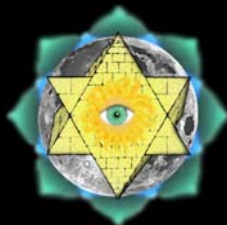


The Drifter

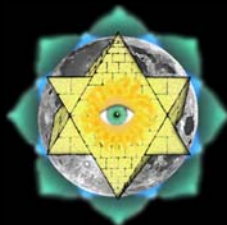
Part 3

Written by Zach Chisholm

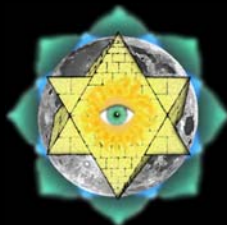
<http://artifishalldesign.com>



Still nothing, I rummaged through the house looking for something to eat, nothing there except an empty kitchen. My stomach was growling loud enough to scare off any predator. While digging through my pack I found the reminisce of a granola bar, torn from its packaging and smashed to bits from the incessant digging my hand had been guilty of during fits caused by bad packing. I picked up the bits of granola piece by piece as if I had turned into a ape cleaning the parasites from the cloak of a fellow ape.



Even after every crumb was recovered from the inner lining of the backpack and shaken from every article of clothing I had - the state of contentment had not been reached. My stomach had now gone on the attack, as if it were going to scare its prey to death, but I was the only prey it could devour and If I didn't find food soon I would be eaten from the inside out.



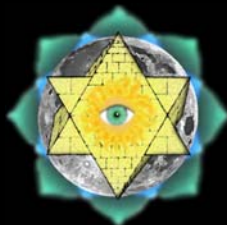
So I started my quest, looking for a bug, a leaf, a blade of grass, sap dripping from a tree, anything that remotely resembled food - anything that could supply sustenance. With the dense fog over head I tried to suck in as much moister as I could, to at least supply me with the essential hydration.

Wait

what is that?

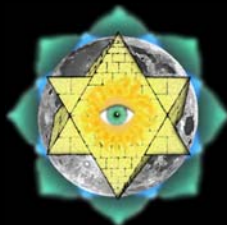
is that a birdsong?

or just the wind whistling?

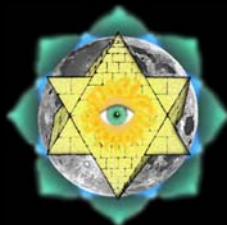


looking all around I searched out the bird running this way and that. I heard it over here no it was over here. I picked up rocks and thrust them in to the air hoping that they would magically hit something and a meal would land at my feet.

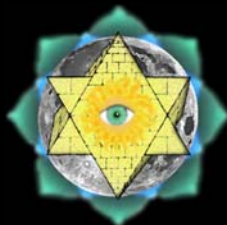
Nothing



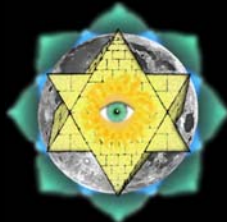
Trudging on I found my self in the shoes of the Theater Arts Student. There was the ray of light blinding my dilated pupils. I looked up to see a massive building, one unlike any I had ever seen. The darkness seemed to stem from this building, as if it was inverting the very light illuminating it. There was no resemblance to any architecture I had seen, no hint of Frank Lloyd or I. M. Pei, just a solid formation jetting out of the ground with an odd entrance. Two black columns zig zag their way up to a mutual point, over head a doorway at least thirty feet high.



The doorway was empty with nothing physical to open, just an encompassing dark mass to let you know you had passed into the building. I reached for my flashlight yet again but to no avail, the darkness just grabbed the light right out of it and suck it into whatever void it created. As I walked forward I became blind to my surroundings. With my arms extended to their full reach I proceeded with a caution and slowly rotating from side to side so I wouldn't hit anything. After a few minutes of careful exploration I found a staircase and found myself climbing up the spiral to find whatever lay at the other end.



Hours went by and still no end to this staircase, not even a level to stop at. In the back of my mind was the intention of turning around and going back to the desolate world below, but at least I felt I was going somewhere, if not in reality, in my imagination - which complete darkness lends itself to fairly well. Again the mountains came to mind, the fictional wife and job, life on the road, and the bird of prey resting in the pit of my stomach creating the overwhelming hunger. Visions of Gandhi took over, and the a peaceful feeling came over me. I was fasting, forced yes but I was fasting, and not just food but



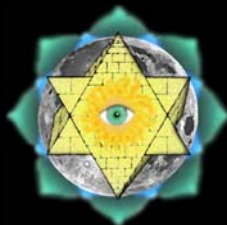
companionship

beauty

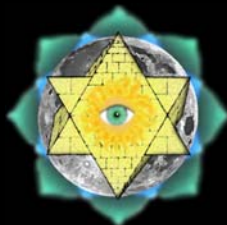
travel

communication

entertainment



everything I had known throughout my life was gone and every thought was geared on how to get it back - but that is not what I'm supposed to be doing now is it. Whatever, whoever sent me to this place is not trying to convince me of this. When I'm on the verge of gaining something more is taken away, delusions of the perfect life come to mind only to be stripped away in this harsh reality to the point where there is nothing left to entertain me but thy own mind.



So I keep climbing
 hoping to attain something
resting at the top of these stairs
 my hand drapes over the banister
 holding me up
The hours seem to drip into days
 the days into weeks
 and I still climb
 taking breaks
every once in a while to sleep
 - very uncomfortably I might add.



Up

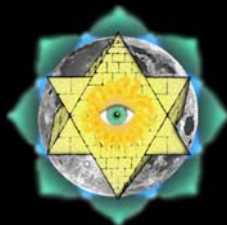
and Up

and up

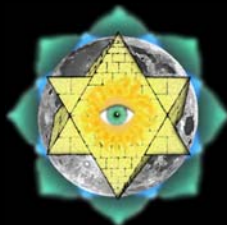
and horizontally

wait

horizontal



the staircase started to flatten out and go in a different direction and I found my self walking on level ground again. Was I imagining things or was it getting lighter? In front of me was a opening similar to the zig zap columns of before but white. As I got closer I expected the sky to dreary and full of fog but it was brilliant. I found my self standing on a marble bridge above the clouds with the sun shining down. It looked to go on forever, at least past the horizon so I hiked on.



Is that a mirage that lay before me? As I got closer, a pedestal lay before me garnished with fresh fruit. I grabbed an apple and inspected it. Got out my buck knife and cut it into pieces. It appeared to be fine so I took a gamble and took a bite. I ate for hours on apples, bananas, mangos even a few I didn't even recognize. By the time I filled up sleep came over me and for the first time in who knows how long I laid on level ground with my mat and sleeping bag and fell asleep.

