

## If At The End Of All This

If at the end of all this, if there is anything left that could be called "you" to remember this, if at the end of all of this, when the lens in your eyes have thickened and expanded like the belt around your waist along with the rest of the universe, or shrunk like the purple gums which held your teeth, contracted like the salt crusted aorta of your heart, objects which once appeared in sharp detail, minute nuance, could now be either raisins or insects. The texture of a brushstroke, the vintage on a bottle of wine are now hazy. We respond to the memory of the thing that we are peering at rather than at the thing itself, because we can no longer see the object clearly. Impressionism, where the memory fills in the holes from what is lost in direct observation. Did you hear that? If at the end of all of this, there is anything left that could be called "you" to remember this, you will know that this is all there is or ever will be. If at the end of this, there is anything left that could be called "you" to remember this, to believe that whatever it is that you are could ever be repeated, as a cockroach, a dragonfly, a hippopotamus or a man, is an arrogant failure to understand that you will never be born again. Reincarnation means nothing without the memory of what we previously were. If at the end of all of this, there is anything left that could be called "you" to remember this, if at the end of all this, standing alone in the setting sun, naked with uplifted palms, gazing skyward at the migrating flocks overhead, if at the end of all this, we are left with the dignity to possess any semblance of cognizance, if the brain functions at all and is not reduced to a feeble vegetable, clotted with sluggish blood and black nerve-choked ganglions, scorched pathways of the back-firing medulla oblongata, the shriveled cerebellum of an ancient petrified wizened geezer, drooling down his stubble-covered chin, strapped like a cabbage to a wheelchair, being spoon-fed oatmeal and pureed bananas through a funnel by a malevolent nurse who when not neglecting you finds you absolutely disgusting. If at the end of all of this, when our ears sag to our stooped shoulders, and only the cartilage in our noses continues to grow gristle, with pores so large they contain bacterial cultures and small philodendrons, if at the end of all of this when our sunken cheeks are hung with colonies of sleeping bats, our teeth are missing, and that golden visage which was once our face has been folded over like a tattered blanket, whatever fine hair that still languishes is in liver spots white as silk, or will only grow from moles. Our neck creased like Egyptian parchment covered with spider webs, a deflated bag hanging like a rag on a knobby stick. If at the end of all of this, we are still young enough to have felt cheated in life by not having lived enough, to feel that we will have died prematurely without having fulfilled our dreams and our passions, we will know that even now we are too old to have died young. If at the end of all of this, there is anything left that could be called "you" to remember who we were, who we are, what we did in this world, what mercy we extended, what evil we perpetrated, what joy we shared, what pain we inflicted, our heroism, our cowardliness, those we seduced, manipulated, destroyed, murdered, edeemed, assisted, assassinated, betrayed or died for, we will have lived. If at the end of all of this, when there is nobody else left in this world to remember this, I will still be there at the end of all of this, to remind you.

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