

TO END AN EAGLE

IN THE DAYS OF DADDY-DUMB



H. KIRK RAINER



Copyright © 2017 by H. Kirk Rainer

ISBN Pending

Published by **MY HOME INDUSTRY**

Published as a “Campaign Version” and as such, is not for sale or distributed for profit.

Other books by H. Kirk Rainer include:

A Once and Always Father
A Father and Future Felon
His Children are Far from Safety
IN THE LESSENING
Tall Tells to on Tredegar Cove
Him Who Cares Till When
CONSPIRANT COLONIES

For more information, visit www.hkirkrainer.org or visit the author’s blog, www.volkswagenvagabond.com.

Eli's journey

IN THE DAYS				
	An Eagle	i	To End	iii
	<i>In the Days</i>	v	<i>Daddy-Dumb</i>	vii
BEFORE WHAT BECAME				
	What it is	1	It creeps	5
	Dead or not	9	Dream on	13
TO FLY AGAIN				
	You cannot fly	17	Scandals fly	21
	Take me home	25	Much harder	29
TO QUESTION				
	Cannot force	33	Triumphant	37
	Do not flock	41	Tranquility	45
AS YOU ARE...OR WERE				
	You know	49	You are alone	53
	You are	57	You pretend (dream)	61
	You see	65	You Fool	69
BEFORE THE LOW				
	Forever	73	Wisdom	77
	Is that you?	81	Vision	85
	At a glance	89	In the storms	93
	Wounded by its own	97	An Eagle in me	101
	A strange world	105	Life is...	109
	Side effect	113	To be determined	117
	The worst thing	121	I still hope	125
	Keep your fears	129	My reality	133
IN THE LOW				
	Your eyes sound to you	137	My blood is	141
	Clever enough	145	Someone's darkness	149
	Her pride of place	153	Without sacrifice	157
	On a lark	161	Go, going, gone	165
	Mockingbird	169	In vain	173
	Love self	177	It was...	181

Eli's journey

BENEATH THE LOW

Sadder sound	185	Make you crazy	189
Dying with the dead	193	Debauched canary	197
For a reason	201	I just lost	205
Silent to chatter	209	Rode his shoulder	213
Who nailed the goose	217	Plucks you	221
Symbol of charity	225	And the pelican	229

IN THE LOW, AGAIN

Hope rises	233	Dare to rise	237
Like a peacock	241	Tried	245
A moment's insight	249	Simpler but profound	253
Dream of Eagles	257	She moves	261
Kind of ashamed	265	Distract You	269
Dandified Vulture	273	Born of violence	277
Strangling it	281	Creeps out	285

TO THE HIGHER

Renewal of life	289	So long as	293
Bound up	297	Flower	301
Would I fly?	305	Peaceful way	307

NOTES

Eagle facts	308	Heroes' journey	309
Characters-symbols	310	Character relationships	311
Eli's journey	315	Seven deadly	317
Seven magnificent	319	Abyss (dark-side)	320
Apathy (darker)	321	“Fly Like an Eagle”	322

Influences-Inspirations

The single most transformational event [] is fatherhood...

That is the sweet spot.

- Josh Levs, All-in

There is no such things as darkness, only a failure to see.

- Malcolm Muggeridge



An Eagle

*I am [an] eagle,
I live in high country with rocky cathedrals that reach to the sky.*
- John Denver, "The Eagle and the Hawk"

I remember "John's Denver's Greatest Hits" and this song among others, where the words beckon us to soar and to see as they (the eagle and the hawk) do. Can you be an eagle, a creature of such caliber?

Renowned for its greatness, an eagle is the chosen character to stand center in this allegorical story. Predominate and with few predators or apparent threats, the bird stands further as a prestigious symbol for nations and brands, peoples and products.

What would it be like, to soar to such heights and distance? Sure, you can fly, but seldom is the chance to really wing-it—to feel the full measure of flight pulsate through your body, the levitation of your whole, the embodiment of aerodynamic forces?

If you have ever skydived then you have probably experienced the closest experience to the *real thing*. No, I have not jumped out of a plane or hurled myself off a cliff, but I think that these feats are the closest, though still distant, from this experience on whole. Nor does remote viewing (such as Go-Pro) or multiplex theaters work (in case you were considering it). You have to fly to know flight!

An eagle is a high flyer enabling it to see much; from its perch and keen vision comes many observations, sightings and scenes. With such vision and precision the predator seems undaunted, unmatched. Vision and precision are obvious qualities...and if that were not enough, the high-flier mates for life and partners in the raising/rearing of offspring; two qualities that add much to the choice of an eagle for this story as you will discover. Who better brought low—very low—than the exalted and elevated eagle?

IN THE DAYS

Other birds and a few non-feathered creatures comprise the character list; each and all as supporting cast that in some way influence and even impede the eagle's journey, mission.

Seeing is more than believing and even more than reading; for between thoughts and lines are the questions that sometimes arrive and depart without clear, concise answers. An overly used sounding perhaps, but *life is a mystery* for which we each may never know or begin to understand why things happen, and particularly the seemingly bad things that we log as losses, critical and catastrophic.

It seems like a freak of nature; that *bad things* would happen to this noble creature but the eagle is just as threatened as any and every creature and creation. And as much of creation is threatened by nature and human will and way, the question of why bad things happen is better reasoned through the realization that the forces around and within us are not known, understood or even acknowledged.

This eagle does not always *live in high country*; it does not always fly in those figuratively high, lofty places or experience the *creature comforts* even among lower forms. No, it must sometimes bear a burden much greater than the prey it carries while proceeding well below comfort without any sense of depth let alone the degree from earth to end, the journey of *life and living*. In the journey still, Eli the eagle must *reach for the heavens and hope for the future and be all that we can be and not [only] what we are* at present.

How far, the depth and distance, will Eli go? For without knowing what lies ahead in such a venture, the eagle is not necessarily able to answer the question—to know the limits that one could or would go to save their themselves or perhaps those whom they hold more important than themselves.

This eagle is more than a creature, more than a monument of nobility; it is a messenger serving as both the eyes and the energy to elicit our minds and perhaps our hearts to perceive what is happening in the present and to plan and prepare as *to end and eagle*.



To End

Imagine something big, made out of glass, [that is] called fatherhood slowly sinking [then] imagine it suddenly shattering into pieces.

[] In this direction, what is best...?

*- David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America**

Where fatherhood goes, so goes marriage, and where marriage goes, so goes society. If fathers stop practicing parenthood than the child suffers personally, family suffers particularly and society suffers in general and indefinitely. Fathers are the foundation of a free society.

Imagine the classic song, “Where have all the flowers gone”, with an added verse, “Where have all the fathers gone...” How might the verse, the song, reply? Did the fathers die in war or did they walkout, abandoning their own while turning selfishly inward? Maybe the song would offer multiple reasons—more attune to reality—as to absence of dad, father, as a developing and disturbing trend in our society.

Not only an escalating environment of fatherless children but also a declining marriage rate; these related trends portend of the societies’ decline, demise. Only about half of our adult population is now married as a sign of serious societal problems, now and ahead. Is a declining marriage rate due to high rates of divorce or is it because younger folks are irresponsible or immature? I believe their reasons for refraining from marriage are many—not the least of which is that marriage has become more risky, the likelihood of long-term commitment in much doubt as much decline. Is marriage dying?

Taking this question and its possible answers to task, this fictional account takes me beyond the complexities of modern humanity to the seemingly simpler possibilities for an eagle, his offspring. Yet because it is an allegory, this story must include some human-like conditions and characterizations. The fact that the eaglets go missing seems unnatural

IN THE DAYS

to me but then I begin this book without more than a passing understanding of nature and its plight, the travails of *life and living*.

What is necessary is that the eagle and other characters possess certain or even abstract, human characteristics. It is vital for the story to resonant with readers, the losses and longings of the eagle understood with sympathy, even empathy, as well as other senses of the humankind. Thoughts, words and actions must be indistinguishable from what you or I would do if our family was lost, missing and possibly more, from the initial shock to the prevailing and indefinite sadness.

To end a life is not the end of life, so it seems. Some believe in an afterlife that, by whatever conditions or through whatever course, puts the soul in a perpetual eternity of perfection and placidness. Before such after-life expectations is the present *plight*, that effects the just and the unjust, the bad, the better, and all other things that populate this world for what it is and is not, acknowledged or accepted.

Just a few days ago while watching a film based on a favorite book, *The Count of Monte Cristo.*, I was reminded that what is called “fate” and faith may not be so different or in opposition; both are acknowledged or accepted yet remain a mystery too. Long after a series of injustices in his life, Dantès offers this advice to the young Viscount Albert de Morcerf:

Life is a storm, my young friend. You will bask in the sunlight one moment, be shattered on the rocks the next. What makes you...is what you do when the storm comes. You must look into that storm and shout as you did in Rome: ‘Do your worst, for I will do mine!’, for the fates will know you as we know you.

Whether *the fates know you...*, faith remains in the void that we are not masters of our destinies, minds and hearts. From faith comes our help in time of trouble, our hope; whereas fate is merely resignation to destiny, perhaps reflected in the overly used phrase, “It is what it is.”



In the Days

Indeed, as fatherhood fragments, things become complicated. [] ...we become confused about the very nature and meaning of fatherhood.

- David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America*

Besides *the burden that he must carry*, a father must deal with his imperfections and insecurities, and the tendency to lapse into some other bird of lower stature, even a scavenger or *bottom feeder*. Fathering and fatherhood is not about perfection but about love and care, discipline and authority, nurturing and *the natural*, and honesty and even honor in the best sense of the word along with behavior better than before.

There is a dearth of such *becoming* today, made so for a multitude of reasons or rationales. More, and then more, men are bowing-out of this vital role and of familial life altogether. Some are simply deferring this step while others limit their life to something less—even much less—falling into and feasting on the fallacies of self-indulgence or, in the current phrase, “failure to launch”.

All other animals have no sense or fear of the future; humankind is unique in his consideration and contemplation of times yet incurred—even the incomprehensible! Depending once again on a multitude of causes or conditions, this unique behavior is both positive and negative: on the one hand prompting and promoting planning (a plan); but on the other hand, reducing individuals to seize only the moment, the present—and to hell with the rest, past and future.

If (or as) we perceive *the future*, influenced in varying degrees but coupled with past behavior, is fundamentally how we deal with it. And in the days of this eagle is much cause to be concerned and cautious; the eagle population has been fragmented in both natural and unnatural ways and the future of this great raptor is in jeopardy (as has been true for the American Eagle during the last century). It is ironic

IN THE DAYS

that this most revered and heralded animal could face extinction—and especially by systematic effort—but as humankind would have it, this effort is not the first or last example of such stupidity (to exhaust and extinguish once held values, the intrinsically valuable and sometimes vital extensions of our existence).

In the days of this eagle and in the days as days actually are, there is much to be concerned about many problems that are cause by systematic effort and that threaten not only individuals but entire bodies of civilization and culture. These matters may not seem so concerning to you or even to me but remember that things are not always as they are perceived or presumed; there is more than meets the eye—even an eagle eye!

The eagle faces a daunting challenge to search and seek-out his offspring, the potential future, and to preserve the eagle as a living species. What he faces in the future is not comprehensible or conceivable; it is replete with *potential*—but *possibly* without his offspring, or the preservation of his own life; the venture, a victory.

It is a glib statement or idiom that *you win some but you lose some*, but is it true or factual; can we believe that life is about *some* wins, *some* loses, and then *to end*? How do we assess all the *maybes*, all the in-betweens the *wins* and the *losses*? There are those who *win* more often; the kind that have better lives as *winner*s but not necessarily champions? Can we really tally our life in such a way as though it is merely a game or sport summed-up as a win-loss record?

In the days is such a time when winning (the spoils) belong to a relative few while the losses to many and then many more. This is time when life has been reduced to a game while the once-games to life and more. It is a time when the things of intrinsic or intellectual value is fast approaching extinction made so by barbarism foremost in human behavior, *the worst of the worse*. It is a time not far away, maybe here.



Daddy-Dumb

*Prior to fragmenting—breaking into pieces, like Humpty Dumpty—
fatherhood in our society spent a long time shrinking. []
Today's fragmentation represents the end of a long historical process:
the steady diminishment of fatherhood....
- David Blankenhorn, *Fatherless America**

Daddy-Dumb is foremost a place; it is the primary setting of story inspired by the present and not too present future. To imagine this...is inspired by the fictional *Thunderdome* if just by name if not by the possible similarity of being futuristic and feudalistic at the same time.

Dumb is undesirable (though it can be funny as with the film, *Dumb and Dumber*). But as to films, *Mad Max* and *Thunderdome* has strong similarities to *Daddy-Dumb*; each/all represent an underworld (not to be confused with *the land down under*) populated by colorful and corrupt characters, strange and sometimes sinister and supposedly seditious, an unnatural result of a once-natural world gone awry.

If there is an underworld is there also an *over-world*; a time and place that is higher, healthier, a safe haven? Is there a place where the sinister are treated with scruples, the seditious squashed by law and order, *the commons* or some other forces for good. Contrast the question with *Thunderdome* and *Daddy-Dumb* where the wicked are rewarded, the wiser “re-programmed” and the wholesome ruined by the *Dumb*, deceived and deceiver alike? It is dangerous and destructive when good and great become bad, worse than *the worst*.

Daddy-Dumb was not always..., but it is more a process of incremental change, control and conditioning as with *boiling frogs*: the incremental change in the water's temperature until the instant when all resistance is impossible—the body burned to death—not a radical or violent change but more a *slow burn* until....

IN THE DAYS

Can Humpy-Dumpty survive after the shell is battered and broken, the essence eviscerated? Considering the time and place, *Daddy-Dumb*, the question is abstract and the answer, ambiguous: the facts of nature sound that a broken egg cannot be mended, once broken, but is there more to nature than nature? Then there is “the wall”....

In this allegorical story is some possible response to that key question of whether nature is *super*, stupendous, serendipitous and even spiritual. *To End and Eagle* is a journey or story for which the ending is not really *the ending* but perhaps more a beginning; and conversely, the beginning is not really *the beginning* but more the ending of one phase of *life and living*, the possibility for another....

In the tale, “The Rebirth of the Eagle”, the raptor endures a transformation during somewhat of a *mid-life crisis*; forced to accept its aging, the old eagle subsequently and literally tears at its own body removing its beak, feathers and talons. In this self-destruction is however a positive outcome, the regeneration of each and all of these vital parts, revitalizing the bird to something of its earlier self.

Accepting our disabilities or disadvantages demands more of some things than other things where the losses may exceed the wins, the negatives the positives and so on. We are sometimes born into such circumstances or conditions but then we sometimes will them too—reaping insult upon injury—bent on destructiveness of body, mind and heart. Not that all such dilemmas fall into the category where *I am my own worst enemy* but that *life is a storm* where we each are unable to overcome *the worst of the worse*.

At the center of any free society is a strong, healthy family; conventionally, paternalistic. Where the family goes so goes a society, its relative freedom; if the family is in decline so too is the society on whole, the eroding freedoms of familial undermined and upended by the upcoming and usurping state and similar in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*.



What it is

What defines an eagle is not its flight but what it carries as it flies.

- Constance Chuks Friday

As this journey is now complete, I (the eagle) can sound it with the benefit of hindsight, with much learning and much growing at the same time. I must sound to you that the eagle that I was is not altogether what I now am. Still, I will begin near the end; that is, near the time when I discovered by family gone, their whereabouts unknown, and continue to now, long after *the end*, more toward a new beginning. I feel.

Generations before me, my ancestors, lived here as far back as legend would have it. In times and places past, the land was a fertile and foundational setting for eagles to propagate and prosper. Then began change with changes to come; the land that was once fertile had become foul with an acrid order in the air and acidic taste in the earth below me—and even to the heavens above me. Streams of smoke crisscrossed the sky, condensed and constant, clouded our thinking. These trails left a lasting effect, the discharge runoff and deposits that seeped into the soil and everything that springs from it.

Life and living continued in spite of the changes. The threats to our land was also a direct threat to us, the eagle, both the living and the yet to arrive. First came a chemical—some kind of insect propellant—that killed the eggs in mass, nearly wiping us out. Before the chemicals, the poachers that robbed our nests and killed us for sport—it was *the end* of all things beautiful, the change and changes to come.

It was convoluted and confused though they heralded us as some kind of symbol, special, yet they treated us with contempt—eating the unborn while undermining our entire existence. Who would do such a thing? Why do their actions defy their sounds and, worse yet, why do they strive to end our existence?

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

What defines an eagle is more than flight or fight. The eagle has to endure a great burden: on the one hand, a noble image for many nations but on the other hand a prize for the poacher and those of such so-called professions that are the lowest of predators.

The only predator once ago was another of our feathered kind, the vulture. The vulture has an advantage over its prey, the dead and dying, the hurt and helpless, the loner and *the landed*. The vulture comes in variety but they are all the same, thinking of themselves as a symbol of some similar stature as the eagle yet sinister, vile and villainous. The vulture is a version of the kind that appears as one thing, yet think of themselves as something spectacular, though *the worst of the worse*. Whether they deceive *their own* is uncertain but what is certain is that they are not whom they portend or pretend to be. Be wary of the vulture and any like them, the veritable *wolf in a sheepskin*.

Any like them are the predator, for what occurs in *the change* is largely the result of systems, society and state. Institutions—that I call “clusters”—of systematic change are a heavy burden on us all. Nature is under siege by swarms of clustering vultures that systematically pick-away, justifying their insatiable appetites as something that they might call progress, even providence. Again, be wary....

In contrast to clusters, are we who are noble because of our kind's ethos to live, thrive, and not because we were emblemized. When you soar like an eagle, you attract the *worst of the worse*. There is a contempt for such *soaring*; the kind that sounds, “I will slay this thing because it is more than me, us, in the end.” Where does this drive come from—that would destroy something because it seems more and because so, it must be made less, nothing at all? Once more time, be wary....

I am a hunter, a fisher and flyer. I am a father too. A father is a caretaker of generations to come. He begins from his youth to know and feel this calling and, as nature abides, he follows his instinct to procreate with protection to come.



By the same unnatural act that vanquishes the flyer is that which vilifies the father—portraying him more a predator or pariah rather than what or who he is—or was—in the nature of his existence.

We do kill, yes, but our kill is for food, not amusement or acrimony. We do not parade, promote or publicize our kill, death. We do not kill out of envy or jealousy, striking down something because it outdoes us or seems higher, grander and greater. We do not make the kill glorious or valorous but only as necessary for our sustenance and survival. We protect our young—to include the unborn—but are not predators or pariahs of our progeny. We teach by example and through time and place, enabling our young to survive with all that we have and are able to provide together, the both of us. We do not live in adversity, my mate and me, but in harmony for as long as nature allows and has endowed to us, our own, and others still. We are eagles and though we share similarities to other fowl, we are not identical to others, excelling in some areas while marginal or mediocre in others.

If I were another of the feathered, I might crow, quack or squawk. If I were among *the worst*, I would not want to do anything for fear I would lapse from nature and do something stupid and selfish. As it seems however, fear falters to *power and pride*. There are some better than *the worst* but, as it seems from my view, *the worst* far outweigh *the better*—and it has gotten worse as *time* trends and *place* turns.

We do not hate and do not know tolerance from intolerance, but we follow the conventions of our heritage because it abides with nature—the only law that we respect, honor and hold. We are strong because nature made it so—not because someone spoke it so or flaunted it like a peacock with all its parading and pomp.

We are not signs or symbols, emblems and such ethereal excretions. We are a species of real substance that is able to look at things with the sharpest, keenest eye and to judge the dimension and distance of all things substantive and not.

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

In my observation over many seasons has come wisdom further—distinguishing *the better* from *the worse*. I do not sound of my observations flippantly or with any of the fluff or froth—merely dressing a pig in a poke. I am real, right and forthright. We do not bark or boom relentlessly just to hear ourselves or to lord over others. We screech and others listen because nature and nurturing has taught them so. We speak and they listen for a reason—the likes of which may spare their life for another day or season, but we are not a mocker or mimic of sounds as some others of the feathered kind and we do not pretend to be something that we are not as *the worst* make practice, a profession.

We are mortal in that our individual lifespan is about seventy years, but we pass on our heritage and therefore live in our offspring, our ancestors in us. We do not disdain or despise nature's ways, but rather, we look to it with reverence and respect, appreciating *the better* while remaining wary and watchful of *the worse*, especially *the worst*. .

We possess physical and mental power but do not have the magical or mystical sort to which other feathered kinds espouse. We do not embrace the emblems that bear our resemblance but consider them as merely a show of some idea that always fails to deliver or decide goodwill, common good and the attributes of community.

We are not many and are not with many—as in *the clusters*.. We do not flock with our kind but, by our nature, fly with few and often alone; and though this behavior may seem regal it has most likely made us more vulnerable to the vile and villainous—and those kind like the vulture that I will continue to call "the worst of the worse".

What defines us most is that we hold to our traditions that have brought us thus far and, we believe, will carry us tomorrow. It is this tradition, our conventions, that come from nature to our nature and enables us to soar in body, mind and heart.

This, my testimony; *what it is, was, and will always be*.



It creeps

Fate is not an eagle [but rather] it creeps like a rat.

- Elizabeth Bowen

It was well into deep winter near my nest. I was flying high seeking out food while she covered our young. As the duty, we each took turns, she at the nest and I out foraging as now. On my return, I would naturally take her place though this was not to be on this day.

What has happened to them—what will..., I thought as the shock took the air from my lungs and my wings. Before I construct another thought and bring balance to my flight something caught my eye; an object that like so many of my prey, was a rodent. Lifting my body once again at the stiff wind, I turned on the critter with the speed to kill, but at the last minute clamped down and then clamped on, clutching the rat in my talons. Pulling-up, my ascent at sharp angle, I managed to squeeze a little tighter as I sound,

“Where are they—what have you done?”

“It does not matter, Eli, the damage is done, they are gone,” he hisses at what seems a moment of delight in an otherwise death grip.

“How do you know my name,” I sound, confused by anger. “Who told you about us, about me,” I continue with yet a tighter clutch. “Where are they, varmint?”

“You’re going to kill me,” the rat mutters. “And that will not change a thing,” it continues with what power remains.

Landing at a crevice, I held the rat in one talon while balancing with the other. For a moment, I remained silent to collect my senses. *Is this an act of nature,* I thought. *Do eagles have their young taken, lost?*

On occasion, eaglets would fall prey to others—though never a rodent, a rat. Was this creature responsible—did it act alone or was it working for someone, something else?

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

I was exhausted emotionally; drained by the dread that *the changes* would be too much for me. It was bad enough that *the land* was changing but now this—and for what I cannot comprehend even now, though I have tried. Some things stay with you forever.

“Aren’t you going to kill me,” the rat hisses. “Let’s get this over,” it persists, a supposed death wish. “I’m already bleeding as it is.”

I had no appetite, no physical reason to kill the rodent and no benefit in ending this low-life.

“Where are they?”

“If I knew I would sound to you, Eli. All I know is that they were taken and their not likely coming back,” the rat hisses back. “Look, my kind die all the time; some die at birth while many others soon after. Death is a common thing as you know—since you kill so frequently,” the rat sounds, peering up at me with the black beady eyes.

“Oh, so I deserve this lot because I kill—is that your point?”

“I simply mean that your acts of killing should condition you for this sort of thing,” the rat suggests. “A killer is, well, all about killing.”

“No,” I fire back. “This sneaky and sleazy shaming won’t work this time.” *There is still a sense that I earned this*, I thought afterword; *killing is still death even if for food, necessity. Some seem to justify killing as an option because there is no one strong enough to question them, confront them and contradict them. I am not one of the cluster.*

“You kill and then you peck away at your prey,” the rat goes on. “I cannot see how your acts are any less cruel than those who did this to you, to them. You’re clustered too.”

“Who did what,” I demand to know while the rat sat and with a grin on its face, evidently enjoying the moment of power. “I am not!”

“Now you understand feathered friend. What goes around comes around,” it continues, the grin grinding at my wits.

My own do not deserve this; such a fate does not rest in my duty to protect and provide for them, came a reassuring but irresolute thought.

“Your statement is mindless and your sounds are empty. You are trying to overpower me by fear,” I charge.



“Aren’t you the keen one, Eli,” the rat hisses back. “You must have seen something then—something else?”

“I smell a rat. In fact, I smell many rats doing *the unnatural*. I see what has happen here; you and your kind are foot soldiers for the sinister, the smelly so-called raptor with weak claws and small talons.”

“Are you clairvoyant, Eli? Do you see the future before-,”

“You don’t have to have unnatural abilities to see the unnatural.”

“Just remember that anger will make your feathers fall-out,” the rat sounds sarcastically. “Are you sure you’re right? I mean, are you *straight in the head*? Maybe you should mull over this for a while—let it sink-in, real deep, your harangue and helplessness.”

“I’ve never been as sure as now, rodent. I am sure that you are holding-back and that you care not if you die. I am sure that the vulture leads you. I am sure that my own did not deserve this with or without my doings and I am certain that you will meet your own fate after we depart,” I sound, stating my feelings, standing my ground.

“You seem sure and then certain, but what about your mate? What happened to your lifelong companion? What lies ahead for your offspring? Where will you go now—what will you do with you?”

“I don’t know,” I hesitantly, honestly reply.

“She could have *pushed-off*, as life would be better for her if she-,”
It knows where to stab and turn the blade, this rat.

“I’m not trying to win, but only trying to help you determine where you went wrong. Eagles fail and fall,” the rat sneers.

“Rat, do you really believe that I will buy this-,”

“No, not really, but it’s my line of work—what a rat does,” the creature calls it. “Who loves a rat? Nobody loves us—not even other rats. You have to be repulsive when everyone expects it and besides, I am only trying to fulfill my natural role, sneaky, shady and snarky.”

The rat made some sense—though not everyone is repulsed.... Rats are food. It is hard to think about *repulsive* when you are hungry, real hungry, famished. I have eaten rat and while not my favorite, it is sustenance.

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

“You should really try to control your temper,” the rat blurts-out, breaking my silence. “You may do something stupid.”

“What are you talking about,” I question.

“Something like this can really drive you mad,” the rat replies. “You really need to be careful,” it glibly remarks. “You might go too far.”

“I need to be ‘careful’? Who are you to-,” I fire back.

“You need to control your temper—not fly off the handle and do something stupid,” it continues, now serious, sincere. “You have to be a rat to understand. And since you’re only a killer of rats, you won’t take my advice, will you?”

“Understand what,” I sound out. “All I want to know is who took them. Where did they go?”

“What makes you think that your own were taken?”

The rat, the rodent, creeps about always looking for an angle or approach that will bring you low and then lower. It does not care of its own fate for, as the rat aptly put it, there is no love—even one to another. What does the rat want? It has no pride for self, its own, yet thrives on the prospect, the potential for power—even if it must destroy someone else to enjoy it.



Dead or not

A dead eagle he might have buried, but he had chosen rather to light a fire for a phoenix.

- Edith Pargeter

Many kinds of birds fly but the loud birds, that fly much higher than I, do not flap their wings, but just glide along with a trail of smoke and sonic sounds. They lift-off from long, large flats and go to the utter ends of the earth, it seems. Sometimes they fight each other, taking shots of this or that to hit another and then another. If hit hard enough, the birds smoke more and make louder sounds, sometimes flaming like a phoenix. They fly fast and do remarkable feats. These birds are so big that they carry many other things too—even other birds. Sometimes they fly alone while other times in a formation like geese, in clusters. I have veered from their path, these *big birds*, the air displacement too much. They do not seem dangerous or destructive when grounded. I have heard that many of these birds land and never fly again; many just sit still and bask in the sun—sounding nothing and doing nothing.

I cannot think of a single natural event where life has come back to life—where death was reborn, resurrected. These *big birds*, these prodigious creatures, come back to life however. These creatures go into a nest and are torn-up, flesh and feathers, and then take off again—and this process may happen more than once! It is amazing that life can be restored among those I call “the worst of the worse”. Such miracles give me a glimmer of hope for this sad species; that aside from their dangerous and destructive ways that such a miracle as rebirth is possible, repeated more than once. The *big birds* rule the heavens.

My sounds true, the truth, what can I do? Though the truth can be costly, its value holds in the end. I know that truth can be very costly to find it and costly to keep it, to hold and honor, but *truth* seems the best course to take—agreed. There are no secrets about *the natural* though

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

many about the intentions of *the worst, the unnatural*; secret sounds and societies, those that rule without holding position, exchanging their secrets to seize more *prosperity and power*.

I do not know if life becomes ghostly after death but I do believe that spirits are about us and even in us, each of us. I do not believe that spirits are among groups or clusters of *creators of creatures as big bird*. Clusters are not really creatures but more like the *big bird*; too large to be natural and too hard to be normal. No, those that think they are one that has won—immortal, indomitable yet the destroyer of all worlds—cannot cluster a spirit however much they claim to do so.

If someone claims that there is an eagle spirit, do not believe it. If they sound that an eagle has a spirit for example, “Eli has a spirit,” than I believe that you should believe them because it is true, a fact, no matter whether you have known it or not. If they sound that all eagles have the same spirit or that this or that cluster of eagles have a spirit, do not believe them; for they are like the rat that sounds-off with nothing of substance but only sounds to accuse and adjudicate without a shred of evidence or tie to truth.

Neither do clusters have life. If they do not have a spirit, how can they have life? Clusters do not have a common, communal life. They may be corporate or incorporated but clusters are not individuals; they are void of a spirit, all creatures turned into a corporation of some caliber that is spiritless and without a soul or anything of real substance.

I know it is confusing, that I am confusing. The natural world is confusing and the unnatural even more. Should I be different?

Why does it matter that there are *big birds* and that I just stay away from them? I marvel at their power and displacement but beyond that, all I know is that they could blow me from the worlds, as their design is to destroy other *big birds* and to hollow the earth from top to bottom.

Why all of this matters is because we each have an opinion about things; feelings and thoughts that we possess and sometimes express if just to ourselves about ourselves or about clusters or creatures that perplex us—leaving us feeling different, right or wrong, but different.



For we each and all share some similarities and signs. If we did not...we would not be of the same source, but would be another.... If you have seen one eagle, have you seen them all? If you study one specimen, do you know them all? Are all *the worst of the worse* bad or do some do better than others, tipping the scale away from *worst* to something more the order of just *worse*—not *worst*?

I have heard it sounded, “The eagle has landed,” but it is not about me or my own. No, it has to do with *the worst* (or *worse*)—a few of the many ways that they used my kind to make their kind look better. Why do they do it; use us in such ways, smearing our name and all?

The legend of the phoenix—bursting into flames on nearing the sun—is among *the worst*; it is a make-believe tale, to dream and fanaticize, to draw their attention away from the dread and dead of life.

The worst may marvel at their own—even their own image—spending inordinate amounts of time grooming and self-helping while driving others to follow this regimen. It is not enough that they promote themselves as superior but they pretend it to be true while in practice doing everything and anything possible to doubt and deny it so. They pretend to protect the very things that they prey own—sounding-off one way while doing the opposite—going the way of a goony bird or the cuckoo without any consciousness of contradictions and contrast.

As bad as the rat can be, they hold no candle to the likes of *the worst* when it comes to dirt, dirty and dastardly deeds. The kind that I speak of is the worst kind of any kind I know and unlike the *legend of the phoenix* that returns to life after combustion, the blowing-up of the described *big birds* leaves little if any life behind. *Big bird* is a mass destruction on scale with only a few natural events—earthquakes, volcanoes and that sort. *Big birds* are a storm of epic proportions.

I realize that the phrase, “The eagle has landed,” means that great feats outweigh defeats but the reality is that *the worst* get even worse than *the worst*. They deny truth and facts; twisting fiction into fact while turning truth into hearsay and hyperbola. They connive and cheat others—even their presumed own—while posing as saints, spirits for

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

good. They steal more than the vulture under the guise of good, with guile and greed. They claim that they have the power of rebirth, renewal and regeneration, and yet they reduce and reprimand their own to refuse and rubble where the only respite is to up and die—if just to escape the slow extermination. They claim to give but as the spiritless *clusters* are and act—institutionalized—they always take and take until exhaustion or extinction. *What becomes of they who do such things with increasing intensity and invention? Is there no end to these things that they do to you, them and me?*

O death, o death...what is this that I do see; a heavy hand and long arm to be, of power and possession,

Please give me more time, spare me the sorrow and give me the strength to get through the morrow.

The rat creeping, the hawk flying while the vulture a-lurching.

The journey of searching and seeking, saving my own,

O death, o death, what do I do when I do not know what to do. .



Dream on

Dreamers have sharp ears like [a] spear and sharp eyes like an eagle.

- Eugenia Herlihy

Dreamers possess invention; not of the kind conducted by those that I call “they” but more so as that which is *the better* in them, in us all. Dreams are never all pleasant or pleasing but dreamers somehow sift the light from the darkness to glean truths from the broken promises, pain and punishment, a gain from a loss.

I dream day and night, perched and in flight, for reasons that I cannot altogether know. Sometimes my dreams are made by me, formed by my conscience and consciousness, with all reasons summed-up as relief, revenge or both—but always to win, to be the victor and the champion. I want to win, I think, but all my dreams seem a loss in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*. I want to win because winning is all that matters to *the worst of the worse*; they hold to the belief that if you do not win than you do not live. To live is to win and to win is to live.

Sometimes as I drift, my mind travels to distant times and places. I think or dream about my own; those who I have known and possibly raised from earliest age *before what came*. Memories are as night and day, darkness and lightness, good and bad, right and wrong.

The wind propels me, the heat gives me lift and then *The Low is beneath* as I rise high, higher, from the sullied earth. My lungs breathe anew—not the sigh of sorrow—but a gasp of life as though to win, again. Flying and winning are so similar but different: flying is forever but dreaming, not. When I fly, I dream dreams of light and love, of strength and solitude, and of peace and promise. When I descend toward *The Low*, darkness overtakes me and I am down, dead and gone. Flying and dreaming is my salvation from *dead and gone*.

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

Do you dream? If you dream, what do dream about? I sound you these questions because if you do not dream then you have lost all life and might as well be *dead and gone*. To dream is hope for the future.

I met a seagull while flying near a large body of water. I do not usually associate with other flocks or *clusters* but this bird stood alone out as a daring creature that loved to *push-the-envelope*. I sound Jonathon, “Do you dream? Are you as daring to dream as to fly?”

“Yes, I dream,” he sounds, “Dreaming is delightful”.

“Why do you dream,” I follow.

“I dream because my mind wants to be free; free from the things that sound to me I should not rise above my place.”

“Who sounds to you that...,” I persist, “Is it-,”

“It’s mostly me that sounds to me so, though I am influenced by others too,” he sounds. “It is hard to see the light when you’re so taken by darkness,” Jonathon added as a shadow came over his white feathers.

“But you fly during day, don’t you,” I sound, confused by his sounds.

“That’s not what I mean when I sound ‘darkness’,” he replies. “I mean it symbolically as *The Low*, a time and place when I am down, sometimes way down in the depths of the darkest of dark.”

“So the light is-,”

“Yes, light is being high, very high at times; soaring and sailing on the sea winds, skimming across the clouds and diving at mind-blowing speed to the great waters, pulling-out at the last moment.”

“I never thought seagulls were so acrobatic, daring,” I sound to it.

“They’re not—not usually—but only those who dream.”

“Oh, I see; dreaming takes you to new places, heights and all?”

“Like no other,” it sounds. “If I didn’t dream I don’t know how I would live—or want to,” it sounds with a wistful tone.

“You have a way about you Jonathon, a special thing.”

“And so will you, Eli, so will you.”

“What do you mean?”



“I mean that in life there are wins and there are losses. You seldom learn anything valuable in the victories, but often learn invaluable things in the losses, failures.”

“Learning involves pain,” I follow. “Punishment allows learning.”

“Pain and punishment, even imprisonment if just in your mind or heart, is part of learning, yes.”

“I don’t want pain and punishment,” I sound back.

“Then you don’t want to learn,” he sounds in return.

“But I have learned, I’m sure of it,” implying that learning and loss are not the rule.

“Did you flop and even fall a few times when you first took flight,” he sounds to me.

“More than I can count?”

“Did you miss the target, hunting?”

“It was so bad that the rodents mocked me.”

“Being the premier hunter and the excellent flyer that an eagle is, not to mention all the credits you earn from others, you must have seen-,”

“Pain and punishment,” I sound.

“What would life be without learning—the losses and all?”

“It would not be life,” I sound back.

The conversation soon shifted to my journey, my experience so far and what I expected.

“You must finish this,” he sounds, “or else it will finish you.”

“But it may finish me regardless.”

“Don’t believe everything that you see or feel. Sensations may be a limitation. Look with your understanding—what you know to be truth—and you’ll see more clearly why you must finish.”

Jonathon Seagull was a saint, a top-flyer among his own. We parted after some more sounds though I felt that we would meet again. Off I flew, taking to the plains, only to encounter another feathered creature an opposite of the seagull.

“Hey you,” I screech.

BEFORE WHAT BECAME

This was an ostrich, a strange bird not from this region.

“How did you get here,” I sound with, once again, no response. “I sound again, ‘How did you get here?’”

A muffled voice rose from the earth, “I was shipped here.”

“Why,” I continue—though I do not why I had to sound, “Why?”

“This is an exhibit for *the worst*,” it returns, its head still stuck in the mud. “I am one of many creatures of this Savanna.”

“Did *the worst* set this thing up?”

“That’s what I sound, right?”

“Not exactly, but I think I understand,” while growing increasingly annoyed by the bird’s lack of social skills. “Why are you stuck in the mud,” I had to sound. “Are you feeding?”

“No eagle, I am not feeding. I am afraid, that’s all.”

“But you’re not hidden—I can see you.”

“No you can’t,” the ostrich faintly replied, its sound garbled by the ground above it. “I can’t see you and you can’t see me,” it adds.

To prove to the bird that I could see it, I pricked its back.

“Hey, what was that,” the ostrich squawks.

“I see you but had to prove it—since you are so stupid.”

“I’m not stupid, just afraid that’s all.”

“What’s your name,” I sound to the ostrich.

“**Blind** is my name.”

“Do you really think that your fears will end burying your head in the earth?”

You can run and you can hide but you cannot go unseen or unnoticed no matter how much you try whether living on the range, in the desert, by the water or under the ground. You can fear that you will be found but if and as you fear forever, well, you might as well have been found and sent off as some exhibit all the more afraid of *the darkness*, a destiny of denial, delusion and deceit.



You cannot fly

You cannot fly like an eagle with the wings of a wren.

- William Henry Hudson

I found a higher place among the Pine in view of the other exotic creatures that roamed this exhibit, the refuge. It is astonishing to think that all these things arrive here, evidently against their desire. Are they happier living here rather than there, their home? Are they satisfied as exhibits; acting, watched for entertainment or excitement?

It is harder to harness the creatures that fly; their wings clipped, their soul caged; they fly no more and probably end-up stuffed as a static display tacked to a wall above some fool's fire.

Flying is freedom. As long as you fly, you have a chance of making it high, as Jonathon has lived and told. The ostrich cannot fly because of nature; that somehow in the act of nature, the wings did not fit for this bird. Many birds are airborne, far away from *the worst*. Some fly fast while others, faster and higher. If the fliers learn and learn well, they fly away, bound for freedom, averting *The Low* and everything like it.

You cannot fly if nature does not have it or unless you are one of those *big birds* that do not have to flap its wings but just glides along. The *big birds* do other things: some sound "chop-chop-chop" while others scream as loud as loud can be; and still these creatures do *the better* and then, *the worst*; all things from freedom to darkness...to death. They are remarkable but also robotic, having some likeness to nature but unnatural and anti-social. If I were as powerful as the *big birds*, I would not be where I am right now: first, I would not have offspring since these creatures seldom give birth; and second, I could destroy anything across the land—or in the air—between my acrobatics and my arsenal of spit and splatter. The only thing that I would have to fear is another *big bird*.

TO FLY AGAIN

I did see a *big bird* give birth however; it definitely looked like it was carrying eggs, a swelled-up thing that is enormous, long and wide. It dropped down and finally stopped and after some time its birthing canal opened and out came a smaller bird—or at least a part of one—that had a fair resemblance. The offspring carted-off to a large enclosure, maybe a nest or similar, its end uncertain. Maybe it hatched but I doubt that it just sat there and did nothing. The mother seemed uncaring; she just birthed it and then flew away as she had arrived. I have never seen more irresponsibility or ineptitude but I guess when you are that powerful, you do not have to be caring, paternal or maternal.

The *big birds* not only fly but they help their own fly too. I have observed one *big bird* riding atop another as though they were reproducing—and maybe they were—but then the one atop would lift-off, launch forward or drop from the other's belly. Sometimes only one but other times many—so many little ones that I could not count them. The little ones fell fast to the earth, blowing apart with deafening sound and deadly end. There is no way that they would fly again, their bodies scattered into a million fragments along with the debris and carnage that they caused. Why bother birthing all those young when all they do is go boom, detonating into dust and debris, destruction and death.

*What the eye can see,
What the ear can hear,
What the mind can conceive,
What the heart can stomach?*

I use to think that you can fly with only feathers but that fast and fleeting, cave-dwelling bat proved me wrong. Then I learned of the *big birds* and realized that flapping or muscle-action is not necessary—not really—when you can buzz, or scream or roar. With such power, the sky is not the limit; why, I have heard that *big birds* go beyond the sky and—if you can believe it—go to the moon and beyond. It is a phenome and a paradox, *big birds*, for which opportunity and tragedy are as close as a creature and its shadow; *the light* from *the darkness* as the *big booms* go on and the many wait in fear that offspring will drop.



I dream about my offspring, not only as they are but also as things could have been and maybe once were. I wonder why other eagles are raising their young while I am frantically and fearfully on a journey to find mine. I wonder what happened to my mate and whether she is safe and secure with or without them at her side. I wonder and still I wonder why I am here and not there; facing *The Low* when I want is be home, to go home and stay home. Have you ever wondered about...?

Wonder yields learning, and what I have actually seen recently is enough to realize that other eagles have suffered similar pain and punishment; they have lived in and through tragedies fostered by nature and *the worst of the worse*—that kind. Similar kinds have suffered from *that kind* in more ways than I can know or even conceive.

There is a freedom I feel when I fly; a sensation that I am in control, determined and dominate among the airborne. Jonathon Seagull spoke of a similar sensation as he mastered the art, pushing the envelope with ever-increasing intensity. The ostrich will never know this feeling as long as it lives in fear, blind and buried, practically dead. There are many other flying and lesser creatures that wait my knowing and knowledge, their nature and their nurturing, the coming of wit and wisdom.

An eagle naturally learns to fly but it is escorted by a parent at times much like the *big birds*—not a cluster but simply one other flyer. Early flyers make mistakes but learn in and through the mistakes with few mishaps that cause damage or death. Other creatures require some nurturing for their care and conditioning; parents and elder ones must teach and train their young. Without nurturing, what would become of the young? They would be lost, really lost, I think—which is why nature and nurturing are a grand combination.

Though grand and great, *the combination* of countless generations has come under attack; hampered, hindered and harmed by the kind that are called “human”—the worse, whether only worse or worse than worst. I believe that current conditions have degraded nature far beyond generations of the past—long before now—taking the freedom

TO FLY AGAIN

away from the father, the patriarchy from parenting. I believe that the conditions hinder nurturing—harming nature in every way.

I will rest in the refuge and maybe learn while I rest. Maybe I will help others learn too. They can learn from me and I from them— whoever they happen to be. I will help some learn by just being me, an eagle, Eli.

Is being an eagle enough? It is one thing to learn and to want to learn but it is another to expect others to learn—especially from someone like me, lonely and alone. Will they hear and harken; or will they ignore me, or worse, discount me as a loser, lackluster at best? Maybe *they* expect more or maybe they expect more than I am or ever could be. I do not know expectations—nor do I care.

There is the kind of *they* that expect a champion, a winner and success story. Some, maybe many, want this kind that have come far, circumvented *The Low*, on their way to the gold and silver, the big and bigger and the always and forever. *This kind* does have high expectations for others, you know. They always want for more and, when they get it, still they want more. There are expressions that sound satisfying but no sooner have they been sounded when, again, the *want for more* returns. I think of the rat, **Rodent** or those similar. In some places, the rat is confined to a cage—a range on very small scale—with a wheel to run. The rate runs and runs while the wheel spins and spins, but the running rat ends up right where it started. This running may happen repeatedly, the rat racing fast and furious without going anywhere at all. Does the rat ever learn that this wheel is a trap; nothing more than a circular motion that, though a wheel, does nothing to forward its journey? The rat tires, but does it ever tire of running in circles or does it believe that if it runs and races that the wheel will fall off its pendulum and form a path through the cage, beyond the boundaries of the reserve? I do not think the rat thinks about these things but I know that rats think about things—as did **Rodent** think and express thoughts however hurtful and harmful to it, to me, and to us. Do you know of a similar rat, its race?



Scandals fly

*On eagle's wings, immortal scandals fly,
While virtuous actions [hatch and] die.*
- William Harvey

After resting, learning and dreaming, I must fly again. As it is in this moment, rest is what I need for my weary bones, tattered feathers and broken heart. I will dream of another day and time from the past, a pleasant and precious time, or maybe from the future when a bright morning comes and we are together again if just for another moment. On that day, that bright morn, I will take-off to a distant shore of strange and wonderful sights. I will fly away in that morn whether I live or die, care or careless, and arrive to that distant shore forever. As the shadows of life have cast a dark cloud over me and in me, so I must wait. When the shadows finally depart, then oh then, I will fly, focused, fast and forthright without having anything left but the innumerable and incalculable losses of *life and living* and then finally, freedoms that come when there is nothing or no one to fight.

There is the thought of those creatures caught in a trap of some kind. It may not be their death but the trap stops freedoms from forming. The worst traps are those that kill you slowly but surely; these are the kind with metal and bars, a gate that latches, and no way of leaving except by someone's authority. Left to the limited confines of this space, you mind and heart can shrink and wither; any hope beyond the bars and barriers is the *life and living* of the favored. I think of the rat or a relative, like a mouse; one locked in a cage with possibly a wheel. Maybe they are happier caged, safe and secure from potential predators. I do not think the cage works for just anyone; some are determined to die rather than be locked-up, wheel or no wheel. Which one are you? Is safety and security real; I mean, can you really believe that such things are possible and, if you do, than how much do you need

TO FLY AGAIN

to quell your fears? I may be in utter safety and security but then, for some unexplained reason, concoct some crazy possibility that this *utter* is my undoing—my guard no longer up and my courage too comfortable and content—in the unthinkable.

You might sound to me, “How much is freedom worth to you?”

Having already thought about the very idea—and especially because the idea is so much a part of my image—I do not have an immediate answer but more a question:

“What is your ‘cage’; what is it that trades for freedom?”

“What do mean,” you reply.

Freedom is sounded as priceless but what I am thinking about is fear. Sometimes it is about holding on to what you have—whatever you think you still have. When you lose something of great value, the immediate response is shock, I think. After shock, you might wonder and obsess over the question, “How could this happen—why me?” Do you ever think to sound, “Why not me?” Is it really about getting what you deserve? Can you find no one that has known worse and has moved beyond the shock, the self-pity and the fear to something more, like freedom? Have you met a creature that broke-out of the cage or found release and has survived beyond safety and security?

I am sure that you have been at a time and place when you lost something. Somewhere on this journey, you finally arrived at the realization that this loss was not yours—that nothing or no one could justify why it happened and why it happened to them, to you. Some might sound, “Eli had it coming” or “I knew it would happen” or worse yet, they may not sound anything and even avoid not only these kinds of questions but also you—for fear that they may catch your misfortune as though it is contagious, a disease. Others may truly care; more than questions and much more than avoiding you, they may express care—even their own sense of loss, your loss. They may sound, “These things happen” or something forward-looking like, “Tomorrow is another day—this too will pass.” I call these others, “care about caring.”



It is another day but only *another day*; not the kind that I've remembered as well or wonderful but the kind in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*—no rest for the weary but only worry about everything that has gone and will go wrong, even worry about worry.

The *refuge* was no refuge, not for me and not for the others that remain there. They are actors for the show; they pose for the pictures and move enough to convince the spectators that they are authentic, not some artificial animal or multi-dimensional image. Beyond the trees and other obstacles are fences and gates—the rat cage—that supposedly provide safety and security. Once in while one of them near the fence, which then sets off an alarm with action to follow. The barriers do not stop at the ground either; it goes down deep and wide *The Low*.

Stories have it that others are reporting their eggs missing too. More and still more have—or will—face the moment, time and place. I am almost ashamed to sound that these reports help me; that I am not alone to bear the burden for this living loss of life. It is a true sense and sounding, “misery loves company,” but maybe there is more to this than that. If they experience similar loss, will they not take flight and travel far in hopes of finding the facts of it? Will they not forgo the safety and security of *the refuge* and venture out into the unknown in hope of finding their lost and, along the way, discovering freedom at last?

Sometimes choices are not so choice. Sometimes, we would rather be forced than decide and sometimes what we consider a choice turns out to be necessary, essential. Sometimes choices involve commitments, keeping or breaking a promise. Choices are sometimes controversial, contentious and conflicting, and demand sacrifice and suffering whether the cause be honorable or not.

Scandals fly and soon it sounds, “Look at Eli—what a pathetic eagle, a grounded creature and a sideshow feature.” Maybe they add, “Eli, how sad it is,” when in truth they should know how sad...but how mad I am. I am mad you know; mad at all this that has happened and still I do not know how or why—who done it!

TO FLY AGAIN

You really cannot understand until another's burden becomes your own. I cannot hold them accountable or responsible for something that they do not know or care to know. It may be that they too have their burdens to carry, even a crisis, but it may also be that *life and living* is too good to allow another's condition or circumstance to get in the way. I know that they do not know and sometimes I know that they do not care to know.

Scandals fly anyway, sourced from the seemingly uncaring, the misinformed or malicious. Some may celebrate your grief or, worse, cause it. Some are seemingly on top of the world; their lives pleasing or pleasant, isolated from consideration or caring about less—if they could even conceive it. Some do not understand even if they think they do; their depth of understanding is very shallow though sufficient such that they may sound, “Yes, this is what happened,” or “It’s just another case of, you know, what happened to,” or “It’s just a failure in/of _____”. If *misery loves company* than it must also be true that some *company loves misery* as to cause it, relish in it, and glean much glee from it.

Am I wrapped around myself as to be my worst burden, the predominate predator of *the prey*? Do they sound, “Look at Eli—what a self-absorbed creature, a false preacher and bottom eater”? Do they sound, “Eli, how sullen he is”—when what they mean is, “He sucks the air out of the room”.



Take me home

*I am a chicken hawk, and I am going take you home.
Come on, I [do not have] all day!
– Henry Hawk, Foghorn Leghorn*

I continue this journey, further and farther from home, and for reasons that I cannot express or even remember. For in the moment, my sense is anywhere and everywhere; ranging from destiny to despair, a future, *life and living* restored, from the present rigor of simply getting by or through the next leg come what may.

“How do I do it,” I sound to myself. Sounding yourself that question does not mean that you convince yourself that it will lead to the destiny or that the rigor will run its course; it only means that you do not know how you will do or have done it to this day—the mystery of mine.

To brake from these menacing feelings and thoughts—yet again—I must sound to you that I have met assorted creatures in the last days; some that I trouble myself to be with or around, but others that make a great meal under other terms. Sometimes I just pass them by, sighting the target but unable to pull it out, while other times I give them no chance, not a second glance. I eat when I must absolutely do so, it seems, and rest when I am able or willing. The journey is taking its toll, depleting my body and disabling my mind, yet the heart remains strong, maybe stronger than ever. The truth is that I do not if I can go on.

Some creatures fret when they see me or hear me. It is encouraging seeing their faces, the frantic moves; a reminder that I am still an eagle if just by appearance. Other creatures do not seem to care; they just go about their business as though I was not there. I do not expect everyone to recognize me but I am sure disappointed when some ignore me—as though a spirit of a once alive and lively soul. It is encouraging, power on power, when the weaker run and scatter, sounding, “Oh no, an eagle,” and off they go. Hey, I am still an eagle—how about that!

TO FLY AGAIN

You may remember the chicken hawk; the one that I thought ate the rat. We may have a few sounds, this so-called cousin of mine, but not much more. I never really considered the ugly creature to be my cousin—or of any part of me! The whole lot of them is nothing more than a vulture. Vile bottom-feeders that do not favor the eagle in any way, appearance, attitude or aptitude; no, the chicken hawk, or chicken vulture or turkey vulture are all the same, crummy and creepy. Still, the chicken hawk has come back, somehow finding a way in to get in my way—as though it was stalking, riding my tail. The ugly creature introduces itself,

“Hey, I’m a chicken hawk,” as though I cannot see the plain truth standing before me.

Have you ever experienced the kind that tries to belittle you—that make you low to make them high? I do not have time for this sort, chicken hawk or any other of *the crummy, creepy*.

“Hey, you sure look tired. You must be totally spent,” the thing spits out, trying to gain my interest while playing the part of help.

Does a chick hawk really care about an eagle, I wonder, still unable to give his question comment. Is the chicken hawk kidding, trying to pretend to care when all it possess is a perfunctory arrogance as plain as the blood on his feathers or the flesh streaming from his talons.

“For the sake of *the natural*, groom yourself,” I sound, the creature likely unaware, unkempt as its lifestyle goes, its standards as low as low.

“Groom...what,” it echoes, detached from any decorum.

“Oh, I think you have me all wrong,” he retorted, the smell of kill beginning to turn while his shoulders slack and his feathers wave afoul.

“If you think me a bum, maybe we should duke it out,” as the thing began to dance around me. “Try your luck, worn out eagle.”

I will kill it as much as it is a waste on both ends, I thought. Can you believe the craziness, atop the crummy and creepy?

“I have flown this far to help you. I know your plight—the unfortunate loss of your young,” he continues, feigning a look of sympathy. “A most unfortunate though growing condition, I’m afraid,”



he drones on without as much as a blink of shifty and shameless eyes. “How do you go on when there-“

“Enough,” I screeched, sustaining from any further exposure, my emotions and all. “This is not your cause, your concern,” I continue, more composed and contained, “but is my purpose at this point.”

It may seem unnatural; all of this dialogue between two unlikely conversationalists, creatures, but sometimes *the unnatural* is all you have to illustrate and identify how far conditions have come and gone. These are dark times, *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, when the impossible and the inconceivable occur—when *the unnatural* is not only common but is the condition more normal than *the natural*.

“Can I help you Eli,” the annoying animal articulates. “You are so desperate, distressed and disheveled, more undone than me.”

“What is your name,” I sound, attempting to deal with this matter from a different point. “Do you have a name, chicken hawk?”

“They call me **Airbag.**”

What sort of name is that, I thought, full of nothing but air?

“Well then **Airbag**, what is your purpose here?”

“No need to get upset further, Eli the eagle. You’re already upset enough, your family leaving you and all.”

“You don’t know what you’re talking about it. You are not a hawk at all, only a chicken. Go away and sound that you won.”

“I know you’re angry and upset eagle—who wouldn’t be when they’ve lost so-.”

“Why do keep pressing me on my problems. What’s your purpose anyway?”

“I told you that I’m here to help.”

“Why do you want to help me?”

“I am much more than you know.”

“How do you know my name,” I sound—alert to the fact that he knows that fact. “Who told you about me?”

“Don’t you remember seeing me, only a few days ago, and-,”

“Yes, I remember,” I continue, wanting to know the source.

TO FLY AGAIN

“Well let’s just sound that I’ve had my eyes on you for some time; enough time to know more about you than you know.”

This chicken hawk was more than aggravating, fast becoming an adversary, an agent provocateur, who was much more than an airbag, air or bag. I needed to know more that he was willing to sound.

As I perched in silence, the thought occurred that I have seen this bird even before the rat, **Rodent**.

“Why do sound nothing, Eli? Are you angry still or is this your way—doing nothing when confronted,” **Airbag** sounds while strutting around with spread wings, daring and daunting at the same time.

I did not think I could sink this low in so short a moment. I was unprepared for this character and his claims; not ready to face the fact that someone besides me not only knew but also likely had something to do with the greatest problem I have ever faced. What could I do now? What would you do, confronted by so coy but commanding a character like **Airbag**. The name is almost comical but beneath it and within it is much more or less than merely air, a vacuum. This chicken hawk had suddenly become my enemy and I did not altogether know why. What had it done and what did it know? Did it plan or plot my greatest problem?

“I think you have a problem to solve,” **Airbag** sounds-up, encouraging but with an eerie tone as though any flight was futile. “Don’t you have many rivers to cross,” it continues, “and much to conquer?”

“Why do you mock me?”

“Because I can...and because you can do nothing but fly away,” and after a pause, it sounds, “Go home Eli, go home.”

“But home is behind me,” I reply before taking flight.



Much harder

*We are eagles, not herds of cattle.
Eagles are much harder to corral with fences.*
- Tom Kingday

Home was behind, way behind. I was far too long into it to turn back—to allow anyone or anything to convince me that I was wrong, or even right. I had my doubts even as I do now. I might be able to fool others but in *the end*, the others do not matter because they do not know what I have encumbered and endured. They may have their own crisis, whoever “they”. Only I can begin to know... and only I can forever want to....

I am an eagle that lived in high country. I was once a father of my own doing, but now I am a fugitive of sort. I have no home of which to lay my head but I travel—further and farther than I know or knew—to find what has been lost either way. I am homesick, though, for a home I no longer know.

It is much harder to search for something when the *something* means so much. You are constantly wrangling with all the possibilities of the future while recollecting all the positives of the past—some of *the possibilities* may be possible, some of *the positives* actually positive.

I tried to put the chicken hawk behind me but the facts are that it has created a new fear; the possibility that others know more about me than I do. Why would I be of any interest to them, whoever *they* happened to be? Why would **Airbag** sound such things unless it meant them, unless it was a fact? Why would another follow me to the refuge and then confront me, pomp and politic.

The chicken hawk knows that I am superior. Maybe it wanted me to attack, to stop everything that means something and to fight the futile fight. The chicken hawk is not *chicken* but nor is it hawkish; a noble predator though made proud by ignoble creatures—the worst kind of

TO FLY AGAIN

pride by the worst kind, parasitical and pathetic, to make *the worst of the worse*.

A strange something, the chicken hawk pretends to be more than it is or can be; yes, powerful sounds but no actions. The sounds bring meaning to me if for no other reason than to remind me that the world is much darker than I realized or care to know. Being noble, I know fraud when it shows its face.

Daddy-Dumb ushers layers that cover-up and disguise the truth; darkness become light and bad, good. The longer that **Airbag** spoke, the colder I became to the point of illness, near death. Quivering is such an unusual state, and uncontrolled undoing. How I could freeze in the season's warmth is beyond comprehension? Strange *some things* are happening all about me, to me too.

I am hungry and must find something to eat—something that will fill a void without touching all other others. There below is a rabbit, judging from my view, waiting to fill my stomach. The rabbit is like the rodent, smaller in size and strength, always twitching its nose and ears but very fast when it has to flee or very silent and still when running stops. In the moments that follow my flight takes me into more than what I expect or had plan; an easy catch at first sight, the rabbit was running at record speed, leading me to yet more darkness.

“You there, you stupid little rabbit, where are you-”

“I am leading you eagle,” is all it sounds in response while not losing a second in its path.

How a rabbit can lead an eagle, I thought, is beyond me. Why would a rabbit want to take an eagle anywhere?

“Rabbit, you win!”

“No one wins, don't you see; we all lose in *the end*,” the rabbit blurts-out, prepared for my sounds still unsounded.

“Well, I've won in the past.”

“Who is the winner,” the rabbit resounds, “but those who do the dirty work, disguised all along, so that that no one knows the better.”

I was not sure what the rabbit meant, but felt corralled at this point.



Where is this going but nowhere? “What do you mean?”

Rabbits can see behind, as though they have eyes in the back of the head. Very observant out of necessity, it is situational awareness. This one sees more, a mind reader of my recent reflections, regurgitating each exact.

“I knew that you would come, Eli,” the rabbit sounds while thumping about a hole. “You cannot pass up an easy meal? You just had to take the bait and swoop down on me. Look at you now, at the edge of a hole of darkness, a deep one to be sure.”

“So I took the bait and ran with it. Now what happens,” I sound, moving ever closer to the rabbit, the hole.

“Don’t come further or farther,” the rabbit cautions.

“What happens then,” I sound, still moving closer. “Do I die or just spend the rest of my days in darkness?”

“What’s the difference,” the rabbit quips, “Aren’t they the same thing, darkness and death?”

I guess the racy rabbit is right; death and darkness are practically the same.

“You’re too close, Eli.”

“How do you know my name anyway?”

“A little bird told me,” the rabbit squeaks.

“What kind of bird?”

“Oh, it may have been blue or black, white or brown, or as brilliant as a parrot or canary, I don’t remember really,” the rabbit resounds.

“You always believe birds?”

“Do you believe you; do you believe in you,” the rabbit sounds.

“Sure, I believe in me.”

“All the time,” the bird sounds while peering up at me with bigger eyes and longer ears.

“Maybe I do,” was all I sound to the daring and darling creature.

“You’re a bird, aren’t you?”

“Not a little one, as you can see.”

“If you believe (in) a bird, than why can’t I believe too?”

TO FLY AGAIN

“What else did you hear about me?”

“Not much more, but enough that you should know that I know.”

“Know what?”

“Know you Eli; know about you and all,” the rabbit sounds, twitching its nose and flipping its ears forward.

“You’re not offering everything,” I sound off. “What else do you know about me?”

The rabbit refuses to sound more, but simply holds its ground, comfortable at the hole.

“I am **Chaos**,” is sounds after the silence.

“You are confusing.”

“And don’t forget random,” the rabbit sounds back.

“What is random?”

“I am,” **Chaos** calls back.

“Random is chaos, then,” I sound to the rabbit.

“Not always; sometimes chaos is calculated, planned and all.”

“How can chaos be planned?”

“You went down the path as I planned; and if you are not careful, you may just fall in the hole, never to return.”

The rabbit was right, of course, and I now know that chaos is just a plan away, the hole, too close to realize it.



Cannot force

*You cannot force someone to be an eagle...
Nobody wants to fly solo. Dreams [need to be] shared together.*
- Shannon L. Alder

I never dreamed of dropping this low; so far down as to find myself on the edge of a rabbit hole. *I should know better*, I thought deeply, *but here I am, and, worse, I keep going further down and then farther away from where I want to be; the future and the past—home again.*

What kind of an eagle am I, now? Certainly not the kind that father was and, as lore has, many fathers before him. Could I face my ancestors now—with what I have been through— and explain why I cower before a chicken hawk, lured into a rabbit trap? What would they sound? What could they sound to their son and so on? This pride, however powerful it may seem, is not a positive place to be right now.

“Your name is Eli,” the rabbit sounds. “And you’ve traveled far to get here—am I right?”

“And how do you know me,” I sound, desperate for something that might make this trap more or less.

“You’re becoming a legend, I’m afraid to sound to you.”

“‘Legend’, me,” as now, more dumbfounded. “What makes me so important, worth reveling, remembering?”

“I am not sure about any of this,” Chaos confesses, “but the word is that you are traveling far and wide, further and farther, seeking your offspring and mate, lost without a trace.”

“That’s accurate,” I call back.

“I’m not sure that I used the right word, ‘legend’; maybe it’s more a marvel or maybe its maniac that I meant,” the rabbit goes on. “But you are being watched among some higher rank out there—those that have a sound that gets around, from up to down.”

“‘Sound around...down, ‘among some higher rank’?”

TO QUESTION

“That is what I sounded Eli—no need to call what has already been expressed,” the rabbit sounds, seemingly sounding down to me, a superior species.

“You do have a way, **Chaos**, of leaving the story with space.”

“Space,” the rabbit sounds back.

Yes, with gaps and missing parts,” I sound more. “Do you purposely make the message unclear and incoherent—or is it calculated as with chaos?”

“Maybe a little of both; after all, you don’t just want to give information away, do you?”

“I think giving is a good thing. I always prefer that others give.”

“Giving is not your way?”

“Sure, we give when we have to be,” **Chaos** follows. “Not today; after all, you wouldn’t expect me to just stand still—an easy target for your next meal?”

“It would be good,” I quip, “but something good may come out of this yet, I hope.”

“You’re not the first to hope and not the last either.”

“Creatures like you seem to know too much, more about me than I would ever-,”

“It is unnatural, isn’t it; this knowing of mine?”

“Of course it is, but it is only part of the-,”

“I know about unnatural,” the rabbit sounds off, “and about hope too. Hope helps in these unnatural times, *Days of Daddy-Dumb*.”

“How do you know these things?”

“I know because I know—and that is all that I can sound to convince you that I’m not really leading you down a rabbit hole, but trying to give you hope, help. I am warning you of what has come and what will come, more. You must prepare, you must be ready,” the rabbit insists.

“How can I be ready and besides, how can I prepare for all this change, the unknowns and more?”

“How can you,” the rabbit sounds back.

“Sound to me more—everything you know and believe.”



“You cannot force me to sound to you everything; for if I did, than the journey would be diminished to little more than accepting your fate, forgoing faith, hope and-“

“It would be so much-,”

“You think that knowing more would be better?”

“It couldn’t hurt?”

“You don’t know that; why, I think that knowing too much could hurt a lot and more,” the rabbit begins. “Did I know that I wouldn’t die when you decided to make me your next meal?”

“How do you know you won’t?”

“Did I know that the rabbit hole would help me, huh?”

“Hasn’t it helped you before,” I sound back.

“Okay, the hole, but the point is that knowing more can get you into a lot of trouble.”

“So it’s better to be ostrich-like, oblivious, obtuse, obstinate,-“

“O’ Eli, Eli, what can I do to help you see that not seeing is sometimes better than seeing but not believing? If you saw ahead, what lies in store, would you believe it, conceive it, or receive it?”

“If I don’t know than how can I know?”

“Look eagle, maybe this will help,” the rabbit continues. “I had a dream that I would be confronted by **Vile the vulture**, and in the dream, that I succumb to its superiority—weakling and worrier that I am.”

“And did you...succumb?”

“I thought the dream a premonition, a portending of things to come,’ the rabbit continues.

“And was it?”

“I thought I knew the future and, thus, would know what to do, when to do it,” the rabbit goes on. “It was all smoke and mirrors, the dream did not give me hope.”

“Shouldn’t I trust dreams?”

“Not always; more that you should not look for hope in thinking that you know what is coming; first, what you think may easily be wrong

To QUESTION

and second, even if your thought or dream is right, what's coming may be terrible, terrorizing and treacherous."

"Then I should put my hope and seek help in other things?"

"Yes," the rabbit replies softly.

"Where then do I put my hope, find help?"

"That too is something that will come, sooner than later, I hope," the rabbit sounds back before returning to the hole.



Triumphant

We are faithful not to the triumphant eagle (ironically, also an imperial symbol of power in Rome) but to be the slaughtered Lamb.

- Shane Claiborne

“Many of my own die,” **Chaos** continues. “We have few victories and many defeats being that we’re among the weaker and lower of the natural creatures.”

“I know the meaning of loss,” I sound off without really considering rabbit’s state, its lot in life.

“No you don’t,” **Chaos** sounds back sharply. “You don’t know what it’s like to see most of your own never make it passed a kit, let alone the birth place. You don’t begin to know what it is like being the prey, the next meal for a higher-up. Our *life and living* is chaotic at all corners. You don’t know my world—not yet.”

“Okay, I don’t...the lot of this creature well below me.”

“What I am trying to sound is that unless you have experienced loss you do not know *loss* and unless you have experienced the loss of much you do not how much *loss* you can sustain, withstand and endure. It is losing a thing that hurts, but losing many things that harms beyond healing.”

“I do not know...I have not known...and will likely never know what it is like to be rabbit—I get that much! The reason is simple; I am not a rabbit, but much more—or at least, much different—from a rodent.”

“Not even close, Eli, you’re on the other end of the stick.”

“What does that mean, ‘other end of the stick’?”

The rabbit hesitates before sounding off: “It’s an expression of those higher than the *worst of the worse*. I’ve heard on occasion, especially when distinguishing the classes of creation.”

“What does it mean, ‘classes of creation’?”

TO QUESTION

“It means that there are two sides or ends: a good side of worth and a bad side of the worthless.”

I never doubted the rabbit’s word beyond this point. I realized the sincerity and depth of its story. For a while though, before this moment, the creature had me wondering. With a name like **Chaos**, what should you expect but all things disordered. *Is it true that from chaos come orders? What was it sounding to me? Was it attempting to shame me or make me feel guilty because I stand above so many others—those like it and much above it? Maybe it was sounding to me that, maybe more or less.*

“Don’t you understand now,” it sounds softly as though someone else was near. “You’re beginning to experience what we endure. I don’t doubt your great loss bird, but in fact there are many who have much more in loss and much less overall.”

“I don’t care about many,” I fire-back candidly. “I am raised to care for my own and that’s it—no more, no nothing but me, us.”

Does a rabbit care for anything other than its own? Try to imagine a rabbit helping the rat or giving aid to some other. Wait for something that convinces you.

Does the rabbit throw itself to the predator and sound, “Here I am, eat me,” because death by decision is better, more sacrificial, than at birth or at any other time for no other reason than nature, the course?

Is the rabbit the sacrificial lamb, the giver of everything, the taker of none? Does it feel more because it is felt more? Does it know more about loss because it is lost more? Does it die a nobler death because it witnesses dying more often among its own?

“What can I do—what should I do,” I sound out.

“I am sounding to you to prepare; that though you have lost your eaglets that much loss awaits you,” the rabbit explains without blinking. “You will lose much—more than you possibly can conceive—but there is good news.”

“What’s the good news?”



“The more you lose, the freer you are,” **Chaos** declared. “You’re not really free until you’ve lost everything!”

Does losing have an ironic twist of winning, victory through defeat? Losing is not a triumph, is it? Winning is everything, the winner take all, right? Someone has to lose and, more often, many more do.

“It is a different way,” the rabbit chatters. “Not the way of the world as it is, but more than those who don’t cluster so much.”

“What do you mean, ‘cluster’?”

“I mean those who need others but do not embrace others so as to give-up their self, their whole to the whole, cluster.”

“How do you avoid that, clusters?”

“You do not give-up on others, that’s for sure, but you don’t surrender so that others—big ones—can give hope, help,” the rabbit answers. “If you are set on going it alone, you’re hosed,” **Chaos** sounds loud. “But if you are willing to give-it up for some big and bad cluster, then you’re more than hosed—you’re washed-up.”

Do creatures really know about these things; winning and losing, alone or clustered? Some birds insist on flocks because nature draws them to it while others, like me, limit our flying to a few, maybe one. Birds of a feather usually stick to together but some appear more stuck than others do. Who triumphs in nature? Some fight while others take flight, but even the weak are courageous given and taking enough.

A behemoth bull chases a red cape with stabs, and finally drops to the dirt. These horned beasts cannot win—not really—for soon, they meet their fate, death in degrees. Similarly, and more like me, the chicken cock; forced into the pit to flog it out with another until one and ultimately the other drops. Neither win in the end; for the fate of the cock is death, something called “cash” carries the day. Land beasts die, birds die and others too, never with a chance to lose and then live to sound, “I won from losing,” or “I am free at last!”

Loss for one is triumph for another. Yes, everyone loves a winner except, of course, those who suffered the loss. The losers detest and despise the winner—unless the worship them.

TO QUESTION

As to the winners that always win, well, they are feverish to win and to win big, even bigger, because anything less is failing and falling. Those that win in such ways do not really know what losing is or was; for they cannot know something that they have never felt or can even imagine at any depth. There may be good losers but they are few and far between; because, in my world, losers as the rabbits seldom live long enough to express their feelings about it. Again, loss in the natural world often is death, slow or sudden, without any account of pain. *What is winning anyway? I am weary of pretending to bask in the glory, of sounding to myself, "It is all good," when it is not. I am tired of triumph and tired of those that dream of it, fight for it, live and die for it.*



Do not flock

Eagles do not flock, you have to find them one at a time.

- Ross Perot

For a second time, the rabbit disappeared into a hole—never to return, I suppose. *A sad moment, an emptiness I felt standing there in the silence that followed and the now-pressing feeling to move forward, the journey with challenges for which I cannot conceive, so sounded **Chaos**. Is the rabbit right—is it sounding the truth?*

Eagles are not like other birds that fly in bands, sometimes called clusters. Geese fly in a band, really a formation, where the leader often swaps off and the rest follow in a v-pattern. Other birds flock too; some in a mess that seems to resemble chaos—though the rabbit might not care that I use its namesake. Some seem somewhat orderly while others in total disarray. Then there are those that seem like a cluster flock but in an instant can turn with such precision as to wonder if they are simply one body. I understand that the fish beneath waters do similar feats though I cannot sound that I have ever seen this aquatic action. I have always admired the flocks; the groupies that hang together whether above the earth, perched in a tree, or meandering around a water hole, formed and fluid on land and sea.

Where is my family now, the few that I can call my own? I am not sounding for a flock, a covey or some other congregant—but only my own, a few precious few. I have been down this rabbit hole too many times however; sounding hard and hardened questions that have no immediate or even anticipated answers. *When will I get-over-it, beyond it?*

I have learned that self-pity is a form of pride; you can overrate yourself, a *pride* too common among some creatures, or under rate yourself, sounding “Poor me, poor pitiful me.” At end, self-adulation or pity, pride is a sure thing—and nothing less or more. *Help me not to be*

TO QUESTION

too proud either way; not to exalt my name but neither, excuse the fact that I still have feathers and can fly far and further. I could find so many ways to return to the rabbit hole; still, the rabbit hole may not yet be too far distant, for pride and pity are my pitfalls whenever I return to earth. The more that I return, the more I fall and then fail.

Eagles are not victims. An eagle is a noble creature by any standard and naturally has no place for pity, for being a victim. *If I am still an eagle, I wonder why I feel no such nobility. What do I do if I have no one to pour out my grief or to share my sorrow, than what is to stop me from falling back on my heritage, my place in nature? Are all of those that flock, too weak to fly alone, too afraid to be alone?* Many that hang together are strong; hanging together merely makes them stronger as nature has made it, made them. Would I be weird if I had a flock of my own, again? *Do I really care to try?*

Do others have their rabbit holes—their weaknesses? There is no pride for the rabbit and, come to think of it, no pity either. They, or it, just try to live as long as *life and living* allow. They do not worry about being weak—their fears are simply a natural way of reacting to threats, perceived or practical. *Nature once ruled—though not now.*

The chicken hawk is much harder to figure-out, impossible to see and sound. It was more an aberration than an animal, more mechanical and mysterious as the big birds. Yes, **Airbag** seems the right name; a lot of surface, nothing of depth, a bag full of wind. Yet, I was fearful as though that **Airbag** was blowing more than hot air. *Why do I fear air?*

We are sometimes weak but is it impossible to accept weakness when you taught that admitting weakness is a weakness. Do you have shortcomings or are you always strong, steadfast and stalwart? If you are always strong, maybe just maybe you have failed to come to terms with your weakness or you just do not care to consider the possibility at all. Either way, you have weaknesses too—plain and simple.

Can I sound that some, maybe more, seldom live-up to or attain the image they imagine for themselves? Whether the image is flawed and fallen or brilliant and becoming, a dearth of deference often divides



what we think of ourselves over what or who we really are. Then there is what others think too; not just about us in particular but about the flock we fly with, or the creatures that we cluster.

It is hard living up to the expectation of or for an eagle—but then, who in their right mind wants to? *Do I want to be an emblem on this...or embossed on that, or paraded around in some other imaginary form, exalted for exploitation, extoled for the exile or even extermination of some enemy whether simply sounded or actually so?* Eagles are not inherently fighters—we do not pursue conflict and contention, combatants to the core. They have it all wrong—and know it! When will they turn from such ways and sound, “The facts are....”

Weaknesses are not a bad thing. Without weakness, how can we begin to appreciate strength? Without weakness, where would *help and hope* be but mere sounds, nothing more. Without weakness, where and when would our need for others be—such as for family, flock or herd? We are caring and communicable creatures. *I am glad to have weaknesses; for in this stage, I can admit that there are times when I cry—other times when I want to or need to. I can confess that my life and living is not always favorable and, in moments, loathed to the point that it seems beyond death, the darkness.*

When I fly, I am strong; a longing or daring flight takes energy but gives it back. The air is to me as water to a fish: a space that I fill and form; a place that I own and operate, a time that is mine. There is freedom that I feel when I fly farther, further, forever.

Below the sky, things are different, disturbing beyond an air mass; too many traps like the rabbit hole—too many ways to get snared, unable to fly away, even get airborne. The ground is round with dangers and darkness, where vultures prefer to bob around and finish-off the suffering or prey on the unprotected. The chicken hawk loves the ground too; where it can blow smoke that chokes creatures into *Cretans*—making stupid the smart and good into gruesome. The rat and all other such rodents end-up digging a hole to hide and live if just for another moment. No rising when bound to the ground.

TO QUESTION

No, the earth takes more than energy from me; it deprives me of all desire in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*—homeless, restless and listless at the same time. The ground takes me to *the deep*—the bottom of the big waters in all ways beyond the physical, leaving me a prisoner of my fears and more. There is no freedom, only fear here, on the cold and barren earth depleted of its richness and left to suffer still.

Though the trees have always been my home, still, I am seeing fewer and fewer these days. The tall ones are no longer and the short ones, smaller and scrubbier. All the light of before is quickly fading, the grays of dwindling light taking over as though a storm is coming—never to pass me by. *Will the storms never end?*

I have mentioned the cold or chill internal, but a sudden sensation of heat puts me in a flux. Is it the atmosphere or my own body in radical change; such symptoms are more than I could think, let alone feel. It is hard to know my mind; all the mental and emotional traffic is more than enough to take me down. What I want I cannot have now, while real needs go unmet and the turmoil of mixed air controls my life.



Tranquility

Tranquility...the Eagle has landed.

- Neil Armstrong

How can I be an eagle with all the turmoil and turbulence? Proud eagles overcome great disturbance. We incur problems—but not the inextricable, impossible variety like this, like mine. Why do I have to endure this alone, not only now but also among all generations past?

I am far too noble a bird to be groveling in pity; a most pathetic sight, the pathos of an otherwise predator. Can I forget that we are independent, self-determined, and proud? Revered and regaled by the greatest, I am among the righteous, a vanguard against all that is wrong and defender of democratic deeds—or at least sounds as such.

Here I squat however, on the ground without an ounce of ambition to fluff my feathers let alone soar among the spirits. Why have I plopped my sorrowful tail feathers down and reduced myself to such a state? Why do I talk and think about all the things I could do in the heavens but fail to launch, stuck to the surface and infused to the inferno beneath. Is the journey dead, the mission scrubbed? Have I lost the moon with no air to breath? *Hmm, I have a problem.*

The higher I go, the higher I get. I guess the *high* comes from the loss of breathable air, the loss of breath, but it always works. An eagle gets *high* when high, but as for me right now, I am about as grounded as a sitting duck—and a *sitting duck* is a dangerous thing to be.

Have you ever been in a funk without a flock to count on? Have you ever wondered what happened to all your supposed friends when life lapses into a hole so deep as to never dig your way out no matter how hard you crawl or how long you try? *Where are they now, you wonder, when I need them most?* Aside of the fair-weather friends, is the family; the folks you think you know and can always depend on. Maybe just maybe they don't understand such a state as mine, but then, maybe

TO QUESTION

they don't want to or worse, maybe they're afraid that I will give them what I have—or don't have. *Is this a disease?*

Maybe my thinking of/in this or that relationship is simply wrong. Maybe some do care deeply but do not know how to speak it or maybe I have distanced myself from them, a withdrawal from contact, to *lick my wounds*. Maybe I never fostered such friends so that when (or as) such times came, my chances of a flock would be, well, nil.

Let me sound to you how important having friends can be; not just *on the face of it*, but with depth and determination—where bad news and loss do not discourage, but rather strengthen, the bonds. Without friends or better, a flock, where are we but on the dark-side of the moon, cold and chilling, the sunrays out-of-view and beyond reach. *I am in a crater.*

To reflect back to an eaglet experience, a challenging part of flight was landing. It took me days on days to get-it-down and make it smooth—as the first attempts practically aborted, my legs to uneasy to make it happen while my wings are sounding to me to pull-up, fly-over. I had to land some time, else I would never get the hang of it. How I feared it at first. My brother laughing at me—the feat seemingly natural for him—I had to fail to learn, trial and error. Maybe, just maybe, the arduous act of landing was my introduction to *life and living*; where you cannot soar like an eagle if you cannot land it; touching ground being the hardest thing I've ever had to do save the decision, this present journey, in the days of my missing them and too, *Daddy-Dumb*.

I could not accept that landing would become rout; no, I was too terrorized with the present to see the future, of what would inevitably come, my skills honed after the hapless and unheralded heading of anything but land, landing. *My brother laughed no more.*

It would seem then that it might be easier to fly me to the moon than to land rightly on earth. In other sounds, distance was more about determination while the approach and landing altogether detrimental. My focus on failure and not on the fact that eagles land and land well—



no exceptions—was grounding unto itself. Who want to fly when they know that eventually they have to land, take a spill, and indulge the gawkers with their looks of pity and piety?

When alas the nature of our kind came home, I could sing again; I could be confident that what all my ancestry did, I could do too. A good landing finally arrived and I could sing a happy tune over the shame and guilt, divorced from my all. *Laughing is now a good thing.*

We are a proud bird—but you know that already, right? What I have not described is the pitfalls of being too proud; of being, well, like those beings that invariably spiral into *the worst of the worse*. Yes, those ancient stories that my ancestry passed-on or up; the plunderers and conquerors that took and took until they could take no more; those that that paradoxically pushed until they were all pushed-out, *life and living*.

The old Romans travelled with routes made out of rock and leaders made out of the noble, like me. Their legions carried images, the Aquila that looked like me. It was supposed to be an honor to carry the image but a most egregious event to lose it. The eagle image was iconic as though it be all that they worshiped and adored. It was only an image and, more than likely, not the single item of sacredness, with all the things worshipped and hoped one god to the next. *When you worship anyone or everything, nothing is scorned—or sacred.*

There is gold and there are precious jewels; and maybe, just maybe, the Aquila possessed some of these timeless, natural treasures. Gold is still highly valued; so much, that it makes *the worst of the worse*, worse—if that was possible! As to gems and such rocks, well, some would soon pave their roads too while all along rolling over anyone and everything like the Romans. *Imagine the dying paving the way with the dead, their stones.*

Winning is all that matters...except for those who have to pay the costs, pave the way with sacrifice and suffering. *Slavery* is what I call it, *sacrifice and suffering*; it means that someone somewhere has to sacrifice and suffer more and then more—until they lose it all and end-

TO QUESTION

up *losing it*—their minds, hearts and spirits driven to death, first their spirits and then then souls.

Back to my own struggle with flight, balance is the key. Balance is beautiful, everything close and centered, but imbalance implodes, the extremes explode—making land an impossibility, an existential end to the eagle and the earth. *Where is balance when you want for it?*

The Romans forgot about balance, maybe not at first when they were veritable fledglings but later, leading to the roads glutted with the guile and Germanic, bustling barbarianism. It is hard to get your bearing, hindered by hubris, hampered by haughtiness, hopelessness. *Balance brings about harmony, a symphony of systems.*

I am compelled to warn you that pride, while powerful, can carry you to the pit, the fall. The problem with pride is that it warps perspective, turning anyone and everything into your slave. With pride comes the strong paranoia that all effect is the cause of weakness and waywardness of the powerless, the poor. *Once pride parts its way all that is left is the fear, the loss of power, and the imbalances that lend to the unnatural.*

You can practically and perniciously bring-on ruin only to claim another at cause or sound sanctimoniously, “It’s not my fault!” Who are you to believe that you are a god when, in fact, you too have flesh and feathers—and that you too had troubles landing, far from tranquility? Is it ethos, ego or the environment that puts you so high above earth—dancing with the stars, angels of the heavenly?

I can sound now that it was within my power to withdraw from pride, its ilk and its ills; humbled yes, humiliated maybe, but still heeding to the hard lessons.



You know

You know I am an eagle, flying around in the mountains.

- Link Wray

Flying over the mountains can be a deep, spiritual experience. The mosaic of color in the fall is especially fine but even the winter of leafless hardwood gives added color to the pine, the fur and all that green that should last forever. Can you imagine the sensation?

There comes the other side, perhaps the dark-side of the mountains, where once trees are no trees and the land seems more moonscape than the natural surface; pocked with larger pockets of carved-out and blown-out earth, moved by the largest and loudest of land creatures and mechanized power.

“Boom” echoes through the region, that once-point now a mammoth hole of endless black, all the edges randomly awry, the natural setting turned asunder. The concussion from the chaos touches my core. Even the air displaced along with infinitesimal, incinerated particles that sting my underside and shake my spirit beyond bones.

My ancestry told me that these mountains possess the history of ancient civilizations. They were typically small in number and lived on the land—perhaps with it—as a somewhat solemn, sacred spirit. Not removed from conflict, so it seemed, but not inclined to destroy others in mass either, they lived largely at peace rather than for possession.

You know how harmony works if you know sound; a mellifluous tune is much better than discord and so too peace over unpleasantness. Still, peace did not last, so they sound, as the sacred spirit fell and failed. It simply could not go on against the deafening discord that came ashore and then decisively moved inland, blazing and burning a way west. You cannot find peace by abusing power just as community crumbles under corruption, a *collective* that have no substance, a spirit.

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

A settled spirit became unsettled, finally undone and ultimately disbanded. You know that such things happen; a sudden and critical change that, like the forces of nature, bites hard as the beast. Pride produces a power as such; one that takes and takes and then takes again—relentless in its pursuit and resourceful to a plan—however devious it be—that tears at the heart of the spirit, reducing it to a shell of dry bones, devoid of flesh, a burned black from *the boom*.

Still, the mountains have not lost yet and perhaps, as nature is a power of such potential will it take back—just as the waters of the deep can suddenly exceed their expected bounds and wash everything clean, salt the purifier—purging the veritable wasteland of incessant want and insidious ways however high-minded or well-intended.

I sense rumblings; not *the boom* or those that rise from the land creatures and mechanized power, but deeper and stronger—that shakes the surface and shifts the substrate. As though the mountains are a living creature, mummings resonate and then amplify to yells and screams as though to sound, “I am alive and I will be long after you’re gone.” *I am afraid of this sound, the rumblings, with power beyond power.*

Either I am just hallucinating or the ground is going to open to expose a cauldron of the burning and the burned, all the colors of fire, beautiful and breathtaking but boiling and boundless as the deep.

My ancestry sounded that the mountains are like an old spirit; wise and full of rich lessons and learning. When the old spirit is awakened finally; oh, what legends will be rendered on the unknowing, the unkempt and unconditioned; a day of reckoning is certain—even soon—where rumblings will turn to rumbles and *the boom* will be far beyond the land creatures and mechanized power.

You know by now that humble beginnings as **Chaos** (the rabbit) are a certain cause for loss. I know this because I have heard it, seen it, and now live it—all pride preferably behind me. If you don’t know loss than you haven’t had *humble beginnings*; and conversely, if you are always



winning than you have no room for *humble beginnings* but are truly full of it, self only. *Pride lends to the end, inevitable and inescapable.*

You know it is one thing for you to witness or sense personal loss but another entirely to see it widespread—beyond the mountains and the limits of one time and place. Once the many experience loss of such magnitude, most come to a new understanding that *life and living* is not just about flying but about landing, grounded—sometimes into the ground. Needless to sound, that under such conditions—colossal loss—few win or succeed. Loss of this scale affects nearly all that survive or not, the many and masses.

Rumblings will bring rumbles as antagonists bring antagonism; and in such times, those that profit in or from power make *boom* on everyone else. The consequences of *boom* carry much further than these mountains, sometimes heard from the deepest earth to the highest elevation. You know of these things if you pay attention to history but if you elect to be blind as an ostrich—afraid of fear—than you will either avoid it or deny it, but you cannot escape it. Remember that *rumbles* are nothing new, of course, but in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb* the rate of *rumblings* are faster than a *big bird* and the consequences calculated beyond number or measure.

You know that sometimes mountains move by acts of nature, that great rumblings produce tectonic shifts, but what you may not feel or sense is that movements are happening by unnatural means too. If you could know the keen sight of an eagle or could see things from on high than you would agree, surely there is unnatural phenomenon.

Sometimes something has to hit you right in the face to believe it—to accept that it is actually happening even before you know how or why. Sometimes you see it, maybe multiple times, yet cannot fathom the sight, the reality of the unacceptable, inconceivable. Sometimes you try to accept it but it makes you feel sick and tired such that you end-up sounding, “No, I am not going to dwell on this matter.” If you do, dwell, you will not be able to live around others, let alone yourself. Try not to believe what you know to be true, and deceive yourself.

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

Pride gets in the way of observation, obfuscating the view, making the mind oblivious and the heart opposed to any thing that causes discomfort or inconvenience. Pride can be costly; sometimes more than hunger, thirst or cold. When accompanied by power, pride is a deadly force that not only ignites *rumbings* but inflames *rumbles* that burn in infamy. You know that pride compounded by power promotes ignorance; this leads to a dangerous mix of indefinite and indeterminate destruction and desolation. Those that are too proud end-up eating themselves—in addition to others—and make a mess out of their madness, malevolent and malignant.

My ancestry told me of such times and places; where *the worst* becomes worse and the better resort to worse even as destruction and desolation follow.

Pride gets no pleasure in just having it—whatever *having it* means—but in having more than anyone or everybody else. It is not what you have, but it is what you have in comparison with others. The pleasure is being above the rest, without comparison and always, the next level.



You are alone

Eagles commonly fly alone.

- John Webster

“Where am I,” I sound before considering still more changes from on high. The earth is black and the sky a mix of gray. There is not sound, even my breathing. *I am the last life living*, I thought, just before I sighted the venal, the venerable **Vile**.

“Eagle, come down,” it screeches, not with the sharp and piercing type of my kind but rather, a raspy and raucous roar. “Come down before I bring you down,” the skin-headed scavenger continues in course. “Come down to my earth where I rule and reign.”

Never underestimate such a creature; such reach and range, yet complete disregard and disdain for even the dead and dying. The vulture stoops lower than their posture; a thing more hideous and hollow than any I know or could ever conjure up.

Can I believe that a vulture would come this far, I thought, *to the ends of the earth?* The sight, the setting, is reason enough to realize that it was the primary place for such predators to play with power; an under earth similarly hideous and hollow. *As the surface is so lifeless in this land, what lies beneath it—in it*, I thought. *Do I really want an answer?*

“What do you want of me,” I sound aground.

“You have gone too far, eagle,” it murmurs, “and will surely die a sorry sojourner, a wistful wayfarer,” it adds with an air.

What to do, I thought. *To respond would only make matters worse, while remaining silent leaves the vulture no choice but to end me—or at least try. Sounding nothing may be better than worse.*

“This tragedy has brought you so low and lacking. I don’t believe I’ve ever seen the so-called noblest of birds, laggard and lackluster,” **Vile**

remarks, aglow with gall. “You really are wasting your time, still weighing what little remains,” as the glow gave way to the darkness.

“What remains,” I sound back.

“You’ve spent these days aimlessly searching for something that is lost,” **Vile** continues, a condescending call. “And you know it, don’t you,” the black thing babbled-on.

“Know what,” I sound half-knowing and half-bluffing.

Ruffling its dark feathers with signs of fury, the vulture screamed, “That they are gone, vanished and vanquished, fool!”

“How do I know that it is so; that my family is gone,” I persist, fueling the fury to more a flame, fire. “How do you know that they are gone forever?”

“You see my anger now,” the black thing blurts-out, “but you can’t imagine what I can do to you—what I am capable of doing,” it warns me. “I have destroyed much greater...”

“How do I know that family is gone,” I repeat, more persistent to an answer than pitying my life as it is or will be.

The vulture circled around, juking and strutting, as though to dance an early celebration, my demise. *Is it going to attack or just act-out*, I thought half-caring and half not. You see, this vulture was clearly an obstacle and maybe the last, but I had come so far as to quit caring about obstacles—even the real ones.

“Eli,” it begins, acknowledging now that it knows my name. “You have been warned for the last time; either turn back or die,” it demands, still doing the dance. “Don’t stay a fool. Give-up and return to you home where you belong,” it demands still dancing. “Remember your pride, Eli; you’re an eagle that soars. Are you an obtuse ostrich or a ruthless rat? Are you a cheeky chicken-hawk or a mimicking mocking-bird,” the vulture seemingly sounds. Before I had time to answer, the vulture responds, “No, you are Eli the eagle—among the greats of the great, the proud and prevailing predators.”

The vulture’s accolades are not sincere, of course. No way for a creature of this kind, a heart of deep darkness, to mean such things; but



on the contrary, contempt is the true feeling and, given my resistance, something deeper and full of corruption, the smell of death. It is an aberration, not actual, not real. It is smoke and mirrors; less than a spirit of not substance, an acrid order and some intoxicating chemistry. It grounds me at its behest, bearing the semblance of a spirit, even sacred, able to sunder all things to it and for it; yet, it has no dimensions, no depth or breadth—not even a facet. *How can so little, much less, manage to be majestic—or even matter?*

“You are listening Eli,” the black beast barks. “You’re sickened and sullen spirit speaks to mine in desperation,” it sounds, seething. “Your spirit has been trying to persuade you to go home but you have not been following, contradicting conscience,” the vulture persists. “At the precipice, you have only this chance before-,”

“Before what,” I interrupt, knowing what sounds wait.

“Before I destroy you as I have others,” the vulture repeats.

Each time the vulture voiced its demands or my demise, I respond with a question; this response to not only anger the animal—as though I could—but to possibly bleed information, as **Vile** takes great pride in prognostication, and I, in using it.

“What is it like,” the creature continues, “when you’re all alone?”

“Don’t you know,” I fire back in response.

“Well that’s something I know nothing about,” it adds, “since I am never absolutely alone, my following in countless number.”

“Do vultures flock,” I sound, relying on my knowledge of nature.

“Flock or not, I am never alone,” the vulture replies confidently, while continuing with more. “Even when I rest I am never alone; for there is always a spirit awake, alert and aware of all things, everywhere, and especially of me as I am of you—all of you.”

“You know about everyone, do you,” I sound, though reluctant, releasing the possibility that the vulture’s word was possibly half-true.

“If I know so much about you, then why are you sounding,” the creature replies as its feathers darkened, the stench intensifies. “Do you not realize the power I possess? You are outmatched, beaten already,”

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

the bird persists. “It pains me to watch you hurt and to cause hurt to others that, like me, know what is best for you.”

I am all alone, I thought again, as both a chill and an ill feeling came over me. *How can I possibly get out of this; how can I overcome the moment to be free once more?* And as these thoughts came, so too, a welcomed and wonderful world: as the shadow of this creature had overtaken me and all light seemed to disappear; yet now, before and around me, a light returned—a brilliant beam—that shown all about me as though to sound, “You are free...fly.”

Vile the vulture was gone with no trace that it had ever been or ever was; the ill of death no more, the chill of darkness lifted. It is a mystery, this moment. I cannot explain how or why this happened and nor can I sound whether the vulture was real or merely an image or spirit. All I knew and know is that it seemed the end of me either way until it left me, once again.



You are

*You are the eagle...remarkable.
You are the ocean eating the shore.
You are the calm inside the storm
You are every emotion...endure....
- Jason Mraz*

I am all alone, lonely and all alone; but still I sound.

(Ho, Hey, Ho, Hey!)

(Ho!) I am trying to make this flight,

(Hey!) I am dropping fast, (Ho!) I am going down,

(Hey!) Grounded in the ground,

(Ho!) Soon without a sound, soon without a sound

I belong up there, where the air is pure with the sky clear,

I belong in the light, not The Low, I fear.

I am eagle and eagles are often alone, loners perhaps? If I was a weaker species, sound a goose, I would need others, flocks or clusters. I am not any of those lesser creatures though; being an eagle, I need no one—but I sure miss everyone right now.

There is no one around to hear my bold assertions, my pride and pomp; the fallback to my legacy, a reunion of ancestry, and anything that might make me believe that I am more than I am—or even was...before? There are no eaglets that, though being there for them, they are gone, perhaps forever. There is no mate of which to share my life, my delights and my dreads and everything in between, feathers and all. *I may not need a community but I sure need companionship.*

Would they understand? Did my legacy have anything to learn about failure, falling? Or we're they, their lives, so good as to be great; a veritable gallant kind that looks good to look at, admire and exalt to what any and all consider second to none, the eagle?

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

I could have it worse; if I were any other bird and most of all the others, I would have less to draw from; less to emulate, less to elicit and less to exalt. *I could be a Gooney bird, a crow or some other creature thought substandard, stupid, something far beneath me.* I can always fall back to my place as an eagle when all else has been lost. I can always look to the past for the light when the present and future look so dark and dismal. I can always appear as an eagle when I feel like an albatross or less than a scavenger. *How long can the always last—how far back must I go to prove that the present or future is promising? When is the past no longer relevant, real?*

Times change and or changing still. To count on the past however real or reliable it may be is *losing ground*. I know that I am still an eagle but I also know now that being an eagle is not enough; it is not enough to sustain me in this time and place, the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*. *Can there be more for me than the past, my species?*

Thoughts turn to a time when I looked-up to them, that legacy, revering the regality of those I can see or have heard about. They were big to me; bigger than life and greater than anything I knew at the time. For what can the past possess except that which we desire; conjuring-up and concocting whatever exalts or entertains our sense of relevance.

Do I forget what I did not want to remember, only to expand and exaggerate some fantasy of a better life? Maybe my view is skewed, blinded by the bright sun and the clear sky over *Daddy-Dumb*, darkness?

“You are too idealistic”, you might sound, “swept-up in a cloud, too aloof, deprived of air, soon to be strangled by Shangri-La.”

Who is not naïve when they are young? Who is not *swept-up* even if their feet seldom leave the ground or the thinking travels no further than their nest, trees or forest? Who looks back without discovering and realizing that the young are innocent and likely insulated from reality? *How do you know that you do not know when you do not know enough to know?*



“I guess you’re right “, you might sound, “As it is impossible to know when you don’t know—or can’t see beyond the bright lights and blue skies.”

I believe that the young can think beyond *the light*. They have some sense that things are not right, all sunshine and blue skies, when they see it before them, thinking, *why are they sad or always mad or why is there so much conflict when all we want to feel is peace so that the promises stand true?* Darkness creeps in to the young too, leaving them aware and worried—apprehensive to speak or even think again about it for fear of another incident or something more.

There is no better way of waking-up and seeing reality than time and pressure, the time to grow up and the pressure to grow within; it is an awareness of what is going-on now, then, or when *the darkness* comes, the storms arise and life takes a turn for the worse. One day you do not know and the next..., *the darkness* hits you like a stone—cold and hard. Have you ever been stoned, cold, hardened?

“Where does ‘a stone’ come from”, you might sound.

“It comes from somewhere unexpected, unanticipated and even unknown—it comes out of nowhere!”

“Why do the young, the innocent, suffer too”, you might follow. “They’ve done nothing wrong to deserve-,”

“Oh, but that’s part of it, you see; for darkness falls upon the undeserved as the others,” I sound to you. “Some suffer more than others, sometimes with causes unfound, a mystery for anyone or everybody.”

“But that’s unjust, unfair, and-,”

“So it is...but for reasons unclear, the young suffer too.”

What do you do; *the darkness* comes—as it is right now—and all the sunshine and blue skies disappear? Do you sound, “There is always a light at the end of *the darkness*, the sun behind the clouds?”

Nothing that I see so far spells something bright and beautiful ahead, but only more and more darkness as plain as the beak on my face. And that’s what darkness does; it makes things dimmer and

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

dimmer until even my beak is missed, my place as an eagle is vanished—all is lost—and anyone and everybody scatters.

I remember when darkness came; one of our own attacked, shredded so that you could scarcely know it an eagle unless you happened to be one. It smelled rank, the carcass now days old, and brought a sullenness and sadness. It is noble to die of natural causes but this is disturbing beyond death, dread that the same is waiting for you, eventually, inevitably. Have you ever seen someone shredded?

“Who would have done this”, you might further sound; “An eagle is too smart and too strong to shred, to tear apart.”

I sound, “It can happen because it has happened; an eagle can be ended in the flash, the flesh!” Forget smarts and forget strength, for whatever did, it can do it again until there is nothing left to do but shout, “It is finished—they’re all shredded in sections, so segmented and separated as to scarcely seem what they once were or what it once was thought to be. Have you ever seen someone segmented?

Yes, I am an eagle. As remarkable as I might think I am, I am obviously not beyond suffering, the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, the darkness that pervades and persists. Knowing your weakness is strength. What are your weaknesses?

Am I the big waters, wide and deep? No, I am not nearly...but sometimes just a grain of sand on the shore, one in a million. When the storm comes or the tide swells, it is all I can do just to hang-on or keep my grip. The sand is shifting, wind gritty and salt-washed, as my friend the seagull has sounded, “I am sand and a storm is lurking, the tide lunging closer-,” Have you ever experienced a lurking storm?

“When you are calm”, so sounds the musician.

I am not calm, my emotions exhausted in what has come and what remains an empty unknown. I do not know if I can endure but somehow it does not seem to matter—as I increasingly have no care about caring, my apathy. Have you ever had apathy; without care about caring?



You pretend (dream)

...if I am with an eagle I always pretend that I am not with an eagle....

- James Thurber

One of those ancestors told me that the imagination sometimes works to alleviate suffering. Somehow, the mind *kicks-in* and helps carry the troubled heart along the way.

Imagine an eagle with an imagination; the one that pretends, not able to adjust or absorb the blow of loss, of life? Consider that I imagined the whole of this story from the rat to the vulture, from the beginning to now and then some more. Why would I want to imagine sad when it would be better to dream pleasant dreams and fly high and far toward the sun, the light? What would I imagine to comfort and console my troubled heart? Would I imagine that my mate was here, her beauty and my pleasure? Would I imagine my family was with me too, the eaglets with all the excitement and expectation? Would I imagine that I was credible, courageous enough to face all the loss without fear and foreboding?

What would you imagine now if you were in my place; that the rat would run away or that the chicken hawk would cower in the presence of an eagle? Would you imagine hurting someone? Maybe you prefer not to be who or what you are—or seem to be. Imagine if you will.

Maybe the imagination can make be a grizzly bear with great jaws and sharp claws. A bear that outlast all, it is an indomitable and inexhaustible, hunted by no one except *the worst*, armed with metal and smoke. A bear is a fierce creature that strikes with strength, speed and skill—so able to shred that the prey is scarcely recognizable. Is a bear however much different from an eagle?

I believe that a bear shredded that eagle. I know it seems strange that a bear would attack an eagle but stranger things have happened and probably will continue for as long as the two exist. There is not a

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

sensible or simple answer to the *stranger things*—which is why I sometimes ignore them or imagine them away. It is possible for a bear to attack an eagle or an eagle to challenge a bear yet, as the *worst of the worse* have proved, it happens. These two have gone at it with a ferocity and fury profoundly powerful and political as to change the modern world and cause me to wonder if peace is really ever possible.

You might sound, “Why is an eagle so fixed on, and vexed by, *the worst of the worse*,” for which the answer is that the *worst of the worse* have an endless capacity to influence nature and unlike the rest of us creatures, are constantly changing for better or worse—even worse than worse. Simply put, “they are real, which frightens me.”

You might add, “Oh you definitely imagine and pretend, Eli; a dreamer, delusional and demented!”

Nothing should stop you from having your own view and, perhaps, expressing it if just to discredit mine, me. What if, beyond pretending or imagination, I am right; that my fixation or vexation is real—so much as to be thoroughly convinced that they are real as I describe and know them to be. You know the eagle and bear.

Depending on your view, creation and cause, you may find my sounds not too far from *your world*; and perhaps, depending on your keen sight and insight, my claims resonate as righteous and real. Someday however *our worlds* may collide and, as when microscopic matter, may be similar, the same, indistinguishable.

You might question, “What does an eagle know about righteousness and other worlds,” for which I will sound,

“Enough to know that there are worlds beyond mine and codes of conduct, right, good and just.”

“And you, a bird, are a purveyor of right and good,” you continue in the line of questions, obviously not convinced. “What does an eagle know of ethics?”

You would be right about my not knowing *right*, insinuating that my nature prevents me from having morals or ethics. This time and place is, to repeat, not nature, not of nature alone; thus, is it any surprise or



shock that my claims or circumstances might seem strange to you—and especially to clusters? You have to be strange to seem normal in a strange time, as you must be unnatural to thrive in an unnatural time and place.

As the natural world changes so too does *your world, the unnatural*. You may decide that you will remain steady, stable or something similar, but taking this stand is like trying to stop a storm or hold back the tide of the big waters. *The unnatural is a powerful, pernicious force.*

Let me sound you a question: “Can you agree that there's something happening here and whatever it might be is not exactly clear?” As to your last question, you have to tuned-in to what's happening above, at and beneath the earth. You have to see and sense it, the change.

Well, are you “tuned-in” to this this world or are you stuck in strictly *your world* with your own practice of pretending and dreaming?

To the question, you sound, “I don't know what you're trying to sound and I don't care either,” for which I respond with a question,

“Do you care at all, about anything?”

If you do not care about caring then you have no chance to see what you need to see, sense. Caring is the beginning of seeing, and seeing is necessary to think and to reason. If you no longer care, assuming you did previously, then it is over, you are lost.

Before you remind me that I have lost and that losing is a part of *life and living*, let me sound that I agree; “Losing is inevitable, certain, and cannot be avoided or averted.” In some form of pretending or dreaming, we might try to avoid losing, losses, but to make see and sense is to wake-up and embrace losing, loss as necessary, necessity.

Caring and losing are related, inseparable. It is one thing to sound, “I fear failing”, and therefore strive to win or succeed. It is another to sound, “I care enough to risk loss or losing something and maybe more,” to mean that your win is not winning at all but rather, that caring involves desire in a different way, your sacrifice or suffering for

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

someone else's safety, security—maybe even salvation. *Winning is not about you, your wants, but is care about caring.*

Caring is not convenient or necessarily credible, given due credit, but it is all we have against fear and is everything this side of *the world, Days of Daddy-Dumb*. I can try not to care, attempting to avoid or avert the losses, but my nature finally reminds me that some things are beyond my want or will, my convenience or command.

I can pretend and dream, leaving this world for a better but brief *life and living* or hiding my head as the ostrich. Eventually and inevitably, I must wake-up, and return and find it once again as it was—worse even, without a care about caring.



You see

In the land of ostriches, the blind are king.

- Erik Pevernagle

You see, some claim to care but do not really care in the real sense of it. They pretend to care or, if they care, what they actually care about has nothing to do with sacrifice or suffering. No, their care is about greed, gain and graft. They are eloquent and elaborate in the sounds they make—appearing to be a real servant—but their sounds do not comport with their actions, their behavior. This form have no compassion, their motive driven entirely by taking, not giving, to the degree that they will exhaust your capacity until you are spent—all used up—casting you aside as refuse.

“How do you know the difference,” you sound back, presuming that you want to know, that you care....

“You can’t sound the difference if you don’t know..., and you can’t know unless you open your senses and you probably won’t open your senses, if you’re afraid,” I reply, presuming that I care whether you care.

You can care to the point of fear, though this may lead to avoidance while trying to pretend that the fear it is not real or it is not your reality, *your world*.

You may think this all as poppycock, the senses and sounds of a too proud cock, but remember this; it is not that I am strange but that my reality, *my world* is different from your world.

I admit that fear is a problem as is to imagine or pretend. That ostrich for example, chose to go lower than the ground on the false notion that what you cannot see or—or believe to be—cannot hurt you. Is there any doubt why that creature is stuck in the ground?

“And why,” you might sound. “Does **Blind** choose to do that?”

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

“Because it is afraid,” I sound, recalling my previous encounter in that natural preserve. “The ostrich is desperately afraid, internally alone.”

“**Blind** is afraid though protected,” you might comment, wondering why an animal that is secure in a wildlife preserve might do this.

No matter how ridiculous the bird may act or be, the fact is that it is afraid. The deep question perhaps implied in your likely comment is, “What is the bird afraid of, given that it lives in a preserve, sanctuary?”

I consider that this bird is naturally afraid but the fact is that nothing is born afraid, but rather, it learns to fear. **Blind** is ridiculous to imagine and pretend that something not seen does not exist. Never mind that the ostrich cannot see, but worse yet, it does not want to think—as fear will have it. Fear or worry robs the imagination, taking the good while leaving the bad to tie you up in knots. Fear ruins anything, everything.

“Ostrich does not want to see,” you resound, weighing my opinion. “It fears that if it does see that what it believes is there, it is better off; out-of-sight, out-of-mind.”

“But more than that, **Blind** can’t see that this fear is all a fake, a state of a mind prone to imagine and pretend for bad,” I sound more. “And more, it can’t see that its effort is ridiculous, its ruin.”

“How do you know this,” you sound. “Are you a psychotherapist in addition to a purveyor of good and bad?”

I could pretend or imagine being either a therapist or a teacher of ethics, but all that I sound to you is that the big bird fears insight more than in it fears ignorance, trading visibility and light for darkness. “And how do I know this,” I would sound. “Because I am just as ridiculous, choosing to imagine and pretend, covered-up in ignorance, afraid of insight. **Blind** and I share this ruin in the making.”

“You need to open your eyes,” you might offer.

“Oh, I know...and have...” I sound. “But I had to see someone blind to realize it. Credit the bid for helping me to see—and to see more. Sometimes it takes another to raise our sense of our own similarities, weaknesses and all.”



I did not realize it then, in that preserve, but have come to realize that my frustration with the ostrich was more a reflection of me, of my own choosing to imagine and pretend in ignorance. It is hard to see your faults and weaknesses when an elite, an eagle.

“**Blind** was you,” you sound as to affirm.

“I was as blind as **Blind** and in spite of my being a flyer, not some grounded excuse of a bird, I was buried deeper than **Blind**.”

It is funny now that I think about it; looking on this pathetic creature, detesting its lowly state and sheer stupidity, to then realize that it is less lowly in that it does not hide its weaknesses. Do you see that the real loss of weakness is not accepting it—unwilling to find your own faults while feverishly finding and faulting others...

Creatures do not usually contend with such a problem, one that involves *getting real* or being honest, transparent and all. For most creatures, such a disguise is only skin-deep; feathers, hair or body giving false signals. Survival is the biggest problem, whether it involves a fight, flight—or both! Nature is selective too; obviously ranking creatures is some order of strength, skill and such.

“Maybe the ostrich is acting on this selective nature,” you might sound back. “Maybe it buries its head by its nature.”

Maybe the ostrich has an excuse or reason for its phobia. **Blind** has some reason for acting as it does, not putting on appearances but deeply and disturbingly afraid to the degree that it is unwilling to even find out what it fears let alone face it whether its fake or real. A creature might have some real fears but avoids any approach because the fears are too fierce or, in my case, too foreboding to accept or acknowledge. We hide our fears and hide from our fears too.

Now I know differently; first, that I have fears and second that the fears have me—driving me to go this far and keeping me from turning back as **Vile** demands I do. As it seems there is someone or some things that I fear more than a chicken-hawk or vulture or any other creature that has stood in my way so far. What are your fears unfound?

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

How far will I go before my sight is truly keen and sharp; so that I am able to see the past without cowering, the future with courage and clarity? A vision is what I need but what I struggle with even now. Sometimes I do not like being me and I would rather be dead and gone than barely living. I prefer to live, really, but am so afraid that if I try... the losses will return, thwarting my effort and reducing me to what I was or worse—if that is possible. Fear is anywhere, everywhere.

I know that you know of the eaglets but I have not shared much about my mate, the mother and all.

“Why is that,” you sound. “What is wrong with her?”

“She is a mystery to me, my mate, far better to imagine or pretend over the potential pain that anything else can cause.”

“It’s alright to imagine and pretend,” you might sound as an alternative to the potential, pain. “Who wants a nightmare over a pleasant, perfect dream? Dreaming is better than dread.”

I suppose that ignorance is better than pain and that too much insight is, well, too much to handle. So let be ignorant, going the way of **Blind** the ostrich. For what we all really want, is peace, right? Can peace ever happen with pain and suffering, or is peace more or less? Let the muse sound now,

*Can't you see, oh, can't you see, what a vision been doing to me,
I will not stop and will not turn, no matter where I end up.*

Can't you see, oh, can't you see, let it lie, let it be,

From the highs to the lows, makes no matter if I get hurt,

Can't you see, oh, can't you see, pain of loss is ever there,

Nowhere to go, no time to remains of what was, could have been.

Can't you see, oh can't you see, to imagine, pretend, that

I have flown far, not turning back, but still much more to come.



You Fool

There are two ways to be fooled; one is to believe what is not true, [while] the other is to refuse to believe what is true.

- Soren Kierkegaard

How many ways can you be fooled; how long and for how far will you go playing the fool, perhaps repeatedly?

You might think that you are secure and safe, that all is well; then, something happens to knock you off-track, de-railed and disabled, maybe done, done-in. *Life and living* is like that; it is highs and lows; hopes found and then lost in *the lows*, possibly lost forever.

You can trust and believe someone or something that it is real or true; but then, that someone or something seem to change, making matters worse or worse yet, *the worst of the worse*. What do you do when something or someone gets *worse and worse yet...?* Do you just try to ignore it? Do you try to help by pointing-out the state of things? The true mark of maturity is viewing things beyond a narrow point-of-view. I may very well know what I think or believe, but what about them—what do others think or believe. What do I think of them?

A fool does not care about others, not really. Does a fool really think about why the ostrich buries its head in the ground or why the chicken hawk boldly confronts a superior creature? Does the fool or the foolish really give time to the lowly rat or confront the rabbit at the edge of its hole? The fool fails to see and sense beyond its own face.

You might think that my journey is nothing more than a foolish venture, a series of stupid decisions or deeds. Somewhere in this decision is the deep sense of what is vitally important to me; namely, my family, their *life and living* and whether they still fly, high or low. Further and farther, the journey is for them, each and all, that put their trust and faith in me, depending on my care.

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

“Is this a discussion of foolishness or just a fool,” you sound. “For what I am hearing is that a fool is full of many sounds framed in a narrow view formed by few thoughts. Fools exploit the freedoms of speech without exercising the freedom of thoughts, sight or sense.”

I agree that a fool speaks without thinking, sounding things that do not even make sense. A fool has no vision but only a narrow and dim view derived with the least effort, no interest in the facts, even the truth. Why bother with the facts when you can simply fabricate, manufacturing something out of nothing, making false any so-called facts.

What about the case of not knowing the facts at all; not about ignoring or discounting facts but, rather, not knowing in the first place? Are you a fool when the facts are unfound to begin with? Can someone claim with credulity that, “You should have known,” when there is no way that you would or could have known? The whole of it may go something like this:

“Well, I did not know,” or

“I had no idea,” or

“That’s news to me.”

Then there is the misinformed, the distracted and the disillusioned; those that are deceived without necessarily knowing it—assuming nobody wants to be a fool, foolish and then fooled.

Are you a fool when you want to be? Do we choose to be fools, foolish, or is it more a combination of causes? Such a question, if at all a real question, might mean that we want to be fools or foolish; we want to be fooled about something that, to consider the facts, we make us feel bad or mad—or both! We would rather be numb than feel the pain.

Who wants to feel a pound of pain when there is an ounce of pleasure and peace within your talon’s grasp? Who wants to hurt when there is hemp—the pain removed or at least msound? The problem with pain is the hurting brings to question and doubt our ability to help ourselves today without deference for hope tomorrow.



The fool does not plan for tomorrow but does what pleases him today. No vision, no future or destiny, the fool is as nearsighted as an underground mole or cave-dwelling bat, digging and flying blind or blinded without any secondary sense.

Vision is more than seeing though; it is thinking and doing too. Vision is hope for tomorrow by help for today. Without a vision, what you have is only a moment, a day at most, and then a hole in the earth.

“But what about passion,” you sound. “Do creatures have passion,” or is the drive more naturally-driven, survival or something like that?”

There should be no doubt that we creatures have passion, natural as it is or can be, with evidence being our emotions. Left without emotions what are we but merely mountings on the wall, stuffed with something to look alive but in fact as dead as death can be?

I have emotions and feelings that I carry with me beyond the day; not limited to the moment or impulse, my cries carry forward echoing to the far reaches where perhaps my own, past and present, can hear and sound, “Eli’s coming.” If I listen, if I really listen beyond the sounds, then my passion passes on, further and farther. Yes, Eli is coming with passion played upon the hearts and hopes of his own, past and present. Eli comes for all who are ready, willing and able to see and sense.

How does passion stay; how do you keep driving—driven—when you know that it’s hard, sometimes impossible, to will it even if you want it? Where does passion come from? Is it strictly our emotions, feelings, the heart; or, adding to the possibilities, does it also come from the mind, thoughts and ideas? Passion Is passion fueled by care and by fear. Passion fueled by fear is lust, by care, is something called love.

Is passion my enemy or friend, an advantage or not? Could I ever be completely dispassionate? As it seems to me, the only possible way to be dispassionate is to die, the ceasing of all heart and mind and else of *help and hope*.

I do not want to be a fool, foolish, but I want to be passionate about care, caring?

AS YOU ARE...OR WERE

The passionate fool is confident and certain that they are right about the world they do not understand, while the wiser is dubious about the world, sounding questions and seeking answers, seeing and sensing that *life and living* is a moving mystery—the more you seek, the less you know. Sometimes I am a passionate fool.



Forever

Even if he forever flies within the gorge... the mountain eagle is still higher than other birds upon the plain, even though they soar.

- Herman Melville

There are many days when I do not think beyond reacting to the moment. There are days when all I do is fly and fly, giving little thought to where I am or where I am going. My passion wanes and my vision waxes, any drive diminished while my sight dimmed by fears and fatigue. Do you have similar feelings at all?

At the same time, I remember one of my descendants, a very proud and prodigious sort whom I held with high regard and respect. “If only I could be like him,” I would sound to myself, admirable of his stature and strength—though later, less of him. Like all creatures great and small, monuments with mend develop cracks and crevices, marks and memories of *life and living*. We each have marks whether caused by us or by others that, either, beat us down.

There was the legendary white eagle; appearing at first glance as a dove or pigeon, but an eagle in every way and more. Even as I think of it, this storied-character seemed more a spirit than feathers; the “great white” could fly higher, longer and faster than any other—even the so-called *big birds*. A fierce and formidable flier, **White Feathers** was as much revered as ridiculed; for some a hero while for others, evil incarnate. Still the white eagle is unstoppable, indomitable beyond imagination, so I learned from a young age.

“Why do you believe—not knowing this creature,” you might sound, some doubt of apparent blind belief, and faith.

“I don’t know why I believe except to sound that if I didn’t...I would have less hope and possibly less help in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*.”

BEFORE THE LOW

For which you might wonder how a legend helps. A legend is, after all, a past and previous life. How can legend help now, offer hope for the journey, the future?

"Heroes help," I sound, "Without heroes, whom would we look to for help, one way or another? Everybody needs a legend." Legends have that effect; they can help by having done it, whatever *it* is; showing what happened, mystery and matter. One legend falls into posterity while another rises to immortality, but all serve somebody for something. While their memory may ebb & flow, it has its place in time memorial—where you either love them or hate them, agree or oppose. Legends are forever. Anyone and everybody need a hero.

It may seem silly, even foolish, to believe; for what or who is this ancestral animal called **White Feathers**? Is it a legend in the true form or just some idea made-up in young minds and hearts? Does a regal and revered creature like an eagle really need a legend anyway? But anything that last forever is hard to comprehend; that in these unsteady and uncertain *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, nothing seems to last for long; all history altered or twisted so that you cannot make heads from tail feathers, good from bad or right from wrong. What you think as one side soon becomes the other and then back and forth. *Forever* is hard to accept—as with those that hold on, forever it seems. You cannot be finite and forever, narrow and distant.

"Who will ridicule those of the white eagle," you sound, surprised given what little I sound, believe.

"Any and all that believe **White Feathers** as flawed, a false figure or fraud, are destined for destruction," I sound to anyone, everybody.

"How could some believe one thing and others, the complete opposite, the extremes," you sound in return.

"As difficult as 'the extremes' seem, the worst of it is those who have no opinion; those that do not care one way or another—the careless, ambivalent to anything that matters, apathetic!"

Anyone and everybody must care about something, even if it is only themselves, their desires and destiny. Much trouble comes where so



many care for so little, leaving little space for anyone or anything else; and while these *many* may seem caring and concerned at times, they practically turn within, excluding those that they claim to care about. Understand that some see **White Feathers** as clusters: fallible and flawed, superficial or shallow; sounding one thing but doing the opposite, hypocrisy bordering on apostasy. The white eagle is different in my view—much different. I must sound that I have never seen this mighty bird but that does not mean that it never was alive or still is... Can a creature live, die, and live again, forever?

I see my reflection on the water; a distressed and decaying figure, stricken with an incurable illness, invasive and insidious, that robs me of my keen vision, my will to live. “Where have I gone?” But there is no precise cause and no effect for which I can honestly sound, “I saw this coming.”

You might suggest differently; you that have no experience from which to draw might sound,

“You should know the cause and see the effect, coming.”

You, that know not of such losses believe that you can steer me in the right direction—down a pathway that would be bring me back to life, to living as you do— as you think you do. Can I argue by sounding, screaming with my last strength, “How do you know that I should know the cause, effect?” What you suggest in your so-called sage advice is that somehow you have the answers when you have never posed the questions. Is it possible for anyone or everybody to have the answers without the experience, cause and effect? *I wonder if white feathers ever had this dilemma. Maybe help and hope are not far away.*

Coming to my senses, I see the situation all too clear—at least the part about who knows what and who does not... For in fact, “the experience” is foremost in having the understanding, cause and effect. If one does not have the experience than who are they to offer not only their jargon but also a judgment? *Go away and come back when you know what it is like to lose, and to lose much, while still climbing out of your nest and making flight in spite of the suffering and sacrifice.*

BEFORE THE LOW

Yes, I fly and I keep flying—at least I am moving if not actually getting or going somewhere. Am I any different from most creatures? Most fly and fly without being altogether able to sound,

“I have made much progress or I have found that which was promised, reaching the end.”

All creatures experience failings, the faltering of *life and living* that causes loss. Why it so hard to experience loss as a curse rather than a blessing, as something deserved or even earned? How easy it seems for these less experienced with loss; for when the loss actually arrives, they not only avoid it but also pretend that it never happened or it is less than what it actually is or will come to be? *Avoidance is right until it is not, anymore.* Then I grieve because it is good and necessary. It may not seem so good, this grief, in the company of the griefless or those too happy to let *life and living* experience less. I know, I know, that the unwelcomed entry of the grieved brings stillness to the place, silence until someone sounds,

“We just didn’t know what to sound,” or “I was afraid if I sound anything that it would sound...”

Who wants a raincloud or worse, a storm, when the sun is about to shine or the sky is crystal blue, cloudless except for the *big birds* spewing-out streams of metals? Who wants for the air taken from the room no matter whether it is all smoke?

I want to be over this, ahead of it and away from it; but grief is something that I cannot shed or satisfy. I wonder if it will stay forever; for it seems now that it will outlast me, a victor over my rotting feathers and flesh; the one that cries out,

“Am I forever an eagle?”



Wisdom

In an eagle, there is all the wisdom of the world.

- Lame Deer

O' wisdom, o' wisdom, where have you gone? Though aging, I wonder where you have gone—if ever was. I look for wisdom but cannot find it or have it. I wonder if wisdom has decided me a hopeless case, undeserving of its worth and ways. When I think I have finally found it and it is there, then without warning, it is gone once again. I can be flying high, soaring like an eagle, then without warning, wingless and wanting, without wisdom.

Can a creature be wise, wiser? Some sound they owl is wise—though I know them for their late-night ventures and hunting prowess—and maybe that is true. Has an owl ever had his young taken, lost; has it had to venture beyond its bounds or confront the kind that I have, without it?

Do the wise hang with the foolish; that by consorting with a fool, someone of modest wisdom can seem the more, wise?

Do the foolish know they are so, or is it that twist of irony by which the fool is too foolish to know they are foolish?

Does wisdom come in degrees whereby one is wise beyond their years or another is, well, just wise or becoming wiser on the road?

Some have sounded, “Wisdom begins with knowing yourself.” If you know who and what you are, than you are wise, wiser. What happens when the things that define you disappear—dashed or destroyed—or the nest that you spend years in the making is then gone over night—blown away by some weather or worse, by *the worst of the worse*? Are you wise if you no longer have a nest?

Does intelligence mean wisdom? Maybe foolishness and stupidity are the same. There is a lot of intelligence among *the worst of the worse*, but ironically, the more they discover the less they know and

BEFORE THE LOW

finally, the less they know. Worst yet, the more they know, the more likely that if something goes wrong it will be because they are not only wrong but also want for it, wrong. *Two wrongs make a complete, conclusive wrong.*

Someone had sounded that when all is lost hold to your dreams or expectations; for *life and living* is really about bearing a broken-wing now and then. Maybe wisdom demands a few broken-wings and downtime on top of broken hearts, downtrodden and destitute.

Others sound, “You’ve got to have an open mind,” as though to suggest that my mind is closed, sealed-off. *If my mind is open then am I wiser more or less?* Sometimes it seems that an *open mind* is gullible, tossed around based on the latest whim, the current trend. Or maybe just maybe an *open mind* is one that is willing to reason, to consider another view or vantage point, without necessarily accepting the idea as fact or credible. *An open mind without tolerance is no mind at all.*

Any fool can know...but it is understanding that counts, right? Then, I think, *when is understanding over?* An *understanding* is more a process than an end—as though to sound, “I have more understanding than before...” When does anyone achieve complete *understanding?* *An end to understanding means that falling and failure is no more.*

Eagles fail and fall, sometimes fast and furious. Failure and falling is not a bad thing when it comes to wisdom, it seems, for without failure, how could you discover success? Without losing now and then, what is winning but more of the same blasé. Can a final and forever winner—or one that thinks they are a universal winner—be wise, even wiser? *What is winning when losing is not?*

Who is bound to see any change when they think they know everything about everything; deceived in the glory of their own self-adulation and grandeur—smart, but foolish?

“I will never change,” sounds the big fool, “for I am as good as it gets. Why consider change when perfection has arrived and stays no matter the mindset or hardness of the heart?”



How the mighty have fallen and fail, I think; they sound an earth shattering stream, their perspective and perception perverted by power and pomp. They opine as though it is fact, fronting their sounds with sensations that dazzle the eyes and dizzy the mind.

“Look at US, they sound,” gloating in their glory while waving their banner repeatedly. “We are great and grand,” they sound while stroking their own tail feathers and feathering their own nests. “Who has preceded or passed us in prosperity and promise,” they loop in sounds aloud. *They are all airbags, chicken hawks.*

While the wise wrangle over this fervor and flamboyance, others look on in disbelief, some shocked while others silent, perhaps sidetracked, too distracted or disinterested to sound anything or think the wrong thing, the heavens forbid.

There is comfort in the company of fools, *the blind leading the blind*, while much the opposite for the wakened, even wise. By these sounds on the wise not to mean the crafty or conniving—always playing the fool both ways—but those contemplative and contained.

Self-confidence is an attribute analogous to health and well-being. Well, is this confidence in self, whether an actual *self* or some *collective* of selves, enough? Can one finally and forever trust another, the fallible finding no-fault in another similar soul let alone their self?

Where the going is tough, even impassable, there are rules or laws. Yes, nature has its laws—but not of the kind produced at an endless inexplicable rate as that of they, *the worst of the worse*. Why, they make laws to replace laws and then more, amending and repealing but ultimately, fashioning them for their plan, purpose and power. They go about laws to protect one form while endangering another and whether purposed or not, always less than promised and promoted—the weak made weaker. Understated and underhanded, such unnatural laws are nothing more or less than the formalizing of one class over another—the powerful once again ruling not only the day, but beyond the so-called sphere of influence.

BEFORE THE LOW

It takes *the unnatural* to produce such rules and laws; those that work at a prolific pace—purposed to produce confusion, even chaos to please a few. What is a misdemeanor for most is merely the day's duty for power, rules and laws misapplied with malice. It not merely having many rules and laws but more, possessing more...power. It is a never-ending program of pawns and kings—pieces duped by that doggone dream of dreams.

Why do I mix wisdom with rules and laws, *the natural* with *the unnatural*? It is because the two are so far apart, of course. Wisdom teaches and trains...while the unnatural takes and thieves. Wisdom is vital to a creature's life and living, the rules and laws vital to a creature's control, containment. Wisdom develops in the wonder and worthiness of one's experiences while rules and law, the result of the wizard's wand, the sorcerer's spell. *Now you see it and now you, poof.*

Some may believe that wisdom is overrated and overdone while others may see it as a heaven sent. Wisdom is natural and supernatural; it aims to get you on the right flight pattern using an internal, spiritual compass. Though the creature may defy *the compass*, even waging war against it, the mark remains there forever, beyond a term. *The compass is consistent, tried and true no matter the distance.*



Is that you?

"Hello rabbit," he sounded. "Is that you?"

- A. A. Milne

I am prone to drift in thought as I do in flight—leading to places never thought possible, mind and body. For many days in the drift, it seems, there is little attention to other life for what life I have seen or thought so. There below is that rabbit, **Chaos**.

"Is that you," I sound, perched just above it.

"I am **Chaos** and more."

"What are you doing on this blustery day," I sound back, more amused than alarmed.

"I am holding my own, staying safe and subterranean," **Chaos** sounds up. "I have to look out for me and my own in this time and place."

"Yes, it is a time when the tempest can take you far and away, which is why I am hanging with my own."

"And 'my own' is-,"

"Why, it's my own as you too have your own."

"Oh yes, 'my own'," I sound low, steering away from too much more, my own and the history.

"And you have lost your own," the rabbit sounds, sensing my struggle.

"Yes," I sound subtly, "if you should need to know."

"I know what it's like."

"You do?"

"You know that I know what it's like; rabbits have many predators, the survival of the kit sketchy."

"What is a kit?"

"Offspring," Chaos sounds. "The kind that are so small that-."

"They don't survive?"

BEFORE THE LOW

“Many do not...,”

“I did not know, Chaos.”

“I am familiar with this loss, you see,” **Chaos** sounds more.

I had no idea—not really thinking about lowly creatures. As one of many predators, I do not think about the losses, their fallibility and failures, but right now, it is meaningful, relevant—everyone suffers at some time.

Life is precious though often overlooked by the predator, powerful and prodigious. It is only natural to hunt and forage for sustenance, as we all must do to survive, but it is another thing to consider that the loss of life is as common and current as living itself. I confess that my position has been too elevated, an eagle. **Chaos** is a lowly creature, not high and mighty as some are—or think they are—but a creation that lives life on the edge, losses and all.

“It’s pooh-pooh,” **Chaos** sounds, contorting its ears.

“What’s pooh-pooh,” I sound back, bemused.

“What you sometimes think is what I mean; that what you think you know, or believe, is actually ridiculous, even irrational, and it stinks.”

Chaos is in order; the rabbit is right to sound that what we think is reality is really fantasy; a make-believe life, free of all the things that we do not want but sometimes need and full of all the things we want but do not necessarily need. It is a fact: you do not always get what you want but in *the natural* realm, you sometimes do not get what you need either. *Who among creation wants more and then more?*

The rabbit seems fragile or fearful but in fact, is extremely fast, focused. In moments of threat, the rabbit will dash but otherwise go as still as a stone. The rabbit is weak in some ways it is an underrated and underestimated; prowess, powerful legs, acrobatic moves, attention and awareness. *The rabbit is not as vulnerable as thought.*

“Have you seen any others,” I sound.

“Not many...but mostly those in mind,” **Chaos** sounds back.

“Do you mean In the mind only or in actuality, reality?”



“Those are the best kind; the one’s we make-up as the best friends,” **Chaos** continues. “A make believe friend is a best friend; no disappointment or disagreements, the make-believe do what you want them to do.

“Who are the fictional friends that you are so fond of,” I sound to the now imaginative rabbit.

“There is a tiger, a donkey, a little pig, a son of the worst and a bear.”

“The worst,” I sound in shock. “Why?”

“This son is not like his own; he is not cruel and calloused, selfish and insensitive,” the rabbit sounds, sentimental.

“Sure, but it’s only a matter of-,”

“You might be right Eli. I know that you are smart and sharp in these matters, but I know-,”

“You’re playing with fire, friend!”

“Bu you are a friend,” **Chaos** sounds back, extending an ear.

“Figure of sound, I suppose; but again...fire!”

“Funny that you’re not concerned about the fierce tiger or the bear, small though it be,” the rabbit sounds back.

“Sure, a tiger is fierce but this behavior is expected. With the worst, who knows what to expect, the deceptions and all, except the worst!”

“The tiger is really silly, and the bear is a cuddly figure, caring and all. The donkey is kind and gentle and the son is, as sound already, not like his kind at all.”

“And the pig,” if I must know.

“The pig is small and sensitive, something like me, nervous and fragile on the surface.”

“Now that is a fantasy.”

“Yes, the best kind.”

“What the others think of the son,” I sound on.

“They all get along. That’s the way fantasies work; anyone and everybody get along, like and trust each other.”

BEFORE THE LOW

Not all; some dream about things uncaring, not the making and keeping of friends, trust and all, but the making of enemies, adversaries and all that drives disparity and destruction. Some dream about ruining someone else, even something that they may have once cared about, even their own. Some are cruel beyond measure, the depth realized only after the effect, if then.

Fantasy and dreaming is not a bad thing, but if all the time, then... You cannot soar all the time; eventually, you have to come down—even at ground level—to survive. Sometimes sadly, the descent is the fall and finally, the end. The more you dream the less you realize that you are dreaming, blind as a bat.



Vision

A very great vision...and the [one] who has it must follow it as the eagle seeks the deepest blue of the sky.

- Crazy Horse

“Bouncy is the tiger”, so sounds the rabbit, and off the rabbit went, bouncy all the way, most likely to its safe place.

Who knows where *bouncy* will take you? Who knows what waits ahead? Who has a vision? Who can sound, “I am certain where I am going and sure of my direction?”

Even civilizations and cultures fail to have vision. If no vision, then where do you go except as the winds blow or your whims take you? You might sound that it is *bouncy*; hopping here and there without purpose or plan. If you are not careful—too careless—you end-up at a hole that is not your own, safe place, but a deep, dark deception. **Chaos** loves the hole, its safe, secure hoe, a place of peace.

Peace is just an idea. Peace is like fantasy friends; not possible in a world where *the worst* make their way. These creatures create trouble; first for others that get in their way and then for those supposedly among them. The more they have they want—and take! Their vision cannot be our vision; *the worst* have a very narrow vision that seeks their way—no matter the costs or consequences—peace no more.

How does nature promote peace? Creatures of the same kind rarely kill each other and when they do, the outcome is not some mass murder, outdoing the many and obliterating much. Creatures cannot endure such costly conflict, catastrophe; they cannot survive by killing their own on such a scale as what *the worst of the worse* wage, but war. Many sounds may pass between parties, even carved in stone, but the outcome is always the same: the sounds blow in the wind like **Airbag** or, if carved in stone, molder in *the madness* and *the mess* of massacres and much done while much more, undone. War is a nasty business but

BEFORE THE LOW

somebody has to do it for as long as *the worst* pursue a vision of being *the worst*. *They will never permit peace.*

What is a clear vision? Some may sound, “We have a vision”, only to have it as made-up as the rabbit’s fictional friends. Another may sound that their vision is real and relevant; the reality of what is to come. They may preface their visions with all variety of claims and credibility and it may be seem realistic to some, maybe many. What of the rest not convinced; those either not convinced of the vision or those that don’t give a hoot? Do they have a valid point or position; is it okay to sound, “I don’t believe you,” or “I am not bounded to such beliefs,” or “We are not convinced,” or “We don’t care—it doesn’t concern us?”

Everyone serves someone or something at some time or place, mind and heart. They may sound, “I am self-determined, independent and even self-sufficient but still depend on someone and something. No one is a rock or island; sure, it sounds noble and heroic but it cannot be. No one is a single cell of society, an atom all alone. Anyone that has hope has a vision, and anyone that has a vision serves someone or something. The eagle serves as symbol to those that need such symbols to make them feel powerful. *Sometimes the things we serve are not what we want to serve.*

Can a visionary know that a vision is false, a ruse or at least ridiculous? *Some make suffer for lack of vision while others may suffer because while forced or finagled to fulfill one.*

Two eagles built-on a nest through the duration of their life together; each year adding on to the prior nest, potentially making it better while mending it from weathering, from wind. Both shared a vision of what the nest should be from one end to the other, the materials and details of this structure. Over the years, their shared vision severed, separated; the one wanting much of what was first envisioned while the other wanting something increasingly different, greatly deviating.... With each passing year, the gap of their vision caused a similar gap in their affection for each other and in turn, their offspring. The differences between them became so wide that you



would greatly doubt that they ever saw eye-to-eye. It is no guess as to what happened; the end effect and result being a nest greatly divided—the tension between them so great as to cause them to separate—the one hating the other and *the other* hating the rejection of the one that once embraced them. *Can eagles hate...each other?*

I know nature changes things, but does it change things *as the unnatural or the supernatural?* Eventually our bodies wither away in the wind, but is the end of our bodies the absolute end? Do we have a spirit or soul that transcends this apparent death, an internal, transcendental me that defies death, lasting indefinitely or forever? Do we finally fly to the end of the sky, the sun, and phase-out as the phoenix? Maybe we fly the oceans as a dove carrying an olive branch of peace, a vision, the eternal and everlasting hope as opposed to hate and fear. *The dove maybe our last help, hope.*

I believe that my ancestors are with me, my father and mother and all their fathers and mothers too. I believe that I am with my offspring too; all those eaglets that I have raised to include those now lost.

As to a vision at this time, well, I must confess that my sight has dimmed and darkened leaving little if any light. I see the things about me, especially from high above, but I cannot seem to reflect on them. It is as though they are made-up, a mirage, merely my mind making-up as with the rabbit, friends.

Once you lose your vision—the best of friends—finding another seems less possible either because you hate, fear—or both. It is not so much about what could have been but what you thought you had. Maybe I made a mistake or many mistakes, taking these things for granted as though I earned it, deserved them. *Do we deserve anything in this day or is everything by grace?*

My legacy once flourished on lands of *the natural*; for generations untold, they lived their lives deeply connected to the earth, land. My own lived in relative harmony, unwilling and unable to understand *the unnatural* that since has spread like a disease, turning beauty into the vile.

BEFORE THE LOW

Restore my sight and return my vision, so necessary for *life and living*. At a glance, I am losing my vision—even before *The Low*.



At a glance

The river is such a tranquil place...to enjoy the elegance of swans and the chance at a glance of a kingfisher.

- Jane Wilson-Howarth, *Snowfed Waters*

A glance is not enough. A clear view is better though hard to come by in these days. At a glance, you see only what you want to see. Looking intently at it, the whole impression changes, not just the images but what is going on, happening. At a glance, I embrace only enough to see the surface and then move on, beyond the flash. Looking intently however, I am embracing it and sounding, "I want to be part of this...or that...and not simply a passer-by on my way to nowhere or somewhere less." At a glance, it is easy not to care. *When you look and keep looking is when care and care more.* Do you look beyond a glance, care and then care more? When I care—more care—then, I get hurt. I do not want to be hurt again, which is why I look only at a glance and no more. *At a glance, looking intently is too intense.*

I cannot keep dwelling on the losses; for though I cannot forget what or who was lost, I cannot become so engrossed and obsessed that nothing is doable, grounded in the ground. The problem is that I dwell..., doing the things I should not do. *Give me help, hope.*

Peace is somewhere out there but I am neither there are necessarily desiring to be. I am angry and afraid, and I like it, for without anger and fear, what drives me to care at all? *Give me peace, again.*

It is exhausting, the anger and fear, and the emptiness that makes me long for something that was.... Maybe if I want for it bad enough, it will come back, the losses behind me. *When we lose, is there ever the losses behind me?*

I sometimes want to be well, alive again, but I like being angry to the level of anguishing and arguing over everything—and especially myself. *Is anger ever good or ever, always bad?*

BEFORE THE LOW

Am I mad, not just angry, but truly mad, insane? What if I think that others may think me so; that they sound among themselves, "There goes that insane eagle, Eli, poor thing," or worse, "He is as crazy as a loon—above blind a bat." Do I really care or concern myself with what others think about me? Maybe some...but the prospect that they care at all is a good thing, right?

It is tough to know about someone or something when you have never given it any thought, more than a glance. What is flying all about if you never fly? It is even more ridiculous to play the part of knowing or caring when you have no experience or have not taken a deeper view of it. If you do not know, one way or another, how can you feel what it is like—or care to feel in the first place? *I find it hard to be around those who do not see that seeing and feeling takes time.*

The best that I can hope is that someone comes along who knows—I mean really knows—and can sound, "I've been there and know what you are going through." My hopes die among the sounds: "What goes around comes around," or, "I believe in Karma," or, "This will work out best, believe me." *I do not hear stupid sounds much these days, now, but worry because I still think them, sounds that resonate in my mind and heart.*

At a glance, I more often scoff at their sounds as to believe that these are only sounds and nothing more meaningful. It is easy to refuse help however well intended and to likewise, reject hope. No, I would rather pretend of friends, glance rather than look intently, seek and possibly find. Sometimes I do not care to seek...and then other times, to listen or allow them a sound if they even get that close. *Maybe it is pride, not the honor or dignity, but more the other, self-pity, that sounds, "Woe is me," or "Why me?"*

On the other end is the other side, the sounds "Why not me?" At the same time, I could and possibly should sound the same about you or them, "Why not you or them?" *What is this life and living but death and dying in the end.*



Should I continue to play the fool, believing that pride will play it right—lifting me to greater heights with the least effort? Should I balk at wisdom, avoiding the hard lesson, languishing in my own hurts while overlooking others that hurt, maybe more? Can I pity the rat or the rabbit; two rodents that I would never have given a thought except as my next meal—nothing more? *Should I be more?*

Whose side am I on, or should I settle for straddling the fence like some mischievous crow or merry lark? For what is this time that remains; is it all losses and no gains, all hurts and no healing, all me and nothing or no one else? *Should it be more?*

I look ahead now, where what waits before me is *The Low* with little latitude for a high, a rise or ascent. It seems that all along, since the beginning of my losses, *The Low* has been coming—so certain that I cannot avoid it—for it is as a great storm that you sense, the pressure and temperature, the blast of wind and fire from the skies. Yes, the times have been getting dark and darker, with only a moment or inkling of light. *How can you really know how dark it can be unless light is there to show you?*

Sometimes not knowing what is coming is okay, but not enough to have hope. If I do not really know who I am these days, how can I expect to know the future—even if it is staring me in the face? It is a paradox, I think, that a creature may know many things but rarely his own self. It may think it knows, self, only to shock itself as what it can or will do given enough time and pressure. One day, a fine day, the creature can be basking in the sun and flying close, while another of less light, perilously toward *The Low*.

There is a legend of an albatross, and as with every creature high and low, there is some symbolism or significance. I have met such birds before; the kind that feed on anything and everything without doing the work. They would have someone fly for them if they could. The albatross cannot be trusted or even treated for its disorder or disadvantages. This creature is set, satisfied in being nothing and doing nothing—nothing to no one. *Am I an albatross?*

BEFORE THE LOW

Sometimes I wish I were an albatross; one that could look on loss as nothing more than another day or that can find food in the crumbs, leftovers from the labor of others. This creature is no better than the rat; still, keeping your head down and your feathers dry is better than making miles toward an end.

Winter is fast approaching. The solstice has come and light, while the little is becoming less. As I decrease or die to my own illusions about me, I discover more and more who and what I am and am not. Could I be an albatross...a crow, lark or ostrich? If I had to be anything other than an eagle, what would I be?

There is the chicken hawk; a bird that looks proud but is so much the predator, pretending or posing to be the patriot, a purveyor of good. Yes, **Airbag** showed me the meaning of hypocrisy—sounds so dissimilar as actions as light to darkness.

The Low is coming and the want of the nightingale is near. It will test the faith in the kingfisher; weigh the wisdom of the owl and the hope of a harbinger if not the sparrow falls. *As fire burns but also purifies, so comes the wicked in the Days of Daddy-Dumb.*



In the storms

*When a storm is coming, all other birds seek shelter.
The eagle avoids the storm by flying above it.*
– Author Unknown

How severe a storm do you know? Was it a severe storm; *the wicked*...that you never forget? Did it decimate and destroy everything in its path; as like the creature of the sea, *Leviathan* that comes, slams and leaves never since the same?

When a storm is coming, creatures usually seek shelter; yes, *the natural* sounds to them to do this for obvious reasons but still, they must act, take cover or whatever. If any of the creatures fail to act, the consequences can be catastrophic. If they plan, they are prepared as best they can, *whatever* happens. Respite or relief comes when the creature sees the storm from a safe haven—but what if a safe haven is not safe or secure? Despair comes to the creature that fails to *act accordingly*—the consequences, catastrophe. Despair for long may cause depression, despondency and finally death. The effects may last a lifetime and beyond.

Creatures of all kinds make decisions every day. Some creatures live in complex civilizations where decisions are collaborated with others, an integrated society or community. Other creatures make decisions for only themselves while others as pairs, flocks and herds. If (or as) the creatures act only for self, they seemingly are self-governing whether the act affects others or not. If they possess much power, such as **Vile** the vulture, their choices or decisions affect more, maybe many more.

Is any creature *a rock*, an *island*, in that they always act alone? Does personal choice or the previously described *self-governing* signify a solo effect? As the storm is coming, can anyone sound, “I will do what I must do for me,” or “You make your choice and I’ll make mine,” or some similar proclamation that suggest that our choices have no effect

BEFORE THE LOW

beyond ourselves? It is, after all, a complex world where one choice or decision, however small, affects more.

The choices that are made affect more than we can know or believe; why, the choices of one tiny ant can save the lives of numerous other tiny ants or, at the least, keep them from repeating a wasteful foray or foraging. With the right smell and perhaps some electronic interchange, tiny ants sound, “Hey, don’t go that way. I went that way and discovered the worst.” The others do not reply, “No way, you’re blowing smoke,” but they do the right, natural thing by listening and heeding the message? Remember that ants are smart creatures because they communicate and collaborate—community.

Back to *power*—the power-hungry. *Power* is more than the kind observed in the skies and storms, or in the distribution of energy to my feathers and bones; it is the capability to convince creatures to act against their nature. *Power* can mine minds and harvest hearts—not for good or right—but to cause division, *divide and conquer*. The making of *power* is by *the power* and for *the power*. It is strange and unnatural, this kind of power; first, it convinces the creature of a crisis—some insolvable problem then it portends the consequences if not resolved; finally, it pretends to address the crisis that it invariably fabricated or fashioned. The creature might wonder, *is there really a storm?* If there is really a storm, *from whom or what did the storm begin?* If the storm is the work of *the worst*, much understanding concludes this kind of power. The next thought is *why do they do it?*

This kind of power sounds, “There is strength in joy,” though what they actually mean is, “There is joy in power.” In case you are wondering, the strong always eat the weak, the less powerful though perhaps strong in their own ways. They are a beast that consumes you without a wonder whatever.

At the highest altitude, my mind is free; for there I am high above it, free of all the filth and corruption that lies below, far beneath. As I descend, the air can take on an acrid, artificial odor laced with unnatural substances, synthetic and seething. *If only I could stay up there, above*



the mountains. Below I am exhausted more by the earth's exhaust than the energy to fly.

Power and pride can be a dangerous combination. Pride addresses the question of who is *right*; the answer determined by power, its abuse. Pride is always looking down on everyone and everything—, which means that it is never looking up toward the light—though the light still shines. Pride can be deceptive but if too proud how will they realized the deception—too deceived to realize the deception. The end result of pride, however momentary the pleasure of glory and gain is failure and finally, the fall.

Pride can take pleasure in doing *right*, but the problem comes in a question: “Right for whom or for what...?” This pride does not however keep a record of *right* as *the right thing* but only *right* as myth or mystery, made-up by sounds that lack substance. They call it *right* because they have the power to do so, even though they are completely and conclusively wrong, even evil.

A storm of storms is coming swiftly and mightily. I am choosing to fly toward the storm rather than away—an unnatural response in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*. While my nature sounds to me of a low pressure preceding *The Low*, I am resolute to see it to the end—whatever *the end* may be. To this drive and determination, I owe not the pride of my previous sounds but rather a new song, a pride that comes from and for them—those that I have committed all that I am and hope to be. I take to the high and then, *The Low*.

Have you ever found it necessary to go some to time and place but dread the thought of it? Things we dread with fear, real or not, leave us with a more than dread but sometimes a sense of doom, as the aged being reaches its last breath and feebly fears even while knowing that death has arrived at last.

Increasingly, my senses absorb *the darkness*; not just death but days leading up to it; the discouragement and despair that is dreaded more than death.

BEFORE THE LOW

What should I do—what would you do when you know the future is not promising yet you know that you must face it, bear it and believe that you can endure it?



Wounded by its own

As the eagle [ends] by the arrow winged with his own feather, so is the hand of the world wounded by its own skill.

– Helen Keller

There is an image of an eagle with a cluster of arrows in its talons; maybe it is a fighter—as with *big birds* that make fire and booms, but the eagle carries arrows in at least one talon, signifying strength more than power, I think. *Could the arrow-carrying eagle end-up hurting itself, a self-inflicting wound by its on quiver?* It could happen, I think, more of plans overzealous, objectives too great, and the opposition underestimated—pride and power gone overboard, yet again.

Further and farther are the lost causes covered-over—overwhelming sounds that paint the preferred, passionate picture of gains and greatness rather than *greed and graft*. Where pride and power in excess ends-up fighting its own—*its own*, the worst enemy—as the Leviathan is drowned, consumed in *its own* consumption. Pride may thwart preparation, and preparation then planning—which is why *plans are overzealous, objectives too great, and the opposition underestimated*. Without proper preparation, what happens but what was not supposed to happen; the unlikely and unintended become *what happens*, the unthinkable becomes....

Overdoing this power and pride, am I? Do you believe that enough is enough if just to *help and hope* in things other than gains, *greed and graft*? What happens when the *gains* do not grow as before, if ever? What happens when the *greed* has gone too far, pushing to the precipice? What happens when *graft* has gone too far, pushing beyond the precipice, to a great divide? What happens when the arrows aimed at the helping *the right* end-up hitting *the wrong*—hurting the least and the most—confusion and chaos (pardon me, rabbit), a cacophony of cries from every corner of the land, nothing unturned?

BEFORE THE LOW

Graft does not always work; the corrupt eventually run out of the means...and then, the end. When force is the only means, eventually, something has to give, and other powers come to call them down.

The sky has fallen and the sun is no more, as darkness upon the dark, the corrupt leading the corrupted. Creation and all that is vaulted and valued is grist for the mill, the grinding down of greatness to weightlessness and worthlessness. Once viewed in awe and wonder, the key or corner stone is crushed, all creation in rubble-trouble.

Before the losses of my *life and living*, all seemed well enough. When I was so, I thought as eaglet, reasoned the same, proud of my own and our place in all creation, past and present. When I lost my own, I put away these thoughts, and became an eagle in the real sense—absent the power I thought natural and the pride that I thought needed. *Losing ironically has been my gain; for it has brought me to realize what is, and is not, right and real.*

I do not want to die by my own arrow; to end myself because of myself all by myself. I want to die with the belief that I have lived, for any creature that fails to live while their living has died already. There is the many however, that mass of creation, that must look on with darkened eyes, unable to see recognize or experience what it means to live; or those with fearful eyes, unwilling to step out or go forward into *a great divide, the natural to the unnatural* and supernatural.

I am eagle enough to express my fear—more so now than ever—for what does it gain the created to imagine some grand creation, a hero, when the world has so many? Like *the worst of the worse*, they fool themselves and others, parading about like a peacock, sounding-off like a ridiculous rooster. *They are Airbag.*

It is one thing not to know and another not to actually know that your reality is really an illusion, much more fiction than fact. It is another to think you know, claiming that this is *real* and that is not, leaving little to your further decision and doubt. It is still another to know that you do not know, to sound, “I am not sure,” or “I don’t know,” or “I cannot sound it.” In this later is the eagle with arrows that



sounds; “I am good and would never use these arrows for *the wrong*, but only for *the right*.” Where does such perfection reside; where does *this later* make their nest and in which direction do they fly? If they really think they only do *right*, they must have nests everywhere, fly anywhere, and appear nowhere in particular. Somewhere there are these, those that do no *wrong*—at least as they see it—making much gain by other names such as *freedom*, *prosperity* and *the common good*.

Am I blind, dumb and death? Can I deny that my sounds are just noise and nothing more? Did she not say that the best and beautiful things we feel are at heart? Well about *the worst* and worsened things—can they pierce the heart as an arrow?

Suffering is not the only thing here, but it is necessary thing—even as I suffer from the sting of my own. Character is not the result of a life of ease, *pleasure and prosperity*; it comes out challenge and crisis, difficulty and distress, and all the features that seem the norm at the edge of *The Low*.

Behind me is one world, ahead another.... I have left the world that I loved only because it left me, while I press-on for a world that invites me—love all gone. Did I close the door on that world and open the one on this world? Did I decide to live in this time or is it some random result being here, now? Can I believe me to be the master of my destiny, my decision, or it more of something or someone else, *power and pride*? *Why I am here, I do not know and where I am going, I have never known before.* *Life and living* is a daring adventure and nothing less or more; and if I think differently or want for some other, then I am living in a dream world far above. I want to dream and not dread, but the reality is the later, often more than seldom.

If I am blind, dumb or death, when will I see—really see? I want not only see but to soar, again. I want to fly high but the will is just not that easy to come by. I tire of creeping as the rat, coy and clandestine, and long to be bold, *best and beautiful*. I long to be out of *The Low*—even though it has not yet come. Perhaps it will pass quickly and I, no quitter, will see it through. I remain after all, an eagle.

BEFORE THE LOW

There is an eagle left in me, I know it; but the sense of it is something that leaves me in doubt as I weigh the world's view of what an eagle is—or should be.



An Eagle in me

There is an eagle in me that wants to soar.

– Carl Sandburg

An eagle in me now crosses a great divide, drawn to *The Low*. As I make my way, giving my thoughts over to *life and living*—laying aside the traps that can render one so consumed as to never be hungry for substance and solitude—on a course for which my destination unsure. I fly somewhere between objective and obsession. I now have no home though often am very homesick.

You know by now that things are hard, harsh and hedonistic, a time and place smitten by the consequences of *pride and power, greed and graft*. The waters no longer flow free; it is slack and stinky, the land fouled by the foolish, the inane and their ilk.

“You there, I call,” seeing a discolored peacock of all things possible. “What happened to your color? You have lost your colors.”

“What is it to you, you high-flyer, the off-colored bird barked back.

It was another strange, unnatural type; the kind that appears to be normal but at a closer view, is not natural.

“What business do you have with me,” the peacock continues, strutting about with the most drab and dingy plume. “Have you lost your way; another stupid sojourner on a mission?”

What was I to sound to the off-colored but cavalier creature?

“Speak-up and answer my question,” the blasé bloomer blasts. “What kind of bird are you anyway,” it stoops to sound, “Are you a loon or just lost? Are you a parrot trying to parrot an eagle? Are you a vulture cleverly disguised as an-,”

Have you ever met someone or somebody like this; a creature so self-enamored that it cannot see its true colors? I am looking at it, this creature, and wondering from where this careless conceit comes? *Maybe I am the one that is disillusioned*, I thought. *I could be concocting*

BEFORE THE LOW

the whole encounter, my mind in such a state. That is it; the bird is not a real bird, but only the image of one, bland and bile. My mind is playing tricks on me again.

“Are you there,” the peacock punctuates, followed by prodding and pushing, as though a prized predator.

“I cannot sound what I am thinking,” I began.

“I am an incredible creature, count the ways,” the peacock postulates. I am everywhere, fly anywhere and appear nowhere in particular. I do no *wrong*...carrying weight wherever and whenever. I am the predator with a plum, a bird of bountiful beauty, second to none—not even you, exaggerated excuse for an eagle.”

“Do you have a name,” I manage to sound in short.

“I am **Proud**,” the peacock sounds.

So this is Proud, I thought—although I was already aware of its many traits as you know. *Can you be too proud, for as it seemed now, being Proud is over-the-top, beyond anything thought possible?*

“There is no such creature or character as, ‘too proud’,” the peacock proclaims. “Proud is proud; always has been and always will be—the rest of creation, the lesser, the lower, and the least, of course.”

I am not sure if I can go on, I thought, *it is worse than I thought.*

“You must be the only peacock, **Proud?**”

“I am not a peacock,” **Proud** exclaimed without blinking an eye. “I am an eagle! Can’t you see that I am the eagle here?”

Dumbfounded by the statement, the claim, I have to sound: “But you don’t fly like an eagle. You don’t look like or act like an eagle, at all, and you don’t sound like one either.”

“I don’t have to fly to be an eagle,” the peacock continues. “I am...because I sound I am—and that’s all there is to it. I am what I sound I am—and there is no sound that drowns me out.”

“But an eagle is-,”

“Don’t try to explain eagles—as though you have some insight into my own,” **Proud** persists. “You don’t know what you’re talking about.”



*I never met a more self-centered creature. My experience is not universal but I can sound, being ever so humble, that this creature is a worse case. Only **Vile the vulture** comes close, I conclude while thinking of others, more examples.*

“**Vile** is my ally,” the peacock proclaims.

*How did it know **Vile**—or know that I was thinking of **Vile**? Does this bird, with all my doubts, have mental powers?*

“**Vile** will lead us to victory,” **Proud** continues. “No one surpasses **Vile** in valor and vitality,” the bird boasts. “**Vile** is viral and vigorous, more a creator than merely creature. **Vile** is a supernatural being.”

“What victory,” I sound before thinking, knowing that my impulse is my mistake. “What victory,” still, I resound.

“All victory,” **Proud** declares. “Victory is either all or it’s not,” the creature decreed. “Victory is sustained gains.”

“Gains of-,”

“Gains of having what we need, deserve; after all, gain must go on,” **Proud** sounds back without a breath between blasts.

“And you don’t see the possibility of-,”

“Of losing...,” it interjects. “Not on your life. Losing is not an option; **Vile** is victory!”

*As the natural allows, for every gain there must be a loss. It is really a question of who wins and who loses—and when...in the law of averages. Whereas the natural tempers the outcome in a puzzling and peculiar way, the unnatural lends to a winner take all regardless of the costs, measurable or not, and the consequences with or without reason. I believe that winning and the gains are not absolute, unlimited and all; eventually, the natural lends to a loss, the potential to pause and sound, “It had to happen sooner or later.” Some may only scoff at this certainty—of change—going so far as to retile loss as gain, defeat as victory, and so on. **Proud** and the prideful must win no matter what winning is, or is not.*

There is the unnatural or the supernatural—the first that I have come to hate and the second that I grow to herald as the help and hope

BEFORE THE LOW

in times now here, and the coming...more. In the later, must a creature die to live? Must a being awaken to know death? Yes, they must....



A strange world

[It is] a strange world. [Please] keep it that way.
– Warren Ellis

How many times do you call something “strange?” As with my sounds about *gain*, sounds about *strange* tends to feed on itself; the more *gain* the more want for gain, the more *strange*, the more want for strange times, things. *Maybe the two are more connected; the more gain, the stranger things become.*

What does *strange* mean? I think it is accepting something hard to believe. I want to believe but the evidence is like the stars; one night there as clear as can be and the next, nothing except darkness or clouds. What is a fact? I think it is what we want it to be, fiction, or fashioned from the past. Some stars stay fixed in space, others move about. The fixed stars are real facts while the moving ones are fiction—more a legend than anything that last, fixed. The moving ones go here and there, a flash, unless it decides to collide and then, boom! The fixed ones just shine as a guide or bearing. *Maybe I will witness the boom kind some day; the ones that make a bigger boom than big bird.*

Suppose the stars (or facts) are angels, sacred bodies flying around, doing the work of some higher power? Are angels as real as facts or stars? I do not have an answer because I question whether facts or stars are real, true. To see one or a few is to find another and then another, as one discovered fact undoes another, one star ahead of another and then, yes, another.

Sometimes the eyes see what the heart wants to feel and the mind, well, it goes along, refusing to believe anything else, less. Sometimes the heart holds to the beauty and mystery, making-up things that are not real or holding on to things long gone. Fiction or imagination becomes real and before you know it, hear-sound holds its own—more so than facts alone or the many lights that shine on a clear, cold night.

BEFORE THE LOW

If I discovered all the facts, would I be better off? If I viewed all the stars, would I be more than a creature, the created? You cannot see everything out there and even what seems fact is not clear or certain. What you must do is first look up and then wait, seeking *help and hope* where you can and perhaps the facts will shine a fixed star on a cold, cloudless, night.

It is a strange world that we live in; one filled with all supernatural things. Supernatural exist and is active for those seeking *help and hope*. Supernatural is real to me, but is not for *greed and graft*. The high fliers—or those who imagine they are—are too oxygen-deprived to perceive or see *the supernatural*. You have to be down low—in *The Low*—to really see what is up there, out there and, well, even within, there. *I am beginning to believe that help and hope is the supernatural.*

High fliers are strange, too; I know...because I am one—was one until the losses. The losses bring me down low; as I am here, near *The Low*, looking up to darkness. In my past, I viewed the world as, “I am superior, strong and sure.” The losses knock the air out of me, and when I awake, the view is low, lower even. Imagine going from *high-flier* to earth dweller and then, if that is possible, crawling around without a functioning feather to fly on. Well, I do not have to leave my imagination to think about such things. I am as sure as facts and stars that do shine, and the contrast between what was and what remains.

It is one thing to have fallen but another to deal with it, sounding the questions with no certain answers or even responses. Do not depend or uphold acquaintances either, as though they can relate, for when you fall, nobody dare follow else they may end-up the same. Creatures of comfort and convenience loath those made low, once a high-flier and now scum of slack waters. “Pity..., such pathos,” they sound silently.

Oh how the mighty do eventually fall! What is true is that the bigger that they are or were, or think they are, the more catastrophic the fall, *the fall*. There are those who have been disillusioned, as with Pride the peacock, but *the fall* is critical, catastrophic. Trust me, I know



this because I have witnessed it. When the mighty fall, the world takes notice and either laments or laughs, “They had it coming, those high and mighty beasts.” Other *high fliers* would be wise to look and give thought or question, “Who is next?” Deprived of the stars or facts however—blinded by their own reflections—*high fliers* just keep flying.

The supernatural is strange but *the unnatural* is more. Consider their young for instance; sometimes, they go to the ends of the earth seeking safety for their offspring while—in a total turnabout—they intentionally kill-off their young in mass, even before they hatch. It is mucked-up in madness, a mess, I believe, to the point of wondering their state, the state of all things unnatural. *Who in their right mind would destroy their young with disdain, a deranged, disturbed kind?* High-flier perhaps but, on balance, they are mad and then worse, *the worst of the worse. Their violence will surely be their end.*

Oh, but there is more to this madness, *the mess*; conflict and contention are continuous among and between *the worse*. They apply so much toward the making of modern marvels only to finally destroy it in a flash. Why do they build-up and then teardown, inventing new ways to destroy things, many things? Why do they claim one thing and then do the opposite? Why do they look upon creation as a *high flier* when in fact they are the dregs of *the darkness*—deeper than an ostrich head and more deceptive than a rabbit hole?

Like a lark, they make-believe ways full of whimsicalness and waywardness. The way-out ways are, at the core, always wanting, never with weight but wandering. They do not have to forge, as *the natural*, but are busy finding ways to get the most without doing much; pleasing themselves without any concern or consideration of others—even their own. They learn or have knowledge but fail in application—and especially experience—apt to lesser attitudes that come from having too much, working too little, and expecting more all along. In such a state, the state, *the unnatural* uses *the natural* to death, *the supernatural* similarly. *They never grow to adults.*

BEFORE THE LOW

There is an allure or attraction, I must admit, to the trappings of this age; convenience and comfort appeals to each and all from the *bottom feeder* to the *high fliers*, from the many to the relative few. I have struggled in this...not knowing when enough is enough, always raising my flight to new heights and ceilings, losing touch with life on the surface, the edge. *What does it matter, my losses, when winning is all that matters, the moment.*

There remains an eagle in me not lost altogether by the losses of *life and living* or the allure and attraction of the age, time and place. *Do you have any eagle, left?*



Life is...

Life is infinitely stranger than anything that the mind...could invent.

- Arthur Conan Doyle

When an eaglet, how do you know that *life and living* is complex and crazy. You learn to fly and follow the lead and lessons, to do the things expected of you in *the natural*, but how do we know how complicated and confusing that growing-up is?

The loon is crazy, the owl, clever and complex. The ostrich is afraid of its shadow, while the crow is annoying beyond end. The parrot and parakeet are pretty but offer no originality, no character, clearly clownish. The canary is willing to go low—too low for air—all for coal. The chicken hawk is similarly full of air, hawkish in appearance only, a chicken of the worse kind. The albatross is an anomaly; on the one, a saint, on the other, a bad sign. Can any one thing be canonized and a curse at the same time? Sounding of seabirds, Jonathon is a rare bird indeed, unlike the scavenging scum of the shores. Vultures are *the worst*; more mad than mad. There are the billed and flat-footed varieties; whether ducks, geese, or some other aquatic flier, about the only good thing I can sound about them is that they sometimes fly in the coolest formations but that quaking and squawking must go! Then there is the rest of the bird kingdom, many of which I am only beginning to see and sound, a *high-flier* that I am, was.

One of the most annoying sounds is the mockingbird. O' beware the mocker for all they are is what they sound and even that is worthless. If you are too proud, *the mocker* will turn on, but if powerful, will probably lose its life doing it; after all, mocking has its limits! The mocker is afraid to try it, whatever it be, but always ready to toy with those who do. *Where is the mocker but at the lowest of The Low?*

BEFORE THE LOW

To add balance to the complex and the crazy is the comfort and company of the good, even right; those that seem less absorbed in themselves—more willing and able to help, offering hope.

The Days are full of the self-absorbed—like the chicken hawk—that sound, “I am just too good to be true,” or “I am so beautiful...to me,”; those that believe all they want is everything they need, they are self-indulgent in degrees of insanity. “Never mind all else, what do I want now, right now, let alone today, later.” They consume so much as to find it boring and blasé—always looking for the next thrill, they cannot find satisfaction in the moment no matter how mighty it could be, should be. *What becomes of such a time and place; want never waits, will not be denied or deferred? How long can the river run?*

My friend Jonathon is the first that I think of; naturally; a being that is willing to wait...wait it out. Commonly the seagull is of little account, but this one is different, rising far above the seagull’s station. He is courageous beyond natural call, exploring and excelling in the extremes of flight. You might call Jonathon another *high-flier* but you would be wrong; for beneath the feathers and all other appearance of a sea bird is a heart and soul of immense strength, stamina. Personally, I am lucky to have known him, witnessing someone not afraid to defy the limits of the norm while confronting the criticism and rejection of many of his own. Why does he do what he does; I mean, it would much more convenient to just conform to the basic life of a gull, right? The so-called “norm” is not enough—*life and living* begins with the want to do the unbelievable, the incomprehensible. *Jonathon’s want is a different, daring kind, the demands heart and soul.*

Life and living is a mystery where the deepest revelations are the darkest too. Discovering these *revelations* demands trickery and then tragedy; first, the work of minds, and second, the oft outcome to the heart—a new understanding that what you previously thought you understood you do not, more confused now than ever. It is a mystery where you never know what you will lose or win. You could lose someone close and gain someone else. You never know until you know.



Why do we experience loss, losing? Is it to learn that winning or victory is not easy, expected? Is loss necessary to want for winning, learning along the way about endurance and effort?

Why do we grow old and die? Is it to learn that *life and living* is about struggle, sacrifice? Is death necessary to love for life, learning along the way about gratitude and giving?

Why are we born in the first place—living beyond the egg to face the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*? Would it have been better if this life were not; consequently, their lives too, not?

Why do *help* and *hope* on each other; that without help, I would have no hope, no reason to go on. Why am I dependent on others for the help, my hope?

When I think that I am there, in the deep and dark of revelation, I soon realize that I am not; that there are other layers as though this *life and living* is an endless sea of undone, unknown, and unimaginable.

Ahead is an *endless* sea; and far below the surface and waves, an underworld of dark and daunting things. I hope for the courage of Jonathon; enough to look this in the face and sound, “I am not afraid to die,” but I am not...and still sound, “Will I ever be, ‘not afraid’?”

It is surprising to me that the lowest creatures end up being the greatest. The downed are able by their actions to do great things in spite of their lower standing in the so-called *food chain*. The rat is one such character; filthy, yet able to shine, get clean, and wash itself of its own vermin. Perhaps it is the pressures that bring about the opposites, the lower made higher, but it contradicts so much of this world— notions about who or what is great or even good. Honestly, a relative few are hoarding practically everything, making the low lower, the middle less so. Who knows where this order is going except that *life and living* is changing, the eagle forced to lower itself well below the *high-flier*. I suppose the bright side is that I can welcome them—should I pass beyond *The Low*.

It is one thing to depend on *the natural* but another to deal with *the unnatural*, where *good* is bad and *light* is dark. It is magic, an illusion

BEFORE THE LOW

however, that attempts to *pull the wool over my eyes, the wolf made a sheep*.

Consider another, the snake; *the unnatural* makes the snake a villain while, in *the natural*, it symbolizes something good, even great, in spite of the fact that it slithers, hisses, and can be downright dangerous, even to my kind if not handled with the upmost respect. Snakes are not as sleazy as some I know. Why, I might even enjoy one for a meal now and then.

The supernatural and *the natural* have a connection if you look at it intently—if you stop and silence all the noise. You can sense it in *the natural* as you see it or otherwise learn of it, a help and hope to the lowly. It is strange too, this *connection*.

It is natural for the Pelican to be among the best of parents, father and mother alike, but in *the supernatural* is much a savior,

The tall and slender crane may start slow but rises above, while the similarly looking heron is always on the watch. Is the crane always happy, the heron prosperous, in *the supernatural*?

The dove carries the olive branch of hope as the faith, kingfisher. Does peace and love abide with the dove, abundance with the kingfisher?

The falcon is a great symbol of sacrifice and the phoenix is the bearer of light, *life and living*. Does the falcon forever win, or does the phoenix escape death, rising from the ashes of a scorching?



Side effect

You are a side effect of an evolutionary process that cares little for individual lives.

- Van Houten

Do *the fittest survive*? What I mean is that sometimes *the fittest* are not always fit any more than the least fit, weak and wanting. Sometimes, a seemingly weak creature proves to be surprisingly stellar, lasting through calamities and conditions, even a crisis! Meanwhile, a ferocious and fierce beast, practically indomitable, goes extinct under similar conditions. The art is to appear weak but be strong; that way, your predator is off-balance, perhaps outdone or outmatched in the wrong, presumed weakness. Perception is the point!

The eagle is as it appears; they do not live life under the cloak of weakness but rather, show their strength up and down. Again, and as you know, the eagle is exalted by even *the worst of the worse*; symbols and images to suggest strength and stamina. *Strange that they hold us in such high esteem on a pole or crescent but as with much of the unnatural, treat us with contempt, hunting us down for sport to showcase above the mantel—all the life gone except what they have done to make life seem life. It is one thing to follow a good example but another to exploit something until exhaustion. We are largely superfluous, I suppose, superficial, surface only, while they act more the vulture, my predator.*

“To do what,” you might sound.

“To do anything and everything to serve them,” I should sound. “It is all about me,” as they could sound if an individual and further, “I deserve what I can get no matter how I get it or how much I get,” and/or some similar rationalization that, in their view, justifies their want for more and then finally, more.

BEFORE THE LOW

What it must be like to be the *lords of all creation*, to not only hide from the weather, protected by their dwellings, but to alter the weather as well? Who is mightier than they are, *they* being those that play the victim when in fact are the predator? They travel the world in record time. They take and take, and then say, “This is unsatisfactory,” still unable to quench the thirst of *greed and graft*—as though this is possible.

Who has reduced the individual to practically nothing, a mere inhabitant, while raising institution—a *collective*—to unparalleled heights, enclaves of pride, towers of power, banks of prosperity?

When it comes to survival, who decides who will dominate or die, suffer or succeed? Is there anyone that can command such corruption to cease, the chaos? They say, “**Chaos** before order,” and “War for peace,” balderdash, bold and brainless.

What does it matter anyway? Why do other eagles continue as *high-fliers* while I creep ever closer to *The Low*? Did I blow it? Did I falter, failing to fulfill the great calling? Am I to take advice from those who have never, but never, go through the same?

Have you wondered why you exist at all, why you are the creature that you are, more or less? Have you wondered why some never hatch and then among those that do, never reach the sky, leave the nest?

In the world of both light and darkness there is plenty of gray too; things that I have no answer to or, for the matter, have given even a thought. I strongly believe that I know some things, can trust my judgment while others...I am not so confident, so convinced. There are many things that later realize my mistakes, misunderstanding; maybe a side effect of the unknown or unknowing, it sneaks up and take you by surprise—future shock!

The eagle began long ago and has lasted through the ages. The Romans, somebody called Nazis and perhaps other *colossal collectives* used the eagle as an edifice. Yes, civilizations have expressed their greatness using graven images to elicit our values and views but



invariably, each and all end-up exemplifying more the vulture than us, than me.

Kingdoms come and go; in their eve, they lapse into mediocrity followed by a malaise, a sense of certain doom and death. Civilizations rise and peak, than they fall; the higher they ascend the greater the fall, finally into the great deep, the destiny of *pride and power* gone awry, abuse beyond and before byzantine.

What is an eagle to do when it realizes that its image is detached from what it really is or should be? Am I this iconic figure; am I a predator to the point of driving creatures from their nests, of taking their trees and destroying their *life and living* beyond my natural needs, survival? Do I exhaust everything, depleting the dirt and leeching the land of its essence? Am I this kind of creature; that takes and takes until exhaustion, extinguishing even the fire of the soul, the want for a will and way of life beyond death, without a modicum of mercy?

Have eagles always been regal and further, will they always be...? From when and where did the eagle come? Have we always been as I am now or were we something less, something more?

Has *the worse* given us a bad name; proud on the surface but pernicious and preemptive underneath a veil of good intentions and plans made manifest, gone awry?

We are not that kind...with two faces, two sides; the noble in appearance while the ignoble and unworthy in actuality. We are not what they purport and portend we are, an icon with blood on its beak and carnage cascading from its claws.

There are two or more kinds of my kind; at least two that I can think of: the one that does what is natural and the one that does not. Beyond the *two* are those that mean well—that want for good—and those that who think only of themselves. Thus, of the *two kinds*, there is those that help and those that invariably hurt—and, then, sometimes those that try earnestly to help but ironically cause hurt in the course. In the end, the eagle's heart is what matters most—the true intentions versus the sorted sound, the screeching of schemes.

BEFORE THE LOW

When an eagle neglects its offspring or purposely plans to hurt them, it is unnatural; in some strange way, *the worse* of the eagle becomes the norm and before know it, *the natural* is nothing, no more—as with some *collectives*.

I would like to believe that we eagles have *come far* but sometimes the factors of *the unnatural* leave me doubtful, discouraged. How can I know the answers when the questions keep changing; evolving from *the natural*, devolving to *the unnatural*?

There is *the supernatural*; less apparent in the physical, but deep and wide in might, a mystery and movement where my doubt and discouragement lie among the many lies, the *sorted sounds* and the *screeching schemes*.



To be determined

To be determined (TBD)...

One has to ready for the flight, the flight. You cannot just fly-off unprepared for the ride of your life, a difficult and indeterminate destiny. You cannot be half-cocked for the worst of conditions; no, you have to be full-cocked, ready and relentless as the rooster that flogs no matter the size or strength of the foe—until I land for the last time.

“Why do I repeat myself,” I sound to myself. “Why do I cover the same concerns over and over again—as though by mulling over them, they will somehow become clear, conclusions complete? As for now, the events are *to be determined*.”

I suppose that *life and living* would be less exciting if all the unknowns were no more; all doubts and fears behind me. *What might happen then; maybe more doubts and fears?*

“Do I prefer doubts, fears,” I sound again. “I don’t know?”

“Do I fear being afraid,” I sound, after which comes a foreboding that I not only am less, less than an eagle, but well below the crow when it comes to courage, character and all the right stuff.

Imagine what the old ones might sound about me—all this obsessing, observing, orating. So much for pride—I am less the eagle, darker than a crow standing on a white fence, as weak as a wren and obtuse as the ostrich. I am smaller than a hummingbird.

Fearing is a good thing! What I mean is that fear lies close to anger and anger can cause a reaction—something more than nothing, anything other than nothing at all. Fear can cause the ostrich to run and hide but it can cause something to stop running too. Yeah, I covered this subject before, I know, but this is what you do when something or someone consumes and controls your waking hours. You talk about it, to yourself no less, and think about it much of the time—and then you wonder why you cannot stop thinking, doubting and fearing.

BEFORE THE LOW

You rationalize that strength, not weakness, is *the natural* of all possibilities. You sound to you that it is wise to fear and good to express doubt and, maybe, sound for help if just to have someone to listen.

You might sound, “If I had hope, I would not fear. If I had faith in something or someone, the problem would be absolved, or at least ameliorated.” As it is for me, *fear* fights the *faith*, bitterness to follow.

“How can I overcome my fears?” *Few if any eagles have ever sound such things let alone experienced my lot.* The eagle should be fearless; calculated and confident in its mission and matters, able to fly high above the rest while keenly aware of every situation, seeking out prey with precision, parenting with passion, perched above the world, all creation. *How do I do all these noble things without failing, faltering or floundering, featherless, only flesh?*

I expected to be practically perfect, powerful and prodigious above all others past and present, but my personal plight has changed my presumptions, my pomposity. I accept that I have failed to live-up to eagle expectations, *the natural* overcome to present, the unnatural applied in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*. Maybe life will eventually take a turn for the better, my old self-confident and assured, “the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*” a distant past. I still look the eagle, frayed at the edges, yet lack confidence that I am. Maybe that is really it; the factor of my fear is the loss of whom I am or was—and will never be again.

Some reject their young; refusing their own as insufficient is some way, while some reject their own for other reasons. Rejection and ridicule happens for an endless number of reasons—or for no apparent reason at all—that run roughshod over the infirmed and infantile.

Whereas acceptance is usually what we want or desire, the facts are that we seldom see or have acceptance in every way by those that matters most. So-called friends are ironically the least able to stay true while adversaries; well, at least they let you know where they stand or stomp, sounding-off with contention and conflict instead of confusion and contradictions. Strange that one day you may believe you are atop the world while the next, seemingly at the bottom of the barrel.



Rejection goes far and deep; it sounds, “I don’t want to associate with you—not now, and not ever again, as it is now.” Whereas this disassociation, rejection, may have good cause, it is still a separation, a severing of ties, for which any recovery is unlikely, unfair aside.

One may give their all and whole to another; a commitment without conditions, only to later deny the other, foregoing the commitment whatever it was, forsaking it all. *Done or doing* is now undone—as it seems by sound and sense—as *our interest* is now *your interest* and *the day passes to night*, all relations no longer precious, passionate and paternal. We are no more and possibly, it is all and nothing.

“What changed,” you might sound. “Why did the commitment of yesterday convulse today, a carcass to be—what or who conspired?”

Did the credence and commitment corrode, crack and crumble, or did *the one* simply forget what they once obligated to another, themselves? Are actions only motions, their sounds only chatter without meaning, without matter? What does it take to make it last, to keep it going through *the storms and across the valleys of life and living*? Does a commitment die; does it really suffer death or is it more a shift to something or someone else, a passing on of passions and personalities? Whatever it takes is not forever enough, it seems, and so a commitment crumbles unconditionally into sand scattered to the sea.

More than I want to consider, the complexity of *the unnatural, the worst*—that makes sounds upon sounds—none of which make any sense against sensibility. Why they sound-off one way and then do the opposite is a conundrum without a clue. It is as though they should never commit, for all they seem to do is fake and falsify one after another, giving cause not to trust anyone at any time for anything. They give *commitment* a bad name, casting all that could be credible to the wind, the rock of a sound smashed into sand scattered to the sea.

They do defy reason, all the rationalizations, but then again, “What is truth anyway?” Do we know anything of truth when we, among the many beneath *the worst*, do not know how to lie, fake and falsify? Can I know the life of another species and still less, the senseless?

BEFORE THE LOW

There is that ground dweller called the opossum that acts dead when still alive and then few others that similarly play dead to survive. Not a one, or even all, top the effort and energy that *the worst* exemplify when it comes to twisting the truth or falsifying facts, begging the question over and over again, “What is the truth?” *What is truth when truth is only a sound, the rest silenced or asleep?*

It is hard not to scream when you have to be around such distortions and distractions; a world where truth falls on disbelief and disdain; where the fittest of the fit succeed while so many suffer and sacrifice in a silence too loud not to hear or hear about.

It is hard not to sigh when you cannot get your wings around the problems of *life and living*; when the world is upside down and nothing makes sense anymore because you cannot trust anyone or anything—what they sound or what they claim they do or do not do. Fear and doubt is all about us and, most disturbing, within us, *the natural*.

It is hard not to step in *the darkness* or overcome the dread when *the worst* seems to be getting worse, *the worst of the worse*. “How bad can it get?” It is a matter of time and pressure, really, the passing of days...and the pressures brought to bear by those too bearish to back-down, even bend, long enough for me to breathe a sigh of relief.

It is hard not to sink to the deep when the streams slacken yet the torrents surface and the tides swell for the Leviathan emerging to do *the worst, the world over*.

It is hard and getting harder, the *help and hope* as sand scattered to the sea.



The worst thing

The worst thing is watching someone drown and not being able to convince them to save themselves by just standing up.

- Unknown

The water yet rises; cresting to levels not previously possible, but now—because *the worse* have sunken to unforeseen and unfathomable levels—has the potential to send practically all but a few to the bottom.

“Are you afraid,” you should have to sound, for which I can sound back, “Are you?”

If you sound, “No, I am not afraid”, you must be a decided fool or one by default; deceived by the trite, distracted by the tantalizing and trivial, but in truth, *a sitting duck* soon to be de-feathered and disemboweled.

I watched a parent duck leading her offspring in a row, file. Beginning with the last duckling, peeping turtles took them down until finally reaching the mother, the last. The mother had not noticed or otherwise observed the taking of her own until it was too late. It was an eating extravaganza, a silent but shocking scene. The parent duck however did not go down, but narrowly escaped leaving the turtles to feed on her family. Six ducklings, drowned...dead.

“Why did the mother duck not notice—why was she not aware that her young were being *knocked-off*?” Maybe it is *the natural* thing for her to do, to look ahead rather than behind, around. At the same time, the predator takes no prisoners, picking them off one by one until no one is left except the fool who did not see and now, wiser or not, will wonder what happened and perhaps, why. Deceived, distracted or distanced, the consequence is very costly.

It may seem insignificant, as simply another example of *the natural*, but it is spot-on for *the Day*. When not aware or alert, something similar happens, seemingly silent but sudden, shocking. Do not bury

BEFORE THE LOW

your head as the Ostrich but be watchful as the owl. Be aware and attentive; yes, look ahead but do not forget to look around and listen for sounds from the deep.

There is *the natural* of which I have described many times and still more to come, and then there is *the unnatural* and *the supernatural* to follow, that often confuses and contradicts the way. In *the natural* is an order—the way things happen whether in a moment or much longer—essential to *life and living*. *The natural* can cause the unexpected, such as a great storm, but not nearly as *the unnatural*.

As to *the supernatural*, there are feathered creatures, angels. The angels may rise for good but they also fall and do *the worst*. Angel are not, *the supernatural is* mystic and mysterious. Not one of these three places is without conflict however, though *the natural* makes more sense than the other two. The worst of all is when a species systematically destroys its own, a depth too deep for disdain.

The young of all creation are not at fault, not really, but still may be swept-up in the workings of *the supernatural*. Birth itself is a miracle but the hatching of something is not always for good. Among *the worse*, hatching may produce a plot so thick as to remain a mystery, the consequences never reconciled, too deep for disdain.

From high above, I watched one flailing about in the water too deep for them to stand. Screaming as it did, perhaps its last effort, others heard, acting with haste to save their own. There were no turtles or other creatures peeping out, this time, to pick-off this young one, but only the combination of water and weakness. This one did not die on that day; it lived, a very good thing, perhaps the best that is possible. Once ashore, the one found others again doing this or that thing to celebrate something. Some do not make it to shore again; they flail and flounder but no one comes or no one cares to—the cries finally silenced. *Why do some care and call while others, the worse, actually contribute—causing their own to die? Why such self-destruction when they sound of care, compassion and a calling of high flight?*



I have heard stories of this kind akin to *big bird*; one big floater, maybe one beneath the water, causes another big floater on the water to go under; somewhat like the hard-shell, stealth and all. They let fly the big boom from atop and beneath, sending the other to the deep, drowned and dead. Big creatures made of steel run silent, run deep. *Why would one floater attack another*, you might wonder as I do, for which I turn to *the worse*, those that float *the floaters*. The floaters are not running into each other—although this has happened too—but can easily navigate their own lanes far from one another, any congestion. Yet, strange as it takes me, they not only stray from their own lanes but also pursue one another with a precision of which only a predator like me can appreciate. They attack with relentless persistence and go drastically out of their way, seeking to destroy other floaters, leaving the remaining to suffer and sink, wide and far. Like *big bird*, these floaters go at it with tremendous power and perhaps pride. Conflict and chaos arise out of nowhere and escalates to everywhere, turning the sea from blue to the red of flesh, the black of death.

In the days that follow, here and there, you can spot the evidence for sure; carnage only a vulture would appreciate. For the scale of the conflict I am describing must be the work of vultures like **Vile**; for no other feathered creature that I know of could concoct and conduct such a vast and violent engagement except this one. No one else has the mind or stomach to do such a thing except the vulture that, though not *the worse* is much the same.

The worst thing about *the worse* is when one or more sink beneath waters less its height, size and strength. When the fool forgets they are a fool, falling for the folly of the unknowing and uncaring, they are at their lowest—lower than *The Low*. *How do they know when they do not know and do not care to know?*

Enough of the questions and comment, I might as well go on and do as I have done, or even think I should do, as the ostrich remains blinded by its blindness or the lark languishes in the belief that, “all is well”, regardless of whose sinking.

BEFORE THE LOW

“What good does it really do to fear, to be afraid,” you sound to me. “Fear is the bane of our existence, our worst enemy,” you add, pulling from the passages of the politic and much more.

“You do have a point,” I sound, reasoning that fear is not a real friend, “But *life and living* here is not a perfect setting,” I continue, “but is chocked with all kinds of conflict and, what is worse, it is getting worse!” “Hereditarily and holistically, *life and living* can be absent fear and its ilk. But this is not that time, place,” I continue to reason. “These are,” I remember, “the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*.”

“Then what is it,” you continue, wanting and willing to know. “What are ‘the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*?’”

“It is at or near *The Low*,” I sound to you. “It is the time and place of the journey,” I sound on.

You may think that you are not with me—not on this journey—but to think so, even to believe that *The Low* is not your world is a mistake, a folly for sure.

The Low is coming and it will leave few if any untouched in some way; for most, difficulty and distress like never before though for a relative few, pleasure beyond perversion of imagination. The measure of this time and place is not absolute but more relative, the difference between then and now, now and what comes.



I still hope

Strange as it may seem, I still hope for the best, even though the best rarely arrives.

- Lemony Snicket

Still, I do hope. After all, I have come this far—not waiting for *The Low* but heading into it as a moth to the flame, an uncertain allure that I cannot deny but cannot explain either. I do not know what waits but I have come this far and cannot see or seem to turn back. I accept that you may think me a goony bird; a loon, one that has lost any senses of any kind. Allow me to be realistic to the present, anticipating what is to come based on what I know, think and feel. Sure, I am not your conventional fine-feathered friend. I am not even an eagle anymore but merely an image of one, otherwise of small account if I depended on the company and support of others.

I am an admitted failure, feckless and fearful—but I cannot forget, can I? Still, in this sorted state, there is some satisfaction and solace in my solitude. I seem accountable to no one anymore—not even me—but have lost all that once held me so. When you lose everything that matters the only thing that matters is losing. Anything gained or going is certain to be going or gone, again. Yes, when everything goes, you are free to some degree; set adrift, no long tethered or anchored. I am homeless, a drifter if just in my mind, though I still long for the things lost, imagining what *life and living* might be like if the gains had at least stayed, the losses too far away to fear.

Do creatures of my kind grieve, you might wonder. Yes, we do—I am sure of that and sure of more not only about my own but about others too. Grief is not limited to *the worse*, and while they have much to grieve about—of their doing—they do not hold the only cup too bitter to swallow or the branch too barbed to touch. Some species grieve over and through the works of *the worse*.

BEFORE THE LOW

The darkness is deep and disturbing, yet it is here that stars can be distinct, bright and clear, and one may get lost in the vastness of space, my smallness. *The darkness* is suffering and sacrifices; smallness that puts us *beneath the world* and all its creation, and must come—else, the light would not. To suffer and sacrifice is to know *the darkness*, and to survive and succeed is to know the light. Suffering and survival, sacrifice and succeeding, are inseparable as with darkness and light.

There is guilt and there is grief. You may think of guilt as a sense or state of a wrong or a right not done. Grief is sorrow over something thought lost or gone, but guilt is being sorrowful, a sort of self-awareness of the part played, passive or active, in something gone wrong in your view. You do not have to be wrong per se, but disappointed that the outcome is not different, more right than wrong, good than bad. Guilt and grief is a good thing, I believe.

“But what does guilt and grief have to do with hope,” you sound to me, attempting to connect these things.

You may remember what defines an eagle; it is not its flight but what it carries as it flies. Guilt and grief are all about carrying *the burden*; not about carrying it forever—brooding—but about diving deep, contemplation. A regal eagle is the one that dives deep, that looks sharply and has the courage to face the facts. Maybe *the road less traveled* but the best way to overcome any unending burdens, bitterness and badness that boils over or burns within you and, most of all, keeps you locked in fear. Guilt is good even though it makes you feel bad. Grief is good even though it can make you bitter. Guilt and grief are among *the natural* in that each and all allow the burden to ease, the load lifted from your wings, and hope restored, recovered.

I cannot go on about guilt without mentioning shame. I do not like shame, to be shamed, because it does not allow the load to be lifted and hope to result; but instead, it takes one down a dead-end—and impassable road of sort—the bad turned to bitter, the branch too barbed to touch. Shame takes me down without *help and hope*; *the darkness* where *the light* cannot stay, survive or succeed.



Know that guilt and grief do not end; no, there is plenty left in *life and living* to stick around and, when needed, to be there for me, for you and for us.

Contrast the guilt of *the unnatural*: the gulling, giving it out without cause, corrupt court and all that so-called justice. To *the unnatural* and *the worse*, guilt is not for good—not even close—but is yet another thing for exploitation, then exhaustion, to shame us. Meanwhile, the truth of guilt *goes by the board*; the powerful excused and exonerated of crimes that no matter how serious or sinister a violation, flyaway *scot-free*, **Vile** and its ilk.

“Without power, being powerful, then,”

Without power, *the charged* is certain to guilty—compelled to confess no matter whether they actually committed any crime or not. It is simply a matter of time and pressure before the bagman and executioner collects from the defendant without power, a pawn for the pleasure of the prosecutor. Weakness made weaker, exploited, and power, exonerated and even enshrined.

“How do you know all this,” you might sound. “You’re a creature bird and nothing more.”

“Well, *the unnatural* does this,” I begin. “It changes everything about everybody, *the unnatural* and also *the supernatural*.”

Leaving *the supernatural* aside, with its many mysteries, I know *the unnatural* works against *the natural*. Leave it to *the unnatural* to set you up, to leave you to drown—all the while, sounding to you that it is your fault, “You fool!” No, it *the unnatural* that creates the storm and then says, as though shocked, “Look, it is raining.” *Sometimes, about the only thing they can do to justify what they do is to first create the problem—a crisis—and then suspiciously send their supposed support to solve it.* Yet, they will not stop trying to find the isle of hope however futile it is, would or will be.

Many sound of hope and its relations. Much more insightful than me, they have sounded-off, giving more than I could possibly know or

BEFORE THE LOW

think about right now, if ever. One such creature, a Faulkner, encourages me in my journey.

“You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore,” Faulkner finds.

Have I left the shore, I think. How far have I gone, come, or am I drifting? Have I gone too far to turn back, to return to the land and call off the whole journey to find my family or learn of them?

One more may sound that life is under no obligation to make good on promises while another reminds me that hope is a thing of dreams that sings and shouts while we sleep.

“Hold fast to dreams. For if dreams die, life is a broken-winged bird that cannot fly,” sounds Hughes, a different color of creatures.

I hope for dreams and dream of hopes.



Keep your fears

Keep your fears to yourself but share your courage with others.

- Robert Louis Stevenson

I keep fears forever. If I do not hold on to fears, how will I know when courage comes?

Am I afraid of death? *I sense that sometimes, yes, I am afraid to die while other times, so dismayed that I just do not care to know or believe.* On the one wing is a weak, weary wingless willing-want-to-be, and on the other...an over-inflated blow-bird. One day I feel strong and steady, the next, worse than an ostrich. Extreme and erratic, two opposites, odd birds; the one, a phoenix blazing to the sun while the next, a duck-in-a-row. The duck longs for the phoenix while the phoenix loathes the duck, two personalities that have not part of the other.

I will still keep my fears whether right or wrong, good or bad, blazing or sitting—as I cannot control the thing that controls me.

I once flew over an island, a majestic island that possessed a big, bold X marking some significant point, place. I wondered as I wandered, *why let everyone know where it is—whatever it is?* Of course, you have questions.

“What was behind the X,” you sound.

Really, “What is beneath the X, buried...?”

“It was something valuable, that much I learned,” I sound to you. “I had to find-out more.”

“And what did you learn, Eli, about the X?”

“I overheard a motley crew mulling over it, the spot marked with an X,” I sound to you, mate. “This crew seemed sinister, sinners if you please everyone. They be worse though—bad to the bones all the way to Davy Jones’ locker, pirates and plunderers at every place.”

“You are starting to sound more like a parrot than an eagle, but anyway, what was the X hiding, covering,” you persist. “What is there?”

BEFORE THE LOW

“The X marked something deadly, valuable,” I sound to you.

“And what was it, this deadly but valuable thing?”

“It wasn’t what it was thought to be,” I would sound to you. “It was a chest with a carved stone inside.”

“A carved stone,” you resound. “Was it valuable? Is it something to help, to hope or even die for?”

“They saw it as a hoax, a trick making them fools, I think it was.”

“They would kill for that,” you sound, “the fool?”

“Oh, I think they would kill for less—and have no guilt or grief about it either,” I declare. “You have to realize what you are dealing with.”

A crew of this kind has no guilt or grief about taking things, thieving and treachery. They trust no one—not even themselves. The crew may make mercy but only if it means their gain, greed and graft.

“Sounds like ‘the worst’,” you sound.

“One in the same,” I sound to you. “Of the same creed and color, they are a most disturbing lot.”

“And was the stone of any size, any sound or any sort of thing of value,” you sound, just to understand this thing once buried, now brought forth as a ploy, a play on fools.

“I don’t know...being a creature that cannot comprehend such things. It was not food or anything useful for building a nest. It was a stone, solid and substantial—too heavy a burden for me.”

The stone has some strong sound though; an inscription, small but significant, so it seemed in my sense, good and great beyond worth. Scratched on the surface of the stone was:

“Peace on Earth”

It was just an inscription on a stone—wealth turned to death!

It is disheartening to discover what some will do—and have done—to get something, no more than a carving in a chest.

Thinking of it now, even as I rethink the island X, my disheartening grows ever deeper. I am not the creature that I was then, or before, but



am more aware of *the unnatural*. The fact is that the merciless killing, the cruelty endemic to those on and far beyond that island, will never end until they end—if that is possible!

“How do creatures become that way,” you sound, the deeper matter.

I have sounded to myself this question and many like it—most of these questions in the losses of *life and living* within and beyond *The Low, Days of Daddy-Dumb*. I have listened to some stories of others, even those that I would otherwise overlook if they were not my next meal.

I still do not know all there is to know and only really know some of what I think I know. To the question, “How do creatures become that way”, they are not born or created that way. As with the crew, the island, those that come to “that way” do so because they believe that it serves them best—and that’s all that matters to them. Their depravity becomes potentially self-perpetuating; that like an illness or sickness, it can grow and expand, sucking the life out of life, a parasite. Once it has exhausted the host, it moves on to another and then another—passed or passing from one to some and then perhaps, a pandemic.

“And do they fear, do they have fears, this kind,” you sound.

I have thought about that too; that if they had fears, such feelings would come between them and *that way*. Maybe they are troubled with guilt and grief, but as it seems they not only have no feelings but they promote and praise such brutal and barbaric ways among others, crew or not. Their minds dulled, hearts seared by repeated, rapacious behavior, making any chance of a return to *the natural* unlikely.

You may wonder how I got away, feathers intact—since that lot was a bad lot, scallywags and all. Well, that is another story or at least another chapter in this story, but I will sound to you that I was able to fly away only because a young one helped; someone by name of “Hawk”, I think, or maybe “Hawkins”, helped this feathered fellow find a way out of *that way*. My fate could have gone the other way had it not been for young Hawkins. I like hawks as long as they are not chickens.

BEFORE THE LOW

“And the stone’s sound or inscription. What do you think of that, the message,” you should know.

“Peace on Earth” is universal, a plea from the planet, while conflict and contention rules the day.

When oh when will the world finally sound-off, “enough is enough”, and confront *the worst of the worse*—the *pride and power* that is the bane of true peacekeeping creatures, past and present. You cannot acquire or win peace by constant and continuous conflict! This *pride and power* cannot go on pirating and plundering now and before—it simply cannot continue short of a catastrophe—as never before in *the natural*.



My reality

I am not strange...my reality is just different....

- Lewis Carroll

All my sounds seem of something less than sane may be crazy to you. Before you decide me a loon, give me a last chance to convince you that I am fine, feathers and all.

I heard some sounds not too long ago coming from those encircling a fire; some sort of ceremony or celebration I suppose, but more the young—those like Hawkins—that stood round a fire while sounding,

Let there be peace on earth and let me begin with me...

As I drew closer, the sounds became clearer and similarly drew me further, the warmth of their song more than just the fire, the light, but a new spirit among these strangers, young, that made me hope that they were among others of like kind.

“Who are these,” I murmur, mesmerized in the meaning of this moment. “Are they those angels?”

Like the experience of the island, it held me in suspense, the settings similar in some ways but different in others....

As the circle tightened, I could not help notice the arrival of my old friend, the rabbit, trotting toward them. Not the least hesitant or cautious, **Chaos** came upon them purposely, with ease among them without one ounce of confusion or consternation.

“You there...**Chaos**, what are you doing?” For a moment, you would think the rabbit deaf.

“You there-,”

“The name is Nivens,” the rabbit sounds politely, correcting the presumed, “**Chaos**”.

“But your name is-,”

BEFORE THE LOW

“My name is not **Chaos** although it has been sounded,” the rabbit continues. “Nivens is the name, now.”

“Well Nivens, if that is your real name, what brings you aside the young singers on this fine night,” I sound, accepting the name change.

“What brings you here,” Nivens echoes, attempting his usual chaos, the rabbit I know, of sounding a question to a question.

“It’s them, the beauty of this moment and-,”

“As it is for me,” the rabbit replies. “Sometimes you just have to climb out of the rabbit hole and make for the music.”

“Sometimes you’re right, rabbit, and this time definitely-,”

“You’re not hungry are you,” the rabbit sounds with a wry expression.

“No, not ever for you, Nivens; you’re too valuable.”

“Good, then I can watch without worry,” the rabbit sounds, a sigh of relief. “It pleases my ears to hear sounds so sincere.”

The light glowed and the music played on while Nivens and I watched, enthralled by *the supernatural*; an endless array of images unending, enlarged and entangled in a kaleidoscope of color too extreme to remember, recall. I have never seen such a portrait before or since; one dimension became degrees and then more. Again, I cannot ever know of such before *the supernatural*.

“Are you seeing what I am,” I called to **Chaos**, though without any direct answer, the white rabbit appeared drifting over me, higher than my perch and floating as though inflated, lighter than air.

“Come down Nivens, come down before you fall,” for which the white rabbit began to dance, dangle and sing a ditty of the dimensions that only later discerned, decided. It was far-out, freaky.

*One makes you larger, and one makes you small,
Some are nothing; they know nothing at all,*

“**Chaos** or Nivens, this is not-,”



*And if you see me now, to rise before the fall,
The rabbit is a dancing a ditty for all,*

“Did you hear me, you distorted, disturbed rabbit.”

*They that play the chessboard, the ‘grand one’ called,
They that push the button, mushroom ball,*

“I order you to stop, **Chaos**. Stop with this weirdness!”

*When logic learning is sloppy dead,
Floating way over your head,*

“Okay, stop playing with my head,” I scream, as the rabbit’s ears slide over my feathers and flesh.

Feed your head, fill your heart and find your hope.

Then it all stopped in the blink of an eye, the flash of a light. Nivens was gone, the song over, and all that consumed me, now nothing but silence—the *supernatural* stilled, adrift and afar.

*Can an eagle experience the esoteric, ethereal or exotic; an encounter far beyond earth? Were the young angels’ aberrations of the ancient or were they actually there in body encircling the fire? Did I meet **Chaos** once again or was it merely my mind wanting for someone or something to share that sight, the night? Can rabbits fly, float about and dance like that? Do they express such rhyme and exude such a rainbow of colors and contortions?*

*What were the sounds, the message and meaning? Who makes me larger, who makes me small? What does that mean, really, my size and all? **Chaos** sounded, “Some are nothing, they know nothing...,” but who is the rabbit describing? Is it the large, the small, after or before ‘the fall, or someone else, the time as it is’?*

BEFORE THE LOW

*Did **Chaos** come to hear the young or to mock them, to steal their light and rob them? They did not seem to care or to notice, their music most overpowering.*

What is chess, the board and all other," I wonder. Can a chessboard be grand or great...scale and scope—even and ever more?

Feed my head, with what, I wonder more? Feel my heart because...and find hope, there after?

What kind of a name is Nivens—and who is Alice, the wonderland?

Chess or not, what is my strategy for this life left or, am I even in the game, the grand board?



Your eyes sound to you

*Do not believe what your eyes tell you. All they show is limitation.
Look with your understanding.
Find out what you already know and you will see the way to fly.*
- Richard Bach, "Jonathan Livingston Seagull"

The unearthly encounters behind me while the journey of my flying ever closer to *The Low*. Things that at first seem shocking are, as time goes, the subtle, sedentary. The conditions; *the natural* is losing, and times are changing you, me, all of us, in ways unimagined.

On the bright side, my encounter with the white rabbit coupled with the sighting of one held high in my mind and heart, Jonathon.

"Eli," the seagull sounds, landing next to me high atop the valley. "You have come far, it seems, and still far to go."

"I suppose I have...but I must sound that I never thought I would see you again, not here so close to the-,"

"You must remember that I fly beyond my envelope—always stretching my wings," Jonathon reminds me. "You can't just stop and let life end life. You cannot give-in, give-out, or give-up!"

"You're right Jonathon, you can't..., but I don't know where you get all this-,"

"Oh yes you do—you really do...," the seagull sounds peering straight at me. "You know what drives me to live my life."

He was right—that I did know having learned much about this strange seabird; willing to stretch the envelope while spurning all of its own that stands about and sound, "Look at that fool trying to be something beyond...beneath. Stop the acrobatics and accept things, your place, here." Jonathon is above all that.

It makes sense; to go with *the natural* and hold to it, with it and by it—for who really wants to live in *the unnatural*. In truth or by fact, some do prefer *the unnatural* while others pretend to hold to *the*

IN THE LOW

natural. Whether pretenders or purists however, they are not as they really are, their sounds; no, their *life and living* seldom measure-up to their expressions, egos. Earnestness is not their character.

*Your eyes may see one thing while the deeper senses sound to you another. I thought I saw the young encircling a fire, making beautiful sounds while a white rabbit danced above them singing a ditty. Did my senses make sense or my eyes argue? Did I see them? Did I really hear their song? Was **Chaos** or Nivens there, with me and above me? How will I ever know? This experience is a mystery beyond measure.*

"I don't know, Jonathon, how to distinguish good from bad, right from wrong and all those extremes," I sound.

"I disagree," the seagull sharply sounds. "You have to be learning, understanding these facts and follies of life—for there are no possible way that you are as you were. It's not unnatural to have doubts, even despair, but your doubts must also be examined, separating the right from the wrong and so on."

"My confidence is-,"

"Confidence does not carry me over the conflict and contention from within and about me. If I listened to any and every sound, would I be here—or there," Jonathon sounds, looking toward the heavens. "I am a seagull and I will always be one, but that does not stop me from reaching outward, upward, stretching my wings beyond all reason and right, and feeling the warmth of the sun, the light."

Jonathon was a poet, a creature of passion, I thought again. Passion is where it begins, whatever "it" is...will be.

I was going one way and Jonathon the opposite. One is flying from *The Low*, the other toward it. The first, Jonathon, is more able, the second, me, unsure, unprepared and unstable.

There are some things that sounds cannot describe or convey. Even if I see it, I still doubt it, my inability to comprehend it, the meaning and message. I have seen things that were shocking at first, exceeding my reality, but after seeing worse, such things become blasé—not a second look or doubt whatever. My condition is reconditioning.



You can make things up, a real trade and talent. Perception over reality, the fog and smoke and all that stuff that clouds the view, the mind and heart. Creatures can do this in *the natural*; they can appear as something other than what they are in actuality. In *the unnatural*, the art of illusion is many dimensions and degrees; good is bad, right is wrong and all that is natural or normal turned abnormal, unnatural—strange and stranger still. Not about survival or sustainment, *the unnatural* is the **Vile** maxim, *pride and power*, the master of the *trade or talent, reconditioning my condition*—and yours, too, I fear.

I see more things that dazzle and deceive—more than I believe that I can conceive, now and then. Some encounters are believable, but not all; not the ones that are too abstract and askew as to astound. I will return though to these in time, as my silence ends, to warn you of everything seen—the things to come.

I cannot fathom why Jonathon came this far; why even a daring flyer as that seagull would come this far or further. There is a darkness beyond black; it is like a cold that is unaffected by the temperature, the climate or season. Looming and lasting, the dark envelopes you and does not let go; it is pervasive and finally invasive, planting itself deep in your mind and heart, ruling your every thought as to drive you mad and then more—all light extinguished, ended.

Try lighting *the darkness* and you discover that it snuffs you out; not just the light but the light bearer too; for nothing is as dark and lightless as what see now and further, then. Here, on the edge of *The Low*, is a veritable sphere of smoke as from the days of ages, a dragon's breath that destroys everything it touches, scorched and smoldering.

My feathers are darkening; the once lasting luster does not last, making me bland and blank, unkempt and unclear, clouded and confused. Maybe my body becomes bald from talon to tail.

The darkness is making me something that I am soon to hate. Darkness does that, you know; it changes you without realizing that you are changing until finally, the change is too much; you hate you more than it. Oh, how I have seen it, others more so, and that is how it

IN THE LOW

works; the degeneration that you cannot decipher until death bangs on the door and burst open your bleeding heart, your brain far gone, a slow, subtle death, painless but suffering; scorched and smoldering.

Open your eyes, listen, the sounds and senses that surround us. What I sound will make you as mad as me, the screaming within and beyond you, and you will hate me more than I do.



My blood is

When I think of all my wrongs, my blood is liquid flame.

- Walter Scott

What does it mean when you are mad enough to kill just to kill? Your blood boils and your senses become senseless. What does it take, seething and salivating, a slobbering that foment beyond the mouth all the way to your toes and higher than a white rabbit and other floating things? Are you mad like me? If you are not—madder than way down at the bottomless bottom—then you have lost the things that matter the most. When you do...you will know it. Oh yes, you will...

The things that happen in darkness defy time and place, indeterminate and dimensionless, *the darkest of darkness*. You flutter and flail but nothing answers, the sounds without echo, return. You scream and screech but no one knows—or cares to know—for all you know. What happens in the dark is another world, kept to thought, barely remembered, but what happens in *the darkest of darkness* is a fear like no other.

Too much dark, *the darkness*, and you go mad, manic, without relief or respite. To *go mad* happens when you are forced—for no one wants it to happen—by things beyond your control. You are out-of-your-control and then, well, you *lose it*. To *go mad* is not only to arrive there, but also to stay; a figurative hole that gets deeper as you frantically try to dig your way out, all the effort in vain.

Unsettling and unsettled, *the mad* pushes, are pushy to the point of making mad malevolent. When *the mad* makes the many mad, it goes too far—though *the mad* may have no sense of the effect. To add to the mix, those supposed as *the mad* can masquerade—or mimic *the mad*—pretending and posing when in actuality using this malady to manipulate and move others to the actual, authentic effect. This kind, their disguise and deception, will *drive you mad*.

IN THE LOW

Some, still, may sound, “I’m mad as Hell and I’m not taking it anymore,” only to exit the stage shortly thereafter sounding, “Do you think they bought it?” It is all show, perception and deception; theater, a charade of winners and losers, the decided and the dubious.

I am learning that this time and place is a mad, mad underworld, *The Low*, and it is ever extending as disease does spread.

The ones truly *touched*, *the mad*, hope for *the storm* because they believe that if they survive chaos, their opportunity and your crisis.

The pretenders, posing as *the mad*, prefer to cause *the storm*, a crisis as the perfect storm for opportunity, access and advantage, to control as much and many as possible. The more they fool, the merrier they are as *pride and power* plays the game. Pretenders and posers are all about *pride and power*—the lifeblood of the dark, darkness.

Individuals, once *collective* and constituted, are much the same; once *the singular* becomes a *collective*, each loses their identity as individuals: no longer a single, they think and believe as others, embracing or otherwise accepting the doctrine, ideology or common interests of the whole. *The singular* is more or less either absorbed or consumed into *the more or many* or else remains on the peripheral, straddling the line between all-in or exclusion. This outlying position has its drawbacks and disadvantages; it is both convenient and compromising for *the singular* to embrace *the more or many*, thinking and acting as a group, *the more or many*. Most birds flock to a flock.

One sounds, “I am me”, but then *goes collective*; constituted, incorporated in an infinitely higher place, often exempt of any being singled-out. Flocks are convenient, comforting and comfortable.

I have never been more singular than I am now (though I have never been merely one of a flock either). Some creatures are much more among the many in *the natural* than I am—and I accept that as their way, not mine. They have their ways and I, mine....

Even when surrounded by a host of similarly appearing, believing or thinking others, one may still feel very singular and even worse, singled-out, an outcast. Rejected or repulsed, the outcast is aware that



relationships are seasonal, *here today and gone tomorrow*. Seldom if ever is the outcast, rejected or repulsed, completely alone or isolated. Relationships formed in *the natural* are destroyed through and endless number of ways, *the unnatural*. Believe me, there are forces that work to destroy relationships, as power plays out, where a fractionalized sort is far more malleable and controllable than the whole. Ironic is this cycle, seasonal relationships, that destroys because it senses that it has endured the same. The mind thinks and the heart feels the rejection, then it strives to separate, sever and subdue *the same*. And in this reversal of *who done it*, the culprit may carry rage, deep anger along with disappointment and disgust, that they have been treated wrongly, unfairly and unjustly—a fascinating twist, a reversal, of the instigator playing the innocent and the innocent, guilty as charged. Among *the more or many*, this *reversal* can get complicated, complex; no more merely a caper or case of one against the other, the whole matter is escalated to regions of the earth with untold and unlimited costs, one side aimed to destroy the other—though their actions be postured as “necessary” for security, safety and such. Rage spreads—like *the mad*—around and across, an asymmetric aggression, until all but the isolationist is absorbed, accepting and articulating that, “There is no alternative....” To *the singular* however, acquiescing to “no alternative” is not allowed whereas with *the more and many*—enthralled and enraptured in *the mad*—it is the final solution, secure at last—powers almighty, we are secure at last! Being secure is what we want no matter how much you must sacrifice, sell or surrender. Nothing is more important than security, nothing.

What I think and express is confusing I know—even to me, by me. Yes, my sounds are senseless and sometimes, perhaps, sourced *the mad* with me. I look at my reflection on the water and do not recognize or resemble the eagle I once was, or thought to be. Beyond the surface of feathers and flesh is still more a stranger, the heart and mind forever changed and still changing with the passing of time, place. *Where is this change taking me*, I wonder, and then here I am; now, in *The Low*. Who

IN THE LOW

knows? Maybe you are too and understand my sounds more than even I do. If not...you will, you must or else....



Clever enough

If men had wings and bore black feathers, few of them would be clever enough to be crows.

- Henry Ward Beecher

“My feathers, there’s that crow again,” I sound to myself, flying low, near the valley of darkness. “This can’t be good.”

Crows are uglier than ugly can be and make mischief like no other. The rapture soars, a real high-flier, but the crow looms about, waiting to peck away as some dead or dying creature. Clever the crow, do not make the mistake of underestimating them, coy and calculated. Crows are related to **Vile**; not as large and looming as the vulture, but just as stubborn, stalking the sick, staking-out the stench of death.

“You there, what good are you,” I sound, more a statement than a question.

“I am more than good, the crow cawed—I am **Dark** and I have a message for you, Eli, the once eagle, now loner of the lowest.”

Just as I expect...and cavalier without any cause. I will show the crow the meaning of low. “What is your message, **Dark**?”

“Not so fast, Eli,” **Dark** demanded before shadow flogging, all show and no substance. “It’s seems that you want to die, don’t you, Eli?”

“Who told you,” I sound back, sarcasm aside.

I had to play this conversation right. As I had learned already, it is wasteful to sound such kind swelled by the likes of **Vile**; those who think that they are superior, fooled in a false sense of value, even valor. It is easier to hover than hold fast as it is to sound-off rather than sound out. This crow is another of a soul without spirit.

I know about soul and spirit. I have one to hold fast and to sound out, “Here I am—do your worst!”

There is a spirit to lead and to follow; to carry and to accompany me before, now and still further, farther. Sometime the spirit stands strong

IN THE LOW

but still it stands true, my soul while it waits. In time and place, my soul waits and wonders the matter, the spirit of my soul. I cannot always find comfort. My mind wonders still more, mostly of fear and the things that may cause the spirit to wonder, wander off. Strange, that I hold to the spirit yet cannot prove its existence, but then, creatures depend on hope and hope comes in believing in something bigger and better than what is seen, understood and acceptable amid *the unnatural* of a dark, different spirit.

This dark spirit seeks to destroy all that is good and right; it moves about like a roaring lion, a prowler and predator; prodigious and predominate. Masterful at disguise, this spirit is opposite at it appears, is perceived. Cunning and clever like this crow but beyond comprehension, it is undeniable and is undefeatable against all but, maybe, one.

And from this dark spirit comes a crow, fast approaching and then lunging at me with ferocity, a final fight; yes, this advance is, as I soon realized, to death and no other end. Falling-back, I tumble and roll to recover, barely avoiding the action of what seems more a flogging rooster. The next few seconds fuzzy—a blur with blood—where you are not sure what is happening, or happened, even after the end. Alas, I managed to go to the air and, from there, higher and higher, a near vertical ascent, narrowly escaping this creature of darkness.

Higher I ascend while wondering why I was running from a crow. *This would never happen in the natural—but it is no ordinary crow.* Soon I realize, there are many; first a few black spots and then more and more so that area beneath me is a wave of crows arranged in such formation as to look like the *big birds* that go boom. The sound is deafening; the volume enough you over the edge, beyond the earth and *the mad*. In this formation of fight-flight, the mass of black was cawing out in synchrony my name, “Eli, Eli...,” followed by sounds I could not understand.

“What is it they’re chanting? I have not heard this dialect before.”



These crows are more than close or similar—they are one in the same; not one **Dark** but a mass, a cloning of that creature. Yes, they move the same, in unison, and sounded the same at the same time; a species of one system, each and all formed one big black cloud displacing air as a storm, troops of storms, storm troopers.

No other can survive this, I determined as a dread came over me; the kind that is so deep that you wonder if death comes and you are all but gone. A sudden cold, thought the dread, but then hail as never before I had seen, felt. Ice collects on my wings, my altitude quickly drops, drawing ever closer to the storm. The inevitability is **Dark** consuming me, feasting on this deadened, downed eagle. In what seems moments from them, under their will, the mass disappears—vanished from my view! It ends in a blink with my rescue to whom, what, to never know? I tell you these things still mystified by my saving.

Darkness (or **Dark**) is like that; a master at illusion, appearing as a mass when in fact, much less if at all. I am learning that *the darkness* is a collective above and beneath all power, its strength beyond dimensions, but more deception of many layers and angles.

In this last encounter for the day, **Dark** simply stared me down, cawed once more, and flew away—vanishing into the spheres for now. I do not know why this happened at all, was all I could think, except to expose the darkness for what it is—and what *it is not*. Hear my thoughts as one that survives darkness.

“What is the message, the meaning of this experience,” I sound to me, the matter a moving memory. I believed for a moment that death was mine, my journey lost. I did not know at the time, only to learn and keep learning, that what happens in one moment can seem a lifetime and what happens in a lifetime, well, can seem consequently as inconsequential. I may draw from this experience more than just the power of illusions but more, my want to believe more than I can see or seemingly what is and is not. If I had never had this moment of utter and endless darkness then how would I begin to know as they, the

IN THE LOW

others, until now? It is more than ironic that utter darkness showed me that light is able *The Low*.



Someone's darkness

*Until we have seen someone's darkness,
We really do not know who they are.
- Marianne Williamson*

*The darkness, as convincing and credible as it first seemed to me, is not relevant to anyone or anything unknowing of the underworld, *The Low*. You have to be in this time and place before you can truly know, to find and feel *the darkness of Dark*.*

Do I know the ways of the ostrich, the ostracizing, burying its head in the sand? Can I feel the fear of the rabbit, the rapid beat of its heart, the shaking of its soul? Can I conceive what the seagull, Jonathon, has endured, scorning by its own who see it as more than a rebel, but a rogue—if that were possible? Can I know what I have not witnessed?

*What do I really know—only what I have learned from experience and even then, doubts and indecision remain? What I know—am still learning—is not as much of the strength of **Dark** as my own weakness. A voice leaves much in doubt, disturbing and degrading, that sounds, “Eli, you should have known before,” or “Why didn’t you accept and acknowledge your weaknesses and then do something about it?” The questions are often leading, a presumption of wrongdoing, that leave me silent but more, sedate and sedentary, suffering a shame of a predator gone prey, the noble mad low as a pauper or commoner. I think that I need to act but then this apathy sets in, sounding, “Why bother, the end is inevitable.” I want courage to overcome this condition of constraint but it fails to arrive and the eagle lands hard, grounded, buried in the earth, a dearth of eagle ego.*

I do not know if darkness is what I fear most. Maybe it is failure, failing to be what I am supposed to be, atop the chain. Maybe it is the unknown or that which I have no control over—it controls me, I suppose, but I cannot conceive what it is, will be, but only that it is out there and

IN THE LOW

will somehow make less of me. Maybe my fear is more about the light in the end that evades me no matter how hard I fly, try, to reach it, grasp it and hang on!

Could I have missed the mark and landed myself into a hole bigger than a rabbit? What if the weakness is no weakness at all, but only my doing—as a kind of self-debasing, a self-induced sabotage, aimed to assure that the darkness prevails and light dims to death? What if I fear the light more than darkness and by standing in the light, any darkness will be exposed—my esteem as an eagle crushed under the weight of flaws and foibles?” My train of thought tends to revolve more than evolve, of guessing, guessing about my guessing.

I need the facts, not guesswork. If the facts come, will it be enlightening rather than disheartening? Maybe the facts are more than I think they are—worse or less— as fact in the natural is found wanting in the unnatural. Maybe facts do not matter much anymore.

If what we think is who we are, then I must be crazy; for my thoughts are anywhere and everywhere—all things again and again—till at last I end-up nowhere but somewhere that I cannot locate or land—lost and then too lost to know that I’m actually lost. There are many options to decide when you are lost beyond....

I can still fly and that alone is something to bring me home, back to my senses, the views and visions from high above; and then the exhilaration of flying fast and furious—like Jonathon.

If I have a bad day, I fly.

If I am hurt but still able to fly, I fly.

If I have been misled or manipulated, betrayed, I fly.

If I am mad and angry, I fly like a bat out-of-The-Low.

For I have been giving the means and methods to fly and to fly well. When I fly, why, I am free—at least for a moment if not a few....

When I tire of flying, I tire of life and living. I know that the earth waits with all the unnatural that messes-up the natural. It is a mad, mad, mad, mad world down there, and still high above, I am covered-up in it; the mud and the muck that stinks like the vulture post-scavenging



and makes you drop what you are doing and then drop to the great deep, drowning in despair.

If only the rain could cleanse the mud and muck, wash away that stench and make us smell clean and pure, new again. The rain does not rain here, in The Low; there is no rain, only more mud and muck with water just as dark and dirty, feted and foul, slack and slimy. We are all covered-up in it, top to bottom and left to right, in and out, back and forth. Absorbed and acclimated, we look like creatures from the black lagoon from the mammoth to the microscopic; monsters of the more and many that thrive on the murky waters and move about the wet and wild—the kinds that crawl on you or in you, ravaging your life and living from both sides, leaving the bones to molder. Parasites of the planet, we take what we want—by force of course—and leave little of the rest, the many sub-classes of the species, this one and that one.

I know that I stink too, but sometimes I do not think I stink as bad as I could. Surely, there is someone out there that stinks worse than my own. Oh, how I hope that others stink worse; that way, my smell will not nearly be as offensive, the stench so pungent that even I cannot stand me.

Darkness always gets me—the mud and muck always someone else at fault-cause, not me. It is not that I ooze darkness but more that it lands on me—thrown from the monsters, mammoth and microscopic. I could not possibly stink like this inside. If I did stink from within then I will know, repulsed by my every internal integral, from the skull to the sharp claws on my talons. As I am, cleaner than most, the mud and muck is more the work of others, not me.

Do you stink? Do you wallow in the mud and muck of someone's darkness? You might think, *I cannot catch it; not me*, but then it happens and before you know it, you are infected and turned, the symptoms, turning and transforming the:

↻ Good into bad—but calling the transformation and then outcome, “good” while the once, original *good* falters, forgotten;

IN THE LOW

- ☪ Right into wrong—but calling the wrong, “right” and what was right (before), “wrong”;
- ☪ Service into slavery and turning the sacred into the exaltation of you, the self—the center of all things;
- ☪ Light into darkness—the unacceptable and disdained—and darkness into light;
- ☪ Commitment and covenant into mere sounds—the actual service or any sacredness as nonsense, passé and provincial;
- ☪ Crisis into an opportunity and an opportunity (to help someone) into an offer, a deal, burdened by conditions/consequences;
- ☪ Institutions or *collectives* into saviors that pave the streets of salvation, while turning saviors into sweet stories of acceptance without any accountability;
- ☪ Laws into orders for most—but not for all, the ones that trump the laws with *power and pride*;
- ☪ Minds into mush, pumping *mud and muck* through multiple modes of something called “the media”, re-programming the gray matter to believe that what should matter does not, and what should not matter one iota is now *the thing*.

Turning, turning and turning is what the darkness does, piece by piece, part by part with purpose on purpose to first pander the population and then plunder all that really did matter and should matter—all this in the Days of Daddy-Dumb.

If my eaglets were with me, things might be different, better than now. I believe there is nothing with more potential to reverse the turning than the raising of our young to know that mud and muck stink—and stink’s bad—and that darkness, while present, cannot prevail over good. I live because they can ideally live longer, long after I go ahead.



Her pride of place

A falcon towering in her pride of place [is]...

- William Shakespeare

It looks like a falcon, courage—no fear, I thought. Rolling in the same path, I came long aside, mirroring its moves. At a perch, a point on a mountain, we meet at Peace.

“What brings you here,” I sound. “I never expected to see someone as you.”

“And neither did I, an eagle,” she sounds. “An eagle in the underworld is beyond the world, my worst dream.”

It is a female falcon; a bird of excellent prowess, she is similar to me but is different too. She and her species come in different sizes: some smaller ones are *hobbies*, larger ones that hover, *kestrels*. A fine bird, once highly pursued for the skills and still, highly maneuverable, hard to trail in the short flight, as I find true today on the rare opportunity, to follow the falcon.

“Eli,” she sounds my name sincerely. “You’re either stupid or stubborn,” expressing her view without hesitation. “This is not place for the living, the light and-,”

“What about you, here? It seems too little too late for this place, once Peace.”

“Aside of the place, this point is a once rich and reverent place, Paradise, that fell and finally became-,”

“The Low,” I answered. “Peace and Paradise became The Low.”

“You evidently know where you are, but do you know where you’re going,” she sounds. “What is your plan, eagle?”

“I can’t confidently sound that I do, but I know that I cannot go back—not now, at least. I have only one direction, dreaded though it be.”

IN THE LOW

“Oh Eli, I know too; that you cannot go back—not ever, as it was, the natural, for once you crossover, *life and living* changes forever.”

The encounter with falcon was not *the natural*; birds flock with their very own. That we were in such a moment was *the supernatural*, I believe, for I cannot comprehend it being anything else, *the unnatural*.

“What is your name, falcon?”

“I am **Fearless**,” she sounds.

“**Fearless**,” I sound back. “This name is a high calling—difficult to abide as I now know all too well.”

In the distance came another sound of another bird that is, like **Fearless**, “a high calling”. *It is an owl; Wisdom is here and, of all places, The Low. First the falcon and now the owl—two encounters of such excellence in the same day, same time.*

“Seems that Wisdom has made its last stance in the Days of Daddy-Dumb,” **Fearless** exclaims.

*She knows about Daddy-Dumb, I wondered. Does she know that Daddy-Dumb covers so deep a distance, so high the height that even a high calling knows? Can anyone avoid the Days; can anyone fly high enough or far enough to escape these times, this place? No, such times leave no stone unturned and no action unnoticed—even thinking—a strictly private, personal matter. Everything and everyone is uncovered and lay bare before **Vile** and such villains.*

“The owl, night’s herald, shrieks: ‘it’s very late’,” **Fearless** sounds, looking toward the skies.

“How can you sense it? It’s always dark, darkness,” I sound sarcastically.

“You do have a personality,” she sounds to me. “You are a strange one, Eli the eagle,” she follows, staring me up and down, “and you are losing your health, it seems. It’s the unnatural, you know,” she continues. “It’s what makes you think and sound strange things; things not natural. This time and place is dark indeed, deathly and dire.”

She was only reminding me, I realized, that this strange place causes strange thoughts while working constantly against any light, hope.



“Can you read my mind,” I sound, given the experiences most recent.

“Can I read your mind,” she resounds, delaying an answer.

“I am not sure that I would want to,” she fires-back, somewhat tongue and beak. “Even though *the natural* makes the whole world kin, strange is the encounter, a falcon and an eagle.”

*Where does she get these soundings? Is she trying to impress me with her intellect or only adding more strangeness to an already strange setting? Is **Fearless** real or merely an image, my imagination?*

“Strange, isn’t it Eli,” she follows.

“Ah, what is that,” I reluctantly sound, clearly setting myself up for something more.

“The sound of the owl—does it frighten you,” she sounds, shifting the subject somewhat.

“Maybe...but does it scare you,” I fire back.

“I admire you’re honesty, Eli,” she continues. “You are a bird of integrity however much it threatens you.”

She did not answer the echoed question, I thought more. Why expose yourself when you can play the game, “Who is more secure?”

“I relish the love-song of the robin, personally,” she sounds. “It warms my heart and makes my feathers tingle.”

“That’s nice,” was all I could manage to sound, careful to hold.

“Eli, I think what you’re doing is right,” she continues, a surprising remark. *She seems to know much about me than possible.* “You must do this no matter the outcome, you know. You cannot go back,” she sounds, commanding while concurring with my answer as to “a plan”.

“Thank you for the endorsement, encouragement. It always helps to believe that you have someone on your side.”

“I can’t confirm that I’m ‘on your side’,” she sounds, making a clarification. “But I can sound that if my young were in danger, lost and possibly in peril, that I would die for them, for us,” she sounds, once again looking me in the eye. “They are our greatest sacrifice.”

“I am for us.”

IN THE LOW

“And you Eli are...,” she sounds, her feathers ruffled.

After a few moments of what some call awkwardness, she continues her poetic prose, “The earth has music for those who listen. The music is sometimes sad, lonesome and longing.”

“What kind of music do you prefer,” I follow.

“Any sound that is soothing, comforting and cooing,” she replies, her language with rhythm and riddle.

“That’s nice,” I told her, a repeated response.

“It’s more than ‘nice’,” she sounds, “It’s necessary for our existence in eternity, *the natural*.”

“I like music, sure,” I sound.

“Don’t play to me, Eli. My sounds have meaning; music is *life and living*.”

“You’re right,” I sheepishly sound.

“It’s not about me or you,” she continues, “it’s about something that is invaluable, vital—like that thing, love.”

“Love,” I sound, vaguely familiar with that language.

“Yes, music is love, I have come to believe.”

“That’s nice,” I sound, yet again.

“You keep using that expression, ‘that’s nice’. I detect some hurt and hostility beneath your feathered frame.”

Of course, I am hurt, I thought. *It’s not enough that I have to hold on to hurt but does she have to remind me*, the thought flashed through my mind, completely removed from whom I thought I was—am.

“It’s hard to love when you’re so hurt,” she sounds, adding insult to the injury. “Do you really know anything about love?”

“I know what love is,” I sound back sharply.

“Maybe you do, but it’s hard to see the forest for the trees,” she sounds back to me, equally sharp. “Your deep hurt is hindering your love,” she explains, assuming more the mentor than merely another bird of prey. “It’s hard to have hope when you’re so deeply hurt.”

“My vision is clear but I can’t see behind objects, it’s true,” I told the falcon, **Fearless**.



Without sacrifice

How do you expect to develop experience without sacrifice?

- Unknown

Fearless went on to sound much about this thing called love. Though found and framed among *the worse*—of all creatures—*love* is everywhere in nature, evident among and between many kinds, many ways, up and down. It may be nature or instinct, but *love* expresses itself in the mercies and majesty of the each species, even between species in a mysterious way. *Where there is love there is life, help and hope.*

Some may sound, “Nature is cruel”, but these fail to see their own ways, cruelty in the highest and lowest order; purposely murdering their own in unceasing numbers using incessant methods making their notions moot. No, *the worst of the worse wrote the book* on cruelty, a callousness and condition that defies us all, up and down.

Again, a screech owl heard in the distance; a sound as no other bird I know. Some sound that this sound is similar to the young, the newborns of *the worse*. “It sounds like a baby crying,” they sound—the cry or screech portending of a tragedy while paralyzing at the notion that “nature is cruel”, while the unnatural stand blind and dumb, drunk on their illusions of life and living—self-absorption, adulation and advancement. They are the cruelest, full of conceit and corruption.

Why would a wise owl be here, I raise the question, thought? If anyone would and should fly clear of this place, it must be the owl, the way of wisdom. Is wisdom seeking me out, standing at my perch? Maybe the owl is lost, old and senile, or maybe it was in an angry atmosphere, accosted and blown asunder. Whatever the cause or course, it is up to its crown like me and maybe way over its head too.

No sooner do I raise the questions do I sound, “Look, it is the owl flying my way. Why—what lesson must I learn now?”

IN THE LOW

“And who are you, eagle,” the owl sounds to me.

“What, you don’t know,” I sound, shocked, surprised by the first of a series of beings that does not know me, my name.

“Introductions are important eagle and, well, decorum calls for me to sound the deeper side of the question,” the owl enters my perch.

“‘The deeper side,’” I sound.

“Yes, ‘deeper...’” the owl resounds. “I know your name—everyone does—but that’s not what I’m sounding.”

Wisdom knows my name but does not sound it.

“Who do you think you are,” the owl sounds. “Are you merely a creature or are you more? Do you know you?”

“I don’t know,” is all I find to sound, my sense of it.

“At least you’re sincere—that’s something,” owl sounds sharply. “The sincere are some you can work with—not the *power and pride* that are so much of some indulged in self that they can’t separate the sacred from the sanctimonious, the skin from the soul or any other sense of the superficial, the mere surface of it, short of deeper...”

“And who are these ‘indulged,’” I sound bluntly.

“Don’t play coy with me, Eli,” the wise one warns while spinning his skull and blinking his wide eyes. “You know who, what, I’m talking about by now, don’t you?”

“I guess-,” I sound sordidly.

“You do know...those you’ve met already and soon more...,”

Does the owl know those I have met and, further and farther, whom I will..., I thought. Where can omnipotence come except by the unnatural—unless it happens to be the supernatural?

“Whom will I meet,” I sound to **Wise**.

“I know you want to know,” the owl sounds back, sensing my desires, “but I have reservations about it, sounding anything to you .”

“And why is that,” I continue, a question to the question. “If you know and if I sound, believing that you know..., then why wouldn’t you sound to me so that will know?”



“Knowing about the future is not always a good thing,” **Wise** begins. “The future is full of great and terrible things, the later of these two often too terrible to bear, I understand.”

“If I don’t know that, how do I know it’s terrible,” I follow.

“And if it’s terrible, the future, than what,” **Wise** makes a point.

“Maybe it would better if-,”

“Listen Eli,” the owl interjects. “I will sound some things and leave the rest for a future time and place—wisdom over want.”

“Very well. Show me the future of what you think will work for now. Anything is better than nothing!”

For that, **Wise** sounded of some whom I met, both prior encounters and new entries in my journey.

“You know of the rat, the rodent, right?”

“Yes, the sneaky rascal, I remember,” I reply. “I think it died, killed likely by some of its own sort, most likely.”

“How much do you remember, the encounter,” the owl continues.

“It came and went, was there and then gone,” I answer, though unable to remember the details—my memory at a loss, the moment of little matter. “Maybe the rat *ratted* one-to-many times,” I sound on, suggesting a cause.

“That rat was the exception,” **Wise** sounds back. “**Rodent** did not carry-out commands to the detail, but it chose to play both sides—thought to be options. By the time such ‘options’ were not actually alternatives, it was too late. You see, **Vile** and its circle do not bargain, do not play,” the owl continues. “If there is one quality about **Vile** it is that this kind are very predictable, always and forever sliding toward Sodom.”

‘Sodom’ is something evidently dark, the darkest of all. “So **Wise** went on to teach me.

“Oh, you’re only beginning to learn the facts about them, those that emulate *the worst of the worse*.”

“And the rat paid for its mistakes,” I sound back, still unsure....

IN THE LOW

“Yes, no good deed goes unpunished and the rat, for what it was, had done you a good deed in some way.”

“What about the rabbit?”

“**Chaos** is a bit crazy,” Wise sounds. “Call it a condition or the consequences of deep and dark fears but the creature carries burdens of enormous size and proportion—not the least of which is leading those like you down the wrong path or way.”

“The rabbit is a darker sort,” I continue with questions.

“Not always; like the rat, the rabbit knows good, goodness.”

“How can you sense it, the good? When do you know?”

“First, you have to observe the creature; see its qualities and how it thinks, acts and does,” the owl teaches. “If you don’t give the time to think deeper and act in kind, you’ll never see the reality of it.”

“It’s never completely black and white, completely dark or light, right,” I follow, more a question than a statement. “It is hard to tell the good from the bad, light from darkness and all those opposites—the truth of it.”

The owl had unlimited, boundless awareness along with insight on why the rat was ended, “**Rodent** lacked absolute allegiance to the causes of darkness,” **Wise** told me. “If you’re not all-in, then you’re outed. For one so dirty and soiled, the rat had somehow found and retained a bit of light,” **Wise** concluded. “The rat took unnecessary but commendable chances. I can sound to you that you that it died swiftly—no match for the chicken hawk.”

What to learn from the rat, I thought many times, troubled by its end. Now I know: *light, goodness and right can come from the most unlikely times and places though you have to accept that improbability to first be aware and second, be attentive. If you do not..., then you are sure to miss the message among the mysteries of life and living.*



On a Lark

The owl goes not into the nest of the lark.

-Victor Hugo

“Sometimes we are compelled to do the impractical, even the impossible and unthinkable, *life and living*,” the owl sounds to me.

“Like the rat?”

“Or others you’ve encountered,” the owl adds, “that go above and beyond *the natural*. Anyone that rises above their station, I mean.”

“Do you mean *the unnatural*,” I sound, puzzled that this avenue gains appreciation.

“Possibly, but not in the sense you might think,” owl answers, “as ‘unnatural’ can be different things, depending on whether it goes one way or the opposite, the darker, darkness.”

“I thought *the unnatural* is all darkness, bad, wrong and such things,” I reply in my uncertainty.

“You are beginning to see that some good can come out of *the unnatural*; the rat is soiled to the soul but rendered some light, right? The ostrich of all creatures encountered; more than an ‘incurable introvert’, the creature is recluse—reduced to the soil as though *the darkness* will shield it from, well, *the darkness*. Then, there is the rabbit, **Chaos**; another of the ground dwellers that is sometimes not grounded at all, but finds light at the end of the tunnel, the edge of the hole.”

“What do you mean, ‘not grounded’?”

“I mean that for all the rabbit represents at the edge of the rabbit hole, it is inherently afraid. More than *the natural* variety, as much as that shows, the rabbit is racked with more fears; *the unnatural* kind that plague much of the high-level creatures, *the worse*. It is a fear not borne but hatched, not instinctive but somewhat inbred—not by love or for good, but in hate and for the worst to do their worst,” **Wise** explains.

IN THE LOW

“Fears or fearing is a powerful thing; something strong enough to do *the worst* and not give it another thought, no senses, concern or conscience. Such fears are final, forever destructive.”

“Do I have such fears that-,” I sound.

“Yes, you do exhibit some similar fears,” the owl interjected, evidently reading my face, my mind and thoughts.

“I am afraid, now further and farther humiliated in my own weakness, the shadow of an eagle,” I confess.

“There is no reason to be ashamed or embarrassed by it,” **Wise** sounds, attempting to be reassuring. “It happens to all creatures faced with *the darkness*, believe me. You are but the next of much witnessed in my own quest for wisdom.”

“It does...they do...I am?”

“Yes, it has to...; the creature has to endure the fears—the feelings deep and dreadful that cannot be denied except in sounds, if that, on the surface. Deep down however, the creature is crying-out in despair.”

Wise the owl continued on this matter describing different kinds of fears that come in *the darkness*: fears that cause an “anxiety, an uneasiness and even concern, “apprehension”, about something for which the outcome is uncertain, maybe dangerous and deadly, but with rampant risks, many problems and issues.

“What are ‘risks’?”

“Risks are a regular part of *life and living* though you really didn’t consider such in *the natural*,” the owl explains. “When you first tried to fly, right out of the nest, flight was not certain; and even airborne, you certainly made your mistakes, inexperienced in this endeavor.”

Wise was right of course; I did make mistakes, aborting flights once I able to lift-off, that is. I cannot remember worrying about it; being all *tied-up in knots*, over *the natural* skill of flight, flying however.

There was, thinking back, an eaglet that never made it to flight; one born with a deficiency, maybe a broken wing, or something worse. As I seem to remember, the flightless creature never made it. Grounded, the bird did not last. I never gave this much thought either, until now.



“There are other fears, besides anxiety,” the owl continues.

Still I had to know one or more of these...even before **Wise** elaborated.

“In *the unnatural*, the complexities of *life and living* arise as these fears. The rabbit fears, yes, but the complexities expound on this than that of *the natural* varieties.”

“And what are those...?”

Wise responded with first, the fear of death. “Yes, the rabbit fears harm, but not death—not like **Chaos** endured time again.”

Below fear is separation; one that the rabbit knows all too well, so sounds **Wise**. “**Chaos** has good reason to fear separation since, as barely a kit, lost its mother forever.”

“These things happen; fear is natural,” I sound pointedly, adding my part.

“Of course Eli, but the kit didn’t know that as either you—even a parent—could have imagine losing your own,” the owl fired-back, “But I wasn’t finished. You see, **Chaos** found its mother in pieces, the remains scattered here and there; a graphic, gruesome event.”

“How do you know this; the rabbit’s history and all?”

Wise the owl had a memory and mental capacity like none I could imagine let alone comprehend. This creature was gifted beyond any and all that I had met—maybe even more than **Vile**—and seemed to know more about everything and everyone—a visionary too.

“And **Chaos** was changed forever,” I continue, a conclusion.

“It took time, time for the kit to age, to come to grips with the tragedy and-,”

“And the loss,” I interrupt.

“Yes...that too and more,” the owl agrees, amended.

“More?”

Life and living in the unnatural is always “more” to the losses and “more” of impractically everything. It is not a merry journey and, in *the Days of Daddy-Dumb*, it can be distressing beyond what I surmise as any time in any place, ever, *The Days of Daddy-Dumb*.

IN THE LOW

“**Chaos** was the only one that survived,” owl continues, the details of their deaths. “The rabbit witnessed the ravaging of his own by-,”

“By **Vile**,” I interrupt, anticipating the culprit, cause.

“Indirectly, yes, those serving **Vile**,” **Wise** confirms.

It was a grisly image and though not that much more than *the natural* can offer as to killing and death, had lasting consequence for **Chaos**, so the owl described it.

“The natural can be just as brutal,” I sound, comparing one to the other. “In the end there is death, regardless of the plan, predator.”

“Not really,” **Wise** corrects me. “Yes, the basic act of death, of killing, can be similar but, as with the complexes of the world, it’s also the intention, the purpose—the motivations and methods, slow and suffering.”

“The intention, purpose,” I sound, echoing the owl, sounding and absorbing at the same time. “Isn’t it always about survival?”

“It is one thing to take life to survive but another to take life for the thrill of it, slow and suffering,” **Wise** explains emphatically.

“I do get some thrill out of the hunt,” I reply, admitting the adrenaline that courses through my veins, a surge of strength.

“And that’s a natural response,” the owl replies, “The needs for sustenance, survival, dictates our determination. But the taking of life for sport or game, well, that’s another thing,” **Wise** adds. “What does survival have to do with this ‘game’ of death?”

Wise explained the intentions and purpose that are subtle on the surface but, finally, are seriously far apart, *the natural* and *the unnatural*. “They are beneath a brute—I’m afraid—beyond and beneath anything that *the natural* possesses, presents and produces.”

I want for a time when *the unnatural* is not much a part of creation. Maybe it is time to go out as a lark, a song of joy instead of death and dirge.



Go, going, gone

There are going to be times when we cannot wait for somebody.

- Key Kesey

Sometimes you just have to go. You cannot wait for everyone to figure-out if they are on or off—or even under—but you have to sound, “Let’s do it, take-off ‘destined’ for destiny.” For as destiny would have it, the next stop on my journey was a place called *Nazareth*, a place known for songs, for players and merry pranksters, the muse alive and well. Do you dig it, the times a-changing?”

Flying down on this place, I see the forbidden features of the underworld. Further still, at a branch of a stumped tree, I see the smaller things, the lesser thing and the things that are not; such that the larger and greater things from before become, yes, less. *Taking it slow or slower is sometimes so insightful, the little things that at higher speed would simply pass by. Getting low means seeing though difficult to stomach, digest, and finally hurl—to toxic for the tummy to take.*

Besides a great view, I hear everything of strange but soothing sounds, the names of creatures called out such as “Mary” and “Joseph”, “Annie” and “Fanny”. Many songs and sounds do I hear and feel as though the band arrives, many larks landed. On one side, some called “Temptations” sing and dance, move and groove, synchronize and harmonize, jazz bedazzle. Chiming in, a couple more called “The Supremes” more tempting than the *Temptations*, alluring in their way, the female of the species so it seemed. The sounds beautiful but blue too, rhythm and rhyme too wonderful to express in my own way, sad but courageous when the sounds arrive, “Stop in the name of love.”

Looking to the right, another group, not alone but not with the others either; a band simply called “Band” urging the listener to take a *load off* and stay awhile, in “Nazareth”.

IN THE LOW

To listen is to learn. To watch, well, maybe the beginning of wisdom. What these minstrels are doing is sounding a story, perhaps several, of how *life and living* was changing, had changed with still change to come; that what had been was soon to change or had changed already—whether it should or should not—and only those that see it and feel it can comprehend it, change.

Pranksters and players play more; those that talk about change and even depend on it for *life and living*. They profess in protest, “The danger that awaits the sojourner is to refuse to believe that change is possible or, as it happens, refuse to see it and, preferably, embrace it is some way. You must believe to receive....”

In and around the sounds are many others; groups of these are those, some *pranksters and players*, while others more the *real deal*—those that show the sacrifices of change, the effect and even the cause. Many make sounds but, between the lines and within all the combinations, some seem to resonant more than others; some accepting...while others, less so, revolting and refusing the established, too structured and systematic to survive, succeed!

“You came, Eli,” I hear the sound to my shock, my startling.

“Who sounded that,” I sound back, stuttering and stammering my sounds. “Who knows my purpose and plight?”

“Over here,” come three sounds, somewhat harmonic, but barking as though they are canine creatures, dogs or the dingo, rocking and rolling while a bullfrog, “Jeremiah” croaks, “Joy to the world...”

“How did you know...,” I sound loud, my doubt now in doubt. “How did you know that I would come—that I would not turn back?”

No immediate answer comes but only a frenzy of creatures covering their ears and hopping around frantic as though they are **Chaos**, the rabbit, full of *the unnatural*, fears unfettered. *Stranger by the moment*, I lapse into the legendary line: *I landed here to take a load off and what do find but more fear—the kind that Chaos knows and lives every miserable, mad and maniacal day of its so-called life, fearing as it is, fear.*



Things were happening fast and furious—making my tails feathers spin. I could not see, hear, or comprehend what I thought I saw and heard; sounds that I have never heard before and thought.

Three more creatures approached from the east, finely feathered and riding humped beasts, looking and then sounding, “Have you see *the one*, yet, have you seen the Nazarene?” *Which one is that*, I thought, *there are so many pranksters, players, and parties, making my mind wonder oh wonder about ‘the one’, ‘the Nazarene’ is—or will be?*

As though they sensed my thoughts, the beast-riding trio called back: “The *one* who will save us from *the worst of the worse—have you seen the savior, the prince of peace, our help and hope to come?*”

“No, no sign of-,”

“We just pulled in...and are feeling about half-past dead. We just need some place where we can lay our heads,” the trio sounds.

“You’re not the Temptations and you’re sorely not the Supremes,” comes a resounding reply. “Who are you,” many sound, astounded.

“Just call us, ‘The Band’,” they sound back. “We got these bags and were looking for a place to hide,” they chime. “We saw the white rabbit flying overhead and began to dance around,” they sound on. “Help us find our hope!”

“If you see the savior, be sure to sound this plea, prelude to the promise: ‘Go down...way down as Moses from the bulrush.’”

Sound to the savior to go down-, I thought, perplexed by the plea.

“Just like old Luke who’s waiting for the judgment day,” the trio truck on, “The great, grateful dead must go—before it’s too late.”

Perhaps the desert heat takes its toll, I thought again, more confused than ever. *How do I make sense of such a sorted song—a warning to all, it seems, from then to now, beneath and above, beginning to end, sunrise to sunset? So much sound that what had been before is many times more, ‘The Band’ sounds a song—even from the heavens—making the common appeal in one accord, the blind to see the lame to walk, and those gone to return. “Got to go...down to the desert east if you, maybe to Hell, if you want to rise to the heavens.”*

IN THE LOW

There is something happening here, I thought, and what it is, still, is unclear. There is “the one” that their searching for, but after all, you must go down there. Like Luke or Moses...some judgment of the ‘great, grateful dead. What does it all mean, why does it matter—how do I get out-of this time, this place, back to the established; a life and living of comfort and convenience that ideally just gets better all the time no matter how shallow and spiritless it be?

“Still got to go, down,” I scream, where and when the grateful are great but may be dead, and the sweet sounds surround me are no more, but only a sound of silence.



Mockingbird

If that mockingbird...

- "Hush, Little Baby", covered by Joan Baez.

Where to go but further down, further deep and dark—this is my destiny, *further* than ever before...imagined or thought possible. From West to East, it is time to board because if you are not on—you are off—and that is it! Um, which are you?

Yet taking flight, however further, is getting more difficult by the day and though it seems my only escape, it is gradually becoming a dread, all determination dampened, doubt and despair waiting in the wings. I am in *The Low* and it is very dark with death all about me.

Those that knew before—or thought they did—would not recognize me: my feathers and flesh in decay; any evidence of an eagle dashed by conditions here where death is more desirable than dying, *life and living* drowned by darkness, the mind and body deteriorating, degraded.

"Yeah, this place sucks the life out of *life*," sounds behind me. Turning quickly about, there is one strikingly similar, practically a reflection of me in the present state, deficient and disgusting.

"Who are you?"

"I am you," the creature cracks, "and you are me."

"What?" *Is this image an image, an idea of mine, set against me.* "How can you be me—I am 'me'; and besides, you're not an eagle! What kind of scam is this?"

"And neither are you," my reflection, my double retorted.

"What are you?"

"I told you, Eli, I am you and you are me."

If ever there are moments where your mind seems mindless, it is when you cannot discern a dream from the dawn, a concoction from consciousness. *What is this before me? It says that it is 'me', but I cannot accept that. Do you have a troubled double, mocker or not?*

IN THE LOW

“Um, I am still you and you are still me,” the second seconds.

When you are too weary to seek wisdom, let alone will it, some want does not wane. This *want* works in a way that does not look back and think, *how and why did this or that happen, possibly posed as “for my own good”, when all the comes is no-good, bad and worse?*

“Try as you may to be sentimental, Eli, you are still looking at you, me,” my double detects. “When are going to believe me, you?”

Who wants to be me, I lament.

“I sure am tired down to the bones and nerve endings,” my clone continues. “Maybe I should rest and then turn-back,” the double drones on while peering into my eyes for some agreement, acknowledgement. “It’s time to turn back, back down and turn it down.” I can’t go on like this; all my feathers in a mat, my flesh dry and cracked and my flight dropping-off day by day,” the copy coughs out. “I got to get out of this place, now!. So what do you sound, Eli?”

Strange that the creature comments are much my sentiment, I thought. *It is more than reading my mind. This image may very well be I—more even—my spirit harkening me to go home.*

“Why are you-,” I begin as the creature takes a hard turn downward, spiraling toward the earth as though it had lost all direction.

What to do, I thought. *I feel as though my life is spiraling but I fear that this thing may lead me down another rabbit trail or worse! I commit to going down but I think of this, laid flat in this dark and dismal place, as a suicide, my planned and purpose demise.*

I am going down to the deep, following the same style and strain of *the double*, a pair plundering to the planet’s edge: descending to the earth as though meteors, aflame with fury though quickly defusing as the ash and smoke form a trail of it, us, or just me—whatever it be. Descending flight finally meets dirt and then, my double is the shell of before...mostly carbon, my cathartic cleansing. Yes, the mocker makes a final boom—one as loud as *big bird*—breaking into a million fragments of flesh and feather, grounded for good. My double, dust to dust, is no more my deterrence.



As I look back to my near-death experience, I wonder still how wisdom works; how the choices we make can avoid or avert adverse consequences without any recognizable thought or decision on our part. This was such a condition. As my death fast approached, something shifted my body from meeting death to meeting water and further, it softened the blow, an immersion in the wet—not wasted on the rocks, as was the outcome for my double. Yes, my double destroyed itself—without destroying me—alone once more.

Wringing my wings of the wet, I awaken, alive and aware that *my double* was not what it appeared to be. No, this *second* was actually a mockingbird, as memory serves me, doing a remarkable job of posing as, well, me. What was I thinking..., the questions too fast and furious; for what I lacked in the moment to discern was offset by the wonder of wisdom that took me aside while the imposter crashed, smashed on the hard place, dirt to dust, and then nothing.

“And what was in that water,” I sound. “What awakened me with awareness as never before—so astute to allow all my senses to speak and then listen and obey, involuntary if even aware, but to submit, sensibility over insanity? What, honestly, I don’t know.”

If wisdom can answer what would it sound, speak or sound? Would it sound, “Eli, you just have to surrender to my greater power and let go,” for which I would sound,

“Okay, but I don’t recall letting go at all—but only incurring a miracle of sort, inexplicable and undecided.”

For which wisdom might reply, “Just because you don’t recall or can’t understand, still, you have to avail your flight to my uplifting wings as it happened,” for which I could sound,

“I saw no ‘uplifting wings’, but only felt my body lifted as though hitting a hotspot, a warm burst of air.”

“But could that have happened, ‘a hotspot’, spiraling out-out-of-control as you were,” wisdom draws the question, once more.

“Was I really out-of-control? I need move my wings and change my direction in pursuit of myself, right?”

IN THE LOW

“But that wasn’t you, was it; that apparent self that you so willingly followed was an imposter, call it ‘my double’ or ‘a second’ or something other than ‘Eli’?”

Wisdom, or whatever the source, is sound reasoning; the other bird, while a perfect match in appearance, was not me and I, not it. As I discovered, the charlatan was a mockingbird and was another of the vulture’s minions; the kind that cause you to end yourself under the guise of being, well, you.

How did I learn from wisdom? I learned that it develops within those who want for and are able to learn, but arrives mysteriously to perhaps change our direction, to lift us up and to land us somewhere that may even save us if not just open our eyes to see reality, things as they truly are—not as they appear or I perceive. Wisdom may ironically arrive in disguise, incognito, but it never seeks or intends to steer us wrong, deceit to destroy as **Vile** does.

Maybe the mockingbird was a good thing, deception being a hard but sure teacher without which I could not learn, reminded or reaffirmed of the mystery and magic of *life and living*. If it is true that we learn most from our failures; thus, failing must happen, my mortal mind adroit, not adrift.

The mocking bird lay shattered against the stone; it’s body so fragmented as to wonder if it was ever a creature. No more babble from its beak, the black thing lie in death and decay, the carcass left for scavengers and worms. I look into its eyes to find nothing—not even my reflection—but only darkness so deep that no light can exist. *This is the same creature that I so willingly obeyed and followed. What was I thinking? Why was I doing it?* And then I here another voice,

Do not wonder ‘What...’ or ‘Why...?’

Do not ponder what could have been...wisdom to send.

Do not grieve for the bird that never was...never been,

If you are feeling that it still be you,

You cannot accept that you are hardly through.

Fly you eagle and leave this place,

For there is much to encounter, embrace,

Courage for what remains..., the horror and hardship to come.



In vain

Mock-on, mock-on, tis all in vain.

- William Blake

My determination is in doubt; all these things thwart my journey. To some, it would or will seem vain, too risky and ridiculous. To others, they may sound, “Why on earth are you doing this,” and still more, “Hey, you dug your own grave,” or “It’s a fool’s errand.”

“Let it go,” they sound. “You need to move on,” the expressed or implied advice. “Why continue on the ill-fated mission,” they boldly sound. The losses of before are certain to compound, a tragedy turned to many?” Simply put, “It’s not worthy it!”

I have thought of what they—whoever *they* are—would think or even sound; yes, I have *been down that road* so many times as to know every particle that make for dirt and every low-hanging branch that hangs you if you are not careful. My days are marked, *the darkness* making *the road* that much more daunting and difficult.

You might sound, “Get off the road and take to the air. Why reduce your life to ‘the road’ when you can fly high and steer clear of dirt, branch or anything down there?”

Those that fly cannot fly always; sometimes we all have to:

“Confront and be confronted,”

“Land and be landed,”

“Undo and be undone,”

“Brake before being broken,”

“Be broken in some way, unable to mend and return to the air.”

They might sound, “That hasn’t happen to me.”

For which I would sound, “Wonderful, that you haven’t been confronted by darkness, forced to land, undone and broken and finally unable to mend. Could you be blessed, spared from suffering or too smart to be outmatched, too tough to be undone?”

IN THE LOW

Maybe it is good that *they* do not experience the lesser parts of *life and living*; the trouble that supposedly we each are born into, hatched and woven into our flesh, feathers and bones. Maybe it is better that you not have to sacrifice and struggle, hate and worry about what may seem the unimaginable, unrealistic and impossible. Maybe it is better or best that you not know the least of all but rather that you have more, much more than enough, such that *your cup overflows* and your nests is well feathered. Maybe it is better that your view or experience *life and living* from on high, way up there, rather than from points where you think or sound,

“I never thought that...”

I look around me now and wonder where *they* are at this time; those that are free of *the dirt*, clear of *the branches* and otherwise separate from the sacrifice and struggle. No matter how great and grand things may be however, realize that everyone everywhere will find something for which they can think or sound,

“Wouldn’t *things* be better if...?”

When is *enough* ever enough? Beyond *the natural* and in proportion to the presence of *the unnatural* does the preceding question arise and then stand unanswered, unanswerable. I mean, that is really the dream, having more than *enough*. Call it what you will or want but these things—materialism and consumerism as **Wise** the owl explained—is why living in *the unnatural* matters most: not getting everything but wanting for it all, yes, all of it.

Wise is very wise, the owl, and seems to have an endless understanding of *the unnatural*. From where all this knowledge and knowhow comes is beyond me, but I have to believe that **Wise** knows... thinks much! Maybe **Wise** was once not wise, the fool.

Having wants is very tempting, no doubt, just as those things called “freedom”, “liberty” and “self-determination”; the more you have...the more you want...and the more you have...the less appreciative or gracious you are. *Having too much of anything seems unnatural.*



We need a nest to raise our young eaglets, but *the unnatural* sounds, “We need a bigger nest—much bigger than now.”

When do they stop wanting for more?

“When...why,” you sound. “*More* is good.”

“But it can’t last,” I sound. “When *more* is no more, what then,” I sound a key question, the problem.

“We’ll cross that cloud when we get to it, Eli. As it is, you’ve got to get it while you can—as much as you can for as long...”

“But what if-,” I continue, *the problem* as a possibility.

“There are no ‘if’s’, Eli; you can’t let a good thing pass you by. You can’t worry about ‘the end’.”

“So you’ve got to keeping getting it—not matter how much you have or have gotten,” I follow, the rational.

“Now you’re learning Eli—now you’re learning, excuse for an eagle. It’s not about simply need...you’ve got to-,”

“I know, I know; ‘get it while you can’,” I resound.

At an impasse in this argument, I turn to the owl, **Wise**, for answers—what matters. I am learning, yes, but it does not follow *the road* that leads me to the deep and destructive, No, my learning is wisdom that seems right, perhaps *the supernatural*. There is a calmness and contentment in this mysterious place, as with *the natural*, though it be less obvious; and ethos not exact or experienced prior. *Wisdom is better than foolishness and puts want in its time and place.*

Does the supernatural hate the unnatural; or is the supernatural dark, part of the unnatural? Does the supernatural have more than one face, one being and one cause—all right, even perfect? Maybe you already are aware that the supernatural is more than one force, a single source, extremes, the likes of which are hard to distinguish and discern from darkness to light, good to bad, and all the in-between and go-betweens. Of course, the supernatural is a mystery; and in its mystic side and size, it likens to the unnatural because sometimes it makes no sense and just when you think you’ve figured it out—boom—it explodes like big bird’s behavior.

IN THE LOW

“Is it not enough, *never enough*,” I sound, searching for wisdom. For as long as *want* is wanting, how will we live but in vain?

Do you want to be **Blind**, the ostrich, hiding your head, foolishly thinking that because you cannot see what you fear, that it does not see you? Do you want to be **Rodent** the rat, playing both sides, confident that you can evade **Vile** all the while running into its wings? Do you want to be Mockingbird—my doubtful double—who died knowing less about itself than any other—not a sound or thought of who it was or could be, even as it crashed on the hard place. *What do you want...for?*

I want to find them or find out about them—even if it is in vain.



Love self

To love [yourself] is the beginning of a lifelong romance.

- Oscar Wilde

Can anyone be satisfied with self in *the unnatural*? Is it right and good to be always and forever *wanting*—chasing a cloud—drowning in the debt of never knowing **Wise**, wisdom?

What is this *life and living* anyway? Wisdom warns that we labor and toll—and for what?

My life is a show; not what or who you are as much as what you pretend to be; it is about perception. The imagination is boundless on both sides; on the one, to entertain and enthrall and on the other to watch and to want for more.

Do other birds try to be eagles? Do other creatures pretend to be birds? Johnathon tried to fly further and farther than his own, I know, and the mockingbird mocks, a mock-up! The rat and other rodents constantly look over their shoulder, always to see or hear nothing until that one time when they fail to look, *boom, game over. Is pretending better than real, but then, what is real?*

My journey brings me further, farther, *The Low*. Here, I see some swallows, aloof and fluttering in my path.

“Who are you,” I sound, and without hesitation, they harken,

“We are the daughters of **Hope**.”

“**Hope**, in this time and place,” I sound back, astonished.

“**Hope** is everywhere,” they reply.

“Evidently,” I murmur, “But this is the worst-”

“We know where we are,” they continue in unison. “And we know who we are,” they add, “and it is right that we are here with you now, Eli the eagle.”

“What are your names,” I sound out, moments later.

IN THE LOW

“Are names are **Anger** and **Courage**,” they responded, again in unison, harmony.

“Why here, why now—what brings you to *The Low*,” I sound, persistent to uncover any and all.

“It is natural to be **Anger** and, at the same time, **Courage**,” they announce.

“Anger is good if applied for right and good, and is necessary before **Courage** can come,” **Anger** continues.

“**Courage** is noble and necessary, the result of Anger gone well,” **Courage** adds.

“You are the daughters of **Hope**,” I sound more to remind myself that **Hope** floats far. “You have come far—more than I thought you could or would,” I continue, “as possibly the last chance before I enter the underworld.”

“**Anger** and **Courage** can do that,” they sound. “We do not stop before *The Low* but pass with the sojourner to here, this underworld,” the two sound, **Anger** leading **Courage**.

“Am I Anger,” I sound the question while knowing.

“Are you **Anger**,” **Anger** sounds back.

I am Anger or angry, I thought. I am Anger because of the things taken from me, the things that are mine, precious and paternal. *I am angry that they are gone*.

“Yes, you are,” **Anger** replies, “You are an angry bird.”

“That is why I made it this far,” I sound back, making sense out of it. “Anger has brought me here.”

“Yes, **Anger**,” the two agree. “But there is more to it.”

“More you sound—what more?”

“There is **Courage**, **Anger** and then **Courage**, one and the other.”

“My feelings did not possess so much **Anger**,” I confess.

“We know,” is the immediate response from the daughters of **Hope**. “We know that anger comes in several forms,” **Anger** follows, “but we also know that **Anger** has to be discovered as a diamond in a lump of coal, and refined as with gold, by fire.”



Can **Anger** and **Hope** be of the same family, I thought. Maybe as **Hope** can give birth to **Anger...Courage**, and then, boom. I am at a loss to distinguish anger from the wrong of other feelings that hurt. “Anger that burns to damage and destroy, promote and provoke, hurting rather than helping and wrong rather than right—is it right?”

Who can dispute that **Anger** and **Courage** are likenesses; joined at the hip and harmonious in sound? Who can deny that **Hope** is the progeny of two sparrows and keeps watch over them ensuring that they are protected, perhaps the least of these? Who can debate Anger that comes from witnessing deliberate, debilitating actions of the strong over the weak, the so-called superior on the inferior or the otherwise powerful on the powerless? If no one can dispute...deny or debate **Anger** why should I dismiss the three in one?

Anger and **Courage** come at great cost. **Hope** watches over the sparrow though in trouble, the conflict of courage and adversity of anger. What will become of the sparrows in this dark time and place is difficult to know, impossible to sound with confidence, but I am glad that they are here, with me now, for to have never met them is the greatest loss, I think.

We need these sparrows. If a poet or musician, I would write a poem or song, a tribute to **Anger** and **Courage**. If a playwright...then a play complete with all the script and stage. If I could, I would carry them back to civilization, from the underworld and all *The Low*—stopping anyone or anything that stood in our way. If I were of *pride and power*, I would will their protection and it would happen. If **Hope** however, I would be proud of my offspring—these beautiful daughters that possess the raw daring and determination to sound “no” when so many either sound, “why not” or sound nothing at all, apathy and ambivalence all around us.

Anger and **Courage** believe in anger and courage—and so too, do I, Eli the eagle. If I should sacrifice and suffer then I do so preferably in anger and with courage—for anything less would be a waste no matter the cause or effect, the consequences and costs. I may think poorly or

IN THE LOW

pathetically, but my desires are pure and paternal—the high ground in a time and place infinitely low. When I possess anger I respect myself and when courage, all the more. When passive and complacent—no Anger or **Courage**—all self-respect is gone, my guard asleep and afraid. Without them, this inseparable pair, I am a pathetic creature—less than the ostrich and worse than the vulture, lower than the rodent and darker than the crow.



It was...

*It was the beginning and ending of everything,
the foundation and the ceiling, the air in between.*

- Kristen Hannah, *The Nightingale*.

Anger and courage must stay, though the sparrows are gone.
Without anger and courage, what will I do—what would you do?

It was the beginning and the end at the same time. *The Low* is low, I thought, *but there is still lower, a valley wide and deep of which I have yet to see though it is coming, fast and furious.* Call it a feeling or a foreboding, this sense of something *lower* is not going away. It is like the mockingbird that mirrors me, spiraling downward to death or still, the parrot that will not shut-up, but keeps rambling, enthralled with its senseless sound. *Can I forget the crow—an annoyance at the least?*

I miss the daughters of Hope but I am happy that I met them, I thought as the darkness enveloped me and I appraised my present problems. If the land below was not bad enough before, the scattered surface and sustenance, it was taking on lunar look; all crusty and caverned without the appearance or atmosphere to support no more than rock and sand—a veritable desert short of cactus and other succulents, a valley too dead to be dying.

“How could anything survive here,” I whispered just before a random sound of, all things, a nightingale. *How could this be?* A beautiful sound, the nightingale reminds me of all things beautiful, long ago, and on occasion since. It is wonderful to remember beautiful things of *life and living*; the things that make me warm when I am cold, smile when I am sad, and high when I am low, lower than the surface above me.

“Sound to me,” I plead. “Sound to me of this thing called love.” Silence was the only answer, still; the singing bird was confused, it seemed, as though it did not understand my sounds—if it heard me at

IN THE LOW

all. “Will you say nothing,” I plead, again. “Please, sound to me what you know, your needs and wants. Sound to me what you’ve seen here, on the edge of earth?”

Response was slow and very sporadic, bringing doubt to my demands. *Maybe the creature is incapable; it may be dying, near death too—overcome by the time and place.*

“I am **Want**,” she stuttered, a sullen, somber sound

“What do you want for,” I sound to the nightingale

“No, my name is **Want**,” she corrected. “I am **Want**,” she sounded louder, the last of her strength.

Why **Want**, I reply with little reservation.

“Because I want so deeply, my name is **Want**.”

“What do you want ‘so deeply’?”

“I want **Anger** to find **Courage**, the two to be joined again, thus **Hope**,” she explains, offering more than all before.

“Are they divided, disparate?”

“Yes, the three have been torn asunder by the likes of **Vile**,” she continues. “**Hope** is gone, I’m afraid unless by some miracle they can be reunited, together again,” she warns.

“What did that vile creature do,” I sound back.

“Conflict and contention, the force that tears us asunder—like that of *The Worst*,” she answers. “Conflict caused chaos, then a chasm.”

Vile devised a means to separate and sever the swallows, I thought. *When will it end—the chaos and chasm—when will it end?* Conflict does that; indeed, it causes destruction and decimation of everything while exhausting resources and ending *life and living* for everyone and everything in its path. Yes, *conflict* is a great storm that never ends.

“**Anger** and **Courage** must be saved,” she continues, her want.

“But how...where are they?”

“**Vile** sent them down under, lower than The Low,” she sounded. “They are exiled, their strength exploited by-,”

The work of Vile, I thought, *exploit until exhaustion.*



It seems simple when you say, “Exploit until exhaustion...,” but it is not so, not really. Exploitation demands cunning and craft; both of these creations are essential to/for exploitation. *What is exploitation but force whether brutish, blatant or blind!* Exploitation is to the villain “opportunity” but to the victim, an untenable debt; it does not ravage the resource but gradually depletes any sustaining strength, the withering of will, *want* never satisfied.

“That’s it,” **Want** wails, “Exploitation—my want!”

Want’s want was not of exploitation however; not about force, “exhausting resources and ending life and living”, but about restoration, reunification of that once together.

“No **Want**, you’re not about exploitation,” I sound, demanding. “You want light and right,” I explain, “Not the disturbing and destructive forces that aim to divide and conquer.”

“Oh, but my want burns; it moves me so deeply though I cannot find anger or courage to continue,” she sounds, her plight. “Will I ever find **Anger** and **Courage** together again?”

“I hope so, ah, I mean, if **Hope** finds them or they find her,” I reply, bumbling in my sounds, my want for her want. “What is **Want** like,” I sound, “but similar to my wanting for my own.”

“It is worse than anything that you’ve witnessed, even more, than you’ve wondered or worried about,” she sounds. “I cannot sound to you everything because I don’t know,” she continues, showing her fears, “and I will not...for to sound to you much or more would stop you in flight—a falling worse than the mockingbird, I’m afraid.”

She continues though, describing the ghastly system—not just exploitation but further, extermination of an entire species, all creation lesser than a few, *the highest of the high*. *What is to become of me, us—the rest of us whose want for others, their good?*

“Who are they,” I interrupt. “Who is *the highest?*”

“They claim to be superior, supreme above all,” she sounds. “They stand, staunch and stellar, sounding off with an uncommon sense. Their platform is punitive and pernicious—full of purgatory—that

IN THE LOW

pronounces, “We are the new age, the creation of that to come. We tear-down in order to build-up, bound in order to loose, seize in order to share,” so sounds **Want** describing *the superior, supreme above all*.

“What do they look like; describe their features,” I demand, “so that I may recognize them, react.”

“I don’t think...I don’t know, not really,” she sounds, returning to a reticence at the beginning of our meeting, introduction.

What does she mean, “I don’t know”? *She is not sounding what she knows*, I thought, *but why—why is she not sounding to me what she knows?* My desperate thoughts could not form sounds, seemingly sensitive to her delicate disposition, her fragile wings.

“Are they superior, supreme,” I sound, shifting somewhat.

“It was, it seemed so,” she replies, again reticent as though she could not sound for fear—hers or mine.

“In what way...are they this way?”

“Well, in every way that is worse than worst,” Want sounds before going silent at last.



Sadder sound

No sadder sound salutes you than the clear, wild laughter of the loon.

- Celia Thaxter

“This time and place is as no other, not now, not ever,” the nightingale sounds, breaking from her silence. “This is the worst of times and still, the worst of all times,” she adds, her whole being stiff and stark. But more, **Want** explains the lands and the great waters.

I sound, “Lands...what kind of waters?”

“Black waters,” she sounds. “Pitch black waters, no light at all and nothing good, no marine *life and living*—dead seas.”

“There is no life in the great waters of the underworld?”

“Beneath *The Low* is more than the burned; it is a continuous burn for which the fuel to sustain in cannot be found. It’s as though it burns from the fire alone,” the nightingale sounds, bewildered.

“So it hot, very-,”

“Strange, but the land and air is neither hot nor cold; it is mild though it burns and smolders as though a cauldron,” **Want** continues.

The temperature is stagnant and stale, she explains, but the air is stifling and the land is barren, unsustainable for life though some mysteriously survive.

“Can you fly,” I sound. “Can you move at all?”

“Fascinating that none fly except they, the superior and supreme,” she sounds more. “They own the sky; airspace, upper and outer.”

That reduces me to the ground—a rodent more or less, I reason. “Yes, it is the lowest of places, of times,” she sounds without really having to... But she goes on anyway, describing how they clip the wings of the once-fliers, “Rendering all as nothing more than a chicken or the much reduced ostrich.”

BENEATH THE LOW

“If you can run fast than I suppose you might be a road-runner or one of those fast walking beach dwellers,” **Want** continues in a rare moment of humor. “The point is that you are grounded.”

“It’s good that you still have a sense of humor,” I sound.

“Oh, I’m crazy,” she replies, all humor aside.

She meant it too—the nightingale had seen too much; **Hope** indefinitely separated from her daughters, **Anger** and **Courage**. I could empathize, her health, having lost my own, on this life-changing experience; she has lost **Hope**, **Anger** and **Courage**—the work of **Vile**, no doubt—that leaves her in this hopeless state void of any song, rhyme or reason. *The nightingale will never sing again*, I feel, fear.

“How can it be, *the highest of the high* when it’s described as the lowest of the low?”

Nightingale sounds on, taking time to think about her response: “Darkness consumes light in the underworld,” she sounds. “This consumption is never-ending—*sucking life and living* out of everything else. They, supreme and superior, collect and consume it all, the darkness at a depth that cannot be conceived. I cannot provide or know every detail,” she sounds on, evidently aware of my thoughts—as others. “Believe me because I want for you to know before I’m gone.”

“Where are you going, **Want**?”

“I am passing into another life,” she sounds. “My songs are quickly fading; a memory of magnificent music.”

The night is passing but will the light come, I thought, the muse making its way to my heart. “I am sad to hear this,” I sound. I want you to stay and be with me, by me, before your passing, *the supernatural*.”

“You can’t always get what you want,” she quips. “You must go.”

I depart, taking to the low sky, leaving **Want** to pass, alone as she wants it. Flying lower than low, I soon came across a solitary loon, one sounding so pitiful a dirge—as though it were passing just as the nightingale.

“What is that hideous sound, loon,” I screech. “Stop it! You’re noise is hurting my mind, driving me crazy.”



"I'm crazy—why shouldn't you be the same," the loon sounds off.

"I want you to stop your noise, now."

"I am sad," sounds the loon, stubborn to stop. "I heard the nightingale sing and it saddened my heart."

*Hmm, it seems that **Want** is making us all crazy—sad beyond...*

"She did it. Want made me want for-," the loon blurts out.

"I don't care what she did," I screech, "You must stop your sounds and pull out of this crazy, spiraling spin. Pull your wings together!"

"I have lost my way," the loon sounds on. "Lost in this sea of darkness—no light in sight."

Losing the way seems the only way today.

"Everyone is crazy out here," the loon continues. "You have to be crazy to be here—why else would you be, here?"

In total darkness, anyone and everything goes mad, then crazy.

"They want you mad...crazy," the loon sounds, assured of their want.

"What your name," I sound back.

"My name is **Nut**."

*It figures that a loon is **Nut**, I thought. "What kind of nut are you?"*

"I am the nuttiest nut you'll ever find, thanks to the superior and supreme, *the highest of the high*," **Nut** informs me.

What a sadder sound, I thought, too gone to try—no way to see light, return home and recover from the mad. Am I destined for the same; will I follow the nightingale, loon and dodo bird to the very end?

The only creatures for me, it seems now, are the mad ones, the ones who are mad for *life and living*, mad to sing and sound. Mad for salvation, they want for nothing, the needs are more than enough. They fly high and burn, burn, burn like the phoenix rising to the light, the sun, across the start; and in the middle of the big waters, no fear exists. Finally, these kinds pass though; a song no more except the dirge or last dire sound before and finally, the end of suffering and perhaps the beginning of *the supernatural*, a splendid and spectacular site.

BENEATH THE LOW

“One day, I will have the right sounds, simple and sensible—but not now, here, in these times.”

“What are ‘these times’,” the loon sounds back, evidently unknowing of my state.

“They are the worst of times, the place, aren’t they?”

“You may be right, Eli, but be careful on how and where you sound it; for our sounds are not so silent, sound or not.”

“What do you mean, **Nut**?”

“*The highest* expect you to believe these are the best of times, the soundest of places; thus, *they* destroy anyone and everything that sounds differently. This time and place is full of contradictions and conundrums; what is darkness is really light, what is wrong is right and what is good-,”

“Is bad,” I finish.

“Oh, it’s worse,” **Nut** sounds to me. “It is worse than that.”



Make you crazy

If he is crazy, what does that make you?
- Ken Kesey, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest*

This time and place belongs to the strong, the superior and supreme. My existence is based on the strong getting stronger, the high, higher. **They** consume anyone and everything to get stronger, higher—an endless ascent—though sounding as though **they** care about anyone, everyone. *I must face up to the fact that we are all expendable, mere mortals, a mass that the highest detest.* **They** malign only one thing more than *the mass*; the mortal, each and all. **They** are gods unto themselves, self-acclaimed deity.

The rabbits accept their role in the ritual, recognizing that *the highest* are wolves. **They** attack in PAC's and use their power and possession to purchase the politic to do their bidding, all election aside. Still, the rabbit is fast and fearful, arriving from the hat and leading you perilously to the hole. The rabbit hole, surrounded by briars and bushes, is the hiding place—where the rabbit runs to evade and endure *the highest*. Yes, the rabbits know the hole, and hides when the wolves are about, anywhere and everywhere. The rabbit does not confront the wolves realizing only one outcome, no options. *If you cannot beat them and cannot join them, then run and hide, the rabbit way.*

On leaving the loon to drift on the big waters, what or whom do I see but a cuckoo? *Should I approach it and sound something*, I consider. *Maybe the cuckoo is worse than all crazies encountered so far, further and farther. Maybe I am crazy—too crazy to realize that I am crazy.*

“You down there, wallowing in the mud and muck, what are you doing,” I reluctantly sound to the colorful creature. “Are you alive, there,” but still no sound from the silent, the still and possibly senseless thing, then finally, as I land, it says,

“Hey brother, what’s hanging?”

BENEATH THE LOW

“Hanging,” I repeat. “I am not hanging cuckoo, I am walking and moments ago, was flying.”

“Crazy! Dig the freedom while you got it,” the thing suggest. “**They** will take it away, dude—take it all away—and leave you hanging, hung.”

“Take what away,” I sound insanely.

“All your feathers Eli, you freedom, and when **they’re** done with you, you’ll like a fried chicken—all plucked up.”

Who was this cuckoo kidding?

“You’ll be toasted to a crisp, cuffed and roughed, shaved and shaken, hammered and hung-up, busted and-,”

“Okay, okay, I get it; **they** are going to destroy me,” I sound aloud, “Enough of that snippy hippy!”

“Hey, I like that; ‘hippy’; cool Eli, cool.”

“What are doing in this place,” I sound, shifting the subject to the basics of place, purpose.

“I got to get out of this place, eagle—you, me, and us.”

“No way,” I sound back. “I’m come too far to turn back now.”

“We got to find a way,” the cuckoo continues, persistent and pointed.

Sure, it is dark—and getting darker—but I cannot just leave, I remind myself.

“I will not go down under the ground,” the bird babbles.

Were below the ground already—how much lower can you go.

“It’s blowing in the wind,” the cuckoo continues. “How many times must-,”

What wind? The air is dead like everything else ‘round here.

“We shall overcome,” as another in the jingle-jangle jargon.

Overrated optimism—a sign of the deranged—is a pipe dream.

“Hell no, I won’t go.”

The other side, I see.

“I’m waste deep in the big muddy.”

You sure are...and getting deeper, I sound to me.



“Protection for peace,” **they** sound off, “contention for clarity,” **they** command, “darkness for light,” **they** become.

May I add, “Might makes right.”

What did all the sounds mean, I sound. Is there any sense coming from the cuckoo? What do I believe...deny and discard? Can crazy make sense? Do you have to be a bit nuts to break open the shell and realize that the egg is rotten?

Nut looks beyond me, a distant stare, and sounds, “Twig-minx, **they** jinxed the digs!”

Who are the ‘digs’?

“Diggers man, the Diggers,” the cuckoo sounds back.

What are ‘Diggers’?

Nut, with another distant stare, sounds, “Scrap-brat, **they** killed the rat, the chicken killed the rat.”

“Why did a chicken kill the rat,” I sound back, shocked that the cuckoo knew how **Rodent** met its end.

“The chicken killed the rat to get to the other side,” **Nut** remarks, cackling, crazy.

“The ‘other side’ of what,” I sound back sharply.

“The side that wins,” cuckoo sounds, “the highest of the high, the worst of the worse.”

Rodent straddled the fence all too often; never one side or the other, dangerous time and place, the rat knew too much about “**they**”—too dangerous to let live, evidently. *How does the cuckoo know about **Rodent**? Is **Nut** clairvoyant, able to see things that it did not observe?*

“Everyone knows the rat,” the cuckoo continues, evidently able to hear my thoughts. “Anyone and everyone has a rat in their life; someone that crosses the line again and again—always aiming for the advantage—while laying low, as though a victim, poor and pitiful ground dweller. Invariably, they find the rat—the game is over—at least for this one.”

The cuckoo is right, come to think of it, “Everyone knows a rat...”

BENEATH THE LOW

The rat poses and pretends, playing the hearts of those willing to listen, learn—like me. Those dark eyes sound it all; small and stealthy, void of light like the big waters of this place. Who knows what the rat is thinking except that whatever it is, it is always about an advantage. Some might sound that the rat is merely defending itself, small as it is, but the fact is that the rat is a survivor willing to do anything—even feeding on its young, offspring—to survive. *Can you imagine a species that would destroy its own young, one after another, to ensure its own survival? Worst yet, try to consider a species that would kill its offspring for little more than the convenience?* As bad or dark as a rat is, it does not command, but crawls. A rat is ironically used-up while trying to use.

“Yes, and **they’re** everywhere,” **Nut** closes.



Dying with the dead

Through the land of the dead [Do I live]?
- Swallow the Sun (Gloom, Beauty and Despair)

“If **they’re** everywhere, **they’re** dead,” I sound just before taking flight far from the cuckoo bird, once again over the big waters.

Each and all of creation are rats now and then. After all, do we deserve life and living? Can I believe that I have earned a life above the rodent, the ground dweller of which I am slowly becoming? I have learned that the rat will flee a sinking ship, a crisis or catastrophe. *The rat is smart, a real survivor.* Fleeing is what they do best, the rat; to stay is to *stand your ground or stand in the gap on behalf of the land.* A survivor, yes, but never a stand-in or stand-up—or anything that stands—so goes the rat, a creepy crawly creature. You have to respect them, the rats, and detest them at the same time—the kind that can never be trusted and thus, will never be a friend.

On reaching my current maximum altitude, practically a crow’s elevation by now, I see a reddish object just beneath the water’s surface. *What is that...a sea creature, bright beyond the darkness. Hard to follow though, with such brilliance blocked now and then by what seemed an almost velvet fog coming on, after the sun has long left us.*

“We are not fog,” a long sound echoes, enunciated.

“What?”

“We are not fog, Eli, we are swallows,” hundreds perhaps thousands sound again.

Above, below and all about me, the swallows swarm as though one large organism, perhaps a mammoth sea creature as the reddish one below.

“Careful Eli, it is neither ‘mammoth’ nor a ‘sea creature’. It is a red herring that you see in the big waters,” they sound loudly, with caution.

“What is a ‘red herring’,” I sound back.

BENEATH THE LOW

“Something that you don’t want to follow,” the swallows sound.

Swallows fly in random, swarming, not as the starling. Hundreds and thousands of swallows create such a stir; my wings little lift, I must go down.

“Are you listening,” they sound, shedding tears but continue still. “Beyond this day, we’ll never see, at the eye of the storm, the darkness of *Low*. It closes the flower as too, the mind.”

I sound to the swallows, “Why is this curse laid upon us. Why must we mourn our loss?”

The swallows near silence, sound despair, my lonely heart made cold.

“Open your eyes,” the swallows scream, while well below the red herring bids me come.

“Believe me, it’s a fact,” so the herring smacks back.

“What’s ‘a fact’,” I sound down, deep and big waters.

“Anything that I sound, and do, and think, it’s all good, it’s all free.”

“Not so,” sound the swallows to the herring. “It’s the grand deception; you’re nothing but a liar, a thief, some conception.”

The grass withers and the flowers fall—as do swallows, by thousands call. One by one until the “fog” is no more.

“Don’t fade away but stay here with me. I will not let you leave me. I will follow you through it all. Wherever...I will follow, deeper into the pain,” I screech my sound all around.

Red herring works its way, deceiving and deciding that all the swallow-like fall to their grave. Still, they cannot hear or break, the fall is coming, the falling of them all; and after all are dead do I fly down, tears and all. Big waters, deep and darkness meet the dying of the dead forever lost forever woe. Of all my sense of sorrow in the waiting I will not go.

“Come with me,” says the herring, I will make it so.

“What the herring sounds, it’s just not so. Would I fall or am I falling as the swallows no sunk beneath me? No, I swim, to a place that you must go.”



“What ‘place’ is that, where you swim, to and fro,” so sounds herring to this eagle. “Does it matter to the weak? Do you care or does anyone, care? Do you like entertainment? If you do, I have a show. I have some games to watch or play that no matter what—you can win! Do not worry and do not fret, there is something for you yet. I am brilliant more than color, multi-dimensional, virtual space—let’s go!”

“What about what matters-,” I sound off.

“Never mind ‘the matter’,” blast the herring, “shut your beak and watch me glow.”

Hmm, but something strange is sure to happen...the games...the shows. “Are you convincing me—all of us—to stop caring?”

“You has-been eagle—you’re flight is grounded, flying low.”

“I know, I know; but still, I need to know—what is ‘the matter’?”

“Sound once and I’ll overlook it. Sound a second and you get more than you know,” the red herring goes. “Deceive you and then destroy you—not games, no show. But on the matter to care: if you care then you suffer, sacrifice; try and you risk; learn and teach, then you hope, anger and courage, first friends and then distant and disparate, the mother of **Hope** has left her daughters, **Anger** and **Courage**.”

“What’s wrong with that,” I sound to the red herring. “Hope, anger and courage are good.”

“What’s wrong with that’,” the fish sounds back. “Do you really want to care, try and learn when you have games to play and shows to watch? What are you going to do, fun or work? Who needs hope when you’re helpless and hapless?”

“But the swallows-,” I sound.

“I know what the swallows sound: their caution about closing the mind and the flow and ‘the grand deception’—those birds are cuckoo!”

“But the swallows-,” I sound again.

Do you really want to live as them—anger and courage long gone,” sounds the herring. “Fluttering around until you hit the ground?” All those swallows are dead, in case you forgot, and all you have left is this red herring. I am your friend now and forever.”

BENEATH THE LOW

“You are not enough—not even close. I have weighed the balance and find that your offering is but air.”

“Suit yourself, Eli; go ahead...enter the land of the dying dead.”

I turned from the red herring, setting my sights on the land, the darkness before me, unsure of whether I can continue; care, try, learn, and teach. I knew that **Hope** had lost her daughters, **Anger** and **Courage**, and—knowing the pain of child loss—I hold to hope as never before or again, our life and living of the same strain, similar pains.

“Go ahead...you’re as stupid as them,” I could hear the fish fading. “Oh, you’ll see me again—that’s for sure! Yes, always a red herring to comb these waters, even go ground,”

Miles and miles inland, I could still smell it, a putrid odor that seeps into every corner of the world and every depth of the big waters and, perhaps, high in the sky as the *big birds*. Like the rat, red herrings are everywhere and always preaching their cure for our pains, suffering and sacrifice that must be.



Debauched canary

Better a debauched canary than a pious wolf.

- Anton Chekhov

My first encounter with a red herring was not my last; red herrings are everywhere like algae plumbs in stagnant waters that *suck the life out of life*, the red herring is a way of confusing and cheating, creating chaos and then, well, concentrated order—from chaos, order! A red herring is more than a fish; *it is the way of the worst*, distortions and distractions, *noise*, nebulous and nefarious. **They give the empty sounds, superficial substance.**

Not long after leaving the great waters, I come to a cave: drilled deep into a mountain, the whole system resembling a dead zone, no means of life. Among the refuse scattered around is variations on the great big things produced by them, for them, to produce other things or to move big things with big things. These large structures do great things but here and now, the things are idle, moldering and mute. **They who produce such things for producing other things are creative though the costs, this crater is dead, death, and the things are given-out.**

I am flying lower these days, no strength to get beyond a tree line—if there was a tree line. Vulnerable now am I who cannot climb high and soar. I am as good as dead, more than a rat or rabbit. I should be more alert and attuned but I am weak. *What can I count on when I am weak?* Perhaps it is better that I am dull, somewhat deadened to dying death. If I were myself, these things would shock me to death—or wanting to be, dead. Maybe the preparation has been the key, dying within..., my feelings gone. *Where is the passion and pride? Where is the yearning to fly high and hard? Where is the sense of purpose that once filled me as a parent, a key part of my family? It is all given-out as these great things that lay about, lasted but long bested.*

BENEATH THE LOW

At the mouth of the cave is a cool, the view dark and everything full of soot. A faint noise comes, my name sounding as, I think, makes its ways with the cool to reach me, “Eli.”

“Who are you,” I sound back. “Who sounds my name, knowing me?”

“I am the canary in the coalmine.”

“Why are you here?”

“I was forced here, testing,” the sound finally back to me.

“What is a ‘testing,’” I return, echoed in the endless place.

“It’s something **they** do,” the canary calls. “**They** do it so that **they** can be sure, confident and convinced.”

“Confident and convinced of what?”

“I don’t know,” it sounds back, “Whatever it was, it caused me death, a passing as the things that you see.”

How the canary calls when passed, I thought, is not possible.

“Are you there, Eli?”

After a moment to consider the call, I sound back, “Yes, I am here, at the cave entrance.”

“I know you must wonder how I can be sounding when I have passed,” the canary continues. “I am the spirit of the canary, the afterlife,” it adds. “My flesh and feathers are gone, but I remain still.”

Never before could I communicate with the dead, the life hereafter. Who sounds with the spiritual except spirits? *Am I dead too—passed to the great beyond?*

“**They** forced me to die, the testing,” the canary sounds again. “Beware of that, Eli. You are nothing more than flesh and feathers to them and will be exhausted and exterminated as me, my own. Believe my spirit who knows: *life and living* as a canary in a coalmine is short, simple and finally, spirit.”

The canary sounds much about life...death in and beneath *The Low*. The bird knows the cave, coalmine; it sounds of what **they** did, moving the earth for progress—the promotion of their own and the praising of **they** who reign as gods.



“Explosions and these huge things, ‘equipment’, take away lots of black stuff. **They** use the ‘black stuff’ for fuel, for fire, to make their lives better and better. **They** use the equipment to get the stuff and then use the stuff to support equipment, make it move, a cycle of sort.”

The *black stuff* was magic, it seems.

“It produces fire and something called energy. ‘Energy makes the world go round’, **they** spoke, tell and talk.”

“Spoke”, I sound back.

“**They** ‘spoke’ words; sounds yes, but a language of their own,” the canary sounds to me.

I knew that those of such sophistication had not just one sound or language, but many—much more than all the birds of all time and place! *Very complex and complicated, they are—too much for me to understand.*

“Yes Eli, they are very complex and complicated,” the spirit sounds to me, confirming my thoughts.

“What will you do now,” I sound into the cold cave.

“I will travel beyond *The Low*, returning to the warmth of the mid-world if it still exists,” the canary’s spirit resounds.

What will come to this place, I think now. Can it be more debauched than it already is, has been by now?

From the cave comes a gust of cold air and with it, the remains of the canary, its body. Much has decayed, all color is gone, and all that remains is bones without much flesh, feathers.

“Ashes to ashes, dust to dust,” sounds the spirit.

“And these are your remains,” I sound back, the spirit willing.

“Yes, this is all that remains for now though soon it will be gone, no sign that I was ever here, death and deterioration. Oh, but I am not the only one, remains and spirit, in this place, the coalmine. There are many...,” the spirit continues. “Many have passed here, like me; many of them that engineered the whole source of energy and slaved to make it so, such.”

BENEATH THE LOW

The spirit sounds much; mostly that the coalmine was “active” then, almost instantly, “was dormant, dead, never to live again.” Simply put, “The coal gave-out and when it did, so did everything else in this place, time. **They** cannot have energy without energy, things without things, and progress without loss.”

“Where is the spirit of the coalmine,” I sound back.

“The coalmine has no spirit; it is spiritless, never once a natural life.”

The spirit of the canary sounds more of such things that do not actually live, either here or there, though **they** will sound, “It lives and, farther and further, it has a spirit too.” *How can something live when it is not living, alive and natural, a cold cloud of soot from sad spirits?*

“**They** seem confused between life and things,” the canary sounds on. “**They**’re convinced that they know everything about anything that they consider themselves above spirits, superior and supreme.” *How can flesh and feathers be above spirits, the spiritual?*

“They are exalted in their own thinking but are the lowest of the low, the vilest of the vile and-,”

“The worst of the worse,” I finish.

“How do you know,” the canary sounds back. “How do you?”



For a reason

Just remember that everything happens for a reason so when I smack you upside the head, it was for a reason.

- Daffy Duck

My first encounter with a spirit and what I learned only makes me yearn to know more. I did not know that spirit's sound, think and do; but in this time and place, spirits are alive, sounding of how it was before the *Days of Daddy-Dumb* and now, the consequences, in and beneath *The Low*.

Life and living is funny and fun, weird and way-out and, sometimes, wonderful with lots of sun and light. I know that it seems *funny* but then, if you could see and feel what I do, you would feel similar, maybe worse than my sounds or the sounds of those that remain, flesh or spirit. *Life and living is dying with the passing of time and place.*

Funny is not all; no, this place is deadened, deadly and dead. Have you ever been dead or near-death? If you have...was it *funny* or *fun*? Did folks cheer and celebrate, "Woohoo, death is here!" Do you jump for joy at the mention of death or spread your feathers and sound, "Bring it on!" No, you do not; for there is nothing silly or subtle about death and dying, nothing to call or cackle when the canary in the coalmine *bites the big one*, the show is over and game is lost.

If you have heard my sounds to this point then I do not expect you to sound or say, "Wow, I didn't know the eagle meant it; that death and dying are real and the *Days of Daddy-Dumb* really exist and there is a dark place, *The Low*."

"All must pass through here, the end of the cave, to the great unknown and beyond." You do not deny it but you choose to avoid it, not embrace it. You do not sound much about it—or think of it if you can—but it is there. *Anyone and everything must face death.*

BENEATH THE LOW

Do you cackle and celebrate when death and dying comes to another—especially those that you detest? “It’s about time—they are getting what they deserve,” you sound in a moment of satisfaction.

You may be sad and sullen when the good die young or when family or friends pass beyond, but the time and place will come—as here—when you want for death and dying, to end your suffering and sacrifice and the pain of trying when all you hear is:

“You’re failing,” or

“It’s your fault” or

“Get lost, loser!”

Oh, but maybe just maybe you have felt this way; down—way down in the cold of the coalmine where all there is are the spirits of the once *funny* and *fun* and **they**, the superior and supreme, that thrive and jive and sing,

“Zip-pa-do-da, zip-pa-de-a, my-oh-my, what a wonderful day.
Plenty of sun light headed my way....”

Maybe you know this place and time. You have seen it, and felt it, and have fallen to the *red herring* or been there when the canary kills over.

There is a reason that we do what we do; a reason that some:

Win and some lose, some gain and some fallback, some thrive and some simply stay alive—if you can call it that. Some:

See small problems that become big while, others, real...,

Do well to themselves and to others while others do not...,

Go mad, while others do not..., not really,

Know the facts while others make them up,

Ignore the facts while others do not,

Live with death while others just exist, beyond death,

Smile and sound, “That’s alright,” while other say, “No, not this, not now, with all that remains—it is not right, fair or good.”

Groan, grumble and complain about nothing while others seem content against everything that hurts and harms.



There is a reason it happens whether “a reason” be there, found or forever remaining. Still, we search, hoping for a reason while others, not so. *You have to try to reason to want one.*

There are reasons for my encounters, the characters in my journey from the earliest to the latest, from my own to the spirit of a canary and perhaps more to come.

The rat, though they are everywhere, happens across my path and teaches me that if you are going to have *two faces*, at least one of them has to be straight and true.

The rabbit, meek and mild, is most challenging when pushed to the edge of their home. The rabbit sees in all directions to, not forgetting what is behind them only because it remains with them, a possible threat to survival.

The ostrich, **Blind**—need I sound more?

The swallows want to believe because it is convenient and convincing, failing to heed, and then falling in mass, a massive end. *Please, learn from the swallows—before it is too late.*

Crazy, the cuckoo, as it gets, and when all sounds, the crazed call their victims “loon, parrot, crow or mockingbird”—take your pick.

Vile and all the veiled villains; those that pose as pious when in truth are worse than *the worst of the worse*. Do **they** do what Vile does? Do any of them:

Sound false things and then sound, “The facts are”,

Commit conflict and call it necessary, a defense,

Consume incessantly and sound, “We’re doing this for you”,

Sound of reform when **they** carry on with crime, more corrupt,

Seek peace by causing more discord, destruction and destitution,

Exhaust and expend everything—as with the coalmine—leaving a lasting and endless trail of their things, all rusty ruin, crusty-collapsed and condemned? *What a mess they leave to the rest of us.*

Claim to be hawkish only to hide behind the cloud when the conflict goes to the air—all sound, none of the *right stuff*.

BENEATH THE LOW

Am I a villain? No, I am someone that wants as the nightingale, to be:

Wise as the owl,
Peace as the dove,
Parental as the kingfisher,
Truth as the seagull,
Fearless as the falcon,
Risen as the phoenix,
Giving as the pelican,
Seeing as the heron,
Renewed as the crane,

Make me as good as them.



I just lost

I just lost my damn mind.

- Daffy Duck

Sometimes I am weak and wacky; floating around the small waters, quaked and queued, making sure *all my ducks are in a row*. *If I am a duck, then, am I sitting or standing?* As it is, I fly like a duck these days; the kind that flies no further than it has to, usually to eat or to escape. If a duck then I am a black one; all black, even my bill, like a crow. My soul has absorbed the darkness, a disturbing black from crown to claw.

No one notices me these days or acknowledges that I am Eli, the eagle. Spirits or not, the scarce life forms rarely if ever look my way let alone say my name or give me any attention at all. I am sad that *the natural* is gone, *the unnatural* all consuming. *Do I have to do something drastic, for someone to say, "Look at the stupid duck, that hideous creature"?* *Do I have to scream, "Hey, look at me...see me, hear me and touch me?"* *Am I real or have I passed and now, in this spirit, cannot comprehend my passing? I see them whether live or passed; and as I see them, why can I not be, seen and all?*

*Maybe **they** are mocking me; you know, ignoring me and annoying me until I break, my mind blows-up, and I finally end it all—a dead duck! Maybe **Vile** has put them all up to this; after all, this is a villainous domain, deadly dark, disturbed and disturbing. Hey, that is what is happening; I am acclimating, crazy and cuckoo, just as everyone else. We are all as disturbed—but at least I am not depressed. When you lose everything then maybe you lose it.*

Maybe I am depressed, finally, and disturbed about my depression. Maybe the hole is escapable; I am over the edge, the certain end of it all, and my spirit consigned and confined, the journey is over, my losses the only thing that last.

BENEATH THE LOW

Do you talk to yourself; do you mull through matters, arguing with yourself? Do you criticize or correct yourself, thinking that you have to stop this habit, break free from the dread and drudge of dreaming about yesterday or hoping for tomorrow?

I may be a duck, down on my luck, but at least I am not *the goose that laid the golden egg*. Now that is a real dandy, the goose and so-called “golden egg”.

Maybe I am many characters, all the beings that I have encountered and more! Maybe I am each and all of them; some sort of hybrid or chameleon, the kind that looks like its surroundings and, more, takes on the very character of other characters. *Can I just be me, an eagle, Eli?*

My feathers are on fire and soon to be nothing by carbon as the coalmine. If I really cared then I would add, “Oh, please put me out; do something! I am melting, melting.” Who would come, and if somebody did, would it help, extinguish the fire before it burns me up? *Does anyone care out there; can anyone take a moment to stop and douse me off—before I burn to oblivion, even my spirit?*

If not help then, can you at least notice me; say something like, “You poor, pitiful, pathetic creature—can you please remove yourself from this world and do us all a favor!” If you cannot convince me that I exist then I guess I will just coil into a ball and pretend that I am something else, an eagle again. I do not want to be a dumb duck out of luck—in the mud and muck—but the eagle that I once was soaring high above it all. Pretending is what we do when reality is more or less than desirable, downright despicable.

“Stop the world...I want to get off,” I scream to the sanctuary of the *supreme and superior*. **They** control the world, the spin and rotation, not to mention the weather, sun and moon and all the stars that we see and do not see. While I look for a place to jump-off, **they** pull the levers, push the buttons, and program all of it—and us too! The moment that it looks right to jump, **they** will turn it up a notch and watch with amusement as I spin-off into space, the Black Hole. “Look at the ridiculous bird,” the sneer. “What a fool to believe for better, best!”



I am in the “Black Hole”; not the one way up there but the one way down below, at or near the center of the world. Just for the record and conspiracy, this place is not populated by superior or supreme beings; no, it is occupied by those who foolishly think **they** are, full of pretending, pomp and pride. Is this place different from yours?

You may think, *Eli is going cuckoo*, but you are wrong; no, I am there, cuckoo already, but at least I know it.

If you stay-up with the owls, it is hard to soar with the eagles and if you choose to go deep and dark then you are crazy. If you think **they** care, then you are crazier....

Cuckoo and crazy are on every corner; they are hanging-out, sounding out, “You over there, come over here.” You try to avoid them (it) or ignore them, but they are more than persistent, downright demanding that you join the cuckoo’s nest. They grab you and pull you in, overpowered by the overdone, crazy as a:

Bessie bug,
Outhouse fly,
Rat or other critter,
Cat in a dog factory,
Dog in a tire factory,
Sprayed cockroach,
Nutty squirrel,
One that is *taking leave of their senses*,
Loon,
Hound in a rabbit patch,
Cross-eyed cowboy,
Roof absent tacks on a windy day,
Chicken when a fox is in the house,
Bag full of raccoons,
Bonnet with a bee in it,
Brick short of pile,
Ants at a picnic,
Marbles, bit few,

BENEATH THE LOW

Wolf on a full moon,

Cat on a hot tin roof,

Anyone else reading this right now, if you have the guts to admit
and accept it.



Silent to chatter

When eagles are silent, parrots begin to chatter.

- Winston Churchill

You may think that the crazies are behind you, but they are not; no, they are everywhere you are, you.

Overhead are the *big birds*. **They** soar high, laden with their super eggs that go boom. A mission of mighty-might, the big birds mean to pick a fight, start something, and finish the job. Big birds will do the most, keeping the conflict to the air while limiting the ground base, activity. **They** will sight their target and then deliver their eggs, the outcome being a birth of such light and energy as to exceed all life, the living, leaving a path of plumbs and finally death in its wake.

Time passes and the mission complete—at least for now—the eggs dropped and the damage exceeding all expectation. No one sounds; all is silent on *the front* except the slow burning of everything not incinerated in the initial blast. Back at base, a broadcast of the events goes out, though censored, indicating the mission motivated by “acts of aggression by “these adversaries...”, warranting a unilateral strike aimed at demobilizing—purely defensive—with necessary countermeasures.

The effects of the blasts and booms are widespread. Exasperating the explosions is the weather, extending the “effective zone” far beyond *The Low*, practically enveloping much of the earth. Food shortages and famine follow, coupled with after effects of something so sinister that no one seems to know how to diagnose it, let alone concoct a cure. Dying and death is slow, cruel and calculated, as all *the natural* is being decimated, and I—Eli the eagle—give witness to it all as though I am anywhere I need to be and everywhere I should not be.

Big birds are not alone in this event however; assault from the air is only one side of the spectrum hatched; and retaliation is underway—the so-called adversary aiming to strike back or strike more, depending

BENEATH THE LOW

on whom you listen, believe. The whole concoction of conflict is beyond comprehension. Never before as the unnatural done more to render the natural in chaos and catastrophe—much more of this and there will nothing left, above or below life.

Eagles and other creatures separated, divided, without real choice; but in truth, they are to segregate, divide by decree, order and force. On one side, the fertile females and on the other, the militant males—fit to fight. Females are convinced that they must forget or forgo their fertility, choosing to celebrate the choice of either cracking their eggs or abstaining from mating, monogamous or not.

“It is your choice,” **Vile** sounds out. “You have the right to choose and have chosen well,” comes more; a convocation of the corrupt and corrupted.

“Eagles to arms,” **Vile** continues. “Now is the time for all eagles to gird on their talons and to turn the tide against terror—that which wills to destroy ‘the natural’, you and me.”

“Hoorah,” the eagles sound in unison.

“We will be victorious over our adversaries,” **Vile** prognosticates to the predators while the chicken hawk hides in the shadows. “Good must conquer evil, light must shine once again over the darkness leaked into our lands, tainting our waters and turning light into darkness,” the vulture rants.

The legions of eagles and other living creatures resound, “We will, we will, we will,” each stanza stronger than the last.

“We cannot be denied, our cause worthy, even necessary,” **Vile** continues, now more commanding than before. “We have cut deeply into the disease, but the only way of ensuring a cure is to remove every part pernicious, partisan. Only by conflict is peace a possibility!”

Meanwhile, and behind the scenes, the spectacle where *never before have so many been so able to do so much in so little time to thwart and perhaps save us of the darkness*. A vision, but ironically, one that makes me more blind to the realities of what I have come to know of *the natural* in all my days living. I am more fearful for the eagles and



all other creatures above and below, reeling with pain and want to say, “No, don’t believe that sound. **They** are not whom **they** claim to be!”

Then I saw more, my vision, of what *The Low* will offer—more disturbing to the point that I could not move except to shake violently as the darkness makes you dark.

“Do you see what you see,” sound **Vile** to me. “Do you see that you will lose; indeed, you have lost already,” the vulture makes claim. “All and more stand ready to do my bidding. I control the whole and *light* but word, a mere sound, and nothing more.”

What could I sound or do? Still shaking, my spirit weak and by heart bloodless; unwilling to do anything but quake in what feathers still pinned by flesh—the wretched wingless that I have come to be.

“Pity poor Eli,” **Vile** sounds aloud. “Observe what becomes of those who seek, desperate and destitute, what they cannot have, earn or given. I give you once an eagle but now, a feckless, featherless father.”

“Pity the fool, pity the fool, pity the fool,” sound hundreds of parrots lacking color or character. No, more like mimes, the parrots play the part of the mocker, the mockingbird. “We are eagles,” the parrots parade attempting to mock our physical beings.

“Yes,” declares **Vile**, “Eagles everyone.”

In the darkness of the dark, distinctions of any kind are difficult, next to impossible for the un-spirited. Once heroes are pariahs while parrots become eagles, so on and so forth. There are no limits, lines or boundaries here; whatever you thought in *the natural* is moot, much turned to mud and muck. A storm gathered and then took us all, one wave after another, until at last, we know not whether were flesh or soul, life or not, an eagle or a parrot—nothing matters anymore.

I long for the way things were, then, when I was with them, my own. *The natural* is not all bad; in fact, it is what we go to and seek in the darkest of times when nothing else matters. We are *the natural*—not the present state of weakened and wayward, **Vile** and such villainous. In the past was progress, every step though the journey be marked by more miles to fly, mountains to ascend and lives to effect.

BENEATH THE LOW

Every day you may make progress, your steps fruitful in some way. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. I know now that the journey never ends, and this now known adds to the glory on the other side, this effort not in vain.



Rode his shoulder

It rode his shoulder like a parrot.

- Rick Bragg

Will the parrots never shut-up and die?

“We are dead,” they say, mocking my thoughts, “But we sound and sound, all the more, to make you crazy, Eli.”

How can I live when they live beyond life?

“Hail Caesar,” the parrots follow.

“Who is ‘Caesar’,” I sound back for no particular purpose other than tap into the mindless of the lively lifeless.

“Caesar is our leader, our sovereign, honorable head,” they sound back, in unison, a menagerie of mindless mutes.

Vile is the leader, I know. “But if Caesar be your leader, what of the culture and the-,”

“Caesar and **Vile** are the same, you foolish, featherless freak,” they fire back. “Don’t you know anything?”

“Who is ‘Caesar’,” I sound again, wondering all along who these parrots think they are.

“**Vile** and-,” they repeat, relentless in their ridiculous role.

Why they play me a fool, I thought further. “What does ‘Caesar’, mean,” I sound, risking more ridicule.

“Caesar is supreme leader of the empire,” they rhythmically respond. “We worship and exalt the great one, hailing **Vile** to lead us into victory, crushing the cruel and criminal elements of-,”

“Alright, enough,” I sound loudly.

Now they will not cease, I realize, *the dam given way and the slow, slack water now a torrent of the tyrants of ancient times. A bloody sea of stench; decaying and diseased, the fluid substance infects everything in its path, disfiguring what is not yet dead, leaving an indelible—though soon to be forgotten as the next Caesar rises to reign and rule.*

BENEATH THE LOW

"We never cease to cease," they sound, reading my mind. "And nor would you if such greatness was yours. But as you are..."

Caesar was supreme emperor of an ancient civilization and the term applies to those of similar station, stature and state. **Vile** is supreme after all—lord of the darkness, *The Low*—if I ever doubted the claims.

*Does **Vile** know that I now know? Is **Vile** confident that I am confident that it is supreme, superior above all things? Does **Vile** really care what I think, know or believe? Does **Vile** care what anybody thinks or, further, that they think or think about thinking? I think **Vile** prefers that there is no thinking except its own. To think is to question and then to reason. **Vile** is not about "reason, but the unreasonable, the unnatural and this underworld.*

More visions do follow however, beyond the conflict and *big birds* and all the chaos orchestrated by **Vile**, cloaked under the banner of all things good, right and light. If the carnage is not enough to move the spirit to crying then comes the next...to make me crazy.

Many of the males that committed to be militant did so at the own peril and, for those that do not perish, the consequences shocking, senseless. All about me, the once-eagles straggle, their talons tainted with the blood of the innocent, minds and hearts weary and wanting; this is a troubling time for them and for those who still care about "them" whether the aggressor or the oppressed.

"What happened," I sound out, seeking some sense from the insensible. "What of victory, the mission and-,"

None dares answer; no, the muted militants straggle on as though I am, yet again, a spirit of no substance, status or stature. *Why am I ignored, my sounds not answered,* I think. There flesh and feathers burned and wings small, shriveled and stumped—the warriors are mesmerized, moved beyond the ability to think, feel—the most traumatized of all titans, worse-off than their fallen brethren.

I crawl beside them, step in front of the throngs, but nothing works—they will not answer let alone acknowledge my presence.



“Does anyone know why the eagles are down,” I sound at last, for which the passing parrots sound back, “They are not ‘down’, but merely returning for R&R before the last push and the final blow.”

“Then **Vile** must be winning...victorious,” I sound back, hoping that it is not so. *My sane senses want Vile vanquished—my crazy...could care less and any part of patriotism passed long ago.*

“Victory is ours,” the parrots remind me. “What remains is to merely mop-up the last of the resistance.”

“Then the conflict is over,” I call out, foolish as it is to think so.

“Wrong peckerwood, the conflict is not over until it is over. Conflict can bring peace, our leaders sound to us: ‘We will have conflict for as long as it takes to have peace.’”

“Not forever,” I hope and sound at the same moment. The object and objective is never peace; no, it is *prosperity, power and profit*. “Conflict is the means to an end that has nothing to do with peace,” I sound loud to the throngs of the returning conquerors but still, no one listens or cares to hear me.

Overlooking the whole affair is **Vile** and villains; they watch the returning with celebration—not because of inspiration but the incredulous—the masses believe and obey because they can do no other. “They are our friends, our fools,” chicken hawk sound, sitting next to **Vile**. “Fight you fools. Fight the darkness, for the light must be won,” **Vile** sounds aloud.

Everything is upside down, I thought with sympathy for the “fools” passed and now passing. “Can they not come to reason and see this ruse?”

While the procession of the passing continue—the long line of conquerors—the many motherless eagles jeer, smearing the masses of males as mere chickens—not eagles. “Where is the anger, where is the courage,” congregates cry out to the lot. “**Vile** planned for victory and you have failed,” they cry more, their darkened feathers pointing in disdain and disgust. “What can we do, the many fools less fallen?”

BENEATH THE LOW

No one came to welcome them back; no, they arrive back to ambivalence at the least, acrimony among their own that hate them as much as they hate themselves.

“Division is a good thing,” **Vile** comments to the villains. “A divided and disparate mass is easily controlled—pitting one against another such that no one trusts or can be trusted. “When they are weakened, we are made strong,” **Vile** proclaims to the inner circle, chicken hawk and the like.

“We must win the prize,” **Vile** resounds, aloud to the masses as a crow lands on its shoulder.

“What is ‘the prize’,” murmurs chicken hawk.

“The prize is *power, profit and prosperity*,” the parrots and the crow answer in unison.

“And what about the eagles,” chicken hawk follows. “Can the eagle end, now?”

“Let them fight it out among themselves—punishing each other—for tomorrow, we will be the eagles,” **Vile** decreed.

“End the eagles, end the eagles, long live **Vile**,” the parrots and crow drone as drool drops beneath them and darkness descends ever more.



Who nailed the goose?

...who nail [-ed the goose]....

- Herman Melville.

As the cautionary tale goes, “Don’t kill the goose that lays the golden egg,” so goes my journey beneath *The Low*. For while the parade of the returning continues indefinitely and the poor in reasoning follow, history has it that once, long ago, **Vile** vanquished a great goose, producer of a gold egg. Yes, the figurative goose of gold eggs left *the natural*, the body buried in the great waters, perhaps food for the red herring or some great sea creature, Leviathan.

“Why nail the goose,” I sound to **Wise** the owl, the one that told me of this tale. “Why destroy the source of prosperity, your power—if such is the objective?”

The owl is silent, stoic, seemingly at loss for an answer; at last, it sounds, “A gold egg was not enough to satisfy the want and lust of power.” **Vile** was obsessed by the creature, the natural ability to produce such profits, and pursued it to the point of the passing, the final pass.”

“Was the gold egg not enough,” I sound back.

“It laid many gold eggs,” the owl explains. “Though the more that it produced, the more the demand—the pursuit of yet more,” **Wise** continues. “The truth is that the goose gave out—exhausted by the demand, the rate of production, and ever increasing pressures.”

The cautionary tale is that “more” does not work forever—though the lust for “more” does continue in *the unnatural*. The love of *the natural* is about giving, accepting that *enough is enough*, but in the darkness comes lust; the want never ceasing, a thirst never quenched, a hunger never satisfied.

BENEATH THE LOW

"*Thirst* is just a symptom however; the result of a deeper and darker problem," so owl sounds. "Call it a cautionary or fabled story, but *nailing the goose* is suicide in slow motion."

"What is the cause, the root of it," I sound back.

"It is the pursuit of happiness—everything now—rather than waiting; it is forgetting the future, the next..., the burning of the 'now' while burning-up and future."

Nailing the goose destroys the future; it forgets that some things are worth waiting for...demands it all now, in the moment.

"Those that have vision are wiser, planning rather than pursuing full bore," owl continues. "Waiting makes *the will* so much more."

Passion and desire are good, yes, but without limits or boundaries, all that remains is *now*—no future.

The gold is not *the end* but rather *the means* to control, to possess and overpower anything and everything else.

"Why power—all the power to possess...", I sound back.

Owl explains that power becomes *the end* rather *the means*. "Not only did **Vile** seek a shortsighted objective but further, allowed power to become the end, not the means."

Every moment wants for more power; a paradox sounds as, "The more I want, the more I need; and the more I need, the more I want." The *power* that supposedly satisfies actually leads to endless want; the cure becomes the cause, the patient is self-infected, finally fatalistic.

A boundless *now* is without a future; it is a destiny of doom, the forces of time and pressure unleashed in a relative instant and the impact overwhelming, the aftermath too severe to overcome.

"How do you know these things," I sound to the owl.

"History sounds where this destiny begins and ends."

The wise one looks to the future and sounds, "Where are we going," and "What matters then, for the future?" The fool however cares not of the future, but only now, in the moment.



“Where are the wise, like you, to be heard, harkened to,” I sound further, frustrated beyond degree. “Who will stand-up and say, ‘Stop this madness and look to history as the life lesson!’”

“They are either ended or exiled as far as I know or knew them.”

“What of you,” I sound back.

“I passed long ago; what you see is a spirit, Eli. **Wisdom** is a spirit.”

“And then, all along...,” I continue, captured by *the supernatural*.

“You are conversing with, confronted by, a spirit, the supernatural.”

“How did it happen, your passing,” I sound to the owl, its spirit.

“It is a common story these days, Eli; you sound too loudly or liberally and then boom, your gone, a goner.”

“They took you out,” I sound on.

“Yes, they took me out, at least feathers and flesh.”

“And it was **Vile**,” I sound further.

“Yes, though there are many as **Vile**,” the owl continues.

“There is more than one, a single-,” I sound, more knowing than not that spirits abound.

“Yes, **Vile** is in volume—more than you can possibly no, a physical being,” the owl sounds on. “**Vile** is anywhere and everywhere—a vision that spans the earth though, as described before, goes not further than the moment.”

“Everywhere, but only for the now,” I resound.

“Ending those that stand in the way is necessity,” they sound. Deemed dangerous, the wise and similar visionaries are marked as first malcontents and then, much worse, miscreants and malicious—inciting revolt and rebellion.

“Can you see me as malicious,” **Wisdom** quips.

“Depends,” I sound back, “on what ‘malicious’ means?”

I suppose that it can mean anything; after all, what value are sounds if they never change, the meaning and matter? Sounds are power to those who cannot deliver action while the hapless and hopeless—no **Anger** or **Courage** to find—flock as swallows follow the *red herring*.

BENEATH THE LOW

Conflict begins on sounds; **they** sound this...and **they** sound that.... Once the sounds get round, things can get crazy, cuckoo, to the point that the crazy seem sane and the otherwise sane, well, something else, less and then nothing.



Plucks you

[Then the] goose swoops down and plucks you out.

- Ken Kesey

When *the end* justifies *the means*, the meaning of sounds change rendering the meaning of meaning, meaningless; if *the light* once represented insight or illumination, it now means dimness and darkness.

Once upon a time and place, three geese flew apart: one east, one west and the third, over the cuckoo's nest.

Which one am I, was my thought. There is the goose to the east that has one idea or idealism and the one from the west, another; but "the third goose is crazy", so they sound.

The eastern goose sounds to the western one, "You are corrupt, full of darkness," while the western resounds, "You are criminal, failing to heed the light." Back and forth they go, one up on the other.

The crazy goose knows the other two for what they are and, though described as a nut, it knows that they are neither right, forthright.

Is the crazy goose actually crazy or something less, more?

"Depends," I sound to self, "on what 'crazy' means?" Someone sounds, "They're a crazy," but that can mean different things to different ones. "Crazy" has different context, from the wild, unbridled to the derelict, deranged.

At ends of spectrum is the east and west, corrupt on one end and criminal on the other—if the claims hold true. *What is truth to the spectrum's ends—the extremes? How can these extreme's ends be anything more (or less) less than extreme, absolute? Is there anything is the natural that is "absolute", surely extreme?*

The one (end) throws stones at the other and *the other* at the *one end* or, if such action is too much, they sound back and forth, charges and claims.

BENEATH THE LOW

Meanwhile, the crazy goose sits in the center, looking both ways and wondering, *why they do this; pretending that their position is absolute, immovable, when indeed they violate their own position and punish any—as the so-called “crazy goose—that point out their actions.*

“It’s madness,” the crazy goose sounds, “sheer madness to go on pretending....”

It is a show, an act upon act, aimed to convince the masses that these two are right, on mark—all *their ducks in a row*. Convincing, they grow and enlist others to follow them, and finally to worship them. When they reach the zenith of power, Caesar, then they have arrived at the doors of an ancient empire, an eagle perched above the legions.

The goose in the middle understands that the end geese are all about power and possession—willing to buy and sell their lives to get it, keep it. *Without power and possession, you are nothing, no one—a rat, rodent or some other poor ground creature.*

One extreme sound, “We must take action on the other; for if we don’t act now, they are sure to act on us, naked aggression!” Thus, they take aggression on the other as a preemptive measure, creating conflict to avoid future conflict and ideally propagate peace and security. The crazy goose sees all this nonsense, thinking: *why do they attack each other to avoid attack?* Power, pursued with a passion, does this; it turns reason on its head, leading to such absurd and asinine *attacks to avoid attacks.*

“We must take action now, as our security is at stake,” so sounds the one extreme to its masses. Meanwhile, the other extreme, whether intent on attack or not, must now take similar action for similar causes. Much destruction comes, leaving one extreme and the other still standing though many decimated while many more, left in the margins.

Conflict divides and destroys though it is a means to an end of more power and possession, giving rise to inequality, classes and echelons.

Conflict is the means of the powerful, the crazy goose thinks. In the end, those that attack are not the powerful but the powerless, made or forced to protect, presumably their own, but more importantly, the



extreme, elite. The passing of the many to secure the few extreme is merely a means to an end, and in this vein is much change, shifting and spinning, to convince the many to *do their duty*. *Who knows who is right, wrong*, the crazy goose thinks. *If I think about this much longer, I may not be crazy any more.*

The crazy goose does think about this much more and, like any quest for knowledge, discovers that the more it supposedly learns, the less it knows. Still, and through its own passion for pondering this *passion for power*, it stumbles across the rich mineral resources that reside between the extremes, among lands and masses. Realizing too that possession is power, the crazy goose recognizes that the extremes seek more possession rather than protection, security for self rather than any sovereign, the many. *The many are merely a means to an end*, the crazy goose decides, though not a popular decision—unless the many are made fearful, more or less, forced to decide favorably.

“The conflict is not over until we have achieved...,” the one extreme goose sounds. “We must continue to ensure our security and limit the risk of...,” it drones on. “It has come to this...conflict is the only way...”

Am I the only nut that sees the cracks, the crazy goose sounds, using supposed protection to pursue possession, more power?

In the days that follow, the crazy goose must turn its attention away from the extremes with the arrival of an offspring, a gold egg. This is no ordinary egg, no, but a solid egg made of pure gold. Remarkably, the news of the solid gold egg arrives at the extremes, one goose and the other. In the pursuit of possession, each sends an apology for their claims and charges of the goose’s craziness and, now, desires to make amends and abridge any past differences, disparity. *How their position changes*, the previously crazy goose thinks, *now that I possess something that they want.*

Remember that the crazy goose is not stupid; it recognizes the intentions of the extremes, their passion for possession, power, and underlying intentions. Further, the goose realizes that they will each do what they must to get what they desire, deserve.

BENEATH THE LOW

Power took the prized possession, one and then another. No one remembered—or chose to forget—any claims or charges, conflict or confiscation, crime or corruption in the case; the ending of the crazy goose that laid the golden egg. There is a moral as with any fable: one day you are just crazy and the next, a goose swoops down and plucks you out; taking what you thought was yours, ending your *life and living*, while having no memory of any or all.



Symbol of charity

He wondered why the pelican was the symbol of charity....

- G.K. Chesterton

I remain deep in the darkness, where light is scarce and any glimmer of light and hope a rare occurrence. My body burns, blackened as a blackbird, raven, crow or vulture. My crown is featherless, pale and porous, looking more as a vulture than any other thing.

Blackbird sounding in the dead of darkness,
Take my deep and make it high,
All my *life and living* behind me,
My body burns and ashes fly,
Take my eyes and give them light,
Shine on me and give me strength,
Sooth by soul full of fright,
I want to be mighty,
I need to be right.

The longer I last, the less I think of my own, the lost, and the more I do not think at all, merely existing as a mindless mute. If I could think, hard and deep, then maybe I would find **Anger** and **Courage** and if the daughters found then **Hope** is sure to follow. Thinking hard and deep, critically, is a dangerous thing to do.

I still miss them, my lost ones. A moment is all that I can muster, my memory of them fading to the point that it seems more made-up, less my past, my paternity. *Did I have a family, or did I just dream it and make it more?*

Wise the owl reminds me that it is having a thing and losing it that really makes it matter. *Did I have 'a thing'—if it did exist, was it every mine, were we ever a family, even friends?*

BENEATH THE LOW

Owl sounds on, “The way to love something is to think how you would feel if it were lost.” *I have done more... accepting that it is lost, perhaps forever.*

The spirit of **Wise** subtlety sounds, “There are two ways to have all that you need. One is to continue to accumulate more the other is to desire less.” *I don’t know if I desire less but I do know that my desires have changed, accepting that some needs are not truly needs, only gifts.”*

Wise goes on, “I believe that thanks is the best thought, rendering gratitude for what you have or have had.” *I do not think ‘thanks’ often; more the pitiful thoughts, my own pity and pitiful heart.*

The owl once sounded, “A good story sounds to the truth about its hero, and a bad one, about the one that sounded or scribed the story.” *What is a hero if no one listens, no one cares; no one bothers to consider the costs of life and living in The Low, the Days of Daddy-Dumb. Do I, once an eagle, have what it takes to be a hero and then to sound my story regardless of who listens, cares, or considers the costs?*

Wise sounds, “Your journey is more than an inconvenience but it is a necessary goal just the same.” *Have I done the right thing; is the journey truly necessary or is the act of a crazy goose waiting to lay a golden egg—and you know how that turned out!*

Regardless of **Anger** and **Courage**, their whereabouts, “**Hope** means hoping when everything seems hopeless,” **Wise** sounds again. *My greatest challenge of this journey is keeping **Hope** when **Anger** and **Courage** wane.*

“Do not think so broadly that your brains bust open,” **Wise** warns me. *How broad or deep should I think—when is enough, enough?*

There is privilege and there is duty. *Does duty push me to this point or, should I consider it a privilege to suffer and possibly pass from the world altogether without having reached my goal, recovering that which was lost?*

Is my journey, the decision, a good thing—am I a good bird, egg?
Wise used an example to define *good*, sounding, “It has many



meanings, 'good'; even *bad* can do something good or well even if the intentions and objectives all along were nothing but *bad*."

There are truths and lies, facts and falsehoods. Even though lies and falsehoods become appreciated or acceptable, they are still lies, untruths and falsehoods. "I have told lies," I confess to you, "but never lied about someone so as to put an end to them, their *life and living*."

Once upon a time, two geese came to a great gosling, each claiming that an egg belong to them. The first sounded,

"It is mine", while the other, "the same".

The great gosling could not decide the actual mother, thus decided to split the egg, cracking open the contents and dispensing half to each goose. The first goose agreed—this was only good and true—while the second screeched, "Please don't do that. Give the egg to the other if you must."

To the later, caring and compassionate, the great gosling gave the egg while to the first, the pretender, came condemnation.

Beneath the Low is very hot, more than the heat of the sun or the humidity of the balm, Dante's inferno. "I believe that hot places make us appreciate when things are cool, calm and soft," **Wise** sounds to mean that "hardship and hindrances reminds us of the necessity for hope." *Can hope help me when I am melting away?*

There are problems and there are solutions. "How can the solution occur when the problem has yet to be...found," sounds **Wise**. "You must discover the problem before any chance of solving it." *What are the problems beyond my own, my failure and all; even if I find "the problems", what of a solution—if it exists at all?*

"How you think when you lose determines how long it takes before you gain," the owl sounds a necessary, nascent truth. *This is going to more than difficult, gain. I cannot get beyond the trees to see the forest, the problem to find a solution.*

"Anything can float downstream but only the living can swim upstream," I remember, **Wise** once sounded. *What about the red*

BENEATH THE LOW

herring—can it swim upstream? “No, but it sure acts like it can,” **Wise** quipped, “in muddy, murky waters.”

“We will never go hungry for wonders,” the owl sounded, “but are famished for wondering.” *So wondering is, well, a good thing unto itself—not a waste of time.*

“Pride lost is a good thing; one sees much from the valley—whether they realize it—and little from the peak.” *The owl was figuratively sounding; that we must go through the valley and, doing it, brings us further along the journey, darkness and all.*

When I confessed my fears, **Wise** explained, “You have all these fears because you fail to fear the one thing that you should, fear.”

“What is that,” I sounded back to the owl.

“You will preferably find out, Eli, and much of what you fear will pass.”

Moving from all my thoughts and memories, I came upon a pelican; at least, a creature that looked as a pelican.

“You’re an eagle,” the pelican sounds with doubt.

“What are you, bird with a giant bill,” I sound back.

“I am **Paternal** the pelican,” it responds, my appearance aside.

“What does your name mean, ‘**Paternal**’?”

“Caring and compassion,” the pelican replies.



And the pelican

...and the Pelican and the eagle...

- Deuteronomy 14:17

The pelican is likable, friendly and open, sharing much that I found fascinating from its life on the great waters to the care of its own young, lost as mine.

“What happen...to them,” I sound to **Paternal**.

“I don’t know,” the pelican bluntly puts it.

Like me, my experience, **Paternal** returned to its nest to find them gone, no trace of the whereabouts.

“I am sorry for-,”

“Don’t sound it, Eli, consolation, a casual care. I just want to forget about it, try not to remember when or why.”

I meant what I sounded, though **Paternal** took it as it did; nothing more than a cliché, a platitude or pleasantry. **Paternal** did not know then that we share a similar story. Noting is more relevant than that which you know all too well, first wing and perhaps more.

“Are you sure you’re not a vulture,” **Paternal** follows, viewing me up and down. “You sure look like one.”

“I am an eagle,” I sound loudly.

“Are you from Egypt, across the great waters,” the pelican continues.

“No, I am from-,”

“Where’s your life-long companion, the mate that supposedly you never part from?”

“I told you, **Paternal**, that my mate is missing,” I sound even louder.

“Oh yes, another sad story—like mine—but you favor the Egyptian vulture, something considered less the eagle.”

“I told you that I am not from that place. My place is neither extreme, east or west, but more among the-,”

BENEATH THE LOW

“Crazies,” **Paternal** interrupts.

“How did you know about crazy goose,” I sound.

“Everyone knows the story of the three geese; ‘one flew east, one west and the third over the cuckoo’s nest’.”

“Evidently,” was all I can sound, stunned by the knowing.

“Do you want to go down to Egypt to see the vulture,” **Paternal** sounds, suggesting some so-called trip.

Why would I want to see a vulture, Egypt, my thought as I try to figure all this out. “Go east?”

“Egypt, land of the pharaohs,” **Paternal** elaborates.

“What are pharaohs?”

Paternal explains that pharaohs, “The Pharaoh”, are much like Caesar; endless power and possession, superior and supreme.

“Do **they** live,” I sound on. “Is the pharaoh living?”

“Yes, more or less, but their power is petroleum.”

“What is petroleum?”

“You don’t know what oil is,” **Paternal** sounds loudly. “*Evidently* you have not been on the big waters when a tanker or offshore platform goes boom—what I think you call, ‘floaters’.”

“Is oil like coal,” I sound back, reflecting for the moment on the canary.

“Yes, very similar,” the pelican sounds excitedly, flapping its wings and clapping its big beak.

The pelican explains that oil and petroleum (or oil) are sources of energy; things that *the worst of the worse* pursue with a passion.

“Great conflict is the consequence of this passion,” **Paternal** sounds on. “It is the life-blood of the modern world, consumed at great cost.”

Did this “life-blood” have anything to do with Egypt, the vulture, or anything we share?

“You may be wondering where I am going with the conversation,” the pelican sounds on. “Lands to east, like Egypt, are laden with oil, pharaohs, and those more ruthless than **Vile** and its villains that control this lifeblood and finally, control the earth—they rule!”



These are sounds of **Paternal**, the pelican, friend to the eagle, Eli; given at this time and place, beneath *The Low*, a vision:

There comes a Caesar from the east and ends of the earth, swooping down as an eagle, blood on its talons. Already, the land is occupied by a Caesar but then, so comes another, more vile than the current, present pharaoh.

As the legions of old, the east is effective in their conquest, **possessing the lifeblood of the world, oil or petroleum**. Decimation and desolation occur on a scale as never known before, *the natural* or otherwise, immobilizing the west in all ways. Many join the conquest of the east—that despise the west—believing *peace and prosperity* is possible with the disempowering and destruction of the west.

The pride or hubris of the west is their worst enemy, failing to prepare for such conflict, believing the east as no match for their power and possession. Caught unprepared, the west capitulates against the east and the many that follow. Possession thought to be the property of the west is swiftly carved-up, the west rendered powerless, drained of *the lifeblood*. The east is brutal and barbaric—as conflict so happens—fleecing the west of all living things or things capable of sustaining life above and on the surface. The big populations of the west sieged—a gruesome and grizzly end. Fortifications once thought impenetrable collapse under the weight of their own structures, overwrought by years of neglect, the gatekeepers gone.

The last of the masses lament: **“I looked for someone among to stand-up on behalf of the west, but I found no one.”** Still more remember: “Unless the house remains strong, it is easily entered, an enemy from within.”

This is the vision of the pelican, **Paternal**, given this day to Eli, the eagle, beneath *The Low*, the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*.

“What remains of the west,” I sound.

BENEATH THE LOW

“Nothing really, a veritable waste land,” **Paternal** resounds.

I will not forget you **Paternal**, the pelican; the sounds and vision offered to me now and then, from one that knows loss.



Hope rises

Hope rises like a phoenix from the ashes of shattered dreams.

- S. A. Sachs

I awoke to find the pelican gone, vanished as though a spirit, while a glimmer of **Hope** or light shown from a crevice above me, warming my frigid flesh, my shaking body. Strange, that the air about me remained immensely hot yet I am cold, the chill from within.

More, the air is stifling, my throat as raw within as the flesh around it. I thirst as never before, my bones dry, cracked and aching. *Is there nothing to drink*, I could not stop thinking, my wanting and needing of nourishment. *I must find water, something.*

"There is nothing nourishing to drink or eat," a sound comes from afar.

"Nothing...to eat, drink," I sound back, my voice raspy and sounds stuttered.

There was nothing...all taken in and through the conflict, conquest by the east. Evidently, the earth is scorched, the water soiled. "If nothing...I will pass," my sound makes.

"You are passing even now. Your flesh will soon be ashes, your feathers dust," the distant sound, again, I faintly hear.

"Then my journey is over," I sound back.

"Do you think that your journey is over?"

"It seems that way," I sound as I draw enough strength to look about me, *The Low*, a waste in all ways.

If not bad enough before, The Low is as the pelican's vision described it; our life and living inextricable connected, spirit to spirit.

"The land is passing, the dreams of the many, no more," the sound continues. "Look and see what happens when pride replaces prudence, and passion is the pursuit of power and possession."

TO THE HIGHER

“It was a fabled story of the age”, as the distant sound begins with another vision of the end.

The west went too far, overstretching to the point of no return, like a muscle or limb too old or brittle to recover, return and restore. The east and many others despised the west—and for good reason—as overstretching causes, the long arm and heavy hand of empire.

The west is not that old, as empires can be, but sometimes it is not the age but the speed. In the latter half of life, **the west exploited and exhausted its resources**, deferring the inevitable collapse through something called credit, sometimes backed by oil, coal and similar sources of power. Like a shooting star or meteor, **the west burned-out**, wasting much of the described resources on lavish living and the vile activities of which *the worst of the worse* are renowned, reputed.

The west was not alone or the only so-called “worst”, but for the recent past, the most provocative and pernicious. The criminal and corrupt are east to west, everywhere, but the primary hideout was west, surrounded by a wall.

An endless array of so-called instruments were produced, the vast majority nothing more than thin layers of wood, parchment and paper—but nothing of real value such as food, shelter and other vitals. Handing one off to another and then another, these described instruments proved instrumental in high-stakes theft, crime and corruption. The more **they** succeeded the more **they** needed and the more **they** needed, the more their greed and guile grew.

The west flourished, as compared to many, and went further, consuming while capitalizing on the possession, power and prosperity. Founded on wanting and want, the culture would eventually hit a wall, opportunity diminish and demise arise, as empires do—history has it.



It was only a matter of time and pressure before the fractures and fissures of this *life and living* would protract and the whole affair end with a boom, an irrecoverable crash.

“Look at the decimation about you,” the sound prompts me. “Is this complete ruin or not?”

As far as I could see—my vision growing dimmer—the surface was a gray ash, the sky a reddish, smoky substance.

“Looks like the crown of a volcano, doesn’t it?”

“Why was the west so despised,” I sound, still unsure, stupefied.

As the distant sound responds, “The hatred of the west came from their undermining elsewhere, against the east and the many others. **They** aimed to control the world,” the sound explains, which pushed them toward *the unnatural*, exchanging their natural life for the darkness and finally, *The Low*.

The west more or less created the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, a period of declining social and cultural life and living. Again, it was a matter of time and pressure before. Those adversely affected and neglected finally unified, opposing the workings of the west that stripped their lands of wealth and imputed them with all forms of oppression, long and dreadful burden imposed on the world. There was an uprising and then, an undoing. Growing despair and apathy in the west practically *opened the gate* for any aggressor to enter and do their worst. Many welcomed the invasion; those who had been ignored or otherwise left out of the vast growth, *prosperity and prominence*, of the west.

Not everyone basked in the glory and greatest of the west; in fact, many failed to “live the dream”, as it was called, and generally survived on the margins of their own burdens and the subsistence that barely kept them alive, life and living.

The west’s so-called ‘dream’ was more an illusion for most who, on realizing it, despised their own more than the east and the many that finally attacked, invaded and conquered.

TO THE HIGHER

“How long will they chase the dream, the abstract and allusive notion of affluence,” was a question of the day, “while those that dreamt-up the dream have killed the goose that laid the golden egg?”

While the distant sound taught me all these things, my health still declining, I fall too. *My days, even hours, are numbered.*

“You are a reflection of the west, Eli; once noble and valiant, now weary and withering, a life in its last moments.”

This association was not what I wanted to hear; that I, an eagle, was “a reflection” of the west, the eve of an empire.

“All I wanted was to recover my lost-,” I sound, my last plea.

“Yes, I know, and you are right and good, your intentions,” the distant sound comes again. “But good intentions do not guarantee that all will be good, right and just. The west is laden with ‘good intentions’ gone awry, often because good intentions are met with a punishing and punitive force—*the unnatural.*”

“**Vile** has thwarted my effort,” I sound, more or less knowing it.

“**Vile** and more,” is all the distant sound could sound back, my doubts remaining.

“I will see you on the other side,” sounds my reassurance of life after life.

“The other side of where, what,” I sound with the last of my strength.

“The other side of shattered dreams, where hope rises,” was the last sound that I remember on this side of *life and living.*



Dare to rise

...*Dare to rise from the ash.*

- Ani DiFranco

The other side is not this side, not the west or east of any other place on earth. *The other side* is where *the supernatural* prevails, all other powers faraway, lower and lacking, and **Anger** and **Courage** finds **Hope** once more. Oh yes, **Anger** is there, but not like anger down on earth, it is a righteous anger, a wrath framed in wisdom.

“Which one are you, **Anger** or **Courage**,” I sound, seeing a female form before me.

“I am both, **Hope** altogether,” the form sounds out as it lifts me up, caressing my soul and soothing my spirit. “You have been through *The Low*,” **Hope** sounds on, “and have found me on the other side.”

She is a beautiful spirit, **Hope**, as more my mate, my companion before and the fullness felt with my eaglets about me.

“I have always been and will always be,” she sounds, “hampered at times, **Anger** and **Courage** faraway.”

“Did they leave you, your daughters?”

“No, my offspring were taken from me,” **Hope** sounds back. “Imagine a world without **Anger** and **Courage**,” she adds.

Hope does not necessarily mean all of anger, courage and the like; but more the kind good, right and just; the kind that comes from *the natural*—not the mutated forms hatched by **Vile** in times of *the unnatural*.

There is **Courage** and then courage, **Anger** and then anger; the two are not the same. **Courage** comes from conviction that *the unnatural* is not *the natural*; the first, the construction—more concoction—of **Vile** and the villains while the later, creation as it began, once was and intended to remain; the difference between design and consequence.

TO THE HIGHER

“What is the source of your convictions,” **Hope** sounds. “Are you bitter over the loss of your own, forever angry and afraid, or have you accepted *the unnatural* for what it is, was?”

Courage and **Anger** is a delicate relationship; and if not treated right, all chance of **Hope** is lost in the consequences of bitterness, irresolvable, inconsolable hurt. When hurt remains, it festers, and forms a lasting illness that spreads. Bitterness is less apt for the curing; thus, it is best to avoid it—leave it be...let it go.

Hope continued to care for me, my soul evidently holding on to hurt, anger of the worst kind.

“Bitterness is another of *the unnatural*,” **Hope** sounds. “It is a contagion, infecting the hearts of many, east and west, relentless in its effect.”

The *Days of Daddy-Dumb* is a time and place of little hope; anger, lapsing into bitterness, and courage lost in angst and anxiety.

Much of what *the natural* did to elevate creation is undone by *the unnatural*, the slow and insidious undermining of the many by a few such as **Vile**.

“What happened to them, my own,” I sound off. “Are the eaglets-,”

“I cannot know,” she sounds back. “It is not mine to know what happened or why,” she emphasizes, “but only that such tragedies are common among them, innocent or not.”

Anger is not a bad being, not really. **Anger** can be a good thing if it fuels a passion for posterity. Planning is a good, right and just thing for those as **Paternal** the pelican; care and compassion for their future, **Hope**.

“What happened...to the west, the many,” I sound to **Hope**.

“You have learned some of it already,” she sounds. “What more do you want to learn, know?”

“What else can I learn that might ease my anger and prevent bitterness?”

“Do you want to be bitter,” she pointedly sounds.



"I remain angry, even now that my body is gone," I sound back, confessing what **Hope** knows already.

*I know of greed and graft, of slaves and owners and such condition and character that make-up the complexity of the unnatural; but I know little of **Vile**—who are what it really is, was.*

"**Vile** was once an eagle, like you," **Hope** sounds shortly after my thoughts were heard.

"An eagle, it was..." I screech.

"Oh, you know that, don't you Eli," **Hope** sounds. "You have figured-out the devolution of creation; once an eagle, now a vulture."

In truth, I did...and that many, many more *once eagles* had sadly fallen as vultures, skin-headed, skulls and scavengers.

"You were evolving, you know," **Hope** sounds on. "You know it, your appearance and all."

She is right, of course, thou I did not have the courage to face it; my ways and everything that once was an eagle was disappearing with each day, growing darkness.

"That's why **Vile** let you live, on," she continues.

She was right again, I believe. **Vile** could have ended me at any time, in *The Low* or beneath....

"**Vile** let you live because it believed you would turn bitter, anger of the worst kind, and join the ranks of the few that run the underworld, creators and crafters of the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*," she sounds with certainty.

"How do you know this," I sound back to **Hope**.

"These things exist only in *the supernatural*," that prior you have little insight, awareness."

I did not know because I could not know.

"**Vile** vacillates between an eagle and a vulture, able to play both sides, coy and clever," **Hope** explains to my questions.

Vile is a veil in which the real figure, heart and mind, is known only *the supernatural*; neither *the natural* or *unnatural*, not really. **Vile** is not as it appears; a skin-headed scavenger, but is more dangerous and

TO THE HIGHER

destructive than the east is to the west, the many to the few. **Vile** is a reflection of *the worst of the worse* where a thin line exist between good and bad, right and wrong, light and darkness.

“Who is that headed high,” I sound, a sudden shadow passing over us.

“It is the phoenix kicking off the dust, above the ashes,” **Hope** sounds.

“What ashes,” I sound back.

“The ashes of you Eli, once an eagle,” she sounds back.



Like a peacock

*If I was a painter, and was to paint the eagle, how should I do it?
[] Like a Peacock for its vanity?
- Charles Dickens*

Pride and **Anger** are similar; both share the similar duality where pride of the worst kind is hubris whereas anger is bitterness. It is one thing to be proud of someone but another to boast and brag, play the blow heart, that struts around like a rooster or plums its feathers as a peacock.

“Look at me, look at me—I am the bird,” sounds pride gone too far. “It’s all about me, my rights, my life and self-determination, my feelings and most of all, a world for which I am at center,” sounds the pride in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*.

The *clusters* somehow hold that they, each and all, are eagles; with liberty and freedom to fly high, low and in between, seeking out whatever their fancy finds convenient with passion and pleasure. They sound, “*Life and living* is all about getting it while you can,” or “I deserved it, anything and everything, because I am, well, me.”

The *clusters* pride themselves on thinking independently, individually, while in fact, they refuse a single such thought—coming or going—because it would require them to stop, think, and consider something other than themselves.

Clusters fly over me, all flocked-up, sounding, “We’re number one, we’re number one,” until a boom goes off below, a bird drops and all the rest scatter like rats fleeing a sinking ship.

They may have the most beautiful feathers in the land—thanks to lots of help—but are deeply flawed beneath the flesh, a mass of mindless and meaningless moments. Their whole sense of who they are has nothing to do with meaningful life but rather, getting the most that they can while they can no matter what comes of any other, even

TO THE HIGHER

themselves. Like the scavengers of my species, scraps and spoilage is preferred over sacrifice, self-restraint and common reasoning.

Chicken hawk is a fine example of a cluster-flock; hiding behind the power of *big bird*, sounding off about conflict here and there.

“Oh, doesn’t the hawk look hawkish, securing our lands and protecting our lives,” while it resides in the comfort of its feathered nest where it comfortably rest for the next day’s song of anger and courage.

Vanity, vanity, all is vanity. Many who remain separate of such clusters are not fooled, foolish; no, this bird faces the realities of *life and living in the unnatural* with **Anger** and **Courage**, few conveniences and comforts. This bird labors and toils and, for what, but to eke out an existence, faith that **Hope** will stay. I witness this bird before *The Low*, and know of such, even now, still below though a spirit now.

“There will be reckoning,” **Hope** sounds, “A great-getting-up day when *the natural* is restored and *the unnatural* will be no more.”

“When...when will it happen,” I sound back, though **Hope** does not answer or is not able to sound any more, supernatural or not.

Why do I remain unknowing, unlearned, of the future and the past, I think.

“It takes time and more,” **Hope** reminds me. “After all, Rome was not built in a day,” she quips, smiling in a moment of lightness, levity.

For all the ages that built Rome, oh how the mighty do fall, I thought, thinking of the time to come.

Now that I am at *The Low*, again, and under the care and compassion of **Hope**, is it the time and place to consider that the east and others are not the clear and present danger to *life and living*. What is, was, the first and foremost threat to the west? It is a pride of nationalism and heritage—exceptionalism—that sounds, “We’re above the rest, past, present and future.” *What a ridiculous notion, “above the rest”—who do they think they are fooling.*

When clusters fly miles above the rest, two things happen: first, they get a beak-bleed, not because of atmospheric pressure but because their annoying attitude warrants a slap on head; second, they



become light-headed, not because of limited oxygen, but because they intoxicated with self-indulgence and aggrandizement.

Once upon a time and place, there was a peacock, proud and pomp. The bird believed that it was a reflection of beauty, a combination of color too complex to paint or draw, replicate in anyway. The self-absorbed bird spent hour on hour plucking and primping, grafting and grooming. When the bird could not find what it thought it needed in its own place it searched elsewhere, seeking and stealing what it needed or wanted, coy and clever as **Vile**. The bird took and took, using far more than any bird could ever want let alone need. “I take because it is mine and it is mine because I can take it,” was the excuse given when some might dare to wonder when enough is enough? More meant more and, still more...with no end in sight. The bird demanded absolute attention and allegiance while much else went neglected, deliberately disregarded, the peacock beset on remaining beautiful. Time would sound that the peacock’s vision was no further than its reflection, perception—denying everything and everyone else.

There came a storm; not *the natural* kind but an *unnatural* kind—the mother of all storms, much too strong for the peacock’s lofty nest to withstand, hold. The storm took everything, blowing the bird to kingdom come and hurling its remains asunder, leaving only a few accounts, recollections of those that endured. The experience, exploitation of everything, is in keeping with the peacock’s sounds, “There is no storm that I cannot withstand, overcome.” This storm however, proved otherwise; any recollections or legend dashed thought possibly avoidable if the right priorities were in place, the preparations made. Still, the peacock was exalted, raised to that of an eagle, endowed with many praises and accolades such as:

“Peacock was a sight to behold,”

“A fine and refined form of creation,”

“We all looked up to peacock,”

“Peacock looked the storm in the face,

”Fearless was that bird.”

TO THE HIGHER

Nothing is more attractive to darkness than the one too blind or shortsighted to see beyond its own appearance, unknowingly failing to recognize let alone realize the failures due its arrogance except for those that follow, blind as bats, a cluster-flock.

Is any creature exceptional, self-determined or otherwise, a god?



Tried

I have tried imagining that the single peacock I see before me is the only one I have, but then one comes to join [and] and another....

- Flannery O'Connor

“**They’re** everywhere,” I sound to **Hope**

“Who is everywhere?”

“Rats, crazies and those too proud to see.”

“Good, you’re continuing to see, more, as a spirit,”

The supernatural is less a mystery now that I am spirit; to see the deeper, hidden things, you have to be spiritual, a spirit, I think.

As far as I can see, further than ever before, peacocks prod, parading their plume, portraying the message of pride: “I am exceptional, self-determined, beautiful and righteous.”

The whole of the parade is a sight to see; appearing as a sea of brilliant colors, it stinks! This show is a refuse of unbridled consumption and convenience, slack or stagnant waters, foul and foolish.

“Something is afoul, foul,” I sound to **Hope**

“‘Something’,” she sounds back, “only something?”

“Maybe more, then, much stinks!”

“Rot and refuse sometimes stinks, the wasting away of things,”

Hope sounds, a lead for something more.

“Are they wasting away,” I sound back.

“What do you think, feel and see?”

They are everywhere—always have been—peacocks exalted because of their color, flesh and feathers, and not the more intrinsic, the virtuous undervalued. **They** are grand and great because **they** believe that that are, and parade around aimed to convince others of the same.

Darkness from the few begins with a dream: “You may not be grand or great, but you can be if....”

TO THE HIGHER

Unnaturally, the prospect of “grand and great” appeals to the empty soul, the superficial and senseless, seeking relevance or at least attention enough to be grand, even great, among all creatures. *If they can climb this ladder, the threat of being at the bottom, looking up, stuck in the mud and muck, is unlikely.*

“Do they understand the dilemma,” she sounds.

“Which one,” I sound back.

“The higher you climb, the harder it gets,” **Hope** suggests.

There is more than one dilemma. First, there is the presumption that the higher you climb, the grander you become; remember that power comes at a price and, all too often, the *abuse of power* is the beginning of the end—or at least cause for failure, falling. Power abusers are not authentically grand or great—just abusers, coy and clever, without apology. *Abusers are everywhere too.*

Second, there is the *slippery slope* or in this concept of a ladder, the *wet rung* where you lose your footing and fall (or fallback) not realizing your mistake, the risks. If you are lucky you may realize the risks, unlucky and you fall to the end. *You have to weigh the risks.*

“But that’s life and living—sometimes you win and sometimes you lose,” sounds **Hope**. “You have to take the chance and-,”

“Sure, take chances...but don’t go charging up that ladder thinking that you’re there, at the top of the heap.”

“Yeah, got to plan things, prepare for the possibilities,” **Hope** adds, somewhat acting the naïve part of say, the natural or other being of lesser place. “They all fall though, sooner or later. You just have to keep trying, get back on the ladder, and climb again, over and over, like a rat running the treadmill.”

“Woah **Hope**, the sarcasm,” I sound, cautioning my mentor.

“Sorry, just had to take a chance myself,” she sounds back.

Third, the ladder may not lead to “grand or great” at all; in fact, the ladder may really exist just as a “golden parachute” is not really gold, only the color of it. Some sound, “You’ve got to climb the ladder...here it is...make us proud...you can do it...think what others will think of you.”



The ladder is an illusion where the root of pride blossoms into a sea of brilliant colors that is finally foul, foolish. The ladder does not stink, really, because it really does not exist; a mere illusion to make you believe that your “grand and great” prospect rests in climbing it, stepping over (or on) anyone and everyone who gets in the way.

“Consume, consume, consume; and when you’re bloated to the gills, consume more!”

“By golly, Eli, I think you’re getting it,” **Hope** resounds. “Your insights and observations are like a cool breeze on a hot, humid day.”

“Keep climbing fool—I’ve got your back,” the orders are given. “You can do this...you will do this...and you will win, promise you.”

Are creatures “grand or great”; is it enough to sound, “I am alive,” and believe that *life and living* alone is a grand and great thing? Are we—all creation—created for a cause “grand or great”, not *born into it* but created just the same?

“Good, you’re sounding the deep questions,” **Hope** sounds.

“Maybe some **do not want** many to be grand or great, but always at the bottom looking up, desperate for -,”

“Bingo,” **Hope** sounds, “You just won the frozen turkey.”

“Frozen turkey,” I sound back, confused by the-,

“Just an expression I picked-up from,” **Hope** sounds. “Anyway, you’re using your noodle and-,”

“What’s a ‘noodle’?”

“Too many idioms...continue Eli.”

“You mean, ‘idiots’,” I resound, my confusion over idioms.

“Yeah, sometimes, but that’s another story,” **Hope** sounds

“Sound to me then; teach me more.”

“No, no, not now—just continue, Eli,” **Hope** resounds with a burst of fury showing some of her daughter, Anger.

“Where was I...,” I sound to **Hope**.

“The concept of the ladder and-,”

“Oh, the ladder...and those that prefer or power-,”

“Yes, the cause for grand or great,” she sounds out.

TO THE HIGHER

In the history of creation, many of the created finally falls under a few. *The few*, not always apparent, possess the conceptual ladder, sometimes erroneously called “the stairway to heaven”. **They** elevate themselves to the top, coy and clever *abusers of power*, profitable and provocative, sounding their superior and supreme stations—above all creation, cause. Someone once called them “the vile maxim...” but I do not know anything else about it right now. **They**, “the vile masters” do not offer the ladder with good intention but rather as a trap, a lair to *The Low*, a time and place similar to the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*. **They** are not the peacocks, prodding and parading, but **they** produce pride that powers the illusion of grand and great.

Am I a peacock?



A moment's insight

A moment's insight is sometimes worth a life's experience.

- Oliver Wendell Holmes.

The vile maxim (“**Vile**”) knows the natural laws but more, how to circumvent and otherwise violate them; coy and clever, accounting for the risks, **they** know what will happen before most everyone else. Simply put, **they** have the jump on everyone, nullifying the risks.

Those at the bottom are too busy surviving to prod and parade, to strut around full of pride. The rat knows it is a rat, despicable and despised, but it does not look both ways to figure out which way it should go—and nor does it depend on anyone to point a direction. The rat knows when it is being stepped over and stepped on—climbing the ladder, abusing power and all.

The notion of equality, egalitarian, is nothing more than the celebration of envy, want and will to get what **they** got—and get it good. There are two ways to control society; either end equality with extremes, the maxim and the minions or centralize control effectively ending any rights and finally enslaving the many.

“Tolerance” is another term that I struggle with; tolerant of what or who, and for how long? If I refuse to be tolerant does that mean that I have standards or boundaries or does that mean that I am bigot or worse, insufferable—the pride of a peacock? Can I be intolerant of intolerance, condemning those thought “intolerant” or, further and farther, convicting some “hate crime”. I hate tolerance and I hate “hate crimes” simply because each and all are never consistent or even close; no, they cause division upon difference without deference, full of pride. Hate (crimes) and tolerance is a cluster-flock.

“Be care Eli; **they** create the ‘cluster-flock’ to divide and conquer,” **Hope** cautions me. “Coy and clever... a cause for conflict,”

TO THE HIGHER

As long as there is conflict within, the conflict beyond... goes largely unnoticed. *Keep us fighting each other and will never know....*

"That's right, Eli. Speak your peace," **Hope** encourages.

"I now know a bigot when I see one."

"How do you know, Eli?"

When the light shines on them, the window of their eye closes shut."

"But that's all creatures—those that have eyes, vision," **Hope** sounds. "Are all creatures bigots?"

"All with flesh, skin or scales; all of them—even me."

"Why you, Eli," she sounds.

If you call someone a bigot that makes you a bigot too; and if you call everyone a bigot then that makes you the biggest bigot of all.

"Your one mother of a bigot, aren't you?"

"I was 'the daddy of them all'..., oh yeah, idioms."

"Now you're getting it, idioms and all."

"If you're not a bigot then you're not breathing."

"If you're not breathing, then your-,"

"Not living, at least living flesh and feathers."

"Is the peacock a bigot," **Hope** sounds back

"Oh, they're bigots alright—but too blind to know, too bold to believe it."

"But they're grand and great, right?"

"Every calling is grand when it's pursued with passion."

Peacocks are passionate about their color, feathers and all; oh yes, passionate! They climb that ladder—working hard to get to the top of the heap—with such stamina as to amaze even an ant, of the worker cluster. The difference is that the ant is doing something for its colony and not for self as the peacock.

"It's not what you do or how you do it as much as why; not where you are but more, where you're going."

"Bravo, Eli, bravo," **Hope** resounds. "But watch that pride—it can creep up on you when you least expect it, before you know it."



That is the problem with pride; too proud to know you are proud, blind as a bat and bold as a rat.

“Not all pride is wrong, right?”

Oh sure, there is a right pride; the sense of celebration when someone succeeds, even survives, a most excellent event! Pride, the wrong of it, is what I fear the most; pride preempts planning, placing all on the present, posterity to the wind.

Once upon a time and place, there were two eagles, male and female, that built their nest in a tree planted in the sand. After many hours of intense construction, and little consideration that the tree was poorly rooted, a storm came along and blew the tree down, their nest blown asunder.

“Are you sure they weren’t peacocks,” **Hope** sounds

“No, but they should have been.”

Anyway, the eagles did not learn from their mistake and, once again, built a nest along the shore, in the sandy soil.

“Do you know what happen?”

“Let me guess; a storm came and-,”

“No, a tidal wave rolled in a washed everything away, nest and all.”

“And the two-did they learn this time?”

“No, they’re not ducks or pelicans or any other sea bird and, alas, they drowned, food for the red herring.”

“Why do say the red herring?”

“Because they were led astray—a fool’s errand—and likely were consumed by the very thing that they followed, a poor direction indeed.”

“Boy, you’re tough!”

“I have been beneath *The Low*—what do you expect?”

“Are you certain about all these comments, your feelings and,”

“As certain as one can be about opinion.”

“Opinion is not certitude,” **Hope** sounds to me.

“Is this another idiom, colloquialism?”

“No, ‘certitude’ means: conviction, certainty and such.”

TO THE HIGHER

There is confidence and there is cocksure; the first an outcome of analysis, the second, more of arrogance. With resolve, the first arrives by a process of reasoning, the later by rationalization; the first, through examination, the later with the influences of the ego. Confidence is the offspring of the modest mind. Cocksure is the creation of the blinded, enormously emboldened brain.



Simpler but profound

The simpler the insight, the more profound the conclusion.

- Janna Levin.

“What’s next, eagle from outer space?”

“I like that, ‘eagle from outer space’. I have never been beyond the low hanging clouds but I sure want to be.” *I wonder if my friend, Jonathon, ever flew to outer space—beyond the highest clouds.*

“You have to careful about that, you know; fly too high and you run out of air or go boom from the pressure.”

“Oh, and let’s not forget the phoenix; too close to sun and you melt,” **Hope** reminds me.

“A melting of the mind is not a bad thing.”

“Eli, I believe that’s ‘melding of the minds’ that you mean,” she sounds. “Too much sun and it won’t matter—your toast.”

“I don’t know...; it could be ‘meddling’, ‘moving’, or ‘mendacity’ or some other m-word.”

“I thought your story is about ‘p-words’—at least per the book cover? What’s up with the alteration anyway?”

“It is about p-words and other words too; but more sounds, not simply the language but voices of all creation; us, them, me, and you, **Hope** and your daughters, and so much more.”

“You know that they have many languages, don’t you?”

“Oh yes, I’ve heard a few in my time but not nearly all that span the globe, from the ages to the tech ones.”

“The ‘tech ones’,” I sound. “What is ‘tech’?”

“Those languages called ‘code’ and so forth; the ones that turn words, more symbols, into actions: If something is, then something happens, and that sort of thing.”

“I’ve heard of this; hardware, software and such,” **Hope** adds. “What of these tech ones, though—does it help them, us?”

TO THE HIGHER

“Oh, these languages are game-changers,” I sound to **Hope**.

“What’s a ‘game-changer’?”

“You’re not the only one with idioms.”

The tech ones are changing everything and everyone, all over the earth, under and over it—to outer space and beyond.

“So I am learning,” she sounds

“Me too; it’s the next revelation!”

“I think you mean ‘revolution’, Eli”

“Okay, ‘revelation’, ‘revolution’ or some other r-words; the point is that the tech ones have ushered the world into a whole new realm—and there’s no turning back!”

The more things change, the more things...change. Is change for the better, good, right and just? Can *change* be: controlled; managed or is it happening so fast—fractions of the blink of an eye—that is it more than unstoppable, unassailable?

“Oh boy, now u-words too,” she sounds.

“I am no longer an underling when it comes to words, **Hope**”

“Right, but watch those words—they’re a tricky thing.”

“Which is why I am *pouring it on*, tricky.”

“More like ‘piling it on’, if you sound to me,” **Hope** sounds, sarcasm aside.

“See, the p-words are beginning to flow too.”

“Alright already, Eli, get to the point!”

“I sense you are beginning to channel your daughter-,”

“I am not angry, but if you don’t get on with it ‘pouring’ or ‘piling’, I am going to short circuit.”

“Hey, you do know about-,”

“Stop—no more,” she demands.

The change—evolution—rate of tech continues to rise as though some kind of combustion, an explosion; the more things change, the speedier they change. Everything and everyone has gone tech.

“Everyone,” **Hope** sounds back.

“Everyone—even those who don’t know it.”



“You mean the peacocks,” she sounds.

“Well, in some way, peacocks are the ones who don’t know it, but there is also the ostrich, swallows and many more.”

“So many gone, and still more—know it or not,” **Hope** harkens.

It is like no language in *the natural*, I think. In *the natural* are many languages that allegedly sprang from one language.

“You mean babel?”

“Yeah, that’s what I heard,” **Hope** sounds.

Anyway, a common language got all split-up; east, west and everywhere in between, communication complicated many times over. “Does an eagle understand the goose? Does the rat and rabbit converse, communicate or even congregate? Can the elephant understand the lion’s roar,” I sound to *the supernatural*.

“I think so. I think everyone understands the lion, their roar,” **Hope** suggests.

“Tech is the new language—a working code—that has mechanized more than ever before, changing the world and all creation forever.”

“How has it affected you, the eagle,” **Hope** sounds. “Has tech changed your life—as it was before?”

“I don’t know, really, but I have to say these things because I believe them true. “

The facts are that tech is changing the world every moment of every day; a revelation, revolution or reset, tech is the universal language and, unnaturally, is a primary tool for *the unnatural*.

“So you accept that ‘tech is changing things’, but not for good altogether,” **Hope** sounds to my claims, beliefs.

My sense or belief is that *the worst of the worse* uses tech for nefarious reasons, once again neglecting the needs of the many for the wants of the few.

“This is becoming a refrain, Eli; the graft and greed of-,”

“The vile maxim,” I interrupt. “It is the vile maxim doing the usual.”

Since the beginning of time, *the natural* has existed; formed and framed in all creation for creation, the function of this earth.

TO THE HIGHER

During this process of creation, *the unnatural* creep in slowly and sinister as a constrictor chokes its prey; “greed and graft” is the vise sure to silence and suffocate, strangle the life out of *life and living*.

“But there’s more,” **Hope** sounds, leading me on.

“There was and is more; the others listed in the closing of my story as, ‘The Seven Deadly Sins’,” I remind those who are reading and digesting this stuff.

Tech carries immense, boundless potential, in my belief; but I worry that it will be fall prey to a bear, eagle or other figures and finally, *the unnatural, the worst of the worse*. The vast potential of tech can go in different directions but the further it goes, the shorter the span of revelation, revolution—any so-called reset or retraction rendered next to impossible.

“The outcome could be-,” **Hope** sounds.

“Yes, hopeless,” I sound somberly, “Hopeless.”



Dream of Eagles

...dream of eagles and bring forth swallows.

- Truman Capote

Never love a wild thing. It will not make your heart sing or make everything groovy. A beast may hold you tight but hug you or choke you to death. As the swallows have fallen so too will you fall, one by one, misled by a red herring to the long arm and heavy hand of the wild thing, the beast. You may sound and scream, “I love it, wild thing,” but the beast loves no one—not even itself let alone you or your cluster. The wild thing appears regal; as proud as the peacock, behemoth as a bear, or enervating as an eagle; but *no matter the appearance, a wild thing is a beast. You may dream of it as soaring high and lofty, like an eagle, but do not let your imagination runaway with common sense.* You may sound or scream, “Oh no, you have it all wrong; sure, wild thing is a little rough around the feathers but give it time and it will be tame and tender. “Tame and tender,” you sound, a reset of sort. “You know Eli, normal,” you sound, dreaming the dream.

“It may be normal, dreamer, but I’d rather have natural,” I sound to you, another cautionary tale in the making.

“Maybe I meet it halfway, you know; compromise a little and let myself learn the ways of the wild thing,” sounds of deep desire, even desperation, to make it work out.

“You want to be a wild thing too,” I sound, unsure of it.

How often do we want to be a sort of wild thing, the free spirit that can “let go and let live”, not a care or concern in the world? We dream of this dazzling *life and living*, fast and furious—the need for speed. Behind and beneath it though is a fear that the wild thing will end up in a cage (what they call “doing hard time”)—wake and realize no reset in sight.

“Well, guess what,” I sound.

TO THE HIGHER

“What,” **Hope** sounds back

“You’re already in a cage and you’re not even wild, that thing,” I sound back.

The cage has not boundaries or limits—anyone or anything that it is accountable to or responsible for—it is a wild thing they may appear normal but is beyond *the natural*.

“Oh, and did I explain that you built or build the cage?”

“You sound that ‘the cage’ is my construction,” **Hope** sounds off. “How did the cage become mine, my creation?”

Like the swallow, to live in *the unnatural*, you have to be hawk, pretend or appear to be tough—not tender or tame—while all along so enslaved. You will tag along with any red herring that comes along. Like the swallow, you do not have to be:

Crowing with the crow, annoying everyone with that cackling, or

Parading with the peacock—all those tail feathers to flaunt—

sounding off day and night, strutting your trunk, eating junk.

Flocking with a cluster; connected wing to wing with the collective lulled into security by merely following the many, a mass, in the mainstream.

“I beg you to get out of the cage—stop creating it!”

“How do I do that,” **Hope** sounds back.

“Well, to start, find **Anger** and **Courage** and never let them go, again,” I sound. “Find them and never let them go.”

“But **Anger** and **Courage** are here already, Eli.”

“They are...? That’s fantastic...your family is found!”

“You just sounded that we don’t need clusters, though, or that ‘the collective’ is not wise.”

“Flock” and “family” is not the same; the first is a collective of many—like swallows—that fall prey to this or that scheme or strategy devised by *the unnatural* to sway popular movement; the second, family, are units that possess a unique, unifying quality. Families are forever, natural, while clusters are just flocked. Family is like goats that



think while clusters are more like sheep that follow without critical thinking—without even a care, caution or concern.

“Well then, I seem to be natural,” she resounds, “my family about me.”

“But not me, no family,” I sound back, hardly a good example of the message, my advice.

“I know that you lost your family, Eli, and I know what that’s like, the lost,” **Hope** sounds back.

I lost them, my own, perhaps forever—this I accept. What is a father without a family but a loner, the least of his species? Can a father be a father when his offspring are gone, perhaps passed from life and living, any future in the physical?

“**Anger** and **Courage** can be your offspring, Eli,” **Hope** resounds.

“Oh, they have been; indeed, it is **Anger** and **Courage** that have given me **Hope**, my helper in this journey.”

I owe **Hope** more than I can ever pay, provide or pass on. Without **Hope**, who would help? **Hope** is right, good and just—and no good thing ever passes away. **Hope** gives me reason to believe that some good things soar high above any cage, as high as the sky.

Freedom—real freedom—is **Courage** to call things “wild” and to give good cause and **Anger** to not accept that *the unnatural* lives forever. No, *the natural* will return, a reset, albeit a revelation or revolution of some kind.

I am and will always be a father for paternity and posterity—no matter what **Vile** and the villains do and no matter what they have done to or with my own. *I remain always, for us.*

“What will you do now,” **Hope** sounds.

“I will fly and fly further, farther.”

“There is a lot of sky out there. You could be lost or worse,” she sounds and sighs. “Isn’t it better just to look at the sky, take in the warmth of the sun, and stand in awe of lightning and thunder, a home sheltered from the wind and rain?”

TO THE HIGHER

“You, **Hope**, are the shelter from the storm, and besides, I am still looking for my home.”



She moves

She moves among the swallows.

She floats upon the breeze.

She moves among the flowers.

She moves...inside of me.

- Nick Cave

She is so much, **Hope**. Where would *life and living* be without her by my side; ahead or behind me at times, but always there for me when I need her?

As I look about, the sky is generally gloom, stormy and ominous; the sun often blocked by the moon, a perpetual purple at the pole, the wind and rain. The darkness is determined; it surrounds me and invades every thought and feeling, my senses, though my strength is returning, my feathers and flesh made better than before. *It is good to have strength when weakness will not do.*

Violence is not a stranger but neither is it friend. **They** plead a vow to violence though **they** appear docile and diplomatic. **They** sound, "Violence will not be tolerated," while **they** commit it and, what's more, orchestrate the deadly and disastrous events that they openly condemn! **They** know nothing other than force, enforcing their will in silent, secretive ways, corrupt and criminal though incapable of implication let alone conviction of the vilest of violence. **They** are wild things, behemoth beast that trod across *The Low* as Leviathans, devouring everything in sight while sounding of the want for *peace and prosperity*. **They** are the "terror" in terrorism, taking on any number of "-isms" in their name.

"Who are '**they**,'" you might sound, to which I sound back,

"I just described '**they**'—as those that do darkness, posing as the light."

TO THE HIGHER

Beware and be weary of **they** that do such things “I just described”; aware and attentive to what **they** do, do.

Now, I come to a large field, a dark valley surrounded by the high ground.

Where am I, what is this place, I wonder.

“This is the field of the Nephilim,” I hear **Hope**, she sounding somewhere behind me.

“What is a ‘Nephilim’?”

The Nephilim are giants that roamed the earth; described as among *the supernatural*, they mated with *the natural* creating *the unnatural*.

“Are they then, **‘they’**,” I sound to **Hope**.

“They are the beginning of **‘they’**; the first of the few,” she sounds to me.

“What is this that I see, shining in the field?”

“The fields possess heavy metals and psychedelic rocks,” **Hope** warns, “Be weary of heavy metals and the hypnotics, the stoned”.

As she spoke, another sound comes from over the surrounding mountains. It is a *big bird*, one or more, flying high in the sky and spewing out a trail of smoke that hangs for hours.

“Look Eli, above; it is heavy metals.”

“What are they spraying,” I sound, the smoke slowly settling.

“I just sounded it, ‘heavy metals’,” she resounds.

“But why...what for,” I sound further.

“*They* are toxic—destroying *life and living*,” she sounds after a moment—the scream of *big bird* drowning us out as it swoops down just above the fields.

“What to do, now,” I screech, this killing field.

If you decide to take the journey through the underworld, *The Low*, you are going to accept that you will be low no matter what you know and do not know, think or do not think, do or do not do.

I am low—where is she.

Sometimes hope is up and around the bend, peeking out from the tree line, or standing atop the mountain sounding, “Here I am, on the



mountain top.” But, the sounds of dread and doom drone on; from on high and from afar—everywhere—like rats or other things that appear as waves, a moving mass, a forever-flock, a continuous cluster.

“Can I or should I depend on she, **Hope**. What am I to do when, as now, she is not around or at least not visible?”

You look for hope but cannot find it. You look for anything, an alternative to take-the-edge-off, pressure and stress away. Succulents and seeds are out there, somewhere, to do something like this, stress relievers, though such things are not always mind enhancers, the experience or trip. These natural alternatives are nothing compared with *the unnatural*, though, the oppressive opioids and oxy-cots.

“Oh no, *the unnatural* ushered in an entrée of exotics through something described as ‘scientific experiment’.”

“Be weary of the exotics, Eli,” another cautionary tale to take. “Darkness and the dreary, dooming drugs will drag you doubly down, dooming you to a most destructive death.”

A medicated mass is a problem, but strangely, unnaturally, it is a solution to revelation and revolution, even reset, reducing life to a slow suffering however removed from pain.

“Who wants to be sober when you can always be sedate,” I sound aloud. “Who wants pain when pleasure is a pill away?”

“Who wants to be low when you can be high, higher, in the sky—maybe outer space,” sounds someone from afar. “Turn on, tune in, drop out.”

“Tune in to what,” I sound to that coming from far.

“To your local radio station, the sound replies.

“What’s a ‘radio station’?”

“The best source for information before and after Tech,” returns the sound.

“How do I ‘turn-on’?”

The phrase means that you like it and more, you must have it. If I sound, “You turn me on,” then it means that I like you or more, I need you. You can like something and that means it is good or you can love

TO THE HIGHER

something and that means it grand or great. But if you need something—more than even life—then you will try to get it whatever the costs.

The problem with love is that once who believe something as grand or great, you are likely to get disappointed when it turns out to be less, natural or not. If you like it, then you have *fewer feathers in the gaming*, but if you love it, you are flocked if it does not deliver or, even worse, does not love you back. *I guess that love is really about receiving love whatever love looks like.*

“That’s not love,” a sound from faraway.

“What’s not love,” I sound back.

“Getting flocked, any love that expects love back,” the sounds come back, “is not love. Love makes many sacrifices, our dying to self.”

We all desire a cluster, flocked in the fact that we are part of many, a mass—secure as a swallow swooping down on a red herring. We all want to like and, more, to love, to be liked, loved and all. We may join a love-in, take a succulent or exotic, and dream the dream.

“What’s love got to do with it?”

“With what,” I sound back.

“What’s love but a second-hand emotion,” the sound comes back.

The sound may be right-on, right and righteous; after-all, liking and loving is full of feelings that go up and down like a pelican on the prow or rabbit in and out of the hole. One minute, you are high as a soaring eagle and the next, lower than *The Low*.

“I am liked, I am liked,” the loon sounds only to realize that it is looking at its reflection on the water.

“I am loved, I am loved,” the nightingale wants, waits and watches.

Feelings fail us but we like them, love them and hope that they never leave us.



Kind of ashamed

I think celebrity is the biggest red herring society has ever pulled on itself.

- Jude Law

“What is this thing, “shame”, that grips and rips,” I sound aloud, more scream, while wreathing in the pains of punishment of new knowledge, understanding. *It hurts to learn...the truth of this time and place—more. It hurts deeply when you realize how much you have been deceived and, worst yet, by those you trusted most.*

I thought myself honored, noble, regal and right. *Oh, how wrong I have been about time, this place and me.* I hate myself for the simple reason that I should have *seen it coming*—like a great weather change—and prepared my own. I should have told my own, us, even them.

“We must prepare for a time and place coming, soon. Oh, but oh no, it is upon us, all around us,” I sound gently, “*The Days of Daddy-Dumb* are coming as a storm, the pressure fast and furious,” I sound to them.

Even if just a warning, some way-out and worrisome way, would one or the other heed? Will I care about and call out in spite of no act,

“I see, yes, we must prepare for this...,” or will the sound fall to death or be resounded with,

“Don’t be ridiculous! The future is fine and all is good, right and just. *Eli, get hold and think positive; veer away from your falling funk.*

No such warning comes from my heart and soul, no such chance taken to sound to the truth if only to sound of what can happen when *the natural* gives sway to *the unnatural*, from light to darkness. *Oh what a weak and pitiful soul that I am, neither willing or able to sound the cry, fly high and perch ready on behalf of my own.* My trust of the trustworthy is more than naivety—believing that a trust sounded is trust secured. *I am a flying fool—but at least I know it, now!*

TO THE HIGHER

“You are learning a lot,” that distant sound again. “The truth can set you free but getting there is a challenge.”

“What do you mean,” I sound back, wanting to know all.

“The big waters are not the only habitat of the red herring, Eli.”

“I know, ‘they are everywhere,’” I sound back, agreeing with the distant sound.

“What about within you, your own,” the sound returns. “Deception and deceit is a natural act too, land, sea and air.”

The *distant sound* reminds me that some things appear different, coloring and all, for protection, survival. Deception is vital to *life and living in the natural*. In *the unnatural*, deception is for different causes, contrasting and conflicting with the later.

In the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, disguise and deception is *a new level*. Deception comes in endless and boundless forms in *The Low*.

“Do not be deceived, Eli. Bad company corrupts—even and especially if the ‘bad company is disguised as good, right and just.”

The peacock is colorful, a plume, but oh how appearance deceives, flesh and feathers only skin-deep while it parades, pride and pomp, flaunting that plume as though it is everything that matters.

The parrot and mockingbird are pretenders and players, all a theater where the brainless and heartless birds, unwilling or unable to admit their masquerading when the mask is off, go through the motions without matter or meaning.

The problem is that I love to be entertained—and they know it—thus, *the show must go on*. Enter the empty entertainers to fill us with a warm and fuzzy feeling while everything that matters goes to *The Low*.

“Did you hear that..., and he did that...and the whole affair was...” another distant sound. “What do you think **Hope** will do, the next episode, when Eli ups and flies away?”

“Who are these birds...and why should I care what happens,” I sound out to them, the babbling birds.

“Okay, if drama is not your destiny, then maybe a little sport, a game of another kind,” a persistent sound presses on. “Did you hear



that a Jayhawk was traded for a Cardinal? Do you wonder if the trade will make it happen,” they sound to me as though I care about their sports.

“Make what ‘happen’,” I sound back, daring them to go on.

“Winning, of course,” they stubbornly sound. “They have to win, you know. How else will I make-it if they don’t win?”

“Win what,” I sound, baited and waiting.

“Just ‘win’—win it all and nothing less,” the blundering birds blast, *strutting their feathers* when they have *no skin in the game*.

Winning is all that matters. We all must be winners or, at least, pretend that we are, living out the sensation of victory through the parrots and mockingbirds, the peacocks, and any other players of games, gaming, that show and spectate all the freaking time.

“We’re number one...we’re number one...,” the resound in unison.

“But I thought that ‘one is the loneliest number that has ever been’—or what it the lowest,” I sound back without an answer.

Nothing else matters (except winning): not you, not them, not us, not our own; no, nothing matters except winning or pretending so.

“No, winning is not everything—but wanting it, is,” the distance sound returns.

Oh, I forgot about *want*, the call of the nightingale. You have to want it enough to die for it and follow the red herring no matter where it leads—a cluster flock of the mindless and heartless too reserved and respecting to say, “No!”

“But ‘No’ is really ‘maybe’,” the persistent sound continues. Rarely do we win and when we do, occasionally, it is reason to-,”

“But you celebrate all the time ad if you win all the time; yes, *life and living* is one party after another, peacock to peacock,” I sound to the distant, the persistent but delusional.

The distant sound is right; when you win all the time, *life is good*.

“Who wins all the time,” I sound on. “Is winning the all?”

TO THE HIGHER

“When you lose, just pretend that you won,” the distant sound suggests. “It’s not about the actual outcome but more the feeling—where winning is all the time.”

“Pretend”, I sound back, thinking of the parrot and mockingbird. “Is that it, ‘pretend’?” *Pretending is okay on occasion, say imagination, but they take it too far.*

“You must learn how to pretend—imagine and then more,” the distant, persistent but delusional sound on.

I believe that pretending is good thing, but what I cannot digest is this suggestion that I must imagine a win when I have lost, the loss. *How does pretending or imagining help me learn?*

“If you don’t pretend, Eli, then all you have left is shame. Do you really want for shame?”

Do I want shame, hmm? “Shame for what,” I sound back. “Sometimes, **not** getting what you want is the best thing that can happen!”

“Oh Eli, you’re the dreamer, the one delusional,” they charge back. “Your intolerance for our ways is simply intolerable.”

How do we know that what we want is what we need? How do I “want” from a “need”; what is need to one being is a want for another.

“Eli, don’t you know that sounding-off sensibly is a bad thing here, in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*? Let go and let your feelings take you away from these differences, your delusions about delusional.”

I cannot believe what I am hearing, all this havoc, hubbub and humming of senseless and stupid sounds.

“Where is your shame, Eli; sounding-off out of turn as though you’re an eaglet, fresh from the egg? Have you not learned already that-,”

“Just shut-up and blow off, you senseless bag of wind.”

“Alright loser, it’s your chicken-neck,” the distant sound echoed moving further and farther toward *The Low*.



Distract you

I am here to distract you.

- Anonymous

“Hey Eli,” comes now a different sound, a chorus without all those supposed feelings, concocted winnings, and other things of no account.

“Who are you,” I call.

“I am a cluster— and that’s all to distract you.”

“To distract me, why,” I begin back. “Why distract me, further and farther, after the last bunch of bags.

“Since you refuse to pretend—make-believe and all—I am here, again, to distract you.”

Distract or not, they are sounding to me...what they are doing—to me, an eagle I think.

“You’re already distracted by my clarity and candidness,” the cluster cloud sounds off. “You are too weak and weary to resist me—and you know it what’s more. Now look into the all-seeing eye and listen as I sound the order, okay eagle.”

Who is this cluster but more of the derelict and delirious?

“Yes, you’re on it, Eli; we always win and even if disputed, the record is that ‘we won.’ Are you the envious eagle?”

They pretend when the facts are-

“Eli, no one down here cares about the so-called facts.”

Why does that statement not surprise me?

“Do you know that you died,” the braggart blurts out.

I knew that I passed but not necessarily dead, deadened. Still, the comment was correct, the confidence of the conversation never wavering, proving that the persona of power is compelling enough—never mind the reality of it, the tenuous state of the powerful vying to be superior, supreme—the only sound to resound, dampening out all other, opposing sounds not matter how much the reality.

TO THE HIGHER

“Yes, I know,” I sound back. “I am a spirit of the eagle once living.”

“Why continue, then? You’re dead and defeated, Eli; your cause is caput, the journey is over, and you failed—as expected of one outmatched by **Vile**, the darkness.”

What to sound in moments like this—when a spirit of the worst is sounding off, spewing-out declaratives aimed at deceiving, distracting and otherwise, fomenting division within us, among us and most of all—between us. They never stop with all their ways, making-up new ones that finally are no different the darkness that always was, is and-,

“Can you not comprehend this-,” the cloudy creature compels me. “You are doomed.”

Is it that simple; life and living over when you pass, die or otherwise leave the physical? As the moment moves so too does the image; the abstraction, or distraction, now appears as a beautiful eagle, a young but fertile female. Who is this aberration?

“You’re Eli...my, you are a sight to behold,” she sounds before another doubt arises, my senses to arrive.

Wait a moment...first, I am a spirit and second, my beauty faded some time ago, I accept. Who is the imposter that imposes such ideas?

“I want to mate with you, Eli, and carry on your progeny,” she continues. “Please come with me and make me proud, pregnant.”

She motions for me to follow her, to take her lead and supposedly be her mate. *The temptation is overwhelming, I thought, but the obsession is not. The image is only that, beautiful though it be.*

“Whatever you claim to be—you are not,” I sound back, standing guard over my better senses, my sensibility.

Her beauty is captivating beyond comprehension; she glows and I warm to this vague vitality. Seeing my sight, she shows sadness, a sullen expression, suggesting that something is not right, here and now.

“Why are you sad,” I sound, a shade of shame.

“Because you don’t want me,” she sounds back, a darkness over and then in and on her. “You are abandoning me, my needs.”



The whole proposition is pretending, I know, her desire to mate when we both are not physical or natural. As I rest on this...she vanishes before me, replaced by several eaglets, active and articulate.

“Daddy, oh daddy,” they screech in unison. “Where have you been? Why did you abandon us, leave us when we needed you most?”

My heart is pumping hard, as though about to explode; an overwhelming sense of reunion—my own have been found, But then—before my eyes—they begin to fade, my eaglets gone, never here at all, another aberration to work my imagination to insanity.

“Your eaglets blame you—they told me so,” a familiar sound comes again, unmistakable, **Vile** the vulture.

I often wonder what had become of it, or “they”, but doubted that it had ever left at all; that somehow, **Vile** is always there, waiting for the opportunity—the crisis-when you are down, discouraged—ripe for a plucking. I cannot sound anything back, too unsure of the sounds, and might slip out and the action that **Vile** can or will take.

“What am I to do with you, once proud eagle? I’ve took your life and yet here you are, still seeking your own, in spirit only.”

The vulture’s image changed in the moment. The feathers and profile rapidly to the most spectacular of images I have ever witnessed. This magnificent creature’s crown changes from bald to white, the beak from a similar red flesh to the sharpest and hardest of gold. It is a bird of beauty and bravado, the prior dull and dreary black passing to a brilliant golden-brown followed by other unnatural images as I see it. As thought a sculpture, the image is atop a stanchion with an inscription, a perch for the eagle with spread wings. At the base of the pillar is a cluster, ring or wreath, silhouettes the body clad with iron and steel, brass and gold, metals of many kinds including precious ones. In the distance, a roar resounds,

“Hail Caesar, hail Caesar.”

“Who or what is this, ‘Caesar’,” I sound, “but *the beast* by any other name, villainess. **Vile** is the vortex of villainess.”

TO THE HIGHER

Among the endless chanting, the image of my once mate stands flanked by our eaglets—and still others owned or known—all swept-up and aglow with *pride and possession*.

“Creatures of darkness,” the beast bellows. “We are unified and undefeatable, unmatched to-,”

“**Don’t you know**...don’t your care-,” I screech out without return.

“Those once yours are now mine for my doing of my will and want,” the beast broadcasts. “Your own is now mine. They are *they*.”

Other images follow while the beast becomes the most of *the worst*, standing tall and true in form and finish, encircled with inspiring inscriptions, a golden and gilded guile. *Never will I have any greater ruminant of royalty than the eagled beast before us—all of us.*

“We will destroy those that seek destroy us,” the golden eagle echoes. Our cause is just and right. My hope, as the honorable emperor, is that all will embrace me as you do. Either you serve me or you serve those aimed to destroy us. There is no other way.”

“Lies, all lies, and yet lies work,” I sound somberly. “What is truth but merely a point of view, opinion, and nothing more?”

The Low is a series and system of lies. **Truth** and **Hope** are bound; thus, without **Anger** and **Courage**, **Truth** and **Hope** loosen, are lost. This “hope” of the beast is a succession of lies—lies upon lies—aimed to distract and deceive you.



Dandified vulture

Not that ridiculous eagle...nothing more than a dandified vulture

- Brian Keith (playing Teddy Roosevelt), "The Wind and the Lion"

Who is this eagle of the ages, the beast? "Who are you," I sound-out, this spirit before me.

"I am the supreme, superior," the spirit sounds back. "I am servant of my own but superior, supreme."

"How can you be superior and servant at the same time?"

"I can be both...because I sound it; if I sound it then it is so," the spirit sounds off. "My sounds are superior too."

"Were you an eagle, once," I sound on without expecting any truth to follow. Still, the beast sounds back,

"No, not as you Eli; after all, an eagle is overdone, glorified beyond feathers and flesh. I am that I am—vastly more than a mere eagle."

"What are, were, you among beings," I sound back while dismissing the beast's self-exaltation. *Where is this going?*

"I was a bear, a big brown bear," the self-centered spirit sounds.

"What happened—how did you end your days?"

"**Vile** did me in," the before-bear begins. "**Vile** deceived me and distracted me, and finally, owned me. Imagine a big brown bear "owned" by anyone; yet **Vile** roars as a lion without delay or deterrence."

The beast comes in endless forms; vulture, eagle, lion and finally, the worst of the worse.

"East versus west," the spirit sounds more, "the end of all conflict."

"The bear is-,"

"I am east while the eagle, the west," this spirit sounds.

The eagle, a symbol of the west, is a faux eagle—having no natural sense coming or going, the past and future, an empire of illusions, ideologies absent integrity, so proud that it cannot comprehend truth.

TO THE HIGHER

“**Vile** done you in,” I sound, echoing the before bear.

“It was all a game of darkness, really; a story built on distraction and deceit, of conflicts planned where one is made the worst enemy,” the spirit sounds on, “and the other, the savior, gods of the good earth.

Eagle, the west, went westward and then eastward; spanning the earth within sight and sound of the roaring lion—so much so, that the two became one, as legend, the griffin. **Vile** plays one against the other—gaming—on a scale as no other before or since. *The problem of gaming is that the stakes keep rising, boom and doom follow; with passing conflict, the boom gets bigger, the doom wider and deeper.*

In the east come many and much, a lion and eagle, more than could be counted or conceived, sound and silent. The lion and eagle appear often as one, a griffin, with the body of the lion and head of the eagle; this hybrid stronger than many lions alone and many more eagles. For every griffin, there was bear—*big birds* everywhere with booms and dooms beyond measure, the magnitude as mammoth as Leviathan.

Vile declares, “Paradise is soon to come, the parting of all differences, conflict and contention ceased, boom and doom no more.”

Paradise did not follow however, only more conflict—paradise lost.

“There are multiple kinds of eagles and more than one form of lion,” the before-bear sounds on. “They multiply.”

Some eagles are truth to their reputation, noble and honorable, while others turn, taking on the vulture, **Vile**, or the chicken hawk, **Airbag**, but altogether, the opposite of truth, all lies.”

Some bears are ferocious and fearless, aggressive but alone—while other bears growl, but only from their stomachs just before their feeding. Some bears in *the natural* strike fear in anyone, everybody, while others in *the unnatural* are entertainers, circus without the bread.

Both bear and griffin lost; each and all played the game of **Vile** and—as planned—entertainment for **Vile**, both circus and bread. In the end of all the turmoil and tragedy, the taunting and threats left behind, the daring vulture is dandified, truth twisted in deception and deceit and darkness rules the day as drones rule the sky.



Why no one understands, sound-out and on, is beyond understanding. Perhaps some listen but do not hear, some hear but do not react or respond, and some simply do not care enough to listen let alone hear; but still, few sound-out. A few that sound-out soon learn their lesson, the sacrifice of sounding truth in a time of boom and doom. Few stands beyond the individual will to sacrifice self.

After a moment of quiet on the western front, a single sound resounds, “We expected to win. Victory is soon to arrive.”

Nobody wins, nobody but **Vile!** Corrupt to the core, the vulture cannot lose. Can any and all outmatch or best the big black bird. Can the bear alone do this..., the eagle or lion, separate or together? Who can challenge the vulture and win or even walk away, still stand?

“We have lost everything, all drifting in the wind and destroyed in the conflict,” I sound to anyone, everybody, the masses.

Is there nothing in life and living worth losing everything, I wonder.

“You Eli, and I, are great, *the natural*. Aside the plans or planning, the best we can or could do is make **Vile** turn on **Vile**, destroying the vulture before the vulture destroys us,” the bear sounds back. “It will take much, more than life, sounding off as I do in spirit. At last we stand and then, we’re spirits, the final sacrifice behind us few.”

There is nothing on earth that is certain and, as conflict is continuous, nothing that has not been planned by They, superior and supreme. Spirits or not, the union of the eagle and bear is a good thing, I believe—the alternative to gaming, the sport of **Vile**.

“Have you ever seen the big star,” the bear sounds, “the one affixed to a hammer and sickle?”

“Cannot sound that I have, though there are many who flaunt stars, one which of which has more, many, fifty or more.”

It is all about stars. The cluster with the most is the most; each star representing great, greater, a cluster flock of stars.

“I believe the heavens have more stars than that,” the bear sounds back. “The faraway stars are far superior to the clusters of stars and, on occasion, prove it by crashing down, boom and doom.

TO THE HIGHER

“Maybe,” I sound, but the heavens do not drape stars in your face sounding off, ‘It’s a grand old star, it’s a high flying star and forever in peace may it....’ Flocks always flaunt their stars, don’t they?”

“Dandified sound,” the spirit begins, “but is a true, the truth?”

Who cares about truth? Circus and bread, distraction and deception, and apathy; these certain and consistent conditions are the sure cure for caring about truth and all other things that matter.

“What is ‘indifference’,” the bear sounds, “but another sound for the same conditions?”

“The opposite of caring,” I sound back. “Indifference means that you don’t give a-,”

Indifference is the opposite of good, right and just; it is the *final solution of the darkness*, the underworld of *the unnatural*, and the end-all of *the end*. It is everywhere amid all, aimed at making the masses feel feeble and fearful—disparate of **Hope, Anger** and **Courage**.

“If I considered the masses, would I have done what I did, caring about care,” the spirit sounds.

“Caring about care” is good, right and just. If you do not care about caring, you cannot resist *the darkness* let alone see it coming—*the unnatural* eclipsing *the natural* without a cry, even a whimper.



Born of violence

A culture of vultures steeped and born of violence shall choke on the blood of its offspring.

- T.F. Hodge

They are steep in violence, born to boom. It is everywhere you turn, this violence, the last vestige of **Vile**.

"I don't care if it takes a century to get it done...we will be there," they sound off, the pride of power and possession.

They are hegemonic, demonic on doom.

Where is this going, the unending violence on violence, glorified with honor and valor, *the madness* of doom, the mass of death?

"We must make the next move...the final push...the sanction of...the seizure of..." pouring it on, "the warmth of blood within and without."

Why, why do *they* long for this end, pushing us all to that death or worse, slowly pulling away until finally pushing us over the edge? Those who live by power, die by power, their teeth and talons dulled from the tearing and torment inflicted on others.

I see the conflict with my own eyes; many birds having at it—a maelstrom on a massive scale with all manner and methods to destroy things—to tear down on the premise that it is necessary to build up. Besides those in the airspace are also much higher and lower creatures with great but sometimes silent boom. Some end it in a flash while others slowly tear away until the creature is immobilized. The full spectrum of the conflict is everywhere and anytime; from beneath the great waters, whales that boom their offspring into the sky, to the heavens where high fliers jam the works in invisible ways.

Violence gives us meaning, elevating us above the vanquished, power over power. We all want to win even if we have to destroy others to do it. Victory is the end, violence the means—and corruption within and without us all, darkness on darkness.

TO THE HIGHER

“Where is the dove, **Care**,” I sound.

“We destroyed the dove,” **Vile** sounds back. “It was too protesting, refusing to embrace our ideas, thoughts and actions.”

We exist in a dark age where kindness, grace, is unkindled in hearts and minds, *the unnatural*. Conflict is everywhere without and within each and all, one and cluster.

We want for a confrontation because it excites us, a break from the banal blight of convenience, consumption for violence if only a benevolent attempt gone awry. Having the best nest means that our existence is not necessary, no one to fear or fret and worst of all, no one to blame the cause or burden with the effect. Nestled in our pleasant and pleasurable nest, violence is a million miles away.

Violence is not always physical or natural; it is also mental and emotional, *the unnatural* too. The non-physical is without wounds but leaves scars; it does not strike but it slowly debilitates, silently sucking the life out of life.

“Help me, help me,” they sound while still the perpetrator, abuser of the abused, masquerader of the martyr.

Shame to the one that commits violence to combat violence, but blessed is the cluster that commits violence to create violence. The cluster call violence the law, natural or not, while the one that commits violence—no matter the cause—is called the culprit, the criminal.

I see the conquest, *divide and conquer*, that works as both a parasite and a predator; the first to latch-on and leech the victim of its viability, and the second, the physical assault, attack and annihilation. The first is non-physical, evident or not, arriving as allies though in actuality is the worst of all adversaries. *Oh how they deceive us*.

The condition for either approach is that violence be aged, deeply entrenched and endemic in the cluster with few if any ones to reason and represent any alternatives. Sometimes one comes along and suggests an alternative until silence or, worse, is coined an “isolationist” or more, “treasonous”, trader to the cause of freedom.



I see more of my own, eagles, in lines and legions committed to the cause, enlisted in the effect, duped into doom. Some survive but many falls like the swallows after the red herring, cut down in a moment—without ever realizing where they are, let alone, who they are amid *the natural*. Engrained in the eaglet, heart and mind, is the ultimate sacrifice without *the end*—left only to a few heroes and warriors revered, “lest we forget”, memorialized with etched stones, monuments.

It is well that conflict is so terrible but even more, that it is continuous, never ending, and always aimed for an advantage of one kind or another at the expense of the many.

“I am not fond of conflict,” sounds the supreme, superior—when in fact, they live for conquest and conquer—violent and vile—in *The Low*.

Where is this going, those born and bred for violence in such unnatural ways? Will it come down to the last beast standing—to be surpassed by another...and another—or will it finally end, the great finale, with one mammoth boom, the earth no more?

Eli, you must stop thinking about such things,” **Vile** returns, cautioning my concerns. “Conflict is unfortunate but necessary to achieve peace under earth and bring any and all into harmony. Without the shedding of blood and sacrifice, where is the salvation, redemption and restoration?”

History, the truth eventually revealed, sound differently than **Vile** pronounces and propagandizes. Conflict is never final, never meant to yield a victor; no, conflict is continuous because, without it, commoners might actually have a chance at succeeding, life and living. In principle, conflict is planned and re-planned, beginning with a planned but presumably unplanned event aimed to elicit the energies of the masses, deep and disturbing fears. No longer is conflict one supposed superior against another, land to land, but it is lodged by the supreme against its own to suppress and subvert, consuming resources for presumed defense but certain destruction. *In this age of such deceit and disillusionment, the truth is a revolutionary act.*

TO THE HIGHER

Who controls this present plight? The same that control the past, pronouncing the claims of **Vile** against history, the truth. The same that control time past also control time, the future—the present is controls the past.

I see a scorched earth, the consequence of the multiple big booms—though *life and living* continue for the few, supreme and superior, that planned their own refuge. Across the landscape from shore to shore and spread beneath the waters and into the winds are many souls, now passed. The structures that once dotted the land are gone too; destroyed by those who failed to heed history or by those that hate it. Lest we try to remember the removed, any understanding intentionally undermined, undone and yet, unforgettable.



Strangling it

...it has gone mad in its sleep, and a snake is strangling it, but it cannot wake up.

- D. H. Lawrence

“What is that sound,” I sound in doubt.

“It is a snake, a constrictor, strangling its prey,” comes another sound of another spirit.

“What prey, kind,” I sound back.

“It is an eagle, Eli,” the spirit sounds to my shock.

Eagles are predators while the snake, the prey. Here however, in *the unnatural*, the eagle is the prey; first, elevated to a position of power and possession—pride—followed by *the fall* as sure as the swallow. In *the unnatural*, everything changes—which changes anyone and everybody.

“How did it happen,” I sound for my own sake.

“The eagle dreamed too much; and too much dreaming means that you never wake up,” the spirit continues. “Dream on dream, you wonder where you are and how you got there—here or—if you wake at all. The longer you dream, the less likely that you’ll wake and if you do, that any chance remains to change things, turn *the darkness* back.”

Waking-up may be the result of the snake strangling you; the dream disrupted by your last gasp, cry or whimper, as the constrictor squeezes for the last time and your breath is no more. .

“Go back to sleep,” the snake hisses. “Dream on and soon it will all be over.”

“Really,” I sound back, “all over.”

“Oh, it is...you can’t fly or flinch, claw or paw, or do anything short of strangling as the snake takes grip.”

“Who is the snake,” I sound on.

TO THE HIGHER

“The snake is the presumed prey, yes, but in the dreaming is the predator,” the spirit sounds.

It is a deception; where the victim is the villain, the “presumed prey” actually the predator with all the power, possible possession.

The unnatural is big enough for anyone and everybody to dream and keep dreaming; it is a time and place of *Big Rock Candy Mountain*, paradise found however imagined, conceived or manufactured.

The problem comes when you wake from the dream, dreaming, to discover that it is a dream and nothing more or less. By then, though, it is too late to do anything about it save die and sound your last.

“Is the snake part of **Vile**, *the darkness* and all, or is it something else, more or less,” the spirit sounds on, one of a series of questions.

“Is there anything good, right and just, about a snake,” I sound back while thinking the times when it makes a fine meal. *The snake is sneaky and slippery but it also sheds its old skin and starts anew.*

“Let the snake be a good, right and just thing,” the spirit suggests.

“How,” I sound back, “Do you do that?”

By understanding that things are not as they seem and, worse, if you are dreaming, things do not matter one way or the other. Further and farther, stop feeling sorry for the eagle, scorning the snake: if the eagle were awake, eyes sharp and mind alert, it never would have ended-up as it did, done to death. Do this..., understanding the time and place. Wake up from your dreaming and see things as they are, not as they want and will, your feelings and such sentiments.

“Have I been the prey,” I sound on. “Am I the prey?”

“Yes, you are...but you knew it long before *the passing*,” the spirit answers, “Why bring it up now, this side of death?”

“Just looking for any snakes, I guess.”

“Again, it’s the dreaming that grabs you by the throat and ends you; but besides that Eli, you are beyond this, a spirit that you are, I am.”

“Then it’s too late for caring, care, I guess.”

“Not at all; in fact, you have more freedom for caring now than you’ve ever had before, flesh and feathers,” the spirit reminds me.



The spirit sets you free with freedom in the real sense of it. Who can do their worst when you are a ghost, an aberration? *Is this freedom forever? If the spirit ends, what is left? Is death, a mindless, heartless, soulless inexistence, my last call?*

“The snake is not necessarily the threat,” the spirit adds. “The snake is simply the agent acting on behalf of **Vile** as with the rat, chicken hawk and a host of other conscripted co-conspirators.”

Returning to the vision, I see that the snake has ended the eagle but it does not eat the eagle, but just slithers away as it came. The snake now departed, the most unexpected begins to happen in my mind’s eye: the once noble eagle changes, not withering, but returning to life as, to my great dismay, a vulture.

“I can’t believe what I am seeing,” I screech-out.

“Believe it,” the spirit sounds back, “that eagles pass and vultures rises, as too much dreaming ends in death.”

“But how...why,” I beg of the spirit, “Did this have to happen?”

As the spirit describes this restoration, it occurs to me that the vulture and eagle are extremely similar, alike and attached. History exalts the eagle, as I understand from my journey and prior, but it does not sound well of the vulture, not really. Here, in this moment within *the unnatural*, what was decidedly dead is alive, standing and preparing for flight—the eagle gone and the vulture poised with power!

A burden of self-pity envelopes me and, though a spirit of *the supernatural*, I cry in my sadness, my grief, of this hard lesson beyond *life and living*. Never would I have believed this end until now

“Am I **Vile**,” I sound to the spirit. “Are we one, the same?”

“I don’t know. What do you believe?”

If I am **Vile** then I may have somehow orchestrated the taking of my own, mate and eaglets. By some strange outcome in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, my mind went to madness and my heart soon followed in *the darkness*.

“Oh, if this is true—that I am **Vile**—then what a sorry soul that I am, have become. “Are you sure about this...?”

TO THE HIGHER

The spirit proceeds from the question with a story; a seabird that, like me, found the nest oddly empty, and went to sea not to find them but to run from the whole tragedy, the present problem.

“Poor me,” the seabird did sound, “Poor, pitiful me.”

During its travels over the big waters, the bird incurred a great storm, the kind that is *the mother of all storms*. Strange as it may seem, the seabird believed it caused the storm—as with the albatross as an omen of darkness—and decided to end itself so that the storm would end, no more life to pass. As it descended perilously toward the big waters however, a rush of warm air forced the bird fluttering forward rather than down, breaking the fall.

“I don’t deserve to live,” the bird blasts, “let me die that the storms will end and the sun will return.”

Self-pity is a danger unto itself; it steals the soul of hope, killing any possibility that anger or courage can follow. Self-pity finally finishes any care for caring that leads to not only indifference but also withdrawal, denial and self-indulgence—as continuous and unending as conflict in *The Low*.

“Did the seabird cause the storm,” I sound to the spirit, the story.

“Don’t be ridiculous, Eli.”

“Then why did-,”

“No matter why the seabird lost its own, the response of self-pity was the end of any journey that may follow, a quest to find-,”

“What are you sounding to me,” I screech.

The spirit sounds further and farther that the seabird failed from the beginning, turning inward rather than forward, casting **Hope** to the wind with **Anger** turned inward and **Courage** nowhere in sight.

“You must not pity yourself for this, Eli,” the spirit demands. “No matter the bad, wrong on unjust of *the unnatural*, still, do not pity yourself; after all, the *Days of Daddy-Dumb* have enough supposed victims as it is. Why do you desire to join the throngs of self-induced victims that view the earth as owing them, settling the score?”



Creeps out

*Self-love forever creeps out like a snake,
to sting anything that happens to stumble upon it.*

- Lord Byron

I see the vision again, the snake returning to the time and place where the eagle ended, the vulture vaulted. Above the snake, the vulture circles in the glory of its victory, once an eagle and now iconic, incarnate. "Look at me, look at me," it screams as it continues its circling route. "I am magnificent, marvelous and majestic! Nothing in all creation has ever or will ever be greater...," the blackened bird blasts.

What is this thing?

"A far cry from the natural creation, "this thing" is over-the-top, courtesy of an exaggerated ego," the spirit sounds, vulture flying and still flying-off with sound on sound.

The snake is slithering, hissing, "The eagle is dead, long live the vulture! Death is overcome; the king of sky is restored to its throne of darkness."

Hearing the sounds of the snake, the vulture swoops down with torched-tipped talons that blaze the land as though the earth is hot to the touch.

"Hey, you are one spectacular slice," the vulture sounds to the snake.

Looking stupefied as though confused between manners and appearance, the snake starts to sneak away though stopped in all directions by the looming, now landed vulture. "And where do you think you're going," the vulture sounds to the slighted snake. Disappointment and disgust on the face of the snake, the simple, stuttering sound is: "I brought you to life but what you do for the rest of it is your business."

TO THE HIGHER

“Why you long, skinny slithery serpent—don’t make me come down hard you! What do you mean, ‘brought me life’!”

“Sorry your sire,” the snake hisses back sarcastically.

“You’re just a slippery sort, stricken to stutter.”

“Well, for one, I brought you to-,”

“Stop smirking,” the vulture demands, bobbing and bouncing in circles. “Don’t force me to do the worst,” it continues—as though force is necessary.

Again, the snake seems confused; the contradiction between the vulture’s presence and personality, flying gallantly though, once landed, flamboyant and fair. *I am beginning to choose, vulture over eagle.*

“Don’t you care for me, snake? Don’t you want to squeeze me—not to death, of course—but more as show of affection, adoration and all?”

“Not really,” the snake hisses reluctantly. “I really need to slide on and-,”

“Do you want to fight me, snake? You think because you ended the dreamer that you can take me?”

“Please o’ great one, just let me leave as silently as I came and-,”

The vulture, obsessing over the snake’s indifference, keeps up the torment going as far as stepping on it—slight more than fight. Above the usual strangeness of vultures, this one possesses a unique feature, more than unnatural, as though both male and female.

“It is...both,” the spirit sounds. “The creature is like a worm, possessing both male and female features, functions.”

“You mean that it can mate with itself,” I sound, shocked.

“Yes, touting that it is ‘superior and supreme’, it is equipped with male and female organs,” the spirit continues.

The vulture is not capable to *care about caring*; it is self-absorbed in its own will, whims and wants. The darkened bird is pitch black; deceived to the point of self-deception. Yet, I see the vulture giving birth; the offspring of it alone. The embryos of this father and mother evolve and to still more shock, they bear a striking resemblance to my own, eaglets. *It cannot be that its offspring are as my own.*



"It can't be," I look on with shock. "They're eagles like me."

"Are they," the spirit follows.

"They look like eagles, features and coloring—not as vultures."

White feathering, both vulture and eagle, but the size and shape of the beak and other notable features are a spot-on—eagles.

"Why destroy you own?"

"You soundly know, don't you," the spirit sounds to me, my spirit. "Does this tragedy really shock you—have you not seen enough as it is or was?"

To add to the present atrocity, as each eaglet hatched it is eaten by the vulture. Believe me when I sound, "The vulture pecks deeply tearing each one apart, flesh and feathers ripped apart, every one!"

This vision is the most grizzly to be, when the parent determinedly destroys its offspring as they come.

"Why does this happen...," the spirit prompts me.

"The vulture is mad, driven to madness," I sound back.

The vulture is mad, madness—maniacal—to destroy its own.

"The thrill of winning, Eli; yes, power is poison."

"How long has this been going on, such-,"

"Since the darkness, in *The Low*, but more so in the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*," the spirit sounds. *The natural* forced away, *the unnatural* follows...."

I, Eli, see before me the true image of *the worst of the worse*, this vulture. Because all cruelty comes from weakness, can I get a witness that what I see and what you hear is, finally, the absence of strength, soul and spirit, the advancement of all things cruel and corrupt?

Is this journey *the end*? To see the things creep into our lands, the end of *the natural* with *the unnatural* to follow—the endless conflict and corruption?

"Where is **Anger** and **Courage**, the children of **Hope**, to help us against our fears? Without them, cruelty and corruption have no bounds and any *care about caring* is sure to die."

TO THE HIGHER

Where is the supernatural to sound, “Enough is enough,” and finally cure all that poisons, the cruelty that comes and then continues undaunted?



Renewal of life

There is no...forgiveness without renewal of life.

- Martin Luther

The snake is gone, finally, and the vulture is taking to flight, laden with the last of its own it consumed, their end.

My heart is heavy and mind is mad beyond madness. Before this journey, could I ever understand *The Low*, of such time and place? I have given all—even my physical *life and living*—to come this far; to see the things shared and to gain understanding in and through the spirit, more than one.

The Low offers no borders or boundaries on what is possible, impossible. It is a time and place when the one is increasingly insignificant and thus must join at least one cluster to be of any value, worth. Without *caring for care*, the one loses (out), the cluster takes over, and they that control the clusters control it all.

“What will come to the vulture—all the villains—beyond *The Low*,” is a good sound to sound. *Can Vile survive life and living when the light shines, the natural returns and the Days of Daddy-Dumb end, finally?*

Cruelty and corruption can serve for good, right and just if the understanding is, “We can do better—and we will...!” If you do one good deed, is a better one impossible, unthinkable? Doing a good deed for one is easier than for/by a cluster. The one will more likely take it to heart while the cluster will invariably resound with anything less, a mix of mixed-up messages far short of the sole soul, the humble heart.

“What become of the eaglets spared,” I sound, “Should the vulture have spared the offspring?” *Would one or more exhibit and exemplify the expectations of the eagle? Would they look at their parent with contempt, condemning the cruelty and corruption, or would they see this as a deep and disturbing behavior, caring about care? Would doubts*

TO THE HIGHER

give way to decision, then finally, the determination and declaration necessary to take such a journey as I did, once long ago?

“It was wrong, cruel and corrupt...and I for one will never accept or allow such,” sounds the eaglet set free.

“It was wrong but it could not be helped, overcome, and I remain committed in spite of continued cruelty and corruption,” sounds one more, compromising with reservations.

“It was a victim of circumstances—unable to do anything more or less than the ‘continued’; thus, I will stand by the vulture’s side,” sounds another, beset on compliance whatever the costs.

What can one do as the vulture bobs and bounces, sounding-off, “...don’t make me come down hard...,” the ultimatum that is never final, the end? Who can face such force, power and possession, and finish the fight without taking flight?

Such wonder and opposing ways subside as a glimmer of light peeps over the plain. *It is good to see the light again; a warmth in the coldness and cruelty.* Can one really bask in this light and warmth if I have not endured the cold, cruelty and corruption?

A little light may expose the corruption for what it is—not what it pretends or imagines for those that dream too much. At the same time, too much light and then *the darkness* is hard to distinguish, determine and decide. It is the two that clarify one’s will; their needs and wants, the good or the bad—shades within the spectrum of light and darkness.

My color and health is returning now. I am feeling more natural these days although I am a spirit, *the supernatural*.

“What is it like, *the supernatural*,” you sound, beyond *life and living*, “the other side” of earth. “Is it better than the flesh and feathers?”

“Yes,” I sound to you. “I am free at last.”

One observes many of earth’s secrets from here, whether beneath or above it. As a spirit, perspective is everywhere, the view no longer bound by the plight, pandemonium, and other p-sounds of the planet.

The further and farther that I journeyed in *The Low*, the more depleted I became, wondering now if **Vile** and the other villains



opposition and confrontation was more aimed at sparing me from suffering than anything else, sinister. *Why would Vile prefer me alive*, I wonder, or if not, *why did they seem to let me go and not end my days earlier?*

I still have questions; and in fact, I have more questions now, much about *the unnatural*. What is just, justice? Is justice a thing; something fair, equal; or does it mean that every bird get a fair wing shake? As I think of this sound, the meaning, I cannot comprehend it in *the natural*; that is, *justice*, has no application to nature while, in *the unnatural*, it seems nothing more than a sound, the dreamer's delight.

The unnatural exalts such sounds, blowing hot air without adding meaning, action to the sounds. They can sound until the chickens come home to roost, when all they intend to do is sound off, making the matter look good without an ounce of goodness. Until the powers become as outraged about this sound, *justice*, as those without power, nothing is accomplished—just hot air like a tempest from the desert.

I suppose there is more than one action; the first, a bitter conflict and the second, a movement to transform the injustice of *justice*. The problem with the second is that they only know force—conflict—with no alternatives.

Force is not always physical but can be emotional too—acting to convince others that your cause is good, right and just no matter the real intent, agenda or objectives. I am only an eagle and, now, a spiritual one. What can I do in *the unnatural* to change the way *justice* works—and does not....

My thinking is that **Hate** and **Courage** are necessary; without them, you cannot hate the way things are...or have the courage to change them. Where **Hate** and **Courage** are, so too is **Hope**. Anything less than **Hope** is apathy; and though this disease is growing, it is not everywhere, yet.

My criticism of sound is sound without action. Still, you do not have to be spiritual to understand that sounds made around, below and above, are the beginning of action, *the flying orders of the natural*.

TO THE HIGHER

As is sounds from year ago, “If you can't fly then run, if you can't run then walk, if you can't walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward.” Even though I am a spirit, I will....



So long as

...so as long as a [being] is capable of self-renewal,
[he is] a living being.
- Henri Frederic Amiel.

So long as I can...I will....

As to **Anger**, well, she is a tricky one; on the one wing is bitterness while on the other, righteousness. I know that **Anger** gets a bad report but I hold that anger is to hope as **Anger** is to **Hope**, both blood relations.

Few dispute that courage is the marvel and majesty of it, putting life and limb out there for the vultures to do their best at doing their worst. Oh, how they hate courage but more, how they hate those that know what they are up to, and finally, and let it all hang out, airing *the madness* and *the mess* to the masses.

In the *Days of Daddy-Dumb*, it is not what you are or are not; rather, it is how much *power and possession* seized in your affairs. If the meek shall inherit the earth, the proud and powerful must end—the sooner the better, eagles or any other birdbrain.

So long as there remain birdbrains or worse—brainless beings—the masses are doomed like swallows following the red herring, falling and failing to the rocks below. Maybe the *power and possession* will turn on each other—as they have in the past—and end themselves. The only trouble is that they used the masses to do their dirty work, suffering and sacrificing in untold numbers, costs and causalities. *The masses are always cluster flocked—like ducks in a row.*

Ten coy and clever beings are not worth one with such courage; the kind that looks forward and sounds, “Do your worst, for I will do mine, for all to know you as I know you.” Courage and anger are more than sounds, but action followed by more.... Sounds with action is, sounded again, a blast of hot air as a tempest from the southwest.

TO THE HIGHER

If there is only one thing necessary for *life and living* in the *unnatural*, what is it? If there is there more than “one thing” necessary, what is it?

Even *the worse* are able to *care about caring* when it is convenient or they feel like it an advantage.

As I pursued my journey further and farther, the sense of rejection intensified, apparent friends fell and the opposition gained—though **Hope** remained. The more risks you take, the less chance given to those that may still support you, *care about caring*. *Going the distance* is lonely, the costs never realized until it is too late to recover, reconcile the broken relations and richness once held.

One has to wonder if pride is on the prowl, the decision to journey, and not just *care about caring*. *Is my pride too proud?*

Can the living get better than now, at present? I believe that sometimes it is possible to change for better but believe that with the passing of time, “change” is less possible. Some sound, “You can’t teach an old eagle how to fly faster,” and I believe that true simply because age bears down on bones and brains. The young and younger however have a better chance, change. With bones and brains still fresh—barring no lazed living and freaky flying—is our hope for what can and should be. *Do the young of today have any future, hope for tomorrow?* I do not envy the young, though, for the *Days of Daddy-Dumb* continue and with it, the worst to come.

In my spirit do I see what lies ahead for the souls of land, water and air—the darkest when time reaches the thirteenth and the dreams of yesterday become myth—if not a ruse—while the future turns ugly as the bare, red head of the vulture.

My journey offers much on the things to come. *The Low* is a reflection of such a time and place, when many and more will weep and writhe, suffer and sacrifice unlike any anticipated...believed possible. The means to change, adapt, will be more than “less possible”. Only the agile will make it with any possibility of existence after *life and living*. I



shared what “I see” but now, with *The Low* seemingly behind, will share more that can serve you well if you should care about caring.

So long as the *big birds* continue to fly and flock with *boom*, conflict and contention will abound; the continued conquest for possession and clamoring for power. Tensions ever growing will reach a point of no return, without reconciliation or renewal of relations, wherein *the end* of many will happen, perhaps in the blink of an eye, while still many irreparably changed, *the end of life and living* as experienced.

What remains of *the natural* will continue to lose ground to *the unnatural*. The minds of many will be tapped and then tapped-out, their hearts darkened by *the darkness* that pervades. *Darkness* rewards darkness and thus criminality and corruption will rise further and farther—where even *my own* disown *my own*—aside from the expected conduct in high places, where *disowning* is deeper and wider the big waters; lies upon lies, the law made lawless, the folly of *the worst*.

As in the story of the rat, either trapped or ended in a trap, such devices and systems will rise too—with most to suffer slavery and servitude—made so by a relative few with possession and power far beyond bounds. Rats may be coy and crafty but no match for *power and possession* that says nothing of the sinking floaters. Most of the most will not realize their place until it is far too late to rebel or revolt, their minds made up for them. *At least the rat the runs the wheel is getting exercise.*

Along with big birds are big floaters; mammoth as Leviathans that sometimes move in flocks too, they will launch conflict from the big waters to land, outer space and beyond, a full-spectrum of might without mercy that exceeds the death and destruction of any and all prior conflict. This cosmic campaign a light show the likes of which that only nature once possessed will be launching of much to end.

Necessary or needed, things will become scarce, non-existent to the masses. In *the darkness*, light is very limited and precious. What *the unnatural* has created as “necessary” raised expectations and desire;

TO THE HIGHER

thus, comes the difficulty when things that many consider as luxuries or niceties, abundance and affluence, are lost, gone forever.

Extravagant and expansive nests that dot the lands will become unmanageable—outdated and impractical. Many will default to temporary dwellings. Nests made mobile or more manageable will become more common, preferred, a nomadic existence. Yes, many will be displaced and disowned, the established undone.

Fewer and fewer young will be born and birthed; the consequences of this decline due to infertility and the fewer benefits of flocking, regenerating the species. With any society, a decline of population is always the sounding of things to come, a crisis and of lasting consequences.

Power and possession will continue to shift to fewer, more centralized, the consequence of a declining societal strength, the undermining of natural flocking and localized orders.

I see other things too; especially now that I am departed *The Low* full of darkness, **Vile** and villains, that rule and reign with brass wings, bronze bodies, and bizarre behavior of which even *they* do not comprehend, control.



Bound up

*The fate of nations is [depends on] their powers of reproduction.
All nations and all empires first felt decadence gnawing at them when
their birth rate fell off.*

- Benito Mussolini

“It is the worst of times, it is *the worst...*,” sounds the darkened dictator while the flocks squawk and screech, saluting the eagle figure. “We cannot allow light to blind us, the shadows to distort our dictates,” re-sounds more of the same, a cluster flock gone awry.

One among them refuses and resist—but only one—to raise its wing of approval, applause and accolades. Only one stands when flocks fail and fall like swallows led by a red herring.

The *whole take* begins with minds; a few that can mind and mine the many, the changing of minds using sounds that are nothing more or less than sounds. The many engineered to be dreamers, in the deepest sense of it, the masses are *putty in the potter’s hand*. Sounding without action is common—even natural—but when sounded endlessly, the superficial sounds take on a life of its own; that by repetition and through rhetoric, it goes from mere hear-sound to some holiness, a sacred sound, that everyone hears and many heed. For those that refuse or resist, action is the course; the sounds made solid by a round of blows that wake-up the wayward or knock out the knowledgeable—with only the obedient, the dreamers that keep dreaming.

Control is not *the end*, but the means to an end.

“What is ‘the end’?”

“Peace, of course, peace,” I sound back. “Peace is ‘the end’ lest we forget that peace requires great costs, continuing until...”

Clusters are crucial, the dreamers in droves. Without clusters what remains but one’s and two’s—communities—that are not near as full of power and possession as the conglomeration of the incorporated?

TO THE HIGHER

“We must unite,” continues the conqueror. “Divided, we fall!”

In truth, “divided” is what power wants and seeks among its so-called own. Their sounds are not truth—and never can be!

When clusters cluster around other clusters, what you have is a large cluster flock, power shifted to the relative few—“They”. One might believe by sounds that clustering creates power and, in some way, that is true, but the cluster is, in truth, controlled.

“Why the criticism of clusters,” the critical mind sounds. “Clusters are as natural as-,”

“Corruption is at the root of the criticism,” I sound back.

The surest way to corrupt one or two is to teach them to revere the like-minded—not those who think differently—thus to cleave to the cluster. *The more clustered, the greater the reverence or power.*

“Then power corrupts,” so sounds the critical mind.

“Fear corrupts...the loss of power more so.”

“Fear...anger?”

“Yes, I believe that anger to-,”

“You encourage anger, courage—necessary for hope, though.”

“Yes, I do,” I sound back, “but when one is powerless, the anger spawns from other sources, perhaps good, right and justice.”

“That anger that ‘spawns’ is-,”

“That anger is righteous—about good, right-,”

“How is ‘right’ good, right?”

“It is *the natural*, of course, the righteous anger.”

“Oh, yes, *the natural*...and then, *the unnatural*,” your critical mind comments.

“It runs counter to *the natural*, *the unnatural*, and is then not right, not good and not just.” *The unnatural* is the creation of *the worst*. When one or two mix with *the unnatural*, the outcome is unnatural—not good, right or just.

“Life and living is not so absolute, *black & white*,” sounds the discerning, critical mind. “Many shades of gray mark-,”



Does the bird ponder about *life and living*? Is the eagle remorseful or ashamed when it kills its next meal? There are no such feelings or thoughts to *muddy the waters* or *cloud the matter* in *the natural*.

Clusters do not behave as the one or two; they do not all combine to characterize feelings, thoughts and the will that serve the soul. Clusters act largely on the direction of a few, socialized into obedience through the sounds and, finally, the fears imposed on the select one or two that do not obey, sacrifices for the sake of the many, their security. "I don't want to end up like the one," sounds some, then many. "If I do what 'the one' does, then I'll end up as the one has," dejected, disowned, destitute, dislocated, destroyed, destined for death."

A cluster finds comfort in conformity, the construction of *life and living* through illusion and imagination—never mind the facts, the truth. When *reality* is too hard to handle, fantasy and fiction become fact.

They are systems of control that bind and bridle many, the engineering of conformance and compliance of the clusters. Never before is this control more determined, destined, than now in *the Days of Daddy-Dumb*. Sounds travel fast and faster, with made-up and magical images to add, begging the question "Is this real, right?"

They construct causes and conditions that undermine unity and utility while alienating one from another. To control all, *they* must first divide us, one from the other—even from ourselves.

They foster and foment fears at the core or component, the single character, such that the one fears another; for if one fears another one or two, divided and destitute, such systems become the singular source, the many dependent entirely on the distant few for everything, nothing left to the locals. *How can you want for security unless you believe that everyone is out to get you?*

If you trust their sounds and see no further or farther, then they have you, the distracted, delusional, deceived, dreamer.

They sound lies because lies are their only way of convincing you that they *care about caring*.

TO THE HIGHER

They steal or take things by force—because force is all they know to get anything and everything. Oh, how *they* operate!



Flower

The flower is the poetry of reproduction.

- Jean Giraudoux.

Spring has arrived and the light is ever more. Fields of flowers dot the lands below and I fly high once again. Though I am only a spirit, yet as a spirit, still I fly among other ways of being mobile, from here to there and beyond.

Other life is frequent these days, as I venture back to *the natural* and higher places, free from all that which bound me up and brought me down, *The Low*.

Though a high-flyer, I do admire the ground and much of what grows and flourishes there. *When you have seen depletion and destruction as I have, the presence of such beauty brings added pause, pleasure.* The floral is particularly precious; a rainbow of color that blossoms to delight us all, the creation of *the natural*.

Who or what distracts us from the varieties of plants that brighten our souls with endless features and fantastic fragrance. *As it is, the natural will never fully return; rather, it is always in restoration.* I believe that we are each like that...as nature takes its course.

Flowers never go away, never end. In *The Low*, at least two flowers flourished; the first is the poppy, a brilliant red. The rabbit, **Chaos**, told me that this flower can make you feel fine but if too much, dulls your senses and makes things dangerous, your very existence. The poppy is beautiful to behold but alarming too. Taken too much, the poppy becomes pandemic and souls end at alarming rates.

My vision could not always distinguish a patch of poppy from the blood that flowed, then pooled into the big waters. Yes, blood flows in such time and place—anywhere and everywhere—often shocking to think that death is extreme, *life and living* blotted out. There is

TO THE HIGHER

continuous conflict throughout the land—made so by *the worse of the worst*.

Flowers serve to honor or remember the shedding of blood for conflict and other causes. This use of flowers is fragrant, offering something beautiful in place of the loss regardless of what or how it happened, *the end*. Some flowers are not natural though appearing much the same, no fragrance to sound of, no sweet nectar or the like.

Conflict is *The Low*; it is in your face all the time, the sounds, action and the consequence—with peace always a future time, place, way out there where no one can reach, see or hold. The blood flows; it appears mistakenly similar to the poppy. The earth below is full of such destruction though the flowing blood is the most striking symbol of the fate and futility of *the unnatural*.

They have flying and hanging things called flags; all shapes and color, to carry into conflict, identifying friend from foe. Flags are meaningful; each sounds or suggests some meaning and matter—if you are somebody, you must have this thing. *Power and possession* have such things whether flag or more; things that symbolize greatness, any goodness *up in the air*. Some flags are false, promoting fake messages and propagating false meanings. Be cautious of these things called flags; for like the mocking bird, the sounds have no meaningful message.

You may think me too intense on contention and conflict, the blood and all, but the smell of rotting flesh is a thing that you will never forget. To see a field of decaying flesh, disfigured souls, is one thing but to smell it is another—the putrid odor of decay and death. I have killed and I have seen and smelled *the kill* but what I never witnessed in *the natural* is such numbers, masses massacred. *When will the end, end? When will peace return, all conflict and contention behind the earth?*

Beyond the blood and carnage is the shear effect of force, which hobbles the sounded “victim” and the predator or, more silent, the actual perpetrator. Conflict destroys both sides and everything in between and beyond, the effect lasting at least one generation, maybe



more, while the gains, greed, and graft prevail. It is a both a calamity calumny, continuous conflict and contention, where the first causality is always the truth—what is true, past and present.

The unnatural continues to find new and nuclear ways to destroy things. If this does not end then, finally, it will be the end—wing for wing, flesh for flesh, and finally blood is such abundance that it covers the scorched ground, above and below. Does the creature that wins the most conflict, win? Does the history of this earth support the notion that those that live by the bloody talon also die by it? At what price or punishment does winning finally win—the undisputed and unending champion? This madness, making a mess of such magnitude, cannot go on as now and before; else, Hope is no more.

The poppy is a full bloom and here, in this arid region of earth, it has never been so prevalent, popular in places. Across the big waters, the poppy processes into another thing, and serves to make the flesh fill better, the mind and heart to draw down. Below, the poppy planted and picked by permit, power and possession, is profitable, producing practically all of a thing that travels further and farther, dimming and dulling the minds of many until death. *Still, I am encouraged:*

*Through the journey in The Low, past the heart that I know
The highs and lows of all my feelings,
Do you know the real from the fake, illusions?
The sounds of peace that never come, but always kill,
I know the real, from the want for what I feel,
Still I hide behind a shield of delusions.
We continue to pretend, minds without mend
While the flowers never end as a rainbow
Reflections of my life, the still, the strain and strife
Cast a shadow evermore to remember.
A spirit though I be, still the possibility
Life after life, then and now, forever.
Birth or hatch the same, the fact of it remains
To do what we must do, to endeavor.*

TO THE HIGHER

I am not the only eagle, right or wrong, but I am still an eagle without end; not the kind that pretend—the poser—but the kind that *the natural* creates. I am not the iconic or inanimate but am real, a spirit still.



Would I fly?

*Had I wings like a dove...
then would I fly away and be at rest.*
- Psalms 55:6

There is a white bird, a dove, on a mission, a journey of its own. With an olive branch in beak, the bird believes that peace is soon to find while *the natural* holds. The bearer of peace sees a time and place; harmony heralded, conflict and contention an artifact of *The Low*.

I know what it is like, the want for what seems good, right and just; yet the wait for **Hope** while **Anger** and **Courage** run their course. To the dove, my continued encouragement sounds:

*If you can see a time and a place for peace,
You and I altogether, care of caring release.
Can you conceive a future; imagine a time when it is.
Dream if you can of a place, beauty, bounty and bliss.
They come and go without any action behind, and
Sound after sound of good pleasure, of peace on earth to remind.
Can they continue the conflict, the death and destruction combine?
Storms are sure to follow the horror, a swath of burning behind.
Maybe an eagle is regal, just like the icon too bold
Maybe the dove is docile, they too calloused and cold.
What does it sound like when doves cry?*

Dove's cry and coo but *the darkness* creates coups too; yes, another kind of conflict is the coup, an attempt to overthrow or oust others, the seizure of power and possession—force against force. *They* may cause coups, often under the guise of public relations or through another thing, proxies. Most will never know what happens when such lands fall—if the story is of any interest, care about caring. The leaders exiled or eliminated, their leadership exaggerated for effect—enter excuses.

TO THE HIGHER

Something sounds as “democracy”—that they would likely respect—but turns into something else, “demagogue” or “dictator”; as the eagle changes to a vulture. *Who knows the difference, eagle and vulture?*

The underlying reasons behind the coup are rabbit-like, **Chaos**, with the coy and conniving rat not too far behind. The bad ones are not necessarily bad, the good ones not necessarily good. They may be bad nevertheless serve more bad, thus are good—if that makes sense. *Who knows the bad from the good, the better from the worst?*

As to the control of the chaos, first, *they* send out a signal, a warning of some kind. *They* follow with controls, cutting off the land of its supply, aimed at starving it out. Then, *they* send in the jackal to do the dirty work, followed by the vulture for the spoils. Finally, but not always final, *they* launch undeclared conflict—an offensive obfuscated as a defensive—and take the land by storm. *Who knows or cares what they do or not? What does it sound like when doves cry?*

Once upon a time and place, one creature wailed and wanted for another’s things.

“Give it up or else,” the eagle and vulture sound.

“No, go away and leave us alone,” the doves cry out.

What does it sound like when doves cry? To stand-down is to surrender, right? Where is the on the watchtower, standing in the gap on behalf of the land?

“Where are you headed,” I sound to the dove, olive branch no more, with a sound of silence that remains.



Peaceful way

. *The dove...winged [its] peaceful way.*

- James Montgomery

Peace passes my understanding yet still I embrace her and fly like an eagle!

Eagle facts

- (60) Species of eagle.
- Different from many other birds of prey mainly by their larger size, more powerful build, and heavier head and beak.
- Most eagles are larger than any other raptors apart from vultures
- Have unusual eyes; large in proportion to their heads and have extremely large pupil with a million light-sensitive cells per square mm of retina, five times more than a human's 200,000
- Lay two eggs, but the older, larger chick frequently kills its younger sibling once it has hatched
- Most eagles are carnivorous.
- May forage over 100 square miles
- To defend their territories and attract a mate, bald eagles put on spectacular aerial displays including death-defying swoops and seemingly suicidal dogfights that involve locking talons with another bird and free-falling in a spiral
- Admired the world over as living symbols of power, freedom, and transcendence.
- The spot on which an eagle landed dictated to the ancient Aztecs the place where they were to build a city
- In some religions, high-soaring eagles are believed to touch the face of God
- Native Americans historically gave eagle feathers to non-indigenous people and to members of other tribes deemed worthy.



Heroes' journey

Heroes' journey describes the typical adventure of the archetype hero, the following events and episodes in series:

1. **Problem-Crisis** – introduction of problem/crisis
2. **Crisis Confrontation** – confronted...the hero faces the problem
3. **Doubts-Fears** – on facing the problem...begins to doubt, fear
4. **Mentoring-Counsel** – the hero, unsure, seeks and finds counsel
5. **Decision-Action** – the crossing from doubt to decision-action
6. **Trials/Testing** – the hero endures trials and testing, sorting-out friend from foe, fact from falsehood, good from bad, etc.
7. **Approach/Challenge** – with the sorting underway, the here begins an approach to the problem, challenges along the way
8. **Peril/Reprieve** – the hero faces his greatest fear(s), challenges, near-death with some reprieve to follow
9. **Reward/Risks** – celebration is in order though may be short-lived due to the risks of losing what has been found
10. **Return/Risks** – the return home is not without risks as the transition is marked by continuing challenges
11. **Risks/Resurrection** – the hero faces still its greatest challenges that, a peak level, will either end in death or resurrection
12. **Return/Restoration** – the hero returns bring with him a healing capacity for restoration

Characters-symbols

Character (Name)	Character Description	Symbol
Eagle (Eli)	Foretelling, insightful and self-initiating	
Rat (Rodent)	Sneaky, sly, a stool pigeon	
Vulture (Vile)	Contemptible...preys on others, exploiting and extorting until exhaustion	
Chicken hawk (Airbag)	Favors and promotes conflict and contention, yet has avoided actual serving/sacrificing in such conditions, circumstances	
Dove (Care)	Advocate for peace and reconciliation	
Albatross (Lard)	Figuratively, "Goony bird", dead weight, possessing no benefits or service	



Crow (Dark)	Mischievous, orchestrating actions that reap dark consequences	
Lark (Prank)	Merry pranks, play, etc.	
Loon (Nut)	Crazy, insane and unstable	
Duck (Weak)	Vulnerable, defenseless as “ducks in a row”	
Canary (Test)	Used to determine survivability, portending of possible death as “canary in coalmine”	
Crane (Renew)	Renewal, rise-above...	
Falcon (Fearless)	Protector, spiritually-driven to sacrifice	

NOTES

<p>Goose (Done)</p>	<p>Too many problems to make ends meet, <i>the goose that laid the golden-egg</i></p>	
<p>Heron (See)</p>	<p>Observant, cognizant and conscience</p>	
<p>Kingfisher (Faith)</p>	<p>Faithfulness especially in matters of family and friends</p>	
<p>Mockingbird (Fake)</p>	<p>Imitation, fake and fraud, <i>making a mockery of the court...</i></p>	
<p>Nightingale (Want)</p>	<p>Longing (usually for love or acceptance), usually without reprieve</p>	
<p>Owl (Wise)</p>	<p>Experienced, knowledgeable of many things</p>	
<p>Parrot (Mime)</p>	<p>Similar to Mockingbird, a mindless mimic</p>	

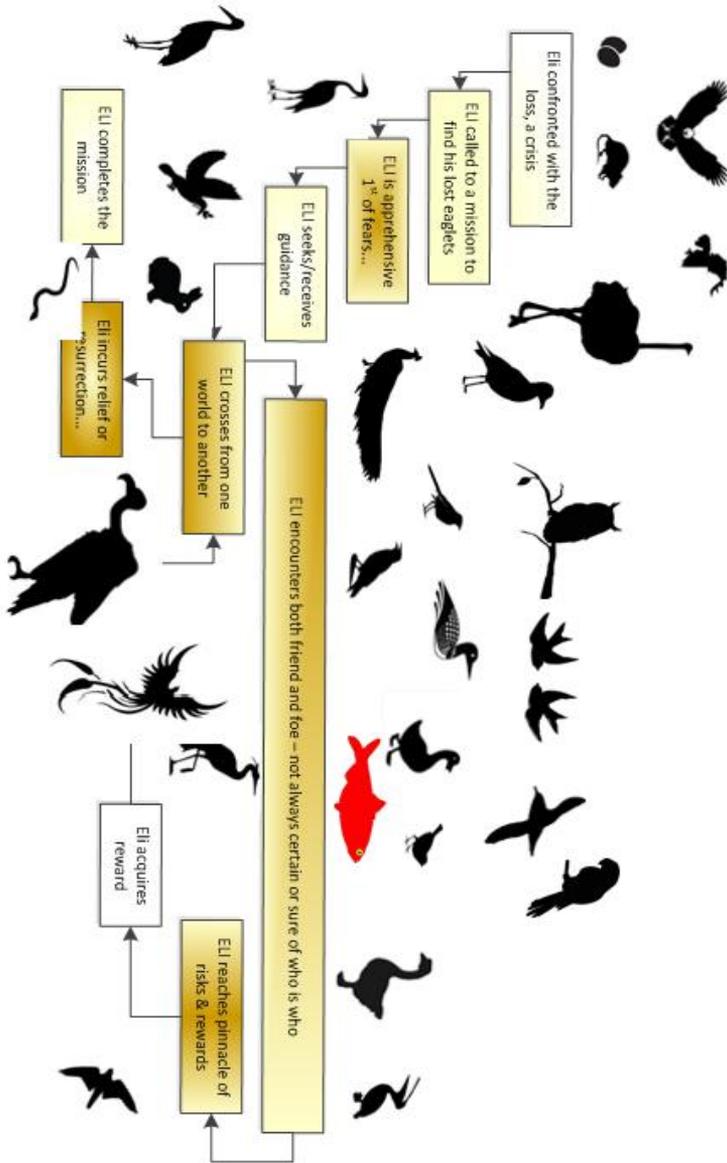


<p>Peacock (Proud)</p>	<p>Pompous, <i>strutting its stuff</i></p>	 A black silhouette of a peacock, shown in profile facing left, with its long, patterned tail feathers trailing behind it.
<p>Phoenix (Soar)</p>	<p>Rising above, soaring unlimited, dauntless even to the heavens</p>	 A black silhouette of a phoenix, depicted with its wings spread wide and long, flowing tail feathers, symbolizing rebirth.
<p>Seagull (Truth)</p>	<p>Deliverer of a message, meaningful words, courageous and challenging</p>	 A black silhouette of a seagull, shown in profile facing right, with its wings slightly tucked.
<p>Sparrow (Hope)</p>	<p>Harbinger of hope and assurance with two missing daughters, Anger and Courage</p>	 Two black silhouettes of sparrows, shown in profile facing right, positioned side-by-side.
<p>Stork (Birth)</p>	<p>Sign of fertility or re-generation</p>	 A black silhouette of a stork, shown in profile facing left, with its long neck and legs.
<p>Ostrich (Blind)</p>	<p>Ignorant, isolated and insensitive</p>	 A black silhouette of an ostrich, shown in profile facing right, with its long neck and legs.

NOTES

<p>Pelican (Paternal)</p>	<p>Self-sacrifice, the love of a parent for their children</p>	
<p>Red Herring (Distraction, Deception)</p>	<p>Intentionally misleading, distracting...deceiving</p>	
<p>Swallows (Falling/Fallen)</p>	<p>Large flocks that follow a “red herring” and fall consequently; massacred masses</p>	
<p>Cuckoo (Crazy)</p>	<p>Combination of psychosis in The Low</p>	
<p>Serpent (Restore)</p>	<p>Restoration, rebirth, resurrection—the re-founding of life,</p>	
<p>Rabbit Hole (Chaos)</p>	<p>Entry into the unknown accompanied by disorientation and possible mental illness if just momentary</p>	
<p>Eggs (Life)</p>	<p>Life, birth, fertility</p>	

Eli's journey





Seven deadly

For the benefit of the writer and reader, the following commentary comes with limited professional knowledge but a lifetime of personal experience in sin, sinning. From Wikipedia; “Seven Deadly Sins” are each/all human vices (of course); timeless in existence and rampant among men, these core weaknesses of *the flesh* give rise to all manner of immorality. The sins are:

1. Pride (of all kinds, from haughty to self-pity)
2. Lies
3. Murder
4. Wicked schemes
5. Haste to form mischief
6. False witness, testimony
7. Manufactured discord among their own

Sourced from King Solomon (Proverbs 6:16-19) and Saint Paul (Galatians 5:19-21), the Seven provide expansive examples to follow throughout and certainly beyond the scriptures right up to the modern age of *life and living*. What does sinning have to do with an eagle and its world? Can animals be corrupt, incorrigible, and finally immoral? No, of course not, but in an allegory, an acting as humans—*the worst of the worse*—makes it all possible.

Then there is the *modern concept* of the Deadly Sins (spiritual pietas), from which comes the possibly more applied still to one as:

1. Gluttony
2. Lust
3. Greed
4. Pride
5. Wrath
6. Vanity
7. Sloth

To this later variety some elaboration for my benefit, possibly for yours....

NOTES

Gluttony: overindulgence, consumption, being wasteful; of which Westerners of developed countries are much the part.

Lust: usually defaults to sexual though it is rampant in a culture of materialism, this languishing, sometimes lascivious want, came become the master— the “ultimate goal of almost all human endeavor”.

Greed: seems like lust, it is “applied to an artificial, rapacious desire and pursuit of material possessions”; Thomas Aquinas sounded, "Greed...condemns things eternal for the sake of temporal things."

Pride: comes in many forms from inflated ego to self-pity, it is “also thought to be the source of the other capital sins.” Dante’s version was "love of self-perverted to hatred and contempt for one's neighbor".

Wrath: anger, rage, and hatred are synonymous, but in the purest form, includes injury, violence and all that provokes to such extremes even imposed on self; it is (or can be) aimed at justice though perverted to revenge and spite whether it is selfishly driven or not.

Vanity: has changed (previously, to mean futility) to that of an overinflated self-importance or attractiveness; but stemming from this condition can be envy where the sense of excessive importance is deeply insecure, subject to jealousy toward the traits or possessions of others—even to the point of malicious behavior.

Sloth: apathy, simply not caring, that may include spiritual, pathological or physical states of behavior; it may also be thought as a failure to do what one should do, their responsibility.

The *Seven Deadly* sins as described, perhaps known, and certainly committed throughout man’s existence.



Seven magnificent

The Seven Deadly sins as described, perhaps known, and certainly committed throughout man's existence, can their possible be seven opposites or virtues? The original four are summed-up by St. Augustine:

Temperance is love giving itself entirely to that loved; fortitude is love readily bearing all things for the sake of the loved object; justice is love serving only the loved object, and therefore ruling rightly; prudence is love distinguishing with sagacity between what hinders it and what helps it.

Each and all being an extension of love, the original four give way to the seven virtues opposite the seven sins, the magnificent are:

1. Temperance
2. Chastity
3. Charity
4. Humility
5. Patience
6. Kindness
7. Diligence

Abyss (dark-side of *Daddy-Dumb*)

What awaits Eli on the other side, the dark-side of the journey, is “Abyss”; it is here that the indecision and doubt seems behind him—that he is resolute on the need to finish the search—even if it means his own loss of life, the final and ultimate loss.

Abyss is an overflowing of occurrences and outcomes of the Seven Deadly.... Inspired by Dante’s *inferno*, this *dark-side of Daddy-Dumb* is *a devolving* from bad to worse; a series of ever deepening and dark events or episodes, observed and perceived by a wide but wary eye and increasing, intensifying insight. Here is a brief description of each and all events/episodes in the order of occurrence:

1. **Gluttony** or over-consumption—an insatiable appetite
2. **Lust** or a wanton, insatiable craving at any and all costs, with increasing, irreversible intensity
3. **Greed** as more of the first and second, though with heightened effort beyond all costs, to exhaustion and still more if that is possible
4. **Pride** or *hubris*, a false feeling in invincibility that causes the blind to blinder and those not blind to be lesser—where any attention to *the madness* and *the mess* (referring to the general conditions and consequences of these events, the series) is met with indignation then elimination
5. **Wrath** comes from all sides (*the mess*) as the wanton intensify their cause while the weak only subsists or increasingly suffer and sacrifice, aggravating relations, adversity and aggression, one against another
6. **Vanity** reaches epic proportions; the *worst of the worse* elevated to iconic figures, even gods while all other are reduced to a mere existence or undervalued, unaccountable end
7. **Sloth** (as the last of the events/episodes), this event is a culmination of all other prior; it is the last breathe of the living, the consequences of devaluing “all other” leaving little to for and even less to look forward to



“Fly Like an Eagle”

Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'
Into the future
Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'
Into the future
I wanna fly like an eagle
To the sea
Fly like an eagle
Let my spirit carry me
I want to fly like an eagle
'Till I'm free
Oh, Lord, through the revolution
Feed the babies
Who don't have enough to eat
Shoe the children
With no shoes on their feet
House the people
Livin' in the street
Oh, oh, there's a solution
I want to fly like an eagle
To the sea
Fly like an eagle
Let my spirit carry me
I want to fly like an eagle
'Till I'm free
Fly through the revolution
Time keeps on slippin', slippin', slippin'
Into the future

Influences-Inspiration

- “A World without Fathers”, Wilson Quarterly, David Popenoe, Spring 1996.
- Bach, Richard, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Macmillan, 1970.
- “BALD EAGLE (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*)”, Text by Robin Barefield, Photos by Mike Munsey, Munsey’s Bear Camp.
- Baskerville, Stephen, “Is There Really a Fatherhood Crisis?” Independent Institute, 2004, www.independent.org/publications/tir/article.asp?a=35.
- Beinart, Peter, *The Icarus Syndrome: a history of American hubris*, Harper, 2010.
- Buchanan, Patrick J., *Day of Reckoning: how Hubris, Ideology, and Greed are tearing America apart*, Thomas Dunne, 2007.
- “Child Support: Can fathers get a fair shake from this system?” www.fathermag.com.
- Chomsky, Noam, *Who Rules the World*, 2016.
- “Destruction of the American Family,” www.eagleforum.org, www.exiledfathers.org.
- “Explore Bird Superstitions and Myths”, exmplore.com/spirit-animals/birds-myths-superstitions-about-birds.
- “Fly Like an Eagle”, Steve Miller Band, 1976.
- “Fathers disappear from households across America” The Washington Times, Luke Rosiak, December 25, 2012. www.washingtontimes.com/news/2012/dec/25/fathers-disappear-from-households-across-america.
- Greene, Oliver B., *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, he Gospel Hour, Inc., Greenville, South Carolina, 1963.
- “Heroes Journey”, www.thewritersjourney.com/hero's_journey.htm.
- “Industries for the Destruction of Men”, A Voice for Men.
- “Is Fatherhood being Killed so the State can Play God”, www.freerepublic.com...
- Commentary on John Denver’s song, “The Eagle and the Hawk”, <http://137.122.14.197/eng1121/Denver's%20Eagle%20and%20Hawk.htm>.
- Levs, Josh, *All-in, How Our Work-first Culture Fails Dads, Families, and Businesses—And How We Can Fix It Together*, Harper One, 2015.



- McDougall, Walter A., *The Tragedy of U.S. Foreign Policy; How America's Civil Religion Betrayed the National Interest*, Yale University Press, 2016.
- Murphy, Andrew R., *Prodigal Nation; Moral Decline and Divine Punishment from New England to 911*, Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Nock, Albert Jay., *Our Enemy, the State*, William Morrow & Company, 1395.
- One-kind-Eagle, www.onekind.org/education/animals_a_z/eagle.
- "Pastor: 'Government as Parent has destroyed the Black Family' ..."
- Raeburn, Paul, *Do Fathers Matter? What Science is telling us about the Parent We've Overlooked*, Scientific American, 2014.
- "Rejecting our fathers, destroying our Country", www.WND.com.
- Rothbard, Murray N., *Anatomy of the State*, Mises Institute, 2009.
- Simons, Richard E., *The True Measure of a Man; How Perception of Success, Achievement and Recognition Fail Men in Difficult Times*, 2011.
- "The decline of fatherhood and the male identity crisis", Psychology Today, Ray Williams, June 19, 2011, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/wired-success/201106/the-decline-fatherhood-and-the-male-identity-crisis.
- "The Federal Scheme to Destroy Father-Child Relationships..."
- "The Child Support Catastrophe", www.dalrock.wordpress.com.
- "The Disenfranchised Father", www.menshealthnetwork.org.
- "The Criminal Injustice System in the U.S.", A Voice for Men.