



( From the life of Isa Moore )

**It was an early spring late afternoon day in Reseda, one of many small towns which, over time had grown to the point of mutually commingling, it's inhabitants with the expanding populous of the neighboring municipalities. Thus creating a conglomeration of such. Which was commonly known as the San Fernando Valley. If you viewed it from a plane at night, it would look like a spider web sprinkled with stardust spread down into a soup bowl. Of course**

the broth would be the ever present "smog" a mixture of smoke and fog that perpetually plagued its atmosphere, and poisoned its inhabitants. Some medical groups claimed living in the valley, was the equivalent of smoking two packs of cigarettes daily. The year was 1983. The sensual seventies were over. There was a part of me that mourned their passing. I had met and moved in with the girl of my dreams and nightmares. I didn't want it to, and she didn't either. But the relationship was nearing its end. Several years earlier a friend had insisted I go visit his favorite Tarot Card reader her name was Julie. She had told me I'd end up in the movie business some where in that decade. That Karma was at hand. I was now in Union Local 40, AC electricians servicing all of the big movie studios. It was enjoyable seeing how the movie business worked from the inside out. Every time I went to another studio I'd learn how to do it their way. This made for a lot of OJT \* experience. I was working out of Universal, and there was a lot of overtime. So I was actually getting to accrue some savings. Life was good, except for the "relationship."

I'd taken some TV scripts, out of a dumpsters at one of the movie studios, a few months back, brought them home, read them, and concluded that : " Any one could write this crap. " So I taught myself how to write a feature. Not long after, I met a man in a spiritual meeting whom I'd vaguely known from previous meetings, almost a decade prior. He told me that his son was the head Story Editor at a major movie studios. I was familiar with the lot. I had worked them all as an electrician. The man gave me his son's number at the studio, and told me to call him. My old acquaintance didn't even want to see the script. Two or three days later I thought :

\* OJT = On the Job Training

" Hey, When you worked real estate you did lots of cold calls\* Treat this like just another cold call and just see what happens. " So I did just that. I was just a little surprised when the fellow told me that his dad had mentioned me. And that he would personally look at what I written on his own time, cause there were lots of rules and procedures, if he did it while on the premises of the studio. So I met him briefly, and gave him the script. In the course of so doing, I'd casually mentioned that : " Any nitwit could write one of those movie of the month production scripts " which I'd taken from the studio dumpster. His eyebrows raised upon hearing that remark. As I left I wondered why he looked so surprised at that comment. Then dismissed it from my mind and went about my day.

It was around three weeks later that I decided to give this chap a follow up call, and see if he'd looked at it. At first he didn't quite grasp who I was. Then I mentioned the name of the script.

**“ Oh! you wrote “ Demonicus ” ! I remember you ! Your right ! Anybody can write one of those TV stories. But *you*, can really *write* ! “ He went on to tell me that his studio wasn’t doing “ Thrillers “ right now. “ But what ever you write I’d like to see it first. “ Back when I was teaching myself how to write a play. I picked up a couple of How To books on the subjects. His name was in them as one of the people with the power to say “ Yes. I thought I had found my calling. And if I hadn’t, I was systematically buying power tools that would aid my transition into the electrical contracting business. Life was basically good, and about to get better. On my off time I’d sit in the coffee house-restraints and write another play longhand. Then go home and type them up on my electric typewriter. It had a little chip in it with a spell check feature, which I thought was fabulous. Oh how times have changed.**

### **MEETING MICHAEL**

**It was on one of those spring afternoons sitting in what you could call the local version of a Howard Johnson’s, drinking coffee that was three quarters milk. I considered a full strength cup of this stuff to be lethal. Stiffer penalties for using various insecticides on American crops were actually being enforced at this time. And it was and is, my belief that at that time the illegal stuff was being sold to South America. And was now showing up in my coffee in large dosages. I further diluted it with a packet of honey, And sat there in the cushioned booth in a half lotus\* reaching for my writhing tablet while telling myself “ maybe it isn’t so. “**

**\* An uninvited salesman’s call      \*Half Lotus = sitting cross legged with one leg up over the other.**

**Right about then a seventeen year old man-child sat down on the opposite side of the booth. At a glance anyone could see he was major-ly stoned on more than one substance. In his chaotic demeanor, there was the childlike-ness of a three year old, Adjoined with the attention span of humming bird. His first words : “ This is a good seat. “ Then while trying to balance the salt on top of the pepper shaker : “ Watch I’ll balance the salt shakers ! “ Failing at the impossible, he dropped them down, reached over and took the tablet out of my hand while saying : “ What are you writing ? I like to write ! “ As he looked around for something to compose with. I lifted the tablet out of his hand and began to raise up to move to another empty booth preferably at some distance, He said something in the middle of the gibberish rumbling from his brain, out through his mouth, that caught my attention. Right in the center of those seven incomplete conversations he was having with himself he said : Julie the Mystic is telling me I have to talk to you. “ I said : “ Wooh ! Role that back ! What was that about Julie the Mystic ? “**

For the very first time, Michael looked into my eyes, and said again : “ Julie the mystic, says I should talk to you. “ Now I’m thinking : “ Do I really want to ask this next question ? Yeah, I gotta know : “ This Julie, your talking about. Did she read cards ? “ “ Yeah she read everything. “ “ No I’m talking about Tarot cards. “ With his head bobbing around again : “ Year them too. “ And where did she live ? “ “ Up on....on .... What Julie ? “ He said it like he was listening into his head. “ She says up on Los Feliz Blvd. at the top of the hill, Between Hollywood and the Glendale.” Thinking : “ Hmm... That’s the right answer. “ Michael : “ She’s talking to me in my head. She’s telling me that she has to talk to you. “ Thinking : “ Ok, Now it’s getting interesting. “ Michael was no longer bouncing off the walls. He was almost kind of focused in a fuzzy sort of way. “ What is your connection with this Julie ? “ “ She’s my family’s spiritual adviser. Or she was. “ “ What do you mean she was ? “ She died two years ago. “ “ And now she’s talking to you in your head ? “ By this time in my life I’d already had a decade of significant psychic experiences. So I wasn’t adverse to him perceiving this phenomenon. I just wanted to make sure it wasn’t a hallucination. “ Ok, If your in contact with her. Ask her the first thing she ever said to me ? “

“ No one in your life has ever given you anything worth more than fifteen dollars. “

I said : “ That’s what she said verbatim. “ Michael : “ Ver..... ver....”

I clarified : “ That’s precisely what she said. “ “ What Julie ? Oh..... Verrrrr....batim ! What does that mean ? “ Oh, It means..... Exactly..... Word for word. Ok, I got it. “ Now I was impressed. Very impressed.

Michael : “ She says I should go home and sleep now. “ “ I agree, Here’s my number. Call me when your head is clear, and we’ll talk more. “ He got up and headed towards the door. But then he saw some people he wanted to talk to. So he mumbled to them for a while, And went off to their booth. The chemicals in his body seemed to be having their way with him again. I thought : “ You know, I might not ever see this guy again. “ And went back to writing. Four days later I got a call around six in the afternoon. The girl picked it up and said : “ It’s for you. “ I took the phone. As I put it to my ear I watched her walk down the hall away from me. She had looks; brains; talent and incompatibility. I was going to miss that mind. The body wasn’t bad either. “ Hello ! ? “ I was jarred from my mind-set, by a deep melodious voice, in it’s own way rivaling Barry White’s.

My mind switched to macho ex-marine electrician mode : “ I wonder who the fuck this is ? “ “ It’s Michael ! Is that you Jeremiah ? “

“ Michael ? Michael .. Wh.....” “ From the restaurant. Julie’s been bugging me to call you. “ “ Ok, now I know who you are. You sound real different. “

**“ Yeah, Well I ain’t loaded, He.. He..he.. “ his cackle was both childish, and deeply melodious. Like a kettle-drum was laughing. “ What is she saying ? “ “ Just that I should talk to you, Only longer this time. “ “ Alright, How about I meet you at that same restaurant ? “ “ No not that one. I know too many people there. “ I wonder if he was ashamed of being seen with me ? I was Forty one, But no one had ever guessed that. I generally passed for 33 or less. So I knew his friends wouldn’t think he was hanging out with his dad, Or something. More than likely, they’d think I was his drug connection. Being of moderately paranoid nature, I didn’t like that idea either. When I’d known him a little longer, it became apparent why he didn’t want to go back to that restaurant. He owed money to almost everyone in it. We met in a restaurant six blocks from the house I lived in. It had a big plastic statue of a fat kid with red checkered pants out front. I was already in one of their booths with a cup of the aforementioned coffee. It was slightly better in this place. I often wondered, why put that statue out there ? Wouldn’t most folks think : “ I don’t want to look like that ! “ And go to someplace else ?” Then I Thought : “ Maybe it’s the guy that started this franchise’s baby picture. “ Michael To the waitress : “ I’ll just have a cup of coffee, Gotta keep my boyish figure. He...He... he.. “ The waitress, a gal in her mid twenties, blond with a light coating of baby fat paused a second to appraise him. The waitress : “ You could afford to eat something. “ Michael smiled impishly “ No I can’t, I don’t have any money. He... He...**

**\* a big black man with a deep deep sexy voice from the 80’s Women of that era got wet just listening to him say: “Baby,BabyBaby**

**he... He... He...he... Had anyone else said that, it would be annoying. But Mike could get away with it. He was six foot two, evenly proportioned, green eyed naturally wavy light brown hair, His upper body came to a perfect innate V. His skin had just a light touch of muted orange. A quality only found in certain of American Indian tribes. The waitress looked like she was about to offer to buy him something to eat when I said : “ She’s right, You can afford to eat something, I’ll cover it. “ He ordered a hamburger. I got my usual when dining in places such as this. Eggs over medium, rye toast. I almost never ate their spuds in any form. Michael was obviously quite clear headed now. His energy was so changed, he seemed like a different person. “ Tell me, How did Julie die ? “ “ She had leukemia, That’s why she looked so white. “ I’d wondered about that. Julie looked rather light complexioned for a gal from India. I always thought she was like the rest of us, a mixture. Michael went on to tell me he was American Indian Irish and Arabian. I thought : “ That lucky bastard, He got the best of all of them. “ Being five foot nine and light brown hair with gun metal blue eyes was ok. But in my**

early existence I really wanted to be six foot tall. That was the height requirement to be an Irish Catholic Cop in New York in the fifties.

That was a long time prior, And from an Electrical Department head at one of those studios I'd mentioned, I'd learned that I wasn't originally Irish. This guy had his family tree traced. And it turned out that my clan came over with his clan, Don't ask me when. I wasn't paying that much attention when he told me the facts and showed me the papers. I was busy working. Our clan came from France to help with a war in somewhere Ireland. So I'm a mix of French, Irish, And what ever Vikings raided that place. My sisters back in The Big Apple, still think their 100.%

“ Your getting ready to leave your girlfriend. “ “ Well I'm considering it in earnest. Are you guessing ? Or did Julie tell you ? “ “ Something is supposed to happen first. But she doesn't know what it is yet. “ “ Well I guess we'll both know when it happens. “ Mike told me his general information, His dad was a grip for the movie studios. His brother, older by about five years, was a sales man. I think he said insurance, But again I didn't really give a shit what his brother sold. I'd probably never meet the guy, And I didn't have a fondness for sales man. Every one I'd ever met, were either a little hipper, or depressed. Depending upon how their sales were going. That is except for the vastly affluent ones. They would just do it to do it. And make more money. They were rare. And didn't have the salesman's demeanor. “ Which side of your family dos the Indian in you come from ? “ “ Both. “ He then related the fact that Mom and Dad's tribes were different but between them he was more than a quarter American Indian. “ “ You know what you've got enough Ingen blood in you to go to collage for free. “ “ Yeah I heard about that. The government will pay for my education. but I don't do well in school. I'm dyslexic. “ “ Don't they have special classes for that problem. “ “ Some day I'm gunna go do that. “ He wasn't ready for a pep talk on the advantages of higher education. His primary interests were pussy, and street racing. I couldn't blame him when I was his age I was in the Marine Corps. Yes ! At age 17. And my interests were remarkably similar. Accept I didn't care about street racing. When my relationship with the Master at Fine Arts girl genius at home was to come to it's ultimate conclusion. I planned to return to that mind set for a while. Some one that Mike knew walked into the restaurant, One of many acquaintances in his age group. Mike : “ Excuse me minute. I gotta talk to this guy. “ He walked over and talked to the kid about when the races were going to be tonight and where. Shortly I became aware that that wasn't Mike's real intent with this conversation. He was preparing to borrow money from the other lad. After he came back, we continued the conversation about our families. On occasion Julie would interject her subjections into his conversation. She even corrected

his diction. There were objections as to where he should look for a job Etc etc. She was very maternal towards him. I kept on getting the impression that they were lovers in a previous life. And he needed all the help Julie could give him in this one. I think at the time, I liked going to lunch with Mike, just for the opportunity to talk indirectly with Julie. It was kind of fun. I assumed that she was steering him my way a couple of days a week to give him a positive role model. His dad was on the sauce. And I didn't indulge. It destroys one's psychic precept-abilities. At this point in my life to obliterate that, was to dismiss life itself. My spiritual connection with what ever it was that was directing all the frequent miracles into my path had become my primary reason for living. If anything got in the way of that connection, I'd flick it off like a bug. Mike sensed this, and never approached me in the condition in which I'd first acquainted him.

I was between construction gigs at the studios. When a big job was over, everyone on the construction crew would get laid off, go down to the union desk, sign the book, and wait for the call, to the next job, at what ever studio was building something new. And they were always tearing those places down, and building new sets of buildings, that had to be wired. So it didn't take long for me to get back to work. At this point rarely more than ten days. Usually a week. So in the interim my time was my own.

I decided to go to a spiritual meeting at the west end of the valley. It was at twelve noon. In the course of so doing I met four people I'd never seen before. We went to lunch and traded psychic phenomena stories from our lives. Two of those folks appeared to have discovered each-other, parted off and rode off into the sunset one car following the other.. The third fellow, a thirty something, business type, leaped to his feet and announced that he had to go back to work. That left me and this five foot ten slender woman in her late forties black hair light skin possibly a former model, discussing metaphysics. Shortly she had to leave. But first she gave me her address and told me to come by the following day. " I think I'm supposed to give you a reading. " " How much does that cost ? " " For you, nothing ! My guide's insisting that you come. I thought : " The price is right, and I've got a feeling this will be fun. "

I said : " Is two O'clock good ? " " That will be fine. I have to be home till at least four thirty but don't be late. " " Ok, I'll be there right at two. "

I think it was a Wednesday, Having left myself forty five minutes to get lost and ultimately find the exact place, I was right on time. seven minutes early. Her name was Nancy. The house was a typical two bedroom fourteen hundred square foot home. well furnished in a medley of predominantly yellows and browns, with a smidgen of pink to set them off. She sat me down on a couch not quite at room center, Subsequently she

brought me a cup of reasonably good tea and when requested, a couple of biscuits. Then a shy girl of around four years of age showed up out of one of the rooms. I asked if the child was hers. If she said yes. I felt sure she'd be lying, I can feel into people. I'm empathic. I couldn't sense one maternal bone in that woman's body. " No, I've started a daycare center here in my home . " With all the sincerity of a talking manikin, She ushered the little girl out to the back yard. Which now came into focus through the French doors, covered by light yellow tipped gossamer laced curtains. The yard was chocked full of those pastel plastic colored Jungle Jims, with sliding-ponds and little people size doll houses. plastic tricycles; balls; plastic bats. Etc. etc. Thinking : " Christ ! This woman's in the wrong business. " We sat there eating biscuits and tea as she told me the story of her former business. She owned and operated two dress shops, Then had to let them go, when she came down with Cancer, which the lady believed was brought on by the stress incurred from this endeavor. Nancy had fought her way back to good health. I was about to make an attempt to subject another line of commerce for her, when she said : " I'm getting messages about you. let's do this reading. " " Ok, I'm ready. " She began telling my life story for the next twenty minutes. I was impressed she could glean that much information. I didn't feel a strong energy field in or around this woman. Just the vibration of a denied child, who grew into a denied woman, who was determined to get what ever she was refused in life on her own. What made me know she had some kind of capability was her being so affected when she looked at me. It wasn't sexual, It was awe. she was trying to understand what was giving her that sensation. But now it was obvious she had extraordinary ability, Though, I didn't know where it was coming from. Thinking : " Who cares where it's coming from ! Ask her about the guru's eyes and what it means. " " Your batting a thousand. Everything's accurate. These are things I'm aware of about myself. I'm wondering if you might have the answer to something I haven't been able to figure out. I have a picture of my spiritual teacher propped up on my dresser. when ever I look at it, the eyes turn towards the desert. My standard practice is to go towards the ocean. But in spite of my tendency towards implementing my own will, I did take a couple of rides out to the desert and came up blank. Do you have any idea what the eyes pointing towards the desert is supposed to mean ? " She said : " I'll ask " then closed her eyes and said " Hilda ? " as if she was going into a closet to talk to some one. It didn't take long. She was out in about ten seconds. When I say out, I mean like, way out. The woman popped on to her feet, like burnt bread out of a hyperactive toaster. And began exclaiming : " You've got to go to the East ! You've got to go to the East ! " " I've been all over the Far East, when I was in the Marine Corps. " " No, No. You've got to go to the Middle East ! " "

I forgot my parlor manners and said : “ Fuck No ! There shooting at each other there. “Most of the Middle East was in one of its many unstable periods at this time. Nancy didn’t seem to notice my impropriety. “ Well when you do your meditation tonight instead of facing your usual way, Face East. “

“ Ok, That’s simple enough. I can do that. “ I just had another thought : “ Did that kid hear me curse ? “ I looked through the curtains “ Na, she’s on the other side of the yard.” “ Ok, little Sally’s parents are going to pick her up at four thirty so it’s time to go. “ As I was putting our soiled dishes in the kitchen sink. She said : “ There is one more thing.

Your supposed to go to Santa Barbara before Thursday of next week. “ Then she looked really confused, and shuddered like she was trying to shake unwanted thoughts from her head.

“ You have to go..... or there’ll be an earthquake ? ..... there ? “

She said the next line like she was talking to Hilda more than to me.

“ That can’t be right. No one can stop an earth.....quake. “

I was inclined to agree with her. But I did also believe that In some “ 6 Degrees of Separation. “ kind of way. It could be true. I had planned to go to S. B. that week, or the one after, if I didn’t get called back to work first. Then I thought : “ Well I guess It better be this week. “ Nancy was still looking perplexed as I exited her door. We said good bye. And I headed for my Honda Lx Accord. I smiled as I approached the car. It was one of the best bargains I’d ever managed in my life. I Spotted it in the L. A. Times classified section. A nine thousand dollar two year old car, offered for four and a half grand. It had a nine thousand miles on it. I thought it was a joke, and called to see what the catch was? There was none. The daughter of someone famous was selling it for quick cash to pay some bills. She had her house keeper do all the go-fer paper work to sell me the car. As I slid behind the wheel I had a sobering thought : “ What if I could, stop an earthquake ? “ That would probably not be the right thing to do. Just about any Californian knows that frequent small earthquakes are a blessing. Cause when those Tectonic Plates gotta move, They gotta move. If they hang out in one place too long, it’s like your pulling a rubber-band back for a longer and longer period of time. When it snaps, the recoil whips back and slaps the hell out of your fingers. Except in California it’s your houses. Thinking : “ Hmmm...

I got a feeling it’s my teacher, who wants me up in Santa Barbara this week. He’s reputed to be over two thousand years old. So maybe he knows something I don’t. He’s certainly had plenty of time to study. “

It was time to go home, and see what resentment my girl friend of seven years was cooking up. Or if I was lucky, she’d be in a good mood. It was neither. She’d left a message she was working late at the Universals Scenic

Department. Four years prior, I'd talked her into hustling them for a job, when all the teaching positions dried up do to budget cuts. Now they could hardly live without her. She could match any color any time, anywhere, under any conditions. She was at the Academy Awards Three years in a row doing their last minute retouches on the set. The woman could do a fine art illustration, of amazing accuracy and complexity on a billboard, in around ten days. She was one great painter. We each had work rooms in this house, Mine was a small bedroom in the back of the house. Hers was the spacious high ceiling-ed living-room. Usually I'd meditate in the living-room or in the back yard if the weather was good. But tonight I didn't want any chance of being interrupted. So I went into that small room in the back. Usually I faced North when I'd meditate. Some one said that the Hindus did it that way. My teacher was not a Hindu, but he did come from that neck of the woods so I did it that way.

“ Alright I know where north is, so East is .... Hmm.. not quite but almost in the direction of Vegas from here. “ I tried to sit in a half lotus on the bed. “ Naah .... This is uncomfortable. I'll put a couch pillow on the floor and try it that way. “ That was perfect cause I could get the wall behind me to support my back. “ Hmm.... Now I need another pillow to go against the wall. “ I ran inside, got another pillow, put it against the wall, sat down put my legs in a half lotus. “ This is perfect ! And I'm facing east. Ok let's go in and see what happens. “ It only takes me one breath concentrating on my third eye and I'm in a trance. By the third breath I'm usually a good deal deeper. This night was no exception. When I was deep enough to feel the tensions of the body unwind as the Prana tingled up through my physical form. Along with it came something I wasn't expecting. It was a finite energy flowing straight up through the center of me. I'd felt lots of energy take that exact path, and usually it was energy that would make you higher than a kite. This was different in that it was so finite, I could hardly feel it. It went smoothly through me right up in to my head. Then I heard my own voice calmly saying : “ Mecca. “ The voice was low, I wanted to be sure of what I was hearing so I concentrated some more energy towards the depths from which it came.

Then It got louder, and started a cadence like that of the clicking of the wheels of a train. “ Mecca...Mecca...Mecca....Mecca Mecca... Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca... Mecca...

After listening to about a hundred of those. I decided maybe it was time to get up and go into the living-room. Right about that moment the girl knocks on the door. “ Do you know where the pillows from the living-room went ? “

I got up opened the door and carried the pillows back and dropped them on the floor in there usual position. We didn't have a couch We both liked sitting on the floor with pillow up against the walls. I knew she didn't give a dam where the pillows went, she was just curious why I was in that room, cause I practically never used that room. It was too small and cramped. It was mostly my place for storing things I rarely used such as bulky electrical tools. And she wanted to recount the interesting parts of her day to me. I enjoyed her stories and it was nice that she was in a good mood. I listened, But something was distracting me. It surprised me that she didn't notice that I was hardly hearing a word she said. Something else was competing for my attention.

“ Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca... And then I said ...Mecca... Why don't you try it backwards...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca... And she said.... Mecca...Mecca...I never thought...Mecca...Mecca... of doing...Mecca...Mecca...It that way...Mecca...Mecca... Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca... etc add infinitum ...

The next day I got up and guess what I heard ? Mecca...Mecca... Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...

I managed to ignore it as best I could, while I went about my daily life. But when ever there was a moment between other peoples words, there it was. My own voice on the wheels of the train clickity clacking...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...

I asked everyone I knew : “ Where is Mecca ? Almost all of them said : “ It's somewhere in the East ! “ The rest didn't have a clue. Even my girlfriend said : “ It's somewhere in the east.

I went into the bedroom and looked on the dresser where I had the picture of my teacher on a book cover. I could usually look into those eyes and get an incite. Now all I was getting was those eyes looking to the East. Almost three weeks of Mecca...Mecca...Mecca...Mecca... had gone by. I was in Reseda, I'd parked the car near that restaurant where I'd first met Michael, And was on my way to the spiritual meeting three blocks away. As I walked down the avenue something caught my eye. There was a thrift store on my left. I walked in. Then the thought came to me : “ They have old encyclopedias in these places. Thrift shops always have them. And no one ever buys them, cause the information is not current. And the store clerks never lower the price cause the books are : “ So pretty that it would be a shame to let them go for partially nothing ! “ I walked up one isle and down the other till I spied a row of books with elaborate covers all the same design. “ Yep, there they are. Book A book B book D book C..... Sometimes there's a book or two missing from these sets. God don't let it be a fucken M...” I was expecting the M book to be missing. I figured the hunt

for the information was going to take me to the library, or a couple of more thrift shops. “ There it is ! Book M. There’s a lot of things in the world that start with M.” I figured if it was in this book, it would be there in the form of a small blurb, barely a footnote. my presumption was almost right. I found a paragraph in miniature print ten lines deep, Above it was a little black and white picture of a building with a big black velvet looking cloth draped over it, with a gold thatch kind of design a foot or so above, and parallel to it’s edges. It had dimensions for the building, 50 ft. high X fifty feet X forty-eight feet. Then it said something that made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. “ Kaba, The most holy Muslim shrine in the world. “ As a general rule, The only time I was able to visualize my teachers face, was when I was staring into the eyes of the picture on the front of that book on my dresser, back at the house. When trying to see his image in my minds eye, No image appeared. More recently that wasn’t the case. So I visualized his image, and said : “ Your asking a lot ! “ Then I thought : “ He probably just wants to see if I’m willing to go. All right, I’ll go through the motions. I’ll find out how, you go about getting to Saudi Arabia. “ The next day I decided it would be a good idea to head out for Santa Barbara, visit the free beach for a couple hours. Then go to the many thrift stores on State street, Search through the piles of National Geographic’s magazines they had in them, and possibly find some photos of this place called Mecca. I told the girl of my intentions and that if I find any with famous paintings in them : “ I’ll pick up a couple. She thought that might be nice. No disagreement there. Next day I got up at nine thirty, And was on the road by ten thirty .It was about an hours drive to where I was going. The beach was in Goleta a town around six miles up the highway from S.B. I went out to the end of the beach and laid nude in the sun for a while then did a yoga routine I’d done there almost every day of the five years I’d lived there. Next a short meditation not the two hour sitting meditation that normally followed the two and a half hour yoga routine. I would have liked to. But it was time to get to those thrift shops before they closed.

Strolling down the beach waving to old acquaintances and viewing those lovely nude females lying on blankets, swimming in the glistening waves, and playing Frisbee, Reminded me of how content I was in this place for five years. Thinking : “ Ok, let’s not long for the past, Let’s get going on the present, and see what the future will bring as a result of my willingness to change my actions. “ New actions always get new results. I just don’t always like the outcome.

Now reaching the path leading inland I took one last look at the silhouetted figures out by the ocean, as the sun lowered in the sky and the evening mist formed on the horizon. “ My God ! That’s beautiful. “ I lightly sensed my

teachers elusive presence. “ All right. All right. I’m going to the fuckin thrift store. “ I headed down Highway-One, turned off at Carrillo Blvd.

Next a right on State St. then down to lower end of that street, to where the thrift shops commingle, Parked on a side street, And checked the first of five shops. I found one National Geographic Magazine with a story told in magnificent photo spreads and a fair amount of text entitled:

“ PILGRIMAGE ” Then went on to the next, And the next thrift shop to glean three more National Geographic Magazines. Two of which were about different locations in Saudi Arabia, Riyadh and some barren ruins of buildings in the North that looked to be carved from huge red clay stones. It was remnants of the Nebatines. The last Magazine was the same as the first.

I wanted a backup copy of that one. I couldn’t believe the price they were asking for these magazines. When I bought them the old gale behind the counter said in a firm voice : “ That’ll be thirty five cents apiece. “

Little did they know. I would have paid ten bucks each for them.

They were like gold to me. In LA they were getting four dollars apiece for old National Geographic’s. “ All in all, It was a good day. Now to find a

restaurant on the way home and read about something called “ The Hajj. “ I read a six page long article in one of the Geographic’s called:

“ Pilgrimage.” It was all about “ The Hajj “ One in the same. There were full page photos of a massive quantity of people in middle-Eastern attire, converging on what looked to be relatively small town with a huge stadium at its center. The little hamlet’s name was Mecca. According to the article, It seemed that all you had to remember upon arrival in Saudi Arabia was that there was only one god. And that their favorite axiom was “ There is no God but God “ So if you had that general belief, Most folks would get along just fine with you. My knowledge of the place I was feigning belief of going to, was about to be augmented. Steve of Santa Barbara mentally buzzed me, As he’d done so many times in the past. The fun part was, I always thought it was my inclination to contact him. “ Hmmm..... I think it’s time I gave Steve a call. “ I haven’t heard from him in quite a while. In my minds eye Steve was always a Santa Barbaran even though he lived in a condo overlooking the ocean in Santa Monica. We agreed to meet at a deli on fifteenth street in Santa Monica Naturally he arrived first, and was sitting in a booth by the window overlooking Wilshire Blvd. As I spied his slightly over weight five foot six body

through the glass. I made note of the fact that his hair used to be straight. Now his blond pate was curly. As I cleared the door and navigated the isle, it became clear why he was having it perm-ed. It had gotten thinner. Curls add body. We were the same age forty two. My top wasn’t as thin as his yet, but I

knew some day it would be. I was hoping to retain a reasonable crop till I was at least fifty. Then I might have enough experience and maturity to attract a decent woman with minimal baggage, to put up with me till one of us died of natural causes. Steve : “ Hi Laddie ! “ Steve always called me laddie ever since he learned he was four months older than I. By now the reason was obvious to me. He in some way felt like the junior when ever we met, So to not feel that way he’d remind himself he was my senior by four months. I didn’t get what he was threatened by. He had money; wit; charm; phenomenal dexterity, Steve played golf right on the edge of going pro. And his spiritual capability was more than impressive. He belonged to a trendy New Age group who charged an arm and a leg to teach you what they know. And in all fairness they knew some very useful principals and meditation techniques. I went to a couple of their meetings in private homes back in S. B at Steve’s invitation. In any and all those meetings there were attractive young women literally chasing around the room to be near him. I sat down. “ Hi Ya Steve ! How’s it going ? “ “ It’s going ! “ “ Yeah, But how ? “ “ Rather good, actually “ He told me about the latest seminar he’d attended. And the elations he’d felt after taking it. “ “ Jer, Why don’t you take one ? “ “ I’ve already got a teacher. You’re the one that turned me on to the book with his picture on it. As I remember you even bought me the book. I’m not through with the teacher I’ve got. He’s got me collecting information about Saudi Arabia He wants me to go there. I think it’s just a test of willingness. But if it turns out not to be. I’m going to need all the money I have to go over there and if I’m lucky maybe see him. “ I’ll buy you your first seminar. I’d get you the one I’m going to next week. But they like you to take the introductory one first. “I was curious. “ how much is that ? “ “ Three fifty “ “ And the one your going to next week ? “ “ That five hundred and fifty. But that’s kind of advanced. “ “ What is there, around ten or twelve of these seminars ? “ “ More like fourteen. “ “ What would it cost to do all of them ? “ He thought it over for three seconds. “ Four thousand four hundred and fifty dollars. “ “ I could make two or maybe three trips to Saudi Arabia for that price. First I think I’ll go to Arabia and look over some ruins. There’s supposed to be spirits in this place I’m interested in. “Steve gave a hair raised on his neck, spooked kind of look. Like he’s kind of sensed the place, and their presence from here. They gave him the willies. I found this amusing thus sparking a genuine interest in me to make the trip. Steve : “ After lunch I have to get a lady friend a birthday present. She’s been hinting at a couple of books she wants. So I’m going to the book store up the street when we’re finished here. You want to come with me ? “ “ Sure, Maybe I can find something about Saudi Arabia. “ We had lunch, Mine was the chicken ala-king. It seemed to be good in almost any deli. Then a walk down the

avenue. And lo and behold we just happen to be passing by his teachers three story modern glass and brick headquarters. Their organization had come a long way from having meetings in private homes, listening to Steve's teachers tapes and throwing a few bucks in the basket they passed.

Steve : " I have to stop in here for a couple of minutes. Want to come in ? Or would you rather wait here ? I'll only be just a minute. " Meanwhile my thought process is like this : " I'm not going to stand out here waiting for him, like I'm afraid of the place. But then that might be Steve's technique for getting me to go in there, and get interested in what ever they're doing. I could just go on to the book store and tell him I'll meet him there. That feels too much like contempt prior to investigation. I'll go in and see what the vibes are like. " I said : " No, I'll go in and wander around the ground floor and see what it feels like in there. " So we went in. He sauntered off towards the back of the place. And I wandered around the huge vestibule looking at some of these brochures. Mostly pictures of their seminars. The text was minuscule. At first I thought it was my prejudices lingering. Then I accepted the fact that I felt I was being watched. So I looked around to the areas I felt the probes from. There visually appeared to be nothing there. But I could feel them. There was at least five points from which I could sense someone watching. I felt like Sean Connery in an old James Bond movie. Finally Steve showed up. As we walked out of the door I actually experienced a feeling of relief. Steve : " Well how'd you like our new building ? " " I felt like I was in Blofield's headquarters. " Steve looked perplexed. I continued : " Do they have like, hidden security cameras in that building ? Sincerely : " Not that I know of ! " " well I got the definite feeling I was being watched when I was in there. And when I get it that strong, It's indubitably happening. Well no matter. I'm not in there any more so I don't care what there doing. " Steve : " I think my teacher would have told me if they installed security cameras. " " Don't worry about it. It's probably just my paranoia. " He smiled. That seemed to set his mind at ease. As Julius Caesar once said : " Men willing believe that which they wish. " We went on to the book store. The store was of an average size, so I didn't expect to find what I was looking for. Still it's always fun to wander around stores like this one and see what folks were writing about at present. I checked to see if they had a metaphysical section. But no chance. The place was too small. So by the time I'd browsed the shop, Steve had assembled his gleanings and was headed for the register. I'd beat him there. " I figured I'd hold a place for you. " There were four folks in front of us. " Here laddie I got something for you. A book of poems by Omar Khayyam. " " That's cool. Thanks. " The more primitive male hunter in me Had an internal thought : " If my current relationship really doesn't work out. Maybe there's some good pickup lines in

here to help me in establish new contacts. Then again maybe it'll help with the current relationship. " I knew I was whistling in the dark. " How did this ! get here ? " It was Steve's voice breaking in. He was pointing to a White and black hard cover book lying askew in the precisely chronological rack of best sellers next to the cash-register. Upon closer inspection. The white was three robed figures flowing as if they were jumping down to the lower right hand corner over a black background. Above in large gold letters the title was : " *The Kingdom* " Steve acted as if it had just appeared there. I picked it up. " Let's see what it is. " I read the blurb on the inside cover. Then said : " Ok, I think I'd better get this book. " Steve just gave me a questioning look. " It's the history of how the Saudi Empire came into existence. " Steve still had a semi-surprised look on his face as I paid for the book and said : " This is going to make some fun reading. " And it did. It started out with a small boy living among the Bedouin near the Barren Quarter. The hottest driest most desolate part of Saudi Arabia. At the time it was not called Saudi Arabia. It was begrudgingly called part of the Ottoman Empire. To make a long story short, It ended with that little boy becoming the wealthiest king in the modern world. King Abdul Aziz And by the time I'd reached the books end. I had a better understanding of the culture I was likely to experience, If this wasn't just my teacher testing my willingness to go. Before I was just waiting for the other shoe to drop. For my teacher to say : " Ok, now that your willing to go, You don't have to. " That was what I expected to hear at some point. But at the completion of that book. I really wanted to go. I was swiftly becoming fascinated with this place. The next day the Union call came. My hiatus was over. It seamed my commitment to going had set something in motion, I was up to my ass in overtime So the money to make this trip would be there, muy pronto. Within a couple of months the price of the trip and provisions was accrued. I was ready to call to the Saudi Embassy to get the visa. Thinking : " Why am I nervous about this ? I've traveled to thirteen countries spread over two hemispheres. " With my objective mind I answered the question : " Cause when you traveled to those countries you were accompanied by a division of other Marines. You didn't go alone ! " " Ok, That makes sense. I just call the Embassy and request the visa. " Meanwhile in my head, when I mentally peered backward It seems like a porthole rivaling the vastness of outer space. From that place way rearward my teachers voice, like a thought without words. Keeps resounding : " Go to the Mosque. " I'm doing my best to convince myself it's not what I'm hearing. In this era no one in this country had much of a notion what the term Islamic meant. The only time you ever heard the idiom on American TV, it was accompanied by : " Terrorists " Nothing Islamic was considered safe. There were numerous TV evangelists outright claiming it to be a " Demonic faith. "

Along with claims that : “ We’re in the last days ! The Anti Christ is rising in the East ! Oh, and don’t forget to send in those pledges. “ I told myself : “ I don’t have to call the Mosque. All I have to do is call the Embassy. Here goes. It rang four long times. Then : “ Hello ! Saudi Arabian Consulate. “ It was a woman’s voice. I imagined someone in a veil with dark alluring eyes. “ Yes.... Hello Er... er .... I would like to visit Saudi Arabia. “ Her next line was delivered with absolute sincerity: “ Have you been invited ? “ The image in the foreground my mind instantly changed to an efficient looking woman, in a smartly cut black business suit with a closely cut skirt well below the knees, conservative black pumps, And dark hair pulled back in a smooth bun. “ I said : “ I’ll get back to you. “ And hung up. Then looking over at my Guru’s picture I said : “ Can’t you get me past one little clerk ? “ “ Can’t you get past one little clerk. “ “ Ok, Touché . Tomorrow I’ll do it your way I’ll go to the Mosque. “ From that National Geographic Magazine with the spread about Mecca I got the impression that anyone who believed in the universal one God, was welcome there. So I’d decided that’s one of the places I wanted to see. It was first on my short list. The Mosque was on fifth and Western street. It was almost incognito. In that it looked like two and a half story building that could have had anything commercial within it. There was no dome. Or octagon designs anywhere in the front or side of the place. I looked at my teachers image in my mind. Sure that I was in contact. I walked across the busy street opened the door and walked in. The vestibule was similar to that of some small to medium protestant churches I had occasion to enter. The red carpet on the floor was about half worn out reminding me of some mama papa small movie theaters I used to frequent in Santa Monica and east Hollywood several years back. This well worn carpet seemed to say : Welcome. Fifteen steps into the place and I was met by a smiling deep brown African American face, slim angular cheek bones. He was about five foot five, maybe a hundred and forty pounds. “ Hi, I’m Mohadad are you new here ? I smiled back and said : “ I’m as new as they come. I know absolutely nothing about this place. The reason I’m here is I want to visit Mecca. “

He immediately started in tutoring. With an almost street smart kind of charm he said : “ The first thing to learn is my name. It’s not Mohammad. a lot of people make that mistake. It’s Mohadad. “ “ Ok, I think I got that it’s Mohadad ! right ? “ “ Yeah you said it perfect ! Now if your going to Mecca you should learn some basic prayers to say when you get there. “ I thought : “ Ok, when in Rome do as the Romans do. “ Mohadad said : “ Repeat after me. “ Allahu Akbar Say it “ I repeated : “ Allah who Akbar. “ The child like part of my mind kept wondering if the word “ who “ was an ancient eastern term adapted to English. That’s the trouble with being self

educated. you can't go to the language department and say : “ Hay ! what's the origin of this word. You have to go look it up yourself. Mohadad continued : “ That means : “ God is most great. “I'm thinking : “ No one can argue with that. And this guys a really clear and happy. The teacher must have hand picked him. I almost feel like they were expecting me here. “ Mohadad : “ now say this : La E la ha' e ala La' “ I remembered this sentence from the magazine about Mecca. I said : “ There is no God but God ! “ Mohadad : “ Right ! But , Here we call him Allah. He is the universal God of all people. But not all people know his name. “ I'm thinking : “ Ok, God knows who he or *she* is, regardless of what you call God. And every body's got there own pet name for God. And a rose would smell the same no matter what you name it. The only thing consistent about it is it's scent. And the Scent is God's choice. The only thing we get to choose is, what to call it. And what to call Him..... or.. Her ...or Oh fuck it ! I'll just call him Allah. ” “ Ok, Allah! “ Mohadad : “ Good you said that well. Now once again : “ Ashhadu an la ilaha ill-al-lah “ I said it until it rolled off my tongue with the fluidity of frog snatching a fly.

The next part of the prayer was : “ wa ashhadu anna Mohammadan Rasulul-lah Allah.

Meaning :” And Mohammad is his prophet. “

The next day Mohaded taught me the 5 pillars of Islam.

1. Belief ( meaning the belief in one beneficent merciful God )
2. Prayer 5 tines daily. ( Just before dawn and dusk and 3 times evenly spaced between the two. )
3. Fasting ( This would be during the forty days and nights of Ramadan. )
4. Tithing ( If my memory serves me right, It was two and a half percent directly to the poor. )
 

I liked the idea of no middle man. I tend to distrust the middle man in charities.
5. pilgrimage This means traveling to Kaba the most holy Moslem shrine in the world. It's in the town of Mecca

The next day I got to join in the prayer. I had no idea of what I

was doing, But all I had to do was follow what every one else did and say what little I knew of the prayers when I heard everyone else say them. I knew sooner or later I'd get the hang of it. After the prayer many of the men there left to go home to their families. About one third stayed where they were and sat in meditation. I liked this part especially cause that's where the great vibrations were coming from. The man that led the prayer did likewise. After around ten minutes A few stragglers wandered in and rushed through their prayers. Mohadad and I had just stepped into the vestibule. Mohadad : " They better hurry Misba is going to send the prayers out soon." What I gleaned from this statement, is that the head guy apparently gathered all the prayer energy in the room and sent it East to Mecca. The next day I found out that no one can get into Mecca unless they are a Moslem. " Ok , What do I have to do to become a Moslem ? " Mohadad : " Let's go talk to Misba. " Misba had looked at me somewhat suspiciously when he first saw me at prayer. But I noticed he had an excellent aura. The man was well centered. The first thing Mohadad says to Misba as we walk into his office is : " He's going to Mecca too ! " Misba gives him questioning look, Then casts a skeptical look in my direction. Mohadad : " My friend here wants to declare Islam. " Meanwhile in my head : " Declare Islam ! I wonder what the hell *that* means ? " Misba : Does he know that this is a serious thing. ( Looking at me ) This is not something you just do on a whim. Me : I seriously need to go to Mecca. I've seen pictures of Mecca and immediately I felt a pull, like something's dragging me in that direction.

I want to go to Mecca and find out what it is, that's pulling me there. Misba looked at me without saying a word for four seconds then said to Mohadad : " Does he know his prayers. ? Mohadad : " he knows some of them. I'll teach him the rest. Misba : " One shouldn't go to Mecca unless he knows his prayers. " Mohadad to me : " You can come tomorrow ? " " I can come every day this week. " Mohadad : " I'll get him ready ! "

Misba got up from his desk walked around to my side and said : " You must point your finger towards the sky and say these words : ----- "

The words were in Arabic. I hadn't a clue what they meant. I didn't want to repeat anything I didn't approve of, So I asked : " What exactly does these words mean ? " It was obvious by the look on Misba's face, He was pleased that I'd asked the question. Misba : " It means that you are turning your will, and your life over to Allah. " I'm Thinking : " Being as God is universal, This works for me. " " Ok, I'm ready. " Misba and I both put our index fingers of our right hands pointed towards the heavens and I repeated the words

he said in Arabic sentence by sentence. Right afterwards Misba wrote out a small document that said I had declared Islam at the 5<sup>th</sup> street Masjad on this date. Misba : “ You will need this with you when you go to Mecca. “

I thanked him and went back to learning what ever more I could absorb from Mohadad. I interrupted the teaching session to use the bathroom. Mohadad : “ Do you have to do number one or number two ? “ “ Number two. “

Mohadad : “ Then you’ll need one of these. “ He handed me a quart size plastic receptacle which had the shape of a tea pot with a long spout. “

Mohadad : “ We don’t use paper to wipe our selves. Instead we wash ourselves with the water. “ I knew from what I read, that you were never to hand anyone anything with your left hand. Always your right. cause it was an insult. Now I was sure of why it was and insult. Your supposed to wash your butt with your left hand. Figuring out how to use that teapot to it’s best advantage was an education in it self. It was trial and error self education. By the time I got back from the trip I’d be an expert at it. Meanwhile back at the other side of my life. I had a break from the daily instruction at the Masjad cause I’d promised a friend I’d come out and talk with him at his house in the desert. He was an electrical contractor who wanted to give me extra work. I figured the additional money would come in handy when going East, Cause it now looked like I was really going. It was a Wednesday night around six PM when Michael and I headed East on the freeway. I asked him if he wanted to ride out with me earlier that day, And was surprised when he said yes. Wait a minute ! I think he asked if me he could go. That’s ! what surprised me. He usually would talk with me for a while. Then go hang with his friends. But this day was different.

Michael : “ Julie told me I should go with you. “ “ Did she say we’d find a Gold mine out there somewhere ? It would be nice if she had that kind of information. “ Mike : “ She says your aura will be gold. “ “ I figured you’d say something like that. “ It was like I was speaking directly to her and Michael was just standing in front of her. “ We drove forty miles into the desert to my electrical friends house, discussed business for a half hour, Then jumped in the Lx Accord and pointed it west, The general direction of home. We drove silently for fifteen miles, just looking at the stars. you could smell several varieties of sage through the open windows. Michael turned to me and said : “ Julie says I should leave my body with you. “ “ What does that mean ? “ Mike : “ I don’t know. “ He then reclined the seat all the way back and went off to sleep. I thought : “ Ok, He’s probably going somewhere with Julie on the \*Astral plane. Hope he tells me about it when he gets back. “ Another half hour had gone by. Mike was still deep asleep in the collapsed passengers seat. We were just outside of the San Fernando Valley. I decided it would be a good idea to pull into a large Denny’s restaurant. I liked

**this place. All the waitresses there spoke with a western twang. Those gals had a down home kind of friendliness about them. They didn't expect men to act like anything but men, And weren't sizing you up, to see if you were anybody in particular. As far as they were concerned you were all just men. And that was a enough. In other words, They liked men.**

**\* Astral plane. When people have out of body experiences this is the plane of existence that they have them on. It's slightly less gross than this 3D plane our physical bodies exist on. You can see some of it in a persons aura. Provided you can see auras. Most folks can with practice.**

**I woke Michael up, And said : “ Come-on, Lets get something to eat, I like this place. “ I imagined Mike would be joking with the waitresses as usual. And I wanted a little coffee before driving the last lag of the journey. It didn't turn out that way. After ordering a giant piece of apple pie and some coffee, I looked up into Michael's eyes. Except they weren't Mike's eyes. They were Julies. Her presence was so strong that upon first glance Mike didn't even seem to be there. Julie : “ There' some things about going to Mecca you have to know and I'm here to tell you them. “ “ Julie, That ... is.. You. “ Julie : “ Yes. “ “ Can Mike hear us ? “ Julie : “ No ! He's not supposed to . That's why he's outside this body. “ She continued : “ When you get to Jeddah, there's going to be a tall dark man, Who will be your guiding you. “ You mean I'm going to meet a tall dark man ? And he's going to be my guide ? Julie : “ Yes. “ “ What nationality is he ? Is he Arabian ? As I asked the question, I also wondered where Mike's Astral and or Causal Body was ? “ Where's she got him stashed ? Julie : “ He's dark. And don't worry about Michael he's fine. “ That settled it. I quit thinking about Michael and Said : “ Well most Arabians are a little darker than me. As a matter of fact the over all majority of folks going there, are going to be at least a couple of shades darker than me. How will I know him. “ Julie : “ Tall and dark. “ How tall ? “ Julie : “ Six feet. . . . two ... about. “ “ Dark, six foot two. How dark ? “ Julie : “ Dark. You'll know him when you see him. “ That statement suggested that she couldn't tell me any more about him. I thought : “ Ok, I guess I'll know him when I see him. I'd better. Nah.... What am I making negative statements to my self for ? If I don't spot this guy It'll be ok anyway. Julie : “ Things will not always be easy. Concentrate on the North Star be congenial and pleasant. “ “ Ok, I'm going to write this down. North star..... Congenial and pleasant. “ Julie : “ Memorize it ! Your going to many Holy places. “ “ I liked the sound of that. “ Julie : “ Your going to talk to the heads of states. “ I intuitively knew : “ I'm going to effect them with my presence ! “ Julie : “ Yes. There is a man there you have to talk to. If you don't go there and talk to him. He will make a Nuclear war in the Middle East. “ “ WoooOO ! Wait a minute. If I decide not to go. What will happen ? “ Julie : “ You can decide to go or not.**

Nothing will happen to you. But if you don't go, The Middle East just won't be there any more. " Thinking to myself " You gotta be fucken kiddin. " Me To Julie : " You mean there's something I'm gunna say to this guy that's gunna change his mind ? " " Yes. " Thinking : " I'm not that important. Oh, I know ! It's one of those domino effects. where you add a factor to some kind of the equation, And it changes the end result completely. And I'm supposed to be that factor. Now I really get it. I can't be sure whether this is just some little joke, the teacher is playing. So I have to go weather I want to or not. I can't take the chance that this is true. Cause if I don't go, And the Middle East goes up in smoke. Then I have to go about the rest of my life knowing that I might have been able to stop it, by just showing up. To the teacher : " I was going anyway. You didn't have to spring this one on me. " I couldn't visualize him but I knew he was out there listening in some finite realm beyond my reach. Julie : " You don't have to go if you don't want to. " I thought it rather than said it. " I know that I have to go. " " What about bringing Mike with me ? " Julie : " No. . . . . For your eyes only. " Julie : " Also, Stay away from the people with the tattoos. They might try to stop you from doing what you have to do. " " You mean they might throw off my schedule. " Julie : " Yes. They won't harm you. But they might lead you away. " " Away from what I'm supposed to do. " Julie : " Yes. " " Is there anything else I'm supposed to do ? " Julie : " Remember, North Star. Be pleasant and amiable. . . . . . She was gone. Michael just kind of sat there for a while like he'd forgotten how to have facial expressions. Then he knitted his eye brows and said : " Were you just talking to Julie ? " " Yeah I was " Eyebrows still knitted : " How ? . . . . " " She walked into your body. And talked with me. " He looked like a little kid, Who was mad at his mommy. Mike : " I don't know if I like her doing that. Why didn't she just tell me ? " I don't like lying to folks. So I'm not in the habit of thinking any up, So I just told him the truth : " She didn't want you to know what she was going to tell me. Mike getting pissed : " Hay ! Man, That's bullshit. He glimpsed around, like he was searching for Julie. When I saw the look on his face, I couldn't help it. I burst out laughing. This just upset him more. Michael : " No, No. I got to know what she said. You two, are not keeping secrets from me ! I got to know ! What did she say ? " The demanding tone in his voice annoyed me a little. But I didn't let it show. I just said : " She told me not to tell you. " Mike : " She used *my* body, Without my permission ! " " No. . . you let her use it. When we were back in the car you said : " Julie says to leave my body with you. " And I said : " What does that mean ? " Then you said : I don't know. " " Then you went to sleep. And when your body woke up Julie was in it. I wasn't aware she was in there,

till I was about to ask you what you wanted to eat. Oh, by the way what do you want to eat ? “ Mike : “ Don’t change the subject. “

“ Well, we can eat, Or argue. One or the other. We can’t do both.

I don’t want to swallow bad vibes with my food. “ Mike : “ Ok, We’ll eat first. But then you gotta tell me. “ The waitress arrives at the table at that instant.

Thinking : “ Hmm... Saved by the waitress, The matron is just old enough to be Mike’s mother.

Waitress To Michael : “ What are you have’n handsome ? “ Mike : “ I’ll have . . . . “ He ordered a large breakfast. Lots of meat and eggs. On a full stomach he was more congenial, The indignant, “ I’ve been violated “ attitude had been quenched by the food. The impish side of my mind served up an analogy :

“ After all the women he’s gotten into. Why the hell’s he so upset that one got into him ? “ Mike : “ What are you laughing at ? “ “ Nothing.

Just you and Julie. “ Mike : “ Oh yeah, I want to know what she said ! “

Thinking : “ Hmmm.... Should have kept my mouth shut. “ “ I can tell you that it was nothing about you. “ That aint good enough, I want to know what

you guys were talking about . Don’t you trust me ? Thinking about it : “ Ok, Michael is secretive about Julie and his mental contact with her. I think he figures his friends and family will believe the drugs he’s taken in the past had made him loony tunes. So why would Julie care where I told him

I was going ? “ Then I sensed her response, I couldn’t hear it. I just sensed it as if it was part of my own thought process : “ Don’t tell him why your

going. “ “ Hmmm.... not much chance of that. He’d think I was the biggest megalomaniac on the planet. To Michael : “ I’m going to Saudi

Arabia. Michael : You already told me you might do that. “ Julie came in to tell me that I’m *supposed* to go. I thought it might just be a test of my

willingness. But apparently this is not a test. ( kidding ) I repeat this is not a test ! “ As I made the statement, the pit of my stomach got that hollow empty

feeling, like one gets before fight or flight. Michael : “ Is that all she said ? “

“ She also said it was important to be nice to people while I’m there. I’m really hoping for the Teacher to show up their. “ Michael : “ Do you think

your teacher might really be there ? “ “ I’m thinking, Why would he want me to go all the way there ? if not to meet him. “

Michael : “ That would be really cool ! “ “ Then again he does, have a unique sense of humor. He might be sending me there just to make a point of some

kind so that I don’t forget the lesson. Michael : “ What lesson ? “ “ The lesson being, the point he’s making. “ Michael : “ Oh . . . And you’ll know

what that is when you get back. “ “ Yeah. “ Once again I called the Saudi Arabian Consulate. Only this time I got a man and just asked for the visa

applications for the Hajj. ( Pilgrimage ) He took my address and told me : “You will receive them in tomorrows mail. “ As I hung up I thought : “ Boy,

That's optimistic ! " It took a day and a half. Which I considered to be unusually prompt. But once I'd made them out and sent them off with my passport, That took Three weeks to get the visas and my passport back I think it was the letter carrier that said : " It took you three weeks to get your visa ? They must have been looking you over really carefully ! "

Well I guess in the summer of 83 there weren't that many ex-Irish Catholic Americans going on the hajj. The Ayatollah Khomeini was still real popular with the Iranian folk. And Saddam was not yet a bad word in United States. None of this mattered to me at this point. Who am I kidding! It was gnawing at the back of my mind like a kitten sharpening his nails, on expensive furniture. As the time to depart grew nearer and nearer, The kitten faded farther and farther towards the back of my mind. It was back there with old tooth-picks, lost favorite combs, And the flavor of yesterdays smog. I'd already bought the ticket. It was round trip, in spite of the fact that Julie had told me I would probably be staying in Saudi Arabia for around two years. I was never one to willingly step into something that I couldn't see my way out of. Almost a decade prior to this era I'd met an Israeli American named Jake. Jake liked to cook. When ever I visited, he'd cook up something spicy. I liked moderately spicy foods. Jake : " If you eat spicy, You'll never get cancer. I've never known anyone who ate spicy to catch cancer. I thought : " Who knows ? He could be right. Here's an opportunity to eat spicy. " Jake made the dish moderately spicy, And offered it to me. " This is good. But I think I can stand it a little hotter. " " Ok, " He cut up three or four small yellow peppers. And mixed them in with the curry and meat dish. That was hotter. " Now that's hotter, there's only one problem. I can't taste the food now. The tip of my tong is burnt. " Jake : " Don't do that. I looked at him like : " don't do what ? " Jake : " Don't taste the pepper with the front of your tong. You taste it with the back of your tong. The front is too sensitive. Thinking : " Hmmm. Wish I'd gotten that info before hand. I just described our first acquaintance, and meal. Like I said when ever I dropped in on him, He always broke bread with me. This time was no exception. As I could stand them, the meals got hotter and hotter. What did I care, I knew the secret of eating hot. " Don't let it touch the front of your tong. " " I got my ticket ! " Jake : " Then your really going. " " It aint my choice. My teacher wants me there. So I'm going. " Jake stirring mixed veggies and rice in a pan : " You always have a choice. " Not in my life. Every significant thing in it, has taken place in spite of my best efforts to go in the opposite direction. That's why I took the name Abdulala. It means Slave of God. I don't have a choice. I have to go there. Jake : " No one should ask you to go to a place like that. It's too dangerous. " " I'm under the protection of my teacher. " This is when his wife Susie chimed in on my side of the discussion.

Susie : “ I feel that he is doing the right thing. I think he’s supposed to be there. If his teacher wants him to be there he’ll be ok.

Jake : “ No ! Susie. You don’t understand. This is a dangerous place he’s going to. Susie : “ I don’t feel that his teacher would send him into a perilous place. “ “ Jake is right. This place for someone else would possibly be

dangerous. But not for me. The reason I know this is so, Is all the things that could fall through and keep me from going, haven’t happened. Everything is moving me in this direction. “ Jake : “ You’re determined to go ? ! “

“ I have no choice. The money came my way almost effortlessly. Look Here’s the airline tickets. “ Jake took them out of my hand and looked them over as Susie asked me about my teacher. I was telling her about how he leaves no footprints and has no image when you try to photograph him. “ he’s reputed to be in Himalayas. But I’m hoping I will meet him there in Mec . . . . .

Jake cutting in : “ These tickets are too expensive ! Take them back. I get my friend to get you some cheaper ones. “ I said it while laughing : “ Your not just maneuvering me into not going are you. “ Jake : “ No, I’m serious, These tickets are very expensive. You can do better than this. “

“ Now wait a minute. When you say cheap ones. Do you mean less money and lower quality ? I’m riding coach on a major airline.

Jake : “ We can get you on KLM. “ “ Ok, Indulge my ignorance. What’s KLM ? “ Jake : “ KLM ! It’s the best airline in the world ! Except for maybe Lufthansa. ( German airlines ) “ For less money ? That sounds like a good idea. Except I’ve already got these tickets. “

Jake : “ These are full price tickets. You have almost two weeks before your locked in. Just go tell them something came up, and you can’t use these tickets, You want your money back. “ I feel kind of funny doing that. Is the amount of money I’d save, that much. “ Jake : “ I’d say around five hundred dollars or more. The man I’m sending you to has a relative who owns a travel agency down town. His Name is Yaqub ( Jacob in Arabic ) He does nothing but Hajj. All the fucking pilgrims go to him. “ “ So I guess *this* fucking pilgrim better get his ass over to that travel agency in Granada Hills and see if he can get his money back. I was going to go over there the next day. But I had to procrastinate an extra day or so, cause I didn’t like taking the commission away from the gal that sold me the tickets. Meanwhile I met Jakes friend, the Pakistani man, who’s name has long since left my memory. Funny thing about that. I remember almost everything he ever said to me. But his name never registered. I asked him to repeat it four times and still couldn’t get it to stick in my mind. But the place he took me to stuck in my mind, And remained for over twenty years. It was the Da Da Travel Agency. The owner was Yaqub Da Da. Yaqub Quoted me a flat fee round trip for nine hundred Dollars. This included a one day stop over in

Amsterdam at the Airport Hotel. I went back to the travel agency in Granada Hills and told the girl the truth. “ I found a really good deal through some friends. Resultantly, An agency in down town LA. Gave me a quote of nine hundred dollars. “ Travel Agency gal : “ I don’t see how they can sell tickets to Arabia that cheap. “ “ This guy does nothing but tickets to the Hajj. “ Travel Gal : “ Hajj ? “ “ It’s the name of a pilgrimage to a spiritual site in Saudi Arabia.

Can you match this price ? If you can match it. I’ll buy the tickets from you. “She said : “ No, that’s impossible. “ Then just gave me my money back. She didn’t seem upset about it. This made me feel a little better. But even if she was upset, I would have wanted the Twenty Four Hundred Dollars for the ticket back. After all it was two and a half times the price, of the one I was about to go back down town and buy. I headed down to Da Da’s agency and bought my tickets.

Just as the transaction was completed, I asked Yaqub : “ What’s it like there ? “ Yaqub : “ I don’t exactly know. I’ve never been. “ That surprised me some. “ You are going ! some day. Aren’t you ? Yaqub in a worried kind of way : “ Yes ! I’m intending to go, some day. But with the wife and the children and all the responsibilities. I’m not knowing whenever I’ll be able too. At this point it was clear to me that Yaqub feared that he would never get to go on the Hajj. He’d probably sent at the very least hundreds, probably thousands of pilgrims to Mecca. It seemed to me unfair that he might never get to go. “ “ You’ll get to go when you decide to. You’ll just issue yourself a ticket and go. “ This statement seemed to amuse his wife sitting at another desk farther back in the room. “ Ok, See you later “ I was half way out the door when Yaqub ran out to me and said : “ When you get there, Don’t forget to pray for me. “ “ Ok, I’ll remember. “ He walked back in the office with greater confidence, And went back to work. Next day after a spiritual meeting in Reseda, I headed down to one of my favorite low scale restraints to sit and write more pages on my third screen play. I chose the place cause it was close to the meeting place, But mostly because there was a symmetrically perfect redheaded waitress working there. She was unobtainable. Not because of lack of chemistry between us. She had spiritual energy, And folks with high spiritual energy at this time in my life tended to either love me or hate me. There wasn’t many that took a neutral position towards yours truly. She and I had some magnetism. But she was married, And for this reason I never let my hand touch hers. Upon our initial meeting I was instantly attracted to her. But I showed no sign of it. My initial mindset was : “ This woman has not only the looks of a star, But with a spiritual energy surpassing most stars I’d ever met. I wonder what’s keeping her here ? “ I looked for the Karmic quip that bound her to this place. Finding no outward obvious reason, such as

a high pitch voice that would stir dogs and men to madness; Bad breath ? Bad posture ? Bad diction ? Hatred of her fellow man or women ? Clumsiness ? An Intellect bordering on special ? Nope ! None of the above. “ She was absolutely amiable. If I do say so myself, I bordered on being the same, when ever she had occasion to wait on my table. Some time in the months that passed, a moment arrived when I spoke parables to illustrate a principal, that so touched her, She went to grab my hands. It was like in this multitude of everyday people, she had found a kindred spirit. My hands recoiled with the speed of a rattler in reverse. “ I can’t let you touch me. I’m very attracted to you. And your married. I don’t want the Karma that would ensue from creating confusion in your life. “ Cathleen realizing how vulnerable to me she was : “ Thank you for saying that. “ Then she told me about how things weren’t working out so good at home. How she wasn’t finding herself attracted to her husband anymore. And that maybe it was her own fault. “ It’s been my experience that there’s a particular point or event that makes women not attracted to their men anymore. Or maybe I’m just sensing that this is the case with you ! She thought about it for a few seconds, then said : “ There was something that happened a month ago. Some man named Spelling stopped here for coffee with two of his friends. Every body knew who he was, but me. He asked me to turn around a couple of times so he could look at me. Then he and the other two men with him all agreed that I should come down to his studio and read some lines for something they were doing or making or something. I told him, first I would have to discuss it with my husband. “ Dan made such a stink about it, And said he’s leave me if I went down there and talked to those men. I guess it was since that day I’ve felt that he really doesn’t want to see me happy. He just wants what he wants. And he doesn’t care what I want. “ “ If you were my old-lady I’d have taken a day off work and drove you down there. Even if you accrued a vast fortune and left me. I’d get half of it in the settlement. He suffers from the same mind set that I did when I was married. The belief that you are, each-others possessions. And all so that the man is supposed to be the head of the house, And he’s supposed to get the last word. I know now that when a man gets the last word dictatorially. He’s gunna pay for it later. “ After that conversation I avoided the place for a while. I was sure she was going to leave him. And I didn’t want to be anywhere near the middle of all that. It was now a couple of months later and I was certain that what ever adjustments she had to make one way or another by now they were either made, or underway. I was right, She looked good and confident and was on her own. I found myself relieved and a tad disappointed, For I sensed no magnetism between us. But she felt all kinds of energy of a different nature when she looked at me over the counter. Waitress : “ Your going on a trip ! “ I said : “ And hello to you too Cathleen.

Your right ! I am going somewhere. “ I chose not to indicate where, cause I was curious how much more she could perceive. Waitress : “ It’s some.... where... Way off in the desert. Wow ! my perception hasn’t been this keen in years. “ I said : “ Go on. “ She continued eagerly like she was reading a good book and couldn’t wait to see what was on the next page.

Waitress : “ This is not going to be a pleasure trip. There’s lots of hardship involved with this journey. My retort : “ Is there any fun-ship ? “

Waitress : “ Your going to accomplish some significant things. your going to spiritual sites..... Old buildings very old.“ Are these Nebatian sites. “ She looked at me like that didn’t fit in the picture she was seeing. Then said : “ No, These are something else. “ “ There not ruins ? “

Waitress : “ No, There just three little buildings. There made of adobe. “ “ Adobe ! ? In what country are you seeing this ? Waitress : “ I’m not sure..... Africa... maybe. Arabia ! ? “ I gave her one nod affirm her assumption. She went on : They’re three small buildings. Your going to be there for a while. I see you in the middle of a desert, sitting there teaching young boys. There really fascinated with you. “ how long do you see me there ? “ Waitress : ..... “ Two years. “ “ Two years ? “

“ Yes. Two years. “ Talking to myself out loud : “ He wants me there for two fucken years ! ” Waitress : “ Who wants you there ? “ “ What ever you perceive is all I’m aloud to tell you. “ She just said : “ Oh. “ And went on describing what she was seeing. “ The place your going to is really barren and very hot. This isn’t a pleasure trip. “ “ You already said that. Is there anything else you see that you consider important ? “

Waitress : “ No, Just that you’ll enjoy teaching the boys. “ “ Ok, Thanks for confirming the directions I’ve been given. “ Waitress : “ Do you want something to eat ? “ No, Just a cup of coffee and some toast. I’ll tell you what this is about when I get back from the trip. “ She was real busy and I was going to another restaurant as soon as I finished half of the cup of coffee and a couple of bites out of the toast. I paid the check put the tip under the coffee cup and left. This place was too hectic. I needed someplace with a booth, where I could sit in a half-lotus and write. There was only a couple of days left, I was packed and ready to be on that plane to Mecca, And I didn’t want to think about it. If I did think about it, I’d tell myself : “ I can always decide to not go at the last minute. “

## **The flight to Amsterdam**

Alright so the moment has arrived. The girl volunteered to drive me to the airport. We were kind of getting along. I think she felt she was going to miss me. I had already put most of my possessions in storage. There wasn’t much,

I only left the things I could afford to louse, Some cloths in the dresser. And a couple of pairs of shoes. What I stored was, around four grand worth of electrical tools I'd bought over the last few years. Come to think of it, She did know that I'd stored those tools. I assumed she'd approve, cause she'd soon be rid of me. It *was* mentioned that there was a possibility I'd not be coming back for two years. So here we are on the way to the airport and she says : “ So when exactly are you coming back ? “ This particular lady had a habit that many women use on there men, when they just don't want to listen to what they're guy is saying. They just sit there and tune you out while looking straight into your eyes. And every once in a while they nod, as if they're really listening. They make a point of only remembering the noun and the verb, of the first two sentences. Then they just repeat them when your finished talking and most men think they've actually listened. This gal had it down to a science. It was this deceptiveness that had contributed to the downward spiral of the relationship. She subscribed to the assumption that if you believed her lie, Than she was smarter than you. Intimacy is based on *trust* and honest communication. Not on competition. Those that cheat the honesty process , Don't get any smarter, Because true intelligence is based on accurate information. How can you accrue accurate information if your not listening ? There was a time when we were communicating and the relationship was going well. But then I got a job that paid about two dollars more than she per week. It was a dangerous job. dealing with electricity. Most people would be afraid to do it. Hell I was afraid to do it. But I did it anyway. She hated and admired me for getting that job. She tried to get me fired. I thought of us as a team. Both on the same side. In her mind, We were in competition, And I was winning. Which made me the enemy. Getting that Job was the beginning of the end for the relationship. “ I don't know when I'm coming back. “ “ What do you mean you don't know when ? “ “ I don't know when. It could be a couple of weeks, Or a couple of years. “ “ Years !! “ “ Yeah, A couple of years. “ “ And what the hell am I supposed to do for the next two years ? pay the whole rent by myself ? “ “ Sorry I didn't even think of that. Hmmm.... Your dad owns the house. I'm sure he'll rent it to you for half the price. “ Her dad owned around twelve houses. He would have let her live there for free if she wanted. It was her mother who insist on her daughter paying rent. Well to make a long story of a drive to the airport short. We argued our way there, And I got out. I would have liked this to be an amiable parting, But she didn't really want to part with me until she got to do it on her own terms. I'm afraid those terms would have been, Not until she'd completely demoralized me. I wasn't sticking around for that. But I already missed her. It made me feel despondent enough to where I kind of

didn't care if I got killed on this trip. Instead of that twinge of fear that I would feel at the thought of going, I thought : " What the fuck do I care if I get killed over there ? I don't have that much to live for. Maybe my death would serve some positive purpose. " Like I said I was depressed. KLM There it was the airline terminal. I had everything I needed to travel with on my back. It was basically everything I'd put in my pack for traveling on a troop transport when in the marines. The only difference was the color and style of the cloths. The volume was exactly the same. You always need all the basics, Toothbrush shaving gear, needle and thread, nail clipper, a small pocket knife with a can opener screwdrivers nail file toothpick and a small sharp sturdy blade. The blade couldn't be too long, Or that would upset the customs people in some countries. I think no longer than three inches was the rule. I don't know what it is with me and my car keys, I could have left them behind hidden somewhere. They don't make it any more comfortable having them in your pocket while walking long distances, But for some reason I didn't feel secure without them being there. I found the check-in counter at KLM and showed them my ticket from the Dada travel agency. The gal there told me I had to give it to the person at the door " Up stairs at terminal ..... where you will be boarding the aircraft sir. "

Prior to working for the studios. I hadn't drank coffee for almost six years. But the early hours there had made me a consumer again. I combed the terminals fast food stands looking for one with the smell of fresh brewed coffee. I found the lesser of the evils with some reasonably acceptable crescent-rolls. There was that hollow feeling in my stomach with the inscription written on it's inner wall up high close to the ribs : " Oh, my God ! What am I doing ? " It blurred and swirled away as the warmth of the coffee and crescent-rolls filled the void it was clinging too. " Now to stay calm, and just enjoy observing the adventure. I had put myself in a trance from the first moment I entered the building. It was my way of blocking out the continuing telepathic argument The Girl was trying to have with me. She lost her concentration on me when she was cut off by another car. I almost reconnected, But instead induced a different frequency of trance. " I want to be here, doing what I'm doing, not explaining the unexplainable in a psychic argument. " The trance I induced had some imagery in it that would block out incoming transmissions. I was surrounded by a cocoon of energy. I was in the here and now, however the here and now seems somewhat two dimensional. I suppose that's why it was enjoyable to sit there in an indoor sidewalk café and draw the people leaving and entering the terminal. Most of them seemed happy, But usually a tired kind of happy. It was always wonderful to see a world wide selection of women passing by me. I could capture their movement and some of their features on the drawing tablet. It

was like capturing a little of their personality as they passed by me. It kept me from straying back to memories of the girl I'd just left. This indoor sidewalk café had groupings of twenty square tables with an outer rail around them to separate them from the bustling crowd parading in either direction.

A woman walked into one of the two entrances at either side of the café. It was the entrance behind me. I not only perceived her peripherally, I felt her pass by. And glanced over to see who it was, that was just now entering the cafeteria type section where you picked up your overpriced food. Five nine or ten one hundred and forty pounds, platinum blond built to beat the band playboy centerfold body. At first glance not my type at all, Too flashy. But one hell of a strong presence. She seemed to me to have the ability to be a big star due to that all commanding presence. Thinking : “ Oh, I know what it is ! She's over dressed. “ She was wearing what I think was a dark expensive three quarter length coat. And I could see what I assumed was a lot of costume jewelry. I dismissed her from my mind and continued drawing the passers by. Fifteen minutes went by, Then she walked out the door at the far side of the café into the side walk café area. She started walking in my direction with a tray full of food in her hands looking for an empty table. In the course of so doing she passed by a couple of thirty five year old business types wearing Armani and Brooks Brothers, They openly moaned as she passed by them. Thinking : “ Rude mother fuckers just because she's got a strong presence doesn't mean she's for sale. “ I looked back down at what I was drawing. When I looked up she was standing in front of me on the other side of the table. “ Excuse me. Could I sit at this end of your table. “ “ Sure. Go head it's safe here. “ I said it as I looked back at the suits. They were taking note that she'd alighted, at my oasis. I shot them a look of : “ Back off. “ And went back to my drawing. I'm not sure that they saw the look. But I was sure they felt the energy. The gal was grateful that her assessment of where to sit for a moment off stage was accurate. I politely ignored her while she ate, And concentrated on the occupants in the crowd with interesting shapes and expressions. Her strong presence went neutral while she ate. After around ten silent minutes of eating in sanctuary, She pushed the plate away. The sound stirred my peripheral senses to feel for her presence or lack of it in the chair she was occupying. As I gradually turned to take a sip of my coffee. I fully had expected her to be gone. Or just now leaving. Not the case. She was settling in, She was comfortable here. “ I'm sorry, I didn't mean to break your concentration. “ “ That's alright, It's time I drank this coffee while it's still a little warm. “ I took a sip, And focused moderately in her direction. “ Are you an artist. “ I was a commercial artist around a decade ago, But at present I'm an A C electrician at the studios. “ “ So you do the alternate current work on the lot. “ I thought : “ See I knew you were right

about her. She has an understanding of the nature of electricity. She probably has a better understanding of it than you do. “ I said : “ Are you, like an electrical engineer or something ? “ “ No my dad was. “ “ That makes sense, Most folks don’t know that A C stands for Alternate Current. Or they do, and don’t know what it means. I know I didn’t initially know till started working with it O J T. It pays well cause everyone’s afraid it will kill them. They’ll pay you anything, not to have to deal with it themselves. “ “ Ain’t that the truth. Are you traveling somewhere ? “ “ Yes, I’m going to The Middle East “ “ It’s not for business ? it’s a pleasure trip isn’t it ? “ “ Kind of. I’m hoping I’ll enjoy it. Where are *you* going ? “ “ I’m going to Greece. “ Her face lit up like the love of her life was waiting there for her. “ To see someone special ? “ “ No I just love that place. It’s it’s . . . . . “ An aura lit up around her two inches thick like a white yellow neon light tracing her form, as she conjured her personal image of the place. I ventured a casual statement : “ You may have had a former life there. “ She looked from her vision back down to me : “ You know..... I believe in that. “ “ So do I, It’s one of the reasons I’m going where I’m going. “ Now that she was at a closer range I could see that all the jewelry was diamonds. And they were all real. She had this one bracelet that looked like who ever made it took twenty slim round twenty carrot gold bracelets, put them flush up to each-other and fused them all together, Then fused diamonds in the space between them all the way around. They had a little air between them but not much. There had to be twenty small diamonds in nineteen grooves So in effect on that one bracelet there had to be three hundred and eighty small high quality diamonds. I priced ones that were comparable when I went hunting for a pair of diamond stud earrings for the girl a couple of years prior. We went to lots of big glittery stores with loads of lights and mirrors to help the glass they were trying to peddle shine. At each store the sales person would move their hand back and forth attempting to get the dull rocks to glitter. At the time I was thinking : “ I’ve seen pyrite that shined better than this crap. Then one day we were pulling into a small shopping mall in her folks neighborhood and I spotted minuscule jewelry shop. It was barely noticeable. It looked like a passageway between two old sturdy cement buildings, Where somebody had built a vault betwixt. “ Let’s go in here, I think they have the studs you’re looking for. “ The girl tilted her head and looked at the partially opened thick steel folding gate. I popped my head in and asked the little man around sixty or so : “ Are you open. “ It didn’t surprise me to hear him answer in a New York Jewish brogue : “ We could be. “ I says : “ Ok, We’ve been to all those flashy chain jewelry stores in this valley. You know the ones with lots of mirrors and strong lighting, And the sales men that moves his wrist back and forth to make that dull piece of glass there hustling shine. I refused to buy any

of that garbage. So when I saw this bunker you got here. I said to my girlfriend : “ This place has real diamonds ! Cause nobody builds a vault like that to house glass. “ The little man : “ What are you looking for ? “ “ Diamond stud earrings, Most likely the smallest ones You have. “ “ Come in. “ As we stepped inside the door he locked the incredibly thick iron gate behind us. Then alerted his son that he had people up front, And began showing us diamond studs. I think I ended up buying her a pair for six hundred. They were small but they were real. This little Jewish man didn’t waste money on light bills. It was almost dark in the place. And in spite of that fact these rocks glistened. After I bought the studs. David introduced us to his son Saul. He was a nice guy around twenty five who sat in the back making jewelry out of *gold*. I thought : “ My God I must have made a good impression on this guy for him to ask us in here, They must have a fortune in stock in this place. I told them about the time I was sixteen, And delivered trade supplies to the diamond district in down town New York near Canal Street. It was there that I got the feel for what a real diamond looked and felt like. We delivered to most of the real diamond jewelry stores and shops down there. Everybody had felt hats and long beards. And when I was done with that story, I told Sol about a place called Piru Creek which was only forty miles away, where I had once panned for Gold. All I could find there was black sand. Black sand has gold in it in small amounts which you can extract with one of those brass pressurization gadgets. It looks like an oil can with tubes coming out of it. I might have tried it, Just for the fun of learning the process. But the primary ingredient is cyanide. And I wasn’t *that* interested. However in the course of the day I watched a guy with a small motorized dredger extract three quarters of an ounce of Gold from the stream, in less than an hour. “ That’s a pretty good hourly wage. “ Gold was going for four hundred and fifty dollars an ounce at that time. Sol got so interested that his dad began to look alarmed. Sol : “ I’ve been working with it for years. I would really like to see where it comes from. Sol’s dad was making sounds like : “ It’s getting late. “ I followed his lead. “ Ok, Sol, All you have to do is remember Pyrite Creek, Just look it up on the map. Well we got to go, It’s supper time for us. “ As I left, I thought to myself : “ That kid will probably never go beyond the walls of this place, Or someplace like it. His dad is hovering over him to stay in the business and work there trade. “ There was a twinge of guilt in me. I knew that if I volunteered to show him where the place was. He would have probably wanted to go the next day. But I didn’t want to freak his dad out. He didn’t have to waste his time with us. I was sure he was in wholesale, and sold his items in blocks, to real jewelry stores in Beverly Hills and Newport, where the real money was. If Sol ran off into

**“Them thar hills “ feverishly hunting for *gold*, Half his dad’s business would be gone. Thinking : “ If he really wants to go check it out, He has the name Piru Creek. All the kids got to do is buy a map, And look it up. “**

**Back to the terminal. So when I noticed the bracelet I also noticed that she didn’t have to move it around to make the rocks sparkle. They did that all on there own. Ok if they were all of comparable quality to the studs I bought for my former life partner, Then they couldn’t be worth less than two hundred a piece, with three hundred and eighty of them on that one bracelet..... I just did the math. That comes to seventy six thousand dollars worth of bracelet. and that was only one of them. If they were all chips with their best face forward, The bracelet still couldn’t have been less than thirty five grand. She had two on one arm, and assorted other bracelets on the alternate arm. The woman had more than a hundred grand hanging on her limbs. Thinking : hmm... She’s dressed to kill. she’s probably going to meet someone special over there. “ I asked : “ You don’t feel like you might meet someone over there ? “ “ No, I’m just in love with the place. “ “ Then it really is a prior life thing. You must have had a good life there a long time ago. “ “ Yeah, I kind of feel like the whole country is family. “ “ Yeah I’m curious to see how well I connect with the people in the country I’m going to. “ Where’s that ? “ “ Saudi Arabia. It’s not an easy place to get into. “ “ Hope you have a good time there. “ “ I hope you’re right. I guess it’s time to head out to the terminal. “ We picked up our stuff and headed down the corridor toward the terminals together. We got around thirty steps and a thirty something type in a tailored suit walked near and said : “ Do her one time for me ! “ Before I could retort. He peeled off into one of the terminals and immersed himself in a crowd of busy plane boarders. She didn’t bat an eyelash. I think she treated them like bubbles. If you ignore them long enough they eventually dissipate. This guy flew off like a fart in a high wind. Soon the corridor was coming to a T formation at its end, My terminal was to the right and hers was way off to the left. I said: See ya next trip, Have a good time. “ “ Yeah, And you to. “ “ I’m hoping so.... Buy buy..... Don’t ask me what number terminal I lighted in. Women keep track of things like that. Or some men do if there paid to. If I had a woman with me on that day she could probably tell you what terminal number and what time of day it was and probably the hour we boarded the plane. To me, *When* something happened, isn’t as important as what I learned from it. What I learned from sitting around the terminal waiting to board the plane is that when your anxious it’s much easier on you if you have something to do with your hands. I drew and drew, and just before we boarded I threw them all away. They were mostly of women and men with lots of hair or strange hats. I figured that when I got to Jeddah the less things to question me**

about, the better. I was remembered one of the things I'd read in National Geographic. In Mecca there was something called the Morality-Police. And that anything that they considered bad conduct would be punished. This in my mind conjured up medieval tortures. After all, Wasn't I going to a primitive land which had just recently gotten very rich ? Wouldn't they have some of those old world habits still intact ? And who knows what they dish out punishment for. " Was drawing women a sin ? " This was my first time traveling alone. I'd hitchhiked cross country from California to New York seven times. But this was different, I was going into a place that you could disappear in, And never be heard of again. I was not so naïve as to think that the state dept. would give a shit about one lost American in Arabia as long as the oil kept flowing. Thinking : " Well here I am boarding the plane. I guess I can always turn back when we reach Amsterdam. Baba are you sure..... Ok, Ok I'll just go through the motions. " I walked on board and was greeted by the early twenties blond at the door. She said hello. Then the comparable, But slightly less attractive brunet five feet inside the cabin looked at my boarding pass and pointed me in the direction of my seat. It was an isle seat, It was gong to be a thirteen hour flight over what I was led to believe was the North Pole. That's what the map said. Then down to Amsterdam. I was having a hard time believing that we were flying over the north pole. They went through the here's your oxygen and here's your flotation device drill but this was my first flight on an airliner since I hopped a ride out of mid states on my way home to New York on leave from Camp Pendleton. \* (A one hundred square mile USMC camp in Southern California. ) " Hmm, This is an adventure in that absolutely everything is new. I'm inexperienced at all of it. " I know I had an isle seat. But I don't know who I sat next to. I do know that everyone envied the woman in the back who had bought three consecutive seats pushed up the arm rests rapped up in a blanket laid across them sleeping ten hours of the journey to Amsterdam. There was a movie. Can't tell you what that was either. It was just a distraction, there was still that ever present doubter in the back of my mind saying : " What have you got yourself onto ? " " All right so if I fucken die, I die. " Was my mental retort. It would buy me some rest from the little bastard that manufactures butterflies in your stomach whenever anything significant is pending. Around the eleventh hour a bunch of yuppie business folks started doing stretching exercises up in the wing area where there's an emergency door and on this plane, with considerable leg room. I was in excellent physical condition, And kept up with much of my yoga routine in addition to all that heavy lifting and wire pulling I was doing as a full time construction electrician. " Ok, This is something I can do, And kind of fit in, cause I know nobody up there is better at stretching than me ". When you crawl under buildings and through attics for a living

you contort in every possible position in order to drill or hammer some electrical gadget into place. It makes for a very strong and subtle body. I walked up the aisle and joined in. Armani was the uniform of the day, Basic black. About a third of the thirty-some-things were blond women. Well proportioned blond women. When one of them spoke to me as she was leaving I was pleasantly surprised to discover they were all Europeans. Mostly from Nordic countries. Nordic Yuppies, their woman didn't treat you like a predator cause your attire's differed from there's. One more meal and the plane began descending. The aforementioned subliminal tension returned with the thought : " Oh God, I'm that much closer to entering Saudi Arabia. " I joined the long line of folks lifting there baggage from the Over head bins. It was pretty simple for me. Every thing I needed was in a backpack, Pull it out of the bin, And I'm ready to go. Then as I'm walking slowly towards the exit door of the plane I get a slight twinge of a feeling that says : " I don't know where I'm going. " Well It's somewhere on this paperwork. " It turns out that I would have to stay a day at the Airport Hotel, Which amounted to what looked like a compound of barracks. Who ever built them must have had a military background. They were essentially one B-motel built in a semi square with a dying lawn the size of a parade ground at it's center. The weather was moderately warm, under cloudy skies around 75 degrees. what land I could see beyond the compound seemed to me to be alarmingly flat. It was as if I had just checked into the twilight zone, Where every things drab and gray. The room my traveling agent had reserved for me was equally dreary. There wasn't a splash of color in the whole place. I secured my belongings in the unwelcoming room, And went off to forage for food. There was none, Except for the plastic covered starch and sugar loitering in a few vending machines. But first I had to find the desk where I could trade some dollars for Guilder's ? I wasn't sure what there money was called. But I couldn't shake the feeling that the guy was not giving me the even rate of exchange. He was too amused with my naiveté. His appearance didn't stand out in anyway, Only his attitude. I bought enough starch and peanuts from the machines to placate my feeling of doom, washed up and went to bed. There really wasn't anything to do. The room had only a bed and a bath in it. No TV no nothing. When I got up the next morning the place took on a little color. I found the room where the complementary Continental breakfast was served. There were lots of happy colorful people in that room eating crescents; jellies; cream-cheese; And various types of fruits. Thinking : " Ok, Now this I can get into. This is alright ! Except for one thing. These coffee cups. They're not a full coffee cup. They're only three quarters of the size of a regular cup. " I took a sip. " my god ! This is really good... really good coffee. I get it. They don't want you to drink too much of it, So they make the cup smaller to cut down on

costs. Well screw that. “ I went back seven times to refill my cup. Then headed in to town on a bus to see what it looked like. I just went to it’s edge. Getting lost and missing my flight was not an option, The teacher had sent me here. If he wanted to change my course he’d move a mountain or something in my way, And make it impossible to go in any direction, other than the new one he’d chosen. “ So far that ain’t happened. “ I was feeling a tad bit pressure in my head. “ I wonder what this is about ? Doesn’t feel like the beginning of a spiritual experience coming on, It’s purely physical. Christ ! I don’t know where this came from, But I’m wired. I feel like my teeth are vibrating. What the Fuck !. . . . Oh, Shit ! Sometimes my own stupidity amazes me. Those weren’t undersized cups. They were *oversized* cups. That wasn’t just real good coffee. That was really smooth espresso. And what did I have with it ? Four crescents. Starch sugar and caffeine. No wonder I feel like running up the side of this building. I got to find a place with real food. Something with protein in it. Just about every place I looked in was selling some form of white flower. cookies ; buns; white bread; custard filled white bread etc ect. Finally I came upon a place that was run by Arabs. They actually had a sandwich with meat in it that I could buy. It was tiny restaurant, Little more than an indoor stand. But I felt safe there. It strangely felt more comfortable than the rest of the surroundings. The sandwich and a glass of milk cut the wired feeling in half. prior to it I felt like a pressure in my head was increasing. Now it was partially quenched, And hopefully soon to be declining. It was time to go back to the airline terminal and check on my flight into Saudi Arabia. KLM Royal Dutch Airlines. That’s what the sign said. Thinking : “ Ok, Here I am. I gotta step up to that counter and go ahead and get on that plane. Here goes “. I handed my tickets to the rather lovely thirty five-ish Dutch redhead behind the counter. She beat on that keyboard like her fingers were computerized. They were a blur. I couldn’t help where my mind was going. “ My God this woman is pleasant to look at. She’s mature, skilled, polite and probably has two kids and a tall blond husband at home. Or maybe she’s not married. Maybe she just has a boyfriend of two. I can feel her consciousness from here. There’s nothing of drama in her. Life is a matter of fact kind of thing. But I can’t help knowing that she’s sexually skilled. I can sense it in her confidence. That’s also a matter of fact with her. I’m sure there’s actually nothing wrong with this one. Why do I get all the ones in need of repair ? Hmm.. Probably cause I’m often in those meetings, Which are filled with folks in various stages of emotional and spiritual repair. And tend to teach what I’ve learned so I don’t forget it myself. “ “ There’s a problem here. “ “ Ah,... What kind of a problem. ? “ “ There was a mistake made with your ticket. I’ve been trying to fit you into another flight, But there all taken. This is very unusual

that all the seats in all of the plane are taken. "At this point one part of my head is saying : " Alright we don't have to go. " But just as quickly, the part of me that wants to go to the place in the North of the country retorted with : " You didn't come this far to quit at the first opportunity. Let's get on with it..... My God she's nice. Why couldn't I have something like *that*. " " I think were going to have to use the S word. "I said : "what's the S word ?" " Stranded. " That put all kinds of weird pictures and phrases in my head. I saw a pirate from an old movie stroking his beard stating : " ARRrr.... Matee... I think we be stranded." Then one of those old twilight zones where the guy is stranded on earth with nothing but food, and books and his glasses are broken. My mind had no modern day answer for that word. I began conjuring up current days worst case scenarios. " We're going to have to put you up in a hotel till some more flights are available. I'm sorry but there is no possible way for us to get you into Jeddah today. " " Err.... I'm kind of on a little budget.... I don't exactly know how much.... " No, No. The airline pays for it." " Oh, Ok. Meanwhile my head's saying : " Maybe they're going to charge you later. Like when you get back to the states. " My retort : " So what ? I'll be able to afford it then. " " Here's your voucher. And here is a map to your hotel " A blond co-worker weighing ten more years and twelve more pounds asked : " where are you sending him ? " " Right in the middle of it. " They traded glances. " It's all we have available." This drew up visions of the dingy little hotels on the upper west side of New Your City. Or the burned out brownstones of the Bowery. I didn't press them for further details. I walked off thinking. " As long as there just isn't roaches. I really hate roaches. Those little sons of bitch's can run seventy miles an hour. I followed the map to the center of the city. " Amsterdam. Hmm So far I like what I see. " On my left were canals to my right, was a large medieval looking building nicely designed looking cheerful with good energy around it. That turned out to be the railway station. I was passing a mooring around a hundred and fifty yards in front of it. There were pretty blond collage girls making themselves at home sitting against a post at the waters edge with their backpacks next to them. They looked me over as I passed noticing that I too, had a backpack. Thinking : " Yes God, That looks good. But I want to meet some Dutch people. Americans I can meet when I come home. If I'm supposed to encounter them. The teacher will put them in my path again. The next thing I noticed was a dark foreboding looking building. " Hmm... That must be an old castle of some kind. It had the vibration of many deaths associated with it. Soon I was standing right next to it. The dark morbid looking thing was around five or six stories tall but the breath and depth of it was no where near what I assumed it to be. It was a church with tall spike like steeples on it. It had Dracula vibes. I checked the doors to see if it were possible to enter and view

what caused this sensation. I would really have liked to go in and observed, What or where the strongest vibrations of horror were coming from. Seven years prior I had entered the Santa Barbara Mission in S.B. California and felt like I was going to throw up when I reached the center of the room. I suddenly became poignantly aware of how thick the walls were. As if looking through a mist I could see oily liquids seeping down all of the walls, And felt like I was smelling a pungent horrible odor. But when I inhaled I smelled nothing. Yet the feeling of sniffing stench, was overwhelming. “ I got to get out of this place. “ Janet the girl friend I had with me at the time went ahead and wandered about the church with the many others touring the place, while I focused on arriving at, and getting through that thick brown door leading to the light of day. When I made it to the lawn fifty yards away I felt safe. Janet : “ Why’d you leave so abruptly ? “ “ Don’t know how to explain it. It’s not logical, But that place felt *evil*. ” A few years later I read an article about the Santa Barbara Mission in one of the L. A. newspapers. It was about the history of the mission. It turns out that the Spanish conquistadors tried to use the Indians as there agricultural slaves. And the Indians kept running away. So they caught a group of escapees and boiled them in oil within the confines of those church walls. From what I perceived they had also hung them on the walls. That was why I saw the streaks of oil pouring down the walls. It was like my inner mind could smell the human debris in the oil staining it’s way down the wall. While standing in front of this church, I was curious of what horrors, the Dutch were at that time capable of. “ I’m not going to dwell on this. This is not what I’m here for. Amsterdam for me is just the port to Saudi Arabia. “ I suddenly became aware of my new resolve. “ My god ! I’m dead set on seeing this thing through. .... I know why. I really believe I’m going to see The Teacher there. “ A little farther down the rather narrow street, And there it is. My hotel. It appears to be a cross between an apartment building and a British tutor housel. It looks like someone had played tic-tack-toe with brown board X’s up and across the face of the building. When I got inside and was shown to my room I realized that the place was really rather well built. Probably about forty or fifty years old, From back in the days when they made things to last. The room was large and well lit. The bed was a queen size. And not against the wall. There was plenty of space in this domicile. Although security worried me a little. Those decreitive boards adorning the outside of the building could easily be negotiated by an average cat-burglar. I was sure I could climb around them if I had to. “ Ahh... what am I getting paranoid about ? Nobody wants to risk prison over what they could steal from me. And that would be a definite sign that the teacher wanted me to turn back. He told me I’d be protected. “ Keep a kind and pleasant attitude and concentrate

on the north star. “ “ Hmm... I better do that right now, And keep practicing it. “

Ok all my gear was secured in the room. I had hid my travelers checks well, And was thinking of the north star as I exited the building. It was mandatory to leave my passport at the front desk. That bothered me a little. I hated depending on other people to guard my important papers. Being very physically fit as a result of working twelve hour days as a construction electrician for the last four years made me feel very confident I could not be mugged and there by capable of handling my own papers. Every muscle in my body was toned. My only draw back was that I'd just had my tonsils removed two weeks prior. And my throat was still a tad sensitive. “ How about that my throat's not sore any more. That's a plus. This trip is already reaping dividends. You know what ? I think I'll go find a meeting. I know they have meetings here cause I have an international meeting book and they're in it. It'll keep me from thinking too far ahead of myself. “ So I looked up a group and made a call to them. A guy named Igor answered. He gave directions, I followed them and whala! I found the building. There was a meeting in progress. As I looked around the room with twenty-five people on either side of a long table, Most of them with Styrofoam coffee cups in front of them, I was amazed that all of them who spoke in turn were speaking English. It would be obvious to anyone that ninety percent of the room was definitely Dutch. But they all spoke English as if they came from California. No Dutch accent. The one dark haired man who's features were assuredly not Dutch, approached me with a cup of coffee, asked me to sit, then set it down in front of me. As he parked himself next to me he whispered : “ I'm Igor. “ He had thick shoulders, Maybe five foot ten inches tall. With skin a shade darker and redder than anyone in the room. The majority of the rest of the people were blond men with around two or three women in the whole group. Igor was

leading the meeting. He was boisterous and good natured. All the folks in the room seemed to get a big kick out of him. The meeting was over by nine PM just like in the states. And on the dot the woman were out the room and on their way home. “ Hmm.... I would have liked to been able to talk to a couple of them. Oh well. I guess I'll just have to chat with the men, And ask them what the woman are like. Maybe they don't like foreigners. Perhaps they don't like Americans ! Then why would they speak American English ? Whatever.... I'll know soon. I'm not gunna think about it. “ Igor Introduced me to folks as they were leaving around four guys stayed around for a few minutes to talk small talk with me. One of them was around six foot eleven. blond hair with a jaw that looked strong as an anvil. Seemed to be a trait with all the Dutch men I met in New York. They all had strong thick jaws. When he

learned I had more time in this world wide organization than he did. He lost interest in me and headed on home. Folks from this particular organization in America are usually night owls. I was amazed that out of twenty-five people, the only one that wanted to go for coffee afterwards was Igor. I was beginning to wonder if Igor was gay, and that's why no one wanted to spend any more time with us. Igor : " Com'on. I'll show you around town. " " I'd like to go to a place that has really good coffee near the canals. " " You want to go to the Red Light District ? .... That's what's down that way. " " Ok, Lead on. " He then explained to me that he had personally never used it. " I've never paid for it. " " Are you married. " " Not now ! But I was. " " Then you've paid for it. " Igor : " Wait a minute. " He turned into a small grocery store and came out with something in a paper bag. " I told my ex I'd pick her up a bottle of milk. " Thinking: " Hmm.... He's still paying for it. But he's not getting it. Maybe it's for his kid. " " Did you have any kids ? " " No. " His mind was now down the block or in the past with her. We walked quietly till we reached The canals. I noticed these little shops with black lighting and lights with red casts to them in the back of the shops. " I want to take a look in here. " Igor : " Ok, But don't buy anything. " I went in and looked around There

was

a small section of pornography in the rear. I looked that over briefly. Then I went to the front of the store where a fifteen foot glass casing served as a counter. The proprietor was showing two thirty-something potential customers what he had under the glass. " And this is some really excellent hashish imported from Turkey. They had everything from rock cocaine to black tar heroin under that glass counter. All nicely rapped in white paper. And sealed in little bags. The folks decided on something. And were making their purchase just as I left the shop. They didn't look like addicts. They looked like a conventional couple up for a new experience. I wondered how they'd feel about it in the morning. " Ah... Who cares. Not my problem. " Igor was waiting outside : " Did you see what you wanted to see ? " I liked the lighting. I had no idea what they were selling in the front of the store. The porn in the back wasn't too bad. " Igor : You want to see woman. So lets go down this street. Sometimes I come down here for inspiration. " " Lead on I could use a little inspiration. " The streets in the town were narrow. In medieval times this was useful in that a small force of good fighters could stave off a larger group of invaders, Cause the larger force couldn't get more than eight men abreast and when they were cut down, The men behind them would stumble over them and slip on the spilled blood on the cobble stones. All the defenders had to do was step back a couple of feet and continue cutting them down. So the closer you got to the center of the town the smaller and smaller the streets became. " This way " We turned down a side street that

looked like an alleyway Being originally from New York City I thought : “ Is Igor going to try to mug me ? “ Then we rounded a curve leading to a fork in the very narrow road, Within the fork the street was a little wider so that a wheeled vehicle could make it round the sharp turn. There were no vehicles. So that space took on the ambiance of a court yard at first glance. At second glance it looked more like a seen on stage from “Guys and Dolls. “ There was a street-light dulled down to the tone of a gas light. Believe it or not there was a slim girl in a black beret and black fishnet stockings with a slit up the side of the little black skirt, so you could see the crack in her butt leaning against that pole. When I looked to my left there were women leaning on to the doorways of the buildings. Some in all white bras and panties with smooth white stockings. A darker skinned Gipsy looking girl in lavenders and purple undergarments . A fat girl in black vinyl and wide tight fishnet stockings that made her skin bring on visions of waffles. “ This whole alley has a soft orange glow to it. Where’s that coming from? Oh . . . ! “ I looked up to the oval shaped windows with the blond women sitting on chairs facing the streets center. As I turned in a circle I would see them all the way around, Looking down from their second story rooms with the soft orange red background lighting behind them. Igor : “ Those are rented out nightly.“ “ The women ? “ “ No the rooms. Ordinary women are allowed to rent them, And offer themselves for the night anytime they want to. “ “ When do they do that ? When they’re pissed at their husband ? Most of the ones in the rooms look like Dutch housewives. “ Igor : “ Hmm... Your right. Most of them are Dutch. “ The rest of them on the street could have been naughty UNICEF workers. They were from everywhere you could imagine. We walked down the right side of the fork. It curved to the left, while all the time I’m looking at the second story windows with the women in them sitting on chairs in their underwear. Still, most of them are blond, late thirties, slightly padded. I realized now, that I was looking for was one as slim and trim as the lady at the airport. I had always liked wholesome woman. They’re a much wilder ride. All in all in the next five or six blocks of twists and turns through the narrow streets sprinkled with females for sale, I counted seventy three women. There was even a set of twins along the way. A couple of Mediterranean looking short dark haired girls. “ Cute, But not in my mindset right now. I really want to see one that looks like her right now “ As we rounded our last corner I began feeling sorry for the gals back there. Thinking : “ We had looked at seventy two woman. With that kind of competition, How does any of them make a living wage ? If a woman’s gunna sell it, she should make some real money. Cause when she gets her nest egg and quits. If she quits, It’s gunna take her around five years before she finds a man that she really trusts, To make a partner of. But she’s probably never going to be able to tell him about

how she made her nest egg. Total honesty per-motes total intimacy. Which elevates the vibration of the sexual act to the point of being a spiritual experience. This is something they are likely not to have. Cause it's always necessary to hide the past, when dealing with the her conventional world. Ok were on the last street. What am I getting philosophical for ? “ Suddenly as I stepped around the lamppost, I nearly sauntered head on, into a Goddess among street walkers. She was around twenty two years of age five foot eight dark chestnut healthy shiny hair, green eyes with a hint of brown in them. I looked down to see what she was wearing. A dark Armani looking suit with a long dark well tailored coat. The skirt was short showing just enough of her legs to know they were perfect. “ Is she some gal from the silk stocking district in New York who's just come down here to play with a few minds. She's got to be wearing fourteen hundred dollars worth of tastefully designed cloths. She can't be a street walker. I know.. ! She's somebody's mistress. No I get the feeling she's her own woman. She had me in her sights. “ You'r looking for a woman ? You've found the right one. “ Even Igor viewing from the side lines was impress with her appearance. She had this soft French sounding voice. mixing with another accent that I couldn't get a handle on. “ Algerian ? Christ, It could be anything. Who cares ! I just want to look into her eyes. My god this girl really is pretty. There's some stuff down in there. But nothing serious. If The Teacher hadn't warned me not to get sexually involved because I would be thinking of her instead of where I am and what I'm doing when I'm in Mecca. I would buy some protection and go for this. But, That's not an option. “ Meanwhile, as my mind's preoccupied with theology. The girl is explaining to me that: “ It's only forty Guilder for a Faaaaak.... “ “ Naa...I Can't get mischievous till I'm back from my trip. But when I do come back, I at all possible, I will come straight to you. “ I said my next line playfully : “ Now don't do anything naughty while I'm gone! “ Igor walked me back to familiar surroundings and said : “ Next time you come this way again look me up. “ “ I'll do that. Thanks a lot. “We shook hands and went our ways. I found a place to get a cappuccino near the lobby of my hotel. The café had tall ceilings. Half way through my sipping and taking in the surroundings, I felt the urge to use the plumbing. The restrooms were huge with high ceilings. As I was standing there making my contribution to the canals, a shadow blocked the light in the doorway to the entrance of the place. I turned to see what was there. It was a man of approximate height of seven foot three, bending his head down so he could fit it through the doorway. He was symmetrically proportioned. Leonardo da Vinci or Michelangelo would have been impressed. Most real tall folks have lanky bodies. Some have ape like looking structures. When people grow fast and grow tall. Symmetries are usually not a priority for some reason. Probably cause there's not enough

nourishment to fill in the spaces or not enough of the right kind of nutrition to fill in the spaces evenly. At any rate this guy was proportionately perfect. And not the least bit self conscious.“ Is he related to the guy from the meeting. No, This one doesn't look anything like him. “ After that I started to pay attention when ever I was in a crowd to see if there were any other people that tall. There were quite a few. Back in the states I never saw anyone anywhere near that tall unless they were black. And usually on a basketball team. One year after I returned from this trip. I read an article about Holland having almost five hundred of the tallest people in the world. Till then I thought the Maasai in Africa were the tallest people in the world. “ Well as long as I keep my mind occupied with these kind of facts I wouldn't have to think about what's coming up tomorrow. “ I went up to my room. In spite of the cappuccino I fell asleep almost instantly. Next morning I packed up, had a light breakfast and took the bus back to the airport. In relatively short order I was standing in front of the same redhead. She was hitting the same keys with lightening speeds and getting the same results. All the flights were taken. After a forty five minute assault on those ever clicking keys. She fell limp, and said : “ We'll have to get you a flight on another airline. “ “ Hmmm.... I wish she could have spend all that intensity directly on me. Wait a minute ! What did she just say ? This sounds like it could cost me money. I don't even know how much it's going to cost me to get through the Hajj. What will it cost me for rooms, food, clothing. I could probably get away with wearing what I've got on. But maybe not. I've only got around two grand left to get me through 14 days in Saudi Arabia. And I've been told that things there are expensive. “ “ We are going to have to fly you to Tunis. Then you will catcha flight into Jeddah on Saudi Arabian Royal Airlines. But we're going to have to charge you a little extra to help pay for the ticket on the other airlines. “ Ok, Now I was ready to get into fighting mode. “ You know this mishap was not, and is not my fault. I've heard the argument that it was my agent's fault. But why wasn't it caught earlier. I'm sorry I don't know what to look for on these tickets I'm not real experienced at this. But isn't that the airlines responsibility to make sure all the I's are doted and all the T's are crossed ?Why chastise me for this ? “ They called up Dada and tried to squeeze him for the difference. A blond lady coming to the aid of the redhead was haggling with him. She pointed the phone at me : “Would you please talk to him ? “ Thinking : “ I knew what this is. It's a game of : “Why don't you and him fight ? Then we'll pick up the pieces and you'll be the losers. “ My retort : “ I didn't call him. *You* did. “ She talked to him for a sentence or two longer and said : “ He wants to talk to you. “ Thinking : “ Hmm.. Smart move. She's manipulated him to talk with me. If I refuse, It makes it sound like I'm mad at him, implying that I think my stranding is his fault. Or she's lying, to get me on the phone with him, And

hoping he'll talk me into paying the difference in the plane fares. Either way, I have to take the call. " I took the phone. Jaquab Dada : "Abdlala! Don't give them a nickel ! Make them pay for that flight ! I repeat. Don't give them a nickel. Make them Pay for that flight ! " " Ok, I understand. Did you want to talk to this lady again. No ! I'm hanging up now. . *Pray* for me .....Click I looked at the two woman staring at me like someone just let a Cobra into the room. " What's the price difference in the flights ? " The Blond answered as I was thinking : " With just a little padding she could have been one of the women in the second story windows last night. What was that she said ? : Three hundred and forty four !! " That I said out loud. The hell with *this*. I'm going back to America." That seemed to set them into a panic. No, No, Wait we'll try to figure something out. They put their heads together and there was that humming sound you here when people talk in low rumbling tones. It's like the bees in the hive are trying to decide weather to sting you. or make you some honey. The blond emerged with a proposal : " We have figured out how to make the difference in the flight only One hundred and thirty five dollars American. " I don't have that to spare. I need all my money for food, lodging and travel within the country, " " Well, How much money do you have ? " I squinted a look at her that said : " Who the *fuck* do you think your talking to ? " She closed her mouth and recoiled her face back three inches. Then looked at me like I was the New York Times crossword puzzle. I'll give her credit for one thing. She never stopped thinking. It only took her about three to five seconds to recover and make another proposal : " What if we let you pay the difference later ? " I said : " Why don't we just wait another day. I don't have much more time, But I suppose I could get away with another day. " " Then we'll be loosing money. We'll be paying for your hotel room for another day. " She didn't jump at the chance to get me to pay for the hotel room. It was probably cause she didn't want to deal with the traveling problem from hell tomorrow. She wanted it to be over today. But I read it as being a little considerate. " How much later ? If I do this, it's got to be a good deal later. Cause I don't know how long I'm to be in Arabia. " " We can push it back to the next quarter. " " How long is that ? " " Three months. " " And the price *is* ? " " One hundred and thirty five American. " " We can make it six months, if you want. " " Nah.. That's too long. She made up the papers. I double checked the price. Then signed them. Subsequently they printed up my new tickets. Just as I was leaving to go to the terminal the red-head said : " You have to fly into Tunis. Then you catch a flight out of there into Jeddah. " " Do I have to stay over at Tunis ? " " No, Your only there for fifty minutes then your on the flight to Jeddah. " " Ok, Sounds good to me. Nice meeting you. " She said : " Have a good trip ser. " As she turned back to her computer. I had around an

hour and a half before my flight to Tunis. I made my way swiftly through the security x-ray station, Then into the terminal. There was a lot of shops to buy various goods But one counter caught my eye from around a block and a half away down the walkway. Something was catching the light and sending a piercing sparkle all the way from that distance. I walked down to that end of the terminal and looked through the thick glass counter to see it. There sat some of the highest quality diamonds I'd ever seen. " Whooo.... That's right the Dutch have diamond mines in South Africa. Damn ! . . These are real high quality. If I got no farther than this. I'd buy the best one I could afford, and sell it when I got home. Even with a tariff, I'll bet I could make some money on these. I admired them for a while, then walked the opposite side of the walkway hunting up a place with a good snack. While in route, I saw something that shocked me a little. There were a pair of air port police walking in my direction. The two strolled casually in step together with their automatic shoulder weapons slung up side down. From this position the weapon could easily be swung up into firing stance. They were the same age, About twenty three, attractive and of the opposite sex. By the Look of them, If it was the late fifties I'd say they were going steady. Their firearms had large clips in them. Now for gleaning through the shops with memorabilia of Amsterdam, Then deciding : " It would just be extra weight at this point in the journey. I'll be passing through here on the way back, I'll get a thing or two then. " Upon finding a sedately lit restaurant I had a sandwich, Studied the people, And wondered what kind of collateral damage those two cops would inflict, If they got into a fire fight with some terrorists. They had enough rounds in those magazines to wipe out half the terminal. And that was only two of them. There were more of these guys floating around.

It was time to board The Royal Dutch Airlines flight to Tunis. Thinking : " Ok, I'm Ten feet from entering the plane to Tunis. When I get there, It would cost me, But I could still change my mind and go back. I'm not in Saudi Arabia yet. " In I went, sat down, the doors closed, The motor warmed up, and we were in the sky. We flew over land for a couple of hours. I presumed that was Europe. Then we were out over water again. I was looking out the window. The plane wasn't that full so it was easy to get a window seat. When we got to the shoreline of Tunisia I understood why not that many folks wanted to go there. I gaped at what looked like it should be aqua blue colored water. You know, That light blue-green clear wholesome wet liquid ? It wasn't that. It looked like it was black green with alga in some parts. Then the color turned to a bright mustard looking hue. That was the land jutting out into the metallic green water. Thinking : " What the fuck did they pour in their water out here ? Maybe they had some kind of ...chemical spills Or possibly the stratum make up of those rock formations is packed with one type of mineral

and in the opposite place not far away plentiful in another so when mixing with the salt in the water it turns different colors. I can't figure it out. If I get a chance I'll ask somebody. " There was forty five minutes of looking at that barren strangely colored coastline and it's weird murky looking water. Then we began to descend. By the time the wheels touched the ground I was of the belief that Tunis was one desert waist land. And : " How the hell do these people make a living on such a sterile looking piece of dirt. I don't remember seeing any sign of vegetation anywhere. Ok Here I go into the terminal. " The terminal was the size of a Trader Joe's Supermarket at rush hour. Except there was nothing but wall to wall people in Arab dress, All talking at the same time. Thinking : " There's nothing here. What do they find to talk about except each other. I kept on looking for someone to tell me where I'm supposed to go. but no one, I mean *no* one spoke English. So I just followed the crowd. I vaguely remember the people issuing me the ticket saying not to leave the terminal when I arrived. This was the first civilian airline trip I had ever been on in my life. So I assumed : " Don't leave the terminal. " Meant : " don't leave the building. especially considering how small this building was. As I walked through the gate into the crowd of people waiting for loved ones exiting the plane. That all too familiar wallllllllllllaa cry that you heard in the Lawrence Of Arabia flick ensued in various segments of the crowd. You know ! That sound that the Bedouin would make as they rode into battle behind " Rarence. " This made the hair on the back of my neck stand up. Were they signaling to their loved ones. : " Here we are ! Or was it a signal that an American had been spotted in the crowd. After all the Ayatollah was still in power in Iran and a lot of folks in these areas sympathized with him. And the " Don't leave the terminal " comment sounded like a warning. As people went charging into the crowd to embrace each other, I concluded that most of the Wallllllllllllaa's weren't for me. But there were some I had suspicions about. I saw a small group of men getting ready to do the prayer. It was late afternoon, and that's one of the most beautiful times for the prayer. I asked if I could join them. They picked me out a spot on the floor.

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So I went through the motions, following everything they would do. My paranoia dissolved as the energy of the prayer took hold. There is a segment of this process that is essentially a meditative period. That portion I knew well how to do. You just raise the energy and share it. And synergy ensues. After the prayer, various folks in the little group introduced themselves to me. All of this took place with verbiage. But none of the words were understood. Only the meanings. The little group broke up and went their separate ways. It was then she spotted me. A blond haired; pudgy' peaches and cream skinned Dutch gal around thirty five. She swam through the crowd like "Jaws " spotting a meal. And I was it. " Where are you headed sir ? ! " " Er... Jeddah

.. Saudi Arabia. “ I showed her my paper work. “ Oh, No ! You’re on the wrong side. You should be in the terminal. “ “ I...I just came through that gate. “ “ Thinking maybe I could just walk back through it. “ Noticing my inference : “ No, You can’t go back that way. Come with me. “ She grabbed me by the arm and began swimming through the dense crowd like a lifeguard towing a drowning man back to shore. We squeezed our way through people waiting to get on to the next flight out. One man, slim and fairly fit looking stood in her way. She did her best to just push him aside with her shoulder with a steady but gentle pressure. All the time he was looking at me with a sly smile of a man in a lower class position, with an intellect well developed enough to hate those who could afford privilege. He was mistakenly presuming me to be one of the immoderate rich. Who took it for granted, that they should go to the head of the line. Cause, after all... They *were* paying more ! I remembered the teachers words : “ Keep a good natured attitude, And concentrate on the North Star. “ I smiled at him like a full sized adult smiles at a small child being naughty to get his attention. He held a defiant gaze for three seconds and then the woman broke through as he continued to look at me, And I at him till my life guard dragged me through the remainder of the of people we were wading through. I continued to look at him and gave him a very small wave of recognition, with a slightly serious look on my face. Then turned to see the Dutch woman explaining to the ticket taker that I had wandered on to the wrong side of the building. He looked at the tickets and waved us on through. She brought me up to one of the doors I had originally walked through to get into the building and said : Wait here. When this door opens walk through it and get on the plane. “ I was about to ask her: “ When the plane was coming, And what would it look like ? “ She turned and barreled across the room before I completed the thought. So I manned my post and waited. It was about twenty five minutes when a big ass plane came rumbling up to the front of the building. It was way heftier than the one I came in on. The logo on it stood for : Saudi Arabian Airlines. I think the word royal was in there someplace. But I don’t remember where. The whole thing might have been in Arabic. I’m not sure. But I figured this was it. So I picked up my pack and headed up the stairs There was two stewardesses at the top of the stairs standing next to a man who was obviously the pilot of the craft. They were checking tickets and credentials as people boarded the plane. I wondered about the women. Cause some of there very nice shiny dark brown hair showed at the back of the modern airline hats they were wearing. When I got up closer I could see the rest of it was tucked into a neat bun at the back of their neck. Thinking : “ I wonder if they hire other than Saudi woman for this job, cause I know that in this country all the women wear veils. “ They look like Arabs, and very nice looking Arabs. I

think the uniforms were a light kaki colored. But don't hold me to that. The lead female attendant was what I couldn't take my peripheral vision off of. She did all the greeting and checking of papers and told folks where there seats were. When I arrived at the platform at the end of the stairs, The man stepped forward and said : " No, No! There's a mistake here. You wait right there sir. " Thinking : Hmm... This could be as far as I go. But I don't think so. " The head stewardess : " No, Look here. " He peered at the papers she was showing him, but never lifted them from her hands. This meant that she was the authority in this matter. He discussed it with her for another five seconds and then she said : " Sir, Please come aboard. As she gestured to the open door. I walked into the plane and through a thick curtain and was seated within a few steps. I thought : " Wow ! I'm way up front. " I moved in close to the window. " The seats are wide on Saudi Airlines. " I looked at the door. And waited for more people to come through it. Only three more came. They were seated and the crew closed the door. That's when I looked behind me, and realized that the area we were seated in only had about eight seats, all of them wide enough for three medium sized people. Upon further inspection, I realized the décor was better than the finest small restaurant I'd ever seen. And the three people that were just seated were elaborately adorned in Arabian dress. They looked like sheiks. " Holy Shit ! I'm in First Class ! This ride must cost anywhere from fifteen hundred to two grand. These guys sitting around me have money to burn ! " I smiled : " Not bad for a hundred and thirty five bucks Jer. " " What if it is a mistake ? Oh, Fuk-it. It's not a mistake. The teacher's sending me in, in class. " I looked around. " I wonder if I'm supposed to meet someone here ? There were only four other people and they were just minding there own business. They didn't talk to each other at all. " Hmm.. maybe their tired from having done business all day. They did look like they just wanted to relax and go home. " Would you like a drink sir. " I looked up. Another delightful looking woman was standing over me. I almost said : " I'm allergic to alcohol..... What am I thinking they don't serve alcohol. In their country it's a hundred lashes in public, for public intoxication. When she says do you want a drink she probably has tea in mind. " I said : " do you have coffee ? " " Yes, Do you have a preference ? " That threw me for a second. " What ever you bring me will likely be perfect. " She gave me a choice of several. I picked one and she brewed it. Thinking : " I wonder if I'm ever gunna get rich ? I like living like this. Well maybe it's the calm before the storm. Cathleen said this wasn't going to be a pleasant journey. She stated there'd be hardships. Maybe she's wrong. It would be extravagant if everything's as fulfilling as this is. " The sun was descending. A meal was served. Choosing fowl, I turned down the lamb. It wasn't so long ago, that the Girl and I were living in Humboldt County in Northern

California. In the spring I saw recently born lambs playing like children or puppies together. Eating a lamb at this point would be like eating a dog you were fond of. I didn't know the fowl. So eating it, was not quite an affront to my sensibilities, provided I didn't dwell on the subject. The lights went down and everyone in the compartment went to sleep except me. I watched the moonlight reflecting on the body of water below us. There was land to what seemed like our left, then it appeared like it was on the right. Our plane was flying over the water following a moonbeam reflected in it, as if it was a pathway to our destination. The glowing sphere was ever present except when a jutting piece of land blotted it out for a second or two. On the land were pockets of tiny lights out in the middle of what seemed like nowhere. I imagined them being ancient little villages outposts in the desert. That made me think of Cathleen's words. "I see you teaching young boys in the desert." "I wonder if it's one of the places we're flying over now?" I watched for well over an hour. Then fell asleep for three, And woke to watch ten more minutes, Then dozed off into deeper sleep. The lights came on and breakfast was served. I couldn't tell you what I ate cause my mind was already ahead of itself anticipating--"Nothing..... I don't know what to anticipate. Fuck ! Man, I have no idea what I'm doing ! " My logistical mind took over for a moment. "Your going on the Hajj. That's what you're here for. And bear in mind. There'll be a tall dark man who'll be your guide. The teacher said : You'll know him when you see him. " I concentrated on my third eye, Initiating a deep trance. " Ok, One foot in front of the other. " The plane taxied to a stop at what seemed like, The largest piece of flat paved land ever seen anywhere. A dot was traveling in our direction. It became a square as it got closer. When it was actually near, the lack of distance transformed it into a huge square platform holding a hundred people already in it. When all the passengers from our plane loaded on to it. It was now holding over two hundred people. This weird looking vehicle then proceeded to drive a mile and a half to another plane. That plane unloaded another hundred passengers on to the platform. And then it drove another mile or so, to a place that had, what looked like, eight ten story silk tents straddled over a five story building. I scoped around to see if the sheiks were anywhere to be seen. " Nope those guys must have stayed on the plane till the commoners got off and the town cars came to pick them up. Or at least a good self respecting Mercedes. We were now all exiting the giant platform into a large cement walled room. It seemed rather gray and dismal like an underground parking lot with a high ceiling. Most of the three hundred people were lining up ten or twelve abreast in front of a large closed door. I looked around and thought : " This is probably going to be a long wait, So I think I'll just sit here on this stoop like area." It was almost like stone bleachers. I sat down and looked to my right where a large

group of men sat on the bleachers closer to the door. They were sneaking looks at me in turn with curious expressions on their faces. It was then that I realized that there were only men in this room. Most of them slim healthy brown skinned dark eyed wearing white skull caps and rather flowing looking garments. You know those baggy looking pants, some white, but most a light desert clay kind of look. Some wore jackets slightly darker with much heavier layers of fabric, and a few others with jackets that looked almost military, light faded green. There were a very few with knitted skull caps. One in particular caught my eye. A young handsome fellow with a little twinkle in his eye. It wasn't till that moment I realized that I must be looking somewhat strikingly different from them in my desert colored jeans, long-sleeve faded canary yellow shirt, And a brown sleeveless vest stuffed with goose down. Oh...! And a Hogan cap. Those are the caps lots of folks would wear forty years ago to go golfing. You also see them in old gangster movies. All the cabbies wore them. It's made of wool or denim with a small brim. And looks like someone made a cap for Frankenstein, then sold it to an Irishman who just took the extra material for the head compartment and folded it down over the bill. The man in his mid-twenties decided to approach me. His eyes had the clarity of a friendly kid you'd meet when you were six. You remember those good old innocent days when someone would walk up to you and say : “ High ! My name is Joey ! “ He had that kind of saintly clarity. He sat down to my right. Then turned to me looked clearly into my eyes and said:“ Muslim?”

Abdullah. He is a Muslim. Then the young one said : “ Muhammad “ as he



**most of them Africans sitting on the white marble**

**Subsequently the Bedouin retreat way back into the sand dunes and do their prayers. Then the camera cuts to the sergeant saying : “ Get back on the wall !**

**Tall Kid, As he put the two**

**right end. You must match**

**teaching me about Islam. And I was primarily interested in**

**a while. So I sat down on the floor and meditated with my eyes open. A trance method I'd used while driving long distances. It was similar to a vibration of someone in a state of catatonia. It is also similar to the state a fish assumes when they rest. They kind of sleep with their eyes open. In my sixth year**

**Somewhere with people**

**continuously. Jackson Pollack would have been impressed. Gorky would have gawked in wonder. Lautrec would have squinted slightly, and moved his eyes in small circles creating simulated brush strokes. As I stood there looking around trying to decide who, to ask where to go to get transport to Mecca, I noticed a tall African man wearing a baby blue robe with one of those hats that look like a water bottle cap to match. He was smiling while eyeing me curiously. I remember seeing what I thought was him, in one of the distant custom's lines on my way into the terminal. I also saw this fellow again when I**

**bought some toothpaste from the Armenians. He had a similarly dressed friend with him, and three women trailing them at all times. The women**

**turning back to me : “ It is too early to go there. First we go to Medina,**

**I said : “ You mean around five or six hrs. ? “ “ No, eight of**

where I want to go in a terminal that must be at least a mile and a half long from one end to the other. “ I felt stupid asking the question : “ Is this where one get’s a ticket for the plane to Medina. “ Yes it is. Please wait. “ He had to finish his conversation with two other men in Arabic. While waiting I suddenly noticed that the tall black man and his little group were right there behind me. It was like we had just become one group. The Arabian finished his conversation and turned to us. I said : “ How much does it cost for a flight to Medina ? “ The Arabian reached under his robe, pulled out a ticket book opened it and said : “ Two hundred and twenty five Riyal. “ I looked up at Abubacara and said : “ It’s only fifteen Riyal more and it saves us over ten hours travel time. “ Looking to the ticket seller : “ How long does it take ? “

**marble floor and acted**

**entities flying between the buildings like Banshees. I wanted to check it out. As a result of having experienced numerous disembodied entities, I felt no fear of the possible encounter, but instead something like the electrifying sensation**

**it's not going to hurt you. You're fine, You're in a movie theater. But you're so invested in what you're seeing, You're ready to jump out of the seat into action. That's a little like the feeling. But if you're me. There is the actual**

**Then rhapsodized with a little bounce before the wheels adhered permanently to the tarmac. Abubacara : “ We are in Medina. I saw the Masjid. “ He pointed in the direction of the Mosque through the window. We were through**

**running his index finger across his throat. For a split second I'm thinking :  
“ Is this guy personally threatening me ? I'm pretty sure I can take him. “**

**Eventually we reached the top of the stairs. Promptly a Nubian woman scooped the little guy up, and brought him back down to the bottom floor. We walked just a few feet, then ducked into a doorway on our left. Upon stepping into the twelve by twenty foot room I was impressed with the quality of the rug. We took off our shoes in order not to damage it. As I placed my bare feet on this king of fabrics I felt the essence of luxury. Then I noticed the superbly crafted wine colored deep felt covered couches, facing each other. The one on our right had a short slightly padded black woman sitting at its end, with her back resting on its amply stuffed arm. Her arms were bare with the exception of those gold ring bracelets so many woman liked to slide over their**

**a day. “ I looked up at Abubacara. “ How many days**

**I turned to the side and counted the money while it was still in my pocket. Pulled it out and recounted it. As I handed it to her I covertly checked Abubacara’s facial expression to see if he approved my prudence in the**

**handling of money. He was sitting down on one of the couches. The woman walked past me saying : “ Come, I will show you the room. “ I looked back at**

**while playing charades. In English it would be : “**

**Some with small skull caps. Others with a sheer long segment of faded cream colored cloth wound skillfully around their heads. I wondered if that get-up actually did any good in the desert sun. Or was it a cumbersome head band that aided the noon day sun in cooking your skull. Maybe they sweated into the winding and the evaporation process cooled the cranium. We were at the indoor part of the restaurant but just barely. I watched the waiter head straight next door, to get a chicken off the cooler more critter cluttered spit. I leaped to my feet, ran over to him and gestured as I said : “ No, NO. We want a couple off of this spit, while pointing to the ones still hot and cooking. Abubacara : Yes. We would like two from this pole. “ We had a chicken apiece. I looked up from mine about half way through. Abubacara had completely finished his and was talking me into splitting another one. I said sure. By the time I’d finished, he’d finished three quarters of the other**

**“ Huh.... Oh, I’m just trying to figure my way back to**

**before the prayer, and at home a couple to three times a day. You're expected to do it five, But I wasn't yet practicing the prayer five times a day. It's mandatory to cleanse before each prayer period. Anyway I'd taken a shower the night prior to going to bed. So I just had to do the ritual and get out the door. " Ok. Now let's see. " I washed my left foot three times rapidly, Then the right. " Ok. Now my ears. " I washed them inside and out. Then it was**



**pillars and over the heads of the hajjis. \* We were now in the center of the Masjad. While sitting we formed an even row from left to right and right**

**energy there is meant to be mutual.**

**Gracious, Most Merciful. Master of the day of judgment. Thee do we worship and thine aid we seek. Show us the straight way. The way of those on whom Thou hast bestowed Thy Grace. Those whose ( Portion ) is not wrath. And who go not astray. “ This prayer speaks of people who don’t seek revenge. It says those are the ones to follow. Cause they won’t lead you astray. Because they have bestowed upon them God’s grace. And in my opinion it graces them with the ability to think, rather than just react** After the Fatiha, On a sound system that resounded clear out to the far side of the city, a man recited a short sura, which as I understood it, is a story or part of a chronicle from ( Hajji \* = Pilgrim ) the Koran. The sounds and the manipulation of the caller’s voice to me were like a beckoning in to another realm of existence. It united the ectoplasmic energy

stures. Apparently I wasn’t doing them exactly perfect. So we went

Nigeria ? “ “ No , I have no wife. I want a watch, for myself. “ “ Oh ! “ It was interesting to me how Abubacara’s hunger for the watch was primary in his current pursuits, But not nearly as interesting as what was happening around us. People were flowing in all directions simultaneously. All kinds of . . . . . Asian . . People. Turks who seemed to be all buffed out by comparison to the average Arabian. The average Arabian from the small hamlets was slender and proportionately perfect. There was not one among them with long legs and a short torso, or short legs and a long torso. They were like perfect starfish. Everything on them was equidistant from the center out, and graceful

benevolence. This was a very hot day and in spite of it there were a few groups sprinkled through the crowds that wore garments with a weave of wool in them. I assumed them to be Afghanis. Then of course there were the ever

present African prints. But that design no longer dominated. White was the principal color worn by the majority, Which were Arabians from small hamlets, spanning the peninsula. So when everyone moved out from the Masjad, and began swirling around it, looking in the shops circling it. It was like a white canvas immersed in flowing white nebulae, harboring Splashes of shapes with varying colors appearing and disappearing within the nebulous white. Suddenly there was a scarlet-red green and pink Dragon flowing through the whole thing. It was coming my way. It passed between me and Abubacara, then under the arms of a mother and twelve year old child holding hands, Swerved round a very fat black lady, And disappeared into the white moving maze of humanity flowing behind us. Abubacara smiled broadly : “ Chinese ! “ They were short and agile wearing brightly colored

through the crowd. Most upon glimpsing her advance, moved aside as one would for any large animal. But then there was those gracile fifty year old Arabian gentlemen paying her no mind. After all this was Arabia where men in public are respected. As she approached I noticed her hip swerve to one side like it was about to do the Rumba, then swing violently in the opposite

**direction just as she came in step with the venerable feather-weight. The man took flight and landed in a group of pilgrims headed in the opposite direction. She repeated this action four more times in the next twelve seconds, till she disappeared into the white wall of humanity in the distance leaving a wave of disarray in her wake. Abubacra : “ There ! Look there ! “ I looked to see where he was pointing, but saw only lots of people walking between us and the shops. “ Where ? “ We glided through the flow of people like a couple of ducks paddling cross a river, Then came to stand in front of the entrance**

**shocked, While the old man behind the counter gives a sly smile. He’s enjoying every minute of this. He waves me over and offers me an ice cold eight ounce bottle of Coke from under the counter. It’s then that I notice the third son, A man of about eighteen years of age behind the counter two feet from the money roll watching it like he’s a cat and it’s a mouse hole. He never takes his**

**attached. Now that was exotic looking. I asked : “ how much does this one cost ? “ They told me how much in Riyals. I did the math. : Hmm...**



**that populace get out of**

**and through a much smaller town, barely a neighborhood, then twenty minutes of open desert coming to stop at a two block long line of people. We got out, the car drove away, and we got in line. This time his friend and the**

**we're about halfway up the block long breezeway. Folks are getting a little vocal with surges of criticism for the guards, who are controlling the flow of the line at the end of the wall. One man dragged himself up, And started walking around on the wall. I watch for a while. No one came to cart him**

**They're of the same age, so the guard begins to reason with the man. Meanwhile the younger man starts climbing higher, but begins to lose a little of his nerve when he realizes he's reached two-stories up and the Bedouin**



**“ Hmm..... With this much foot traffic that thing should also be covered with conduit. Maybe I’m wrong. Maybe that’s just a thick batch of telephone wire under that dense insulation. I don’t know their methods out here. Could be they’re being extra careful with the phone harnessing. “ Just then a bare headed man wearing creased trousers and short sleeve shirt the same color as**

**“ Nasser “ “Nasser may put me in contact with someone who needs electricians..... after the Hajj. “ At this point Nasser was writing his name**

**and phone number down. “ Call me after the Hajj and we’ll talk. I have work for you. “ He handed me the paper with the number on it. “ Ok, I’ll give**

**sometimes give false hope to the late comers that there was possibly a seat left by Allah just for them. Just to be told by someone like Abubacara : “ No....No. That seat is taken. “ When leaving the Mosque and beginning the walk around the marbled floor circling between it and the merchants’ stores, we had side**

**concrete work across the left wall most of the way through to the other side. On the right were pillars just like the ones in the inside of the Mosque, but with a simple rounded rim design on the top. In front of this almost cave like looking orifice, was a thickly structured six foot tall middle aged man, with a**

**a stronger bargaining position having already performed the service,**

**They ran over and caressed the wall, while speaking through the Islamic lattice design holes in it, as if they were beckoning their long lost lover.**



**and miraculous. Why miraculous ? Cause we didn't get one drop of bird shit**

**learn ? “ I say : “ Oh ! So that's how it fits.**

**The rate of exchange at the airport back in the States was one dollar = three Riyal and change. It wasn't quite three and a half, or even three and a third. So I decided to round it off to 1 for 3. One dollar for three Riyal. This way I could come to a decision quickly, and wouldn't look stupid when someone quoted a price. Also it was succinct enough where I couldn't get rooked for more than twenty cents in a small transaction. It would only add up when I bought large items, like rent. Then I would sit-down and figure the difference.**





**Picky...Picky ...Picky. “ Pointing to the Pakistani : “ Do you**

**Picky...Picky. He’s never been married. “ Pakistani : “ There are other things I can teach you. “ “ Maybe tomorrow or the next day. Right now Abubacara and I must go look for a watch.“ Another smile from the tall dark man.**

**Amid : “ This is a serious thing, going to Mecca. “ Abubacara looking down to the face of the young man : “ How many times have you been ? I have been to Mecca five times. This will be my sixth.” The twenty four yr. old looked over to me, and said : “ I will see you tomorrow. “ He turned and left.**

**awesome. “ My friend handed me the kaleidoscope. I pointed it to the sky and**

**his pilgrimage. Kaba, the tent city, The Devil’s rock, It’s not a requirement but they threw in the Medina Masjid. I gave it back and he gave it to someone passing by. “ Abubacara : “ I want to stop at this shop. “ As we walk in : “ What do they sell here ? “ “ Perfume ! “ Then he starts looking over this**

**akin to the professional beggars in New York. What struck me was the genuine sympathy generosity and naiveté of the African people viewing him.**





**He handed me back the paper. Then spoke to the five foot Saudi in Arabic. Then to me : “ Go with him, He will take you to a man who will teach you your prayers. “ “ \* Shukran “**

**I just about regretted thanking him when I saw the place we were going**

**it was gone. Thinking : “ That’s stuff’s amazing. “ Around ten minutes later he returned with an ornate metal teapot with a long slender spout and two china cups. “ Would you like some tea ? “ “ Yes, Please.... thank you. “ As I was thanking him for asking, he poured tea in one of**

**the cups, and handed it to me. For a moment I thought he was going to sit and have tea with me. But instead he just walked off with the pot and the other cup. I was half way through the tea when he returned with a slightly ragged looking Arabian man which he held by the upper arm. He walked him over to the left of my chair shoving him down on the floor to sit against the wall.**

There was white tape over the stub at the end of his forearm where his hand used to be. Then the young Saudi said to me : “ Don’t give him any of your tea. “ He said it as a mother would say to a child : “ Don’t feed the dog your food. “ Needless to say, This started my mind on a search for some logic to this process. “ Is this a good-cop bad-cop scenario instigated by a single individual to see what my reaction would be ? “ The man to my left sitting on the floor was looking truly terrified. I’m thinking : “ Is this a test to see if I’ll give him a drink of the tea anyway. Am I destined to be the guy sitting on the floor beaten and petrified ? Ok, God ! What the fuck am I supposed to do ? “ “ They’re ready for you now. “ I stood up thinking : “ I wonder who *they* are ? I don’t like the sound of *they*. He’s ready for you, would have a much nicer ring to it. It would give me hope that he would be the man who would help me with my prayers. Alright ! Just concentrate on the North Star. “ The young Saudi put the tea cup on a small table on the opposite side of the room, and shot a look to the man on the floor stating : “ Don’t you dare touch it. “ We exited the room and walked all the way to the end of the hall into a good size office with a huge heavy desk at its opposite end, and a sumptuous window taking up most of the wall behind it. Seated at the desk was a silhouetted torso. It was impossible to see who was there till you were at room’s center, cause the window was the only source of light. As I arrived at the room’s midpoint a man around forty in a western business suit met me. “ You may sit here. “ He was gesturing to a chair at my right. “ I sat in the chair. So at this point the young Saudi had left, and I was facing a new panel of inquisitors at the opposite wall. It reminded me of a trial where the Judge in this case sits to my right at his slightly elevated desk. It’s on a platform around six inches high. Sitting at the contrary wall to me is a collection of people not unlike the ones in the minaret, except they’re maybe a year older. The suited man to my left asked me the same question as before. “ Why are you here. “ “ I have come to be on the Hajj. “ “ Yes but why ? “ Because this is where Allah wants me to be. I made enough money to make it here, and I might never be able to come if I didn’t come now. “ “ Could I see your passport please. “ I took it out and handed it to him. He studied it for a split second and brought it straight up to the man at the big desk. And they looked it over together. The suited man came back and sat with my passport in his hand. “ Your name is Abdullah. “ He said it as a statement of fact. But it was a fact, he wished confirmed by me. “ Yes. That’s my Muslim name. Back in America I have to use my other name for legal reasons. But when I go to the Masjad I use my Muslim name. He nodded and handed me back my passport. “ There was a complaint that you don’t know your prayers. “ “ I’m new, I don’t know many prayers. But I *am* supposed to be here. “ *I* was surprised with what conviction I had said it. “ What is it that

makes you believe you're supposed to be here ? “ I just let go and spoke my piece : “ Something has been drawing me here. I can feel it pulling at me even now ! It feels like I'm being pulled in that direction. “ I aimed my out stretched arm back and to my right. I had no idea where I was pointing. The older larger man behind the desk and the suited one looked at each-other with a little touch of awe. Then one of the panel spoke up. He was around twenty, but seemed younger because of his limited life experience. “ What is it that you do ? What is your work ? “ “ You mean how do I make money ? “ “ Yes. “ “ I work in the movie industry. “ He moved his finger back and forth in front of his face like he was scolding me : “ No, no, no. This is not allowed. “ The lawyer type in the suit, looked over at the sixty-ish large boned man behind the desk with an irony in his eye. Which suggested he wasn't looking forward to the kid setting the tone for the interview. The lawyer then said : “ Yes, this is true. Is there another job you could do ? “ “ Yes, I was a commercial artist some years ago. I did magazines. “ The pushy twenty-year-old lunged forward a little with : No ! This is not allowed either ! The lawyer changed the subject to : “ Is your family Muslim ? “ “ No. “ He continued with : “ You know that as a Muslim you are obliged to make them become Muslim too. “ “ That's not an easy task. They're stubborn Irish Catholics. “ “ Well you should try. “ “ Ok, I'll see what I can do. “ This part of the conversation suggested to me that I quite possibly had a future outside of these walls. The kid butted in again : “ Ask him if he believes in Allah. “ “ Yes, Do you know the five pillars of Islam ? “ I responded : “ Belief, Prayer, Fasting, during Ramadan, Tithing, and what I'm doing now, Pilgrimage. The lawyer nodded his head to the old man with a look of solemn approval. “ And how did you come to believe in Allah ? “ “ Didn't know his name at the time, but nineteen years ago I was drinking myself to death. My skin was turning yellow, I was soon to die when I turned my will and my life over to Allah. And I stopped drinking, and haven't drank a drop of alcohol since. So when I was told to become a Muslim, I had to turn my will and my life over to Allah, I thought : No problem, I've already done it. I'll just do it again now ! The lawyer was relating my story to the older larger man behind the desk in Arabic. By the time I'd finished what I was saying, the look on both of their faces was awestruck astonishment. The possibility that in America, where alcohol could be purchased in any corner market. Someone could abruptly stop drinking, to them was phenomenal. In this land alcohol was, and is, forbidden in the entire country. The word I got was, that the consumption of alcohol was punishable by one hundred lashes in public. I never witnessed it happening. But I never seen anyone dare take a drink in that country.

Thinking : “ Are they freaked out that I have the gene. Or that I’m still walking around alive ! I hope it’s the latter. Thankfully they recuperated. The lawyer now asking curiously, rather than inquisitively : “ What exactly do you do for the movies ? “ The pouting twenty year old was poised, Ready to pounce on the answer. “ I’m an electrician. “ The pouter was perplexed. The rest of the ensemble of obedient gentle faced boys looked surprised. The suit and the Mullah were ecstatic. “ You’re an Electrician ! ? “ We have work for you ! “ Then the Mullah became pensive for a second and asked the Lawyer something in Arabic. “ Oh, Yes. Do you have a piece of paper that.....” “ Am I a contractor ? No. I’m just an electrician. “ They got a little calmer now. In this era Muslim electrical contractors were in short supply in the Kingdom. But Muslim electricians were slightly more plentiful, yet still rare enough to pull down some serious bucks on this side of the world. “ We still have work for you. You Are Muslim. You can work in the holy cities. This is very good. Then the kid said something to them in Arabic. The Lawyer said Oh, Yes. One other thing. There is this little piece of skin that has to be cut off your penis. “ “ I can have that done back in the States. I have good health insurance. “ “ The Lawyer said : “ Fine. You can do that then. “ And dismissed it. Giving no indication of it, I breathed an internal sigh of relief. Circumcision removes ten percent of your sensitivity in that area. If returning to the Kingdom meant having to be circumcised, this would be my first and last trip. “ I want to hear you say Allahu Akbar ! “ The pesky upstart was back making demands again. He said it like he was clearing his throat in mid sentence. So I said it in a like manner. But that didn’t satisfy him. He more or less insisted I scrape up a lugi, to be able to say it right. “ No ! That’s not good enough. Do it again ! ..... No, Again !..... No ! *Again* ! ..... This time I looked into his eyes and said it from the center of my heart chakra : “ ALLAHA WHO ACHBAR ! What happened in that instant surprised me. Miracles to me are commonplace. But this one was a duzy. The kid was pinned to the wall in a catatonic bliss state, with his mouth opened and the whites of his eyes showing. He couldn’t speak, He couldn’t move. It was like he was splattered there with a big chunk of glowing ectoplasm. Then the Mullah said something. And the lawyer responded casually: “ The Mullah would like to teach you your prayers now. “ Meanwhile I’m thinking : “ Didn’t they notice what just happened to the upstart ? Hmmm.... Maybe the Mullah did it. That would explain him not being surprised.” The suit motioned me up to the desk. The Mullah stood up and extended his large thick right hand to me. I took it and as we shook hands, I suddenly realized he was my father in another life. I don’t think he was aware of it. But the second his hand was firmly in mine I knew it indelibly. He drilled me on the same basic beginners prayer that I learned at the Sixth Street Masjid. Then began to write the

prayer on a piece of paper in Arabic. “ Would you ask him if it is possible for him to write the prayer on a piece of his letterhead ? “ The Lawyer asked. The six foot four statue of a man said : “ Sure “ With a nod of his head. I to the Mullah : ” Would you say the prayer one more time for me ?”

The Lawyer translated. The Mullah said yes. And spoke the prayer, as I wrote the words phonetically, below his Arabic scrolling of the prayer, on the letter head bearing his name title and address above. “ There is one thing I would like to know. Is it possible to travel to see some sights in the north of Saudi Arabia ? “ The Lawyer said : “ You are Muslim. You can go anywhere you want in this country. And when you’re not in this country it’s alright to go and have fun. But when here, you must have reverence. “ “ I understand. “

It was now time to go. I shook hands with the Lawyer and the Mullah once more. As I grasped the lawyers hand he said: “ We have some books for you, But they won’t be here till tomorrow. “ On the way out, the original young Saudi beckoned me into one of the rooms. By this time I had assessed that he was the Mullah’s personal assistant. “ Would like some incense ? “ My response was a sign of the times : “ All-rrriight ! “ When the young assistant chuckled at my response, it assured me he’d been educated in an American University. On top of the sturdy dark wood table, stood a burly based bracket brass pot, with perforations for the smoke to waft through. As is customary, I draped my white scarf upon my head and bent over the vessel to capture the smoke in my beard. There’s an old Arabic saying : “ Take the incense an go. “ I said good-bye, Walked out the room, cut a left to the hall, then through the door past the guards down the stairs and into the street. “ Life is good, Allah is with me. “ I went back to one of our frequented lunch spots encircling the Masjid. Abubacara wasn’t in that general vicinity..... He could have been. But I sure couldn’t find him, in the mix of many thousands of people walking by. As I scouted through the people looking for him, a man with a lidded stainless steel bucket stood out. For some reason it was necessary to know what was in that pail. “ I’m gunna ask him.” Upon reaching him I pointed to the bucket and asked what was in it ? He didn’t understand my verbiage. But my gestures were clear enough. He opened the pot for me to look in. Then asked me if I wanted some. I took out some money, and asked “ How much ? “ He gestured with three fingers. I gave him three Riyal. I guess I should explain what I saw and smelled in the pail.... Yogurt. The bacteria that create Yogurt if I’m remembering this correctly, They’re called cultures. And these little creatures are multicultural. They quite literally have different tastes. We were standing in the middle of the passing crowd. The temperature in the shade was 120 F. He takes out a stainless steel ladle, dips it into the pot, scoops out a half a cup of the most delicious smelling substance. But it’s physical

appearance was that of what an infant barfs up when he's had too much whole milk in one feeding. It looked something like cottage cheese floating on a murky surface. I knew that the cultures killed off any other type of bacteria. So It was most probably safe to eat. I drew the cup close to my face and thought : " Am I really gunna taste this stuff ? You know that If you don't taste it, you're never going to be able to tell anybody about it. All right. All right ! No balls ! No glory ! " I put it to my lips and swallowed about a quarter of the cup. It was done promptly, so I barely tasted it in the front of my mouth. Yet the lingering savor at the sides of my tongue was magnificent. Thinking as I swallowed more at a slower pace : " This Yogurt is better than twice as good as the best I've ever tasted. And it's warm as tea ! There's a fortune in that little pot right there." It was the evil commercial side of my brain functioning. Rubbing it's hands together in greedy anticipation of Money, Property Prestige. " Come oooonn... You know that you can't nurture that culture all the way back through customs. Yeah. But I could get this guy's address and cut him in for half or more of everything ....And..and... And It would displace your primary purpose for being here. *Nothing's* worth that ! " I looked at the man in front of me. He was a kind, gentle fifty year old, Sharing his family culture wit the world, one soul at a time. I thanked him, indicated it was the *best* I'd ever tasted, through gesture. Then ventured off into the crowd again with a slightly less earnest eye searching for Abubacara. I recollected his words from the previous day : " You must go with this man. " There was an auspicious dread in him. He didn't expect to see me again. Days passed before I encountered him. It was nowhere near our mutual habitation. Purely by chance, I spotted him across the avenue a mile or more from our usual haunts. " Abubacara ! " On the other side of the sumptuous road he turned with an inquisitive glance transforming into astonishment. Recovering his composure he waves as he walks backward into the crowd saying : " See you later. " Then turned round never to look back again. " Hmmm..... He's scared shitless of me. Could be he thinks they're following me to get to him.. " I considered the thought. " Nooo... They never asked question one about him. Maybe I'll run him down, and confront him with his fear. Nah.... That would be totally chicken shit. ( It's an old Marine Corps term. ) Jer You should be grateful that he got you this far. And let your guide go in peace. Yeah I know, but I wanted to at least shake his hand, and say good-bye. I just lost a friend. " Alright enough of me talking to me. It was time to go to prayer. Let's roll back to my just leaving the Mullah's office and eating the Yogurt. What do you know ! It was time to go to prayer again. I got there a little late, and had to sit just outside of the shaded area on the edges of the center of Mosque. In so doing I noticed of my feet. Here was one of the many small miracles of my life. I'm Irish by descent. So the complexion is relatively light. Yet after the last six

days of wandering about Medina, in sandals and sunlight that could easily fry an egg, on any cement surface in this hamlet, my feet looked like everyone else's. These folks had been enduring this heat and had adjusted to it throughout centuries. Their feet just tanned more. Mine didn't tan. They didn't burn. But on the sides and the bottom, they looked thick and dry, like a new set of flesh colored tennis-shoes. It was like my feet were reincarnated from somewhere back there in the middle-ages. Around a half a mile away, on the other side of the Mosque, out on one of the avenues, I heard a man cough. It was a strong hacking cough. The kind that heralds the arrival of a robust new virus. Then there was two hacking. Then four, then twelve. etc... etc... You do the math. It was moving my way. Before the prayer was over there were two thousand people clearing their throats at different intervals. No one took much alarm, to them it was just a temporary scratchy throat, that would clear up in an hour or two. Or maybe a day. To me it was a life threatening plague that caused a fever and swelled the glands under my jaw on both sides. I headed for the infirmary. There were long lines of folks waiting to see the doctors, of which there were many. " Got to hand it to them. They've got the procedures for handling this many people down to a well oiled discipline. " I was in talking to a doctor in less than a half hour. " Your tonsils are very swollen. " " That's impossible. I just had them out. " " Well the area where they used to be. It is very inflamed. " " You , Got anything for that ? " " Yes. " He gave me nose drops, ear drops, and some kind of solution to swallow. There was a slight language barrier. Consequently he couldn't explain what was in the stuff you swallow. Hence ingesting it was out of the question. I figured : " Well at least I got the nose drops and the ear drops. I can take a chance on one, or possibly both of them. " Not so. The instructions were in Arabic. And I couldn't find anyone in the neighborhood who spoke both it and English. So I didn't know which, went where ? " Ah, Screw it. I'll just buy some lozenges. " I headed towards the sizeable avenue running straight down through the town to the Masjid. In its center I found a little shop among the looming modern looking buildings. It had honey-eucalyptus cough drops. Thinking : " This sure beats the hell out of nutin. " Just then the proprietor looked up and to his left, towards " Old Medina. " A dark glare tinted his eyes, as they squinted at a spectacle spied in the distance. My right hand pulled the white kerchief-like cloth I wore over my skull cap to one side, so I could view what he was staring at. At first I got an impressionistic view of something in the distance. It was twelve blocks away, and looked like a bunch of abstracts waving in the wind. As the square of fluttering things got bigger, I became aware of the people under the waving objects. They were flags and banners. The folks were protestors. I walked across the avenue and took a seat on the dark marble stoop surrounding the bank. And watched the parade of Iranians

walk defiantly waving their banners and flags. There was enough crude art work on them for me to glean their obvious meaning. Down with the state of Israel. There was a drawing of it. And “ US “ was represented with flames under Uncle Sam. I think he had a pitchfork in his hand. The thought was now occurring to me that : “ Maybe I’d better slip down the alley, and take the back way home. Then again, would I be welcome at the dwelling if this is the temperament of the majority at present ? Wait a minute pilgrim. Check out the expression on the faces of the on-lookers at the sidelines. “ They all had a visage of rage. And it was directed at the Iranians, haphazardly marching down the avenue, wearing clothes purchased from the “ GAP “ That’s right ! They were all dressed somewhat like the Beetles. Bell-bottoms etc.. Some even wore those little wine colored felt Hogan caps. “ This is weird. They’re all Middle Easterners, protesting America while wearing American clothes. Hmm... They look a little like me when I first arrived at the Hajj terminal. Except they all have dark hair. “ My white scarf covered my scalp, so I looked like everyone else watching the parade. I sat there scrutinizing till they had passed. Then I got up, turned off the avenue, and literally down the street. It was an incline of about twenty-five degrees that ran for three blocks before it leveled off. I found a place down the last block to quietly consumed chicken as usual. Then headed towards one of the many public bathrooms. They were plainly marked with international symbols. The little stick figures one with pants. One with a skirt. A long skirt. Needless to say the bathroom was crowded. They used the buddy system, cause the door to the stall had no latch on it. The next in line to use the stall would hold the door closed for the occupant. He would face the waiting crowd with one hand behind him grasping the door firmly, affording the occupant complete privacy. When I was done at the latrine, and through with the washing ritual at the sinks, in the next room, I wandered outside and sat on a stone block adjacent to the entrance. While drying my feet the rest of the way off, I’m noticing an Afghani man and his wife holding each-other up, due to a slight case of heat exhaustion. They’re headed straight for the door I’d just came out of. “ The men’s bathrooms. “ All the Arab men on then sidelines started yelling at them “ Hay ! You can’t go in there with her !” But these folks didn’t speak Arabic. So they just kept trudging along towards the men’s rest-rooms. Finally just before the entrance a youngster ran up and tapped them on the back and pointed each in the correct direction. The two were virtually reluctant to let go of each other. Thinking : “ These two are afraid if they disengage, When they come out, They might never meet up again. Poor babies. They’ll be ok. It’s kind of wonderful. Their connection’s so strong. They so desperately need each other. “ It was time to walk back towards the center of town. Soon it would be nearing the call to prayer. After walking the

level street in that direction for several blocks it was necessary, to ascend a flight of white modern stone stairs, about two blocks long, with several ten foot landings, or platforms along the way. At about half way up this climb was a landing with something piled partially between the platform and the stairs. From a distance it looked like someone had chopped up a piece of French furniture and left it there. I ignored it till I noticed the other people looking as we passed it by. So I looked too. Even as I was doing so I could hear the voice of my teacher in my mind's ear saying : " Don't look. " " No ! I think that's Julie's voice. " I looked : The first thing I noticed was the thick dark syrup-like blood on the stairs. Then up onto the platform where the body of someone, was indefinable as such. There didn't seem to be a head. So deciding what position the carcass was resting in was a challenge to my cybernetic system. In the past I'd drawn a lot of models, and many of them fancied themselves as contortionists. My mechanical-mind was working on that puzzle while my mystical self wasn't concerned with it. It was just physical matter. Fortunately my mystical self was firmly in control of my emotional self. I was deep enough in trance to be unattached. A sight like this would normally set most people from the West into a state of shock. The man to my right, who was closer to the clump of flesh and cloth, explained to me that the person was a " qapil " My first guess was murderer. Second guess was infidel. That thought aroused ever so slightly, my comfortably subdued emotional capacity. It was barely perceivable by me, and in no way denoted in my countenance. I concentrated on the space between my eyes, and the trance thickened significantly enough to slightly blur my vision. And make my mind blank out to a place where thought is without words and pictures. There's only the next step on the stairs to nowhere in particular. Each step feels slightly blissful. The ectoplasmic mist thinned as I climbed higher on the stairs. I was now looking at an old thin fragile man, with his head down concentrating on just trying to get up these stairs. People in their thirties and forties were rushing up the stairs like : " We'll be late for our blessings. " And in so doing were bumping the old man as they passed, each with enough force to practically knock him down. I said : " What's the matter with you people ? This is an old Man ! " As I stepped behind him knowing my statement would fall on deaf ears, and tightened my shoulder and lat muscles like I was going to lift something heavy, while taking sturdy direct steps behind the age-ed fellow. Folks were now bumping into me as they passed. Some of them were bouncing off as if they'd just grazed old the corner of a building. I looked up and saw a couple of the local young men sitting atop the high stoops on either side of the stairs smiling at me. Thinking : " It's nice to know someone appreciates me. " I'd reached the top of the stairs and was nearing the Mosque " Hmm.... I'm a little early. Maybe I'll look at that material shop. "

I couldn't help thinking how nice the girl that I'd left back in the San Fernando Valley would look in some of these exotic fabrics. It wouldn't hurt to get her something nice. Or if she didn't want it, the next girl in my life might. "Let's face it. I just love looking at, and assessing truly excellently crafted fabric. This stuff was not as good as the days of old, when everything was organic and made by hand. But they still had some very exotic elegant materials. I imagined them on various women in my previous sensual escapades. "Enough of this indulgence. None of those gals are in my life at the moment. So I'm not buying anything. But I've got to see that stuff in the back of the shop." In that instant, came the call to prayer. "Darn it .... I'm really late. "The people around me were setting up for the prayer right there on the sidewalk. They were lining up in rows, while rolling out their three-quarter body length prayer rugs in front of them. "Maybe I'd better buy a piece of fabric to shield myself from this dirty street surface, cause I'm going to have to do the prayer right here and now. Shoot.... I don't think there's enough time to buy a piece of cloth. The call to prayer has been sounded. All transactions must stop. Well I guess I'm gonna get dirty. And that's all there is to it "Just then a Bedouin man around my age unrolled and spread a piece of cardboard the length of his body on the dusty pavement just to my right. At a glance he saw my dilemma. Instantly he turned the cardboard sideways and beckoned me to use the other half. I fought back the tears that came to my eyes, as I accepted his invitation. I couldn't say no, in order to save him from getting even more soiled than he was, from having to do the prayer in this manner. But it would hurt his feelings to refuse his hospitality. So we did the prayer together. I was a little amazed how I was able to remember the next step. When and how to do all of the postures. Soon the prayer was over and the man was up and gone before I could say thank you. Oh ! That's right. There was something else that happened as I readied myself for the prayer. The owner of the fabric shop beckoned me back with a hand wave. I waved him off with a definite "No ! " Meanwhile a potential customer stepped out of the premises behind him and found a place not far from the door to set up for the prayer. The proprietor not wanting to lose a sale, brought a fabric the man had been looking at over to him, and pitched him on its quality. An officer of the "Morality Police " wearing a simple dark green uniform stepped up and started tongue-lashing the shop owner. When I first heard that term Morality Police it made my skin crawl. I thought : "Man, What do they do ! Arrest you if you pick your nose in public ? I'm afraid to ask. What are the rules ? " But now I was beginning to see that they were just enforcing good decent manners. If you come here to pray, Nobody's allowed to break your concentration. If I may be so crude as to say so. The shop owner was scared shitless. The punishment for messing with the Hajji's during prayer

was obviously severe. And you know what ? I was beginning to appreciate these Morality Police. They seemed to have my version of morality in mind. Well it was now time to go hunt for a rug shop, which I found on short order. I found a gold colored rug. And settled for it. But the one I was looking for was a mixture of deep blues and purples with a splash of magenta, with Sanskrit white writing trimmed in black, around it's edges. I had a vest made from a prayer rug of that description many years previous. It went well with my long hair and bell-bottoms. Lots of pretty girls were attracted to it. I thought the writing was just a design. I now knew it was a prayer. I was curious as to what prayer I was wearing. And if I liked it, I definitely wanted that rug. But it was nowhere to be found in Medina. I still have the gold one. Upon returning to the habitation, the young boy who served as the go-fer guy for the building, took pity on my somewhat cooked face. I don't know why my feet were exempt from the effects of the sun and my face was peeling from it. That's just the way it was. Well anyway he made me a gift of an old umbrella. I attempted to pay him for it. But he was emphatic about wanting it to be a gift. So I accepted it. I must have started to look pretty bad. I was feeling sicker with the virus I'd contracted at the Masjad two days previous. When I got up for the prayer the next morning I was a little worse. But I did manage to get in early enough to get a good spot in the Mosque for the prayer. Another young Pakistani sat next to me and when the prayer was over he said : " You don't say your prayers right. " I just took out the prayer written on the Mullah's stationary and pointed to the Arabic writing on the top and said : " Can you read this ? " " Sure I can read *this*. " I watched as his chin backed to his chest, and the blood ran from his head making him look like he's just seen a ghost. I continued : " This man says I'm to say the prayer in the manner in which I'm saying it. Do you wish to contradict him ? " His response : " I have to go. " He got up and exited hurriedly. Never to be seen by me again. It was a good feeling. In spite of how sick I was getting. " Maybe a glass of papaya juice will make me feel a little better. " I went in search of a stand that sells it. If I just drank water it processed too quickly, then I had to go through the whole washing ritual every time the urinal was used. So this was a good source of liquid. And it somehow made me feel a little better. I found one standing singularly on a dusty hill-side street at the edge of the urban center. The owner was discussing something of interest to him and two men wearing those cloths wrapped around their heads in such a skillful manner. They noticed me waiting in the background at a respectful distance, so as not to intrude on their conversation. The customers cast an eye in my direction, as if to say : " There's another paying customer. " The proprietor discounted my presence. And even told the other men something like : " Oh, Don't worry about him.

Ignore him and maybe he'll go away. I want to finish our conversation. How do I know ? Body language and tone of voice. After around seven minutes, their conversation was over. The men asked how much they owed him. He said three Riyal while indicating it with three fingers. They paid, said their final farewell and left. I then approached the stand. I half expected to be refused service. His disdain for me was written in his face, fostered by a prejudicial vibe. I asked him in the only tongue I had, my native tongue : " How much ? " He answered in Arabic while holding up four fingers. Thinking : " Hmm.. he really doesn't like me. This drink sells for three Riyal everywhere. " I took out a Riyal five note and handed it to him. He poured the drink into a Dixie cup and handed it to me with the change. I turned away taking a sip of the drink while walking a few steps down the hill. Then I noticed that I had two Riyal in my hand. " Wooo.... He gave me the wrong change. " I turned, started back up towards the stand, while raising my hand to the to get his attention, cause it looked like he was closing up. The proprietor immediately started waving me away, like : " Whatever you've got to say, I don't want to hear it ! " I continued to advance, and spoke while indicating numbers with my fingers. " You said the drink cost *four* Riyal. I gave you *five*. You gave me back *two*. I owe you one. The expression on his face changed to pensive as he took the Riyal. He then looked more directly at me and said in perfect American English : " You, You are a *real* Muslim. " I responded with one of the few words I know in Arabic : " Shukran " ( Thank you ) turned and walked down the hill thinking : " I guess the nuns weren't all bad. They taught some basics of right and wrong. " When the call to prayer came at dusk I was between the Mosque and the habitation. The crowds were even bigger now. I was nine blocks from the Masjad. The people were lining up for the prayer on the sidewalks, and on the concrete island in the middle of the avenue. I laid out my new prayer rug, and joined them on the island in the center. Soon the day was at its end. I retired early and slept feverishly well. So deep it seemed dreamless. The next morning I dragged myself out to the island in the middle of the avenue for the prayer at dawn. It wasn't an easy task. I was even sicker than the day before. So after the prayer I went directly back to the room to sleep. Soon it was time for the second prayer session of the day. I knew that landing in a hospital was the next step, unless a little humility was exercised. " Humility is the exact appraisal of self. " I appraised my condition as : " Seriously infected. And in need of a lot of uninterrupted sleep. " I told myself : " So you're not going to be able to finish the forty prayer periods in Medina. It's not a Hajj requirement. Sleep in. Get some strength. Go to the airport. Get a plane to Jeddah. Slumber at the terminal for a couple of days. You should be well by then. At that point go to

Mecca. That's what you're here for. " So I drifted off into deep motionless sleep. Two hours later : " What is that ? " It was a sound coming from the doorway. A very nice looking twenty year old African girl standing there yelling to me to get up, it was prayer time. I thought : " Well maybe I can get up. " And rosé my head off the clump of cloths I used for my pillow. " No, This aint gunna work. " I was exhausted to the point of being dizzy. When she realized I wasn't getting up she started telling me : " God is most great. God is most great. God is most great. " Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar. I think she was trying to say : " If you ask Allah to raise you up, He will do it. " I knew if I got up, I was just going to get worse. So I stayed down till she left. Then I dragged myself up, wet my shirt thoroughly, drank some water, and went back to sleep for five more hours. I didn't feel great. Just better enough to wash off, pick up my pack and head out the door in the direction of the airport. I could hear and see the planes, coming and going, from some point, at the far edge of the town. Walking in the direction of the sound was simple enough. When I reached the rim of the municipality, there it was. About a mile out into the desert with waves of heat radiating off the ground preceding it. My head was after me. Saying things like : " What if you can't get a plane ? " " Then I'll sleep on the floor at the airport, just like everybody else does..... Ok, Now where is a cab or preferably a bus that's going that way ? " I spotted a couple of cabs loitering outside of an aged convenience store, and steered myself in their direction, entered the store, bought three sixteen ounce bottles of water, shoved two in my pack. Then while sipping sparingly on the third inquired who were the drivers of the cabs ? A hatless man of about thirty stepped forward. He wanted two days rent

to drive me a mile across the desert to a place that was in plain sight.

I assumed that whoever owned the other cab, was listening to the greatly over priced conversation, and hadn't made a counter-offer. So it was time to hit the pavement. Thinking : " I'm an ex-Marine. We walked through jungle heat in Taiwan, for a day and a half with four twenty minute breaks. I can make this mother-fucker. It's only a mile. " So I started off trudging up the road in the direction of the buildings in the distance. I was about a quarter of the way there when the cab pulled up alongside. I figured he's probably'ed picked up another traveler and was about to make me an offer I couldn't refuse. He was alone, and wanted to take me the rest of the way for the price of one days rent. " Nah... That's Ok, I can make it there. I'm not even half way through my first bottle of water. " Then he offered the ride, for a half days rent. Some people have their conscience to live with. I was just about positive he was worried he'd have to tell his wife that night, that a man was dead, cause he was too greedy. So I gave him a break and took the offer. This airport wasn't

as heavily guarded as the one in Jeddah. It was pretty small compared to the one of my intended destination. I expected to land at the Hajji Terminal. Instead we landed at a terminal seven miles away. I asked around, about how to get a bus to the Hajj Terminal. And was told to take a cab. Even if you wanted to take a cab with four other people it would cost you around eighteen bucks. I haggled continuously “ No, No. That’s too much! “ One smiling Arabian passing by said to me : “ You want to take a bus ? I drive a bus that goes past the Hajj Terminal. I’ll let you off there.“ “ Hum dil Allah ( Praise be to Allah ) An honest man. “ He smiled even broader as the cab drivers complained at him in Arabic. Half way to the bus I asked the price of the bus fare. He really had integrity. It was less than a dollar America. I gave him a dollar. He insisted on giving me the change in coin. I didn’t even know there *were* coins. Everyone usually paid in Riyal notes for everything. I was now familiar with the Saudi dime. Or the equivalent there of. I had two of them, and a coin the size of a quarter. The color of the metal is still a mystery to my memory. Soon the tent like structures on top of the terminal came clearly into sight. And when we were parallel to it, the bus stopped. And the driver said to me : “ There it is ! “ “ Don’ you go past the entrance ? “ “ No, That’s all the way around the other side. Just climb the fences. “ There were two of them running parallel, around ten feet apart. Twenty Arabian men rushed off the bus, and ran at the initial fence, like they were charging the first echelon of an enemy encampment. I got off the bus and waved good-bye to the driver. Naturally paranoia ensued prior to all other thought processes. “ Did this guy just screw me ? “ I didn’t see any trucks driving up from opposite sides of the barrier ready to deploy troops to capture, and incarcerate us for having broken the rules. The fences were the cyclone type . You know. The kind you see at school-yards and parks. A ten foot high latticed thick wired structure with three inch square spaces of air flowing through it. Most of the men scaling the barrier were doing so wearing thongs. A few had their thongs in their hands and were climbing it barefoot. I was sure those were bona-fide Bedouin. Then of course there were the two with sandals. I don’t know if they were just lucky, or smart. As for me. It was time to kick off my thongs, get out my tennies, put them on lace em up. And be over that fence, and the next one before most of the climbers. My work required a lot of climbing. I wasn’t really relaxed till being thoroughly mixed in with the general population in the terminal for at least twenty minutes. Then I picked out a spot on the floor, laid my pack down tied it to my leg, stretched out on the cool marble surface with a rolled up shirt for a pillow, and drifted off into one of those dreams where everything’s solid and firm, like I’m in a realm, harboring three dimensions and *mass*. I awoke with dry mouth, and a sore throat. It was time to get some cough drops, and that vapor rub, that everyone would use on their nostrils to

sooth the effects of the hot air. In Medina the environment was swelteringly arid. This place being not far from the coast, the atmosphere was somewhat sultry. It was preferable. The moisture was kinder to my throat. But I'm describing the external. Inside of the terminal there was air-conditioning. It was perfectly balanced so that every part of this huge structure had exactly the same coolness. An equilibrium so perfect, that it rendered no chill. It was the virus that was aching my throat. "Ok, Water, cough drops and bathroom." I searched out those items in turn. Having gained use of them all, I laid back down and slept for another five hours, woke drank two cups of water, went to the can, slept another two. That was my methodology for the next ten hours. Each time going through the washing ritual after using the facility. Three Syrians in their early sixties or possibly late fifties with a hard life, set up camp on the cool floor around six foot from my location. I think at that time Syria had a military draft. So all of it's able bodied males had served time in uniform. The leader of the three was at one time a sergeant or a major. Or maybe a sergeant-major. He was the type that led, and inspired the troops. The second in pecking order was a sturdy, happy looking fellow with a mouth full of glistening gold teeth running sideways up his smiling face. I found him reminiscent to that modern art painting from the forties. "Nude Descending Staircase." He reminded me of the staircase. At first I thought he was just trying to shock folks a little. But, No. He was genuinely good natured and happy..... And he wasn't stupid. The third in the group reminded me of the fuzzy headed third member of the "Three Stooges" He was fat like a pear and carrying a medium size exquisite Persian rug on his shoulder. The man whined about its weight as he put it down on the smooth surface of the floor. The others gave him a glance, then continued laying out their gear. Better to not answer, less he complain some more. Two and a half days had passed. I was feeling considerably -better as I woke. The Syrians were packing up. The lead man motioned to me and said Mecca ? As he pointed to where the taxis were stationed. I nodded yes with a smile and rolled up my things, packed them in the haversack and was ready to go. Thinking : " The more the merrier the cheaper when it comes to taxis in this place. " I figured I could probably find lodging when we arrived there. " It's only twenty-six miles. " We were gunna get there soon. The black sedan we hired to take us there was doing around eighty. There was nothing but cell phone relay units sticking up like black iron skinny rods trying to scratch the sheltering sky. " There it is ! " We were entering an area surrounded by brown scorched hills backed by mountains of a similar ilk. Thinking : " Could the sun have burned the top of those rocks black over thousands of years ? This isn't that much different than Medina. Except everything's bigger. Or it seems so, cause the buildings are built into

the side of the hill surrounding El Haram Masjad.” We were now at the side of one of its long, enormous walls. “ Maybe we’ll stop, and take a look inside ! “ No, the lead man was procuring lodging. Everyone he talked with, pointed way out up into the hills. That’s when I looked to the immediate area above us, at the remains of an ancient structure three and half stories high built into the side of a cliff of equal height. On either side was recently constructed modern buildings. “ I can’t believe they’re tearing out magnificent historical monuments, to put up straight lined modernistic characterless blocks of black glass and steel. Oh God. Allow me to release it. And let the world evolve on its own terms. It seems that all things of character and flow must give way to the glitter and glow..... of plastic. And what is plastic at Its base ? Oil ! ..... Drop the subject. Let go of the resentment. One day they’ll turn back to building with natural materials. “ Then I’m pausing to view the Masjad : “ What am I talking about ? Look at this place ! It’s made out of the finest natural materials money can buy. “ A yearning to see the rest of it was welling up from within. I figured the Syrians would probably wave me good bye. And head out

to where ever they had arranged to lay their heads in slumber. When they did so. This magnificent composition was mine to peek into, and maybe be able to see the structure of Kaba at its center. Then possibly undergo a strong flow of trance from just viewing it. After all I could feel it all the way from Jeddah. Kaba had this magnetic pull. Let’s face it. I could sense it’s incantation all the way from America. Where ever I was, it was out there drawing me in. “ Mecca, Mecca, Mecca, Mecca, Mecca, Mecca. Hmmm..... That’s not echoing in my head ! I wonder when it stopped ? Amsterdam ! I think it stopped in Amsterdam. “ “ Abdullah ! “ The head man of the three-o, was motioning to me as he rattled off some words about what he was pointing to. Some place in the hills. He then ascertained from the dumb look on my face, that I had no idea what he’d just said. So he just motioned me to follow. I had apparently been adopted. This was kind of nice. Having a new little group to travel with. I really liked the lead man. He was a good and decent soldier. The number two man smiled at my mild surprise with a look of : “ It’s ok trooper, You’re one of us now, “ as we began climbing a single dull Naples-yellow foot-path, pointing up into the dark gray-red mountainous hills, where there seemed to be a sparse number of houses, about three or four miles ascending the slope. At the halfway point we stopped at a little school house, where the teacher was instructing five and six year-old boys how to read. When I was that age Dominican nuns taught from “ Fun With Dick And Jane ! “ I couldn’t see properly. Things kept inverting. A B C became A C B. Then back to A B C. So learning to read was impossible. They started at the first row. And each kid read the first page with the help of the nun- in her late teens or early twenties.

I was in the third row. So I just listened attentively. And by the time they got to me. I had it memorized. “ Run Dick run ! Run, run run. See Dick run ! “ Then came the same line for Jane, Sally and that mutt Spot. Any moron could memorize that ! This sweet dumb nun had no idea I was faking it. Had I been born in Arabia, these guys would’ve been on to me pronto. The kids in *this* school, like the kids in the whole country, Were being taught to read directly from the Quran. It was prayer time. So we were invited to line up and do the prayer with the group in the school. I just followed what everyone else did. And hoped that these little kids didn’t notice, that I knew way less than they did. In some manner it seemed that I’d come full circle. And I’d gotten away with it again. After the prayer the school master sat and chatted with the other three men, while I gazed off into the mountains looking for Mohammed’s cave. He spent part of his summer days sitting in a cave. That’s where he began to channel the Quran. That cave had to’ve been a power spot, and I wanted to see if I could sense it out there. Like I could feel the pull of Kaba. Thinking : “ Nothing yet. But I know your out here somewhere. “ It was time to journey farther up into the hills to our place of lodging. We stopped at a two story house not dissimilar to many I had viewed in the San Fernando Valley as a realtor. It was a two family four bedroom home, sitting four miles up the hill overlooking a small valley with a dry riverbed running through it, with the outskirts of Mecca at its opposite side. The structure was typical of so many California condos. “ I’ve come double digit thousands of miles to stay at a standard valley condo ? “ We went inside and solidified the rest of the negotiations, the head man had arranged on the phone from Mecca, while I was busy assessing the Masjid. It turned out to be around the same price as a cheap motel in the aforementioned San Fernando Valley. CA. We paid for three days in advance, then were led into a large nicely wall to wall carpeted room, with air-conditioning. It was kind of interesting in that, there was no furniture. Just ornate firmly packed log like pillows. The three men set their gear down, and immediately positioned themselves against the wall, as a back support, with the pillows as their armrests. I thought that was pretty cool, till I realized there was only three pillows. Situating myself against the far wall, I arranged my pack, to support my right arm in a similar fashion. Our host then returned with a tray, four cups, and a gentle little boy in front of him. The child was as kind and tender as a puppy, with the eyes of a saint. The father, a man of about fifty, stout six foot, thick featured, with the countenance of a merchant. The Hajji was a source of income to him. I felt no vibration of reverence for the place across the riverbed. Or maybe it was just a lack of reverence for Hajjis. Thinking : “ Perhaps I’m being too judgmental. The boy is like a beam of starlight. How could the dad be so contrary to that ? “ The child lifted each cup from the

tray, and distributed them to us, beginning with me. I motioned to him to give it to the head Syrian first. He nodded and did as I wished. A dark look momentarily came over the face of the father for a split second. Like telling his boy to do anything, was a personal affront to him. But it pleased the Syrian greatly. And in seeing this. The father changed his mental bearing. I had no sooner finished the first tea, which was wondrously soothing to my throat, and a second was brought to me by the boy. I think he had possibly asked the others and they declined preferring to go to sleep. I accepted. The boy brought the tea and enjoyed watching me drink it. He then ran off to the kitchen to fetch another. I didn't tell him to do so, but I would have gladly drank a third. I was a little stunned to find that he was sent back with water in the tea cup. I motioned to him to not bring back any more, smiled gently to him, and waved goodbye, gesturing that I was going to sleep now. He beamed a smile back to me and left the room. I arranged my pack like a pillow and drifted off immediately into a deep sleep. I woke feeling stronger. The Syrians were washing up, preparing to go down the hill. Their head man motioned to me to get ready. So I went into the bathroom and washed up. Then the host surprised me by giving us something like chicken, and a piece of bread, which hit the spot. I was feeling really good. The head man gestured to me that it was time to change into my Ihram. He was already wearing his. So I did so, along with the cumbersome money-belt I'd bought at the Hajj Terminal. I had also bought my Ihram there. It's two white towels your supposed to wear when you walk around Kaba. They're about five or six foot long. You wrap them around the top and the bottom of your body. You're supposed to wear nothing else. In the literature it was warned not to cheat by wearing white jockey shorts under our Ihram. I made the mistake of buying the most expensive Ihram, which had more nap to it, making it warmer, than the average one that most Hajjis were wearing. As soon as I was suited up, the man of the house told me that I wasn't wearing my money belt properly. He showed me how to hide it rapped up in my Ihram. He then explained through gesturing that there were people out there that would cut your belt loose and run with it. Then he motioned me out on to the little balcony. I thought he was going to point out something of historical interest. No, he instead showed me a not too healthy looking sheep with a lead tied to its neck. And some dry looking hay, I assumed for it to eat. He motioned that in three days, it was his duty to slit it's throat, and give the meat to the less fortunate than he. That sheep didn't look hungry. I was sure he'd picked up the vibe that his days were numbered. I backed away from furthering that conversation. And the Syrians beckoned me. They were all wearing white and ready to go. It just now dawned on me. That guy wasn't a merchant. He was a cop. Who else

would be familiar with the rarest behavior in Mecca ? Stealing. The punishment is amputation.

It was time to single file down the mountain silently. The school teacher was acknowledged by barely a nod, as we passed his structure, then venturing across the arid river-bed onto the narrow path, leading to the outskirts of the town, at the bottom of a bowl like formation, made up of the hills surrounding the most valuable thing in the Muslim world. That little square building : Kaba. I ignored the pull of its energy as we approached from afar. It tugged like a thick rope attached to my solar-plexus, drawing me in like a heavy duty winch, was at the other end cranking from center of the little over populated town. I had a sensation like I could almost fly over the heads of the three guys leading me, and run the rest of the way to El Haram. That was only a feeling. My physical body was a tad concerned about making it there, and back. As we entered the hamlet the pull changed. It was as if I'd entered into a yoke of ectoplasm that embraced enthralled and nurtured the whole place. We neared the entrance of one of the many doors to the great Masjid surrounding the shrine. In my life, terror was my most frequent form of excitement. Just plain excitement was reserved for the middle class and the rich. Excitement in a poor kid's life is when the utilities company turns off your lights in the middle of the winter. Or the truant officer is at the door one more time.

My head was after me one last time. I looked around at the enormous amount of guards in green uniforms surrounding the place and thought : " I'm still pretty sick. Maybe they won't let me in ! " And there was also a twinge of a fear, that they *would* let me in.

We were at the open doorway passing the guards, now came my last thought : " I might *die* here."

Then we passed through the doorway, walked about fifty feet, and started down one of the many marble stairways, covered with thick rugs like in a movie theater. " There must be thousands of pillars throughout the circumference of this place. " I tried to peek between them, and could see nothing from the stairs. One of the many guards guided us to a clear and evenly spaced area covered with exquisite rugs, on a platform large enough for each row of pilgrims to comfortably do the prayer. When I got situated, I realized the pillars were no longer in the way. " There it is, Kaba. I'm looking at Kaba. We went through a little prayer routine. Each of the Syrians had a different one. Or they were at different stages of doing the same one. I couldn't follow along, so I just sat with my legs under me, knees pointed forward, with my hands flat on my thighs, staring in an opened eye meditation at Kaba. Within a few seconds I was feeling this large aura around me. The lead man motioned to head for the stairs. I got up and moved in that direction. He followed me on to the stairs. Then led me down them.

It was time. We were going down to make the walk around Kaba seven times. I didn't dare think. I just followed. If I was to see my teacher I would probably see him here ! We were now close enough to the circling white mass of people wearing Ihrams, to see the ectoplasm that streams in from all over the world when the prayer is sent out to Mecca, from the devout sending their energy five times daily. Everyone was immersed in a glimmering cloud of white nebula. I could see sparks in this ethereal substance surrounding and flowing through everything. When I stepped into the crowd of hajjis walking around the shrine, the feeling was : " If I resist this energy I'll explode. I have to make myself like air, and let it flow through me. So I stayed in a constant state of release. " The lead man broke out his pocket size Quran and invited me to say the words with him. I couldn't follow. He didn't mind. He just said the prayers for both of us. As pilgrims pass the door to Kaba it is traditional to get as close to the black crystal stone as possible. I think it was just above and to the right of the frame. While passing by we put out our right hand towards the rock. It had an interesting effect on the gray matter. Suddenly you were rendered thoughtless, and didn't recover your conscious navigational skills till you were all the way around the other side of the building. I was like a sauntering zombie, every time I passed the thing. It would scramble my thought wave patterns. By the second time around, I had no idea where the Syrians had gone. " They're probably roaming around wondering where *their* minds went. " Now being on the opposite side of the building, my wits had returned. I started walking backwards for a while looking to see if the Syrians were somewhere behind me. " I'm sure they're not in front of me. Where are they ? " Bump.. . " Why don't you watch where you're going ? " The statement was made in perfect English. I turned back forward, to see that I had bumped into a little old man. He could have been Arabian or Persian, I couldn't tell for sure. But upon viewing him, it was apparent that he wasn't the one who had addressed me. The little frail fellow was fighting for his life. There was six people in their thirties of both sexes standing around grandpa, fanning him with pieces of cardboard as he gasped for breath. Again the tallest of the males said to me : " You should watch where you're going ! " While looking at the old man : " Sorry I was looking for my friends. " " That's no excuse. " " I then looked in his eyes and said : " Sorry, I have to go. " As I turned and stepped off into the crowd circling past the little group, like water flows round a rock in a stream.

I was now circumnavigating Kaba for the third time. In this instance I was even closer to The Black Rock, while trying to avoid being in the center, when rounding the other side, and regaining consciousness of my body. I didn't want to encounter that family for an encore. As a general rule, while rounding Kaba, women are not allowed to wear veils. However they bring

sheer material with them and cover their faces if they think men are looking at them. “Wow, I’m really close to The Rock ! “ In that instant, with my peripheral vision, I saw a slim wiry older woman wearing white, with a black wide-spaced wool fishnet veil, over her head. The spaces in the garment were extreme. Her face was easily visible through it. I felt her eyes burning into me. But when I looked directly at her, she showed no sign of acknowledging my existence. I swung my head forward and continued to walk. Again I could feel her staring intensely at me. I turned to look at her again. This time she twisted her head sideways to look at me with a witch-like glare of “ *WELL !! ?* “ I immediately turned my head forward with the intention of keeping it that way. Five steps more and : “ Wait a minute ! That woman had the exact facial features of my teacher. It was the same visage as the one on the book with the eyes pointing to the East ! “ I turned to the space where I could still feel her presence..... There was no one there.

while pondering the face of my teacher, in my mind’s eye, I rounded the corner to the other side of Kaba. “ Hmmm..... I kinda didn’t black out this time. Maybe I’ve gotten used to that rock. “ Just then the Syrians filed in behind, and beside me. We walked round the building reaching for the rock four more times. I indicated to the head guy that we had done the required seven times round. He shook his head : “ No. “ And motioned to just keep going round. Thinking : “ Maybe the stone fried him, and he doesn’t yet know how many times he’s been around. “

“ What are you doing here alone ?! “ The voice was coming from my right side. The Syrian lead man was on my left and the other two were to the left of him. “ Have you lost your group ? “ I looked to my right and saw a tall, slim, clean shaven Arabian, with the demeanor of an American, when he spoke to me. He was apparently leading a group of people around Kaba. They were all sticking close together. He spoke again with great concern : “ You should join my group ! “ Somehow they looked like a flock of sheep. “ No. You don’t have to worry about me. I’m with these men. “ The Syrian with the staircase-teeth gave him a wicked smile, striking terror into the heart of the well meaning shepherd. The stone was coming up. The Syrians and I jockeyed farther to the left for a greater proximity. The hajji Shepherd couldn’t leave his flock. I could hear his faint..... “ But..... But.... “ Then Hum dill Allah, He was no longer drawing attention to me. Thinking : “ Thank you God. Things have finally settled down. I wonder how many times the lead man wants to circle this building ? It’s going on number ten. “ In that instant came the call to prayer. I looked up and we were in direct alignment with the Black Chrystal Stone twenty-five foot away. We got down and did the prayer right there in place. The head man’s timing was flawless. “ Boy I’m really getting the full treatment here. “ Then the prayer was over, And I almost didn’t want

to leave. I'd become accustomed to the energy. We circled gradually to the outboard edges of the thousands of people in white till we were at one of the many staircase leading up and out of the Great Masjid. I lingered for an instant to look back at Kaba one last time, before accepting that I would probably never again see it personally. When I reached the street I suddenly realized the Syrians were no longer with me. "It doesn't matter. I know the way back to the house. And even if I forgot it. I have my money and passport with me. I could just buy new clothes and go home early. I've done pretty much what I'd come here for. I've made it here to Kaba. But I would like to finish the Hajj. Enough thinking. It's time to shop." I started looking around the town for open food markets. There were lots of them selling many things of interest to me. Dates and figs. Biggest I've ever seen. They were vending them by the kilograms. I only needed about five dates. That would probably last me two and a half days. I indicated : "How much for these five." The vender looked at me like maybe I'd contaminated the dates, and waved to just go ahead and take them. I insisted on giving him at least two Riyal for the hand-full. He reluctantly took the money. Thinking : "I must look pretty bad ! That old guy appraised me like he was viewing a leper. The sun had baked my face pretty good in the last twenty odd days. With all the peeling, different shades of red, and the dust from the dry riverbed, I must have looked like I was ready to star in "The Mummies Tomb." While munching sparingly on one of the dates, I strolled slowly passed various outdoor food markets. "Hmm..... I'm heading downhill." I was taking more time to view my surroundings. "This place looks like the town in "Shane." It had a wooden boardwalk running down the lane, just like in those old western cow-boy movies. Except there were little general stores running all the way down that street selling very different things. For instance, one of the stalls had assorted substances collected from the desert. Various plants, the use of which I hadn't a clue. But among them there was a distinct scent, which I remembered from my childhood around Easter time in the Catholic church. Up by the altar, they'd wave that brass incense holder around with frankincense and myrrh in it. "I recognize the smell of Myrrh ! But which one of these things is it." "Hmmm..... I guess it's Ok to sniff this stuff. After all, that's what it's here for." I finally pinned down the smell. "It's one of those chunky yellow white rocks ! How's that possible ? Where do you get a rock that smells good ? And where would they mine this stuff ? And how come I never heard of mining Myrrh ? "Well the answers simple. It was the gum or sap, of the Murrh tree. These guys must have had some really big trees. Cause they were selling very large chunks of the stuff. So large that they looked like busted up chunks of big rocks. However they were just broken up globs of resin. Thinking : "I wonder if I should buy some ? Nah.... They probably

wouldn't let me through customs with it. Besides I'm not feeling well enough to carry the extra weight. "

Shouts of alarm were coming from farther up the primitive street. For a moment I wondered if Iranians were staging a demonstration. Something was coming down that dirt road, and it was tilting our way. If you've ever seen the movie: "The Blob," This was surrealistically similar. "My God ! That stuff's thick. What the hell is that ! " It was filling up the entire street like a giant helping of chocolate pudding sludgging steadily in our direction. Before I could figure which way to run, it gurgled passed me, just one inch lower than the wooden walkway. It was then I caught the smell. Farther up the road a giant sewage pipe had burst, and an abstract hefty snake of human waste was slithering its way down the road, into the valley of the dry riverbed. " Should I run down the street on the boardwalk, hoping this stuff will thin out, and maybe I can get farther to the right, or left, avoiding it's central path ? Or should I run up the boardwalk to higher ground ? What if another pipe bursts up there ? I'll just be running right into it ! " I turned to see what one Bedouin looking soul decided to do. He had pulled up his thin robe-like garment to well above his knees, and was walking shaking-ly across the street to the other side, through a depth of a foot and a half of this vile stuff. " Oh God !! I hope that's not the only way out ! If that guy goes down, he's sure to get Hepatitis and Lord knows what else, and I don't want to follow in his foot-steps. I wonder if these little structures are strong enough to stand the onslaught if we climb on top of them ? " Then I thought of my probable legacy : " He went to Mecca seeking a spiritual experience, and drowned in a river of shit. " " No, No ! No fucken way ! I'm gunna survive this. No matter what happens ! " It was then that I noticed. The snake was deflating. Hope was on the horizon. I chanced walking down the boardwalk another hundred yards. The swelling snake of slithering slime had flattened like a deflating inner-tube to a level of two inches and falling. I paced farther. The now puddle of excrement was veering left. Fortunately my path across the valley of the dry riverbed was to the right. " I will sleep deep tonight. I'm spent ! "

I woke late the next morning. The Syrians were already out and about, returned, exhausted and sleeping. I was dehydrated and sick to my stomach. At some point I'd bought a quart bottle of water the night before. " It's best to drink half of it. " I used the bathroom. That made me feel just as bad, or worse. " I don't know if I caught something from that brown river last night. Or it's just the same virus asserting itself again. But I'm sure that I'm in no condition to finish the rest of the Hajj. I'd say goodbye to these guys. But they might try to persuade me to stay. I know ! That I have to go. That's why they aren't stirring, Even though I've made

some sounds while packing and using the john. There not supposed to wake up. I'm supposed to get to the Hajj Terminal now. If I get any sicker there, the attendants will put me in the hospital and I'll survive. If I try to finish the Hajj I think I've got a good chance of dying. " The pack was on my back. Everyone in the whole house was asleep. I slipped quietly out and down the path thinking : " I hope this half bottle of water's enough to get me to the market area. I need three more bottles, minimum. " With head hanging down, I put one foot in front of the other, in a descending trudge through the foot hills. Then journeyed across the valley of the wide dry riverbed, all the way concentrating on maintaining a trance, cutting the pain in half or better. Often I felt no pain. Just spacey..... " What am I complaining about ? I always feel spacey. Maybe I can finish the Hajj..... No you can't. If you go out and stand in the sun for a half a day on the Plains of Arafat, you'll drop-dead. You're going home ! So get used to the idea..... Where the fuck am I gunna live when I get there ?..... We'll cross that bridge when we come to it. "

Enough internal dialogue. I was passing the school-house and the school master was saying something to me. I didn't have the energy to respond. Just getting father up the embankment, and ascending the path to the street, another mile and a half away, was all I could concentrate on. He took it personal. When I was about a block away, he said something that had the tone of : " Ah, Go on. Who needs you anyway ? " " Hmmm.... Didn't he notice how sick I looked. I'm in no condition to socialize. I need to get to some place where hospitals are readily available. " At last, I was on the path leading up into the little city. Then walking on pavement. A good sign that busses, planes and such are soon within reach. It was noon when I encountered what I was sure, was a central bus station. I went up to the window and told the clerk I wanted a bus to the Hajj Terminal. " No ! No....Taxi ! " " No I want a bus. " Thinking : " Just my luck. This guy doesn't speak a word of English. I'm just gunna sit here and rest on this bench till I see someone who looks like he's of the intellegencia. " If I was in Santa Barbara I'd look like a soiled bum who decided to take up residence at the local bus depot. It took around twenty-two minutes of me just sitting there in a daze. The attendant came around the counter and tapped me on the shoulder and motioned for me to follow him out the side door. I thought : " Maybe he's sent for the authorities. I don't think they'll take me anywhere except to a hospital. And at this point. That would be just fine. " That aint what happened. He pointed to the curb. There was a bus standing at it. Then said : " Hajj Terminal. " And walked back inside. " Maybe he's sending me anywhere on this bus just to get rid of me. Hmmm..... Maybe where it's going, somebody speaks English. " Stepping on to the bus while gesturing to the driver : " Hajj Terminal ? " He gestured to pay him and get all the way on the bus. I pulled out fifteen Riyal and some coins. He

took a dime. A Saudi dime ! And told me to get on in. He was speaking Arabic so I didn't know where I was going for a dime. But I was sure it couldn't be the terminal. Lo and Behold ! Hum dil Allah. Twenty minutes later we pulled into the Hajj Terminal. I didn't even have to climb the fence. Just walk through the doors. " It won't be long now. I'll be on a plane. Then back home recuperating. " " Not so fast. " said fate. No one was going home just now. The Hajj was nowhere near finished. So this was kind of a down time in the terminal. It was explained to me that there was one ticket seller behind a particular door. An enthusiast, that didn't like the guy on the other side of the aforementioned door, pounded on it every twenty minutes saying in English : " Come on out ! We know you're in there. Come out and do your job. " Then he came over to me and said : " He's probably drunk. " I'm thinking : " Drunk ? ! " I remembered my Israeli friend telling me : " If you're caught inebriated there. It's a hundred lashes in public. " I'm thinking : " This guy may not come out for days ! " I also thought : " Maybe this other guy is just putting me on. Maybe they'll be no one behind that door for another week. " Nevertheless. I camped out in front of it. And it opened eighteen hours later. There was no other entrance that I could ascertain. The guy must have been sleeping in there. He looked sober enough. Then he processed my ticket. I was ready to fly out on the next flight. Two hours later. Next a touchdown in Amsterdam. I had a five hour wait till my plane took flight. I asked if it was possible to leave the terminal ? " Not unless you want to alter your ticket by paying a couple of hundred dollars more to stay here for a few days. " " Naah..... I'll just wait the five hours and head on home. " Then I thought about that statement. " Home ? I don't exactly have a home. Jesus ! Baba, What have you gotten me into ? I don't know where the fuck I'm liven now. Aah..... It'll all work out. I'm still in the union. There's lots of work. All I have to do is get somebody to let me sleep on their couch till I nail down a room somewhere. I could afford an apartment. But I'd rather get a room, and save my money for another trip. "

