

Everyone's Brother Dies

A framed image of Jesus hung near the bedroom door as though a world away. Although obscured now by distance and an oppressive darkness, it seemed to stare down at him in a kindly if condescending manner from its elevated position across the dark expanse. Incandescence oozed begrudgingly through the opaque sepia of the lampshade on his desk; it was too big for the lamp on which it sat and had long since become brittle and brown with age. This singular source of lighting sat to the right of where his elbow pressed the desk, the weight of his chin upon it. The picture interrupted the smooth dark wall more as a rectangular blemish than as having any especial significance. But from previous long association he recalled its significance, blood dripping from stylized lacerations where one was to believe thorns had marred the ivory porcelain of an unfurrowed brow in this shameless portrayal of an anglicized effeminate imposter with incongruously fine blonde beard hair. It was the ubiquitous image recognized throughout the fundamentalist Christian world that denied Semitic origins of their own expatriated Jesus, otherwise of Nazareth.

It hung there millennia away, a gap that seemed to have expanded from what he recollected the short distance across his bedroom to ever have entailed. Facing the icon now as he had so many times, contemplating associated thoughts throughout his childhood and youth, darkness and sleep-deprivation limited his abilities to focus on the finer details of the image. He found himself concentrating instead on a mental image of a similarly bearded but earthier man. This object of thought was much more in the mold of Ezra Pound's *Goodly Fere* than an inexcusably polished countenance flattened by ideology. In reflections emanating from the glass he also saw himself within that very same confine. The mental visage of his brother dithered in and out of focus pulsating in the vicinity of the icon like blurred annotation scribbled so softly on an ancient manuscript, providing an aura of marginal clarification more obscure than the *clarified* text.

Having struggled for some time with an emerging vision of a modern religious synthesis, the images he perceived in, and associated with, the picture of Jesus seemed to reinforce intuitions. Ultimately, however, his vaguely altered attitude was all that remained of the portrayals of specters that had vied, however tentatively, for those subjective honors we attribute to *existence*. Despite its essential difference even the painted depiction of his former Lord and Savior had seemed to completely dissolve into a gray gloom as Paul, a lone witness in that dark night, sought significance elsewhere than from the direction to which he had prayed so often as a boy. Overwhelmed, a veritable cavalcade of crinkled thoughts avalanched in upon him like the dried leaves and sand that had so very recently cascaded down upon the lowered coffin of his eldest brother.

Swiveling with no awareness of why, his field of view now included a bed stand that abstracted for him the frailty of 'the human condition' – he opted instead for the 'mortality of man'. It effected for him a credible, however trite, postmodern rendition of twentieth century life. The burden of the stand that brought about this association included several small jars of pills, an evidently blue and white box of tissues, a clock radio, ladies watch, and a drinking glass two-thirds filled with water, its inner surface largely defined by tiny bubbles. Unconvinced by the subliminal fabrication, awareness lapsed.

Finally, having for an indefinite period been mere stimuli in succeeding saccades, the textual patterns formed at the fovea of his eyes were propelled electronically along twisted optic nerve channels crossing to opposing lobes of his cortex, nuances supporting arguments of an external world. Colors became aspects of sensed perceptions, flitting and flashing like streaks in an aurora borealis. In this flickering holographic torrent, a resonance established itself, becoming the stationary waves of a draped reclining figure accompanied by a no less objective awareness of an associated exhaustion.

Then a twitch, a tic. Subtle physiological inferences to which he was oblivious deduced the face of a clock radio, the twisting he felt in his neck having been but one of its corollaries. "Two fifteen." The tick of the clock emerged for a moment from primordial nothingness then lapsed back. Again with no cognition of relationships between thoughts and the reality to which he might at other times have attributed them, the watch beside the clock radio confronted semiconscious, perhaps primarily electrochemical layers of mind. With the delicate Teardrop watch, a woman entered who in daytimes wore the watch and smiled soft smiles his way. An image of her smiled deep – yes, well beneath all superficiality, although where and how he could not fathom other than as constituting an *actuality* – deep within him.

The stridence of a broken spring irreverently destroyed the silence of the night as thoroughly as a screaming child disturbs a congregation during prayer. Dark shadows beneath his heavy brows jarred as he turned to stare once more into the untidiness of the bed. Shadows in the folds of the blanket converged, revealing a nubile form moving with barely perceptible breath. The patterns had jerked in a small quake from sleep and although not having been relocated by the effort, a nebulous distinction between dreams and reality was being resolved in there. Somewhere. Elsewhere? Simultaneously, with distinctions of its own –totally incomprehensible issues in a solipsist's world. The protuberance was still and yet a latent force. Awareness was bipartite now; thought would proceed in unison or with an eschatological conflict that would further shatter unanimity. The meiotic rhythm of analytic and synthetic forces creating the substance of things hoped for and most surely dreaded, a conflagration of thoughts beginning like a new being that having forever been naught, suddenly becomes aware of its own somewhat disassociated identity and strives naively toward perpetuation until finally, no longer interesting and totally disinterested, it dissipates down a multitude of diverging paths.

The covers moved discernibly now, smooth nothingness becoming sensuous shape, ridges disappearing, going nowhere. From within these topological changes a questioning, but barely audible, "Paul?" crawled out from underneath.

"What, Dear?" he countered, mundane conscious powers having been restored with his name on it for the first time since he had ceased writing some time ago.

The bed made its noise as the woman sat upright. "What time is it?" she asked so quietly he could not have understood the words without watching her articulate them.

He presented to her his recent perception.

She looked at the clock. With no inclination for disagreement, she yet noted that the minute hand touched a spot where the number seventeen would have appeared had there been room enough for sixty numbers the size of the four that were represented. She had no penchant for accuracy in conversation although observing and acknowledging minutia was her obsession. Intricacies of fine lace, the effervescent ever-changing demarcations of clouds, flecks of foam on ocean waves broken by the bow of a ferry bullying its way through the channels of the San Juans that she so loved to watch on those wonderful occasions when they vacationed there, and even the

fleeting movements of man-made second hands. These were her *realities*. She observed with no penchant to formulate complex statements; but sentient subtlety was most essential to her being.

Her legs were bent now as she sat, forming loosely connected pyramidal structures with covert passage between. Her arms were straight as braces behind her. Long blonde hair, mostly parted on the right spangled like tinsel in the sparse, single-source, incandescent lighting, enshrining the milky whiteness of a delicately expressive and most benevolent countenance dominated by eyes. These would have appeared blue if color could have been distinguished in the shadows, and more significantly round, but now reflecting only the orange incandescence from their molten surfaces so that Paul could scarcely detect expression in them, intuiting none. She implored nonetheless, however obscurely from beyond the virtual images of the lamp whose warmth now engulfed him. Nor, of course, could she see into the depths of the dark pools where the ensemble of his soul tossed about like charred debris, sometimes exposed even if unseen, but then immediately submerging, twisted in torrents as in a raging sea. Just so the light and darkness of the room obscured respectively from each their antithetical realities.

Finally she queried, "Paul, why don't you come to bed?" A pause and then, "Why can't our life go on without your brother now just as it did before?"

She had paused here much longer, appearing in this manner even to Paul to realize the audacity of such a question. Clearly, she comprehended the importance, at least some of the implications of his brother's death, recognition of what precludes continuity for those unceremoniously left behind, even if those thus separated had failed to maintain a close and congenial relationship when and while they could have.

After a pause she continued, "You've been staying up too many nights in a row! Your body can't endure this indefinitely Paul! Won't you *ever* come to bed? Don't you love *me* anymore?"

Irritated, he began before she had finished, speaking hurriedly in reply. "You know it's important that I write to Ellis as soon as possible and tell him all that's happened. No simple note can explain it! I understand what you're thinking, April; you don't even need to tell me: 'Everyone's brother dies, and in a week, a month, a year at most, they begin to be forgotten. If it were not so, how could anyone ever be happy?' I know all that April! I know! But,..."

Her own thoughts propelled themselves onward when he hesitated:

...I do not approve.

More beautiful was the light in your eyes than all the roses in the world.

"Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave

Gently they go, the beautiful, the tender, the kind;

Quietly they go, the intelligent, the witty, the brave.

I know. But I do not approve. And I am not resigned.

When Edna Saint Vincent Millay stopped whispering to her, she attended once more Paul's continuing tirade.

"...I've told you until I'm tired of telling you that this is different! He is not just *my* brother; his death *means* something! Can't you see that? The circumstances of his death characterize the evils of the era in which we live and the need for a new message? How can I, who have dedicated my entire life and ministry to eschewing evil and helping humanity, ignore these signs of our time and avoid this so obvious and terrible responsibility?"

He had become increasingly more heated as he spoke, approaching anger, but it was frustration, not hostility per se. She knew that. Very loud, however, his voice sounded in the stillness of the upstairs farmhouse night – very much the aspect of Paul she liked the very least, his total inability to talk *with* her instead of *at* her. It was always as though he spoke from some ever-palpable pulpit. She visualized the grain in the wooden face of specific pulpits from which he had preached to his various congregations. She heard him again as though she was but one of many in a congregation to whom he boomed the veritable will of God. "It is necessary that one speak volumes with *volume*," he had said, so that (among other reasons given on other occasions) the lady in the last row with the impaired hearing could hear him. She remembered his initially humorous response on the occasion when she had first asked him about the volume of his message. But it had become a point of contention.

That irritable and irritating lady, the former vicar's wife had refused to accept the facts of her own failing abilities. She had complained regularly that so few people nowadays articulate the way her late husband had when he had preached from that same pulpit that all might take spiritual nourishment. But why would Paul have listened to *her* when he never took suggestions from his own wife? Paul had not been a poor speaker, but it *was* rather an addiction with him. This communication problem of which she alone seemed intensely aware, was of course, a rather natural barrier to have developed between a member of the clergy and his wife.

Motionless she sat now – her shoulders bare and shining except for narrow lace straps, and slightly hunched over due to the action of her arms, which seemed to be her sole support. The nightgown hung loosely from twists of delicate lace and scarcely touched her body, save where nipples seemed nearly to pierce it through, tonight as though with many sorrows.

A hint of under-mushroom pink and soft voluptuous shadows merged into the spectacular collage of pheromones that seemed to attack all his senses. Although each would in its own way have most certainly overwhelmed him on other occasions, the unspoken but nonetheless formulated expression 'all temptations must needs be undergone' was sufficient chastisement to subdue wearied flesh that even with more piety could not previously have been denied.

She remembered now those days in late May and early June the year before their wedding when her virginity had become increasingly threatened by scripture-supported appeals and physical maneuvers, however chaste her dress and manner. Marriage had, of course, obviated, or more precisely, *consoled*, the inevitable compromise, but it had not yielded the momentous joy that he had promised and that she had reserved for the occasion of ultimate surrender. How robust, however, had been his love thereafter, excessive really, never ending without her having experienced a certain undeniable satisfaction – little else, and most particularly not the child she yearned to bear and cherish. Nurse. What remained were tender reassurances, guaranteeing one's absolute necessity to the idol of one's affection, if not to the larger scheme of things. But that was *then*. The *then* and *now* had seemed to come unglued – unraveled – the former continuum of past, present, and future having curdled like sour milk within her breasts.

Now he must complete the work he had laid out for himself. His task as he perceived it was indeed large – foreboding really. She did understand the broad outlines of the task he had set for himself. His *New Beginnings*.

Even while she sat there appealing sensually to the very core of him, his dedication drove him onward. The symbols in 'That all men might know the Truth' were parsed as a visualized line of archaic text before an unsophisticated scrutiny. While the little twitch that 'Truth' had caused still quivered on pursed lips, he began again, 'That all men' such that the thoughts and actions of his

fingers proceeded symbiotically as though by an automated cybernetic process. "Clickety-click-click-clickety clack click-click" echoed from his ancient Smith Corona.

The clock on the bed stand ticked a methodical counterpoint to his typing, becoming light percussion for the dirge that played within her. The wristwatch Paul had given her when they were sweethearts made timorous ticks that the more boisterous clock subdued. She watched the minute hand make its jerk. The pills were strange company in this not quite *still* life display, providing artificiality to an ensemble, with microscopic bubbles still forming while the former enlarged on the inner surface of the drinking glass as if by electrolytic processes involving some huge flux of energy. Reaching out, her slender hand pulled a tissue from the box on the stand, crumpling it as she pulled it back to daub the deliquescent redness of her eyes and nostrils. She blotted them gently, then lay still holding the Kleenex in a closed fist, reddened eyes wide.

A black and yellow Halloween darkness provided macabre context for vertically hanging clothes in the closet that looked now so like compacted mourners passing slowly by an open casket. She would be more at ease if the closet door were closed.

"Paul?"

He turned immediately. "Yes, Honey?" asked itself kindly, spontaneously, although somewhat autonomously. She had caught him between thoughts so that just at that moment he was comfortable with being interrupted by her reality.

Rising immediately, he asked again from where he stood, "What is it, Honey?" remembering for the first time since returning to his writing how she had sat there in the lamp light appealing to him. A needle of feeling for her pierced him, and wonderment accompanied by a certain pride in himself for having been able to turn and leave her sitting there expectantly.

"I love you," he said, but he noticed that even as he said it a tremor of mild contempt swept across his mind and lost itself, "Dear."

Tears welled up in her eyes at this expressed tenderness. Paul recognized, perhaps for the first time, that he appreciated these tears almost as though for their own sake, like jewels cherished not only for inherent beauty, but also as tangible assets. He did not realize just how much he needed them at this troubled time, that they provided material evidence of a spiritual worth that would otherwise remain unsubstantiated until he found new standards on which to base such subjective values.

He took the several steps and sat down beside her on the bed, hearing again the noise of the bed. He twisted his torso comforting her. She clung to him desperately now, breasts flattened in pressing against his chest; her face rested in a dampening depression above his collarbone. Contracted nipples thrust against him stirred love and anger in a cauldron where lightning already flashed and flickered with thundering rumbles between his temples.

She felt the buttons on his pajamas and let go of his shoulders, lying back. Her ample breasts did not lay flat but bulged, darker aureolas quite evident through the diaphanous silkiness of the gown that he had sometimes insisted she wear. The memory of those times was why she had worn it this night they both supposed. But those memories were stale within him.

Rising quickly once her grip had been released, he denied there being more than 'flesh' to any of this. "What was it you wanted April?"

Childlike now, accepting denial, she pointed toward the closet door as those imagined voyeurs of death slipped back between the folds.

He turned back toward her, laughing almost cheerfully for a moment, recognizing the sense of her perception, to which she blushed. Still jovial he kicked a twisted undergarment into the dark closet and closed the door, content with a muted click. He performed this task slowly,

methodically, for he was very weary. Only within his brain was there a jerking at accelerated speeds, reiterating thoughts, contradicting them, proceeding. He asked from where he stared blankly now at the icon of Jesus from this closer range if that were all, still with a playful mockery at her puerility, but quickly again was engulfed in his own abstractions.

Coquettish still, she intoned, "I guess that's all," and noticed how her continual entreaties seemed to be increasingly resented by Paul. It began to arouse a bit of contempt within her.

His gratuitous, "You had better get some sleep then," was followed by "I'll come to bed as soon as I can."

That completed this phase of her alienation. There was closure. He had already been sitting at his desk, his back swiveled toward her, when he had finished his condescension.

Before April would finally be dragged back to the nether world of sleep, he would have typed an entire page generalizing further upon his brother's death. And still he would type on.

"There is the very significance of life that we must consider, Ellis. I hope you can come to understand the importance of this. No one here seems to comprehend it; I feel very much alone.

"One hears some here nowadays of the Teacher's Doctrine from your Dead Sea Scrolls, protected through the ages in urns for the spiritual alchemists of our time. But what are they to us now, who have our own sacred shores to search, who have our own beaches to comb for bottles corked and filled with the only remaining evidence of some more recently dying master of the seas? Why do our minds seek across oceans and eras for the eternal when the eternal is here and now?

"Please read everything that has been preserved of what Josh wrote. He obviously put much thought into it. Read all of his unique insights even though it reduces the significance of years of your life there at Qumran and the other sites." His words now were mere gesticulations referring to the many sites and digs in and around Khirbet Qumran, Ain Feshkha, and Masada that Ellis had so enthusiastically described to Paul when they had last talked in person, and indeed whenever Ellis had found time to write. "Your work there in the Holy Lands, just as my own sacred tasks here at home, have become of little significance relative to his body of work." He emphasized the 'sacredness' of his religious work in particular, but for the first time did not contrast it against 'agnostic' conclusions Ellis had applauded in the work of his colleague the British scholar John Allegro.

"I am enclosing all we have found of his writings from the hovel he last called 'home'; I have typed them over myself, arranging them as seemed best to me. It was difficult to assemble the material since the originals were written in the hand which you, of course, more than any of us, will remember because I know that you and Josh communicated on a more regular basis. Much of what I have pieced together was written on tiny scraps of paper with mere squiggles to represent words in some cases; you know how impatient he was at having to force ideas into physical molds. (Of course you remember. You must have a treasure trove there with you; I am anxious to see what you will send me or put together on your own as well.) Because of their very nature I have had to do some editing of his words. You may keep the copies I am sending. Michael (who is totally unchanged by this tragedy) will get a copy. (Whether he will want it or not remains to be seen. He sees no real significance beyond our personal loss to any of this. I cannot understand him no matter how I try!) I will keep a copy for myself, of course, and another which ultimately

I hope we can have published as a memorial to Josh's unique philosophical (and dare I say theological) inspiration, and yes 'theological'."

Coming to the end of another rambling unit he had considered to comprise a paragraph, he looked up weary-eyed. This time turning arbitrarily toward the dark window behind him, he perceived the reflection of a haggard unshaven man, framed by the now-closed closet door. He strained to see through these reflections, but not even the outlines of the trees he knew stood just outside the window were visible in the darkness. Thus, although conceiving himself to be gazing into that dark world he focused rather on his own obscured reflection while ruminating on thoughts he had earlier given permanent form.

"I am no longer even attending church services. I have not gone the three Sundays we have been here with Mother; April has accompanied her. These are the first Sunday services I have ever missed when I was well enough to be up and about. I have wondered lately to what extent you felt that same loneliness on Sunday mornings after you quit attending communion. There is a deep sadness I cannot explain. But I find that I can no longer go, Ellis. I can no longer accept the doctrine. I don't even believe in Christianity anymore! Ellis, he was right, and this is an absolutely deplorable truth. I *never did* believe it. Not *ever!* How could one? And yet, it was not what one could call hypocrisy... besides always being very zealous, I was always very honest; you must know that. Don't you? I was totally and inexplicably unaware of my own disbelief. That was it. My involvement and responsibilities in the church have always been so extreme, even since giving up the ministry for teaching, that I must never have really addressed the issue of whether, and what, I believed at the center of my being. Not certainly since having been raised to understand what it was proper *to* believe. But now I seem to see as through a glass darkly as stated so eloquently in the epistle that all I have ever really contemplated were the surface issues of my own participation rather than the deeper issues beyond my own self-image. I never could see beyond my own commitment into the deeper reality of Being. For the first time in my life now, just since having read and edited what He wrote. I see a broader concept of reality and where I fit into this whole."

(Ellis would later notice the capitalization of pronouns in reference to their brother and worry about Paul's mental stability in the context of the huge manuscript being introduced by this letter.)

After this reiteration of his own previously expressed thoughts, Paul looked away from the window and back once more to the typewriter from which he pulled the completed page and slid it beneath perhaps a dozen of the top-most pages stacked before him. As he inserted another clean sheet into the carriage, he contemplated the instance of the 'Inverted Causal Principle' thematic of much of what he had transcribed of his brother's work. This principle appears repeatedly even in the least edited letters that Ellis would later publish primarily from his own collection. Just now Paul was thinking of the corollary, "A belief *once denied* never existed; only what one believes in conclusion can be said to ever have been believed *at all.*" This, of course, bears directly on the related 'Dilemma of Hypocrisy and Inherent Guilt,' on the horns of which "dilemma" Paul found himself impaled.

With rejection April lifted the covers to tuck them the more securely around her neck, and while they yet parachuted downward, she observed her recently neglected body, the fullness of her breasts of which she was, however modestly, aware. Paul had praised that aspect of them, referring to it joshingly as their "abundant beauty". With that comment a subtle difference in her attitude

had begun to emerge, reducing the weight of them. She had acted shocked by his impertinent comment since they had just started dating and were embarrassingly religious. She had swooned in pleasure nonetheless. Her breasts were not like her younger sister's that had become definitively 'large' by any standard, but then September was not as beautiful as she. April admitted this fact even to herself now, although certainly not without plenty of evidence supplied by others, Paul excluded. She observed these mere mammary glands now, yes, of course, that was all they were, glands, their slight curvatures even while lying flat suggesting maturity, their conical peaks having long since dissolved into more subtle and substantially more sensuous forms that became an integral part of her total being while yet possessing their own more independent undulations. She smiled to herself, first fondly, then with sadness, letting the covers fall as they would. She felt the coolness of escaping air that contracted the nipples into little wrinkled bumps with rings of dots so like those in the fast action photographs of drops of milk at the very moment following impact with the creamy surface, droplets rising symmetrically around the central fact like jewels in a crown. If only a warm hand were laid upon them, how surely they would soften and cease as appendages. Then they would lie limpid like pink lily pads on her soft liquid body, undulating slowly as though over ripples induced by a warm summer breeze through the gentle curvatures of time.

She really must forget this now, this selfish aching in her thighs. "His current task is important – at least to him. I must get to sleep," she resolved.

So she lay there then musing about sleep being no conscious resolution. It could *not*, therefore, be achieved by such deductions. Her mind and indeed her entire restless being was too *alive* for sleep now. Life pulsed a counter rhythm to the sad melancholy that had engulfed her, recreating memories to reconcile the vibrant and the morbid, whose conflict comprised her current waking state. Oblivious, therefore, as much to the details of the conflict as to the healthy immanence of compromise, it seemed to her that there was no reason at all for remembering an otherwise irrelevant joke right now. It was a 'dirty' joke she judged, using any standards she and Paul had ever approved, but she couldn't avoid thinking of it right now anyway. She liked it. Each word she went over verbatim in her mind:

"Do you know what they did with bad girls in Egypt in ancient times?" Here she paused long enough for the word "no" to have been pronounced.

"They laid them in coffins and eventually they became mummies!"

A full smile showed her appreciation. Disgusted with herself for smiling, immediately she frowned. It was several years ago that she had heard that joke; and she had not remembered it again until now, at this very moment. It was back before she and Paul had been married a full year, shortly after Paul's ordination. How disdainfully he had shown his disapproval of that joke. That had been a major part of what had seemed so funny. It was perhaps the funniest and ultimately most significant aspect of the whole situation. It had been at Paul's brothers' reunion, before Ellis had embarked on that ar-che-o-log-i-cal (she articulated syllables mentally as though they were individual words in the description of what Ellis had been doing) expedition.

"It's strange we don't hear from Ellis more often," she mused. "He was very quiet and introspective that day." She thus interrupted her own train of thoughts and then continued her considerations of how much he had enjoyed that joke. The brothers' tensions had seemed to be broken by it even though it had been necessary that she and Paul not laugh, at least very loudly nor very prolonged laughter, more of a snicker really. She had liked the joke nonetheless in spite of her awareness of having blushed until the red must have contrasted with her stiff white collar. That too had added to the merriment of the brothers.

Josh, the eldest of the boys, had told it. He had expressed it so cleverly she had thought, surprising her when the punch line came. He did have a way with words and people, she remembered now. She recalled again the guilt of not having been sincerely shocked, embarrassed, or disgusted, which although unfelt they must have thought had caused her reaction in red. No, she had not been shocked at all, nor embarrassed, nor certainly disgusted by the joke. Surprised by its punch line, yes.

But why had she blushed then? How she hated blushing. She had not laughed openly however much she would have enjoyed doing it if she could have, if she had been the kind of person who would have. For that she had felt hypocritical, the hypocrisy of not honestly expressing sincere immediate reactions. Everyone hides behind subterfuges that way sometimes, of course; she acknowledged, excusing herself now. But she did not like such feelings of insincerity. That must have been the real reason for the embarrassment then – the recognition of the incongruity of her reaction rather than any contempt for the joke itself or the telling of it.

And now...he's dead!

She lay devoid of thoughts for several moments, as though for many centuries, perhaps simulating death as an only means of comprehension. Then suddenly – almost as a rebirth – she remembered the *rest* (yes, there *had* been more, a part that had seemed to have waited for germination), a most intimate aspect of the whole situation that had occurred then but was in part created now...but having *always* existed, nonetheless. It was alright now...she could let herself think the thought that had only flashed for a moment then and had as quickly been pushed back into her subconscious, covered by a fortunately misunderstood blush. Now she would let it pass slowly through her mind as one would taste a wine whose recommendations had been all but forgotten when a label, rediscovered by serendipity among wines listed on a menu years later, had allowed her to re-experience something very special. Now it could make no difference as though the cost on this later occasion no longer mattered.

There had indeed been a mysterious realization then that she had felt somewhere deep within her – a strange sense, in which she loved that *other* man, Paul's elder and strangely bearded brother. And there was more...yes, much, much more than that... The desire had flashed, like heat from an open fire with the pungent pleasure of the scent of smoke in one's nostrils, to taste his love, and... yes, even... the 'perversion', if that is what it must be called, of comparing even its physical warmth and the thrust of power within her to all she had ever known. She seemed to feel those same yearnings again. But she did not worry about them now. He was dead. The titillation of his freshly trimmed beard when he greeted her so warmly at the reunion, flushing her cheeks with red, would never be felt again... Dead.

When her subconscious mind stumbled, her consciousness rallied: "But I really love Paul!"

Was it out of guilt or fear that such reactions always popped into her head so quickly after acknowledging her true feelings? Or was it, although naïve of course, the expression of love itself? *Fear of flying* she concluded quickly, addressing such intrusions in thought objectively for the first time. *Afraid of going too far out on a thought limb*, but the apologetic assertion was *true in its way too*, she noted in her musing. Hiding in the deepest catacombs of her unconscious mind was the ultimate conviction that when finally weighed in the balance, Paul's love would be found wanting.

"Still..." she reiterated but without conviction or specific comprehension of its deeper meaning. Strange indeed these disorganized layers of conflict and resolution in a single brain that compromised one very lonely woman caught in a web of thoughts that would eventually become dreams... and then reality.

This was all a long time ago now, but it is still a reality of words having been made flesh.

