor where I feel the Old Man's presence pass before me, over me and through me in one breath.

"Who are you?" I ask out of a need to hear it from the horse's own mouth.

"I Am Who Am." He responds in a way that only seems to further fuel the fear filling my frame.

"What do you want with me?" I inquire as my curiosity finally gets the best of me.

"As I have need of a good knight," He replies, "I have called you into my service."

"But Sir," I respond, "I am not a knight; besides, I would be of little use to One so powerful as You."

Having touched me upon the shoulder with the point of a red-hot sword, fresh from the forge, He says to me as the fire He has ignited within my heart consumes me, "I dub thee Sir Eodor, Knight Exemplar. Rise! And go forth as thy heart shall lead thee."

Rising to the occasion, I ask Him, "How am I to serve Thee, O Mighty One?"

Left standing beside that gallant white steed of mine in the guise of the white knight, with nigh a thought in mind, I hop onto the horse and gallop back into the darkness of my past. As I race back through the years, to an even darker period of my life, I realize that the blacksmith and the Old Man are the same person, like the white knight and me. Looking down at my side, I see that I have no sword, which concerns me at first, for what's a knight without a sword. Through a break in the clouds, I see an island below that reminds me, a lot, of the island of Oahu. As I enter that period of my life when I was in the Navy, some twenty or more years ago, I realize that I am to use my pen as a sword.

As the events of this story continue to unfold, I find my self back onboard my old ship, the USS Davidson, where I hear a voice that looms louder and louder, calling out my name. And as I'm pulled into this particular moment from my past, the fall of 1968—November 7 to be exact—I realize the master-at-arms is calling me.

"Drury!" He yells out. "Haven't you heard me callin' you?"

"Huh?" I reply as if I've just been awakened from a deep sleep.

"Come on!" He groans. "Or you'll be late."

I grab my hat lying before me on the table, a hat I have shaped into a square in mockery of the traditionally circular-fashioned hat worn by the enlisted man. As I begin to stare at my hat, to turn it round and round in my hands, I'm drawn elsewhere, deep within my being where I run into the monk again.

"Do not fear," he tells me, "for I will not harm you. I am an image of wisdom as you see it, one that veils my true form but suits you for now. I have come to you as your master, for you are to be my pupil. Ask of me whatever you wish to know of wisdom, and I will show you, with the exception of the future, which is not mine to reveal. For I can only help you understand the events in your life as they unfold.

"You have entered the realm of the Kingdom of God where you will encounter various forms to assist you on the journey on which you are about to embark—forms that are spiritual in nature and incapable of hurting you. For even you, as you stand here, do so only in the form of a spirit that, unlike the body, cannot be harmed.

"In the womb prior to your birth," he tells me before I can verbalize the questions that come pouring into my head, "you were programmed with everything you would need to know about the Kingdom of God and the life awaiting you. Despite your mother's efforts to spare you the pain Adam and Eve experienced at the moment of their expulsion from the garden, you were so traumatized by your descent from the womb, or fall from grace, that you forgot the way back. So were you born into the world without a clue as to how to access the information with which you had been programmed, until you reached the age of puberty and received a key to the Kingdom.

"Thus do you see the nature of the first birth and the need for the second. The second birth is that which Jesus alludes to in His conversation with Nicodemus, *'Truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.'* Jn. 3:3.

"To experience the second birth, you must leave behind the world as you know it, and enter the womb of your imagination. You must be willing to relive the trauma of the first birth—to endure the pain of becoming aware of Who You Really Are—to enjoy the fruits of this birth. But more importantly, you must overcome the fear you have of finding out who this person is, that lives and grows within you, like an only begotten son."

"Damn it, Drury! Let's go!" Yells the master-at-arms down through the hatch, causing the monk in me to vanish.

Startled back into the compartment space on the ship, I put on my hat and grab my statement—the script ghostwritten for the Old Man who needed my hand just as much as I needed His eloquent words of wisdom. Because I worried about what to say to other people, I had to plan every word I was going to say ahead of time—I needed a script; He needed a writer.

As I leave the compartment, I stop to take one last look into the mirror. As I laugh at the ill-fitting clothes on my body, which remind me of a monkey's suit instead of a uniform, I conclude that the service does not suit me well.

Then, in a flashback, I see the woman who had sought out the monk in me, standing opposite me in the mirror. Alarmed at first, I step back from the mirror, only to find my self being inexorably drawn back into her world through the smile on her face. Having just received the only affirmation a well-drawn conclusion needs, I reach out to her in the only way I know—with sword in hand. In my inability to give any more reality to her than this, am I left standing alone in front of the mirror, smiling at an image of my self dressed as the white knight.

Spinning around, I charge up the ladder and race down the passageway in a last-ditch effort to catch up with the master-at-arms before this last bit of reality, onto which I cling, ducks through a hatch on the starboard side of the ship and disappears without me. Coming up on his heels, I follow him at a brisk pace aft to the fantail where, in quick succession, he smartly salutes the flag and the officer of the deck before proceeding down the gangplank. As I leave the ship, I give them both a halfhearted salute that resembles more the greeting of some lady than it does a military salute. For today, I'm on my way to meet Lady Liberty—to seek a discharge from the Navy.

As I walk beside the master-at-arms to the administrative building, I hear the voice of the monk inside my head giving me some last minute instructions.

"When you are brought before the authorities," he tells me, "do not worry about how to defend yourself or what to say, for I will show you all that you need to tell them.

"Above all," continues the monk, "you must write. You don't need to understand everything, right now. You must have faith in the process of writing, for the story will reveal the knowledge you seek. You must enter the story and forget about analyzing it, as it will analyze itself, in due time. Since the answers that you seek, lay hidden deep within you, within the various parts of you that you will encounter, you must not be afraid to talk to them or hear them out. No matter how crude their ideas may seem, take what they give you, and let the oyster in you shape the grit into a pearl of great price."

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"How do I know," I interrupt, "that you are not some cruel hoax or misleading figment of my imagination?"

He laughs. "You do not know now; but you will know by the time you have completed this story. Trust me."

"Why should I?" Asks this recalcitrant self of mine.

"Because," he replies, "you have your soul to free and heaven to gain. Write! You must write," he repeats as his voice fades away.

"Write," I mutter to myself.

"That's right," comes back the echo of his voice from somewhere across the great void that still separated me from who I really am.

With that, I laugh aloud, thus evoking the strangest look from the master-at-arms as we enter the ADMIN building.