

The Immeasurable Dream

Steve Brooks

(The drama takes place in, on, and around a bed; the home of fears and dreams, a place where one confronts oneself in life and death.)

Scene I:

(A man is lying on a bed: a frame, spring, and mattress. He is clothed. He awakens in a dumb panic. He sits up and begins to look around, as if he needs to do something. He thinks he is dying of paralysis in his legs. He walks around his bed. He discovers there's nothing wrong with him. He lies back and goes back to sleep, quickly and easily.)

(A poem appears on the wall.)

Go and live among your dreams. Grin at them. Talk to them. Walk on the sidewalks of your dreams. Speak clearly in your dream speeches. Devise fast-moving dreams on buses and subways. Have a stupid dream. Be a renaissance dreamer. Demand public dreaming. Vote for politicians who dream. Walk a dream up your front steps and into your house. Get up early and watch the dawning of a new dream. Live in the house of your dreams. Wear your dream clothing out into the world.

Scene II:

(People move into the room of the stage, until it is full of people mixing and talking with one another. The man awakens and makes his way to the front, as if perplexed by a head full of people. He clears his head, until

he's at peace on an empty stage. The crowd dissipates, as he moves back to the bed, as the stage darkens.)

Scene III:

(The lights come up. There is a table downstage right. A white-haired, white-bearded man in white robes is seated at the table with two others. The elder speaks.)

Old Man: Can't anyone see that man is disturbed?

The man sits on the bed and looks at the three, not understanding the comment, not believing it applies to him, but caught by it. The lights go dark, When they come up again, he and the wise man sit together. The wise man speaks.)

Old Man: You do your best work when you are exhausted.

The lights go dark again.)

Scene IV:

(He rises out of bed and begins to levitate. He soars over the stage and audience, then back to a standing position, still levitated above the stage.)

Scene V:

(The bed has been replaced by a coffin. Lights are coming from the coffin, like a gentle 4th of July celebration. Colored sparklers, etc.)

Scene VI:

(He rises and moves to the front of the stage where he stands to speak to the audience, but nothing comes out of his mouth. Finally, this is not disturbing to him. He seems pleased with the connection with the audience in silence. He looks as if he is seeing every member of the audience, one by one, connecting with them. These words are projected on the wall behind him, as a voice reads the words.)

My life is a tiny dot on the map. And yet, things are going on, down there. I'm a magician, and outside this room, people are gasping to imagine I can be inside of it and still be alive. These people have come to me like unsigned letters. I don't know their names. This life is falling asleep. This life is awakening. Be awake when you are asleep. Be asleep when you are awake. It's a double exposure. I'm the author of this book. I'm the pages. I'm the cover. I look at the book of my life, the size of my hand. I was a good boy once, but now, I am everything.

(He looks at the palm of his hand. He holds his hand out to the audience.)

Scene VII:

(He wakes as a young man in bed with a young woman, making love, until darkness engulfs them. As the two make love, a voice speaks.)

What is confusion, and how does someone, in the middle of it, describe it – a hurricane that dislodges a forest, a river turned to something more than rain. The democracy of water, anarchy in the wetter emotions. Here at the epicenter of love's shopping mall, here in the logjam of concern and passion. The glance of nuance, first in the eyes, then like a slant-back assaulting the defense. An orange crate, passing itself off as a Maserati. There's nothing original here, just the usual catastrophe.

From where I sit, everything I see is American. American walls, American paint, American people, a couple of American cops drinking American coffee. How does a man with a gun appreciate cheesecake, with keys and a badge, a billy club, and a radio on his belt?

American music, American chairs, American talk. What does it mean to an American to be an American? A light American rain is falling on the American street. The lights of the American cars shine in the American night. An American is holding an American umbrella, as she waits for the American light to change to American green. Does one become American when one is already American? The American cafe is nearly empty, as the American patrons head for their American homes to eat their American dinners.

The shower is dripping, the heater is clicking, the birds are chirping. What the hell is happening? *There are no birds in San Francisco*, she says, rolling over in bed, in the room on Peters' Alley, where the chickens walk the street like in Mexico, and the kids playing football on Sunday are all related. The gloves tossed on the chair have fallen into gestures. The floor looks like it's been raining clothes, and the singing continues, a relentless cheerfulness. The 7AM traffic on Mission Street rumbles relentlessly, as the sun relentlessly brightens the room by degrees.

The refrigerator hums, the heater clicks, the dogs bark, the heels click on the sidewalk, as she burrows deeper into the layered sheets, strewn and twisted like Paul Bunyan's hankerchief, and the horns keep honking.

Some stray band of birds has wandered across the border, migrating the wrong way in the wintertime, as she turns, twisting and rolling in the sheets, and I hear a tune. *Let me go. Let me go, lover.* I sing, as her back turns, naked to the room, striking beauty, a scene for Matisse, or Courbet, or me and my eyes, I trace the lines over and over with my eyes. I dream the dream that happy lovers make of everything in sight, this day the sparrows came back to San Francisco.

The agitation that comes on a man in the presence of a woman blessed with remarkable beauty would never do to win the heart of one of love. Certainly, it takes part in the stir she is part of, altogether too familiar to her, and seldom done without, and if done without, becomes cynicism or blind boredom. Except where an original mind, by fate's double blow, is thrust onto the same woman, and seeks itself, the way all flowers grow wherever they grow.

There, it becomes a challenge of a higher sort, or other, or odd, or never known, or alone. There, it dreams, and along with dreaming, sees, and is. No imagination of the excitable satisfies. Flash rain never soaked the soil, or the soul.

I'm tired, without someone to love, running on spirit, and it's not enough. Seeing spirit in everything, everyone, all action, light and sun. Lying in the back of a pickup, on 580, watching a hawk, lying on the wind in the hills. Scratching a cute dog like a young deer, its face, like a wise, sad old man. Loving my work, my friends, my coworkers, faces, ideas, memories. Lying on time like a hawk. Circling, no fear, no hatred, my eyes on tiny creature details.

The hawk is love of the air. The hawk is love in the air. I look at my hands, conscious of the love in them. I am love in them. I am all the things I say I am, and I'm tired, without someone to love. Strong as a young deer, face like a wise, sad, old man, circling the details, running on spirit, light, and sun.

I want you to be mine, and I want to be yours, and every time I say that, I want us to laugh at our little ruse. I want us to merge into one, and every time I say that, I want us to laugh at our little ruse. I want us to walk down Paris boulevards and forget who we are, and what we're doing, and where we're going, and then we can laugh, together, at our little ruse.

I want you to be here, because you're part of me, and I'm part of you, and the hardest laugh is to laugh alone at our little ruse. Being so far apart for so long a time, learning all we can about the perfect and the imperfect

in the world, where learning to be without is a greater ruse than any we could play together or on each other. Knowing the ruse of life and loving the ruse in its face, the eternal ruse of realities and the ruse of all the rest.

Sweetheart, you'd go nuts in any other relationship but this one. The ink of the soul needs a quill to match the need and the necessity of the words. A runaway ballpoint pen won't scratch properly, computer screens are for other computers to love. We need our love in our hands, as slow as our hearts at peace, as quick as the dream flies ahead of the body blessed to the ground. We're in love as the mind works when it's free to the colors, intent on a single petal, hearing the fast scratch of each new breath.

There's a shadow line across the face that cuts the eyes like a breeze that feels like a blade point, a water line across the mask that defines the elements we choose to live in, some more adept at it, bird or fish. The sky-swimmer knows both, and he fights the weight that pulls him down.

There's an attractive death in letting go the fierce eyes that describe an Icarus. There's a faith that keeps him aloft. This human shape of faith and will cannot be resolved in either. It, too, is a line of shades, the horizon at sea, twin blades of blue.

Between god and beast, we are winged flesh, swamp angels. The warm mud we plod through makes the wings heavy. They lose purpose, until they're tried in the compatible air. Caked legs kick off the mire, ballast turns to rudder, and we soar in a completed reality. We stand on an earth whose partner is the heavens. The fall from this grace can kill, when the fond look back at the underworld spills the flight in backward dreams.

Put aside the chronicles of wasted time when you enter this room. Here is the full crisis of love, where a kiss comes down on lips like spring comes up in bloom, as slow as the rose unfolds, as full as each week makes a year, where a few ingredients make a stew greater than the table of elements. Do not bring old eyes and ears to this occasion of mixture. What's alchemic cannot be melted down by argument or sorted out by formulae. We require a new name, and the uses follow.

By candlelight, I lie beside her, dreaming an old dream's awakening, without possession, unpossessed, free in airy bondage, our arms, around each other, a completed circle, one love circling, leaping the separations, a fullness upon us, our hearts full as one. My tongue releases the words, my lips the kiss, my brain rejoices at the clear beauty of love. Obstacles to great thought fall aside when the heart gives consent to the dream's awakening.

Adam and Eve were monkeys, or apes, if you prefer. They lived a million years in the Garden of Eden. They quarreled over the checkbook for a split second, until more bananas fell past their satisfaction. One day, they looked at each other in a wondrous way. The look echoed in their eyes like mirror on mirror. Suddenly, it was time to write the Bible. Thought and sin became simultaneous that fateful day.

Now we are familiar with such moments, but, my, how much that familiarity resembles bananas. We are still living in that same garden, but we must now remainder the instructions. The wondrous never died, but we die when we forget the look in the eyes that teeters on and defines our pristine origin.

Scene VIII:

(The Man gets up from bed and wanders the room reciting lines from characters of his imagination.)

(The Preacher) One day I rose from my bed, as is my usual custom. I went downstairs to my kitchen to partake of sustenance. Breakfast. Ah, blessed food. I sat down to a meal of bacon and eggs and sausage and flapjacks and coffee. But the bacon and eggs and sausage and flapjacks and hot delicious coffee did not go into my throat and down into my stomach and fill me with wholesome sustenance.

Oh no. Instead, they ran out through a hole in my lip, down onto the table below me and down onto the floor below me. Praise God for the parable of the hole in the lip. I realized that God was telling me... to go back to bed... to go back up the stairs to my bedroom... to go back to my bed and reenter the dream of restorative sleep.

Go back to bed... and sleep... and dream. Praise God for restorative sleep, and praise God for the parable of the hole in the lip.

(The Mime) What is real? What is not real? Sometimes I know, and sometimes I don't know. When I was a boy, I have this puppy. Spotty. I love this puppy. One day I come home from school and I cannot find Spotty anywhere. I go to my father and I ask him, "Papa, where is Spotty." And he say... (He shrugs.) So I go to my mother and I ask her, "Mama, where is Spotty?" And she say... (He shrugs.) So I think, "Maybe there never was this puppy." I miss this puppy, Spotty. I love this puppy.

One time, I have this girlfriend. I like this girlfriend very much. So I call her up. I want to see her. I call her up and the telephone say, "This party disconnected." So I think maybe there never was this girl. I like this girl very much. What is real? What is not real? Sometimes I know. Sometimes I don't know.

(He lies back down. He awakens and plays more characters.)

(The Preacher) Children, you know that God is like unto many different things. And one of the things that God is like unto... God is like unto a poem. And you know, children, that a poem is like unto many things, and one of the things that a poem is like unto... a poem is like unto... a folding chair.

(He picks up a folding chair and demonstrates what he is saying.)

And you know, children, that if you open your heart to the poem, you can sit down inside the poem, and the poem will provide you with

a wonderful place from which to view the world around you. But if you close your heart to the poem, the poem will slam shut and fall to the floor, and it won't be worth a damn.

(The folding chair slams to the floor.)

So, children, if you open your heart to the poem, you will find that you are in the right place, because poetry... is the verse thing... that could happen... to you.

(The Mediterranean Poet) My woman has great steaming tits! I love to grab them into heaven of terrible bliss! When I am dying inside my woman, like an angel inside of Satan's hell cunt, I scream, "I am lover," and the flowers of our mouths blossoms into the crimson of love's anguish.

Anyone who would come to interrupt us in the middle of love's despair, I would rip his balls apart and eat his teeth for dinner, because I am chariot driver of mighty phallus, she is wonderful moon goddess, and I am her blazing sun and sexual master!

(The Swedish Poet) I was driving my Volvo when a wolf screamed. "Jesu Cristus!" I screamed. The blueberries were beneath a blanket of winter snow. At home, Inge told me Grandfather Nels had succumbed to throat cancer. Meaninglessly, we prayed. In the sauna, Inge screamed. Pastor Lundberg shot himself in the rectory, while the children chased the Easter goose. In a dream, the nighthawk screamed. I ran my Volvo into a tree.

(He lies down and sits up, continuing with characters.)

(Korean accent) I like you art. You got a good art. Maybe I buy you art. You got a good art. You don't know me. My name Walter Wah. When I was a boy in Korea, my name Wah Wu, You know names are other way round in Korea, so here I am called Wu Wah, but my parent, when they

come to this country, they like American name, so they give me the name Walter. Maybe you heard of me by my American name. I got a famous store. My store named after me. I got a lot of store. My store all over the place. Maybe you heard of my store. I sell carpet. My store called Walter Wah Carpet. It's a funny name. But they buy the carpet! Anyway, maybe I buy you art. You got a good art.

(Southern accent) You ask about my name, Long Ball. Now the name *Long Ball* was given to me by my manager at the time, Mr. Whitey Dody. He gave me that name Long Ball for the fact that I could hit the ball a long way. I didn't care for the name at first. I prefer my given name. But, the name stuck, and now I'm stuck with it. I don't mind it that much. You can call me Long Ball, if you like, since that is the name I'm known by, everywhere I go.

Scene IX:

(The walls are covered with words projected on them. He wakes and begins painting the walls, in order to cover up the words. He paints from a pan of water and a roller, but it has no effect. He walks to the front and speaks. As he speaks, the words fade.)

I'm made of words. They crawl over me. They drill holes in my skull. They plague my nights. They wash down the alleys of my dreams. They derail my feet. They stain my thighs. They tremble like a movie on the ceiling. I clamp the hardest words between my teeth. I put my hands on words and rub them into my skin. I am the Prince of Time. In the eternity of the world, I am a flower on the sea.

Everything I say is lost at sea. My heart sailed with Columbus. I slept, clutching a handful of Spain. Picked roses are kept in water. It's a good way to fool the flowers. My hand lies off the side of my bed like a lifeboat and imitates a swim in the sea. My heart gets lost on the voyage. Unfamiliar with ocean travel, it thinks the sea is a vast garden.

(He gestures and moves in a kind of dance to enact the words.)

There's a voice in the garden. A little sun, a little moon, it says,
You're looking for death. It's a little cool, a little warm. There's a voice
in the garden. A little sun, a little moon, it says, *You're looking for death.*
You're a little warm, a little cool. The sun and the moon like to watch you
searching around for your evasive, errant, foolish death.

Water splashes me. Water runs, without gutters, in the street like sunlight.
In bed, when the visitor says, bobbing sideways, *Here are the curtains,* I say,
Here is the sleeve of my coat. My bed is a square of floor that jumps all over
the room. I'm being released from my homey prison. Flowers are jumping
out of their vases.

I'm a landed mackerel, scrabbling across the beach, on its back, looking at
the sky for a sea. I've seen water flow out of my eyes. I've seen fish fly out
of the sea. I've heard the voices of the sea shoot to the surface. I've felt a
wave of words cover me. I've seen bright colors under the surface. I've
seen a door open in the waves. I've heard a voice singing from my throat.

A river of nakedness runs through me. Every morning, I recover
from the night, partially born, partially destroyed. I abandon death
when the sun comes up. My heart burns through the night. In the
morning, it lies exhausted in cold coals. I lie shoulder cold in the sheets.
The wars accumulate from night to night. Sunlight comes without hope.
It's a tragedy. It's a comedy. The dolor I dreamed is alive and lies beside
me. I cannot undream it.

My skin is dense with water. My cheeks hide the light from my eyes.
My forehead undulates. I'm sober in my dreams. I jerk around the room
like a riderless horse. In my jungle blood, I hear a voice, *Your feet walk*
around outside the house, while your heart beats alone, inside.

My words are eclipsing, letters falling out, half-words, like a dirty sun in
a yellow sky. I dream I'm in a woodland green, being kissed lovingly by
indiscriminate animals. I went back my watery life. I was a mushroom fish,

swimming darkly, hallucinating on the underside. I've somehow crawled out of the sea and onto this place, not dead yet, doing strange visual things to people, who think I'm a marvelous instrument, happy to think they own this articulate graveyard.

I grip my fingers tight, as I walk up and down the street, asking about the time. The trees wave in the wind and point to the stars. I walk the street like a visitor, and all the buildings bear the weight. Blood slips along my fingers. My feet think they're the same as hands, coursing these streets and streets again, the same as seawater under tide-pull.

I am the ghost that lives in the flesh. It's not safe to live in flesh, but it's dark, and it seems safe. Sudden movements flare, like a rainbow in an unnoticed flower or plain green plant, that's ready for a split second and gushes into my eyes, when I picked it for another reason than the total immolation of my senses, like a sunbath when my sweat tries to please the light and becomes its lover, like the sugar that melts when a drop of coffee hits the cup and I hesitate before pouring out the rest, afraid to watch the china melt, wanting it to.

Everything I love floats near me. There are no unreachable distances at sea. I'm attached to my world, such a poor one. I swim through it, disconsolate. Resigned to myself, I touch the wet edges of everything. I love water. Even among trees, I am a swimmer, and the moon is the eye of a lost white whale. I'm the kind of fish that enjoys the crooked and broken path. I love the occult eye that hangs above the horizon.

My eyes are glued to my life like a sleeping animal is glued to the ground. I remember all my lifeless poses. I lubricate the contradictions. I give my life charms of metamorphosis. The electric light glows on the crystals of my breathing. Flamboyant in my dreaming, I glow like amber. I turn in a prism. Time is a spinning clock. Serene, forgetful, calm, solitary, united, I have trouble coming back to life. I've become deranged. My senses are taking on courage. Everything and everyone is marching across the screen in a caravan.

I'll dance on Sunday until I'm exhausted, until I'm an old man and dead as an unborn child. I'll remember, as far inside my extremities, as I can. I'll give up the lands I've taken. I can't see over the wall anyway. I'll retrieve what will happen from absentmindedness. I'll desert the vague wars of inferior obstructions.

I'll stand in place of Christ before he saw the stone roll away. The stone rolls back. He runs out. He flies to heaven. Science, geography, physics, he remembers in a rush. *Ah, Science!* he cries. The body and the soul transcend rhetoric. The world rolls like a stone. It's oracular to see it roll away, to see through it like a tunnel to China. I await my eternity like the wind through the hollow in a stone wall.

I go back to sleep and dream again. I soak my cheeks in the tastes that have evaporated. I put myself back in the immeasurable dream. I take hold of myself. I breathe the odors of last night. Do I eat my vast desert with tranquility? Do I prepare myself for the precious slaughter? I find the riches of life behind false ceilings. I let loose a little of my spirit. I don't blame my corruption on the daylight. Ignorant people pour out belief like a rushing fluid of comfort, a creation for the mind, which looks away. See the truth marching. It wanders!

I look in front of my eyes, many times louder than the river. I see the moment pinpointed. I walk on my feet, a man so mild. I dance a dirge of verses. The room where I wait for death accompanies me. It makes me a fool.

Pour yourself full, I say. There's no substitute for your own consent. At the same time, notice everything and everyone. Consume yourself in your choices. Earthquakes cannot vent the emptiness incorporate in the last man. It is the hour of love and the hour of the blues.

Look at the light like an open grave does. Take a position under everyone, even under everything, like a bird who has died in flight and cannot fall from the sky. With your wings at the perfect attitude, fly across everything, always and forever.

There's a revelation in the wind-house of my being. It wraps itself around my arms, the arms of my chair, my legs, the legs of my chair, engulfing my posture and my platform. This revelation is transplanted into the flesh of a timeless being, mine. The azure blizzard, of wanting to know every goddam thing there is to know, drowns out the innocence, but innocence returns, remembering nothing of the storm. Death, you cannot have this stage. You can have everything on it. All these words can be eaten, but this stage is mine.

Scene X:

(He wakes in a room in India. It's a spare room with a string for clothes, a small window and a door to the shower,. It's a room inside the room of the stage. He gets up from the bed and goes into the shower, off-stage. You can hear the water running softly. A voice speaks.)

I stand in the maelstrom of a crowded street in India. A hundred yards away, I see a woman running, lightly, wildly, madly. She's a beautiful woman in torn clothing. Her left breast is exposed. No one is paying her any attention. I feel as if I am the only one paying attention. I see her as if the street is vacant, except for her and me. In seconds, she is running toward me, up against me, away from me, running like water through watercolors, leaving a streak of blank paper in my mind.

She might be running from abuse, running for her life, her body beaten, her clothing torn by a husband or angry lover, her cries unwelcome and ignored in a male-dominant society, but to me, in that moment, she is a kind of goddess, a female bakti, a passionate devotee of the divine, alive in the busy street, in the maelstrom, running to warn, to proclaim, to invite me to my freedom, to my heart, to the awareness in my deepest being. It is the most striking image of my time in India. It gives me a message I can't decipher. The indecipherable message is the one that resonates in the heart.

I pay \$7 a day for a room. The Avadh Lodge has its own side entrance. The hotel has a curved driveway, which leads to the covered entry, with a semi-circular lawn inside the curve. The main door opens to an office and a lounge, then to stairs to the second floor and halls to rooms on the ground floor. The men who work at the Avadh Lodge speak English, the business language of India. I don't have to learn Hindi or any of the many dialects of India. I don't have to learn the Indian names for menu items, either, since they're translated, almost entirely in English.

Next to my room is a garage for repairing old British sedans used as taxis. They are more costly and not nearly as much fun as the bicycle rickshaws, which fill the roads, or the motorized rickshaws and jitneys, which carry the bulk of local traffic. Just about everything is inexpensive by Western standards. I can have breakfast brought to my room for less than a dollar, including eggs, bacon, toast, jam and coffee. I leave laundry at the desk and pick it up later, cleaned and ironed, for what seems like pennies.

Each day and night, in my room, I'm alone. There's no radio or TV. I'm in a state of mind that, in my experience, is close to what I might call fear. It isn't fear, but it resembles fear in the body. It's a state of constant presence, attention, awakesness, a state of mind without attachment to thought. Thoughts come and go, but there's no feeling that any thought warrants being held. It's an acute numbness, an intense feeling of non-feeling.

This state of non-mind, of awareness in consciousness, comes, not as the result of being taught by some practice or by any influence. I'm not in a trance, or fear, or compulsion. I'm not doing the bidding of any directive, internal or external. There's no form of thought directing my being alive.

In Hazratganj, I find a bookstore with English language books. One book I buy is *Be As You Are*, by Ramana Maharshi, the teacher of my new teacher, Poonjaji. Another is a collection of cowboy stories. Another is a detective novel. Another is the writings of Paul Gauguin. It feels as if Ramana could be my grandfather, as Poonja, called Poonjaji, also called

Papaji, could be my father. In his writing, Ramana speaks of surrender as one of two paths to freedom, the other he calls self-enquiry. I'm drawn to surrender as a path to everything else.

In a brief letter, one day in sat-sang, I ask Papaji to speak about surrender. Before he can read my letter, I raise my hand. My voice stops in my throat. I point to the note he's holding and reading, and Papaji laughs. In answer to my question about surrender, he gestures toward me and says, "Well, this is it, isn't it? There is no more. You wrote these words with your heart and not with your mind, didn't you?"

I nod. I gesture with my arms that I'd like to embrace him. He invites me to come up on the small stage where he's seated. He embraces me. I embrace him. I see myself make it an embrace of equals, not the embrace of a disciple with a master. While I hug him, my face is buried in his neck. He's eighty years old, slightly older than my father, but his skin reminds me of the grandmother I loved unconditionally during her long life. I turn to look at the people in sat-sang. Papaji sees me turn, and he says, "Don't be afraid. They won't hurt you."

"I'm not afraid," I say, "I love them." I beam at a roomful of faces. I think to say I love them all, in the heart of the love that is the nature of all beings, the same love I saw in Papaji, from the first day, pouring from him out into the room, like a flood, like sunlight, like love speaking to love itself.

In my room, I look at the walls, the ceiling, the occasional cockroach. I look at the line I hang for the clothes I wash in the sink. I look at the smell of water in the shower. I look in the air. I look at nothing in particular. I look at the particular in nothing. I lie on a narrow bed, in love with nothing in particular, not even in love with everything.

I lie on the bed, reading, not reading, thinking, not thinking, sleeping, not sleeping, in the essence of the ocean, where the qualities of the ocean are of no interest to the ocean itself. The room has a window, a door, two wicker-and-wood chairs, an enameled white wooden table,

a bed, a cord for the light, a shower that's nearly as large as the room. Hot water for showers is available once a day, variably, in the mornings, before eight. The isolation of the room is filled with the absence of isolation in my heart. I am being in being itself. There is no other to make me feel apart from who I am.

Scene XI:

(He wakes as if from a realization. He moves to the front and listens, as his voice speaks.)

To be, or not to be, that is the question: to die, to sleep... no more... and by a sleep... to say we end the heartache and the thousand natural shocks that flesh is heir to. It is a consummation devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep... to sleep, perchance to dream. Ay, there's the rub! For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come, when we have shuffled off this mortal coil, must give us pause... there's the respect that makes calamity of so long life. For who would bear the whips and scorns of time, when he himself might his quietus make with a bare bodkin?

Who would burdens bear, to grunt and sweat under a weary life, but that the dread of something after death, the undiscovered country, from whose bourn no traveler returns, puzzles the will, and makes us rather bear those ills we have, than fly to others we know not of? Thus conscience makes cowards of us all, and thus the native hue of resolution is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought, and enterprises of great pitch and moment, with this regard, their currents turn awry, and lose... the name... of action.

(He then speaks in a similar tone.)

And what if action is but a piece of the dream. And what if death... is a dreamless sleep... and awareness... a dreamless being... filled with the dreams of thought, feeling, and action?

(He continues.)

A man stands, facing a painting, and the painting draws him into the moment of his being. Something happens outside memory and meaning, and the moment overwhelms him.

He shouts, “Masterpiece!” Education begins, universities are built, departments are filled, and the painting begins to fade from recognition.

I knew a woman of remarkable beauty. I saw men become fools in her presence. I wanted her to be as real as the moment of her beauty. I wanted the moment of her beauty to be as real as she was. I wanted to bring these things of magical beauty into what we call the real, not something we elevate and denigrate beyond our reach.

I thought she was unable to accept the moment of her beauty as simple reality. Neither could I accept myself as the same simple reality of beauty. She began to make a profession of her beauty. This is what happens to masterpieces.

I see this empty stage. I surrender to its empty awareness. But my unhooked thoughts still seek my attention. Images seek ways to hold and own my interest. Disturbing and delightful thoughts move about in my mind like familiar strangers. They fall like rain on the window.

(Rain falling can be heard and seen on the window.)

Thinking wants my attention on love, where even the possibility of love becomes the object of thought. I carry the thought of a lover.

(A picture of Ophelia appears on the walls.)

I want to hold my lover, until I let go of holding onto the thought of her. Then, I come to this open moment, where she can come and go, like all the other patrons of this theatre of beauty and wonder, this life.

In this life, we know breezes, cool and warm. We know gusts and gales like creatures made of wind. The wind blows dust and snow, and the wind blows the air so clean everything looks fresh and new.

(The sound of the wind can be heard.)

One imagines the wind from within the quiet of the mind, as one imagines this life, relentless upon us like the incessant wind. A constant blowing wind becomes the nature one inhabits, until every activity becomes the decoration of the wind, and whatever lies within one's mind becomes the parts of the wind.

Some gravity holds us in place. We learn its weight in the wind of our ruthless reality. But we have nothing to hold, nothing to hold onto. And we have no way to hold what cannot be held.

The wind is known for its coming and going. When the wind relents, when the air is calm, when we're at peace, we rest in the tranquility of our windless being. The stoic steels himself against the wind, but the one we call stoic may only have cleared away the dross of his dramatic mind, the dross we hold in times of romance, remorse, desire, and regret.

(The wind rages.)

When the wind blows without ceasing, it seems intentional, as if it had a will. But the wind has no design on us. We respond to the wind. We give the wind our fears and desires. And what if the meaning of my fear and desire no more defines my reality than calling the wind by a name? What if I am nothing but a man, living a life, and a wind has blown down through the generations, from the beginning to this moment of speaking?

The wind of being itself has blown us into this confluence where we speak words in the stillness of eternity. To let go of the meaning of our definition feels like a betrayal, even when the definition is counterfeit, and every word I speak adds to the masquerade.

I speak my approximations, yet the stillness of my being lives in every word. I am the voice of silence. I play in words, and stillness plays in every role I take.

When I resist the acceptance of my own empty being, my life becomes attached to its façade. I'm drawn to the façade, and when I sit in agitation and feel the nearness of my reality, when I neglect the awareness that would ease my agitation, I grip my pain like a pleasure. I love my desperate dreams, as I love all dramatic character caught in terrible circumstance. I love this dramatic life, this fantastic production of reality.

I sit in shadow and love the light, until I walk out of the belief school. I want to hold close the ideas that soothe and savage my life. My mind tells me I am the deceiver, the deceived, and the deception. Ending my self-deception breaks the contract I enter into as a citizen of this life. This clearing away makes me a traitor to my history.

To stay in the shadow school sharpens the light to a distance, and when I don't feel peace, I think of peace as a distant thing. When I fall awake in the awareness of reality, I realize darkness is only darkness and not a sign to deny the sun.

I don't need to construct a cosmos for my awareness. I don't need to match the gods of our naming, when I am more alive in the moment, shed of its meaning. When I'm not living in the moment that's beyond meaning, I know I'm being misled by the habits of my life. I attend to the crowded moment. But when I surrender to my nameless being, I stop running around myself in anxious attendance.

I seek the heart of the poet who died too young. Aware of his mortality, he lived in pain, but he lived in the truth of beauty, and dying was his foil. His rise from the dying fire of his life was a look in the eye of eternity. He was not his mortal death. He was not his immortal soul. He was their common reality. He stood in the terrifying nowhere of his own beauty and told the truth of it. He stirred the phoenix from his own ashes.

Destined to die, my life is often graceless. I want to invest it with grace and survival. I want eternity as my byword. I want to fashion a fine mask of a life, but the poet discovered that the beauty of our masks does not save us. When I surrender to the beauty of my being, I become my own eternity, in the moment of my forgiven mortality. I forgive myself for dying, when I surrender to the identical moment of life and death.

When my lover leaves me, I'm left alone, grateful for the love that lives in itself.

This has been my expression, and I have no more use for it. I've been romantic in the world. I've been romantic in my spirit, but I no longer walk in the romance of love. Before, on the occasion of this state of emptiness, I might have gotten drunk; a clumsy trick of romantic urgency. Now I live past the use of any romantic reality. With romance removed from the face of reality, I seek the source of being, until nothing is left but nothing itself.

From our origin, we fell in love with the life of the mind. I fell. I have lived in a mind that lives in separation. I've been separate. I have denied myself. I fell in the fear that I'm alone in this life. In an empty universe. Finally and absolutely alone, I uncovered the peace of who I am.

In the despair of bare existence, there's nothing upon which to found my life, so I founded my life on everything and my place in it. I founded my life on something of nothing, as if bare existence gave me meaning.

I want my life to have meaning, until meaning becomes greater than life itself. To know formless being does nothing to rid me of this personal pillar of meaning. I held a romance of existence. I held a romance of myself. I created a self that has no named reality. We have named this self a soul. I have lived in the fullness of barest being, as if it were a rich, romantic reality, and even in this, my mind stayed at play.

Always a thing in everything.

To let go of myself as a thing to be named, I finally face a letting go of my life. I joined with the god of gods in the thought of no thought, where there's no one present even to have the thought of no thought, where there's no one to witness the absence of thought, except this soul, this glorious thing of nothing.

In my soul's pretense, I might have enjoyed the romance of the presence of my own being for a lifetime. In this soul pretense, I created a self that even allowed despair and the loss of meaning, until my consciousness became the keeper of what cannot be kept.

I gave my existence a persona, with all the character of someone I might meet on the street, but in bare existence, there is no form to become and no form to be known. By what name shall I call this nameless being, when I can no more be named, than I can name the god of my imagination.

Naming is the placeholder of meaning. Naming attempts to match the thinnest facade and the thickest reality of who I am. My mind believes its beliefs are true, even when it knows its being has no name or form, but when I let go of the naming of myself, I am revealed as a constant living expression of this wonder of existence.

As a self-imagining creature of being, I do myself proud, but this is still mind over being. The tiger in the jungle has no name until we name it. Naming has continued for so long, the love of existence has become the love of its definition. Here is the book of our thoughts. Here is the book of our gods. We have made them the same book.

I have been in love with those near and far in this wide humanity. I have loved God and life itself, when my truest love has been this nameless reality. Now, depression and despair are here to regenerate my romantic ways, to claim my character for the sake of the mind.

I have been brokenhearted in love, but in love itself, I have never been broken. Love has been my otherness, my sameness, my fullness, my torment. I've been asleep in love. I've been awake in love. I have

lived in the trance of love. Love has been a haven to keep me from disappearing in the reality of my being. I ask myself why I should go deeper in this reality, when all is love. The hurricane has been my home. The eye of the hurricane has been my home. But I am the eye, the storm, and the reality in which the storm rages. I refuse any refuge.

One man lay on the ground to discover what happens in the death of the body. I lie in being itself, to see what happens in the death of the approximating mind. In love and fear, my life is the same as its misery, but I live this moment of misery, I am not the misery that lives this moment.

As protection from death, I loved what I thought might harm me.
As reassurance against death, I loved what I thought might return love.
If I fall in love with death itself, or I fall in love with its reprieve, I might believe myself free from fear, but when any love, even the love of death, is only another intoxication, my freedom is obscured, until it's lost.
When freedom is lost, only its name remains.

The nearness of death opens my heart to its vulnerability. But the mind is fitful, and love does not relieve the mind's practices. Mind will be mind, and desire and fear are its stock in trade. Awareness is clouded by desire and fear. I want awareness true to itself, not to some thought or feeling about it.

Awareness is awakened in those about to die. If I look for peace in an easier or even a more difficult reality, no matter how satisfying it might be, even if it lasts a lifetime, that partial peace darkens this reality.

When someone I love dies or leaves me, I despair. I despair in the death of my love for love itself. I despair in the loss of love for my own being. I despair in the loss of the love for being itself. I despair in the loss of the love I feel in the world. This is the trinity of the romancing of reality. I've lived in the glory of being a lover, when there's no need for this feint of the real. I've been what I take glory in naming and holding, as if it were a passing thing, to be held close, until it's ripped from my embrace.

Whoever loses a love may find what lives beyond all transient realities. The source in my own being is greater than anything I might do to find it. I accept this despair to see the fullness greater than my loss. To let go of myself as a lover, I move through this despair, into the reality of my being.

Knowing where I come from is not the end of travel. Being free of romance is not being sent to a Gulag. I don't love any hero, or god, or any other, any less for cutting them loose from the romancing of reality. I live in the reality that includes them all.

I am nowhere named in the romance of my life. I'm not the shadow of my stream. I'm not water. I'm not movement. I'm not the course of my flow. In force and fury, I'm no longer the occasion of this moment. I am the moment itself. Being itself leads to itself. Beyond the undefined is more of the undefined. This is what is so disconcerting about awareness. It has no walls to define it. This freedom contains no containment.

Letting go of the sugar of romance is not a call for more sugar, or for bitterness, or a bland diet without sweets. My sugar speaks of paradise. Sugar guarantees my ticket on the plane, until I discover I'm living at my destination. Waking up in paradise is a disappointment to the airlines.

I let go of seeing through the eyes of romance, and I see being, greater than any romance I might imagine. After living in the heart of romance, I live at home, and this romantic familiarity is gone from everything that's familiar. In this presence of reality, without its romantic cast, I lose the play of filtered light, and sight becomes vision, with no division between.

Romance makes the familiar miraculous and the miraculous familiar. What's familiar loses its romance and romance its familiarity. This reality doesn't come dressed as something familiar. Without the look of the familiar, the real is randomly terrifying and almost unbearably beautiful.

This life is the art of my being. In this theatre of life, characters move around and within me. They dance, they sing, they love and fight,

they're born, they grow, they wither and die, they embrace each other in fear and passion.

I was born in this body. I was born of this humanity. Yet without its costume and history, there's nothing holding up my performance. I look around in this emptiness. I see arms, I see the tip of a nose, I see the trunk of a body, I see legs, I see feet, I hear the resonance and echo of a voice. Sound flows past the uvula. Out of my throat comes the call of kings, and I become a king. I hear a cry, and I become a naked baby on a dark highway. The whine and roar of my blood makes me a hero or a villain.

Someone enters through a door. There's a picture on the wall. I walk the floor. I sing the voices in my throat, with no end to their song. Not what I appear to be, I'm free to be who I am, in the most congenial way.

I let my character come to the stage. I feel the feelings of intimacy and separation. I think the thoughts of brilliance and ignorance. A clock is ticking. I speak of reality. I remain no one, at the center, wearing a shirt and pants. My mind wants to know the script and what happens next.

I look across the footlights. There's fright in being born a human being. My throat constricts. As soon as I'm able to speak, I become fearful of the empty silent stage. I want to know where I should stand and what my role is. I tighten my belt. I want to learn the comings and goings of any other players. I want to know their lines and mine. We smile at each other. We greet the other. I become one in the company of others. I write and direct the drama. Here is the director's chair.

(He indicates the bed.)

I stammer when I can't remember my lines. I posture and pontificate. I'm speechless. I become an extra holding a spear. I fade into the background. I come to the front. I tear at the scenery. I topple the walls. I rip the seats out. I try to find the meaning of my words and my actions. Nothing I am, or become, can change my awareness of this reality.

Mirrors reflect what's in them. The art I create is the role I play. I've been the embodiment of fulfillment since before the beginning. I am this art. There's nothing I can do to surpass this theatre of there being no theatre. I lie on my bed. I witness my existence. I comb my hair. I am the essence of my appearance, but the appearance of my essence is not mine to reveal. I see a book on a table. I pick it up. It's my book. I am its author.

I can't depend on sense or senses to find my place on this stage. Nothing that comes of who I am is out of character. I am the character of being itself. In this, I can't be misunderstood. Something tells the truth. I create a face of the reality of being, knowing nothing can demonstrate what is, but everything does. I take a bow. There's nothing that does not reveal what is. Yet I cannot tell it, without becoming its unnecessary salesman.

I make the air empty of my presence, and I speak as if I'm present. Here we are, face to face. I speak myself into being. I'm a sound in a shape that composes a soliloquy to its own empty beginning. I hold a piece of paper. I enjoy the disappearance of what makes itself seen and heard. I whisper, *I am not here*. I shout, *Here I am*. I speak to the farthest reaches of this great empty space. This is a big theatre.

This man who was born to parents in Illinois is the one who appears on this stage of consciousness. I speak to nothing and no one. I speak to everything and everyone. We talk to each other so being may commune with itself. The one, who says there's no one present, is the same one who appears in place of this emptiness. *It is what we do. All fall down.*

The art that frames me human is the same art that reveals me artless. In this artless being, a voice comes out of the silent dark. Let us wear the clothing of who we are, and let us be naked of form and formless. The emperor has no clothing, The clothing has no emperor. Let us dance in the light. *Everyone is naked and dancing all the time.*

The End