

Other World

Synopsis Attachment

Underlying the action / adventure element of the story, opposing fanaticism, superstition and belief serve as motivation and the source of all tension behind physical conflict. In essential contexts of belief, the nature and characteristics of reality account as perhaps most elemental, and the most elemental underlying conflict theme of the story accounts as the fundamental opposition between theories of objective reality and subjective reality. The following is a series of excerpts in which the theme recurs, defining the fundamental conflict between objectivity and subjectivity (*Asterisk lines indicate the omission of all content between segments*):

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Once upon a time, no man told any story, no man practiced the written word and no man counted years. The number of years I might now name commenced generations before my lifetime and though the stories of men may authenticate the number, no greater knowledge does it reveal than the preponderance of that it fails to authenticate.

I know not the correct time. I might count a number of years and name that number aloud but the event commemorated by that number reveals no truth of greater consequence than any other isolated event or number if it does not explain the origin, and I know that it does not. No greater truth does that number reveal than its utter irrelevance. If I know not my origin then I know not who I am, nor do I know what I am.

The longer the count of years, the more inaccurate the number - The more history we record, the more obscure our identity - The more we learn, the less we know.

For an unknown age before the counting of years, my kind in remote solitude and isolation endured an epoch in which the origin and conclusion of time represented such abstract value as to merit no measure, and no story did any find worthy of repeating. The first encounter with men from the other world commenced the series of events that inspired our first count of years and our first story traditions.

From the void of lost history and uncounted years, no story establishes motive or cause, so my story is the story of effect and consequence. This is the age of counted years, the age of technology, economics, politics and war. This is the story of men. In the dawn of civilization without an identity, this accounts as our only known origin.

I know not the correct time, and no greater lie can I ever tell than the accurate account of my history. The correct time to count will never commence, until we know the truth.



When the age of plunder and treasure is ended, let those tormented by haunted dreams and grandiose visions realize the futility of their mortal actions, and finally capture the prize possession of those treasures so jealously concealed from plain sight.

Would each provide only for all others first and only that which all others might need, so would each know in abundance without effort, all riches for which they might ever wish, and this constitutes the only treasure within all the earth.

In the quest for material value lurks only the torment of wish and dream unfulfilled, and so it would stand to reason the greater the accumulation of material value, the greater the torment of wish and dream unfulfilled.

And if those who dream only of opportunity, free will, ambition and accomplishment, hunted their treasure in the hearts of humankind, they would know the limitless abundance of modesty. They would know sanctuary.



“That is what the last days of humanity are going to look like. The last remnants will die off resting blissfully in the shade of apple trees, and starve to death while apples fall from the branches above and bounce off their heads, because they won’t know apples are food if no one pays them money to pick the apples up off the ground, and their last words forever frozen on their dying lips will be, ‘If only we’d managed the money more wisely... We could have done whatever we wanted and had whatever we wanted if only we had applied ourselves... What a shame - We had such potential’.”

Wyl exhaled and shook his head, “I don’t know about that, Fae-”

Fae raised his eyebrows somewhat surprised, “Really? Are you sure about that? I’m disappointed, Wyl, because I know you’ve observed for yourself, firsthand. They already believe they exercise no natural expectation to inhabit the earth. Someone tells them, ‘You’ve failed to satisfy your obligations so I’m afraid we’re going to have to expel you from the earth.’ and they believe it. They walk around with their feet on the dirt, living and breathing, and they believe they’re not allowed on the earth. They consider that reality... and you doubt they’ll starve while apples bounce off their heads? For true believers, no matter what experience or material principle of the earth might contradict, nothing exceeds the power of these articles of faith. They’re already twice that stupid now, Wyl. You’ll see. I won’t be around for it but in your years to come, you’ll have far more contact with these people than I ever did. You and I have always been ready to believe all the fantasy, they just didn’t get to us in time while we were still kids and now that we’re adults, we know better and it’s too late but one of these lifetimes, they’re going to find an opportunity to tell a next generation of ours that they have potential and need to apply themselves, and then those kids are going to live in a suspended state somewhere other than the earth, and starve to death while apples bounce off their heads.”

Wyl smiled slightly in appreciation of Fae’s outlandish scenarios. Fae smirked in reaction but then assumed an extremely serious demeanor, “It’s okay to laugh at it now -- whatever it takes to make it memorable -- that’s all I care about. Just, always remember it because that is how the big last great war to determine the inheritance of the earth will look. There won’t be a lot of weapons involved and hardly anyone will wear uniforms. Everyone will look and act about the same, and the only way you’ll ever figure out which ones to kill... is by paying real close attention to which ones tell you, you have potential and you need to apply yourself...”

Saccia pulled Wyl into the vestibule of a clothing shop just short of the offices and directed him, “Tell me your story one more time.”

He spoke quickly and in a monotone, “I’m a farmer from Harin Creek north of-”

“No.” she interrupted, “Look me in the eye and convince me.”

He nodded and started from the beginning, “I’m a farmer from Harin Creek. It’s a small burgh north of Foulds. I lost most of my crops to a fire that burned down my barn, my grain shed and my house. Some men who cart grain in and out of Foulds told me I could maybe find seasonal work here in Enet. I’m here to work for food and shelter - I’ll take any work available...” Saccia tilted her head with a skeptical expression and he suddenly doubted his performance. Intent to perform to her satisfaction, he extended the exercise with an improvised plea, “I’m not proud or particular. Give me a chance to contribute and I promise you I won’t let you down-”

Saccia shook her head with a wince and inquired, “What is that?”

“What?” he asked.

“Contribute?” she replied, “We never discussed that.”

“I was just improvising, I guess.” he explained.

“Well, don’t do that.” she instructed, “Just stick to what I told you.” She examined him and his expression did not particularly encourage her. She squinted and inquired, “Have you never done this before?”

He shook his head and stated defensively, “I really am a farmer. I think I’ve told you that more than once... No, I’ve never done this before...”

Saccia clutched his collar in her fist, pulled him close and stated clearly and firmly, “If he tests you at all, that is precisely the kind of test he will conduct and the only correct response to any test will be to stubbornly stick to the prepared material. Any deviation will expose you as a liar, understand?” Wyl nodded and she continued, “All right. Listen to me. Don’t interrupt me and don’t ask me to explain. Just do precisely what I tell you, say the words I tell you to say and don’t try to make any sense of it... You do not care about making any kind of ‘contribution’ to anything, you understand? You care about yourself and your selfish personal interests, and nothing else. You are here to make money and you don’t care what you have to do or who you have to hurt. If he offers you work beating children in the head with a club, you tell him you hope he has enough of them to keep you occupied all winter then you ask if you are allowed to eat the ones you kill. You are grateful for this man’s time and consideration. You admire and respect him. You hope to learn from him, you wish to be like him and will do anything to please him. This is an opportunity for which you consider yourself extraordinarily fortunate... You are greedy but not intelligent enough to steal... You are ambitious but not competent enough to promote... and... you never have any opinion about anything until after he explains the correct opinion to you... Do you think you can remember that?”

“Surprisingly enough,” he declared, “that all actually has a certain simplistic clarity.”

She smiled with wide eyes and exclaimed, “Excellent! Simplistic clarity...” She tugged him forward and instructed, “Hurry up and get in there now while it’s all still fresh in your thoughts.”

At subsequent dinner occasions, Feirrell-Haan, Policy Advisor opened his arguments with Mara by challenging her to explain why she might not invite the men in rags outside the gate to return with her to her state, principality or ‘forest’, as applicable, and live in splendor by her terms, if she genuinely felt such concern over their conditions. He clearly intended to inspire discomfort with the idea of surrounding herself with such a collection of undesirables, presumably in the expectation of exposing hypocrisy, but she contended such a proposition did not account as a legitimate resolution if it did not preclude other men from replacing those outside the gate. She subsequently pointed out that in his premise he obviously assumed if she brought the men to her state, principality or forest, the same economic conditions would somehow not apply and this she concluded he would only assume because of his direct knowledge that the economic conditions within his state are wholly contrived. She summarily dismissed him without further comment or contest with her customary, “He loses!” and King Nelles affirmed the judgment with a subtle and conclusive gesture of his finger that silenced Feirrell-Haan in concession.

Mara subsequently dispatched Guemeneau, Economic Advisor after a far more exhaustive ordeal in which Guemeneau relied exclusively on complex mathematical formulae he contended establish and affect relationships between gross productivity, the circulation of currency and ratios of process, surplus and demand. Mara accommodated Guemeneau to exaggerated extents even inviting him on several occasions to present protracted explanations of the mathematical foundations of his theory, and just when he appeared convinced he surged upon the cusp of victory, Mara silenced him with her hand and inquired, “Do his mathematics **describe** or **determine** the actions of men?”

Just like Praeleau before him, Guemeneau clearly and immediately recognized Mara plotted a philosophically treacherous course to navigate but distinctly unlike Praeleau before him, Guemeneau abstained from further debate and subsequent to a moment of silent brooding, he whispered barely audibly, “He loses.”

Mara leaned in his direction and stated gently, “She apologizes but his words spoken so softly she does not precisely hear. He would for her please repeat these, yes?”

Guemeneau contorted his lips, inhaled deeply then slapped his palm on the table with a loud clap and shouted, “He loses!”

On another occasion, Mara dispatched Rhanse, Chief Counsel and with that, exhausted the five men King Nelles initially assembled as presumably his principle council of greatest expertise. A series of far less memorable characters followed with a series of far less memorable arguments over a series of far less memorable dinner parties until at last, in the most epic of all economic debates, King Nelles Garomena proudly presented then unleashed the indomitable genius of the renowned and formidable ‘spiritual theorist’ and ‘mentalist’, Fazzo.

The great Fazzo clad himself in a flamboyant red cape, shaved his head to smooth shiny bare skin and prominently displayed a black chin beard heavily waxed to a sharp stiff point perhaps as long as a foot that extended out away from his chest. A black moustache similarly waxed to sharp stiff points extended perhaps six inches from each side of his cheeks in an overall arrangement producing the appearance of three dark spikes splayed off his face like the talons of a bird of prey. Beneath the red cape, the great Fazzo cloaked his body in dark purple silks that shimmered with reflected light and flowed loosely down to red slippers with great ornamental coils that tapered away from the toe tips. Fazzo spoke demonstrably with exaggerated hand gestures, facial expressions, postures and poses, and in every motion he performed, he jolted suddenly from one pose to the next then froze in each position never conducting a continuous or fluid action. In his tone, pitch and inflection, he indulged himself with extravagantly theatrical ostentation and clearly made no effort to conceal his condescension.

The great Fazzo tilted his head, spread his eyelids wide and stared at Mara as she struggled to restrain a smile then he commenced the contest with pure abstract theory. Although he read no more than perhaps one quarter of his print of the book prior to the occasion, Wyl recognized the basic components of the monologue as fundamental elements of Ome’. The theory emphasized the ‘illusory’, ‘interpretive’ and ‘subjective’ quality of material reality, and Fazzo contended that material reality is not absolute and inflexible but that each individual independently determines a personal interpretative subjective reality and therefore, material reality is not universal. For close to an hour, he conducted his theoretical lecture meticulously and methodically establishing a foundation of logic, explaining that objective thought is a form of self-deception because it assumes meaning originates from external sources and avoids the responsibility of defining meaning for the self.

With a series of logical extensions, Fazzo contended that because true meaning and reality are subjective, values are consequently subjective as well, and any consideration for objective values is irresponsible avoidance of self-determination and therefore self-deceptive. He enumerated sympathy, restraint, proportion, responsibility, morality and remorse as objective values the self-deceptive individual perceives as originating from external sources, and he warned that such values are the product of cowardice for fear of responsibility for subjective self-determined values. Fazzo progressed through his theoretical foundations all supporting the logical conclusion that material reality is the product of subjective interpretation that the individual determines subject only to the limitations of individual imagination and strength of will. He then conducted a logical transition converting the abstract theory of subjective reality to the dynamic manifestation of subjective value established by the practice of economics but just as he commenced the transition, Mara politely held up her finger to interrupt and even waited patiently while Fazzo advanced to a convenient point at which to conduct a pause.

The timing and subtlety of her gesture disrupted the poetic flow of the lecture conducted by Fazzo but he composed himself after so protracted a preface just enough to allow an accommodation as common courtesy. In fact, he even appeared pleased that she paid such close attention as Mara inquired with a demeanor suggesting she sought only clarification of a specific point, "If all things external are objective then her subjective thoughts are to him, external and objective, yes?"

Fazzo uncharacteristically stirred in his chair then froze in position with a hint of embarrassment that he briefly compromised his otherwise uniform mannerisms, and just as her earlier contestants, Praelau and Guemeneau, sensed that she trapped them with a question for which, they neither prepared a response nor even expected to hear, Fazzo obviously sensed the same philosophical hazard. However, Mara asked her question in the form of pursuit of mere clarification of a point he already strenuously confirmed even to an extent of verbosity and in response to her question, in all of the cosmos, only one possible answer occurred as legitimate for the great Fazzo.

He exhibited unyielding confidence but he swallowed hard and his throat noticeably flexed then the great Fazzo affirmed, "That is correct."

Mara maintained a disarming demeanor and even though clearly concocted, she yet convincingly portrayed herself as genuinely intent on grasping such sophisticated and advanced concepts. In continuing ostensible pursuit of comprehension, she subsequently inquired, "If recognition of external origin and consideration of objective quality is self-deceptive irresponsible cowardice, and... her subjective thoughts are to him, objective..." then she suddenly leaned onto her elbows as far out onto the table as she could reach and whispered, "... why for then he cares what she thinks? Yes?" Fazzo inhaled a deep stammering breath as her volume ascended to a controlled gentle speaking voice, "Why for hours he lectures her in attempts to persuade her? Whether with him she agrees or with him she disagrees, her subjective thoughts in any event are to him, objective, of no consequence, and his care and consideration for her thoughts is therefore self-deceptive, irresponsible and cowardly... yes?" She nodded her head innocently with wide expectant eyes as she spoke the punctuating word, 'yes' but immediately continued unrelenting, "Does he not self-deceive his subjectivity with objective consideration of her thoughts? Does his attempt to persuade her not demonstrate he lives in and reacts to objective reality? Does not the only possible demonstration of proof of his subjective reality occur in **never speaking to her so much as single word with intent to persuade?**"

Fazzo jolted into a theatrically contentious pose and opened his mouth with obvious intent to oppose her vigorously but then he froze, adjusted and arranged his clothing, relaxed into a comfortable slouch in his chair demonstrative of contemplative and content introspection. As if oblivious to the presence of any other humanity in the room, the great Fazzo stared blankly at the wall, immersed in a clearly self-determined subjective material reality, and he never moved or made so much as a single sound again.

For well over an hour, King Nelles, Fazzo, four other counselors to the king, Wyl, Dara and Mara sat nearly motionless and in absolute silence but for an occasional nearly inaudible grunt as Wyl painfully struggled to restrain a childish fit of laughter. After stubbornly subjecting the council to a passage of time she calculated as undeniably greater than the time Fazzo monopolized with his longwinded abstract thesis, Mara finally in customary fashion, thanked King Nelles for his gracious hospitality, wished all present at the table a pleasant evening, and informed her companions, "They go now."

After rising to her feet, Mara suddenly slapped her palm on the table with a thunderous clap causing everyone in the room except Dara, but most conspicuously including Fazzo, to jolt in shock. She leaned upon two fists pressed against the tabletop, glared at the renowned and formidable spiritual theorist and mentalist, the great Fazzo, and forcefully stated, "His reflexive reaction to clap of her hand upon tables as well as his improvised defense to her arguments demonstrate beyond all plausible dispute, he lives in objective reality he neither interprets nor determines." She leaned in his direction even further still and screeched, "**HE LOSES!**"

Fazzo stubbornly stared blankly at the wall, silent and motionless.

Upon entering the circular chamber of the king, Wyl felt his face flush with a surge of apprehension immediately turning his attention to a man in dark clothing at the fireplace. Months passed since the king's address and Wyl observed him only one time from a distance but he experienced no remote form of doubt in identifying the notorious man in dark robes. The man glanced casually at the three visitors but quickly turned his attention elsewhere. With a better look in close proximity, Wyl appreciated with some surprise, the youthful appearance of the man, conspicuously differentiating him from the mature elder statesman presence of the usual members of the council. For a brief moment, he even wondered if he had not mistaken the identity of a girl as he examined delicate and fair facial features and long curly yellow hair. He shuddered slightly and moved close to Mara feeling suddenly quite distressed with a powerful sense that something about the man simply felt profoundly wrong, even though he might have struggled to explain it.

Wyl nudged Mara but she ignored him and Dara discreetly brushed up behind him, whispering, "Do not rush. Take time. Pay close attention and be sure." He inhaled deeply and assumed his usual subordinate position behind MaraDara.

King Nelles conducted introductions, ultimately presenting the subject in question as his 'personal advisor', Tamel. The man conspicuously lingered a bit detached during the customary pleasantries, never speaking to anyone even throughout the meal.

As attendants cleared dishes and the party relaxed with cordials and smokes, Nelles asked Wyl, "Have you had a chance to read any portion of the book yet?"

Wyl struggled to focus on casual conversation but managed to respond, "Yes, my Lord, I have."

Nelles nodded with satisfaction and inquired, "Have you developed a reaction yet?"

"Yes, my Lord." Wyl responded, "I find it quite compelling but at times, somewhat perplexing."

Nelles smiled and stated with apparent amusement, "I told you, you owe me an opinion and that is an opinion. Excellent. Please tell me what about it you find perplexing if you do not mind my intrusion."

Wyl reluctantly explained, "Well, I read this part about the relationship between man and nature, and I'm not sure I'm interpreting it correctly but it seems to me it suggests something like an apple, for instance, is not considered food until after it is converted to the product of a marketplace..." It occurred to Wyl as he spoke, while present council may not have immediately recognized the identity of 'the book' to which Nelles referred, the content of his commentary made the subject in question apparent to all present and he easily noticed a degree of tension. He guessed perhaps that the council restrained from admonishing him only pursuant to their understanding Nelles initiated and orchestrated the conversation. Wyl continued delicately, "... and... I guess the way I read it... it seems like it means something like... uh... nature doesn't feed you - Only a market feeds you... like... food is not natural - Food is... an invention?" He concluded his interpretation awkwardly, intentionally converting it to a question as if a guess, in the hope of avoiding potential offense with a plausible plea of ignorance.

Nelles nearly squealed with delight and exclaimed, "Precisely!"

Wyl jolted slightly and shook his head sharply then composed himself, cautious not to offend anyone with too demonstrative a reaction and he repeated, "Precisely?"

Nelles praised him, "It is a very subtle and complex imperative, and at the risk of underestimating your intelligence, I am pleasantly surprised by your comprehension of the principle evidently without the assistance of a knowledgeable instructor."

Wyl inhaled slowly straining to conceal his amazement and responded, "You're saying I'm interpreting it correctly?" Nelles nodded graciously and Wyl impulsively blurted, "... and you believe that?"

The council bristled but Nelles maintained his humor, affirming, "No. I do not 'believe' it - I know it as inalterable truth."

Wyl recalled Mara's instruction to express himself honestly with Nelles should the subject arise and he wondered if that meant she considered argument acceptable. Nelles appeared quite entertained by the exchange and despite the obvious discomfort of the council with a situation apparently headed in the direction of blasphemy, Wyl responded to the perceived invitation extended by Nelles with an inquisitive challenge, "If food is an 'invention', how did the first inventor of food survive long enough to invent it?"

No less entertained, Nelles responded, "What is the origin of man?" Wyl stared and deliberately clenched his lips tight indicating he expected far more explanation and Nelles accommodated him, "Many aspects of mortal life are beyond the comprehension of man and simply are what they are as ordained by God."

Wyl nodded slowly and exhaled in a long breath then stated as gently as he could, "Look... I'm not going to argue with you and pretend I know something more than you, about the origin of man or the meaning of life, but... uh... apples grow naturally on trees without any invention from men... and they're edible! It's definitely not an invention! I can pick an apple off a tree and eat it right in front of you... You can't dispute that!"

To Wyl's astonishment, Nelles contended, "I can and I do!" then leaned onto his elbows and continued with uncharacteristically engaging hand gestures, "Wheat grows naturally but not in a form fit for food. Wheat is not food until men selectively breed it and then process it into a form of food. Wheat is not food naturally produced by the earth but raw material that becomes food only by the invention of man." To Wyl's growing astonishment, Nelles even reinforced his argument with a logical extension, "The water that flows from the mountains is not fit to drink until properly prepared by man." Wyl's jaw slowly fell open and Nelles advanced his argument to even further extremes, "To say the raw apple is food is to say man does not exercise control and is therefore equal to the apple, or no more significant than an apple. To say man is equal to the apple is to elevate the apple perhaps even to the status of God. That is idol worship of nature and it places nature in a higher order over man."

Wyl responded almost reflexively, "Nature IS a higher order over man!"

"No, it is not!" Nelles confidently declared, "Man is the highest order. Man creates nature. Man is the master of all things upon the earth."

"Man creates nature?" Wyl nearly shrieked on the verge of hysteria.

The council squirmed with discomfort over the boisterous tone of the exchange. Nelles appeared suddenly eager to pacify them and he smiled then bowed as if to call the bout to an end both respectful of his opponent and properly reverent for the subject matter. Most of the council exhibited indications of some relief over the cessation of the engagement and they noticeably relaxed in their chairs. Tamel leaned casually onto his elbow, nodded slightly in Wyl's direction and smiled a sly smile then stated in an inappropriately restrained tone, "Man is demonstrably and indisputably superior to all things on the earth. It is the sole discretion of man to do with the earth and all things upon it as man so sees fit, and just as you might pluck the apple from the tree and devour it, and call that beyond dispute, so does it also demonstrate your mastery over nature, and that is also beyond dispute. The apple is not food because it is an apple - The apple is food because you determine it so."

Wyl withdrew from the table and held his tongue, leaning close to Mara. It occurred to him the situation might require her intervention and he remained silent expecting some form of indication from her but after a tense moment, he interpreted no indication at all as an indication of her permission to proceed at his own discretion. He inhaled deeply and established direct eye contact with Tamel, and in a brief instant, he relived all the debates that occurred between Mara and the council of the king; economics, abstract theory, subjective value and interpretive material reality. He examined Tamel intently and perceived he observed an abstract, subjective, interpretive image of man. Perhaps his mouth and eyes were not his own, and merely projected onto his face by illusion.

Wyl attempted to exhale but his breath froze solid. His skin crawled and his hair stood on end. He shuddered slightly and blinked his eyes, and in the instant that transpired in that blink of an eye, he saw his father gaze across waves of grain then pluck a fistful of husks, roll them in his palm and watch as the seed tumbled loose and scattered to the wind. Leaning onto his elbows, Wyl faced Tamel and asked contentiously, "Is that so?" Tamel sneered with smug confidence and made a motion as if in preparation to respond, and in the instant that passed before Wyl interrupted, he felt keen appreciation for the arrogant folly of Tamel, personal advisor to the king. He recalled his dismay when he disrupted Mara and Dara as they hovered near the longbeard, suspicious of their intentions. He knew not for sure what they intended but he guessed in all likelihood, Tamel would consider it less than appealing, yet he sat casual, smug and confident barely beyond arms reach of them.

Wyl made up his mind, sure of his senses, and said, “So much confidence at this table and in this room - So confident are you all in your individualism and your contemptuous mastery of nature - So liberated from doubt. Tell me, oh great wise and insightful Tamel, creator of food, inventor of apple and orange, how confident are you in your abstract and subjective reality? How unyielding is your belief? Are you so convinced of your subjective interpreted reality, you no longer recognize death seated across from you at your dinner table?”

Tamel flinched. He leaned on his elbow as if in mock imitation or challenge and glared at Wyl, and though his eyes boasted arrogant confidence, his lips trembled the tremble of a guilty child. Wyl lunged at Tamel, clamped a hand onto his wrist and with a raised voice as if a public accusation, he declared, “This one dreams the dreams of god-”

Wyl felt a sharp blow against his chest propelling him into his chair and as the chair toppled over backward, he caught a glimpse of Tamel on his feet with a long dagger in his hand, leaping away from the table as Dara landed atop it with her dagger extended out in his direction. Wyl scrambled up to his feet as King Nelles and his council abandoned their chairs and rushed for safety in the corners of the room.

Tamel backed away with terror-stricken eyes wide as saucers then produced a second dagger and swirled the blades into a defensive stance. Dara leapt from the tabletop and drifted to his right as Mara slid across the table, and slipped to his left, both flashing their daggers in threatening displays in an obvious preparation to strike. Tamel shouted with an unexpectedly plaintive tenor, “Wait! Wait. I am trying to help. I have altered policy. You wouldn’t know! You have to look at the overall situation to understand...-” He tapered off to silence and MaraDara exhibited no reaction to his pleas other than perhaps escalating rage. He recoiled and in a blinding flash of motion and glinting blades, conducted a series of slashes, jabs and thrusts. MaraDara swirled in defensive reactions with equal lightning quickness and with blades ringing, Tamel withdrew back to his defensive stance. MaraDara crouched and moved a step closer preparing to strike then Tamel suddenly twirled, charged three steps and dove headfirst through a window, shattering the glass and splintering the delicate wooden framework.

Mara raced across the room, clutched Wyl by his collar and dragged him toward the doorway as Dara brandished her weapon causing the king and his council to shrink further into the corners of the room. As the three exited the room, Wyl struggled against Mara then shouted over his shoulder with a pointed finger, “King Nelles Garomena, one day before your time on this earth is finished, I will pluck an apple from a tree and you will eat it from my hand!”

The guard inside pinned the girl to the floor and in reaction to the commotion, he spun around with eyes bulging in shock then he pushed himself up glancing at his weapon, which lay perhaps two steps away from him. MaraDara stood still and quiet, their swords held in combat positions. Mara glared at the guard and said, “Go now and join the others. Say nothing of what happened here.”

The guard took a tentative step toward the door but Mara’s blade whistled in the air and came to rest with the point against his throat, just slightly depressing the skin, as she barked, “Not him! ... Her.”

The girl jumped up and ran toward the door. Dara said gently but authoritatively, “Walk.” and the girl slowed to a stop, composed herself then casually exited the house.

Wyl leaned to Dara and whispered, “Outside. No mess.”

Mara clutched at the guard's collar and dragged him to the door while Wyl gathered up his things to remove the evidence from the house. The guard glanced about so surprised and frightened, he never even noticed his companions hacked up and splattered in the dirt, shifting his eyes only back and forth between Mara and Dara. He finally blurted out, "You will burn for this... Run now while you can!"

Wyl stated grimly, "We come from beyond the living world... We bring you judgment... and punishment."

MaraDara glanced at Wyl for just an instant then dismembered the guard into three neat pieces consisting of an arm, a head and a torso with three limbs. They glanced nervously in all directions and perhaps with a degree of surprise, concluded no guard present accounted as in any condition to observe, let alone report, the incident. MaraDara picked up the pieces of the former guard and ran back behind one of the houses. Wyl followed suit and started with the man that fell from the tower, selecting him because he most likely represented the most complete and least damp and goeey object requiring concealment. The three gathered up all the rest of the pieces as quickly as they could and piled them all together under some trees in a weedy thicket. Mara dug into the earth with her dagger while Dara returned to the houses and Wyl hesitated for a moment then turned and followed Dara. At a water pump, she filled a bucket then ran into the tower while Wyl shuffled nervously outside, supposing she intended to wash away blood. A moment later, Dara emerged without the bucket and pointed as she passed Wyl, drawing his attention to a severed head evidently accounting as his last load to carry to the pile. He clutched it gingerly with only a finger and thumb pinched on an edge of the helmet and looked away from it grimacing all the while then after depositing it, searched two sheds, found a shovel and quickly returned to Mara, pushing her aside then digging frantically. Mara sat down, stretched her arms and broke out smokes and liqueur. Dara soon joined her and the two relaxed, smoked and drank while reclining to watch Wyl as he dug...

After some passage of time, MaraDara casually inquired, "Why for he tells guard" "from beyond living worlds he comes, yes?" "Yes, who he thinks is he" "that to them he brings judgments and punishments?"

Wyl spoke in short bursts, breathing hard as he continued shoveling, "I'm sorry. I didn't mean to intrude on your territory, it's just that... - Well, it didn't seem to me like you were going to say anything anyway... so... I exercised artistic liberty... I pretty much just said it for dramatic effect..."

"... Dramatics?" "Effects?" MaraDara repeated with eyebrows bent in consternation, "Who for are his dramatics?" "Yes? What cares man that dies" "what he hears instant before deaths, yes?"

"Umm... No- See..." Wyl stammered, "I didn't say it for him... I said it for me." MaraDara only stared perplexed in response and Wyl finally explained perhaps a bit irritably, "It will look really good on paper later! Okay?"

"... Mm..." "Yes." MaraDara concluded, "Similar are these to conclusive narrative dramatic flourishes" "of which he speaks when for home his fellow scouts depart, yes?" "... *from him again never do they hear*'?" "... *to these very days do they say*'?" "These are 'dramatic effects', yes?"

"Yeah, that's what I'm talking about." Wyl confirmed, "... and I hope you're not planning on writing anything any time soon because you really botched that up... It's: "... *and he was never heard from again*... or... *and it is said that to this very day*... Get it? It's not, '*from him again never do they hear*' ... That's crap. You have to honor the poetic tradition-"

“Yes!” “Yes! They appreciate” “his ‘poetic traditions’...” MaraDara mocked, growing perhaps a bit irritable themselves. They glanced at each other, smirked then with renewed curiosity, inquired, “... Eh... If these he believes later on papers looks good...” “why he does not later on papers write, yes?” “Why for these he must say?” “Yes?”

Wyl sighed heavily and explained as if such a question accounted as painfully remedial, “- **because...** if I **write** it... but I never **said** it... then it’s **not true...**”

MaraDara gasped, rolled their eyes, shook their heads, smoked and drank then finally reengaged with a far more vigorous and argumentative tone, “If these he says” “only so later” “he can write and claim true...” “is same as lying!” “Yes?”

“It is not!” Wyl protested. He paused and slammed the tip of his shovel into the dirt, leaned on the shaft and angrily insisted, “I said it! It doesn’t matter why. You were there - You heard me say it - Later, I’ll write it down - It’s true! That’s that! This is journalism, not fiction. If I didn’t say it, I can’t say I said it, but I said it and that means I get to say I said it because it’s fact!”

He panted and glared. MaraDara smiled and bowed their heads slightly conceding the argument or perhaps merely abandoning it but in either case, Wyl accepted the cessation of the argument as minimally satisfactory and then continued his digging.

When the hole spanned perhaps eight feet with a depression three or so feet deep at the center, Wyl climbed out then fell on his back, panting in the weeds as MaraDara cast all the body parts into it then the three took turns shoveling the dirt back in and over the bodies, heaping it into a slight mound. MaraDara kicked loose dirt and weeds onto the surface of the mound while Wyl tamped it with the shovel.

They concluded and stood still for a moment staring at the mound. Wyl held the shovel in both hands across his waist, nodded sharply in the direction of MaraDara then stated with a conclusive and dramatic flourish, “... *and they were never heard from again... and it is said that to this very day...*”

Wyl stretched out and rested against Mara and Dara, one on each side, and implored them, “No. Don’t humor me. I want you to convince me that what I observe and experience is real. I want you to convince me what I am doing is right and... that it makes sense to fight for it - That I am a part of something larger and not just immersed in some subjective dream that makes sense to no one but me.”

Mara smiled and instructed, “He looks into skies and tells them what there he sees.”

He laid still and they all stared into the heavens then he guessed, “Tinkling lights?”

“What else?” she prompted. He held his breath and after a moment, she prompted him further, asking, “What twinkling lights do?”

“Um... they twinkle?” he replied.

She sighed and asked, “Does he see every twinkling light always in same place at all times? Does his moon occupy but one single position in his skies and never change in appearance? Does he on occasion observe twinkling light streak across his skies?”

He thought for a moment then guessed, “They move?”

“In eternal motion are all things of heavens.” she affirmed, “Of but one gaseous particle are all things of heavens. So great is magnitude of heavens and so innumerable all gaseous particles, when compressed together in great masses, they ignite into stars and under great pressures and heats do they transform gaseous particles into diverse substances he calls his earth and his material reality. He is of same gaseous particles as stars. He is material in motion just like stars. Sun, moon, all stars and all of heavens are his family.”

He gazed up beyond the glow of their small campfire, into the unfathomable depth of the heavens and saw for the first time, not merely mysterious points of twinkling light, but endless masses of material swirling across an infinite expanse - Particles hurdling through space and time... He shook his head and asked, "Then what am I? None of this helps me make sense of anything. I see gas and dust in motion in an endless expanse... Is that all I am then? ...- particles of gas and dust in motion?"

"What more he would ever observe he thinks might to him present greater meaning?" she asked, "He must be of something, yes? How gaseous particles in motion are for him more or less clarity or disappointment? He thinks if up to him, he might do better?"

"No... I'm not saying I think I could do better-" he protested, "I'm...-"

She slapped his arm to interrupt him then counseled, "He places stone upon table, yes? If nothing ever disturbs table, does stone ever move?" He shook his head slowly and she continued, "He lifts stone from table and hurls stone. This sets stone in motion, yes?" He nodded slowly and she again continued, "What then this tells him about gaseous particles in motion across endless expanse?"

"Motion doesn't happen for no reason." he concluded, "Motion is the consequence of an action or a cause..."

Mara stated, "In all he observes and experiences every day and for all his lifetime, he sees overwhelming proof of actions, causes and consequences. Gasses hurdling through space and time or great causes on grand stages - Humans or gods - Cosmos or earth. If he doubts one, he doubts all. These are absolute totalities of his realities... His human eyes tell him materials in motion but the memories of his elements tell him he sees evidence of what was, becoming what will be... Real or imagined - What differences these ultimately to him make? He experiences what he experiences; imagination or reality; only words are these and they do not alter or determine his environment or his experience."

They drank their beer while the girl shuffled in and out of a back room, eventually producing hot bread, fried cucumbers, and onion and celery soup, placing the items in a neat and orderly arrangement in front of the threesome. Wyl immediately scooped up a spoon and plunged it toward his soup but Mara clasped her hand over the top of the bowl, obstructing his access.

"He is hungry, yes?" Mara asked.

"... Yes, I am hungry..." he answered.

"He thinks if girl sees witches and witches are his imaginary friends then girl is also his imaginary friend, yes?" Mara asked.

"I suppose that makes some kind of sense." he answered.

"He is hungry, yes?" she asked.

He answered, "Haven't we already established th-"

"He answers her." she insisted.

"Yes, I am hungry." he answered.

"His hungers are real?" she asked.

"I don't know." he answered, "I think I see where you're going with this, and I don't believe my hunger necessarily has to qualify as any more or less real than my imaginary friends."

"-but his hungers he feels, yes?" she asked, "He will eat soups, yes?"

"If she ever removes her hand and lets him at it, yes, he will eat soups." he answered.

“She says eat, not ‘eats’. Yes?” she admonished.

“I know. I’m just teasing.” he explained.

“... Eh... she will remove hands...” she assured him then reaffirmed, “-then he will eat soups, yes?”

“Yes. I am sure I will eat the soup.” he answered.

She paused for a moment as if deep in thought then inquired, “Will he push soups away and eat nothing? Will he do these to prove to her and himself, his friends and hungers are not real?”

“That’s good. That’s real clever, Mara.” he remarked, “Now if you’ll excuse me, I am going to eat my imaginary soup to pacify my imaginary hunger in the imaginary warmth of the imaginary fire before I wake up and find myself sitting in the rain eating road apples, okay?”

She smiled sarcastically, held her hand firm over his bowl and leaned close so her lips almost touched his, instructing, “He will eat soups, breads and cucumbers then he will never again to her suggest in imaginary worlds he lives. When he no longer eats and does not fall over dead... then to his imaginary worlds theories will she listen... yes?”

He stared at the bread, the cucumbers, the soup and the beer then with a grim expression, nodded and compliantly stated, “Yes.” She lifted her hand away from the bowl, picked up a piece of bread and stuffed it into his mouth. “Mm. Thank you.” he mumbled through a mouthful as he chewed.

Mara continued to talk in a near whisper between mouthfuls as Wyl consumed his meal, “Nearly any things can they make with thoughts and words very complicated and even confusing, like his good friend Nelles, his council and great clever theorist Fazzo. So long do they think, so many words do they speak, they forget from anything other than thoughts or words do ever they learn. One day then, they say thoughts and words determine their reality - Reality is product only of thoughts and words - Reality is imaginary - Reality is subjective... yes? -then hungry they get, then bread they eat, yes? Reality strikes them in faces like brick but by thoughts and words have they so convinced selves, no longer do they recognize hunger as reality they do not control. Like great clever theorist Fazzo, like Ome’, like him, his imaginary friends and imaginary soups, for all those that too long think and too many words speak, nothing ever humiliates theorist and discredits theory with such profound clarity as fistful of bread shoved into mouth, as brick in face... or even perhaps like his captain tells him... like apple that tumbles from branches above and bounces off his head while to death he starves... yes? Nothing ever resolves complicated theory like reality of hunger, bread, brick and apple, yes?”

“I will never forget it, Mara.” Wyl stated gratefully after washing food down with gulps of dark beer. He placed his mug on the service top with a thud and informed her, “No beer or food ever tasted so good as this.”

She smiled, lifted a spoonful of soup to her mouth then stated after swallowing it, “Mm, yes, is very good soup.”

Gavrae smiled affectionately and contended, “All involved in enterprise, from the field hand to the mightiest landlord and captain of commerce, benefit from the arrangement. The enterprise increases the value of the labor and the captain of commerce that compensates labor generously awards to the laborer, value greater than that which the laborer could ever otherwise independently produce-”

“Oh, please!” Wyl impatiently exclaimed, “I suppose next you’re going to start quoting passages from the Ome’...”

Gavrae admonished, "It is not 'the'."

"I know the name." Wyl informed him, "I just don't respect it enough to extend the courtesy... I guess I'm just not courteous enough to practice that kind of hypocrisy... I can't believe you of all people would attempt the subjective reality argument."

"Me 'of all people'?" Gavrae repeated, "Why am I, 'of all people', any less credible a candidate to attempt the subjective reality argument?"

"-because you of all people ought to know better!" Wyl insisted.

Gavrae leaned his elbows onto his knees obviously entertained by the argument and patiently suggested, "Think about it. Who of all people but I will ever qualify as a more appropriate advocate of subjective reality? Am I not living proof of subjective reality? Look around you: carved stone, velvet furniture, hot and cold water running indoors, glass windows confining artificially warmed air from the cold outdoors, soft plush carpets underfoot... Are these not the products of imagination? Are these not the creations of self-determined subjective reality? ... No... reality is subjective. The proof is both overwhelming and indisputable. Neither any evidence you present nor will any line of logic ever support your argument. It is wishful thinking."

Mara chortled and opened her mouth as if to contest but Wyl pressed the backside of his hand against her shoulder and gently requested, "May I?"

Mara shrugged with a smile, perhaps even relieved to avoid participation. Wyl stood and paced for a moment as if organizing his thoughts and strategizing his arguments while Gavrae stared with fascination then Wyl chugged half the beer from the bottle, opened his mouth in an exaggerated demonstration as if to commence a speech then hurled his half-empty beer bottle at Gavrae, and it bounced square off his forehead with a hollow thud, sprayed beer onto the fabric of the couch then rattled across floor.

With calm deliberation, Gavrae leaned forward and pressed his palms against his forehead while only restrained gasps and giggles from MaraDara broke the momentary silence. Gavrae groaned, "Aahh!" then swiped his hand across the fabric of the couch in an attempt to disperse the beer that splashed onto it. He impulsively moaned, "You spilled beer on my velvet!" then raised his head glaring at Wyl incredulous and shouted, "What is wrong with you?!"

Wyl replied, "What is wrong with me? No!" then pointing his finger at Gavrae, he demanded, "What is wrong with **you**?" Gavrae stared in shocked astonishment but before he spoke, Wyl leaned in his direction and advised, "Don't complain about it, Gavrae, or you'll prove reality is objective... If reality is subjective and you interpret your own self-determined reality, if consideration of the objective is cowardly and self-deceptive then to complain about the bottle that strikes your face, is to project meaning onto the external objective bottle and avoid responsibility for your own interpreted self-determined reality. The only course of logic for you here is to contend that **you** determined a bottle should strike your face, and that **you** interpret beer on your velvet. **You** did that, not me! If I did it, then the external and objective determined your reality, not the internal and subjective... What's it going to be, Gavrae? Objective or subjective? Are you going to defend your lofty and noble principles or does an immortal lifetime of inflexible unyielding belief vaporize as instantly and as easily as with a simple beer bottle hurled in your face?"

Gavrae exhaled in a raspy squeak that escalated into laughter both bitter and genuinely appreciative. He rocked back on the couch, clapped his palms together and exclaimed, "Excellent! ... Very clever... but this is a contrivance. The only reason you did that is to concoct an argument. Under any other circumstances-"

“Any other circumstances?” Wyl interrupted, “The circumstances don’t matter, Gavrae. Either I determine an objective reality of external origin for you or I don’t, and the reasons for my actions are irrelevant... Circumstance has nothing to do with it.”

“All right, all right.” Gavrae conceded then he flexed his neck and with a mischievous grin, suggested, “Perhaps I did determine that after all. Perhaps I knew exactly how to control you and cause you to hurl a bottle into my face just to prove to you that I determine my own reality even to the extent that I subjectively determine the actions of others as they relate to me.”

Wyl clutched at a liqueur bottle on the table, held it up in a threatening gesture and remarked, “-and maybe I’m not convinced yet and you still need to teach me a lesson... I don’t believe you, Gavrae. Prove it by making me throw the liqueur bottle in your face. Once is a fluke - Twice is a pattern. Prove it. Make me do something else. Make me set your draperies on fire then I’ll believe your reality is subjective.”

Gavrae squirmed with obvious discomfort but stubbornly maintained his congenial demeanor and graciously conceded, “Enough. Enough... I appreciate your point and the quality of your argument... Well done.”

It accounted as considerably less than an acknowledgment of defeat and Wyl would nonetheless have been perfectly content with it as a conclusion but as he turned to lower himself back onto the couch, Gavrae added, “Let us just accept that we are each entitled to our own interpretations.”

Wyl jolted upright and stiff, turned to face Gavrae, tilted his head as if struggling to hear then inquired, “I’m sorry, what was that? - Our own... what? Did you say ‘interpretation’? I’m entitled to my own interpretation?” He plucked the cork from the liqueur bottle, gulped from it then shook it vigorously, expelling liqueur onto the couch occupied by Gavrae.

Gavrae shouted, “Please stop spilling on my velvet! I apologize! I meant nothing by it... It is only an expression!”

Wyl placed the bottle upright on the table and stated in a tone with dramatically increasing agitation, “That was not an ‘interpretation’, Gavrae. That was a complaint. You implored me to stop spilling on your precious exotic velvet as if you exercise no determination in the matter. The reason you implore me as if you exercise no determination in the matter is because you exercise no determination in the matter. I am objective to you, Gavrae. I am external. I hit you in the face with a bottle and spilled on your couch whether you like it or not, and you determined nothing. You interpreted nothing. I am **not ‘entitled to my own interpretation’!** I just proved that. This is not a stalemate. This is not a case of two opposing opinions, neither right nor wrong and both equally legitimate. Reality is objective, not subjective. I proved it. I am right and you are wrong. You want to squeeze in some sarcastic last word to my back while I’m graciously attempting to accommodate you and relieve you of the humiliation of acknowledging outright defeat? Fine. No gracious accommodations. No allowances... Just one jubilant victory and one humiliating defeat. Now be a man about it and admit defeat. You lost. You are wrong. Reality is not subjective. Reality is objective... Say it! ... Say... reality... is.... objective!”

Gavrae sighed in an attempt to placate but Wyl only became more infuriated. He spun to MaraDara and shouted, “Hold him down!”

MaraDara recoiled, eyes wide with surprise over both the instruction and the anger but after only a brief instant of hesitation, they suddenly sprang from the couch, over the table and onto the opposite couch, pinning Gavrae into the cushioned velvet. Wyl barked, “Make him watch!” marched into a corner of the room, turned his back, fumbled with his trousers then the unmistakable sound of fluid splattering onto the carpet echoed from the corner.

Gavrae gasped then howled, “Oh! ... Oh! - No! No! ... No, no, no ,no... Oh! No! ... Oh! ...”

Wyl returned and knelt on the couch, leaning face to face with Gavrae and asked in an innocent tone, “Gavrae... Is reality objective?” Gavrae moaned and squirmed. Perhaps tears even formed at the corners of his eyes to some extent. Wyl stated with stark deliberation, gently yet forcefully, “That’s urine on your carpet, Gavrae. It’s external. It’s objective. It’s not interpretative... That’s real, external, objective urine on your carpet. Sentimental belief and wishful interpretation won’t make it go away, Gavrae. You will clean up that mess or you will live with it. You will not interpret it in a magical faerie realm of self-determined reality... because...” Wyl leaned closer and concluded in a near whisper, “-- **you -- do not -- determine -- your -- reality**, Gavrae... -- **I -- determine your reality...** and you determine mine... get it? ... Now... is this argument over yet? ... Did I win? ... or do you still want to argue some more and squeeze in one more sarcastic last word?” Wyl reached behind him and picked up a candle from the table, stating, “Gavrae, those beautiful silk draperies are next... Say it. Is reality objective?”

Gavrae moaned and cried out, “Ohhh! What value is a coerced confession to you?”

Wyl stated, “Confess... then I will explain to you the value of the coerced confession. I am offering you the closest thing to a stalemate you will ever get. I’m giving you the argument of coercion as ammunition for defense and for the basis of future arguments. Confess, Gavrae. Say the words.”

Gavrae grimaced and glared, and as Wyl fell silent, he finally spoke the words through gritted teeth with an appearance of excruciating pain, “-- Reality -- is -- objective --”

Wyl patted his cheek affectionately then returned to the other couch with MaraDara. Gavrae stared into the dampened corner of his carpet, shivering and panting in shock over the horror of such an objective desecration. After a moment, he excused himself then returned with a pail of hot water and a bundle of rags. Wyl immediately joined him in the corner and in fact, ultimately ended up performing the majority of the cleanup work. He conducted the act for shock value in argument and considered the action of Gavrae actually cleaning the mess unnecessary.

While Wyl blotted and scrubbed with the wet rags, Gavrae finally inquired, “What is the value of the coerced confession?”

Wyl explained in a conciliatory tone, “If you, yourself, describe the confession as ‘coerced’, you are describing something external controlling your actions and conditions - You acknowledge that something or someone objective determines your reality regardless of, and contrary to, your best most interpretive and wishful subjective self-determination.”

Gavrae bent his brow in thoughtful consternation then concluded, “You said the coercion would serve as ammunition for defense and future argument.”

After a silent pause, Wyl prompted, “So?”

“-so,” Gavrae stated, “if my use of the word, coercion, constitutes a concession in and of itself... how does that work to my advantage in defense and future argument?”

“It doesn’t.” Wyl replied, “I lied to you when I said that, Gavrae.” Gavrae flexed and curled his lips as Wyl administered a final blotting to the carpet then gathered all the rags up and dropped them into the pail.
