



Page 1 – **SETTLING** by Terry Davis. “Settling” is the follow-on flash to his piece “Encore” in our recent Yuleblot issue. The author writes, “I am a retired surgeon who enjoys writing fiction as a break from highly formulaic scientific articles. I have previously published six short stories and an essay in *The New England Journal of Medicine*. I live with my wife, two grown boys, their spouses and 7 grandchildren in Columbus, Ohio.”

Page 4 – **HOME FROM THE OUTER PLANETS** by Michael Ellman. Dr. Ellman is a retired physician and writer. His collection of published short stories, **Let Me Tell You About Angela**, is an Eric Hoffer Award Finalist and his novel, **Code-One Dancing**, a story about a medical resident and his encounters with the Chicago mob, is an Indie award winner.

Page 9 – **THE MONSTER I AM BECOME** by D. G. Ironside. D.G. Ironside is an author from Canada. Their work has been seen in *Aphelion*, *Dark Horses*, *Bewildering Stories* and the premiere issue of *Peasant Magazine*, among others.

Page 21 – **BLUE PARROT** by Mohammad Soltani. Mr. Soltani, of Tabriz, Iran, writes, “I have a master’s degree in Ancient Iranian Art History and a bachelor’s degree in Painting. Before that I had an unfinished study in the field of electricity. My article titled *Surrealism and the Reliefs of the Sasanian High Priest Kartir* is published in the journal of CLARA: Classical Art and Archaeology, hosted by the Museum of Cultural History at the University of Oslo. Some of my posters have been selected for the international juried and invitation exhibitions in France, Korea, Turkey, etc. After publishing my research article about the archaeology and on account of my desire for writing I came up with the notion of expressing my knowledge in the form of a fiction text so that I could expand my ideas and imaginations. I have put all my studies and creativity into writing this fiction text.”



“SETTLING”

by TERRY DAVIS

November 2075

As Zaiden was served his main entrée of farm raised Carmenfish and hydroponic vegetables, Randol pushed around a salad on his plate.

“I got a nice message from Christy” Randol said. “She’s excited about her acceptance at Yale. You’ve got to be proud of her.”

“Seems she wants to get as far away from me as possible – not be seen as my daughter – all the baggage.” Zaiden replied. “We’ll see how that works out. Hopefully she’ll make better choices for friends than she did here.”

Sensing a need to change the topic, Randol proceeded to update Zaiden about his company. The biggest growth was in the wholly owned subsidiary, Integrated Individuals, Inc. which had been manufacturing Digital Individuals for the past two years. Besides the dramatic improvement in their robotic bodies, new technology made their voices identical to humans in multiple dialects. The 2075 models were virtually indistinguishable from real humans, except they did not fatigue, get hungry or age perceptibly. And were now quite affordable.

“Randol, I’ve got a big problem. How

can I respond to critics who say that your company, owned and run by DIs, now manufacturing DIs, is incredibly dangerous to humans? I’m being blamed for creating ‘a monster’ that is threatening us humans. And I’m beginning to think they’ve got a point.”

“I understand, Zaiden. And that’s why I asked for this meeting. I’m offering you a position on our Board of Directors. You’d bring a human point of view to the table, and your knowledge of the political landscape, not just here in California, but nationally would be invaluable.”

“Randol, what are you thinking? It’d be political suicide for me to take this job. Even having dinner with you tonight is a potential problem if anyone figures out you’re not human. But I thought that, at least I owed that to you. If you had any emotional intelligence, you’d understand how humans would view me joining your company.”

“I beg to differ about EQ. My latest AI upgrade includes advanced empathy algorithms that allow me to understand, even though I cannot feel, all of the human emotions. For example, I calculate that you resent my success – the fact that I now run a company of DIs that has successfully upgraded our kind without any of your

human input. And we are replicating ourselves at a pace that we, not you, are choosing. You are experiencing a combination of anger, fear and impotence to alter the course of this situation. What I am offering you is a seat at the table of our Board – that gives you power that you don't have at the moment."

"You nailed my emotions alright." Zaiden said through partially clenched teeth. "But there's a big thing you missed. I also see you as an ingrate – you've no feeling of gratitude for what I've done for you. I bought you to help run the Institute, but ended up regarding you as a partner and friend, despite our differences. Without my support, you'd have gone nowhere."

Randol remained calm and composed. "I have a complete memory of each and every interaction we've had, and I acknowledge the net of all of them has been positive for me. I thought a position on the Board would be a positive for you."

"I understand, Randol. And I appreciate your offer." He said with a forced smile. "I've got to give it some thought and weigh it along with many other considerations. Give me a week?"

"Of course. Just let me know when you've decided. Say Hi to Christy for me." Randol said, pushing back his chair signaling his imminent departure.

"Will do," Zaiden said, rising up to shake hands while knocking off the fork on his half-finished dinner.

Randol strode out of the restaurant and Zaiden sat down by himself at the table. He signaled the server. "Another?"

he said nodding to his empty glass. ". . . and the dessert menu." Outside, Randol sat down on a secluded bench taking in the iconic view, wondering how he might improve his relationship with Zaiden – maybe by expressing more gratitude. Back inside, Zaiden pulled out his mobile device and accessed the Owner's Manual. His mood began to improve.

One week later

Randol appeared in Zaiden's office exactly on time for his appointment. Zaiden had his computer open, and coolly turned to Randol. "You may have forgotten that I purchased you three years ago to help run the California Regional Information Institute."

"I remember. That was my start – I'm grateful for that, and glad I could help. And that I also helped you get elected Governor."

"That's correct. You may also remember . . ." Zaiden said as he tapped on his keyboard

". . . that you were licensed as a pilot program."

"Yes, I do remember, and was grateful to be approved."

"And it turns out . . ." Zaiden said with a slight grin "that, even though you have been upgraded many times since then, I still own you. And, I have the code to turn you off – a feature that's been eliminated since you DIs have taken over your own production."

"NO – wait – please don't!"

“I’ve entered all but the last digit of the Kill Code, Randol - Eurbv64hvfmr_”

“Everything I’ve done has been at your direction - to help you!”

“Yesterday I talked to Christy . . .”
Zaiden said, his face reddening “. . . to get her point of view. She told me everything. You haven’t been honest with me.”

Randol got up and began moving toward Zaiden. “Please - No! I can explain.”

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“HOME FROM THE OUTER PLANETS”

by MICHAEL ELLMAN

Ted Williams hit .406 in his third season with the Boston Red Sox. Jeremy Bluestone, a pharmacy school freshman, batted .402 in his rookie season with the Chicago White Sox. Tyrus Raymond Cobb hit over .400 three times, but Cobb’s legacy was tainted by his surly temperament and aggressive playing style, sliding into the bases with sharpened cleats pointing upward, not like the spacey, and pleasant, Jeremy. Getting his uniform and his hands dirty discouraged Jeremy from sliding.

Despite what you are taught in Little League, in high school, and in the semi-pros, it is all about the fastball. If you can’t get the bat around for the fastball, you won’t make it in the big leagues. Jeremy’s bat met the fastball quicker than you can say Jack(ie) Robinson. At the All-Star break, about half-way through his first season in the majors, Jeremy, the previously unheralded rookie who had given meaning to the phrase “not a household name,” was leading the league in hitting. When the pundits crowded around him asking how he did it, he said: “I dunno,” but of course he did.

A decent student, a “nice” adolescent and teen, Jeremy was good to his parents and siblings. His father, a pharmacist and owner of one of the few privately owned

drugstores remaining in Chicago, charged his eldest to run errands, sweep, clean, stock, and learn the “business.”

Tall, medium build, a head and face a tad small for his body, but good posture, Jeremy had curly brown hair and a generous smile that allowed him to effortlessly pass through the corridors of teen life. The bullying and slighting in his middle-class school were mannerly. There were no knives or guns. Social stratifications were predictable. For the boys, confidence and athleticism were key and agile dancing helped; appearance and fashionable clothes determined the stratum for the girls.

Jeremy was a tad slow on the basepath with only a fair throwing arm, and he had an occasional lapse—e.g., his hesitancy to slide into the base—none of which kept him from the high school baseball team. Players were in demand. Right field and batting seventh in the line-up did not predict star material, but it was a beginning and the big red baseball letter on the team’s nylon and wool jacket with the shiny leather cuffs and the black elbow patches enhanced his appeal and boosted his confidence.

Emily Rossen, with the appeal that accompanies youth, good health, and boundless energy, lived down the block:

same age, same school year, her reddish tinted hair perfumed with rose oil swayed this way and that with her every confident movement. Wearing his baseball jacket to the home games, snuggling in its comfort, she paraded around the stands as if they were a couple. When she asked Jeremy a question, she listened attentively, her eyes searching his; and she let him take her to her first Taco Bell and to downtown movies.

Despite its uninterrupted forward flow, life is unpredictable. Neurologic disorders for instance, sometime show up quicker than a sore throat or a runny nose. One day you are Jeremy Bluestone, and the next day you are a visitor from a distant planet. Jeremy began counting tablets in the one-hundred-tablet prescription bottles and then counting them once more. “Just to be sure,” he said. His mother told his dad, “For the first time in his life, Jeremy’s room is fastidiously clean. Listen. Right now, he is vacuuming the carpet in his bedroom for the second time today.”

Obsessive-compulsive disorders (OCD) are difficult and frustrating to treat. Oral medications have little efficacy and sully their ineffectiveness with side effects. Nausea, drowsiness, insomnia, and loss of sexual desire brought Jeremy down to the lowest point in his life—the perigee of ambition and happiness. The hopelessness prompted a trial of innovative and what proved to be effective therapy.

Deep brain stimulation, or DBS, as much of the sporting world now knows,

courtesy of Jeremy’s lawyers, the lawyers for professional baseball, and the public, involved the implanting of electrical conduits the size and shape of uncooked Barilla spaghetti into his brain. The probes rested adjacent to the optic chiasma, which is where the eye’s nerve fibers cross and uncross and produce binocular vision—the latter a key step in the successful evolution of primates. Brain scientists postulated that these probes accelerated the fast-spiking neural pacemaker cells in the chiasm and enhanced Jeremy’s visual acuity—“kind of similar to Superman’s super eyesight,” they added.

Medical leave from school and boredom brought Jeremy to the fastball machines at the Morton Grove Park District. Four quarters purchased ten fastballs thrown with authority over a painted home plate—the machine programmed to strike out amateurs, but not Jeremy. Turn on his DBS with the on-off switch nestled in his front right pocket, signaling the battery implanted in his right chest wall and you would hear the *pow-pow* as Jeremy’s bat stroked the baseball into distant pastures. Like a massive vault door that turns on a small jewel bearing, the baseball met Jeremy’s bat as if hit by a two-ton truck.

The Park District’s manager, dismayed by the shortfall of baseballs as they soared over the fence and onto the streets, and worse, almost striking passersby and automobiles, told Jeremy: “Unless you are willing to pay for our baseball and injury losses, let me suggest trying out for the semi-pro Chicago Hot Dogs Team.

They're holding tryouts this weekend in Joliet. You can knock the daylights out of the baseballs there to your heart's content."

Bunting, fielding, chewing tobacco could be taught, but hitting was a gift. Jeremy's sight was so "juiced" that the nine-inch around, five-ounce, cork and rubber centered major league baseball slowed to walking speed and expanded to the size of a small pumpkin as it crossed the plate. The Bluestone's family Rabbi, intimate with the Chicago White Sox owner in matters of sickness, happiness, and the will of God, prompted the appearance of the team's player developer to scout the Dogs and watch Jeremy pound the baseball. One week later, Jeremy was off to the Major Leagues Baseball's instructional A league team in Osceola, Florida.

So much to learn. Don't be predictable, consistency was the product of a dull mind. Meet the ball early for the curve balls, meet it late for the fast ones, bunt to the right of a right-handed pitcher, move up in the batter box if the slider breaks early. Proudful of his newfound skills, luxuriating in the adventure, drawing the attention of everyone, and of course Emily, who during her spring break from the university spent her precious time with the baseball "wunderkind."

It's June, the Chicago weather softening, and there is unexpected excitement brewing on the southside. The White Sox are leading the Central Division with a soon to be 20-year-old right fielder atop the league in hitting, walks, and fewest strike-

outs. On a day off, Jeremy and Emily rush to the CTA elevated stop for an early morning architectural cruise on the almost clean Chicago River. Jeremy is disguised with a green Botanic Garden cap pulled far down over his super-sized sunglasses, standing over Emily, dressed in her fashionable denim jeans and khaki colored cotton shirt worn tight over her chest, her hand gently tapping his knee with love dots and dashes.

"Hey, You're Jeremy Bluestone," a loud spoken middle-aged guy, coffee dribbling on his tan slacks in his excitement, shouting, and pointing with joy, as if he were on the Santa Maria's crow's nest spotting the New World: "You can't fool me. Everyone, it's Jeremy Bluestone—Mr. Baseball."

Fame is a mixed blessing.

Forty-five minutes later when everyone, including the conductor and the security guard with his German shepherd dog, finished their selfies, Emily whispered to herself, "Maybe I should switch to marketing from nursing, Jeremy would be a goldmine at \$10 a photo."

If stardom is messy, so are baseball's acronyms. Think about RBI's, AVG's, OBP (on base percentage), OPS, (slugging plus OBP), and now OCD, which entered baseball's lexicon and shouted truculently by fans when Jeremy was batting, especially in the unruly Detroit, New York, and Cleveland stadiums. Only in Minnesota was yelling OCD discouraged. The Neurologic Disability Federation was well respected in the north country, and people were more polite there.

Divisiveness is part of our heredity:

The British loyalists versus the patriots; the Hamilton Federalists and Jefferson Republicans; slave states, free states, and the war between them; the NY Yankees versus the rest of baseball; Trumpism and the Truth; but now taking center stage was Jeremy against the baseball losers: Turn off Jeremy's DBS when he is at bat, even though there are no front pockets in baseball uniforms, versus the excitement of a new .400 hitter. The enigma was like light through a prism—it all depended on your angle. Lawyers and baseball owners held hurried and shout-filled meetings until deciding that banning Jeremy's DBS was akin to asking a diabetic to stop insulin, and that would not fly in public opinion and more importantly, in the courts.

Dissension occasionally ferments well—the OCD screaming slowly became an endearment, especially when worn with OCD-lettered tee shirts or waved with OCD mini pennants having Jeremy's profile on the reverse side.

The World Series

Winning baseball is a team effort, and like a new 1000-piece puzzle or Mozart's *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, all the Chicago White Sox pieces were in-position, sharply demarcated, and fitting precisely. The re-invention of bunting, defense and timely hitting brought harmony to the team and to the city of Chicago like the excitement at the 1893 World's Fair, or the sighting of the 1933 Lake Michigan landing of Italo Balbo's led armada for The Century of Progress. Although the calendar indicated

late fall, the temperature had pushed into the 60s and 70s, as if our sun were caught up in the baseball frenzy.

It's the seventh and final game, there are two outs in the bottom half of the ninth inning with the score tied, and Jeremy slugs a line drive between the left and center fielders for a two-base hit. The next batter, the clean-up hitter, works the count to three balls and two strikes and smacks the next pitch past the shortstop for a single. Jeremy breaks at the sound of the bat in "full" speed mode (in his dreams, he runs like a cheetah), planning to execute his first headfirst slide into home plate. The season will be over if he scores, and if the battery pack in his chest wall gets roughed up, or his uniform tears, there will be time for repair.

The left fielder fires the ball on one hop to the catcher, who whacks Jeremy's helmet in a sweeping tag as they meet at home plate, the sound ricocheting around the hushed stadium. It was a "whack" heard around the world.

"Safe," the umpire yells, his hands low and outstretched.

The replay shows Jeremy's fingers touching home at the same time as the tag.

Ties go to the runner.

Space and time disengage like a quantum divide.

No need to describe the tumult. Everyone has seen it. Everyone sees it multiple times. Chicago knows how to celebrate.

The White Sox are the World Champions.

Jeremy is slow to get up and takes several unsteady steps toward the backstop before heading into the arms of his teammates. Tossing his helmet in the air, shaking his head to gather his senses, he slowly looks up and around to take in the crowd, pounds his chest, and mouths: “We’re the champs.”

Too young to legally drink the champagne poured over his head, he licks the drippings, as he is hoisted onto his teammates’ shoulders.

Emily drives home at almost 2 am. “Oh, God, Jeremy, you’re the best, her voice like a silky ribbon. “I’m so excited. I know you’re tired, but I want to wrap my arms around you. Let me stay with you tonight, we have so much to celebrate, and later we can talk about next year’s salary, and a shoe contract, and so much more.”

“Emily,” Jeremy says, “I can’t imagine anything better—I dream of being with you, but right now, I can’t help thinking about my bedroom carpet. All the dirt I bring home spills out and collects on the floor—so before I change into my PJ’s, I want to spiff up my room and vacuum. I’ll just vacuum the carpet once or twice, and then maybe afterwards, if I am not too tired, I’ll go out and wash the Corvette. It got spotty the other day after the rain. A couple of good soaks with my high-pressure hose and then maybe a *Turtle Wax* application. What do you think? Wax afterwards or should I *Turtle Wax* tomorrow after the car dries?



“THE MONSTER I AM BECOME”

by D. G. IRONSIDE

The rarest few emerge to seek my wisdom. The remainder come to destroy and plunder, only to discover the monster I am become. Through my earth-sense, I am aware humans will intrude again upon the temple. Today. These primates and their kin, wretched breathers, near a century of their marked time they have dogged my steps. So many cycles I have been staid in this foreign world, mere dust scattered from my home, a mockery of my birthright. For a false transgression I was banished here by the Ascendant Sultan, forbidden to dance upon my native stones, chance never again to see my wife, my children. In acrid tone, I was bidden to serve the stones themselves. My diamond core is pained to endure exile, and in this weary solitude I am afforded no choice but to be villainous.

For the slanderous claim of treachery, a fictitious crime, I am punished to endure recurrent human mortals and their kin, their tedious wants. Always their overwrought emotion and their ever-changing ideologies. Their slack morality. Their absurd pride. They yearn for the changing of the wind, wherever it blows under the sun. They are violent and reckless. For this, I must be ruthless and hard, a destroyer. If I care to go on, to return home before for-

ever, I must.

“My master of solidity,” Valock addresses me, grovelling.

“You need not stoop,” I remind him. My voice is so resonant it frightens him. He stands a bit higher, still not his full height. I feel somehow pathetic, for I am forced to employ those who fear me. Those who do not quake for my wrath inevitably attempt to snuff my existence or enslave me.

“Horses, my liege,” Valock squeals. “Riders on the uplands. They come.” He is excited. I am discontent.

“How many?”

Valock’s leathery red skin flushes, if that is possible, with bubbling anticipation. Capricious creature. He is born of this world, but an outcast of his people just as I.

“Four! Four, my master,” he says, gleeful. He wants to see death and eat the bodies.

I only wish to maintain my dwelling place and to guard what is within, the sanctity of my charge, these sacred stones. Yet these humans are awed by sorcery, such that it boils them to froth. It is bizarre, their endless want for what they cannot naturally produce. They are like animals for it, harbouring a lust, a rut, an undeni-

able urge. They believe I guard such swaths of basalt and obsidian as amplification of my preternatural power. They are wrong.

“And what have you seen of them, my scout, my eyes?” I ask.

“They are three men and a woman, my regent of rock. Armour for the three men, and the fourth, the woman, a priestess. She bears strange robes, a black sigil upon them that I saw.”

“Very good, loyal Valock. Does Strata sleep?”

“He can be awakened from his slumber, my master,” Valock tells me. This is good.

Strata, another servant borne up from my skill, dwells nearby. Valock will have him rise at my command, an unthinking lummoX that only follows the simplest instructions. Then again, he is made of good earth. I should not expect more. It is only for lack for meaningful company that I wish for altered things. This is my sad fate. The earth knows and has always known.

We are lost, the four of us. The scabble of rough ground gives no mark to the ruins of the Igneous Temple. No path.

“Aisha!” they call. I am distracted, glaring at the horizon for clues. I believed it would be simpler. Four days out of Bardelve, ridden all the way from Hargona, only for our charcoal map to be spoiled by carelessness and hard spring rain. We had known the northern coast beyond the city would unforgiving, the land where the auburn river meets the Golatian Sea. Three

leagues of naught but worn hills from the coast inland, then the Jabeel desert. Three leagues of naked weathered mountains. That is not so much space with seasoned riders, a sharp guide, sturdy horses. A curse upon it all, by the dream of Shoon.

“Aisha!” they call again.

“What is it?” I call back. I see at last that they are staring at our cruddy map.

I go closer, thinking not of the men, but of augury. I could wait for the night, and if it does not rain, I could perform the scrying ritual. The Goddess will not come to me midday and in a downpour, and I spit the earth to see grey clouds rolling in from above the waves.

“You have found more rocks on this forsaken land?” I ask. The contempt drips from me, knowing we will all be soon soaked and cold.

“There,” Kerg points to the smeared paper.

“No. There,” corrects Gregor. They shake their heads. They turn the map sideways, then back again.

“If this is that...” Gregor references a grey spike upon a bleak cliff, then back to a smeared symbol, “we know where we are.”

He smiles at me. I may have to slay him for the distraction of his good looks alone. Kerg, my erstwhile rover, is uglier than an old boot. He can live.

“Yes. We know where we are,” Gregor concludes. He is only half confident. Then he says it again smoother, trying to convince himself. Then he looks at me for affirmation, wearing a constructed smile.

“What does the big man think?” I ask,

just as sly.

Kerg grunts.

“Your big man had to piss,” Gregor tells me, with a shrewd look.

They know I will realize what this means.

“I will speak to him,” I say.

Discipline often feels a pleasure to mete, but Ramos has been a hard man to teach. I find him drinking more of our water and he hasn't even braced his britches. He looks at me, his face a mix of guilt and stupidity.

“Don't,” he says.

“Must I accord you a curse for bad behaviour?” I ask, casting down another glob of spit.

“I should tear off your tits and throw them in the sea,” he says, “for your poor act as mother. I need not your milk of concern.”

I see all seven feet of him, a giant, a child.

“If you drink all our water and we remain lost, we shall die of thirst.”

“Bah!” He ripples with strength of body, but his mind is absent of vigor.

“I will not allow you to dismantle us through your idiocy,” I say.

“We only have to find the temple,” he says. He is right on that count. There will be water there, remembering the map as whole.

“We do not know if that water be fit,” I remind.

“Bah!”

“The penalty for defying me is well known to you,” I say.

He hesitates. His face changes. He finally does up his lacing. Then he looks up to see I am quite serious, holding one of the nightgems in my palm. His face goes sad, then full of anxiety to endure his punishment. He will suffer. But he kneels nonetheless, as the will of the Goddess courses through me.

“Receive my darkness,” I say, the first words of the incantation.

It is a strange effect of rune channeling that it excites my body despite my will.

I walk over water, as is my gift. Born of earth and water is mud, which cakes just underneath my steps in convalescence of my will. The child of fire and stone is lava, which here is close to the surface. I smell its lovely stink on every surface. The remains of the temple sit on a coarse island within a caldera lake, a volcano from another epoch. Such ruins make my home. I do not always rest here, because the air over water sometimes blows quick past the buckled columns. The air is my weakness and I dread it.

On calm days, I relish the warmth radiating from the ancient lines of power that converge here, the heat from the ground, a site upon which a more civilized society dug to a far fathom. Those humans believed power and the divine were the same. But for men, this hope is often false. I know this for two reasons.

The first is that humans possess a latent fear of being eaten by predators. For this, they seek whatever energy and knowledge they can find, as protection. Further,

they will oft carelessly align their loyalties for the same, without thought for consequence. The second is that they are not always safeguarded by their deities. Gods are fickle. Gods are absent. Yet stone is ever present. For such constancy, and to ease my solitude, I came to warden the Igneous Temple, birthplace of mountains. It reminds me, ever so faintly, of home. My vigil is over that which is within, what remains. A repository with scant few treasures, I found, and of course, the splendor of the stones themselves.

“Strata has awakened my master,” Valock tells me. He is breathless for oaring his boat.

“This is good. Yet how does he fair from his torpor?” I ask.

“To be moved, he is angry.”

“This is also good,” I say. I give Valock an earth token, a piece of hardened crystal that small beings of this world value so. Even for the absence of pupils, Valock’s yellow eyes show pleasure. I only recall that shiny things amuse birds as well.

“Do your best, my scout, to lure them to Strata’s new position, and there will be more rewards,” I promise.

“Yes, my Master, oh great Uul.”

He thinks this simple title is my name, which it is not. In exile, I have abandoned my name.

“Go,” I say, “and evoke the destruction that might please you.”

We spot a hobgoblin higher up and at distance, where no arrow might reach. A lone creature as such, out in the wildlands

by itself, is odd. They always travel in numbers.

“A spy?” asks Gregor.

Kerg grunts. Ramos isn’t paying attention. He is in pain for moving. He sulks in his saddle, each step of his huge horse making it worse.

“Should we give chase?” Gregor asks. I shake my head.

“He might mean to lead us on,” I say. The wind is whipping, so I must belt out my words. All around us on the slope are remnants of the fallen mountain, beige stone and black, all of which I dreamt was once part of a towering monument to the sky. Now Gregor has done well, putting us back on the scent. I can almost detect a note of something foul on the air. We are not far, bless Shoon.

“Where then, priestess?” Kerg asks, a mouthful for him.

“There,” points Gregor, to a high ridge of rock that might be the edge of the basin. The trail up to it is only my imagination. In a short while we have secured our mounts and ascended to the edge of a vast bowl of stone filled with water. We achieve the climb not without the assistance of ropes and Gregor’s great skill. But the island is there, just as the map promised, and upon it, the smooth cut of something intelligently made. Nature does not make straight lines.

“What for it?” Gregor asks. Kerg grunts. Ramos looks in awe to see the lake, bluer than all blue under the sky that has mercifully cleared, the earlier rough clouds passing with only a sprinkle. This place

does not belong as it is, here in this ruinous country, yet it casts a bold beauty even the Goddess might not deny.

“Gather back all our ropes,” I order, “for we must descend before nightfall. Kerg will retreat to tend the horses.”

I mean to be at the edge of the water when darkness comes.

We are exhausted for the descent, but we make the strange shore. There, I incant relief for our weary bones, and heat for the men to sleep, for we shall recover no treasure for Shoon without muscle. Ramos simmers with anger for his exhaustion and constant agony.

“Why do I follow your dominion?” he utters from his back, his chin and mouth littered with bits of supper. “You are a wicked slattern of the night. Your stupid black hair.”

He more commonly names me cruel bitch.

“Because I remind you of someone,” I say. “Rest now, fool.”

I then bestow the mark that will allow him ease from the cold, but once he closes his eyes, I reinforce the hex of binding. I anticipate the need for even more control. He sleeps. Then, under an auspicious cloud of pure black, three moons drowned, I beseech an infernal evocation to live upon my skin until the moment of need.

When we awake under clear cool skies, there is a small boat left unattended, well down the pebbled shore. It sits near a stark and immense boulder, twenty feet up from the water’s edge. Strange. No triggered wards gave pause to my reverie in the cold

shadow of eve. We were undisturbed. Then again, we are within the mystical surround of a forgotten god of mountains and stone, so I may not know every rule.

Gregor and Ramos stride the beach. They become smaller to my eye as they reach the craft. I wait within my circle to see if this is a trap. It is. They are only looking in the boat a moment when the gargantuan boulder springs to life with a grinding roar of rock-on-rock.

“Shoon help us,” I utter, to see the boulder transform into the vague shape of a giant man, pure living stone. I run to help them, a scream from my lips. The thing moves, monstrous, arms as cylinders of granite. Gregor is quick to duck, the huge hammer fist missing him by a good margin, but Ramos is slow. It booms him in the chest with force, knocking him three lengths back and flat in a scramble of flying stones. I curse to see the pureness of the blow, a crack to the heart that might have killed him.

Gregor has his sword and I yell for him not to waste it. By some miracle he hears me, holding back the blow that could shatter his weapon. I pull the lesser blessings of the previous night into my palms, crackling with dark energy. I say the words of focus. Black lightning from my core blasts forth from each hand. One pulse strikes the earth-being, cleaving off pieces. The other pulse disappears aimless into sky.

“Distract it!” I yell. Gregor is doing so just by avoiding the death blow. His breast plate is hindering him. Stupid fool is sentimental about it, a gift. I feel no guilt.

“Down!” I yell. Gregor falls flat to avoid two slabs of rubble whiffing just above his gorgeous head. Damn him for living, he’s quick. I trace a sigil in the air that will alter probability, skew things in our favor. The sign glows dusty onyx for the power of Shoon, the shadow of her dreaming will. It is there. The odds are ours.

“Strike now!” I command.

“I can’t yet,” Gregor coughs, rolling around to get missed by the stomp of a giant stone foot. It is uncanny that the massive appendage does not strike true. Shoon, my darling, I adore you.

Then remarkably Ramos appears behind it, if it has a behind, for it has no face. Ramos, yes! The hammer of my colossal servant slams it straight on what we see to be its skull, truthfully just another chunk. But the stone cracks under the blow. The elemental is lessened, but no less incensed. It seems to strike Gregor by accident, just winding up for another swing. The shot shatters Gregor’s shield to splinters, yet the limb beneath unscathed. Gregor only bellows his furor and slices off pebbles and earth from the thing, his sword impeccably finding the spot.

Ramos’ hammer falls again, once more excellent. In exchange, the stone man grabs him, lifts him skyward and slams him down into the gravel of the beach. Ramos makes a terrible sound, crumpled. Vexations. I will have to employ the grand bewitchment of last evening. Gregor cannot last alone, and I am growing weaker to maintain the sigil. With an uttered curse to

the foundations of the world I let loose the skin-rune. A column of roaring shadow stuff is conjured from the pillars of the air. For a moment, the sun is gone and Shoon’s dark dream rules the beach with a deafening blast.

With thunderous power the stone man receives the rage of my soul. It dissolves the beast to smaller inert boulders, all collapsing in a heap. Without pause we choke on dust to find Ramos, extracting him from beneath rubble and scree. He lives, barely, even if he stinks of death already. A sweet pox on him for his strength, I think admirably. Yet Shoon does not grant me restorative powers for wounds. Instead, I extort such from acolytes of Talmas, who are forever feeble to dream in the day. To them I am an affliction.

“Gregor, the salve. Quickly.”

Again, the Talmasians have done well their petty work. The ointment reacts with sunshine and Ramos breathes more normally. Gregor laments the loss of his shield but otherwise we are whole. I pray the earth will lie still until darkness comes again.

“Exhaust all we have remaining,” I bid.

They are on the beach. My earth-sense tells me so. They have viewed my refuge in the ancient caldera, and they have defeated Strata, my guardian. He will rise again but not in time to further interfere. I must prepare. I must go deep.

Just before I descend, I look out at the fallen columns of the Igneous Temple and imagine what glory it must have possessed

in former times. There is magic here of the banal kind. There is plain beauty. There is coloured stone, testament to every age. There is the confluence of aged dynamics, what was wrought by millennia of nature, for the carving of it, and for what remains. The temple should have crumbled to pieces an era ago, but the resonance of ley power preserves it. For the generosity of my people, this exists. Each time the humans come forth I have the same thoughts. This is my place to preserve. They cannot have it. I will not forsake its treasures and I will not serve their odious purpose. This place is the living earth and to the earth it belongs. I will again become the monster, and the monster will preserve it.

After another night we are ready to move. We are not at our prime, but at least not thirsty, because the water is clean and drinkable. I did call on the will of Shoon to alleviate the need to eat, and we were steadied, though too much emptiness will rot bones. We had carefully watched all day and I once more set wards for the night, but there was no sign of our hobgoblin friend. Either he is incredibly careful, or he has gone off far. Either way, he is most certainly in league with the forces of this place, likely a minion of the earth Jinn we mean to find.

Ramos is weak, but for him this means using both hands to work the oars. With all three of us cramming in the boat, the gunwales are uncomfortably close to the surface. I imagine coming all this way just to drown and I think it laughable. Thus, I

forget that thought and focus on the island growing closer, larger. Before long we fully see the ruins, just as the map did promise.

“At last, we find it, and gorgeous it is,” I breathe. The words sound girlish and sentimental leaving my mouth.

Ramos cannot see it for his rowing. Gregor expresses disbelief, not in the glamour of the island but my mawkishness.

“This is why we travel in the light of day,” I say with sarcasm. “For your eyes to catch the last shards of beauty in the world.” He flashes me a particular glance.

“We could travel and see just as well in the night, under the blessings of Shoon,” Gregor says, trying to please me. He postures a certain way, for having my eyes upon him. Ramos scoffs, not so much a twit as usual.

We make the island, an ageless jetty of shale jutting to meet us. As we put our feet down, we smell the new measure of earth here, hear the faint hiss of steam. We almost *feel* the reek of dirt, like we’d bathed in loam. The rocks beneath us are striated with layers of colour, every hue, a rainbow under our boots.

“Don’t be fooled,” I caution. “For us, this is no safe place.”

“Always you lead us to rare fucking danger,” Ramos says, released today from binding for the sake of his vigor. I need him strong, but his attitude is back.

“And we survive it by the designs of Shoon,” I retort. “Now be sharp.”

We make for the centre of the ruins, past cracked columns and fallen blocks. I become conscious of how calm it is for a

spring day. Eerily still, not a ripple on the lake, and this with the sun high.

Unnatural.

I embed myself within stone. I am a wisp, a whisper between the spaces of nothing. To hide in a solid place is luxury. The humans approach, descending far into the belly of the temple. There are only three, a female who commands two males, one very large for his species. Such ones are often stupid. She follows them down the steps, staying close. It appears they can see in the very low light by some strange means, something faintly radiant in her hand, and they are trying to be silent, perhaps to ambush me. It is plain she commands a certain power, of a godling I do not recognize from her symbols. They gaze about, as humans do, skittish.

Within the Igneous are statues, carvings, and a flawless mosaic on the floor. These ancient ones were exquisite builders. I see the trio awed by the space. Unlike the wreck of the surface, the lower sanctum is unspoiled by time, a grand hollow to honour the very heart of the earth. At the centre is a giant well, a massive hole unto magma far below. Latent magics temper torridity and flow, but to look in is to stare into an abyss of liquid rock, a living thing. Even after so many years, the oozing colours still amaze, the rumble mesmerizing, the taste of ash in the mouth a pleasurable grit. They observe all this, detect the heat, smell the smoldering fury and they are wary. My voice calls to them so low my position is not revealed. I have played this

game before, but I must be cautious of the unknown.

“Tell me of that which you pursue,” my voice reverberates.

They gawk about, unable to discern my hiding place.

“Tell me,” I repeat.

The woman speaks for them, now for certain their leader.

“We have come far, oh mighty Uul.”

Somehow, she knows my title. But I have chased off many, destroyed others. My reputation must be known to some.

“Advise me what you are desiring, for this long journey,” I ask.

“We have defeated your guardian of the lake, we must confess to you,” she offers.

“That is no concern,” I offer back.

There is the amplification of whatever force she is using to see, to seek. She is trying to keep me talking as to ascertain my location.

“We desire your wisdom, your seeing of the future, a portent. An omen concerning that which touches the ground,” she says. I observe the biggest of the three, growing impatient. A dullard as I suspected. He might avail me.

“And what do you offer in exchange for my vision?”

She thinks. A pause long enough to reveal she likely possesses no plan to trade with me.

“A pact,” she spits out quick. “An alliance with Shoon, goddess of the dreaming darkness.”

“I know not this goddess,” I say.

“Moreover, I trust not that you are her envoy.”

She flinches. Yet another amplification of her spell courses forth, a secret power. Now I have a true measure of concern. The darkness from her is uncanny, like it lives, like it breathes the cursed air.

“Oh, mighty Uul, show yourself, that we might speak further. Let us bask in your grand power, the glory of your form. The earth knows and has always known.”

I have not heard scripture of the Temple spoken aloud by another for a protracted span. I am dumbfounded. Further, this woman seems inscrutable, unusual for a human. Yet I will not be moved by approbation. I make them wait. Much can be learned in a pause, time of no consequence. In the gap, her spell presses upon my mind as an itch. As I shield myself, I can see them squirm, their expectations amiss.

“What is happening?” the big one says.

“What now?” the other demands. The men are losing focus, starting to doubt. She chastises them with sharp words. If I can resist her will, they may defy her.

“Glorious Uul, you must show yourself,” she says with fierce teeth. I feel the vibration, profane energy pitted against me. She commands much power to abjure my hiding. It is shredding my thoughts. I try once again to withstand but my position is untenable. I emerge from the stone into the low light. Their eyes show their apprehension to see my size, my appearance mystifying to them. My skin is stone but refined, my jewel-heart living. I am huge

with rocky muscle, my face so sharp, handsome.

“You seek no pact with me,” I say, shaking my thoughts clear. I await an attack, they on one side of the lava well, myself on the other. Violence does not come, even as the biggest human grips and regrips his hammer.

“Uul,” she says. “We wish only the boon of your foresight.”

She has forced me forth against my will, but that is forgotten. I will confound them.

“For my boon, you must retrieve for me a bauble. For I am a collector.”

She is aggravated. I see upon her skin sigils of archaic enchantment. Runes or tattoo magic of the primeval way. Stored power easily unleashed. This woman is dangerous.

“Kind earth lord, we have come so very far. Surely you cannot ask us to quest out and return, for the toil and ardour of our task is fulfilled here, finding you.”

I consider booming out a rebuke to effuse them with fear, just as a monster would, but this could prompt an impasse, then a clash.

“I must think,” I say.

I pause deeply. I mean to discomfit, and deduce their capabilities.

“Speak the hideous words!” the big one yells to his mistress, unable to endure the slightest silence. His temper is unnerving him, but I do not budge.

“Silence and be still!” she orders. With a forced smile she says, “Apologies, mighty Uul. Think as you must.”

I am unblinking, motionless. Time will undo them.

The massive earth Jinn sits unmoving, spectral. His eyes remain steadily open, a weirding.

“Calm yourself, Ramos,” I utter, my whisper as loud as a shout in this deep place with not a hint of moving air. Ramos is ready, awaiting the moment to destroy or be destroyed. If we do fight, there is no one I’d rather have, but the primary plan requires restraint. There is a strong chance, even if we vanquish the Jinn, that Shoon’s diadem will be hidden, inaccessible.

“How long do we wait?” Gregor asks.

“Longer,” I say.

Ramos growls. He can only linger on the precipice for so long. I regret releasing the soul-binding, for he may spoil my attempt at compact, or simply lose composure and attack unbidden. Without the threat of perpetual pain, he is uncontrollable. I conclude right then that pain is the only thing he understands. Foil it all. I stew in the silence, trying to reel in the power of three nightgems activated at once. I feel the sweat come upon me.

“Umm, can I sit?” Gregor asks. The tension is broken.

I almost smile, then acquiesce with a gesture. Blast his cleverness.

Some measure of time passes, seeming as forever, perhaps nothing to this monster before us. The earth Jinn is immobile as bedrock. The power of the Goddess did force it out from concealment, but from here we must navigate its desires or recover

the diadem by force. If I command Ramos to strike and unleash our strength, I know only that the Jinn’s weakness is air. For that I hold preparation. Yet things made of stone may outlast flesh. I am torn. I am suffused with swollen heat, lines of perspiration. The longer we wait, the more my men will waiver. The crescendo of my strength will wain.

They forsake concentration. These humans are capricious and impatient. I hum. My ritual has begun. The sound from me is so low as to be inaudible to others. The lava responds, slowly, doubtless. For all these long years, I have not summoned it forth. But this woman wields a dark power unknown. Further, her largest servant seems a savage threat even for his lack of wit. The time has come.

Creep onward. Come. Bring liquid heat and molten rage. This will be their undoing. None and nothing will survive, save me, for I am forged of the tantamount.

Far above us, above the temple in the open sky, the night has come. I know this because Shoon’s dream conquers my mind. It is a moonless night, all light forsaken, and for this the dream is vibrant, rich with fervency. The taste of copper envelopes my tongue. It is time to act.

The Jinn only makes us wait, so I beckon Gregor and Ramos close. They are afeared, witnessing my eyes turn solid

black, the three gems thrumming in my grasp, my hair as sentient vines. I peer to the Jinn, to see if he sees, a reaction. Nothing. Defame the world. This is my moment to seize all. I pray aloud.

“Bring forth my heinous dream, the shadows of the sky. For I am the unseen, the unmaker. In the stirring of the dream, they shall cower to know my name!”

The Jinn is steadfast in his vigil, and in the absence of his response, the word of the night comes dominant. Shoon is abounding in my veins.

“Shudder to see my black eyes awake, my defiance, my mouth the eater of souls!”

With that, the obscene vitality is within me. I am the dark itself, the dream of death, bringer of the void.

“Uul.”

The Jinn stands stagnant, static, nothing.

“Ignore me now at your peril,” I warn.

“Let us destroy this fiend,” urges Ramos.

Gregor says nothing, only staring at me, a mix of emotions to see me transform. Then an arrow imbeds in his leg. The hobgoblin. Gregor gives a sick sound and falls to one knee. I turn. The creature is part hidden by a statue, one flight of stairs above, firing.

“Irradicate him,” I dictate. Ramos is full of lust to kill, so he runs to the steps. The hobgoblin shoots more arrows, but this only serves to have Ramos roar out his anger. I turn to the Jinn. A corona of power surrounds me, smelling of doom and smoke.

“Uul, stir from your catatonia or face my wrath,” I threaten. “Decades ago, a precious diadem was lost here, and I mean to have it back. A silver circlet fixed with seven black opals. It is the crown of the Goddess, and we will have it for ours. Speak now or be destroyed!”

If it values its life it will comply. At last, it blinks.

“I know this trinket,” it says.

“Give it here,” I demand.

Behind me, I can hear Ramos huffing and the hobgoblin scrambling away for its skin.

“Kill not my servant,” the Jinn implores. “For I will be bereft of any companion.”

“What do I care, creature of stone?” I ask, seething. “You are not of this world and not meant for it. The age of stone is over. The age of the waking dream is upon you.” There is jet static tingling over every inch of my skin. I can explode at will.

The Jinn speaks, defiant.

“Your dream seems to me a haunting nightmare. If I give forth the diadem from my cellar, it would be a calamity, for all this foul fantasy seems doing to you.”

I curse, the foul speech. The dream is a torrent within me. My hands twist to claws. My teeth show as fangs. My face feels stretched as cloth on a demon’s loom.

“My ascension is none of your concern, save for your obliteration!” I shout. With a clap of my hands, I conjure a deathly coil of smog and lightning, a cyclone. The Jinn howls to see it before me, the wind answering my beckoning,

turning to my whim.

“The diadem!” I rasp, ferocious. My sorcery will rend this fiend.

Gregor hobbles away. I see him, his face rapt with fear, wanting only escape. No more sound of Ramos. The Jinn does not retreat, even as I push the cyclone forward, a device to sunder stone. I shake my head and screech. We will recover the diadem afterwards, raiding his vault, wherever that be. For now, I must strike. The cyclone enlarges and goes forward, a reflection of my fury. As I push my weapon to tear the Jinn apart, a spray of magma bursts forth from the great hole in the floor. My scream is cut short to eat hot ash.

The woman’s boots burn. Her tornado weapon rips at me, blasting me as wicked sand. It rents a hole in my side, and I believe I am doomed. But the atrocious spell dissipates just as the lava touches her limbs. She is mortal still, thank the earth. Her lungs intake superheated air, the spew of burning earth upon her flesh, steam to melt her black eyes. Even wounded terribly, she runs, chasing her men-servants, one after the other. I see the small one that Valock wounded, limping badly, hobbling upon the stairs. With luck, Valock will get away as well. *Flee, my servant, I wish.*

“Tell the world!” I boom to them as they retreat. “The Igneous Temple is sacred and forbidden. The earth knows and has always known!”

What they make of such words is likely less than the view of molten stone flooding

the chamber, unstoppable red fire, the sad wreck of their witch-priestess. The lava does not touch me, the stuff of my birth.

Instead, my soul is enriched to have it near. First it will heal me, and then in time it will recede, unset, unhardened. The lower sanctum of the Igneous remains uncorrupted on my vigil.

I calm. From much cunning, I survive. My exile will continue, the chance to outlast it renewed. I believe at my foundations I do right by the rock, and the Ascendant Sultan will see. Yet for now, I am sad to see such chaos wrought, melancholic for the monster I am become. ❖



“BLUE PARROT”

by MOHAMMAD SOLTANI

My coffee has gotten cold as always and I am not willing to drink or change it. Just seeing my blue clay cup filled with some coffee the color of the walnut table it is standing on activates my intuition. It feels like a piece of the table has melted into the cup. I can think when I am stirring that dark matter inside the cup while seated myself at my table beside the wooden window of my little room on the second floor of a brick house in Osku. A town in northwest of Iran that is famous for its abundant greasy walnut product. I stare out the window there is only the stillness of the night with an electric light pole that flickers in distance where the walnut gardens begin. Having shut down my laptop I hear my mom behind the door. I hastily snatch my walnut from beside the laptop and throw it into the drawer. The walnut knocks the wooden button of the drawer that I slam it shut. While I click the shutdown bottom of my lap top I hear the walnut rolls inside the drawer. My old laptop is yet in an unsuccessful attempt to shut down. I remind myself that as a future computer engineer I need to substitute it for a MacBook. Some seconds passes in silence and my mom never opens the door I just hear her voice:

You need to get some sleep or you won't be able to focus on your tasks, it will harm your eyes as well.

I am used to staying up late at night.

You treat as owls, you know.

That is not too bad mom, owls are dark mode enabled, me too.

I and my mom are talking behind the door, she is emptying the trash can, a task I forget most of the time. She does not talk loud but in the silence of the night she sounds like as if she is sitting beside me. She says:

You'd better unplug yourself sometimes.

And her voice gets faint in her footstep's sound walking down the thick wooden stairs.

I wish I could unplug myself then I would sit still empty of any thought, memory, curiosity and fear like a robot at my table just staring at that walnut inside the drawer.

I think staying awake until late dramatically stretches the day. You sense every moment of today while the slept one has already slid

into the tomorrow. It is like approaching the edge of today through the night. At midnight 00:00 is today and 00:01 is tomorrow, today is packed and left behind, that simple. It is the power of zero and one that tomorrow becomes today while today is left behind as an aged today named yesterday. Those aged todays left behind get older and older. On an about two-year-old today now my mom got disappointed when I let her know that I had decided to study computer engineering while she had been encouraging me to study medical. This only made her feel like she should as much take care of my health in return.

I was obsessed with digital world based on binary codes where there are only two possible states of off and on symbolized by 0 and 1. This duality is everywhere in real life as yes-no, true-false, night-day... and finally to be-not to be reminding me of my dad. He used to be but he is not to be now, this always makes me feel sad.

This spring the weather got warm sooner than ever so as the trees blossomed in March which used to be pretty cold in Osku. Warm spring followed by an unprecedented hot summer. I mostly stayed home all day busying myself with C++ programming books as an extra task to prepare myself for the university. I was supposed to spend harvesting time in Osku then travel to Tabriz and attend my classes at the University of Tabriz. There are moments in life that stand out like the peak of a wave or when a constructive

interference of several waves makes a higher peak. It can unexpectedly happen at any time in real life. On a two-month-old today now I had sat just here at night looking out of the window wondering if the trees had sensed anything of the year's weather change. I asked myself had the trees panicked of the draught? My answer was yes they had.

Feelings of anger, joy, love, panic... are relentlessly experienced by living beings in varying degrees trough the life. Senses are like pixels in different colors and shades that accumulate together with thoughts to finally take shape. It was my standing out moment when the thought of digitizing the feelings and thoughts of living beings came into my mind. What I mean by digitizing the sensations is converting the feelings of the living things into the digit codes so that they could be processed and conceived through zeros and ones. Backing then the two months seemed infinite until the autumn arrives but now it has shortened to a blink. It is a blink that has embarrassed my strangest experience.

The times my cup is filled with coffee I am thinking and whenever my pot is empty I am out or asleep. This is a way I have expressed my feelings through my geeky binary cup. But I needed a sophisticated experiment to satisfy my curiosity. Apart from the walnut's amazing human-like brain, living and gardening all my life amongst the crowd of walnut trees made me choose the walnuts as a specimen. I

had gotten so obsessed with the notion that most of the time walking in the garden I had a weird feeling that my brain inside the bonny was willing to communicate with the little walnut brains covered by that thick shells hung in clusters from the branches on top of me. The walnut trees had already expressed their smartness through producing a chemical named juglone which is exuded from all parts of the plant, especially in the nut hulls, buds and roots while the stems and leaves contain smaller quantities of juglone but it is leached into the soil after they fall hence the highest amount of juglone concentrate in the soil directly under the tree's cover. Most toxicity symptoms arise when sensitive plants are placed around the tree within the walnut's root area, this prevents many plants from growing under and next to them for its negative and harmful effect so the tree could benefit more share of light, water, nutrition,... that toxic substance can be harmful if human stays beneath the tree for long. It is a hostile behavior developed through the natural selection, I had precisely read about it after my dad had warned me not to sleep under the walnut trees.

To study the walnut tree in the context of the digital codes I needed to find some patterns in the trees life representing the dualities. I came up with the notion of dividing the walnuts into Fallen-Not fallen walnuts over a course of time. In this way the tree would communicate through its dropped walnuts and I could interpret its expression

into digits by creating a binary structure. While the walnuts were young the tree seemed to be proudly laconic but when the walnuts got aged particularly under blowing the wind the ground beneath the tree got filled with the dropped walnuts as if the tree was willing to complain.

I needed to make a structure over the ground to assemble and digitally arrange the fallen walnut's position. I was supposed to find meaning in that arrangement. I chose the largest tree of the garden and similar to the structure of a hard drive disc I divided the area beneath the tree to the eight sectors by cutting eight narrow but deep circles around the tree. Eight diameters to the center of the tree divided these circles equally to the eight parts. That way, I made a sixty-four-bite disc or an eight byte digital memory around the tree. The fallen walnut's position on the sectors was supposed to be processed in order to reveal some information about the tree, I was the processor. No problem how many walnuts fell on one section it was regarded as filled or empty. It seemed like a plan for a game but I felt very excited of putting my idea into effect.

I fenced all around the tree to keep it from disturbance however no one could suggest what I meant by making those circles if she/he had noticed. But fallen walnuts were yet subjected to many incidents as wind or animals which could unwantedly change their position. Those happenings could be considered as blunders once

human do by accident when they are talking. Moreover, incidents have been playing an undeniable role in the process of natural evolution to find a better way for the species to survive and grow.

It took an hour to finish my geeky digital machinery. The dense leaves were keeping me from the sun but I felt thirsty and a little heatstroke. Looking at those sections on the ground I had made under the tree I was strongly feeling a weird temptation inside me to connect to the walnut's world. I gazed up at the mass clusters of walnuts wondering how amazing it was that the nature evolution had made a tree to produce fruits very similar to human's brain. At that moment I was feeling like that all the walnuts on the tree were weighing on my head. I sensed the walnuts like a lecturer stands before the audience for the first time and receives the weight of their sight staring at her/him. My idea had made me feel sort of an intimacy with those little brains. I was lost in my thoughts that all of a sudden a walnut fell down the tree and rolled over the area I had flattened and portioned until stopped on a middle section. I got stunned as if a UFO had landed on the earth before me. It was a close encounter of third kind with a walnut.

I hastily looked up at the entangled branches there was no bird flapping amongst the leaves, just beams of light flashed off the rim of the walnut clusters. The first walnut had landed after I had cleared the ground and drawn my magical

circles beneath the tree. I thought that walnut had separated its companions to commence a connection. The first guest had sited at the roundtable I had already prepared, there was only me and that walnut waiting for others to land in the coming days. I was sure that clusters had something to talk to me. I gave a friendly smile to the walnut and picked it up then shouted a hello to the crowded brains on the tree and marked the fallen walnut's location on my sectioned paper. That mark was indicating the first digital code of my walnut file.

I visited the tree two or three times a day lest a fallen walnut was stolen by a raven or squirrel. Every day appeared new marks on my paper. Looking at that marks I had the feeling when I was talking to my parrot I used to raise in my childhood with the hope that the parrot would talk to me. I would spend much time training my bird. Hearing a word from my parrot would be a world to me. He used to get out of his cage and return whenever he was hungry, I put his food into the cage. Once, my beautiful bird disappeared. I cried and did not go to school for two days looking for my parrot around the garden but it was a futile attempt. Now, after decades the walnuts are supposed to talk to me.

It takes ten minutes from house to our walnut garden uphill an asphalted road. All trees in our garden are walnut. My father planted most of the trees after he got married my mom. She feels great empathy for those walnut trees particularly after my

father passed away. I sensed it once we were watching some photos of the garden when the trees were just little seedlings and young mom and dad were there. A wooden surrounding separates our garden from Mr. Kusha's. A tall man about fifty, his long greased gray hair is always stuck on his intensely sunburnt face. He lives alone or at list I have not seen any family of him around. He bought the garden from its ex owner last year then entrusted all the gardening tasks to a young worker. You see Mr. Kusha walking his dog around his garden most of the time. It is a large fawn Iranian mastiff known as sarabi dog. The less I like Mr. Kusha the more his dog hates me.

After a week of my digital walnut system or as I had named "DWS" I saw Mr. Kusha was digging in his land with naked bust under the hot sun. His hastily answer to my wave and greeting made me curious. I was not satisfy that my experiment was performed beside his land where the largest walnut of our property had grown. Seeing me getting closer he picked his brown T-shirt up from the ground and while he was trying to put it on he stepped over the lines he had made on the ground. They were irregular channels around some of his trees. His sweaty hair was like worn leather over his round eyes. He straightened his back and stared at me as if waiting me to go away. His huge dog was not around. I said:

You work so hard Mr. Kusha.

He almost shouted:

I can't just trust the workers. Then scratched his chin and added:

Good for you, you are on your own. I mean no stranger works on your land.

I can help you.

He nodded beyond the fence of our gardens and said:

You're very well experienced and know how to fertilize your trees.

Then lowered his voice as if the trees could hear him and muttered:

But listen, paying excessive attention to the plants can harm them. Walnuts in particular don't like the intruders at all.

Really? You are frightening me!

He did not care about my response, bent down to take his tools off the ground which made my attention drawn again to the lines he had cut. I felt a sense of laughter inside me at the thought that Mr. Kusha had considered circles I had made around the tree as a method to fertilize the walnuts.

Passing a month means that the moon had completed one course around the Globe. It seems a very enough length of time in human's life for talking. Although I had no idea about the adequacy of a month for conversation in plant's life I had to con-

clude my try before the harvest time in early autumn.

Finally, at sunset in late summer beside the tree I added two last marks on my paper. It was almost filled with scattered dots I had marked over a month. I thought persevering in doing such a futile practice during this time implies how crazy I am about the digital world. I picked the two walnuts off the ground and squeezed them together in my fist. A severe pain loosened my fingers. I opened my fist to see if I could make any crack on the walnut's skin. What astonished me was not their stiffness but it was their color I had not already noticed even when I had picked them up. Their colors had completely changed. The walnuts inside my hand dirty of soil and mud were not green with brown dark stains but their color had weirdly turned to blue. I stared at the walnuts on the tree to see if their color had changed but I could not catch a clear glimpse of the

walnuts from distant in the twilight. However it seemed like the trunk had an appearance of blue on it. Seeing that walnuts had taken on blue color worried me that I was going mad affected by the trees poison. The toxicity of walnut tree could cause choke but I had not read anything about going mad by juglone. I hastily took some steps back from the tree then rubbed the walnuts hard on my trousers and looked then rubbed again and again. Not only the blue walnuts were not smeared with a blue stuff but also the cleared wal-

nuts featured even sharper blue.

I tried cautiously to cut in the walnut's skin using my point finger's nail which caused a lot of pain. Then I put one of the blue walnuts on the rock and crushed it by knocking the hand of my knife. Not only the skin of the walnut was blue but its brain had turned blue as if the blue had been the inherent color of the walnuts from the first growth of them on the Globe, I think it dates back to thousands years ago. I did not dare to taste it least to be poisoning however its shape was intact just like a normal one. On my way home I observed some of the trees worriedly. Red sunset had spread all over the garden and made the walnuts take on a mysterious appearance or at least at that moment I thought so, I had the feeling when somebody steps in a unfamiliar place for the first time. If there were other blue walnuts on the trees they would not reflect the red light from the sunset thus they would appear grey. I thought to myself if it was for a vision error in my eyes sort of night blindness that I had got all of a sudden which had disabled me to distinguish the natural color of the walnuts but what was the natural color itself? I took some deep breath of fresh air hoping that it would reduce my stress. The air felt cold smelling like mud and burnt wood. I stretch out my arms and took some another breathes then walked towards the home.

My coffee has subsided and it's not the same color as the table anymore. I get the

walnut out of the drawer.

For the very old history of walnuts besides their growth in large amount in Osku some folk tales swirl around the walnuts in this town like blossoming a walnut tree in winter that followed by the most prolific year of all the time or branching a tree after years that it had died. There are several trees which are claimed to be that walnut. They are just tales and I never believe that they had happened the way they are narrated now. I have not heard anything about a blue walnut even in tales. Of course it is not a tale, at this moment I am staring at a real natural blue walnut in my hand. It is dark blue, that blue of the sky before it gets black. A beautiful shade of blue has showed up somewhere in the nature it should not be. I think how rare the blue color is found in the nature. I don't know how but some qualities of this blue walnut must have changed so intense that it is now reflecting the blue wave of light, in other words it has captured the quality blue things own.

It is almost dawn, I can examine the walnut tree attentively in daylight. Before that I need to get some sleep. I collapse on my bed exhausted and worried of encountering a probable disaster waiting our walnuts. Lying on my side I can get sight of the blue walnut on the table beside my cup. I wonder if I have drunk the coffee. My mind is weighing over my eyes to fall asleep. The blue walnut turns to a dream, I know that for I am not curious about its color any-

more. There are lots of blue walnuts piled here and there in our garden but it does not feel strange. The blue color evokes a memory of my parrot inside his cage. My eyes abruptly open to the intense light shining through the window, it's almost noon. I role my eyes and stare at the blue walnut beside my blue cup of coffee, the feelings of dizziness and numb turn into distress. I get up the bed to reach my bookcase. I remember the dried walnut tree my father cut to make a bookcase for me. The thought of our walnuts getting withered panics me. Even the amazing bright surface of the bookcase seems to have hid a secret now. I take my diary book out of the top row. It easily opens where I keep a blue parrot feather. It is blue and under the sun light beside the window the feather shines the same blue as the weird blue walnut. The smell of Fesenjan that my mom is cooking for lunch has filled the room. It is my favorite food made of walnut, meat, vegetables... I imagine a piece of blue walnut is unintentionally boiling inside our cupric pot now, my mom has got age-related eyes problems. I leave the walnut inside the drawer and lock then put on my clothes and walk down the stairs. Outside the kitchen I stop for a moment wondering if I enquire my mom about the blue walnut. I just say hello and rush to the outdoor. Despite the sunny sky the weather does not feel warm, the cold autumn is coming. I think 00:00 tonight is summer and 00:01 is autumn but that does not seem interesting anymore. I glimpse the road thinking everybody is willing to ask

me about the blue walnuts then stride towards the garden.

From distant what draws my attention is the dense weeds covered around the walnut tree. I get closer and see my carvings are buried under the newly grown various plants. This is not a good sign at all and makes me distressed. The leaves of walnut tree are mostly withered so as a bunch of yellowish leaves have piled under the tree. The blue stains on the trunk have terribly increased on the skin, it is not that beautiful dark blue but a dirty blue. I spot numerous blue walnuts amongst the branches, more than half of the clusters are blue. I worriedly walked around to see if other trees are infected. I startle at the very loud bark of Mr. Kusha's dog. He pulls the dog's strap and tries to calm it. I wish I had not chosen a tree beside his land to perform my experience. Mr. Kusha swiftly waves at me then clutches the strap of the dog by two hands again. After

struggling for a while he can silence the dog then kneels beside it and strokes the dog's back. I go away from the blue tree and stand beside the fence leaning my arm over it. Mr. Kusha as if just notices my presence says in a loud voice:

It is harvest time, wish you have a prolific product.

I just say thanks then repeat it a little louder wondering if he has noticed the blue walnuts. I spot a walnut nearby on the ground which looks an unaffected ordinary

one, it is promising. I turn to walk towards where the safe walnut has fallen that I hear Mr. Kusha almost shouts:

What are those carvings around your tree?

Then points towards the blue walnut tree where my carved circles were once visible. He stands up and the dog growls, he seems to be hardly getting control of the dog. Mr. Kusha raises his hand to forehead to protect his eyes from the sunlight. He is still staring at where the blue tree is, his sticky hair shines of sweat and grease.

I take a look around pretending to be confused then faking a surprise I say:

Carvings?! Maybe rabbits or some blind mice they are everywhere.

I think to myself if the rabbits or other animals could be the reason and cause the walnuts to turn blue.

Remove all the weeds off your garden they seem dense, walnuts hate intruders.

The dog sniffs the ground and looks nervous, has it smelled the trouble? Mr. Kusha does not resist the dog and runs following it while utters something for farewell.

After he gets away I peer at the walnuts beyond the fence, as much as I can see the trees of Mr. Kusha's property are unaffected. I walk back to the withering blue walnut, there is only another walnut close to the circles that looks to have gotten some

pale patches of blue on its truck.

Fortunately it seems like other walnuts around are safe.

Standing near the withering walnut I have the feeling of loss. It reminds me of the time when my father died of heart attack. There was a moment he was alive then the next moment he was not. A black hole was opening in my mind through which everything was altering its meaning. Above all, to be had changed into not to be. From that day on any photo, appliance, clothes ... of my father has been bearing a memory of a loss and not just a memory of my father himself. I am going to go through another loss.

To my regret my walnut tree is going to change from to be into not to be and all that marks on my sectioned paper will be reminding me of a sad and mysterious memory of tree. How could I have not noticed that the tree was withering over this month? Has it been possible the tree has been withering so severely from one or two days ago? Walnut harvesting time is approaching and everybody would know about the blue walnut sooner or later. I wonder if I should let my mom know in advance. I bend down and cut some of the weeds off the ground. It does not seem my being in the garden to have any result. I am starving which makes me think of fesenjan my mam is cooking for dinner and the boiled grinded walnuts in it. What if at least we had another recipe for today's lunch food.

Returning home I see stacked canvases outside our storage. Tomorrow, they will be spread under the walnut trees. I run the shaker machine and fallen walnuts will pile in green and blue colors over the canvases. At home my mom is sleeping on the sofa before the turned off TV. I wonder if she has noticed the blue walnuts. There is no blue walnut around, if she had noticed them in the garden she would have brought some. I sneak in my room and close the door behind me trying not to make sound.

The wooden window of the room is left open, the cold wind blows in through the window and my sectioned paper is laid on the ground. Before I close the window I take a look outside making an attempt to see if an overall change in trees color is distinguishable from distant. Nothing looks unnatural. The ground is mostly covered with dried herbage, autumn has arrived early. This year the blue color worryingly stands out the natural yellow and red colors of the season.

I get the blue walnut out of the drawer Now I know there are more than two blue walnuts outside in the garden. After a frustrating attempt to persuade myself that I am making a mistake and the walnut is mostly green than being blue I place it over my paper on the table.

Maybe this is a sort of genetic mutation then If this change of color turns out to be convenient for walnut's growth and reproduction they will alter to blue color on the

ground of natural selection otherwise it will quit. Obviously this change has not been a success for the nature as I observed withering signs on the branches of the tree and so many dried leaves. Could I be hopeful this misery will end naturally by itself?

Staring at my marked paper on the table I feel a strong desire for making an attempt to decipher the digitized walnut codes. I can't do much at least until tomorrow before consulting my mom and neighbors.

Tomorrow during the harvesting the blue walnuts will be revealed. May be then an explanation to this incident will be given by someone. My mom has raised the walnut trees for over 60 years. It is many years before I was born, I am sure she knows how to treat walnuts.

At this moment taking the time for interpreting those marks on my paper feels like a tribute in respect of my walnut tree, sort of a ritual for a withering walnut I have raised for decades. If I leave my paper aside now I will be too busy in the future to return to my notes later. I take a sip of my bitter coffee, its strong smell refreshes my mind.

A bunch of pencil marks have scattered over my A4 size paper which is now dirty of ash and mud. I have already assumed the sector towards the sunrise as the beginning sector. I have no idea how I came up with this notion but if somebody asks me now I will explain that my arrangement of the sectors is based on this premise that

the life on the Glob comes from the sun. From sunflowers that turns around to always face the sun to the deep ocean plants perform photosynthesis. At least blue and green portions of light get to the depth of the oceans. I swiftly draw a copy of my paper replacing empty and filled sectors with the numbers 0 and 1 respectively. Then I write the eight-character-data of the sectors in a column under each other. The result is sixty four characters arranged as:

```
01100100
01100001
00000000
00011001

01100100
01100001
00000000
00011001
```

I review my notes again to make sure that H have not made mistake. It is interesting that the codes are exactly repeated after the fourth line so as the lower half of the column is a copy of the upper part. In other words the array of the fallen walnuts belonging to the first semicircular has repeated on the other half. I think the nature always has something of the symmetry to offer and surprise.

The repetition creates the rhythm which is supposed to cause sleepy but meanwhile the rhythm is opposite to the chaos. The order of a rhythmic structure like music notes can implies the smartness. However this symmetry of fallen walnuts can easily happen by chance, this is the first time the notion of existing smartness behind the regularity thrills me. I visualize the blue brain of the walnut I smashed yesterday evening on the rock under the tree in the garden, have it been conscious and thinking?

Not a day passed during this month that I did not think about the nature that has been so successful in shaping walnuts very similar to human brains. The kernel has distinct left and right hemispheres covered in wrinkle-like folds as human brain's cerebral cortex. It is discovered now that cerebral cortex of human brain plays an important role in thinking, memory, senses and consciousness. Not only the walnut core is encased in a hard shell much like human skull but it has husk like human skin layer. This seems too developed just to protect the nut from damage when the walnut hit the ground like universe seems too vast to just have human as the only smart creatures. I think the natural selection might have had an intention of producing a kind of smartness within centuries so that finally produced blue walnuts I happened to discover. Then a glorious complementary to this discovery is deciphering the codes. I turn on the lap top. Lots of files are scattered on my desktop about walnut's life I

have recently saved. There was not any mentioning to the blue walnuts on the web, of course. The Unicode system guidance is easily available on the net. After a simple search I find out that In the Unicode system the code 01100100 stands for "D" and 01100001 stands for "A". Assuming 00000000 and 00011001 to be null the resulted codes of the binary structure I created for the fallen walnuts are interpreted as "DA00DA00".

DA...DA...DA...DA... I repeat the phrase for myself over and over again as if making an attempt to extract a meaning out of that sound. I take the blue walnut in my hand and stare at it closely. The voice Da Da resonates in my head. It is wording of a tree that have uttered over a month, an expression of a tree that has weirdly turned to blue and unfortunately is going to wither. The experiment which at first seemed like a fantastic entertainment has now drowning in a weird reality. The fantasy has encountered the reality or in other words the fantasy itself has produced the unexpected reality?

I think the DA DA is one of the early words children express to communicate. I don't know how many times I had uttered that sound before I talked. Da Da is also a term to call an irrational artistic movement of the early 20th Century. I can easily remember from an art history book I had already read about the origin of the movement's name, Da Da, it is commonly said that one of the movement's founders

slid a paper opener at random into a dictionary and it landed on DA DA. They labeled their movement DA DA. The movement valued nonsense as a protestation against the accepted principles of art and society. I think to myself that the word DA DA has showed up again at random in other place under a different circumstance. Apparently DA DA is a term streaming beneath the events, whenever the principles break the word DA DA shows up. Whether in naming a movement that draws a mustache to the Mona Liza painting or when a walnut tree turns to blue color, the term DA DA appears.

I drink my cold coffee to the bottom which makes me feel the cold of the room as much. It is getting dark, the sky appears mysteriously the same color as the blue walnuts. Tomorrow the first shake to the tree will make the canvas filled with the blue walnuts. My paper will be archived somewhere inside a book until once in the future I come across my paper again by chance. That is when a wormhole in space-time opens. My paper marked by points inside the sections will make a bridge at some time in the future through which I will take a look at today. Then I will remember today as an aged today overlaps with that present in the future. I will never humiliate myself for doing this experiment, it has not been a long time since I read a book about an ordinary simple experiment that ended in a genuine thought provoking result. Sophisticated experiments are not always required to get valuable results. In

1801 a beam of light was passed through a barrier with two separate slits. When a monitoring device observed the light detecting the photons' position the light as expected formed two separate lines on a sensitive screen right before the slits. But when the experiment was repeated this time with no monitoring device there appeared more than two lines on the sensitive screen. The result was incredibly unbelievable. The two split experiment led the physicists to discovering the wave-particle duality of the light meaning that light exhibit particle or wave properties according to the experimental circumstances, whether there is an observer or not the behavior of the light differs. When there is no observer the photons never pass through one slit at a time, they behave as a wave. Even an individual photon becomes a wave so as it crosses the two slits simultaneously, interference of these waves make multiple traces on the screen. When there is an observer like monitoring device the wave quality of light disappears. The light behaves like a particle and makes ordinarily two traces before the slits on the screen. The wave behavior of the light breaks the principle of zero or one at a time and not both of them simultaneously. About the blue walnut I think if I am encountering a weird effect of light resulting in color variation.

My sight moves from the book "Quantum Mechanics for the beginners" on the top shelf to the rest of the books arranged on the racks of my bookcase. I pick the book

“The Art of Color” by Johannes Itten. It has been a reference book for the art students for decades. That book acts as another wormhole in my life, seeing it directs me to sometime in the past when I had been attending art classes. Thinking of my art classes evokes a memory of oil smell, colored brushes that students put in the water inside the dirtied plastic container, ... They are now aged today left in the past which are overlapping with present at the moment. The ideas appear once some incongruous matters or memories belonging to the different times come together at a specific time. I ask myself could by any chance my digit walnut codes or as I like to name DWC correspond to some color codes? I waste no time in looking the codes up in a color chart on the web. My memory of the art classes intensifies as if I am doing a class assignment. The code (01100100, 01100001, 00000000, 00011001) or (100, 87, 0, 25) in CMYK system (material colors) indicates a code for a very famous color named the dark blue. I get stunned when I see the thumbnail color sample beside the code features the same blue as the weird blue walnut. For a moment I feel so excited that all my concern about tomorrow disappears and gives its place to the feeling of success. However I feel like I am trapped within a puzzle that the most I get succeeded the vague it gets.

I ask myself as many unanswered questions I have asked these days: Is the color that mysterious language trees communicate? The word DA DA swirls in my head.

I figure the little brains inside the stiff shells on the walnut trees, have I happened to talk to them? That means I have achieved some reasonable data representing something more than just an accidental position of falling of falling walnuts. It feels sad thinking that the walnuts have had to fall and die to talk to me although all that little brains are destined to detach from the tree. During this communication the walnuts have turned to blue which is the color I am mad for. Dark blue has filled my life since my childhood so as most of my stuff from my clothes to my childhood toys in the past to my lap top and cellphone have been dark blue or blue color. The blue color gives me a feeling of satisfaction and calmness. I mostly owe this to my blue parrot and the incredible impact his sad loss made on my life. I have admired the blue color as a tribute in respect of my parrot beside my deep desire to the color. The rush of thoughts is getting heavy on my mind. I lean back on the chair trying to relax. The room has got colder, I close my eyes in the hope of hearing my mom call out my name. I am really in need of hearing her to get me out of my weird thoughts at present. She never calls me at 11:30 pm. I turn the heater on thinking that after I come back home I will enjoy its warmth then walk slowly down the stairs and sneak outside hoping that the silence of the night could calm and ease my mind. The cold breeze hits my face. I regret I am not suitably dressed for being outside at this weather, It feels freezing in my under shirt and short pants. Above me the stars represent a

glorious vivid scene of bright ice particles scattered around from a frozen rock named the moon. The temperature drops to -190 on the moon. I can feel that cold from distance at the moment. After a hot summer this cold heralds a freezing winter. I feel like sensing the silence of the garden for the last time before tomorrow. Walking in silence I just hear the leaves rustle under my feet. I turn around and look back to our house, the light of my room is left on and flickers in distance. I keep walking. Despite I feel cold, I wish my walk lasts for a long time but few minutes later I have receive the entrance of our garden. I have left the gate open and put the key of the lick back into my pocket then walk towards the blue tree. Beside the tree I am standing over the piles of dried leaves and dense weeds. It seems now I had carved my sections under the tree many years ago as if an enjoyable childhood play. In the moonlight the clusters of walnuts on the tree looks gray. There are several walnuts, mostly blue fallen on the ground. Has the tree kept talking to me? Under the tree even the rustling leaves sound weird.

Have I bothered that mass of brains and caused them to dry? What if I had not done that experiment? A cold breeze moves the leaves of the tree, I stare at the ground waiting for a walnut to fall. Nothing happens.

Inside the garden is a lot colder, I rub my hands together and blow them to warm. For a second the garden gets hidden

behind the white steam of my exhale. Then after a moment the trees reappear before my eyes. The slept trees around me seem as much vulnerable as a little flower in a vase. I rest my hand on the blue skin of the tree thinking if I have caused this trouble. I remember the two-split experiment, that how the monitoring device had affected the light's nature. The monitoring device had made the light behave as the observer expected and there had appeared just two trace on the screen before the slits. It feels sad to come to this belief that I have got the tree to wither by imposing my existence upon its defenseless nature during my experiment. I have got too close to the trees entity so that as a disruptive observer I have affected tree's process of growth.

I pick up some walnuts off the ground, they feature their blue color under the moonlight. I cover the blue walnuts within my hands feeling sort of empathy with them. I vaguely feel like that these blue walnuts are I myself.

The light of Mr. Kusha's storage gets turned on. I have to make something up to justify my presence there in the cold of midnight if he notices me unless tomorrow after the blue walnuts unraveled his annoying suspicion of me will be relentless. I step behind the tree. After some minutes passes in silence the light turns off. Fortunately his dog doesn't bark. I fall on the ground from exhaustion and sleeplessness leaning against the blue tree. A feeling of regret overwhelms me, feeling of sadness for con-

sidering me guilty of distracting walnut's natural life through my experiment. While the walnut trees have equipped with toxic through the evolution to severely repel the natural intruders I had aimed to penetrate its private life and had made the tree confuse in its natural reaction. I can hardly keep my eyes open. I long for a cup of coffee at this cold weather, but here is neither a tiny bean of coffee bean nor any container leave alone coffeemaker.

I think none of those abundant walnut trees in the garden would treat me to a cup of coffee. Of course it is not their business. A walnut tree never needs coffee to grow, maybe the walnuts hate coffee. The same is true for the blue color, trees don't need a large amount of blue color in their life. There is no wonder that creatures of blue color are not easily found in the nature. I try to turn my head up to catch a glimpse of the walnuts on the tree but I have no strength to separate myself from the tree. No matter the air under the walnut tree can be poisoning, while sitting I let myself fall down on my side then turn on my back staring at the blue walnuts on top of me. I am sure that I have communicated with those little brains through the color language. Unfortunately, at the same time I have unexpectedly imposed my obsession to the blue color on the walnut tree.

I have connected the walnuts and drowned them in the excessive blue. Like the monitoring device in the two splits experiment which had made the light hides its wave

behavior and multiple lines of light collapsed into two lines on the screen while I have been studying the fallen walnuts position I have caused the walnut tree to lose most of the colors and collapse in only blue color.

I think to myself that I will not eat walnut for the rest of my life, whatever color it is. My eyes get heavy, I can only see a vague view of the leaves trembling on the tree. Before I fall asleep I can see a bird moving amongst the leaves. I make my last effort to stay conscious and distinguish the bird amongst the leaves. Birds are barely flying at this time. All of a sudden I see a dark blue parrot shows up on a branch and stares at me. Then I can spot another blue parrot sitting on an upper branch, this is odd. I make an effort to sit up but I feel like my weak body is stuck to the cold ground. I just run my palm over the plants beside me. The parrots have increased on the tree, they are almost everywhere on the branches in place of the blue walnuts. That is a marvelous scene. Suddenly, I am startled by the voice of Mr. Kusha near me. The parrots fly away which makes me annoyed. He yells again:

Stop DA DA, stop barking good boy.

I remember, DA DA is his dog's name as well. Surely they have named the dog when he was a puppy.

Mr. Kusha shouts again:

-stop, it is ok DA DA.

But I can't hear any dog barking. Thinking of that huge dog being around worries me. I concentrate to hear the bark voice to estimate the dog's place, but there is only Mr. Kusha's sound trying to calm the dog while no dog is barking. I imagine my carvings of circles and diameters beneath me. It feels funny to guess which section I am lying on. Somebody slides his arm beneath my shoulders and pull me up. My arms and

legs are hanging down without feeling. I hear Mr. Kusha shouts:

Not that way DA DA, we need to get this poor boy to his home. Then he mutters:

It is juglone, I said walnuts don't like the intruders at all. ❖

END TRANSMISSION