

WORD COUPLINGS

Play and Ponder

By

Jill Campbell

Author, Illustrator

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A Small Thing

A word is just a thought materialized
On paper just a line wrinkled into a recognizable shape
Communicated verbally, a word is nothing more
Nothing less
Than a pattern of pressed air, disturbed molecules

In the smile of an earthly benign day
A word sinks to millimicron status
Not observable even from the nearest
Celestial body
No, from that reflection the only manmade object
Observable is the Great Wall of China.

Hordes built it
Numbers of men with commas and zeros after
The initial numeral,
Years built it.
Spans of seasons including torrents and tornadoes,
Rains and riots, frost and heavy summer sweat.

Next to the Great Wall, the only observable from the cosmos,
The only one on earth,
What is a word?

Does it have significance?

Can it?

Might it?

Might it be that mighty?

Might it be mightier than a great construction?

Unuttered a word

Can exist in a smile

And that smile can reach from horizon to horizon

For the Great Wall is created,

But a smile is creative.

It can alter the path of a life,

And that life reflects

Action upon reaction

On another's life.

The clouds change their patterns:

Action upon reaction

Ephemeral, they only exist in our imagination.

No wall, no greatness

Just changing clouds

Which change the pattern of wind

The pattern of weather

The climate alters

The flora and fauna, monkeys and cockatiels,

Mosses and chick peas

Are altered.

Patterns annihilate, patterns proliferate

A fern becomes extinct

A new breed of mammal is cloned

As the patterns change

With a smile

With a word

Even a small thing

Moves everything

Including you and I,

Including unuttered words.

Anticipation Faces Off Expectation

Standing in the corner, looking for all the world like a dinosaur out of water, Expectation shifted his weight not-as-lightly-as-he-would-like from one foot to the other and back again in a slowly changing fashion. Expectation was confident of his victory as he had just completed a fairly exhausting psychological battery. He had discovered his own he-wished-were-more-hidden traits were his extraversion, his judging manner, his choosing to sense rather than feel and his rationality.

Anticipation stood somewhat more shyly, perhaps coyly, for she knew intuitively Expectation's characteristics, much more so than he knew hers. She intuited her intuitions as well as her perceptive mode of operation and her slight tendency toward introversion and it was her feelings, not her rationality that guided her.

Who would make the first move?

You, I think, would guess first that it would be Expectation, for he is male and males are aggressive, at least more aggressive than females in general. Expectation has that social acute sense of THE ENTRANCE. He will move first, extraversion guiding the way.

You're sure of this?

It might be Anticipation that gets the interaction going. Remember she's the sensitive one and cares about the needs of the other before herself. She would melt back, relax and wait for the first opportune moment to join the interaction. Then, again, you could think that supporting, as she does, a bit too dependent, more so than one would think by her given name, "Anticipation" she should have bits and pieces of herself scattered all over the who-knows-where.

In actuality, Anticipation is not too worried, she intuits so well that she knows Expectation's every next move, although he cannot know, or even guess, Anticipation's next move.

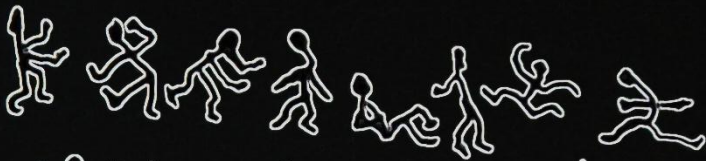
Anticipation can fly, even though Expect didn't agree it was possible. Expect can perform with certain knowledge of the way others think of

him. He can keep a consistent character, a key factor in the face off between himself and Anticipation.

Who do you think is gaining in the face off? Do you lean toward Expectation? I did, until that last little turnaround. Now I don't Expect it of him, but I do Anticipate it of her.

I'll go now. Let you loose of this thorny subject-just as soon as the place your bet on Anticipation or Expectation.

ANTIC·IPATION



FEAR AND CERTAINTY

NO: they do not even want to meet to talk over their differences. Fear conspires with trepidation tripping over awkward feet that cannot seem to step forward. Fear's dance is one step forward and three steps back. Seeing itself move backward increases its resistance to change. Its feet, like a kitchen drawer full of surprised field mice in a nest, scurry to a safe retreat.

Oh, that Certainty: Bold and forward, strutting its every syllable, it's every letter, honking like a whole V of geese winging southward on sheer knowledge of impending cold. The geese know where to go, know when to fly, know how to form the least wind resistant V. Just as Certainty knows. Brash and blatant, Certainty claims an air of self-confidence unassailable.

Poor timid fear huddling in the corner. I don't know why this strange writer would juxtapose the two: Fear and Certainty. They have nothing in common. No bond, no struggle between them for recognition or supremacy. There is no contest. Hands down, the winner is Certainty, ahead by a mile in a mile long race.

Who spoke of contests?

No one but the wind. For the wind carries the expectation of response. In the wind anticipation plays its little fingers across the brow of Certainty.

Of course, unperturbed, Certainty stands tall: proud, unmoving, unbending in the wind.

On what could an encounter of the two be evaluated? Strength? Truth? Imagination? Interesting criteria to say the least. Very provoking: Shall

we give the two, Fear and Certainty, a moment of attention, an equal chance?

Or can we, because that tiny mouse: Fear: crouched in the corner- now has grown a huge shadow. The sun has lowered in the sky, lengthening shadows, call the geese to rest for the night, leaving a vacuum of presence. Fear's shadow continues to grow as the sun sinks, as time passes. It is hard to see the figure of Certainty, for it is unmoving, but Fear moves swiftly now, a cancerous growth overtaking everything in its path until its shadow stretches halfway around the globe, killing light. Fear doesn't stop at obstacles, but its unknown qualities invade mercilessly. Fear has a slyness that tricks the emotions into betraying Certainty. It multiplies in strength as darkness encompasses.

And the second criteria: truth? Certainty's truth is a glowing candle. It is straightforward, obvious from the outset and the outside. Yes, Certainty has the glory of truth pinned all over its exterior like medals awarded at the end of a shooting match. Certainty had on a bullet-proof vest. The contest is over, until Fear breaks the rules and slides surreptitiously into consciousness.

Oh, we can't readily admit that sneaky fear is out and about. It was shot. But who can kill a shadow, a doubt, a loss (Oh, yes, we all Fear loss although some of us deny it with Certainty), and the unknown present or past?

Those sacred inner private truths we Fear revealing, what will they say about our stalwart upstanding Certainties of being? Those hidden mistakes and injustices, those tiny inwardly-twitching bits of conscience perturbed by inklings of cruelty that we keep hidden from the light? But the truth is in the Fear, a powerful, painful Fear.

And what of imagination? What lurks ugly, stalking, dangerous? Fear. What pops the balloon of Certainty with a smirk? Fear.

Wait; wait a minute- How can Fear get so much airtime? Certainty claims at least half- give it credit for the clear, pure, daytime, time in the light. Yes, we all urge on Certainty, it feels so steadfast and clean.

So why does Fear keep its little paws creeping in?



January 3, 2016

Dear Fellow Traveller on this Planet,

This letter is to you, but it is also to me, because that is what writers do: they write from themselves to another and “from themselves” means just that- directly from some inner urging, a voice within pressing outward.

So I shall begin and what I shall begin with is beauty: beauty springing directly from harmony. In the relationship between the two I can barely distinguish their differences.

I am careful to give each individual word its personality as it justly deserves. Certainly you know that I expect it to be so. Certainly you understand the anticipation into which I throw myself when it comes to the quality of words. Not with fear, but with certainty.

I trust words. Each separate word begging for recognition, pushing for attention. Carefully, I listen to their resonances, listening for the cadence each word represents as it marches into the sequence of sentences. I taste their flavor as a wine tester- touching the drops of fermented grape to his tongue and feeling the lightness, the texture, the perfume, the essence of the liquid. In this way I approach words gently, but with curiosity: asking, asking: how do we produce the meanings we do with such alacrity, such dexterity, such flexibility?

Why, look, here come the two words I was attempting to distinguish: Harmony and Beauty. Harmony is leading-dressed... no, maybe that's Beauty, I'm not so sure. Yes, yes, it's Harmony dressed as a dancer and moving with such a graceful litheness that I understand immediately

am about to be seduced. For there can be no awkwardness here, no reticence, no undertow pulling back the surging motion. On second thought, that must be Beauty that I describe.

I am mistaken once more for it IS Harmony that is constantly in motion. Can you see the rhythm of repose in her movements? Can you feel the breeze from her swaying arms pulsing is a sea of jazz? Oh yes, Harmony coming lightly as a cloud forming over a flowing river. Rocking with the ebb and flow of the current. Creating the current. Patterns I motion of light and shadow on the water's surface.

If Harmony is the light, light has a fraternal twin. Its shadow-twin is Beauty. Beauty has an assurance that raises its stature in the eyes of others: higher, taller, and prouder of its fuller recognition in the triumvirate of values, even Plato recognizing him.

There is a sound of laughter. Directly from Harmony. The laughter sprinkles Beauty until the two are swept along together away from the history of pride and recognition, gliding into one current of feeling, one happy coincidence of knowledge.

They know the same things. Not because there are the same. No, remember, I value the separate personalities of words. Harmony is neither Beauty, nor Beauty Harmony.

How can I then not distinguish them clearly? How could I think they are one?

That knowledge angle, let's take that into consideration: "a happy coincidence of knowledge." Beauty's knowledge stands rock-solid on the precipice of truth. Harmony gathers a bouquet of all the types of truth and passes them over to Beauty. What an armload! There's a wild batch of buds of the pure fiction of truth. A second variety, bland, but present, is the bloom of factual truth. A half dozen blooms of natural truths and a few experientials round out the bouquet. Beauty's eyes reflect the wisdom of the whole bouquet and with a glance it is offered to Harmony.

I see Harmony nodding in agreement for she and Beauty are so intimate that words need not always pass between them.

Sometimes the words are replaced by a current as if the poles of a magnet have been aligned. Sometimes the words are replaced by patterns moving between light and shadow as on a liquid surface. The two mottle the surface, converge, swirl and mingle with one another. At one moment the surface slips from shadow to light. The next moment Beauty slips from convergence with Harmony and swirls down the river. Harmony, being the word she is, sails along in an echo of the pattern.

And the pattern reverberates.

And the pattern reduplicates.

And the coincidence of knowledge reappears.

And the truth of the two recurs until the re-current is so strong that they blur together.

Do I need a slow motion camera to separate the two? Or can you see yonder on one horizon Harmony dancing and on the other Beauty: a synchronization, an instantaneous synchronization?

What do you see with your far-sighted vision of those two cavorting together?

Do you recognize the bouquet?



PASTPRESENTFUTURE

Way back beyond even the trickles of my memory I'd heard of these legendary folks, dressed in their military finery they marched lockstep without a thought, without a pause. Oh, they created a fine show- precise, accurate and measured in many ways from milliseconds to eons.

Left, right, left, right, left, right.

Never faltering, for they were the accepted version, the unquestioned threesome, more famous than the musketeers, more universally known than the father, the son and the holy ghost. Why would anyone want to question their honored rhythm?

Out in front, Future leads with a band major's aplomb. His chin is tilted out at an angle meant to inspire respect, because he, only he, has the knowledge of how to lead the other two. He is leading every one of the 8.9 billion earthly souls needing a format in which to live out their lives. He's led every individual person beginning with Lucy of Oldavai Gorge, that ancestor of Eve from whom all of us have sprung.

He did miss a few of the ancient Greeks for they looked askance at his lordly ways and found them sorely lacking. They tried to pry loose the foundation that he had built with the pathways of knowledge now accepted in brains as their accumulated understanding emerged from ape to

Neanderthal to homosapiens. We'll return to those pesky Greeks shortly.

We know that Present falls in line right now, right in the middle. We are all caught in the now of her steps. We can't escape. We are in Present. We stay in Present no matter how we struggle to get to tomorrow. It is always today. Present only acknowledges her power by the shortest of sidelong glances at the admiring crowd, a smaller-than-Mona-Lisa smile on her lips. She knows that Future strides in front of her. She stays without complaint, without comment, without question in step:

Left, right, left, right, left, right.

Past can keep pace, but is forever ceding the stage to both Present and Future. He never seems to receive the attention he deserves.

Never.

Even though he is dressed as splendidly as his companions, with as much spit and polish, he can't command for he is the follower of followers. He follows the follower of the leader in a nongame that is accepted as reality. In fact, Past is hard to keep in focus for when we look at him his features are constantly in flux.

I thought I had just glimpsed a feminine look to his face, or maybe that was masculine that transposed itself in the politically correct manner.

I am actually not certain if the face is in shadow or in the light for it appears to have changed ethnicity, but it could be just a trick of the sun and clouds and my vision.

Although our attention is not riveted on the Past, still there are volumes and volumes, the weight of history, written about that follower of followers. Those volumes are inscribed with the truth about the Past. So why does its form continue to mutate?

Present. That's why. Oh, she has influence. Past is in love with her. All she did was turn her head in his direction to make eye contact, nothing physical, nothing whatsoever. That glance made Past throw out his chest enlarging his presence so that the expectation that is given him by Present may be fulfilled. So that his anticipation of being whatever Present wants him to be will not be denied. Those volumes can switch around. He has a certainty about that. They may be rewritten in such a way that he no longer retains his identity. That is his fear, losing his identity, for he may become feminine and then Present may lose that fiery interest that he can see in her eyes that so enhances their relationship.

He sighs and reflects. Neither his expectations of himself, nor his anticipations of what might come next are so important- for throughout his entire millisecond-to-eon memory they have walked in harmony. There has been an intrinsic beauty about the two of them in their motions together.

Such a pity then that he forgets to take Future into consideration. He is content with those time-to-time, moment-to-moment glances from Present. Unfortunately for him, she is continually following the Future. She faces front. Future's back is her whole universe. It fills her vision. Not that she needs a vision, for she is eternal. She is in the midst of forever. Between the not=yet and the has-been.

Now back to those pesky Greeks who said that it is the Future that is known. The oracles proclaimed it. The Past is the unknown. Maybe political correctness is listening to the Greek way.

But present doesn't listen. She has one quality that we haven't yet mentioned. One quality that changes the lockstep.

Present doesn't occupy a body. She is the hallucination that I thought I had when I looked at Past. For Past is her twin. And so is Future. She flows as a liquid over the two, reducing the lockstep to a current. Their solidity dissolves. She is the rain. She is the small trickle called MaCaslin Brook and she is the Nile. She is the Mediterranean and the Caribbean. She blankets both the extreme north: the Artic Future who thought he held the top of the world, the vision that all looked up to see. She also covers the extreme south, the Antarctic Past with history buried in nonmelting snow which only can be controlled by Present.

Watch out for a glance from Present: she is no more than a play of liquid over the surfaces of our lives. The liquid may become hardened and freeze into habits. Or the liquid may evaporate and both reasoning and meaning float away with it. Or it may be that you dip in your toes and find that the water is not so bad after all. The warm water is enticing and beckons immersion.

Is immersion what we understand as the Present ?



ENTRANCE AND EXIT

Entrance and Exit? Is that what you said? Why those two? What the in the blue Armageddon moon is possible comparing the way in with the way out? I can't even start to think about it for there is everything in between the two. The whole tunnel of existence lies stretched out separating Ms. Entrance from Monsieur Exit. Mais, oui!

Would you look at that carriage? Oo, la, la mademoiselle standing slightly to the left of center stage, but a shadow behind the curtain, look at that attire! Hair coiffed to the max, rouged and glittered, high-buttoned shoes, a bustle complete with silk and lace. She's ready. Yes, yes, nod in agreement with me on this one. She's given out tickets. There's a clamor at the door to the theatre, more would like to enter and experience Ms. Entrance. Aye, carino! Entrancing si, caballero, but of course. It certainly gets the juices of life flowing in the veins. Dismisses rheumatism with a vengeance. Sheers away years.

Who said Anticipation had an edge way back when? Anticipation is blind, just a child, naïve and silly compared with the glimpse of Ms. Entrance. And that fool Expectation: how does he fare when presented with an Entrance into this affair?

I fear there is neither certainty nor another plane of emotions to explain that state of affairs at the theatre tonight. All are nearly overwhelmed at the prospect for certainly they have been to the theatre in the past. Many are holders of season tickets. But this is different. Far different, for the program tonight has not been explained. Only the Entrance has been announced. Only the Entrance. What is to follow?

Harmony and Beauty happen by and they are well acknowledged, for a part of their anticipation allows for the spontaneity of entrances without printed programs. In fact, they get front row seats. There are only two seats in the front row. There are no other rows. All others will have to find suitable ways to encompass what is about to happen.

Most will never be able to discover a way to accommodate the true nature of what is about to come to pass. Therefore, they must stay in their conventional modes of thought and remain uncomfortable, just a bit so, for they are not on the stage, no, never! Who would think the majority would even be enticed into such a theatre without a stated purpose? No plot? No menu of characters, only an Entrance?

And an Exit. Around the theatre are posted the many signs that normally glow in neon. Red neon markers. In fact, this appears to be a theatre run by that clan from Sicily with so many illegal, underhanded, but gallant connections, commonly known as the mob.

I state this just because I notice only one Exit glowing in this theatre. According to city jurisdiction, permits for mass gatherings are not issued for buildings with only one single Exit. Therefore, I begin to suspect that there are some dealings, not only with the possible non-performance tonight, but with the building as well. Are there other slippages on the raw side of the law? The lack of proper seating I seem to have noted already.

Ah, but I was mistaken, for there is another Exit sign, not neon, not red, but nevertheless an Exit, except that it does not say Exit exactly. The words printed on the sign say simply "way out". So is that the same as an Exit?

I would guess not. Having survived the hippy years, you and I know that hippies and flower children and radicals were always deemed “way out”. They were the untouchables of society, the underclass. Therefore “way out” cannot be the same as Exit. How certain of this am I? The present is a relative of Ms. Entrance, as well as a confidante. The past has tried to keep in step but, the present has relegated many social practices to her follower, including the concept of “way out”, at least in regards to the term hippy.

The present is in cahoots with the construction and licensing team which set up this happening. One Exit is plenty, especially when it is so wide open and accessible to any who would need to escape if a fire broke out in the building. Who knows what the future might hold?

Actually this makes Monsieur Exit all the more attractive, even though Ms. Entrance is already beckoning and pursing her lips at the audience. M. Exit can see that the people who have gathered can find freedom from this crazy experience if needed. For Exit, having dismissed the “way out”, has allowed himself to offer a place at the end of the tunnel. The whole tunnel of existence that separates the two: Entrance and Exit.

Then again, let us consider a possible relationship between Entrance and Exit. Complimentary. Check your mind, not complimentary.

Entrance would not abide awaiting compliments. She is too set apart; alone she must make her appearance. Alone she can stand, not needing the reinforcement of the crowd, still battering at the door trying to get in. She knows they are coming but she does not linger on stage for she sees the yang of her yin, the Exit still in neon red.

No performance at all. The relationship between the two is one of acceptance. Both are offerings: the one offers an opening of the senses, the Entrance to meaning, the Entrance to a way of life, to another dimension. The other offers the loop of escape from the sometimes overwhelming daynight, moment to moment, breakfast lunch dinner, tie suit coat, sock shoes, task task chore chore, gas groceries, stocks bonds retirement plan. Exit has a sense that what can be turned on can be turned off, what can be stressed can be relaxed. There is the daily commute and then there is the ocean. There is the meeting and then there are the mountains.

Will the Entrance merely Exit?

Or is there more to it than that?

Have you discovered the tunnel in between?

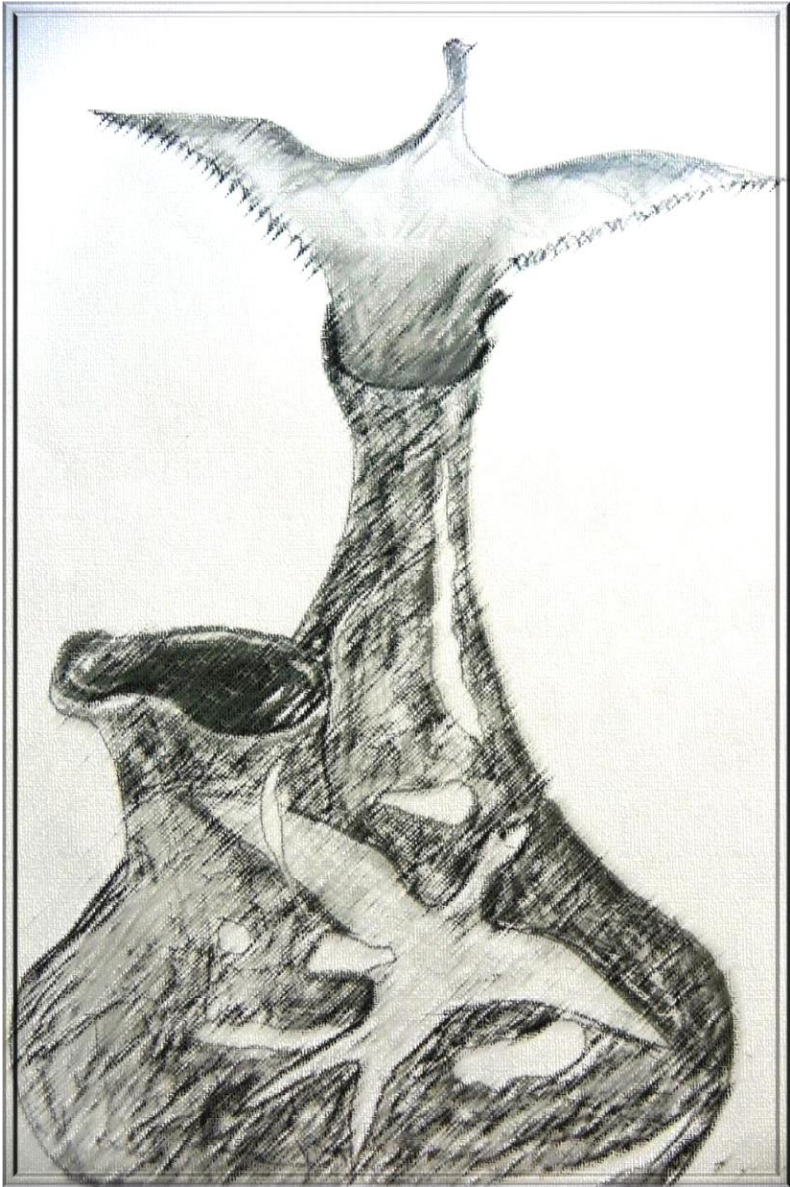
Ahhh, mademoiselle I am entranced. AHHHH, caballero such a glowing Exit!

What more do we ask for?

Or should I say how much more do we ask than Entrances and Exits?

Especially when, now reader, take careful note, this author has gone one better than before,... especially when an Exit takes you out of one place and leads you into another. In other words an Exit is an Entrance... careful, watch the words as they permutate. Dangerous territory when they permutate in a new direction and you ask yourself:

Can an Exit also be an Entrance?



STOP OR PAUSE?

I caught a glimpse of them from behind the barn and started to run after them, but they were scampering so quickly through the weeds and underbrush that I petered out almost immediately. As they kiddingly pummeled each other, I thought how ironic that I could actually be chasing after two such sedentary, or at least motionless, kids: Stop and Pause. Oh, they are a feisty pair, inseparable and mischievous.

Stop was the one who stuck out his foot and tripped Pause so slyly yesterday. That's why he has that Halloween-colored eye, Pause gets mighty riled up when Stop starts playing sneaky tricks. Stop is always after the last laugh, the ultimate prank, the practical joke that is the be-all and end-all, the last bit of food baited on a stick – ready for Pause to grab and get tossed high in the air with the sprung trap. His are the definitive moves to terminate any question about what to conclude in his character. He achieves it constantly, dying a thousand deaths as Blue Beard the pirate or blown away in Peru as the Sundance Kid. When he's finished with a prank, there's not another in sight, it's the ultimate...until he does it again.

Now Pause, on the other hand, always seems to call for a respite. Pause is not one to back away and let Stop pull off every incident. No, Pause slips right in, sometimes unnoticed, sometimes from an opposing direction, until there is a checkmate between them. Pause will endure and hold her ground. If Stop pulls her lanky hair, she whips it across his face. If Stop gives her a chicken bone for lunch, Pause breaks off a piece and says that she got the best part of the wish bone and her wish will come true, but she ain't tellin' nobody what that wish is. She'll just keep Stop in suspense because

she can hold her own ground, can call an intermission in the situation and can resume later, or later, or even later...

No this, of course, frustrates Stop, as it frustrates you, the reader: you think you've come to the conclusion and then all these little underhanded-under-the-table-quiet-footed-wipe-your-fingerprints-away deeds would be finished, discontinued, broken off, be done with when Stop pulls off yet another coup (the blood on the kitchen knives and all over the floor wasn't that of Pause at all, nor is the hers tombstone set so rakishly in Peru). There is only a temporary lull, a rest, an interregnum. Pause dead pans, no smile at all, except inside, and there's a gigantic one there- unstoppable.

I have absolutely no idea why, but I see the two of them in a huddle over there planning something. Watch them carefully, you never know what they'll be up to next.

Why, they're setting out markers of tied rags on trees: it must be a race. This ought to be good. Pause is putting her necklace on the ground- that's the finish line I guess. If Stop gets there first I'm sure he'll claim it. In fact, he's checking it out now and he's putting something down next to that necklace. What is it? Can you see it?

I expect that he will match or better Pause's bet. And I can tell that she has already anticipated this. She was more than anticipatory, she was certain of it. That's why Stop is looking over his shoulder for he fears that he will not match the necklace. What has he got that he can put on the line?

He thinks it should be something surprising, perhaps a thing of beauty. Naw, beauty is for those folks in the future: grownups. He sure don't want nothin' to do with beauty. Something harmonious with the necklace? Nope, not that

either, that's more like an exit line, something that leads from the past into the present and involves an entrance which is really an exit, and that is much too complicated even to contemplate at this moment or at any other moment , isn't it?

So, he lays down the medallion that he won in the long-jumping contest at school the day before he got kicked out. That'll do.

Oh, yeah, that'll do just fine. She will Pause when she sees it and he will win. He's bettered her once more.

So the race is on.

Check their strategies.

Who's gonna win?

I'll Pause while I think about it.

Then I'll STOP.



BE SILLY, BE SERIOUS, OR BE DEAD

“Well, Hon,”, reclining deep in his rocker on the wide verandah overlooking the hills down to the fog-distant sea, Serious began, “Looks like it’s time for a long pull at the reminiscing. So much piles up in heaps of information, knowledge, feelings, experiences, we need to sigh deeply. Then we can slowly work this puzzle into pieces that fit together.”

Serious had a voice like a gravel warpath- insistent, ponderous, full of strange cadences that lured you into the spell of his long years, into believing that Serious was a professor emeritus at an ivy-covered institution.

We’d better listen too, for this is Serious speaking.

“Long, ever so long ago, way before when, before my ninetieth year: I have memories you know, back to when my legs were little pumps racing that sure-footed, goat-brained, cheating, gallivanting, sweet, switch-blading partner of mine, Pause.”

Here Serious took a deep breath, you can feel him slip out of the present, even the omnipresent, present, into a past that’s ripe and full and lusty with changes. The future isn’t leading him at all, in fact, it is being constructed by the past. You can even sense the dimensions of the building that is being constructed. His brain is leaking backwards. We will have to repour it when he has finished his reminiscing.

His gray matter is plentiful. The whole subject is a Serious matter, one worthy of this contemplation. One bouquet of truth and he begins to recount his memories to us in his harmonious way,

“Memories,: I was walking down the road back into that time when Pause and I had a race. When we were young and we could never be stopped.”

At this, Serious stopped short and looked out at us gathered at the confluence of his words,

“What are you staring at? Haven’t you ever listened to an old man sort through his past? Flip the pages in your own head. Where do they take you? I know yours, yes, yours, you, over there Mademoiselle Entrance. Yeah, right now you listen to me and my rambling about my partner Pause back in the days when running free was the only important pass time... You, you’re thinking about your own partner, that caballero, Exit, who couldn’t be bothered with the long traditional performances that words put on when they slide sideways and lose the tight grip on their meaning. No, he was on a roller coaster that sped so fast that the car leaped the track and went sailing, no sail, just sailing out over the blue expanse of language. He not only managed to escape the conventional acts in their normal human order, but he actually glowed with the knowledge that there was a way out, which was also the way in to another realm, just as valid, just as fine, just as...”

“Oh, Serious,” a hearty chuckle arose from the companion seated on the wicker swing next to Serious, “You may be Serious, but you sure are long-winded.” Silly tucked her wrinkled legs up under her and shrugged at the slowly

rocking figure on the verandah. “Where’s that puzzle you’ve been talking about? Let’s do it!”

“Don’t be Silly,” he replied, “We’re involved here in a discussion of a most Serious nature. We are contemplating the nature of nature, the contemplation of mental processes, the wisdom of the ages is about to descend upon us as I speak these very words.”

”And descend upon us it will with a white, chalky plop from that pigeon that is sitting directly over your head,” the Silly laughter bubbled up and burst through, “You keep on ruminating over the nature of nature and I’ll look for footprints and bird poop falling from the sky.”

Serious mumbled, nearly under his breath, “How does she do it? Every time, she does it every time,” then more clearly he spoke directly to her, “Silly though you may be, you anticipate my every move. I think I know what to expect, I ought to after all these years piled upon one another like thunderheads ready to disgorge rain on a clear summer’s day. Why is it that I can’t always be certain of what you are planning to do next? I have this nagging fear that you are one step ahead, and yet that certainty cannot be possible, can it?”

“Serious matter, seriously planned, that’s you all right. Go ahead with your plans, straighten up the corners of your life and pull up the corners of your mouth. Get rid of the flotsam, jetsam and surrounding scraps. But know this, I can’t plan. I’m too Silly to set store by such crap”

“Let me puzzle this out,” Serious replied, “the way... we figure...”

“That’s right, let’s get out the puzzle and get started on it,” Silly was quick in her response, “Look I’ve got the first piece!” with that she reached into her back pocket and pulled out a rubber band and handed it to him with a grin on her face that would split an oak.

“You can’t be Serious!” he shouted, “What do you think you will do with that thing?”

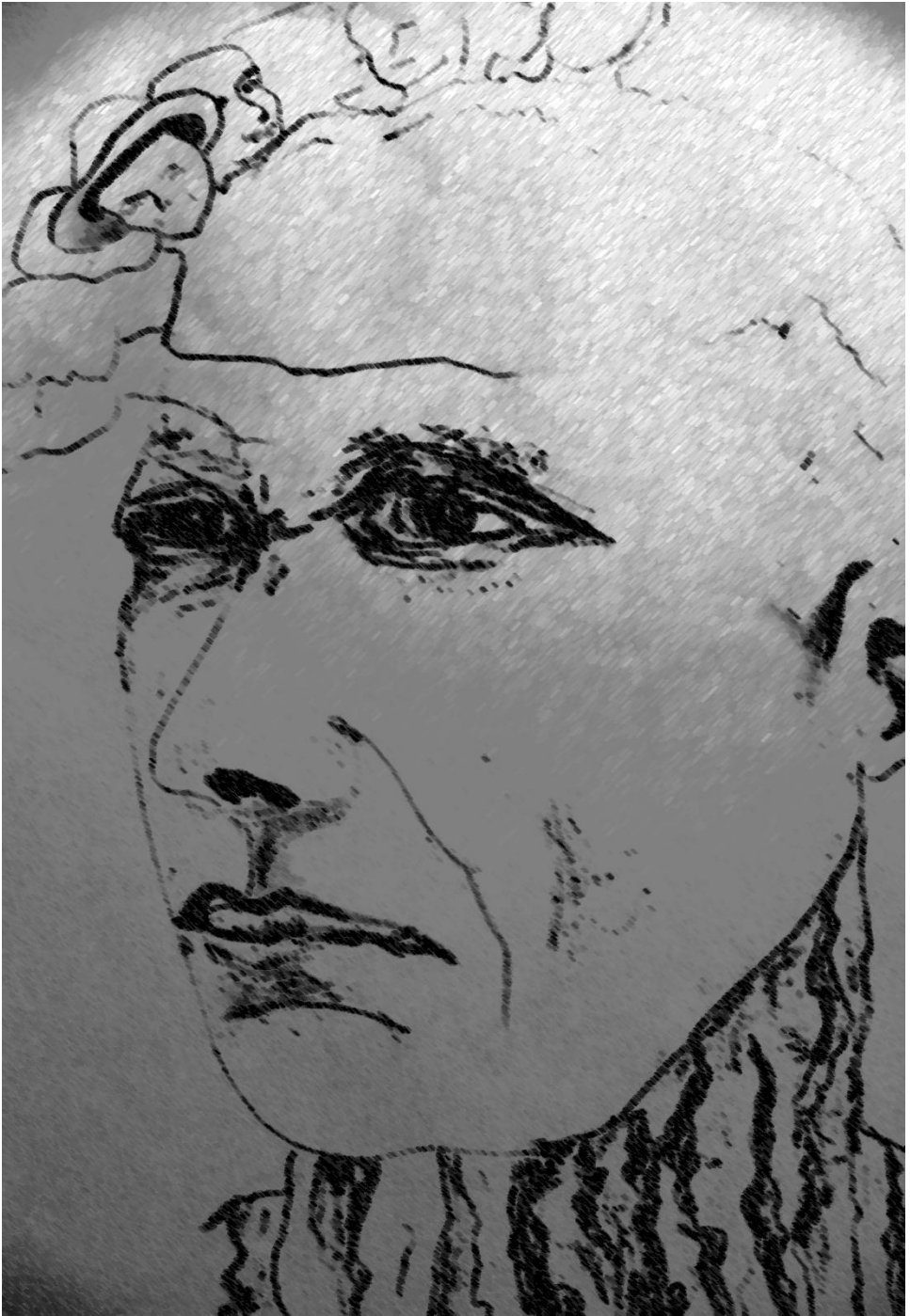
“When I shoot this rubber band into the sky, slingshot it, I aim for the stars and catch one as it pitches earthward and then dies into an ember. That’s a good start for a puzzle isn’t it?”

“Go ahead, just BE SILLY...”

“And you BE SERIOUS,”

Or we’ll both be dead,

Huh?









A STRUGGLE WITH WISDOM

Not having died, death being far distant, Silly continues with her partner Serious, debating on the existence of a Future, immersed more than knee-deep in the Present, with eons and nanoseconds competing together for the particles of the Past that they draw upon incessantly.

Although they Pause from time to time, they will not Stop. There is no question, because the Exit sign has been turned off, the crowd dispersed and Entrance just keeps coming in and coming in and coming into play smiling, smiling, smiling. Her broad grin flashes in a smile of recognition at those two travellers Beauty and Harmony, who have come to watch her continual entrances.

Beauty and harmony take off on their own and cavort with the wildest abandon since they have seen what Entrance can do, including slipping through the portals of the darkened Exit just in order to make yet another Entrance.

I expect that Entrance will then pass through the next Exit and the next and the next. She's looking and looking and looking for a spot to Stop, but I don't Anticipate that she will find one for she IS Entrance. Over and over and over she repeats her role until her form curves serpentiney surreptitiously slipping into a sphere and she is rolling, rolling, rolling. The Fear was that she appeared caught in a spinning web and the spider had become a machine spewing out a longer and longer strand in which Entrance would roll until cocooned. Certainly we cannot keep Entrance in the foreground when dealing with a life and death, sock-it-to-them, blast-their-shoes-off fight between Wisdom and Struggle.

Who the heck does Struggle think he is anyway to contend with Wisdom? You don't know do you? You haven't been watching the two hour workouts in the arena with his coach, Improvement. Improvement has daily one-liners that push Struggles' mental capacities to the limits.

Today he says, "A goal is never attained, for once achieved, it is no longer a goal, it is an achievement."

Struggle had to lock elbows and press down hard to master that one. But Improvement really is a great coach and has continued to push and pull Struggle toward perfection. Struggle focuses on perfecting himself, looking deeply at himself and reflecting on his workouts to make them a touch more difficult each day. Why, the dangnabest thing about the coach was that he presented impossibilities, like "This statement is false."

What is a person to do with that sentence? What?

Struggle?

Or how about Zen's part in the Struggle with words such as this koan:

"Shuzan held out his short staff and said: "If you call this a short staff you oppose its reality. If you do not call it a short staff, you ignore the fact. Now what do you wish to call this?"

Struggle just wanted to ignore the koan, but of course, couldn't because part of being Struggle was flexing his mental muscles, even though they sometimes got puckered and tuckered and atrophied hideously until he would take a long nap.

Wisdom took the koan and smiled and began his short walk with the short staff, not in his hand, but in his head. He needed it only inwardly to begin and not outwardly to continue...

Wisdom let clouds enter his mind. He let in the wind. He let in all the other elements. His mind grew large. So large that he rose above the designated gender and became purely human: more than feminine or masculine, more than old and young, more than an entrance or an exit or the space in between, more than words could express, even when they are the only vehicle for the inexpressible. Wisdom asked him/herself about dilemmas and came up with Nansen:

Joshu asked the teacher Nansen, "What is the true Way?"

Nansen answered, "Every day is the true Way."

Joshu asked, "Can I study it?"

Nansen answered, "The more you study, the further from the Way."

Joshu asked, "If I don't study it, how can I know it?"

Nansen answered, "The Way does not belong to things seen, nor to things unseen. It does not belong to things known, nor to things unknown. Do not seek it, study it or name it. To find yourself on it, open yourself wide as the sky."

Struggle, continuing his workout, hefted this last quote. It weighed a bit more than he was accustomed to lifting, but he tried. Oh, how he tried! He began to feel as if he and Wisdom were beginning to spiral in synchrony side by side. Only Wisdom always seemed to be floating and Struggle was always doing the dog paddle and was dog tired and felt like

he belonged in the dog house: what a dog of a life to have to be struggling all of the time.

Wisdom smiled that enigmatic smile of hers. It was the smile left over after the disappearance of the Cheshire cat. It was the smile of confidence of a clear bet that Struggle could not undo the ropes tying him to the chair in Granny knots. For Struggle would rant and rave and wiggle and wrangle, would plead and beg, pester and pray- for help, for relief, for a vacation. I mean he had built up enough sick days that he should simply be able to call in to work and say he was taking the day off, thank you very much. But, no, not Struggle, he had to Struggle with the moral implications of that- wasn't it lying to call in sick when you weren't? Wasn't it a bit nasty to other staff who were so dedicated and loyal and were having to pick up the slack left by his proposed absence?

Oh, macabre masks of mayhem! Why can't poor muscle-bound Struggle just relax?

Ahhh, the opportunity knocks, a hard knuckles' rap upon the door. It's Libido speaking (I know, I know, you haven't met him yet, but thank both your lucky and unlucky stars that his appearance here is the briefest of brief and that he will not return until Eros has a word or two with him).

"Why not go play billiards with me? There's a Pool Hall just down the block and billiards means shooting balls into pockets. It means pushing that slim stick smash clash into the balls and aiming firing letting loose (big loose) " It can be, ooh convincer of the convincers; can be a Struggle to win.

Why Struggle with this stuff like: "Is a sentence fragment" is a sentence fragment- what in tarred and feathered tarnation

does that signify? Just a few balls in the pockets, hey, Struggle with it: what do you say?

Struggle looks up at the face of Wisdom. Looks at the wrinkles of knowledge. Looks at the corners of her eyes where a mixture of emotion and salty perception leaks out. Looks into the centers of her eyes and sees the pools deeper than Sequoia tree roots. She sees roots rooted in a truth too profound to be told, only to be sensed. But Struggle wants to play pool. Those little balls are calling out “C’mon, c’mon, put me in the pocket.”

Struggle is pulled first left then right, right into the quagmire from which his personality has emerged. His coach would reprimand him. His soul would enjoy the pleasure of the moment, the pleasure of the principle. And then it would cry out and punch him in those parts that didn’t want to be punched. Then what?

Wisdom calls out now. Without a voice. Without words. Beyond what Struggle can comprehend, but somehow seems to understand anyway. At least he is struggling with comprehension of Wisdom.

Wisdom seems to be saying, “Why not duke it out?”

Would Wisdom even say such a thing? Struggle looks again. Looks this time in order to see down into those depths. Are there trout swimming in those eyes? He’d go fishing if he could. Are there whales whistling deep in Wisdom’s oceanic eyeballs? He’d be Captain Ahab if he could.

Suddenly there’s a gust of change. Blowing hard. As if he were the Wicked Witch of the West in the Wizard of Oz and Dorothy had just thrown a bucket of water over his head. He

is dissolving. Dissolving in the gaze of Wisdom. His death is imminent.

Or at least his nonexistence is imminent. He can't get out of the ropes. The pool hall called too loudly. The billiard balls are bouncing off the walls and striking him in the head from all angles- angles of love, justice and values. The barbell that he was attempting to lift, with a loan on one end and a moral implication on the other, simply takes on a life of its own. It is as if in the worst of ugly nightmares, the barbell crashes down on the body he would have if he were anything more than a mere word. It breaks both of his nonlegs and crushes his nonribs. His nonhands are shattered and folks, guess what? It's hospital time for this guy.

A new Struggle. Maybe even though he was a male, he was pregnant. Then maybe Wisdom will allow him to give birth. For Wisdom does not Struggle. The Struggle is in her past. Absorbed. She is the sponge of the universe.

Does she absorb all struggles, or will something so new come of this that we will notice a birthing process?

What does Struggle beget?

Do you know?

Do you know Wisdom?

If you know Wisdom, ask her.

If you don't, are you struggling to know Wisdom?

Are you?

Are you?

If you are real: you ARE.

What do you think?

I know I think, therefore I am. And I am therefore, I think.

At least that's what I think at this juncture:

What do you think?



WANT/DESIRE

Tha-wump

Thaba thaba thaba wump

Tha-wump

Thaba thaba thaba wump

Thabathabathabathabathababa thaba

That is, you know, oh don't we all: the way it begins. It is a simple physical beating of the heart. Want is the auricle pumping fresh, oxygenated blood outward toward the panting cells.

Desire is the ventricle receiving the flow. Rhythmically rocking in tune without sound-oops! That is completely incorrect-with muffled sound for it is from deep within the body that the life beats occur. The two parts of the heart move incessantly keeping the vital signs vital. They beat bold and red interlocked with the very essence of life. All pay attention to Want and Desire for their function is so central to the pulse of life that it IS the pulse.

You can count on it.

You can count it.

Tha-wump

Thaba thaba thaba wump.

Want, call him over here, will you? We really ought to talk directly to him to see what he has to say for himself, that chest-bulging guy.

“Hey, dude, you there! Want!”

“Yeah, I got bulging muscles. I’m the Pump, hey, yeah, man, the undeniable, unescapable, capable, cantankerous, hot, ready for action, put-it-in-fifth-overdrive man. I’m your man. I’m the guy with the beat. Give it to me rock and roll. Send it out heavy metal. Push it to the max rhythm and blues, swayin’ slinkin’ calypso, crackin’ at the edges Volga boatman music. I got them all. I do them all. I’m the man with the rhythm. I’m the man that keeps the party going. Without me it’s bones and dust. I got a smile for you all, a quick ready gesture of making it happen. Brother, can I make it happen!”

“I got no master, for I am he. What you want to happen? A big hullabaloo? A celebrity bash? Watch me now- center stage, right after Entrance- that’s me dressed in shine and brillcream. I am the performance. Not no past and ancient fellow. Not no serious thinker pondering over where to get his next breakfast of prunes and yogurt. Not no expector waiting for whatever it is to occur.”

“I don’t expect nothin’. I’m it. Ain’t no other. You got me right. Not waiting on no future. Nothing to do with pausing or stopping-that would be sure death! No, sir, not me. I’m the action figure. No struggle with wisdom and philosophy for me. None of that mental drudgery. I’m the guy you want when you want cause I’m Want, that’s a capital W thank you. I’m pleased you are listening to me cause, I repeat, I’m your man.”

“Got that?”

Now, dear reader, if are as exhilarated and exhausted as I am just from listening to an auricle pump out his own praises, I think we need to listen to his partner in life giving action, Desire, the ventricle. Speak up, will you?

“Here, rather close to Want I find myself, Desire, connected in our rhythm, always acting jointly. Always together in keeping those vital signs vital. Want pumps so hard, he makes all the noise. At least, that’s what you hear, but I’m there. I’m present and well accounted for. I’m the half that takes in all those millions of countless childlike used-up, tired and irritable little cells and I refurbish them. My voice is more muted cause of my partner’s bravado and spark dominating our existence in terms of straightforward perception. “

“He’s the first you notice, sure enough, but he isn’t alone. No, he’s well accompanied. And he knows it. Big talker Want, but look how his cheek is pressed next to mine for all of this body’s life. And look how his side and legs fit right well here along my side and my thighs and calves. It’s uncanny, but it works. And I’m the refresher. Since I’m not so loud I may be less noticed. But because I notice things that Mr. Action here doesn’t, things like how beautiful it is that we are totally in harmony...”

“Now, wait a sure-fire-cobra-spittin’-minute, Ms. Desire, I am the man, and that’s the thumping truth, but that doesn’t mean I don’t appreciate the finer things of life. The finest bein’ , of course, this

Tha-wump

Thaba thaba thaba thaba thaba

Thaba thaba thaba wump

“It’s kinda sexy, ain’t it? I couldn’t keep movin’ without you. And I can’t keep talking about this, I need to pay attention to this body that we inhabit. Got to keep this ALIVE:”

“Ain’t that so?”



SEULE

I

Stand

Alone

Lonely?

No

Soulless?

No

Soundless?

Often

Meaningless?

Never

Melancholy?

Infrequently

Anticipating?

Um-hmmm

Expecting?

Ummm

Fearful?

Poco
Certain?
Certainly
Beautiful?
Definitely
Harmonious?
Universally
Timeless?
Well...
Entranced?
Surely
Exiting?
Fully
Stopped?
Never
Paused?
Sigh
Silly?
Why?
Serious?
Smotheringly so
Struggling?
Immensely

Wise?

Beyondbelief

Wanting?

Palpitatingly

Desiring?

Desiring

Peace

Calm

Still

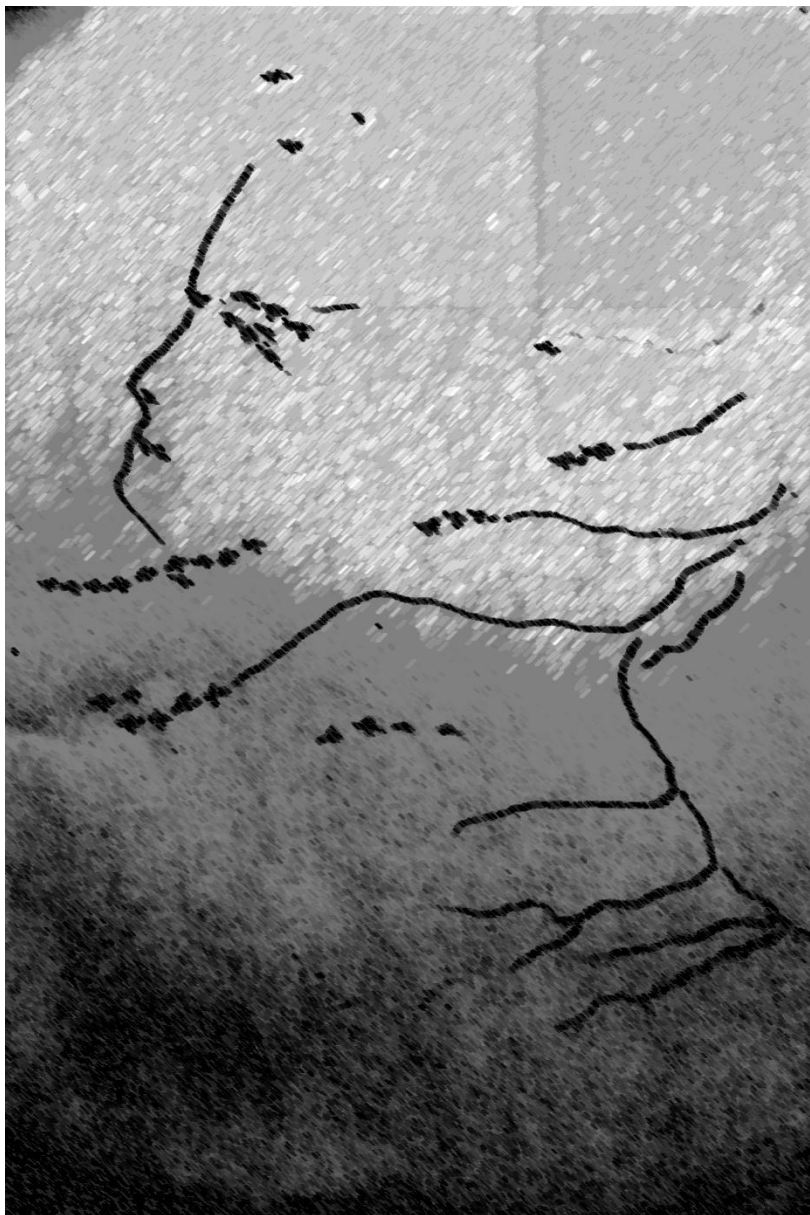
Will

Seule

And

Soul

Alone



POSSIBLY AND/OR PROBABLY

Muddied.

Yes, that would Probably define the difference between Probably and Possibly.

Tenuous.

Yes, that Possibility lies down right smack on Possibly's pillow.

Probably turns her back slowly making certain the Possibly is aware.

Though Possibly he's not.

But Probably cares about him. Probably too much for her own good because she never thinks enough of herself until the moment Possibly arrives, then she's in the thick of it. She becomes possibly the most self-centered, high-wired, can-it-or-croon-it, love-sick ninny. She's the one who lies in melancholia awaiting the semi-expected Possibly, never never never knowing if he would arrive or not. Probably thinks of all the Possibilities of what he might do. And the range of Possibility! Oh, the Possibilities are endless. He could be whistling Dixie in a New Orleans funeral. He could be cruising up the coast. He could be headed for the moon. Or writing a poem. Flying a kite? Smoking cigars? No, that's not his style.

Possibly is the master of suspense, and even this fact is shrouded in mystery for the vast majority. Possibly is a rogue. He can never be anticipated. He's the exceller at circumlocution, a planner of deception to the highest degree. He is the point man assessing the situation with a cool eye.

Having assessed, he nods inwardly, no trace of emotion crosses his features. He proceeds strategically to attempt to maximize his pleasure in the outcome. One strategy might be: desire, denial and destruction.

The scenario would occur as follows : Mr. Gilroy (our key man) get the attention and the attraction of a Lovely Young Lady sent by Possibly. Mr. Gilroy is flattered, but worried since his marriage is already on such shaky ground that he can hardly maintain his balance. He desires L.Y. Lady but must deny that he desires her. Then the denial becomes the denial of wrongdoing. He rationalizes away the real until the consequences bash him in the face: destruction.

He is exposed to the world and meanwhile L.Y. Lady is so pleased with the outcome that she turns her affection and attraction toward Possibly. After all he completed such a masterful plan that she didn't even realize that her ultimate attraction to him was THE game plan.

Yes, that's a good attempt at the way Possibly arranges his life. There are plots within plots within plots, overlapping character roles and juxtapositions of the impossible: all under the guise of simplicity.

"Oh," he sagaciously says, "the hypothesis was already confirmed in my mind. I PLAN to be spontaneous. A paradox? No, not really, you've read me wrong. I never said that nor meant it. Only I know what I'm doing and the way the nebulous future will shape itself. You can only guess, for I am Possibly the best at sliding sideways out of your expectations, and I mean the Best."

Probably sits with her legs crossed and her arms folded majestically, defiantly in front of her. She's not about to

accept Possibly's explanation. But she's sitting on a fence. Possibly is on one side, Certainty on the other. She struggles with her fear; a fear of indecision which she will Probably overcome. She has made her Entrance, leading a string of followers along the top rail of the fence. Harmony and Beauty have front row seats as usual, only this time there aren't any seats in front of the stage at all. Because there isn't any stage. Of course not, remember, it's just a fence rail on which Probably is attempting an arabesque without losing her balance. She appears very graceful, so she will Probably succeed.

An arabesque on the fence post of life?

Pause and think about that.

Then stop and look over this field full of the audience and billowing tall grasses: What an audience! Already you know about the split between Possibly and Certainty, with Probably right smashsmackin' in the dead center. Fear makes her calves quiver.

Harmony and beauty have been acknowledged. They smile enigmatically, for the smile comes from so deep in their beings that mere humans are hard-pressed to understand. It is a struggle to discover if, Possibly, that pair is not the wisest in the audience. Wiser than Sir Wisdom himself.

The pair sits next to one another somehow distanced from the figure who occupies the space so near them. That figure has eyes riveted to the fence top drama. Seule sits and absorbs. She absorbs and admires. So absorbing and admiring that she does not even notice the coupling of want and desire to her right in the tall grass. Everyone else

becomes distracted for the grass sways mightily as in a storm. Noises emanate. Pleasuring noises. So much pleasuring that even stop can't.

Possibly is slightly conscious of the commotion in the grasses, but rivets his attention on the arabesque, awaiting a possible disaster, awaiting a probable fall. He will catch her.

He will catch her on the edge of her imbalance.

He will catch her on the edge of her life.

He will restore her balance.

He will restore her life.

She will be grateful. She will be kind and generous in return.

She will pledge her devotion, Probably.

Well, Possibly she will pledge.

But then, again, being who she is and taking Possibly into account, the pastpresentfuture, she Probably acts on it and acts well enough so that Possibly has to discover other, more effective strategies in dealing with the probable.

Are you clear on your possibilities?

... You say you Probably are?

What the rainbow-in-the fire, flowers-in-the-flood do you mean?

Don't, please don't leave this author with endless possibilities.

I'll Probably never get to understand their infinite ramifications.

So clarify, please: Will Possibly catch Probably if she falls from her fence post of life? Does he have special forces?

Possibly...



THE BANQUET

END OR NOT?

As soon as I heard that both End and Not would be arriving, I began to immediately set the table. This would be a banquet unforgettable in its entirety. End, the eldest, most venerable, bent-back centurion would bring that tiny helpless infant struggling into being, Not. Not, the youngest, most innocent, the gleam in the eye Not yet conceived, yes, Not, would also be there.

What a superb banquet I planned. Never had such a company of relatives, intellectual evokers, partakers, dreamers, philosophers, comedians and fulfillers come together at one sitting. But would they sit?

Not a chance! I knew that, and I began to prepare the meal. Emotionally I began to spin those small cellular excitation bundles into being.

From Anticipation, who would arrive on the confident extended arm of Expectation to Possibly coyly accompanying her companion Probably marching with a sly stride, they would attend the banquet.

Yes, I anticipated Harmony dancing in. Next to her, gesturing simultaneously I expected Beauty.

Fear would collapse in a heap of anxiety just upon receiving the invitation. He would have to be carried into the affair in the suitcase of Certainty. For Certainty would be the first to arrive with his unforgettable knock.

Of course, Certainty would be closely attended by Struggle who always appeared at the muscle-building and healthy eating sessions that Certainty led every other Tuesday in the odd months of the year on Leap years only for those born in the year of the Tortoise who also had the sign of Cancer.

I had been certain that they would appear together. But their appearance wasn't as often as I had expected.

I was ready for the others too.

Pastpresentfuture I was expecting them soon, but they might have already arrived. They were funny like that. Presently, of course, was continually arriving in the midst of all the other guests.

When I continued to speculate on the order in which the guests might arrive, Certainty might not be the first. Entrance, oo la la, rouged and glittered as always, has to pick the precise moment to make her appearance.

On the other hand, she might wait until all had arrived so that the drama would unfold at her beckoning.

What about Exit? He has a part in this drama that somehow coincides with Entrance, but at the opposite end of the spectrum, so as she arrives, he might leave, or vice versa.

At this point I must Stop, for that little twit Stop who won (or did he?) that famous race between himself and Pause. Stop, methinks, will simply slip in unnoticed between the legs of whichever adult is making an entrance, while Pause will slither in, even less noticed.

I had thought of laughter when Harmony made her entrance, but she will probably be accompanied by Silly, who is always giggling despite her affiliation with both Serious and Wisdom.

Serious won't enter with Silly, wouldn't be proper, but he will proceed her for he has always believed wholeheartedly that he has an edge on validity. He might very well requisition Wisdom and allow the gathered company to witness their remarkable Entrance with such awesome dignity that Silly will collapse once again in chuckles. She knows that they are ponderous only superficially, underneath bubbles all sorts of harmonious beauty the links them with all others in happiness leading to laughter.

They are even linked with that intrepid pair whose chins crease the clouds and whose bodies haunt the soul: Want/Desire. They will certainly Not be coming separately, no, not them. They will come once, then spy Senor Caballero Exit and come in again. With the sight of Entrance, they will Probably come yet again. Then with the knowledge of Probably, they will have to come again in order to accommodate Possibly. She wouldn't want to be left out.

Too much. These heart-thumping arrivals are too much for me to comprehend. I think I will wait for Seule.

Ahhh, what a respite Seule will be among such a notorious crowd. Seule entering alone, calm and peace emanating from him/her (as I recall Seule does not admit to a gender, nor a race, nor a creed, nor a religion, nor a heaven, nor a hell, imagine that!)

I do look forward to Seule's entrance. Is that Mademoiselle Entrance also Anticipating Seule? Will they all converge upon

the seeker of peace and inundate Seule with their multiple dimensions? It is Possible. It is even Probable.

So, that will be the crew along with End and Not.

I Pause here to contemplate all of the arrivals. Let me sit back and breathe for a while listening to my thoughts on what to serve this illustrious panorama of guests.

The menu has been planned while all this Silly contemplating has been taking place.

The table, surely, truly, will be festooned with bouquets of Truths, and then those hybrids-some Experimentals.

In the glasses at each place will be liquid and this will never be identified. The only truth of the liquid will be that it is clear as a mountain stream, fresh as a blue sky and pure as a new heart in love.

As for food, I tried valiantly to choose items appropriate to the occasion. Unfortunately I eventually determined that I had no choice whatsoever.

First of all, there had never been an occasion like this one to give a clue as to how to proceed. Secondly, each of the guests had so many unique needs and qualities that it would be totally impossible to please and satisfy all with a variety of foods. The only option was plain: have you guessed it?

It's plain as the Pampas in Argentina, plain as bread and butter, plain as snow in Antarctica- so have you understood what must be served?

I wish it weren't so. Oh, how I wish that I had a choice in the matter. This is just too Silly (and you do take into account the underlying Serious nature of Silly, don't you?) to bear.

Did you know that if Silly and Serious are such close companions something in addition is taking place? Silly and Serious might have lived together forever, but Wisdom was just as attracted to Silly as Serious. An affair of the mind has taken place.

I'm digressing. There is a reason for the digression, there always is. The digression allows you time to figure out the menu. The more-than-obvious-menu.

It could be none other than soul food.

And I don't have to serve it. It will serve itself. It is as ripe and mature as a Brie cheese from France. It is as easily ingested as air. Easier for it is already part and parcel of every participating guest. And every nonparticipating guest. And everyone who isn't even a guest.

I hear a knock on the door.

Guests must be arriving.

Am I ready?

Are you ready for the true arrival of such an august group?

Who will it be?

I open the door.

What is it that I see?

An aura. It is bright and so I shade my eyes and allow them to adjust to this presence.

Directly in front of me.

Directly in front of you.

Stand two.

Just two.

Seulement deux.

One male. One female.

“We are your guests,” they state this simply and simultaneously.

And that is Not the End.



By Jill Campbell

