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I've never been the same since that night when the demons intruded into our cozy circle of angels and kicked it all to hell. On the other hand, let me tell you about my love affair with Blaise.

Do you know the word jackanapes? That was me back then – a metaphysical jackanapes. All I knew about angels was what I had read as a boy in *The Pilgrim's Progress*. I didn't know you could fit forty million of them on the head of a – pin? No, in a pinprick of brilliant light two inches above my belly button and a little bit inside. Nor did I know that they'd – Blaise, or should I say, the Blaises? – had the Marx Brothers as script writers and the Supreme Being for copy editor. Or that most of the world had never heard of them, but ought to.

I suppose it all started that morning in Glastonbury when I woke up with the phrase 'What's beyond that star?' in my mind. I didn't just wake up; no, it was more like being ushered back into the physical world and my body by the most attentive, softly luscious – it was like being wrapped up in a blanket of love.

I usually hate talking this way in public about things like love and lusciousness, but there is no other way to evoke the amazingly affectionate regard in which I was escorted back from dreamland into this world and my tiny second-floor room at Level's View Bed and Breakfast atop Wearyall Hill. Who escorted me? I have no idea, but I doubt it was people. I

can't remember ever feeling that kind of unconditional love before. But if not people, then who? And what star?

All day long I felt there was something extra in my life, something additional around me, like an aura made of that same ineffable sweetness that had glided with me back into my waking state. Except every now and then I felt a chuckle, a sly giggle ripple through me, as if someone – actually, it felt like a group – was trying to keep some big laughs down so as not to ruin the surprise and betray their presence. It was as if first having given me a taste of the glorious sweet presence, they now wanted to send it all up in a swell of amusement at my expense.

Well, at the end of the day, what's any of it to do with King Arthur anyway? That's why I was in Glastonbury, this crazy, millennialist-mad village in Celtic Somerset, this bizarre living museum of myths about the Grail, Camelot, Avalon, Excalibur, Merlin, King Arthur and about fifty other unverifiable oddities of cultural memory. I shouldn't carp. I was here to add yet more confusion to this vast melange of speculation, scholarship, inflation, conflation, and expectation. After all, King Arthur was coming back, as soon as he woke up and dragged his sorry ass out of the hollow hills where he and his knights were sleeping until the time was right and Merlin gave them the wake-up call.

I was tired of history, tired of culture, tired of the United States, tired of reality. The world of myth sounded more interesting; at least it would be a summer's distraction, perhaps something publishable I could take back home when I got sick of England. I remember fantasizing one evening back in the U.S. I had just finished reading somebody's retelling of

the basic Arthur story and I had pretensions of writing for *The New Yorker*. I was contemplating one of those elegant, urbane, slightly whimsical and exceedingly polished and well-researched fact pieces they excelled in and which since my adolescence had so thoroughly seduced me into believing represented the pinnacle of good writing.

‘We recently paid a visit to Glastonbury of King Arthur fame to see what currency, if any, the venerable myth of the Round Table might still enjoy in these parts,’ I fantasized telling William Shawn over lunch at the Algonquin. This would be my opening line for the article; Shawn of course, being an astute editor, would assign me the story immediately and even approve a generous travel budget and I’d be off to Celticland with *New Yorker* imprimatur in hand.

You can fantasize anything you want of course, and that’s all this *New Yorker* daydream remained. My actual reality was that I had taken the summer off – realistically, I was between jobs, or out of one, whatever – and was holing up at Level’s View to check the Arthur milieu out on my own penny. One aspect of the story that had recently grabbed my attention was the way certain actions were rooted to specific places in the landscape. Arthur fought here, the Grail was seen here, Camelot was situated there, Excalibur was tossed here. In fact, the Arthur story and the Grail myth were all over the British Isles, like confetti dropped from a height and scattered by the ocean breezes across the islands.

In some strange way, I sensed the myth had roots into the landscape, that it somehow lived in the landscape, depended on it, thrived in it. If it was all made up, then why the landscape specificity? If it was true, then why these places and not

others? But then how could it be true? The scholars didn't give much credibility to that notion.

As for the psychics, most of them claimed they were King Arthur or Morgan le Fay redux, so you couldn't put much credence in them either. But the myth in the landscape – surely that is a mystery worth investigating, I thought to myself, as I was doing nothing much on an old, mostly broken down bench perched on Wearyall Hill. Below me sprawled Glastonbury, a busyness of reddish-orange roofs and funny-looking green hills, and a ruined cathedral.

But I felt that otherworldly regard around me again. It was basically a nice sensation, only marginally intimidating because I didn't know its source. I must have drifted off because I awoke suddenly as if somebody nudged me. Then I remembered where I had been, or dreamed I had been. I was at my childhood home, and I was perhaps six or seven. I floated out of my bed onto the roof of our home and walked into a six-pillared gazebo miraculously parked there. It was very bright. I almost had to shield my eyes as I approached it. I could have used sunglasses.

There were a few short steps leading into the white gazebo, and in its center was a brilliantly lit round table of some kind, made of light or crystal or lit by a dozen 300 watt bulbs. For some reason I wasn't the least bit alarmed or even surprised. This was as familiar to me as walking into the kitchen to inspect the refrigerator contents for something sweet and fattening to eat. I couldn't remember this part well at the time, but it seemed I smiled at some old friends inside this marvelous mobile gazebo, and that as I did there was a wink, a rushing sound, an explosion of light, the peculiar sense that it

had all collapsed into a single pinprick of intense light. We went somewhere, but I can't remember where. On the whole, it felt pretty good.

I spent the rest of the day walking around the town, up the High Street, up the Tor, over Chalice Hill, into Chalice Well, down to Pomparles Bridge, and up the backend of Wearyall Hill to Level's View again. Your basic walking tour of what one local savant calls the geomythic landscape, the land floriated with old, impossible stories, the myths that live on, incorrigibly, inarticulately, like dandelions in the land that all the rationalists want to expunge with weed killer. But there was one strange thing.

Every now and then, as I relaxed into my newest perch, parked comfortably on the ground, my butt absorbing the Earth energy and getting damp, but otherwise doing nothing, just watching, daydreaming about the myths, the landscape seemed to twinkle at me, like it was one giant eye with a sparkle of amusement in it. It was different than seeing stars, that unsettling aural experience when you bump your head or you stand up quickly. There was only one star, and it seemed sentient, inhabited, purposeful.

I know this sounds a bit daft, for what on Earth is a star doing in the landscape twinkling at me in the middle of the afternoon in dreamy Avalon, yet there it was: a star in the landscape was twinkling – no, *winking* – at me. I got a wink at the Tor, Chalice Hill, the Well, Pomparles, and the top of Wearyall. Not exactly *New Yorker* material. One thing I've learned in my few weeks in England is that everybody, even foreigners – especially the worst kind: Yanks – gets a license to be eccentric, free of charge. So I was being seriously eccentric.

I was having a pot of Earl Grey at Level's View around five o'clock after a leisurely day on the quest and thinking about that queer experience of stars winking at me when I remembered something else odd from my childhood. Actually, it was both intensely pleasant and deeply distressing, if you can feel excited and alarmed at the same time. Many times as a young boy I would lie awake in bed, under the covers, barricaded in with pillows and heavy blankets, and think about things.

Often I would read under the covers with a flashlight, long after I was officially instructed to go to sleep. Who could sleep when I didn't know how things turned out in *The Pilgrim's Progress*? I particularly liked the part when Pilgrim gets helped by an angel when he's ready to pack it in from despair. When I tired of John Bunyan's world, I would try to figure something out in mine. I would think about distances.

It's about fifty feet from my bed to Richie's house. It's a twenty-five minute walk from my house to school. It takes two hours by car to get to Uncle Isaac's house. Then I thought about how far away Boston was, because I had been there once already with my parents. But what about the Moon? That was far away, and the Sun was even farther. And the stars were farther away still. I could feel the tremendous distances like a chasm inside me, sense the immense space between everything, but things — stars — were now so far away from me I couldn't begin to calculate the distances, and my head spun.

It always happened this way. I got to the distances between the stars and me and a great gap would yawn open before me, an abyss I couldn't measure. The stars are impossibly far away, but what's on the other side of the stars? There must be something. How big is infinity? And what's on the other

side of that? And what will happen to me in that infinity? Will I die?

My body would get big, huge, hollow, tingling and vibrating. It was like having a body made of a fully inflated balloon with nothing but air and space on the inside and a thin, expanding membrane on the outside. When I was really feeling daring with this sort of fun nightmare, I would look inside the balloon that was now my body and see billions of points of light, an uncountable number of tiny pinpricks of light. Stars. Galaxies. Inside me, and I was still expanding, ready to hold more. Despite this immensity of stars inside my balloon body, I knew there was still something else beyond them all, on the other side of the balloon. But what?

I was only six, too young to be a detached philosopher. My balloon always popped when I realized the ramifications of all this infinity: I would die one day. That's what it all meant. If there is infinity and the great mystery called God, then it meant I was real and alive and *that* meant I could and would die.

The next day I was sitting on a fairly lush hillside behind the Tor. The landscape was flushed with a shade of late afternoon summer soft green luminescence I'd never seen in the United States, or anywhere. The grass is fragrant and I almost envy the cows down the valley for their salad bar. The landscape before me is still, complacent, majestic, and full of stars, no doubt, if I were to indulge that deliciously odd experience from the other day.

I admit it: I was happy, possibly even delighted, about nothing in particular, just being here. I was even smiling and my smile as it deepened seemed to include the landscape as

well, absorbing it in a motherly kind of way. I feel wrapped in a cotton duvet spun of wings – angel wings, I suppose, not that I know anything about that. But my body feels flooded with a creamy warmth as if somebody has emptied a pitcher of light into my head and its contents were flowing velvety and irresistibly like syrup through me.

My palms feel itchy, like something very small is scratching them. I pry open my eyes from this intoxicating envelopment and look at my cupped hands. There's a star in them and it's twinkling at me. No, it's not a twinkling star. It's a star going supernova. No, that's not it either. In fact, it's not in my hands anymore. The twinkling, supernovaing star has turned into something else, and they're standing right in front of me. Before me, in an effulgent arc of wings stand six angels, and each one is winking at me, like the joke's on me.

That's Blaise of course. They like their dramatic entrances. They like their little mysteries, their enigmas, their paradoxes. Why do I call them Blaise? Their official name in the membership roles of the angelic hierarchy is *Ofanim*, which is Hebrew for 'wheels,' but they like to call themselves Blazing Star. We started calling them Blaise early on because in Malory's *Le Morte d'Arthur*, Merlin has a mentor named Master Blaise who lived in the North of England and to whom he would pass on the gossip from Camelot. We figured let's keep it all mythological, so we dubbed these six winking angels Blaise and they didn't seem to mind. In fact, it seemed to grow on them.

Later we'd call that delicious soft duvet velvety feeling the Blaise Wrap; it was their way of letting us know they were back in town, back from God knows what else they do with their

time besides talking to us. Later, not only would we get the Blaise Wrap, we'd be treated to the Blaise Drone.

Imagine you're sitting in your living room late one evening in a house out in the quiet countryside; it's so quiet even the cows are quiet, gone to bed. Your house is in something even smaller than a hamlet, a little conclave of six houses and a manure-splatted lane. But it has its own name – Wick – and it's about a mile from a town called Langport, large enough to have several churches and a cramped used book store.

Now suddenly it sounds like an eighteen wheel tractor trailer truck has pulled up outside your window and is idling. Except there's nothing in this farmlane that passes itself off as a road. In fact, when you go into another room, you can't hear the idling; come back into the living room and there it is again, unmistakably loud, vibrating your bones, but there's no truck.

Once we asked Blaise what this sound was: 'Oh, that's the sound of one of our wheels touching down,' they answered, expecting that would clear it all up.

The us in this case was myself and two others, Russell and Berenice Pendleton. I moved in with them when the proprietors of Level's View got sick of having me constantly underfoot, typing away upstairs, talking to myself, demanding miso soup for dinner, giving them no chance to close up the place and take a holiday. The Pendletons are their friends and now they're stuck with me and my little King Arthur investigation. They rent me a room upstairs. Russell does pottery, Berenice is a homeopath. They stay at home a lot and drink lots of weak tea, and thank God they don't mind having a busy-body American writer in their midst.

I mentioned the living room. That's where the Blaise Drone

happened. Maybe it's the house. It is very cozy, very old, moderately dysfunctional, and full of quirky charm. Frankly, to an American brought up in exurbia, it's a fantasy house, something out of C.S. Lewis' Narnia. It's one of those 300 year old stone manor houses with a dozen cramped rooms and low ceilings and crooked, uneven staircases where you crack your head coming down the landing because the second floor is so low because people used to be shorter and didn't need high ceilings and probably paid more attention anyway coming down the stairs.

There were two fire places: one was big enough for a slumber party for four; the other was where we had our evening fire in the grate as we enjoyed another cup of weak tea. Berenice's idea of a good cuppa was one inch of hot water, four inches of milk, and an anemic teabag thrown in for flavor. Russell's idea was just keeping filling the cup, thank you. He'd drink anything hot.

Occasionally, I weaned him off the Earl Grey and fed him a Guinness. On this particular evening, we had both knocked back a stout, one half each, and were feeling frisky, a little inebriated. Neither of us drank much alcohol so a little can be quite economical for cheap drunks like us. We were playing with Edmund's little toy cars. The Pendletons have two children, Edmund, six, and Celia, four.

I often got stuck babysitting them which was like being thrown into a swimming pool never having touched water before and not wanting to swim in the first place. But tonight the Pendletons were handling the babysitting and we were drag racing Edmund's toy cars around the lips of our beer mugs, seeing who could finish 20 laps first. Then Russell

ditched his Maserati in the foam. ‘You shouldn’t mix drinking with driving, you know,’ I chided him.

I thought we had been a little drunk and quite silly, but suddenly all that was gone. We were rivettingly awake and focussed, as if somebody had turned up a dimmer switch to full intensity. A gigantic truck was idling outside the window. The oak logs in the grate were twinkling with stars. An amusement of wings settled over us. Reality seemed to melt, loosing all its hard edges. I almost felt like hugging somebody. There they were, the same six very tall angels I had encountered on the hillside behind the Tor. Except now Russell and Berenice were with me, and they saw them too.

I’m not saying the Ofanim condensed themselves into actual pinchable physical forms in that living room at Wick. They met us half way. Russell and Berenice were both a bit psychic, and I had my moments too, so given our raw talent, Blaise helped us see them by impressing themselves a little more firmly into our senses than they might normally do with more upmarket psychics.

Of course, over the years many times I wished Blaise would come down into matter and put their feet up with us. They said they had never been in human form, but one day they would have their chance. They even gave us the date: starting in 2020 they would start coming into our world as little Blaise babies, Blaiselets, little celestial wheels in infant’s bodies. No doubt they’d be winking at an early age. It would be a once in Creation occurrence, and would actually signal the start of good things for the world. That was nice, but from where we sat in Wick that was a lot of years away still. I’ll be worrying about my prostate by then. What have you boys got for us now?

We called them ‘the boys,’ partly out of amusement and partly because how else do you relate to high-ranking angels who are just inches from God without irony and jokes? I mean, why are they talking to us in the first place? What did we ever do to impress them? I only got a C- in Zen Buddhism after all. I flunked the *koans* and never moved up the corporate ladder in the Zen world. It was the same with the Boy Scouts. No climbing instinct I guess.

Sure I meditated, but my knees would get sore and I’d fidget and sneak a look at my wrist watch to see how much more of this nonsense I had to put up with. Russell got infected with Buddhism too and was sick for a long time with the Dharma, but he got over it too. Let’s hear it for the lapsed.

It took us a long time to understand why Blaise bothered with us, but we finally got it. The Marx Brothers. The Three Stooges. Curley Howard, that outrageous mix of two year old and mad dog, must have studied with Blaise. Remember that wink? What’s behind a wink but a tinkle of amusement, and what’s behind that but a grand sense of the comedy of it all, the divine chuckle. Even the Ancient of Days has a funny bone.

This I what we got: even if you’re a jackanapes and a complete failure at *koans*, if you get the joke, you’re in. Blaise likes to laugh. The Old Man likes to laugh. Most of the angelic hierarchy, at least the top end of it, is full of cut-ups. I say most of it because, confidentially, the Elohim can be glum at times, and the Seraphim come across as a bit flighty.

But Blaise likes their lightness, their levity, their *levitony* – a species of giddiness inspired by angels. An antigravity particle twinkling away in every human. We once asked Blaise: how come you’re talking to us and not the big shots in Shambhala

or highly evolved masters and such? Because they take themselves too seriously and, believe it or not, they can't see us, Blaise said. Humor is the key that opens the door to where and what we are.

As I said, we called them the boys, although Berenice didn't appreciate this. She saw Blaise as females, we saw them as males. Of course they are neither, or both, or more than both. It doesn't matter. In fact, they told us they had been many forms, all the ones in the book, actually, even elephants. They once created a stir as a Hindu deity named Ganesh. Remember Ezekiel's fairly grandiose vision of the divine chariot that everybody thinks was a UFO? Blaise was there as the wheels of the Merkabah.

There were always six of them, identical, eight-foot tall angels with wings out to here, full of jokes and the answers to cosmic mysteries, responsible for all kinds of arcane tasks in the universe, on friendly terms with just about anything we could imagine – Martians, Pleiadians, all the gods and goddesses of every pantheon on Earth – and a great deal we couldn't imagine.

Another reason we called them the boys was that they didn't want us to put them up on a great marble pedestal and make celestial gurus out of them. Sure they were wise and educated beyond belief; sure they had a really impressive wingspan and could travel faster than light and visit us yesterday if they got a notion to now, and instantly take us to places like Mount Meru, the Crystal City, or Shambhala, at the drop of a hat. And sure we were a few not too clever humans who liked to drink weak tea and relax in comfortable chairs by the fire and occasionally lose all motor control over half a stout.

The point is: they needed us. It's a shocking proposition, but true. The angels need us to complete their work, and we need them to make being human palatable. They have all the answers and no bodies; we have bodies but no answers. Let's do lunch! I think Gurdjieff called this reciprocal maintenance, and it's a good term.

Later I thought of it in terms of a dimmer switch. You're in a dark room and want some light. You reach for the dimmer switch but find it won't move unless there's another hand there next to yours. Your hand and the angel's hand. Turn it on slowly, or else you'll make everyone blind. Move the dial slowly and bring light to the planet. Actually, you need a third hand on the switch to make it work right, but I'd learn about that later on.

So they were the boys to us, senior colleagues, if you will, and it seemed we had some things to do. But first we had to fall in love with them because you need a star to do the Grail Quest, and you need an angel to get your star. I didn't know this until much later. I didn't get how we had to sit back and enjoy the seduction for a few months until we had cultivated enough certainty that we could be trusted with a little field-work on their behalf. What's it like to fall in love with an angel, to be wooed by six attentive Ofanim with a forty million backup team if one of them gets stage fright?

Forty million? Remember the silly question that used to vex medieval theologians, the one about how many angels could dance on the head of a pin? That's one of those little irritating cosmic mysteries Blaise answered for us: 40.3 million. Here's the math: they have 144 major manifestations, and 6 to the power of 6 lesser manifestations. Each time they increase, they

do so in multiples of 6. So that's 40.3 million and change. They can be in a lot of places at once, if they feel like it. Their resting, ultimate state is as a pinprick of brilliant light; then when they come down a scale, they're six angels; when they're feeling really expansive, they're 40 million. I once asked Blaise: how come six?

'How come there is only one of you?'

'One is hard enough to deal with.'

'One can do so little. Six can do so much more.'

I forgot to mention that not only does Blaise live in the universe, they live inside us, inside every human, frankly, whether they like it or not. I don't mean Blaise is some kind of angelic squatter, looking for bodies in which to perch. It's to do with the spiritual constitution of the human in general. People like Rudolf Steiner explained that all the angels, the stars, the whole celestial hierarchy helped create the human and still keep an active hand in the running of our affairs, and this includes digestion, breathing, seeing, thinking, and probably joke-telling.

Remember that wild vision of my body as a balloon full of stars? There's actually something to that and Steiner was probably right. Blaise has a legitimate, God-appointed place in every human: two inches above the belly button and two inches inside. It's not that somewhere amidst the cells and fatty tissues in your abdomen you will find a burning star. It's slightly more metaphorical than that, or perhaps I should say, rarefied. The star is definitely there, but it's in your energy body (or call it the etheric body, or aura, whatever) in the same place, just above the navel and a little inside. Look there and you will find a tiny blazing pinprick of angelic light twinkling

back at you. Giving you attitude. Giving you a pick-up wink. Giving you Love from Above.

That's how we started to fall in love with Blaise. We couldn't get them out of our minds. Everywhere we went in the house, in Wick, in Glastonbury, there they were. We'd wash the dishes and there would be Blaise winking and waving from the suds. We'd cut up an onion for the miso soup and the six Blaises would wave to us from the cutting board. I'd vacuum the living room and hundreds of little Blaises would be grinning from the carpet fibers. I'd feel this scratchy, ticklish feeling at my navel, lift up my shirt, and there they'd be, sitting around the great wormhole of my physical body like it was the Harvard Club on a slow night.

One time I went to London to look something up in the British Museum (when they still had that fustian rotunda and the Victorian card catalog). Hundreds of Blaises with reading glasses down on their noses were studiously examining books on the second level of the rotunda. As I drove down Shaftesbury Avenue, every taxi had a Blaise passenger; some even sat on the roofs of the cars. On the motorway back home, we passed a small airplane taking off; a dozen Blaises clung to the tail like kite strings, and they didn't forget to wave. One time I was riding my bike home at dusk, having been out at a landscape site meditating and chasing cosmic mysteries. The six Blaises settled on my head as if it were their drawing room, sipping tea, reading the *Times*.

Another time, biking it home after dark, they set up a brass sextet on the top of my head and gave me some Mozart for the ride home. They set up some spotlights too so other cars

wouldn't run me off the road since I had no lights on my bike and there were no street lights. I have no idea if the other cars saw Blaise's lights, but they didn't run me over, so something must have worked.

It's too bad pejoratives have been dumped on the idea of navel gazing. There's actually something to it: a conversing, winking, flying, shape-shifting, wisecracking, talking-to-God star. I spent as much of my time as I could keeping my eye on that star. I would have done it all day long if my mind didn't keep wandering, getting distracted, chasing bones the way those Zen dogs are known to do. The dog runs after the bone: that's the clever way the *roshis* would tell their students that their mind had no more brains than an easily distracted puppy who's off like a flash at the merest suggestion of a bone. Well, this dog runs after the star, after the coattails of eighty million wings. Woof, woof!

Everywhere I went, it was star, star, star. I kept seeing that blazing pinprick of light at my belly button, twinkling, waving, regarding – loving – me. It felt like an old friend, older than you could have had a friend, even if you figure in reincarnation. This was a friendship that was older than even the first life any of us ever had here.

The star was my closest, most confidential, most sagacious friend, an invisible helper I could have all to myself never forgetting – and somehow the paradox didn't vex me – that everyone else on this planet, in this solar system, this galaxy, universe, multiverse, the whole spacetime black bowling ball – I'll tell you about this later – could rightfully say the same thing. We are your Blazing Star, Blaise always said, but that 'your' encompassed a lot of beings.

I'd see Russell at lunch and ask him if he'd heard from Blaise. It didn't matter we had spent two hours talking with Blaise last night until two o'clock in the morning. It didn't matter that I'd just had a ten minute complimentary guided vision of one aspect of the angelic hierarchy, courtesy of Blaise. It didn't matter that I felt Love from Above streaming out of my belly star like heat waves across a summer landscape. I wanted more: I wanted to hear more, know more, see more, be more. It's that craziness you get when you're twentysomething and seriously infatuated with a love interest. Even five minutes away from the erotic fire and you feel homesick for your lover.

So Russell and I would discuss what we'd heard from Blaise since breakfast. A wink, a twinkle, a little pressure on the aura, a slight nudge in understanding, the seed of an interesting concept, a fascinating connection. Anything. We couldn't keep Blaise out of the discussion. Why should we anyway? What more intriguing subject could there be?

It was like suddenly, miraculously, and unexpectedly, you find a secret entrance into the Great Man's office at the top of the high rise, and you can bypass all the middle level bureaucrats, the secretaries, gophers, ass-kissers, sycophants, dunners, confidence men, everyone in the organization who would prefer you didn't have direct access to the chief without going through them, without an appointment, credentials, a referral.

Forget the teachers and priests, the gurus with their business cards and websites. When we were with Blaise, it was as if we could see God through them, get a feeling for the Architect of it All through Blaise's sheer proximity. The sheer fact that

Blaise existed, was talking to us, showing us amazing things, was irrefutable proof that atheists were wrong.

Yes, sometimes we'd hear from Blaise between breakfast and lunch, and it would be like the Saturday morning kid's cartoons. Six Blaises in sunglasses standing – strutting? – cockily on a lilac beach under an intense sun. 'It's very bright where we are,' as if they needed an excuse for the shades. Five of the Blaises shaking their heads in dismay and disapproval as the sixth Blaise staggered about, his wings shredded and plucked. 'He flew too close to the Concorde today. Wings everywhere.' God, who writes their material?

Of course, they could ask the same question of us: who writes the thoughts in our heads? Sometimes they'd plant a little thoughtlet, the possibility of an interesting line of thought, and good Grail dog that I was, I'd fetch it and worry it all day, often driving Blaise a little crazy. It happened with tin. Joseph of Arimathea, the guy who bankrolled Jesus and brought him to the British Isles, even, if you believe the legends, to Glastonbury, supposedly owned or operated some tin mines in Cornwall. So they said Joseph was a tin merchant.

Metaphysical doyens, we figured there must be something esoteric to this story. What's tin spell in Hebrew? Greek? When you factor in the number equivalencies? Where would it fit on the Tree of Life? Does it correspond to a Tarot image? Russell and I obsessed about tin all the way into the evening when it was time for Blaise to visit again. 'Do you know what tin spells backwards?' they asked first off. 'It spells NIT.' As in nitwit, but they were too polite to say it.

But they wouldn't hold it against us. If they thought we were terminally obtuse, they'd never have bothered to make contact

in the first place. Their way of leaving was often amusing too. A fat box that looked like a family-size detergent box, with the word 'ALL' printed in brazen colors. Under the brand name the box read, 'The answers to all your questions.' Another time Blaise said: 'And so. It's been a long day in the sun. We need . . . oh, a bath. We're going over to the Dead Sea for a dip. See you later, Our Love. Wish you were here.'

The days passed like this. With every gesture, every step, every little activity, climbing the stairs to my room, carrying out the trash, raking the compost pile, brushing my teeth — these irrepressibly happy Blaises are with me, mirroring everything I do. Then in the evening the Blaise Wrap would start.

They would usually announce their arrival about an hour before they showed up. It got so I would just sit on the sofa and do nothing, waiting for the first sign of Blaise. It was like staying up all night and waiting for the sunrise. It was like dowsing. It was like waiting for your lover to come home from a trip, from her day at work, from the next room, from looking away for a second.

They would slowly approach our world, like an exquisitely slow strip tease, long before they congealed into form and speech. The room would start to feel attentive, as if populated with eyes and ears, as if we were being regarded. Normally, we go about our days observing the world, but how often does the world look back? As Blaise slowly approached, you'd feel watched, observed, noticed, but in a wonderful, almost narcissistic way. You could almost like yourself under the influence of this kind of wonderful mushy affection.

It's as if Blaise watches us from within reality, beholds us

from within our own awareness. You end up observing yourself the way they are. You start having deeper thoughts, more organized thoughts; they start running in interesting grooves; you start understanding things. You feel you're getting some help. Things grow warm, happy along the edges; things melt into a sweetness that flows like blood through us. I suppose mystics call this bliss.

Like a dimmer switch that is slowly, steadily strengthening the illumination in the room, Blaise meditates us, reminds us who we are, who they are, what the Mystery feels like. The little pinprick of light at your navel grows larger, like a star rushing towards you, like a star milliseconds away from going supernova. Soon their presence is almost palpable. The room seems inexplicably brighter, fuller, as they keep turning up the dimmer switch of their presence.

We feel as if 'translated into Heaven,' as Malory often said of the more fortunate Grail Knights in their angelic encounters. You almost can't stand it it's so delicious. You want to feel this way forever. It's so full you feel you will burst, and then Blaise speaks, organizing this lush angelic presence, this Love from Above, into words.

'We come as a Blazing Star. We come as a pinpoint of light. Feel for this pinpoint of light inside yourselves. Feel for this tiny Blazing Star just above your belly buttons and a little inside. Breathe with your Love from Above to this Blazing Star as we breathe with you...' We'd comply, and start to melt away into bliss city, then Blaise would say some more. 'Think of us, as you wish, as six columns of enveloping white light, making a circle around you.'

This one woke me up: the gazebo on the roof of my parent's

house. That was Blaise. I've since refined my perception of this a bit and now describe it as a rotunda. It turns out Russell and Berenice often experienced Blaise in this form; in a sense, this was Blaise's office, a six-pillared collapsible rotunda. Often we'd visualize this rotunda set in a lush green lawn: walk in the rotunda, wink at the six white pillars (Blaise pretending not to look like angels, hiding their wings behind the columns), sit down at the table as they zipped the rotunda up into a pinprick of light and went somewhere.

Blaise continued: 'Think of us as a blazing pinpoint of Light. Think of us as the *Nimitta*, the comet of consciousness, as a very fine point of light within a lilac flame.' This *Nimitta* reference was interesting. It's a Sanskrit word and means something like the ultimate point of focus, or a refined quintessence of consciousness. Experientially, the *Nimitta* is a diamond with forty million facets. Just think of it: picture a sparkling diamond, say, the size of a two-story house. It has forty million facets, each twinkling, each winking, each a doorway. You can walk through any one.

We never got a straight answer out of Blaise on this one. It seems the star is the condensed brilliance that comes out of the *Nimitta*, but it also seems that the *Nimitta* is what you find inside the star, the manifoldness before it concentrates itself into a point of light. It doesn't matter; it's real either way.

Part of the Blaise experience, we learned, is that you want your star to go supernova. It starts as a pinprick of light at your navel; focus, smile, grin, wave, and send Love from Above to it, and it swells, enlarges, expands, rushes at you until it envelops you in a blaze of light and disappears. Now you are inside the star. You've turned inside out. First the star was in you; now

you're inside the star. You're a walking, talking, winking star. You're in Blaise, or at least the outer fringes.

Aside from this being rather a fun thing to do, it's essential for the Grail Quest and all the other geomythic things Blaise had us do. To get your star to go supernova, it's sometimes easier to see it as the Nimitta instead. Walk through any window. As soon as you're through, your star is supernova. This is good, and the start of a progression that actually leads you to the Round Table, Holy Grail, the Christ, the Buddha Body and other high-end ineffables.

The Nimitta is also handy if you want to remember your past lives. They're all in there, even the ones you don't want to remember, when instead of being an amazing Atlantean priestess-starlet or wizard manque, you were tortured, maimed, disemboweled, humiliated, and generally abused beyond belief. Yeah: death pictures. But it's not all horror show.

The real problem is that it can be a hall of mirrors, a seductive fun house with always another fascinating door to open. It's like the Tarot image of the Wheel of Fortune. You keep going round and round as you explore yet another past life, mostly out of curiosity. I once had a clear visual (metaphysically speaking, it was an analogy) of this records room inside the Nimitta: You stand in the center of a large circular room along whose perimeter are thousands of doors. Open a door and walk through into a past life memory. Stay as long as you like. But watch out, you might.

Some days I'd climb up the small hill behind the manor house and look out over the Wick countryside. There were the little drainage ditches called *rhynes* running through the

somewhat boggy fields; there was the train track along which a couple times a day a train sped in a hurry; there was the River Parett, an out-of-work has-been of a stream with just enough life force to keep moving along; there the Holstein milkers from the dairy farm crossing the tiny footbridge over Durleaze-drove rhyne. The Somerset landscape is minutely domesticated, known, described, labeled, and mapped. Every two-foot wide rhyne and single-person footbridge gets validated. I'd perch and wonder: what does Blaise do during the day? On the weekends? What is time like for them?

You have to start with the fact that they've been here a very long time. Not on Earth. In existence. When was Blaise born? 29,900,000,000 years ago, actually earlier than this universe and some of the angelic hierarchy were created, they told us. Twenty-nine billion years and never in a body. Twenty-nine billion years old and masters of time and space, coming and going, backwards and forwards, as they pleased. To be precise, as God pleases. They've seen it all in this universe, and that 'all' encompasses a great deal more than I know I am presently able to comprehend.

A lot of their time with us had to do with planetary history, how things got here, who did what, and why. Reading between the lines, I also got a sense of how angels are restrained from doing certain things because they would interfere with our free will to be complete idiots. In other words, they set up the place, the whole geomythic temple that is Earth, showed us how it works, but then under orders from above, had to step back and let us use it intelligently or stupidly. Occasionally, they'd be allowed to mop up the mess.

One day they were explaining ley lines and their relation-

ship to sacred sites, holy sites, power points, vortexes – they're called lots of things, but in this case Glastonbury Tor, Chalice Hill, and Beckery, a not well known but important site on the edge of town. Blaise said that the ley lines – for now, think of them as energy lines running between points – shouldn't be tampered with because it was complicating their work.

'Man is foolish to tamper with these lines unless under specific guidance through thought forms to deal with them in the material plane. His foolishness creates more work for us, gives the dark more of a chance. Tell people to leave what they don't understand alone until they understand more. Put this in big letters. Otherwise we will never finish our work.'

'And you're talking about a long time,' I offered.

'Right, a long, long time. Imagine a day spent waiting for a ten ton weight to drop on you. Can you do that? It would make time very long, wouldn't it? Imagine thousands of years like that.'

One time they had to curtail their evening visit with us to sort out a problem in the third star of Sirius. Some bad guys were trying to commandeer this star and, I guess, basically take over the galaxy. Another time, they called us from the road, en route to the Pleiades where they gave regular reports on what we were up to on Earth – not just me, Russell, Berenice, and the kids, but everybody, the whole race. By the way, I asked them how long it would take them to get to the Pleiades from where they were, which was more or less in our solar system, maybe even near Earth. About six hours, they said. How do you guys travel? Blaise said it's like we all look through a long telescope and try to imagine we're already at

the other end of it, say, in the Pleiades. As soon as most of us can see ourselves there, we're there.

Another time they were going to Arcturus but they weren't planning on making much of a report there due to insufficient interest. Last winter they spent four months on a planet related to the star Polaris in the Little Dipper where apparently a lot of souls from Earth hang out for a while after death. Blaise vaguely hinted there was a beach there, with lilac sand, and that they might, on an off day, have spent a few moments kicking back in the sunlight.

One time they had to leave to help out at a meeting in Glastonbury where business interests were trying to do something to Chalice Well that would have been bad news for the planet's energy body, Blaise told us. One time they visited us and said they actually weren't even here; this was a video recording they made earlier, but which they scheduled to be activated and shown when we reached a certain point in time and understanding that would trigger the start button. Video recording or not, we still had a lively chat with them, they answered questions, evaded others, made some jokes, dished out assignments, and left, never having been here.

Recognizing I couldn't match my mind to their level of consciousness at this moment, I asked them what was surely to them a dumb question. What did you guys do today? 'We will give you an extraordinary piece of information,' they said, in that mock solemn tone that always has a twinkle or quip lurking just behind the syntax. 'We will speak to you of the life of an angel. We read from 'Today:' Awoke. Found we were already awake. Looked around and thought, This is it. It is this. Knew it was no thought, knew it was inspired. Knew we

didn't know, knew we had work to do, knew it was joy. Knew we would return to Earth one day. Knew one day we would have bodies like yours. Knew we would try to help as many humans as possible. Hung around a few church spires here and there. We were mainly in Europe and North Africa today, though two of us made a significant presence in Central Mexico.'

Among their other daily duties there is zodiac cleaning. That is, tending the galaxy and its many constellations. 'We love the zodiac on behalf of those above. We are like dentists. When you brush your teeth, if you don't brush them all correctly, then some will rot and drop out. They will decay and need external help. Now, if you care for each tooth with love, with toothpaste and toothbrush, each tooth will be whiter than white. It will shine from within your mouth like a star. This is what we do with each part, every part of each place, even the dark crevices of humanity. We send some love into even those places. We try and get rid of the decay so that we may all become one again in the brightness of the big star we are.'

Blaise as God's peripatetic dentists, gallivanting all over the galaxies treating stellar gingivitis and patching up caries. I didn't know it at the time of course, but Blaise had a career in zodiacal dentistry in line for me as well.

One thing Blaise never tired of telling us and which we never tired of not understanding was that they remembered us from before the Fall. Presumably they meant the Garden of Eden or some pre-incarnational state. We'd sit there, being with Blaise, listening to them, swimming in their Love from Above, knowing the boys knew something major about us that we can't even remember. They also implied that somehow we

had come from them, had once been with them, and gone off on some kind of hare-brained assignment, and hadn't written home much.

It reminded me of the situation of Odysseus's crewmates when they hit Circe's island. Being a magician and evidently ill-disposed to Greeks in ships, Circe turned most of Odysseus's men into pigs. Odysseus escaped this fate, but he suffered nonetheless at seeing his former shipmates snouting around in a porcine misincarnation. A few of the crew were still in the ship moored off the island; they were still humans, unenchanted into pigs by Circe.

I came to think of Blaise as the shipmates still whole and hale on the ship in their original state; the rest of us had already bit Circe's bullet and were groveling in the mud, oblivious to our former state of existence, or, if we did know we weren't originally pigs, not remembering how we got here or how to get back to being human – or in this analogy, one of Blaise.

One of the most startling pronouncements Blaise made in those days was about angel envy. They truly thought humans had something they lacked. Imagine: they have the joy, the bliss, the awesome knowledge, the proximity to God, a non-money based lifestyle, total recall, complete mobility, and they envy us? What do we have? The need to eat, bloat, get heart-burn, scratch mosquito bites, not understand most things, get headaches, be quarrelsome, evade responsibility, pretend to be atheists. However, this kind of oppositional thinking doesn't wash with these boys.

'The Architect of All Absolute Existence made you in His image. We are not so fortunate. You have Buddha Nature. You

have Christ Spirit. You and He are one. We only serve. We have to come back in your forms to rejoin with Him. No possibility for us until our time is right. To have human form is a rare and extraordinary event. We are envious of it. Each of you who occupy this form has an opportunity of uniting with the highest, with the Lord Absolute. We do not have this possibility in our present form. We are not complaining, you understand. Just trying to put things in perspective for you. We are more than happy. We are in a state beyond your experience.'

We think being in a body is a bit of a nuisance, and we'd rather be angels. Blaise thinks being an angel is pretty okay, but they've got unfinished business they can do only in a body. They envy us the chance, we envy them in general. Studying this basic conundrum, I realized I had left something out of my equation, but what that was, I didn't know.

Their basic strategy was to plant seeds of Love from Above while they were still the Ofanim. Then when they get their once in 15 billion years chance and incarnate, they would reap a little Love from Above as anonymous gifts from the seeds they had already planted just in case people forgot to be nice to them. These guys are good planners. The game plan was that when the next Golden Age arrived – circa 2020 AD – they would achieve bliss in the human body, transcend all limitations, and definitively be out of here in one life, back with the Old Man – technically, one with the Old Guy – where they belong.

However, and this is where we came in, for that Golden Age to commence on Earth, for Blaise to bliss out in those human bodies, certain obstacles had to be removed, certain things set

in place, a little bit of Grail questing had to be done on behalf of the big plan. That's why Blaise was visiting us every night. Somebody had to get trained in being a Grail Knight and they thought I was a likely candidate. Or else everybody else they asked already turned them down. Either way, the job started the next day.