



Vision

I TURNED MY BACK ON ANNIE AND WALKED AWAY. I wasn't going to have anything more to do with this witch doctor nonsense. Instead, I spent the rest of the day in my shop fiddling around with some little woodworking projects I had intended to complete months ago, before this Lucy fiasco had begun. A couple of our dining room chairs were falling apart and I was gluing them back together, and I had some bird houses to rebuild, too. Although these little projects kept me busy, I thought about the witch doctor issue throughout the day, and it kept me in a bad mood. We didn't discuss the topic that evening over dinner either. Annie could sense that it was potentially an explosive one, and she was hesitant to light my short fuse. We went to bed that night with an uncomfortable feeling between us, and slept with our backs toward each other.

In the middle of the night, I awoke with a strange sensation. The room was peculiarly dark; I could barely see Annie's outline lying next to me. It was almost as if our bed was floating in a black ocean. I lay on the bed with my eyes open looking at what should have been the ceiling above me, but I saw nothing. A strange feeling overtook me, as if my cranium was expanding very slowly, giving me a mild vertigo. The slightest motion, even of my eyelids, sent the bed into a slow spin. I froze, gripping the sheet

underneath me with clenched fists.

Suddenly, the blackness above me appeared slightly cloudy. I thought I could see a tiny light spot in the darkness overhead, but I couldn't focus on it, no matter how hard I tried. It was a wisp of cobwebs floating above me, a fist-sized cloud turning inside-out. I closed my eyes, but could still see it. All the while, a warmth, a comfort, permeated me.

I felt utterly compelled to examine the odd glow above me. I focused and concentrated. Suddenly, I recognized a human form within the fog, appearing very distant. I focused on it with all my attention. The figure appeared to grow larger and came closer, revealing more figures behind the first. As they approached, I counted five ephemeral forms: human shapes with no faces. I concentrated intently. If I looked directly at them, they blurred into unrecognizable apparitions. However, I found that if I looked slightly askance, as if I were looking at a distant star, details began to reveal themselves. The largest form had a human face, a man's face, dark-skinned and bearded. The warm feeling seemed to emanate from him. I looked to his side and was astonished to recognize some of the other four people, all of whom simply appeared to be floating in bliss, angels garbed in white robes.

One of them was Annie. She turned her head to face me and our eyes met. She smiled as soon as I recognized her. I saw my eldest daughter Sarah, then another face, that of a young man whom I didn't recognize. The fourth face was my own, peering back at me through the blackness. When I saw myself, I suddenly jerked bolt upright and found myself sitting on my bed with daylight streaming in through the windows. Annie was not beside me. The warm feeling that had filled me in the black void lingered.

I laid back down and tried to rationalize what I was experiencing, telling myself that it was just a dream. But I couldn't deny the feeling that lingered inside me; I had never felt anything like this before. It was a good feeling, a sense of well being, almost palpable, vibrating within me

and upon me as if I were basking under an invisible heat lamp.

The unusual feeling remained with me even as I made my morning tea. It would not go away; I felt utterly and unexplainably different. I could feel it when I ate breakfast, when I loaded my roofing truck, when I climbed on roofs that day, even when I ate dinner that night. Although I was fully aware that my unusual condition had originated from the encounter in the black void, I could imagine no reason for it that made sense.

Somehow, it occurred to me that the man I had seen in the dream was Eduardo, the witch doctor. I also realized that the other faces I had recognized were of people who would be accompanying me on my journey to see him. And yes, I knew without any shadow of a doubt that not only would I go, but that I *must* go. I couldn't offer any explanation for how I understood these things; I just *knew*.

I didn't mention anything about it to Annie until dinner that night. The experience had been too abnormal for me and I wanted to let it sink in for a while before I talked to anyone. I didn't know what to say anyway. How do you tell someone you saw a vision in your sleep and woke up with an odd feeling inside you that's stayed with you ever since? It's not that simple. It's like telling someone you saw a UFO. People think you're crazy. Yet, by dinner time I was utterly convinced that I had had some sort of paranormal experience that portended a future occurrence, and I needed to talk about it.

"Did you have any unusual dreams last night?" I asked Annie, nonchalantly.

"Nope." She was moodily picking at her broccoli with chopsticks.

"Well, I did."

"Oh really?"

"Yes. Really unusual."

"Like what?" she asked, impatiently.

"Well, I met that Eduardo fellow in a dream last night, believe it or not. I actually *saw* him. I know what he *looks*

like. He has a black beard. You were in the dream too. It was more like a vision, actually. It left me with a certain feeling. I woke up with the feeling, and I haven't been able to shake it all day; in fact, I can still feel it now."

"What do you mean a 'feeling'?" She stopped eating and looked at me out of the corner of her eye.

"I can't describe it. I've never felt anything like it. Imagine tasting a really exotic fruit for the first time, a totally unusual, incredibly delicious fruit, and then having the memory of that taste stay with you all day long. Strongly. As if you're tasting it again and again, even though you aren't."

"Like a mango, you mean?"

"No, actually, fruit's not a very good example. It's hard to explain. It's more like a hangover. You know, you wake up and feel fuzzy all morning after drinking too much the night before. Well, that's how I've felt all day, except it feels good. And it won't go away."

"Maybe it was the pizza you ate. Maybe you just ate too much."

"No, no. I saw this witch doctor guy. I *saw* him in a dream. Last night! I saw Eduardo!"

"What makes you so sure you saw *him*?"

"I don't *think* I saw him. I *know* it. I can't explain that either. And guess what, I know now that we have to go and find him. You, me, and Sarah."

"Sarah?"

"Yes. I saw her in the vision too. And you. And another person who I didn't recognize, a guy. You were all there last night. I know that we'll all be in Peru together, with Eduardo. See, I told you it was weird."

"What makes you think Sarah can even go to Peru? She's up in Chicago, working in that greenhouse for the summer. You haven't seen her in six months, either."

"I don't care. She's going. I just know it."

"And what about Penny? Was she in your dream too?"

"No. She's not going."

"Where's she going to be then, if we go to Peru?"

“She can probably stay with your mother, don’t you think?”

This was the straw that broke the camel’s back. Annie had put up with just about enough from me by this time, and the strain of our bizarre inheritance coupled with the stress of our travels and now the possibility of a trip to Peru pushed Annie over the edge.

“*My mother?* Wait a second. What kind of hare-brained idea is this, to use one of your *own* expressions? You jump all over *me* because I make *one* phone call to a lady in Montana, one *reasonable* phone call, I thought, and now you have a crazy dream and you want us to rush off to *Peru*? I can talk to a living person in the real world and get concrete information about your aunt and you make me feel like a *fool*. But *you* have what was probably a pepperoni induced nightmare, and you expect me to go along with it like it’s the gospel itself?”

“I know it sounds crazy.”

“Crazy?! It’s more than crazy...” Annie proceeded to give me an earful, ranting and venting built-up frustrations that had accumulated inside her since the beginning of this Lucy affair. I had not been very diplomatic with her a lot of the time and now she was giving me a big dose of what was coming to me — my own medicine. I guess I deserved it. Nevertheless, her withering diatribe went in one of my ears and out the other. I was absolutely convinced that I would be going to Peru and that I would have three companions, so I patiently let her get it all out. Eventually, she calmed down and I picked up the conversation where I left off, trying very hard to be patient and understanding with her. By the time we went to bed that night, Annie realized that my resolve was unshakable, and, by the next day, she became resigned to my premonition — we would go to Peru.

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