

A

HOME FOR ALL SEASONS

By

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"And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do,
that the Father may be glorified in the Son."

The Gospel According to St. John, 14:13.
The Holy Bible: King James Version, 2000.

Chapter One

For Tyler, it was the perfect dwelling. A place of few inhabitants situated neatly in the great woodlands. Although referred to as 'Heaven On Earth' by some and ordinary geographical references by others, he simply called it home. It was a vast hiding place before a company by the name of Timberbrooke mistook its beauty for profit, but that had come much later. It was a land, rising and falling, with lakes and oak groves, which had produced a needed refuge for my friend and there was no place like it in the entire world.

I once inquired of my friend as to why he chose such a remote location to live out his days. He only

smiled and stared quietly into the dense green forest that engulfed his abode. I watched as his head then slowly turned and seemed to follow the line of trees that grew steadily smaller in appearance as they disappeared below a sloping crest. At the base of the very hill my friend fixated on, the forest gave birth to a wide and abundant stream. The smile never left his face as if to reply, "Do you see what I see?" Several minutes had passed since asking my question when Tyler finally spoke. His voice was barely audible above the whistling wind blowing in from the North and the multitude of songs made by the many fowl that took to the air in harmonious cooperation. "My dear friend," he said. "It chose me."

I recall how Tyler continued and his words were as melodious as the nature we were then so comfortably a part.

"A man has need of a place to tell his secrets, calm in which to meditate, and time to buy back his soul. He requires an

absence of banks, doctors, and clergymen. It is with these types and many others there can only be dissention and conflict. Only when I am alone do I discover another meaning to life and that is the peace of death. Only then can I ponder the long awaited question: does a man exist for the sake of his God, or his God for him? My friend, the solitude of my home makes its power felt. During the winters, I venture no further than the fireplace, its hanging cauldron, the small table, and the comfort of my bed (which beckons me more often as I grow long in the tooth). These are long hours in complete silence while the terrific storms blast the snow against my shudders and blanket the forest floor. When the Spring melts the frost and the Summer scorches with an intense heat, I long again for the cool of Fall and the onset of yet another quiet Winter. Oh, dear friend, this is truly a home for all seasons.”

I noticed that while Tyler spoke, the same smile danced across his face and although he stole glances at the earth and sky, it was as if his eyes never left mine. This is how a man can look at all things simultaneously, I thought. I also believed in my heart that my friend did not

speak of the seasons in the form of an almanac, but more in tune with a cycle. I recall how Tyler had been before coming to this resting place. His life had been hard and full of disappointment. He had graduated from university and achieved a few degrees, including a masters, along the way. He had served his country in war. I had once heard him say that better men than he fell in that war and nothing reminded a man more of peace than combat. Indeed, my aging friend Tyler had been accustomed to noble pursuits, but discontent had tainted all of them and even still, a dull rage lay in the pit of his belly like mud.

As we sat watching the day's last attempt to overcome the impending darkness I remember thinking that day and night working together to form dusk was always more beautiful than one without the other. This thought reminded me of how I would have to leave soon and return to my world. I live in the city and like most cities and towns these days the conditions were below average and down right depressing. The town where I

lived smelled, because it lacked proper sewage and they never cleaned the streets. Making matters worse, its people naturally felt superior to their fellow man; some of them actually saw themselves as the flowers of civilization. On a good day, Tyler referred to them as lost souls without hands in which to find their own behinds.

Mine own feelings toward humanity began to dwindle many years before. I too saw the decline of hope in all the faces busily hurrying past, trying to make the first of many bells during the business day. It was becoming difficult to witness how people forgot we are all sewn together with a divine thread of salvation. All too evident was the collective focus on material wealth and power. Greed had won over civilization and now a concentrated, proud people worshiped himself or herself amidst an earth-bound thrall of consumptive origin. All people of all nations bathed in this pursuit of self-proclaimed sovereignty and no hands were unsoiled. Thus, the town in which I live and many like it lives happily in its self-

confidence and its belief that this is the true doctrine of faith and democracy. Of course, this does not seem to bother Tyler any longer. He seems content to exclude himself from people, their lost causes, lack of understanding, and above all their sound belief in the fact no one need accept responsibility for their actions. Like him, I believe in the blessings of being mortal and that within the confines of life, this too shall pass.

As the natural light began to fade, I asked if we could go inside the house and speak just awhile longer. Tyler gladly obliged and as he rose up from where he sat, we heard an owl's screech off into the distance. He looked in the direction in which the sound came and nodded his head as if to offer his own reply. He then said, "There are many sounds that drift from these woods, but none as wondrous as the salutation of the owl. He's been watching us you know?" Tyler then walked into the house and I followed suit.

Once inside, Tyler offered me a chair near the hearth where a warm fire was already burning. After handing me a cup of apple beer and cider, Tyler sat down directly across from me. For a few moments, we sat straddling the fire without speaking. I watched Tyler reach for his pipe and cradle it gently in the palm of his hand, which rested neatly upon his lap. His eyes reflected the flames and I thought they looked both tired and lonely. I knew of those who had mistaken those same eyes as brazen and without mercy. It was understandable. They shown a bright green in the daylight with pupils wrapped in soft bands of gold. However, they hid rather poorly the mourning of days past. I knew in my heart that if it weren't for the surfeit of shame, he would have laid his head against my chest and wept until exhaustion had taken the last of his strength.

“Tell me a story,” I asked. “You have always told the best tales.”

Tyler did not respond nor did he stir at all. It was as if he had stared into the face of Medusa and she had turned him to stone. Several minutes had passed and I jumped a bit when he finally said, in a soft, caressing voice, "Why not."

"Into this world comes a boy and in time he is filled with rebellious emotions. He wants to reform the world beginning with his desolate surroundings, inside and out, but he fails completely, almost going under in the attempt. The description of his life is bleak for sure, but there is no time for contemplation. First and foremost is survival and even as the boy grew to be an adult, he did not know why. Though he pressed onward without any real sense of himself or anything spiritual, he knew quitting was not an option. Without a doubt, his decision to endure became a suffering of human ugliness and bigotry. A strong belief in God had aroused his tenacity from time to time, but soon he would find himself protesting even the very existence of a divine father. One does not have to be keen sighted to see the tolerant strain in this man's quest for

understanding. His actions alone have sketched a clear and unmistakable portrait of a pursuit for peace. Finding that he cannot obtain peace outside the limitless possibilities of strife, he instead drew within himself. To his amazement, he found the antithesis of serenity. It was from inside his very being, he found only chaos.”

As Tyler finished this last sentence, I watched his chest rise as he filled his lungs with air and then slowly exhale ending in a quiet sigh. I took this opportunity to pick over the words he just spoke. I assumed Tyler had been telling me about himself, but then I remembered what he once said about making assumptions. “To assume is to take for granted and nothing is ever what it seems.” Simple enough to remember, I thought, but not easy to follow. I did know for sure that behind Tyler’s words were another meaning altogether, however, what lurked deep within his soul I dare not want to see. I knew damn good and well it would be like standing at the edge of a steep cliff, waiting for someone to push me and too

afraid to jump, but realizing either way – you're going to fall.

Tyler was in the process of lighting his pipe and I suddenly noticed how quiet it had become. The woodland creatures had bedded down for the night and all animals nocturnal were too small or far away to create much noise. As if reading my mind, Tyler spoke and asked if the silence disturbed me. “No,” I said. “However, I am not accustomed.”

“It doesn't take one long to get used to,” Tyler said, and went back to tamping the cherry tobacco down into the bowl of his worn out pipe. After his pipe was sufficiently full, Tyler struck a match against the brick of the fireplace and brought it to the lip of the bowl. The tobacco caught instantly creating a red hue that grew bright then dim and bright again with each draw of air. I watched my friend perform this simple ritual with the ease and agility of someone who has mastered a task through repetition. The fire that plumed from the match head cast

a shadow giving the appearance that Tyler had only half a face. It struck me as rather poignant due to the fact I believed there are two faces or sides to all people. This was especially true about my friend and I knew his dark side was as ominous as fear. In another time, he had been a warrior and I recall he had been very good at it. We talked very little about this time in his life. I have stumbled across a few of his past military awards and decorations. It would appear he took to killing with little effort whatsoever.

Even though silence was seldom awkward between Tyler and me, both of us enjoying the other's company and the peace along with it, the night was closing in and soon I must be going. I detested leaving and going back to the city. It wasn't just because the stench and overcrowded living conditions, it was the absence of my friend. Tyler had often made it quite clear that traveling to the city was not an option for him. Like the monster in Shelley's Frankenstein he added, "I'm

through with man!" He once said, "When I die you can take me wherever you like. Of course, don't leave me there for long because I will soon begin to decompose and look very badly. I do apologize for my impertinence, but vanity has always been my greatest sin." We laughed at this and I could see it tickled him to think about me carting his dead weight around and scaring the hell out of those who saw. I truly loved his wit and already, before I could finish my last thought, I knew within the place from which that humor came raged a terrible battle between good and evil.

The tears stung at the back of my eyes and I thanked God for the darkness. The overwhelming feeling of sadness gripped me like a vice and I struggled to stay the wave of despair. It was rather alarming that I suddenly felt like bursting into tears and if it weren't for my own vanity, I would have done just that. Was it the sorrow I felt for my friend or the fact I wished this were my home, tucked away from the crime and turmoil of modern living?

I just didn't know. What I did know was that I needed to get my mind on other matters and fast before I made a complete fool of myself. Yet, I dare not admit that if I were to bawl like a baby, Tyler was the only person I knew that would not only understand, but also know exactly how to comfort me. It was his eerie way of knowing things that again saved me at that moment. He always knew just what to do and say, especially when not to say anything. "Let me refill your cup, my friend," and I relaxed straight away. When Tyler returned with my cup now brimming with a fresh brew of apple beer, I was relived for two reasons. One, I could nurse the drink and extend my visit, and two, I could listen to my friend talk of things nearly forgotten and dearly missed. He asked if I would like to hear another story and I replied as I had done so many times before, "If you're telling it."

"There had once stood a city, much like the one you will return, and it was considered by many to be a metropolis. There were

groups of skyscrapers bunched together in large centers all over the city. Their windows gleaming in the sunlight or the evening's electricity. All other cities wanted to be like this one, which seemed to find itself ripe with progress. Presidential candidates would drive through the streets in blackened urban assault vehicles, I believe you called them SUV's, and promised the rising war in the Middle East would soon be over and we would triumph in the end. Even though the price of oil and wheat shot upward, the people believed in a better day and loved their fine city. It was then called, 'progress,' and based on the rabble-rousers of the peppiest kind, it was the dream of every man, women, and child. I recall it was this last president that had been called a true stump orator, and with blatant eloquence, she demonstrated that nothing would be easier than for this great nation made up of all her fine cities and towns to hold our lead and set pace for a new millennium. I ask you now, are you not one of the happy citizens of such a city?"

Tyler's question was rhetorical and they always were. "Never ask a question that you do not already have the answer," he had said. No, I was not a happy citizen of

the city in which I now lived nor would I have been in any of the cities scattered throughout this country. Many of them were in ruin or at least close enough that their inhabitants have already either given up or set out to find another more promising homestead. I nodded a meager reply to the like and then asked my friend to continue.

“This city I speak of was called Nadir, but it probably cannot be found on any map under that name. I always found the name amusing because it means Lowest Point or Rock Bottom. I suppose the city planners weren’t exactly skilled in the lost art of language or literature. In fact, they didn't lay out the city itself very well. The streets were too narrow and the landscape was nothing but a dirty concrete maze of freeways and service streets. You literally had to drive several miles out of your way just to travel three blocks. If that wasn’t distressing enough, one had to turn Right in order to Turn Left and visa-versa. Well, I’m getting off the subject. These were not the most significant problems and since the city is no longer, it is as if they never were. Forgotten. Like all things neglected. It wasn’t

always that way in Nadir. In the beginning, there were few people and with its enlarged horizons, the city resembled a quiet village. Hereafter comes the starting point for industry and technology. Teams of brokers and scientist conducted critical raids into the territories of commerce and improved living. Our lives would be easier, they said. The city grew a hundred times larger, therefore a hundred times richer, and one hundred times as satisfied with itself. The enchantment of its optimism and progressive spirit embodied the people and they served and bowed to a golden calf. The middle-class was now referred to the upper-middle-class or penny millionaires by the upper-class. It meant a great deal to individuals to reach that higher tax bracket, which would allow them the pious distinction of dropping the middle out of middle-class and sailing gallantly into the realm of the elite. Many were even willing to kill for this particular moniker and many did. Years went by and the city conformed to so many others like it across the plains of the New America. People became bored easily and looked for ways in which to stimulate their interests. The fix became more and more difficult to obtain and they lubricated even the most mundane fantasy in order to fire it up the tracks

of self-actualization. Emotions became so saturated with visions of prophetic attainment the people produced heroes faster than potato chips. They distorted the ideal of a champion. It was no longer a man or woman that gave their lives freely for another, it was the person who lacked morals and disregarded rules of conduct. For this person, he or she wore their ethnicity as a badge of honor and without hesitation considered their actions to be in direct accord with God's purpose. Of course, there were large sums of money paid out to these new heroes based upon the fact they suffered greatly. No one was guilty any longer, but grossly misunderstood. The only accepted article of faith was to increase one's income and enjoy modern improvements at all costs. These lost souls obeyed the commandments of monetary gain and individual supremacy and therefore lived in complete harmony with themselves. Undoubtedly, society crumbled along with the city in which it was built."

After Tyler finished speaking, I felt an urgency to defend these people, their beliefs, and above all convey some hope to my friend. If the truth be told, the very

reason I wanted to do this was that I was one of those people he described. My professions have change throughout the years and at this time I had been working in real estate. I would tell my colleagues that it is the highest existence, but usually only after landing a very lucrative deal. I never paid much attention to the trees and landscapes unless I was here with Tyler. Quite understandably because there was nothing else to look at. Cast your eyes in any direction and all there was were trees upon trees.

My homes have been standard, inside and out, with their manicured lawns and corresponding shrubs and flowers. Trees were rare and if found, they were insignificant in size. If you wanted trees in the city, you would have to pay a high premium for them. And yes, the streets were too narrow or there were too many vehicles on them, I don't know. The cars whiz through the streets, sitting inside them are their proud owners passing and cursing at anyone in their way. I often thought one would

have to be a survivalist to drive amidst the perils of traffic and found I did not take a deep breath until I had passed out of the city limits. My life also corresponds to what Tyler had said. I am average at best, but I refuse to accept that perhaps this is alright. I find the anger creeping inside of me when the neighbor purchases yet another new piece of furniture or I see a newer vehicle parked inside their two-and-a-half car garage. I have become used to the disorder and the impetuous fellow man, but that is what one expects.

Rather surprising, I found myself getting angry. I felt Tyler was judging me and it would not be the first time I fell into this way of thinking. We have had our differences in the past and they usually started with a misunderstanding. If I had more confidence in myself, perhaps it would be easier to just come out and ask him what the hell he meant. However, I lacked the ability to do so and too many things have gone unanswered between us. If only in my mind, I said the words I wanted

to belt out aloud. I would tell Tyler that I enjoy excellent health, I'm well fed and thriving, alert and good-natured. The city in which I live may not be peaceful and the people do have their problems, but I feast at clubs of instructive business conversation and stimulating anecdotes. I am sociable and have a winning personality. Like you, I have a gift of speech and when this thought passed through my mind I felt a stab in the center of my chest. There was that familiar twinge of remorse whenever I compared myself to him. Let it go, I thought and pushed the feeling aside as I had done so on many occasions. Where was I? Oh, yes. I have learned other languages and mesmerized listeners with a flowing tongue during popular talks before clubs and mass meetings. I bask in the company of noted professionals, who concentrate their genius on the composition of striking advertisements for various firms, and last but not least, I earn a good annual income.

After completing my mental rant, I looked up at Tyler who had been quietly smoking his pipe and staring at me this whole time. He was quick to know things and I'm sure he knew I was angry. He probably even knew what it had been I was thinking. It was my turn to read his face and I was rather confident of what his retort would have been. He would have simply stated the following,

“Not even for the most elevated means of worldly compensation will you ever understand the need for spirituality. For this loss, you should be sympathetic. You are lacking what is necessary for life in your pursuit and attainment of what is desired. You have forgotten the face of your father.”

Yet again, he would have been right. I have learned to live a life of an irreproachable citizen, unconscious of my own respectability. But the jealousy of my heart broods still over a mortal whose happiness grows too great. I wonder, is Tyler truly happy and would it bother me if he was or was not? I am surrounded by

people all day long who seek nothing but happiness and never find it. Their soul, of course, are incapable of growth unless they discover that their tendencies toward vice are natural, but there is a greater meaning to life than by the moment gratification. As I myself approach fifty, I hasten to make up for the neglect, which is why I visit Tyler and enter into these conversations. Our relationship has always been irregular and I've more than often played the role of the pouting child. However, in time I return to this place and the generosity afforded to me has never diminished. While away from my friend, the silence and aloofness becomes more painful as the years past. It is because he is getting older and not long for this world I suppose. I also try to remind myself that I can no longer be frivolous with my time spent away.

I have been quiet for too long myself and so I offered this up to my friend. "When you spoke, you hinted at human kind's chance of spoiling the present as well as the future. You, my friend, had once had membership in

the committee of material progress. Weren't there cities that loomed before you in which you succeeded in claiming your proverbial piece of the pie? Did you not find a better self in the process, and did you not on occasion kneel before the monuments of fortune and fame?" There was no expression on Tyler's face when he pulled the pipe from his mouth and began to speak.

"When I knelt it was to receive absolution. I worked hard to become a success at doing my best, not in order to triumph over another or build a false kingdom of wealth. My devotion was to God, not myself and I often prayed to become useful to mankind, and not just another drain on society. My life will end as it began – a gift not to be thrown away or discounted. The institution of my representatives are from another world entirely, they give me strength but never answers. They give me hope, but never carried my burden. Your representatives have nothing to give and only take. They have false ideals and care not of the soul, but of the individual. You sit here now thinking that I'm attacking you yet again. I care not to prove I

am right nor do I wish to hurt your feelings. However, truth is born and not created. If what I say is true then regardless of your damaged ego, it is beyond criticism. Son, there is nothing unique about attacking and I pride myself in being unusual. I have no preconceived notions of triumph over you or anyone else. I only wish to live within the borders of an earth-bound existence without plight or unrest – of these and many related adjectives, I have paid my dues. At the very least, I hope to extend to you some wisdom and be remembered as a lovable individual.”

Before I realized it, we had been arguing and the tears now broke free. They fell slowly enough allowing me time to wipe them away. Although their speed increased substantially when I noticed Tyler had been crying as well. Chocking on my words, I told him that I am naïve, and a believer who speaks up before thinking. I added that I am not always so festively refreshing and my rhetoric isn't often so full of snap and vitality. Quite

frankly, I said, I am not half as amusing as I think I am. Without wiping away his tears, Tyler said this.

“My good man, at the bottom of your soul is a solid foundation. The splendor of your heart, as well as other noticeable characteristics of yourself, exists as an unparalleled gift of glory. Listen, for example, to our conversations, sitting together near this fireplace. During these precious times, an unsuspecting halo falls over your head. You become a romantic hero, a wandering poet, an aviator of nobility. I have watched you grow from a young samurai to a cosmic seeker of wisdom. You have always been a serious lad and you needn’t travel very far to know why. Tremendous resources have been placed at our command – some we see and some we don’t and some we don’t care to see. You are doing your best and any sincere attempt at doing just this ranks you among the better human beings. Never quit searching from within and I promise your journey will be richly endowed.”

Now I wondered if there had ever been a time when Tyler did not love me nor I him. Although it seems

difficult to realize, I know we have been at odds for most our lives and for the life of me, I cannot understand why. He had always been firm, but gentle. Even the most speculative person would have seen he would not take advantage of them or stand in the way of their opportunities. He never profited from another's fortune or private war, but he fought in enough of them and for causes he himself did not comprehend. Like now, he is fighting for me without regard for his own gain or feelings. I have always known Tyler to be on the alert and deadly aware of all things, especially things intrinsic. He has pushed me to search with infinite care for the truth even if it meant abandoning him in the process. Recognizing this characteristic, I wondered how many loves have been snatched from him prematurely leaving only empty hands and a massive weight enveloping his heart.

It was true that under the guidance of this gifted and conscientious teacher, I developed into a permanent idealist. Witnessing the tragedy of his life while he made

one terrible inhuman discovery after another constantly renewed my faith in the power of prayer. Knowing this fact, and even after all these years, we still quarreled. No doubt, our arguments were intriguing, but I found myself wanting to get past all that and move into a level of our relationship where I finally understood this man. I fear this may not be a possibility. It did, in fact, take years for me to begin speaking with him again. To my surprise, I began to regard our time together as an honor and began merging with his beliefs, always finding renewed vigor in his unyielding support and solace.

Admittedly, I am not so shrewd to deny how I have also been one of those to abandon Tyler. Years had passed before returning and when I did, he treated me as if I had never left. He was never one to drive anybody to work for the honor his beliefs, if you did there was harmony. If not, only silence. I hated this man for his non-compromising theory of Right and Wrong, Good and Evil, Black or White. Where so many people live in a gray

area, he vehemently opposed it. Without the power to change these types of people, he exiled himself. Those that took the time to understand him found a warmth and admiration that seemed to suggest a living model of compassion. He is an incorruptibly honest servant of God, but at the same time a resentful anarchist and a loner, who doubts whether humanity was more than a divine experiment that has gone terribly awry. Further, within his soul there lies awake a radiant Titan, who sings the praises of Christ, but would gladly accept the position of Avenging Angel and exterminate those who oppose God like poisonous rats. He has said, "We burn infected villages, preach proper hygiene, and base our values on the gospel, but how many people would gladly sweep the sword of retribution across the necks of their kin in order to back their claim?" I knew he would have done so and a chill ran deep within my spine.

We both grew very tired and I rose to leave. Tyler stood as well, looked directly into my eyes, and asked if I

would like to stay the night. “We can talk more tomorrow when we are both rested,” he said. I gladly accepted his kind invitation and made my way to the spare bedroom down small hallway. His bed was in the great room and not too far from the fire. Tyler had moved it there right after taking up residence in this place. I asked him if the master bedroom had been too cold during the winter, causing him to relocate his bed so near the hearth. He replied in barely a whisper, “No, it is that the fire keeps me company.” I wasn’t sure if he had been extending me an invitation to stay with him for a time or even move in for good. Regardless, I was too afraid to ask. Not because he may have answered no, but quite the opposite.

So near sleep, I needed a lighter tale to lift this melancholy that hung within my mind. “Tell me a funny story,” I asked. “One that will brighten my spirits and cause me to slumber without difficult dreams.” Tyler obliged as he so often did and without so much as a complaint of his exhaustion. I remember that about him

and quickly pushed the thought away. It was too serious to ponder and before I gave it a chance I knew that particular river of emotion spiraled downward and fanned out into countless branches.

“What are you thinking now?” He said.

“Oh, nothing. Go ahead. Spin me an amusing tale.”

“Very well!” He said, “Make yourself comfortable and I shall begin.”

“Alongside a particular road there lay a stone. While passing one day, a man noticed its markings. Much too clever to mistake this particular rock for some precious minerals by the looks of its skin, the man didn’t get too excited. The man had been walking for days and was terribly thirsty. A mirage! He said to himself. A trickery of sunlight. It was miles before the next town and without water, the man would soon perish, but for now, he was intrigued. More curious at this point than not, the stone caught his attention because it was without a single blemish. It had no exposed faults or cracks upon its surface nor

did it resemble any stone he had ever seen before. How could there be no scratches, nicks, or cuts etched into any of its rounded smooth sides? He thought. Certainly, someone must have rolled, dropped, or moved it at one time. Stones don't just appear. Even if it were buried deep within the earth during the Ice age and laid dormant while the glaciers lay heavy and thick upon the earth, it would have been knocked around a bit and wearing these effects today. But, to the man's amazement, the stone was absolutely perfect. If that hadn't been surprise enough, he lifted the stone from its resting place and found that not only was it perfection symmetrical, but it was spotless. There wasn't one grain of sand, which clung to its underside or needed brushing off its top. The man became more restless and began to ponder the net worth of his discovery. Having always been an irresolute person, he couldn't decide as to what he would do next. The whole matter seemed rather insignificant from the outside, but 'what if?' he thought. What if there be gold or silver that lines yer belly ole Mr. Stony? The idea made perfect sense. Any object this unblemished on the outside must be full of unbelievable riches on the inside. The man decides to find out for sure rather than drift about the countryside always

wondering whether or not he was within reach of untold wealth and let it slip through his fingers. He then began to look for yet another stone, one that would do just fine to bash against his treasure, thus splitting it open and finding what lay inside. The task was simple enough for there were stones everywhere, but none as wondrous as the one he now clutched within his hands. The man had been unsuccessful his whole life, according to his measure, and this would be his big break. After situating the stones on top of one another, the man lifted the one used as the tool and prepared to slam it down hard against what he believed would be the answer to all his prayers. Prayer, he thought! Not a bad idea! I'll say a prayer first. So, he closed his eyes and mumbled the following. Dear Lord, I know it's been awhile since I've spoken to you. I am a devoted and simple soul, who demands nothing and who patiently waits in solitude, bewitched by the hope of Your grace and the siren of The Second Coming. If you grant me riches within this stone, I shall lose myself within Thy labyrinth of Thy Father's Work. It would appear from the man's righteous prayer that he honestly believed the Good Lord is as gullible as He is wise. Without a moment's hesitation, the man brought the two stones together

with an audible crash! Both stones broke open immediately. When the man carefully removed the broken pieces of his hammer rock, he saw what filled the precious stone. It was then he wept and called the name of the Father for the first time in many years without want, desire, but with sincere gratitude. What suddenly caused the man to weep was the sight of what now brimmed within the stone. Its color and clarity was perfect and it sparkled in the afternoon sun. Before lifting the stone from the road, the man spoke once more and said, ‘Thank you God’ and then as an after thought . . . water.”

Later that evening after we tucked ourselves in our separate beds, I thought of the story. There was yet another meaning within the story that came to me like a rush of warm summer air. Even though the man had forgotten all about God and his first thoughts upon finding the stone were purely selfish, God gave him nourishment. I thought to myself, this is how a father loves his children. He doesn't punish them nor turn away. He waits for their return and gives them sustenance upon their arrival.

Knowing the children may leave again after they find rest, this does not concern a good parent. They remember their part in the scheme of things and never forget the face of their children. Tyler has been that to me. He has accompanied me to the islands where I have ventured to test my boundaries. He has listened to me even after my crowning final act of defiance and primitive self-absorbed masculinity. He has never been superficial when it came to the foundation of his love. Within the work of caring, he has built a monument to our true Father.

I began to drift off to sleep and the wind whistled me a lullaby. Suddenly, a voice reminded me of songs I haven't heard for many years. Songs that put me to sleep. I will not know what pleases God while still flesh and blood, but I believe a sweet tune from the lips of a parent is one of them. I haven't the slightest idea what I shall talk with my friend about tomorrow, but I am truly glad for the opportunity. A chance – that is all we ever need in this world, isn't it. Tyler said this. He also said

there is a sentry inside every gate, ready to bear down with vengeance or look away bemused as you slip by unnoticed. It is the goodwill of an individual that will decide this fate. Their willingness to become humbled will allow them to bend and stoop beneath the guard's menacing axe. It will be their foolish power that will result in a somber and devastating effect. Personally, I have seen this play out and I have fallen victim to its truth. Although, it is difficult not depend upon one's own strength and remember we are not completely alone. I don't always believe this and find myself both asking for guidance and questioning a divine source at the same time. However, I must remember to point out that hypocrisy thrives a little everywhere and that any one that attacks it at such a close range places himself before a demon with several dangerous tails to whip and maim.

As an after thought, I have caught glimpses of God in the cool beauty of the snow, virginal as the Winter wind, and none of the flakes alike in the entire world. This

makes me feel like a child again and the possibilities of things eternal blossom like a brilliant flower. Again, this reminds me of the quiet of this place. It would do a man good to live here and mediated as Tyler said. I see myself doing just that from time to time and feel the pleasure of a quiet man who loves the peace enough to leave it to its fate. Once alone, I have always been able to meditate upon my problems and clear my soul. I can think of many things honestly and without prejudice. Like the soil, I am quiet but recall the tread of the forlorn soldiers and restless hunters. It is here I return to my roots and understand my position. What was that Tyler once wrote to me? It is almost there, but I cannot seem to grasp the beginning. It was then I fell into a deep and sound sleep. The best I've had in months, or since my last visit. Afterwards, the words came to me like a bride to her groom on their wedding night.

“It had been still within your turbulent years of adolescence that you started with that self-criticism. Not to worry, it is a sign of finding your way. You have the blessed gift of life implemented with a firm hand and I’ll wager but with a smile on the lips of our Lord. It is your time to cultivate the land that will become your path and become a new pioneer. This I write to you now, you will not understand. I might have used an occasion before your speedy departure to vocalize this, but I did not have the receiving ear in which to listen. Perhaps the words will make their way into your heart through eyes more forgiving. I am not the strong chieftain once thought of, nor am I the traumatic captain bearing too great a pressure down upon you. I am only a messenger who bears his soul and am glad to have known this day with you. You were born and now you must live as best you can. I ask that you ascend and receive your just rewards and punishments by the hand of man and king, but please – do rise.”

A HOME FOR ALL SEASONS

Chapter Two

I jerked awake as if to expect the annoying buzz of my alarm clock or incessant drone of the morning traffic outside. Instead, I heard nothing but the birds and the oncoming Fall wind. Tyler would be up by now because the sun had already risen. He usually took walks in the early morning when it was just barely first light. Afterwards, he would return and ask if I would like breakfast: pancakes smothered in peanut butter and syrup. Delicious.

While still a bit drowsy, I lay back against the soft mattress and reflected upon the previous evenings discussion, specifically, my friend. If an interested

foreigner were to ask me what I admired most in this man and on what qualities his greatness depended, it would first seem easy to give an answer. People like to talk of what they love. Those closest to Tyler would say that they celebrate this man because he represents a character with a style and genuineness that they would like to be theirs, and because he has sung, with singular power and exquisite charm, of the traditions of a more humane people. Citing all the precious features that distinguish the most compassionate folk, they would say Tyler fit this description and did so within the shadow of this hell called earth. They would also know that although he has sufficed to tuck himself away deep within this pine-covered mountain, his soul still has hope for mankind.

I believe this perception would be accurate enough, but I also know that one must soon check themselves, realizing that such a general explanation is insufficient. Inside this man, there are many things, beloved but difficult to define, which a proper appraisal must take into

account but that are inaccessible to the mere acquaintance. I've learned that Tyler does not withhold himself to others purposefully, but that he can offer no ready-made expression of his convictions unless a person is willing to sacrifice everything to exposure. No lies. No hidden agendas. He will know if these things exist in a person based upon a certain ability I always found to be mysterious, in it are powers and instincts that elude analysis. Where would someone develop these powers of intuitiveness? I had a pretty good idea for Tyler it all began when he was only an infant and this particular malevolent education commenced with a scream.

I had stumbled across some old documents located in a box I found stuffed away in one of the empty closets within this very house. In what appeared to be quickly sketched across the lid were the words "life-work." Curious, I flipped the top off the box and began rummaging through the stacks of papers. Tyler had been walking and I knew it would be at least an hour before his

return. Initially, I had faced a difficult decision as to whether or not to take a peek at the contents of the box, but then soon found myself forgoing that minor sting of guilt when something written on one of the yellowing documents caught my eye. Typed on legal paper in bold script nearly illegible from water stains and age it read, “Ward of the State: Minor Child” and underneath, “Foster Care Recommendations.” As I read further, it became evident that my dear friend was the object of a great legal debate, resulting in not only removal from his home, but also separation from his siblings. Even further still, I read with great difficulty how a terrible accident had left him with third-degree burns all over his upper torso. According to the state report filed by the Department of Social Services, this had been no accident, but rather a clear case of abuse.

I spent the better part of an hour picking through various letters and codicils depicting the most appalling acts of human maltreatment forced upon my friend. The

time seemed to stand still while I bent over the old box smelling of mildew and bad memories and adding my own contribution of moisture while the tears fell like stones over one terrible article after another. I hadn't noticed Tyler standing in the doorway until he spoke. Startled, I spun around so fast I knocked the box over, spilling its contents all over the closet floor. There in plain view of the both of us were the printed reminders of hatred. With deliberate self-control, Tyler walked over to where I now sat and knelt down, picking up the papers and placing them neatly inside the box. He said nothing while doing this and I could only stare motionless, feeling nothing but pity.

Tyler glanced upward when he had finished and his eyes blazed with fury, "Don't ever feel sorry for me," he said in a harsh whisper. Placing the box back into the closet, he got up and left the room.

I waited for a few minutes and gathered my wits. Afterwards, I walked into the next room where Tyler now

stood looking out of a large picture window. I apologized immediately and he still said nothing. Probably due to embarrassment and feelings of guilt, I then blurted out, “How can you save that disgusting crap?” Tyler turned slowly toward me and it was then I saw he was crying, which made me feel even worse.

“Because it is what I am. It is the fate in which I have been dealt with its most profound casualties and bleak values. Those dreadful circumstances have undeniably helped build my spirit with the character and rhythm of its original owner. Yes, it is painful and I would most definitely give it all away if I could. However, it is mine to keep and remember so that none of that can ever manifest itself again through my actions or any other’s I come into contact. Like a repulsive tumor, I will remember those things and keep them safely in a box for the rest of my life. When I die, be a true friend and burn the ugly pulp inside that box. However, before you do, just remember that every man must recall all that has been good and evil in his life and give tremendous weight to every meaning and single word ever

spoken and received while alive. Only then will you understand one needs the night as much as the day.”

I agreed wholeheartedly to Tyler’s request and soon we were eating one of his homemade breakfasts. With each swallow of the delightful pancake, I felt a little better. By the time, we were drinking our coffees; the incident had passed away from my mind entirely.

As I lay awake thinking of these disquieting circumstances, I know the time has come to reflect upon my own childhood experiences. It was not anywhere nearly as awful as my friend’s and for anything distressing I only have myself to blame. I always put myself first and rarely thought of others in the process. In fact, you could categorize my individuality as a dimly felt feeling of superiority. The manic fire of my mother’s disillusionment and overall psychotic attempt at parenting fueled this. She felt that I should never feel any pain and that anyone who caused me even the smallest bit of discomfort was a

disturbed control freak. She suffered from one failed attempt after another at translating her feelings because they were forever changing and always depended upon what served her purpose best. Her life's work was to find other's that agreed with her sociopath points of view in order to add credence to whatever new philosophy she came up with that week. No one fully comprehended why she was so miserable; however, her parents were the exact same way. It took me years to admit this was all true and it wasn't until I found myself in the so-called real world. As much as I hate to confess it, I was fumbling through this world without even the basic social tools. There was a time when Tyler tried to enrich my life by giving me some jewels of wisdom, but I turned away from his offer as I often did. I simply felt that he was trying to manipulate me, not help. This feeling of distrust was echoed by my mother and she helped build a wall between my friend and me – one that could never been torn down, only offering the possibility of scaling its

rugged surface. Like then and now, I was never a very good climber.

Tyler often tried to instill within me a firm belief in God, mind you, I did not say understanding. He himself was very clear about that by stating, “I shall fear God more than I will ever love Him and I will believe in Him, but never grasp His reasons.” While we sat sipping the hot coffee, I asked if Tyler had given the idea of God anymore thought as he approached the twilight of his years. It was the smug look he gave me over his cup that made me smile. “Are you saying that I’m old and near death, so perhaps I should better get in good with the Man Upstairs?” he said.

“That’s exactly what I’m saying,” I replied.

Tyler suddenly broke out into laughter and remarked, “You answered me honestly and without reservation! You are learning young man!”

Still pushing to hear my friend’s viewpoint on God these days, I said, “Well, that’s all fine and dandy, but

have you?” Tyler put down his cup after taking a long slurp and began to answer my question. At what I had assumed (there I go again) to be lecturing, actually came out quite beautiful. His rejoinder was more like a pleasant sermon and would do more to bear his true soul than answer my question.

“If I call to mind the notable and devout life of Christ from his debut so long ago and through His lingering works of salvation, I am unworthy to think my place will be in Heaven. Even in my limited standards, I see very clearly how I do not measure up to a man with the approving eye of God upon him. My talents have not always been used for good nor become fruitful to another. I am not always solid nor genuine. Yes, I do believe in God and have staked my claim with Him. I also believe in Jesus as my Lord and Savior. However, I have never taken up the cross, so to speak, and ministered to others about the Word. Even at this late age, I may be a singer of nature, conscious of my faith, but still doubtful of whether or not my name is written in the Book of Life. I have asked myself the question for

years - is there any use for me that graced the hands of the creator? Did I have a meaning and was it achieved? Early in my life, I looked for the answers and became angry when they did not fall from the sky. My ego was bruised, along with my body. Adopting a new philosophy years later, realizing all I can do is my best, I found it easier to represent my feelings, learn from my sufferings, and appreciate my sarcasm. However, the answers still eluded me. I, like you, have been lost my whole life. The only difference between us is that I have figured that out. I am no longer shy nor reluctant to expose the private mist of my soul. Classic isn't it? I speak of bearing my soul, but live a hundred miles away from the nearest town. Well, my friend. I refer to the link between my soul and God, not mankind. It's interesting and very comical that I have grown spiritually as I grow older and at the same time lose a once firm gait. Regardless, there will be no more fantasies about life and death. Life on this earth was, and forever will be, a harsh testament to becoming a better human being in which others may mirror themselves by the reflection of your upright actions. In the same manner as we are created in the image of God. It is this image I can now see God's sense of humor, which often shows

reverence for His creation in disguise and exists that unstained preservation of a magic ring worn by the bride and groom, mother and child, father and son. To find myself at this place spiritually was without a seemingly peaceful development indeed. I contain many struggles and tensions this day, just enough to create the necessary pressure for the creative spring within me. Nourishment for today's trials and tribulations. This world has been a continuous test of strength and wit against the very substance of my being. Although my epilogue may play a cold and ruthless tune over a winter organ, whose pipes reach from earth toward a Heaven I do not belong, and to feel this inside hurts me deeply, I would choose this providence yet again if for only you."

When ended, I lowered my head and stared into the dark reflection given by what was left of my coffee. The half-moon shape of my face made me look much younger, that and what Tyler had just said, caused me to feel like a boy again. The reminder of my childhood still echoed off the face of my friend. The unity of his

teachings is a rarity these days and lost in the lack of self-discipline of a new breed of people. If I asked Tyler where he came to possess such a devout belief in God, he would have answered with one word, "Pain." If I asked why he still believed in our friendship, and above all me, he would have replied, "God."

His originality grew on the soil of a pagan and luxuriant wilderness even still, but my friend's aching journey had began many years ago. He was now seventy-three and had been putting his house in order for some time. Again, this is why he came to this place. Tyler would not have drawn himself so far away from the decadence of the city if he had not felt the presence of demons. "The demons are still with me," he would say, "more than God Himself." However, he was not as anxious here with the trees and away from people. The muffled tumult of nature under the moon of a celestial festival is always one of the visions Tyler speaks of when describing the nights here. He told me that the contrast

between the heavy intoxication of the fresh air and the pure blissful yearnings of the soul recurs constantly during his day-to-day life since leaving the bundles of brick and steel called evolution. Yet, I see his torment still through a thin veil of exasperation Tyler finds difficult to hide. It's as if he is waiting for something. At first I had thought it was death itself, but now I feel it is another matter altogether. I will make a mental note to ask him when I find the nerve. For now, I will relish the time we spend together and watch in absolute wonder while my friend shows me how to tame the beast of remorse, remaining faithful to himself, me, God, and by giving a personal touch to even the smallest of details we call life.

Tyler got to his feet at once and said, "Well, if you're going to stay awhile then walk with me."

"You just returned from a long walk," I said.

"Ah Yes! But that was without my friend. Come now and I'll show you the difference."

I have grown used to watching the expression on Tyler's face when he spoke. It was a telltale sign of his heart. When he uttered these last words, there was scarcely a single manifestation of poetic self-consciousness. I was always amazed at how he could show love without reservation or embarrassment. "Why can't I do this for him?" I thought and quickly got up from the table as well. "Let's walk then!" I said with a smile.

We were nearly a half-mile from the house when Tyler spoke up for the first time since setting off on our afternoon journey. The sun would be nearly dead center in the bright blue sky, but because the trees offered a natural canopy, I felt cool, almost chilly. "Would you like my sweater?" my friend asked as if reading my thoughts.

"Sure," I said and took the worn out sweater and slipped it over my head and shoulders. The sweater smelled of wood smoke and spice. "I could breathe in this scent all day and never grow tired of it," I thought. I was so taken by the small act of kindness I totally forgot my

manners. "Aren't you going to get cold?" I said worried. Tyler replied that he has gotten rather used to the air and would be just fine. It was my turn to know things untold and I knew he was lying. Yet, he smiled sweetly as if to say, "I would gladly freeze down to the bone if only you would wear my sweater." We walked a bit longer.

About twenty minutes later, Tyler stopped suddenly and pointed to a group of maple trees standing alone and away from the tall elm and oak that riddled the forest. He pointed to them and asked if I found anything peculiar about this? "Yes," I said.

"Tell me. What do you make of this?" Tyler asked. He has always eager to see how aware one was of their surroundings. "If you do not know your environment then you do not know yourself," Tyler had once told me.

I answered his question. "I see a grouping of trees set apart from the others and they are a differing type."

"Yes!" He said and clapped me on the back. "Now, my friend. How did they get there?" To this

question, I had no idea so I deferred to my friend. “They were planned, of course, and it was I who planted them.” Remarkable, I thought. They were in a perfect circle, not too close to crowd or smother one another and not too far apart in order to form a natural barrier.

The fact Tyler planted the maple trees did not surprise me in the least. He had always loved to watch things grow, especially something as beautiful as a tree. However, the position of the trees did, in fact, kick my curiosity in the rear. I asked, “Why in a circle and away from the others? Surely, the two breeds of tree can coexist.”

Tyler answered, “Yes, they can and do quite well as you’ll see further into our walk. As for the circle, well it allows me a secret place within an already secret place in which to sit and think. When it snows or storms, I rush to this grouping of maples and hide within its protective ring. It is then I can listen to the wind beat against the earth and the very trees that encircle me. I find myself giddy

with anticipation and fear.” Tyler then finished with, “I’ll say no more about this, except one day, you should plant a tree – or more.”

I could see within my mind’s eye, finding it very exciting within the shielding of the maples. I also knew that Tyler had other means kept hidden deep within his soul and his trees were an expression of his faith. They would offer him a solid protection against aesthetic arrogance and allow him to find even a little proof that he has not been forgotten. So often, my friend has spilled his peasant blood while revealing his true colors. I have watched him relinquish his honor in order to hold onto an already blemished integrity. His trees were handmade with the help of God and revealed a beautiful and permanent work. In an age where these things have become rare, there stood before us a new and moral value in the majesty of several maple trees. I could imagine how Tyler stooped to plan their tiny seeds and then visit them every day to ensure the hooves of animals

did not trample them, or hungry creatures did not nibble the sprouting tips. There before me was now the synergy between God and man, chiseled, and resonant of His verse.

We walked on and an hour had passed since we had last stopped and Tyler spoke about his trees. We had been walking for at least two miles and I needed a rest. Placing my hand on Tyler's shoulder, I motioned to sit down on a fallen stump. He obliged and we both sat saying nothing. I finally broke the silence by requesting he tell me about his feelings for the countryside. It had been another story I wanted and my friend came to the rescue once again.

“All around you there is God's work. It is like poetry possessing the stamp of miraculous perfection. Which one of us does not stop every now and then and think that this universe was not an accident? One did think just that and his name was Dante. Within Dante's heart, there were no strings that vibrated like wondrous songs of conviction. Within his soul, there was not a

voice that differs from those that bounce and slam against our skulls. He could not hear a clear and resounding, 'I Am.' No divine stanzas, ringing like bells, permeated Dante's body and sung his praises – none could penetrate his distrust for all things he could not see, hear, or touch. He would call out at dinner parties and business functions, 'God is dead!' At one of these events, a very pretty young woman approached him and said, 'Perhaps for you God is dead because you do not remember the moment he whispered your name and it came out sounding like a beautiful song sung by a perfect craftsman?' Dante laughed at this and snapped back at the young lady, 'Utter speculation, religious babble, and plain ole hogwash!' The woman left him alone afterwards and that suited Dante just fine. Years passed and Dante finally passed away. There were few at his wake and even fewer at his funeral. Upon his death, Dante found himself spinning like a wheel through a tapestry of light and color. He began to ponder this strange manifestation and thought there must be some mistake because he did not believe in God, the devil, and especially an after-life. Yet, here he was in spirit, traveling through a tunnel that defied not only his earthly beliefs, but defied all elements of physics. Suddenly,

the tunnel was gone and Dante stood on the banks of a narrow river. Taking the needed time to gather himself and renew his conservative beliefs, Dante didn't attempt to move from this place. Time seemed irrelevant so he had no idea how long he had been standing at the river's edge when there appeared a man standing on the opposite side of the river and staring directly at Dante. The man spoke, 'Dante. There is a divine relationship between tradition and experiment, and the principles of resurrection are contained within your soul.' 'Excuse me?' Dante said, absolutely dumbfounded by this whole event and even further confused by this man's words. 'I don't know what you mean and I don't know who you are,' Dante said, rather aggravated by now, and growing steadily more frustrated. The man spoke again and said, 'The natural tradition of existence does not survive beyond the flesh because it must release the spirit to set upon a new journey it has so dearly paid for while trapped within the body.' This Dante understood and he became quite excited. 'Do you mean I'm dead!?' he yelled, even though the man seemed to be within arms length from where he stood on the other side of the river. 'Very,' the man replied and then added, 'refreshing, isn't it?'

Dante, now very alarmed, asked the man if he were God. The man replied, 'Goodness! No! But I can take you to Him if you like?' 'You mean I have a choice?' Dante asked rather suspiciously. 'I mean,' Dante continued, 'I didn't believe in God or the devil while I was alive.' 'Yes, we know,' said the man, 'but God believes in you.' Dante then thought of the women years ago that made such a silly remark at a party he once attended. If she's passed, she's probably here right now, he thought, laughing at me. The man then spoke and said, 'No one is laughing at you, although we do find your type rather amusing in the whole scheme of things.' That did it. Dante bellowed, 'Look Mr. I don't know if you're God, Jesus, or some creepy angel, but I want this conversation to end and I want it to end right now!' The man spoke in a more sympathetic tone and told Dante all he had to do was cross the river for all this to be over. 'Then what?' Dante demanded. 'Then we go home,' the man replied. 'Home, where's home?' Dante asked. The man's face grew bright and the light seemed to fill his whole body when he spoke the following: 'Home, my dear departed soul, is where we rejoice in the true light. It is from this light we predominantly draw inspiration and all pain disappears

thoroughly and without notice. It is from this light we find ourselves content. We become poets and great listeners. Our imaginations soar with innovations into ways to do nothing but worship. It is then we step forward boldly, fall to our knees weeping with joy, and accept wings made especially for the exposed backs before Him.’ Dante felt the words work through him and he felt for the first time what they meant, but still he was weary and would not budge. Thinking the man would grow tired of his apprehension, Dante began to search himself for another alternative. It was then the man spoke and said, ‘Dante, I will wait for you to make a decision for as long as you need. As a matter of fact, I shall wait forever.’ Still regarding this whole matter a trick of some sort, Dante felt he could cross the river on his own. It was narrow enough that a quick jump should put him on the other side without much effort. ‘But the river is deep,’ the man said, ‘and if you miss the edge you will fall into a great abyss never to escape.’ ‘That doesn’t seem likely nor fair,’ Dante said impatiently. ‘I’m dead so what harm could come to me? I most certainly can not drown and I have no need to swim.’ ‘You will not die again,’ said the man, ‘but you will find yourself too heavy to swim and thus sink down deep

for eternity.’ ‘Eternity?!’ screamed Dante. ‘What’s beneath this water, hell?’ ‘Precisely,’ said the man and a look of sorrow crossed his face for the first time since appearing before Dante. ‘Come, reach for my hand and I will guide you across the river. Come take my hand and you and I shall return to the place you belong.’ ‘Why is all this necessary?’ Dante asked. ‘Because it is time for you to make a choice. God wants you to come to Him, but only on your own. You have eluded Him your whole life and now that life is over. Come now and let this all be over.’ After the man finished, Dante pondered his words and then asked the following: ‘Why did God send you?’ The man suddenly was no longer a man, but a small child – a boy of about nine. The boy looked mercifully up at Dante and began to speak with the voice of a child. ‘Do you remember me now?’ asked the boy. ‘Do I not have your eyes and rounded face? Am I not a spitting image of you?’ Dante fell to his knees and the memories came to him speedily and without mercy. It had been so long ago Dante had buried his only son after a courageous battle with polio. It was then Dante remembered he lost his only child. It was then Dante remembered he lost his faith. When Dante looked up, the boy was reaching for him.

His small arms extending as far as they could across the river. 'Daddy, please come home,' he cried. Dante did not only reach for his son, but leapt into his arms. As they held one another and wept, Dante cradled his boy as he had so many years before. As he had the day he died in his arms. Rocking back and forth while he held his son, Dante began to sing a familiar lullaby. It seemed hours had gone by before the man and child stood to leave and head for the place they would live for all eternity. When Dante looked back before walking away, he noticed the river was no longer there. 'Home,' Dante said to his son. 'Home,' his son replied and giggled.

It was then I noticed a river passed before Tyler and me. Over the glass-like surface, the water reflected a light of its own. Death stood between Dante and his son in the story like a river infinitely fathoms deep. Death had stepped between the father and his reward; under the circumstances of troubles the world had dealt him. He had mourned when his boy had left him and cursed God for this tragic work. Dante's faith was outshone by the

imperishable realm of reality – we all die and some much too soon. Under these circumstances, all hope was lost. There would not be another summer in which he would play ball with his son. All that remained before the father's eyes was a tomb in the dusk of winter he would visit everyday until his own death, performing the same ritual of removing the decaying flowers in order to replace them with fresh ones. Afterwards, muttering to himself, "These will die too."

Yet, in the story, I thought of how Dante lived within a heartrending world of chance, but received one of glory in the end. With this, Tyler was telling me we suffer, but at the same time, we hear the great victorious harmonies sung by the happiness of a creative genius. We feel His pleasures and well as His trials in the garden of both comfort and anguish. God does rain upon the righteous and unrighteous, while granting the same love and deliverance to all accepting hearts.

While sitting on the stump as the afternoon dwindled away, I moved closer to my friend. He gratified this act of love by placing his arm around my shoulder. I thought to myself, is there anything that is beneficial to humanity as well as to the individual? Perhaps there is and this just may be one of them for this moment will remain unforgettable and I will thank God for it. Regardless, of my life's ups and downs, nothing has emerged from this world more beautiful than the wreath of fondness wrapped securely around my heart, a wreath to adorn the love I feel for my beloved friend.

I do not know where this moment will take me nor do I care. The result of this day will not be less, but more. I may or may not have much in common with my friend, but I do adore his work. It has served and destroyed his life, but he is dedicated to playing it through with all its good and evil faces. One last thought and I will give my mind its due rest while enjoying a little peace. I have contemplated quite enough today. Although I do not know

when my time will come and I must choose to cross my own river, I will try to remember what matters most: good or evil, we need God. It is to Whom we owe everything that makes our lives worthwhile.

Chapter Three

When I survey my soul, it is much like the landscape I now sit and stare over with Tyler – seemingly undeveloped, usually not very smooth, and full of unexplored pockets of darkness and light. A weary thought, yet a conscientious and remorseless impulse push me on. I am not one of those who will turn the world on its ear leaving a mark of distinction in which people erect statues in my name. I am no saint either for there is too much resistance to taking up the cross and following my Lord. Instead, I am born, as many would put it, too independent, recluse, and harrowed in a search for salvation that I will never fully believe deserving. I have

traveled all over the world and found nothing more inspiring than what lies within the rarely used closets of my own home. At the age of thirty-eight, I began writing for the first time, the immediate reason was to fill the emptiness that permeated my whole being, and it was my own doing that recreated, evidently not without the inherent prejudices of many people, the feeling that even this vocation was beyond my reach. Tyler has written and found some promise to the art, but nothing that would make him famous. Although, I have read his work and feel if I could pen like that, I would publish. I recall the self-critical beginner withdrew his best works and these editions I still say were his best. However, as I am beginning to finally understand, Tyler's claim that the origin of his fame and his monumental chief work has been the path of righteousness in the name of God. He remarked once, "It is a hope of mine that I did not choose the creator, but long before my birth and very shortly after

my death, He has chosen me.” To this, I can only say, Amen and I will stay the course.

The fundamental feature that was to mark all my subsequent works on this earth was already now too apparent. I dealt with the immediate day-to-day needs of my body and often mistook heavenly gifts as happenstance. If I am allowed the opportunity to live long enough to forgive my ungratefulness and shame, I might have a fighting chance for an afterlife of goodness within a sphere of our true Father’s thoughts and feelings. And, yes. I would like Tyler there with me. Yet today is my natural surroundings and I again have cast my mind severely too far into the future. It is much too easy to do so and I always end up feeling as if I am no more than a vagabond, who casually makes his acquaintance with God when it suits me. Dear God, please do not let this become my fate.

A fish just jumped in the brook and Tyler did not seem to notice. He too is deep in thought and I wish our

minds were one long enough for me to understand him. [Excerpt from Tyler's mind: "My friend seemed to see the fish leap from the water and perform its natural aerobatics, but I can't be sure... I wish our minds were one long enough in order for me to understand him."] It was then I also knew that I could ride a railway car for hours with Tyler and never get bored, although we would rarely speak.

We have spent the entire afternoon in the woods and soon we will be returning home, I to mine in the city, and I must prepare to fight against the cold arrogant society. Tyler would comment and say, "That sucks," afterwards smile as if he had just successfully tapped into my generation's language. Maybe I'll draw what is left of my courage and ask to stay another night or perhaps a few, I don't know. We could become engaged in another mental debate fighting with intellectual arms, above all at capturing our innermost feelings and imagination. I never tire of fighting in this manner with Tyler. All other worldly

battles seem narrow and harsh, and the persistence of the usual attacks placed upon my character in the city is nothing more or less than pure evil. Afterwards, I feel a strong impression of doom and the deep wound of injustice.

Without realizing it, I have changed again. My spirit is growing and the inequity of people hurts more than ever. I now aim at the soul, that rich and infinite body of truth given unto all of us as a gift from God, always there whispering our destiny, constantly calling us back to the place we belong. I have not yet reached real gentility or fullest extent of my spirit, but I strive with my sympathies and instincts toward the not so well known ideal of His bondservant. Hence, I am becoming more rigid in my beliefs, imperturbable, and imposing correctness. I am more on guard against the dangerous feelings of immoral things; however, this does not excuse my occasional lapses. When sin again intrudes upon my life, I am remorseful and seek to make my way through

the thorn of shame and again find the liberation of God's mercy.

It strikes me now as essential to speak of beauty. It is where my mind went and quite unusual as it seems, my heart followed. Beauty here is not represented by the tragic failure of human action and reaction, but the forgiveness of sin. It seems uncertain if in the beginning God thought this is the way to Him, to fall, to rise, and to fall over again until we slash deep into our souls revealing our true beings and enlightened character. If one were to take an independent account of human nature, the total result would mirror so many others. It would appear the same throughout the world. One takes up the cross and inevitably drops it squarely on his or her feet, only to bend, stoop, and fall in order to pick the rugged and hard thing up again. What beauty is within this masterpiece we call the soul? Its effects on my life have most drastically changed my perspective and still I change. The work is always expanding and thus the saga proper will end when

we finally leave this burdensome flesh behind. I am dust and realizing this, I pray God had mercy on my soul and all the souls of the universe.

“Not finished yet.” Tyler would say. “The earth will claim her treasure of flesh and bone and God will decide what to do with the light that is left.” In one of Tyler’s many discarded novels, “What Trilogy is This,” He wrote on the subject of death and dying. A passage comes to mind,

“A new trilogy, whose structure is exactly like that of its creator, consists of three perfect beings, The Father, The Son, and The Holy Ghost. United by One – the One. Where it says, I am the Alpha and the Omega – The Beginning and the End. This trilogy forms a divine accomplishment, where the creator has carried the history of His time through three perfect entities and His success in mastering so excellently this enormously difficult task both in its scope and in its depth remains the basis for all living things in heaven and earth. It is doubly remarkable when we consider that it was performed in a field of

glory in which the most imperfect and fallible beings would dwell. This is knowledge: it can then only be through death and resurrection that we can kneel before the only throne and inhabit the Kingdom of Heaven.”

I wept when I read these words, not because I was sad, but because I was happy. A small piece of it made sense to me. Although, it was but a mere glow, I believe in the end, I finally saw the first light of Trinity.

In the foreground, the shade was becoming more prominent, the ghost of the trees cast longer shadows against the ground, and I found myself hoping we could stay long enough to welcome the moon. [Excerpt from Tyler’s mind: “The moon will be here shortly. I hope we stay long enough to see it smile down upon my friend and shine against his kind and gentle eyes.”] In the background, there was now a visible sheet of darkness creeping across the mossy fabric of the grass. It was as if we were in a theater where the projector shown above our heads making the room black except for the screen

directly in front of us. So close to both night fall and my friend, I forgot my personal fortunes, conflicts disappeared, and tragic comedies vanished. For now, all things historical could have been as long as only a minute and that minute was both inconsequential and perfect in memory.

While pondering the fabric of historical events I always try to keep in mind that those proceedings leading to this very moment weren't always grand or pleasant. Every person in this world can testify to the fact that while describing their existence, they have been witness to a great many funerals of their soul and with every death there is resurrection – especially, with the soul. As I am concerned, it has been gray weather at the fence of life more often than not. It takes only a rapid survey of my age and my accession to this old log near my friend where I now sit that convinces me that mules as stubborn beasts have been gravely mislabeled. It is humans that should bear this distinction. I also realize that this will be the

closest I will ever sit on a throne worthy of morals and a genuine manner. I have changed, yes, but I am still both monkey and dust twice over on this earth. I will not deceive myself further and deny this is true.

I now have a new master. He reigns in a heavenly place and all through creation. Up to this day, I have feared Him. Now, while my rump warms the bark and my friend breathes near me, I am trading in my fear for love. No more disillusion, the age of my years will bear no more of that nonsense. It is not that I am afraid of dying; it is Tyler I feel is close to death. This thought sparked yet another memory and his novel speaks to my mind again. It was within the first few pages I remember reading this and have since committed it to memory. It read.

“I am tired from bone to brow. I have observed the transformation of my soul and suffice it to say, my body has not kept the pace. Not long from now I shall be returned to the earth at my days end. In the Trilogy that I sought after, I came

to understand life is that period that fuses nobility and foolishness with the accompanying change of the notion we are not alone. Both gentleman and lady experience the summers of prosperity and the days, and sometimes, years of the storm. In this hour, Oh, what Trilogy is this? After my heart stops, will I call the next a saga comedy or tragedy? How can I describe the profound crisis of my fear that I am not worthy of any sort of afterlife? How will I change the ruin of my past and justify the impoverished memories of sin into its future home? Dear God, I am spoiled, rebellious, and unfavored by so many. Before this Trilogy of the divine, I pray You receive a broken spirit and homeless son. Please let this be a Trinity of mercy.”

Although Tyler would have not rejected the notion if I presented it to him, I knew he had masked this passage under the guise of common literature. However, I knew all along that it had been more than this. He obviously had been pleading with God. It was a prayer of absolution.

The galleries of my friend's type are quickly leaving this world and soon I will be surrounded by the cold and

malevolent without the respite of our long walks and talks. I am tried too, but younger by years than Tyler. I cannot live in this world and it makes me really wonder how he survived for so long. I truly learned to hate just as I truly learned to love and both emotions are so much alike. I am weary of the robust businessmen, blemished society ladies, insubordinate young children, politicians, and all things old-fashioned slipping quietly away. There is nothing concrete any longer, and all worthiness seems to die before our eyes and ears.

Each situation recurs with the same dull curious documentation of my own exhausted expectations. I refused to marry and have no children of my own. No wife and no portraits perched high upon a mantel at home of one who may give me pleasure throughout the golden years. As far as that goes, I have no mantel. Yes, I did say I refused to marry. There were the proverbial catches years ago, but I either threw them back into the vast sea of possibilities for another. There had been the oscillation

and the undulation of sweet romance a few times, but as we neared the winter of our relationship, I adhered to the law governing my heart, which was never to allow things to extend beyond this point. Ashamed at it now, I see at the very least that it had been only lust for me. Even when they wept and begged that I reconsider, I turned from their wet and sorrowful faces. Tyler told me that what was at work in those situations had been fear. Not of the woman in question, he insisted, but of learning more about myself. He wasn't being instructive when he told me this. Looking back, I recall it looked as if he would weep as well. Perhaps he knew that I was lonely. Too late now. I once read an Irish proverb that said, "What's done is done and cannot be undone, and that is why the Irish are such assholes." I suddenly feel very Irish.

I have also observed with much interest Tyler's gradual changes throughout his life. The radical and sarcastic critic of society is still there and continues to rise by degrees to a greater conviction as he grows older.

What I used to think cantankerous, I now see as wisdom. However, his appreciation for this time on earth to learn has allowed him the possibility of exoneration for certain individuals he has had past dealings. I will not mention them at this time. A liberal he is most definitely not by definition, but I do believe he cares more for humanity than any self-proclaimed moderate. Of course, he has always been partial to animals, one in particular – a kitten he once owned, and his treatment of the like is nothing short of angelic. He is not standard and either you love him or hate him. I have rubbed the hide on both accounts and to the latter, rubbed it raw.

Indeed, my feelings have gone from one extreme to the other when it came to my friend. At first, it was pure affection, love, and reverence. Then there was a terrible change that I alone did not bring about, but with an impudent woman that found triumph in hurting Tyler by separating us. She was both cruel and stupid and I shall hate her for this always and long after she is dead. It took

many years for my feelings even to begin to change again and for me to try to get close to Tyler once more. They were reluctant, but growing changes from hatred, animosity, to casual like, and finally changing into a genuine sympathy and, yes, love. Now, I am battling the after-effects of my actions under the crushing weight of remorse. I have seized upon my sympathy for Tyler, the characterization of his personality and his most remarkable feature, his ability to forgive. With regard to this trait, I ask myself how far has the apple fallen from the tree.

One easily remembers the final episode of the drama that finally ends any relationships, but it is all too difficult to recall what it was that led us to the conclusion of what time reveals as the ultimate downfall. It took many years and a celestial map to plot my way back to the place it all began when I stood apart from Tyler and called him my enemy. I know he remembers the pain and

longing that I caused, but he sits near me and shows his affection without reservation.

Where we are now situated is the place I want to stay forever. I shall be buried here, I thought, and at least if all else is wiped away from the forest, a single stone will mark this site. I suppose I want it preserved for many reasons, but perhaps the greatest of these is the fact I wish the stone will lead another to a better place on earth to mend and reclaim what is worth fighting for. More likely, years from now or less, there will not even be a forest and not even a ghost of a path will lead others down into this tiny valley of grass and trees. As if in agreement with my thoughts, Tyler suddenly took in a deep breath of fresh, rough pine-riddled air. Afterwards, I watched as it seemed to go a little to his head; he then folded his hands in his lap and sat musing, his back rising in and out. Still staring straight ahead, Tyler said, "This has never been a lonely place, but when I come back here without you, it shall be." I, in turn, could say nothing

for it was the frog that now took up residence in my throat that I feared would croak had I done so.

Instead, I sat quietly and wondered if I could ever settle down here? Each morning, greeting my friend and still smelling the smoke on my clothes from his pipe and wood fires. He would allow me to stay and try to hide his joy. For this, he has waited for a very long time. For me to return home and stay after leaving so many times before. He would never have left me even if I commanded it, I thought. Tyler would have sat waiting for me a lifetime, absorbed in his feelings of yearning and the recollections of my birth. At this time, something moved in me. As if the nature all around us was abruptly a part of my bones. I understood earlier, at least on the surface, what Tyler had meant by this spot being lonely if he were to return here without me, but now I felt it way down inside. The feeling of loneliness without him seemed to be in my blood, and I ached with the prickling of despair. I realized how he was unable to give me up, to let go, to let

die emotionally. For a moment, I seemed to understand Tyler and even myself.

The somber prosaic feelings that I held onto respectfully for years began to rush from me and spill down my cheeks. Too much realism, I thought and wept harder still. Damn his manner! I thought as I felt Tyler's arm enclose me and pull my limp body closer to his. As seconds passed that felt like days, I allowed the weariness that gripped my soul to takeover, and I grew more and more visibly grief-stricken. Oh, the shame of it! The simplest traits of Tyler's actions have escaped me before, yet under these circumstances, I see how little I had appreciated them. With this I will add, never underestimate the power of resistance. Not even my usual feelings of self-defiance could permeate these feelings of sadness. I finally gave in and simply wept while my friend held me, not with one, but now both arms.

[Excerpt from Tyler's mind: "Even now he fights to allow my affections to go forth and render a more

kindhearted poetry of emotion. I cannot help but to think he is protecting something precious, yet whatever that may be, certain loss has already shadowed it. What are these old chambers that my dear one hides as if to remain there forever? Although, it is so good to hold him while the moon is shining beautifully on the water and the hedges of shrubs near the river glint and shimmer from the reflection. Dear Father, if I were selfish, I would ask that You take us both speedily home. In the light his gray hair shown more prominently. I remember when it was the color of bronze. It was his hair, among many other qualities, that caused me to write a particular text.”] And, Tyler spoke aloud. “My Man. Would you mind if I recited something I had written for you many years ago?” I took in a large gulp of air and nodded yes, letting the tears fall against Tyler’s chest where my head now rested. “It may come to you as some surprise and I’m not sure if it will ease your heart, but no matter, I will go on and see how it turns out.”

“Time does not permit me to dwell in the same detail upon his features for they are changing before my very eyes. He is comparable in quality to those virtues that surpass epic dimensions. It is not his appearance alone I make these remarks, it is what I see within him. Above all qualities, he is like a dark flower that his essential character is to be sought. Although he does not know this as of yet and perhaps will not for nearly a lifetime, he is wrought with modest tragedy that surrounds a truly noble nature. He is condemned to be restrained if not destroyed by the wickedness of this world. Where I see now the budding of a discrete mixture of pity and irony, later to become the unfulfilled martyr of social consequence, and finally the loner tortured by the shadows of the masses, but who is able to take the decisive step toward the impulse of gentle action. He is a dreamer and I pray that this fact never changes although many other characteristics about him will. He will recite eternal monologues beneath the night sky quietly alone and with variations of resigned passion. He is both shadow and light. A good craftsman trapped within a low-grade industry.”

Tyler's words appealed to my deepest sorrow. Afterwards, he said he had written this in a scrapbook when I was only two. Of course, he did not know then that I would lose all sense, especially a sense of justice. That I would lose my art and gentle influence, contemporary notions of life and first-rate habits. Least of all, I doubt if he knew at that time I would have turned on him years later. There was never any doubt that I had left him when he needed me most and I now all I can do is weep in his arms and receive the forgiveness that I truly feel is not deserving. Tyler would disagree with me, of course, but for now, he just held me while gently rocking back and forth on the fallen tree. How profound, I thought. A tree that once stood against all weather and insect had finally fallen with a crash. I have fallen as well and like the earth, my friend gave me comfort and a soft place to land. Neither questions nor complaints. Also like

the ground the tree now laid, Tyler waited years – always ready to break my fall.

I leaned from Tyler and swatted away the remaining tears from my face in the only manner a man too long in his years and pride could fashion. I'm ready to go back now, I said without looking at Tyler. As we rose to leave, I heard a Plop and a Splash coming from the river. The fish were as restless as I, however, I was quickly becoming exhausted and looked forward to another night's rest in the home of my friend. I had no contemporary notions of life and habits of thought any longer. I was simply just too tired of such things and wanted only sleep. The day has been both tiresome and dramatic. I cannot say with much certainty the day has led to a definite reform of my emotions and previous points of view regarding my relationship with Tyler, yet at least in one area, there is now a change taking place. While we walk back to the small house, I mull what this is over in my mind. Tyler is helping me walk by holding me

close to him – it helps the already blossoming feeling that now fills my heart. The unusual richness of affection combined with great understanding must show on my face, but I continue to stare only at our path.

When inclined, I will mouth the words and pass onto Tyler what I am feeling. In the forest, I only want to take in the smells and sounds moving past the mighty trees in silence. Stealing a glance at my friend's face, he looks as if he agrees. How could anyone want to do away with this landscape, I wonder. If I were deaf, sight alone would brand my spirit, leaving an impressionable mark of wonder. Adding to this is the fact that I do hear and the birds sing along with the wind's chant. It's a show representing the power of creation in its most subtle form. The earth that now clings to my shoes has been here for millions of years. Long before the press of commerce against the defenseless creatures. Long before the tragic and brutal machines that butcher the land and waters,

removing any aide memoir of the soil's formation – the resultant evil.

The earth has always been loyal to man, but rarely the other way around. I have certainly not always been loyal to land nor the friend which supports me along our walk. If loyalty depicts a matter of honor in which it is tested and impartially examined in the different circles where it is at work, then I have not been honorable as well. Tyler would say he hasn't either and this is the way of humanity. He would add that the force of aspiring to things principled plays in the logic structure and concentrated actions of human development. I'm somewhat relieved that I am looking downward and away from Tyler, because the smile that crept over my face would have been cause for him to ask me what it was I were thinking. I would have to answer honesty, lying was never good with him, and admit it was that I couldn't believe I sound just like my friend and the bit-o-love in which I felt when doing so was embarrassing.

A bit further and I will see the first of the house. Its simple frame and smoke rising from the chimney. I'll tell my friend, as we get closer that I would like to stay and rest for the night. He will, of course, agree with much delight. In fact, I know that he will begin preparing my bed as soon as we arrive. There will be much to talk about the next day. It was Shelley who wrote, "...on the wings and flames of dawn." There will be flames because the time has come when I do away with old habits and tell the truth about my feelings for Tyler. I haven't the steady enemy of oppression to fall back on any longer – and there never was even the slightest hint of it to begin with. Like my friend, I have always been a sensitive man, but who lacks with all my heart the consideration necessary for fair play. To come right out with it, I am afraid of showing my true feelings. I had once believed that there was a definite musical charm with catching and keeping the hidden feelings. My intuition was so infallible that I was content without as much as a hint of guilt. It didn't matter whether

or not Tyler or anyone else understood me, but here is irony, I now care more than ever before. We reached the house and walked inside. I went straight to bed and stopped dead in my tracks as I crossed the threshold of the door that leads into the bedroom. On the nightstand, was the book I had thought of earlier and it gave me a fright to see it there. It was as if it manifested itself, or I summoned it by merely thinking about it earlier. Tyler came up behind me and gave me a start, “are you going to be comfortable?” He said, and still smiling finished with, “I thought you might want to read that old thing to help you sleep.” Sure, I answered and Tyler left. He still does not know I had read it before. Although, the pages in which I wept over have long since dried and crinkled, I still see the passages float before my eyes. It will be good to read it again. I knew that he would sit by the fire until I’ve fallen asleep. In this house, there is always a fire, I thought. The hearth never grows cold. I slipped out of my day clothes and climbed under the comfortable sheets

and blankets, reached over and picked up the book. After staring at the cover still trying to get my mind around this whole situation, I opened to the first page – skipping the introduction altogether, and began to read. The first four words gave me yet another chill, “What Trilogy is This.” Although I had been near exhaustion, I would not sleep for hours. Soon, I was lost in every word.

Book One: [What Trilogy is This] Chapter One: [Tria Conspiratio]:

“What Trilogy is this that even the tone of the words separates the soul from its outer flesh? The frost once covering mine eyes has lifted, new life springs from the warmth of yearning, all in the presence of forgiveness now upon the doorsill of death. There are no more questions of why it must be so, why it is necessary, and whether I am worthy to receive it. Instead, like nature – it just was and forever shall be. On earth, I could never underline the sweetness of this place. Incidents of worship were now replaced with a constant flow of adoration with the help of a sweet wind. Clouds were everywhere, the

fragrance of Myrrh teased my nostrils, and angels beckoned me further. This was no psychological imagination at play, no dying neuron flooding my brain with endorphins, and He – the best ally of understanding and sympathy – it was then I fell to my knees and wept for mercy. Sorrow was also in harmony with this realm and I was truly remorseful for all my sins. The very sins that marked my natural turn of mind in the old world were now being called upon and recited back to me. He was so gentle, all the while filling me with new life, that He preserved me with the blood of a New Covenant. Yet, I persisted still humbled before Him that I am not worthy to receive this gift. The incarnation of this privilege was lost when I became a man and tossed away the honor of The Father along with the ideals of a child. If nothing else, I could not lie before Him. It had been only a dream and it had been my dream. Even in slumber, I saw no place of honor for me in heaven. It has been my way for many years. I grew up in the tradition of grief in which failure dominated all chance, occupying a place of despair full of indignation and pity, setting myself against the humiliation of loss. I seldom thought I deserved better, for this would become even more of a conviction when my only child drew

absent from my life. Only the debris of old portraits and sketches remained in memory of him. I lived in a world of illusion without the strength to fight or weep. Nonetheless, I never escaped the influence of God and the movement of my soul appealed to this reliance. As with the dream where I died and experienced what I can only describe as the Trinity, I could never bring myself to proclaim my worthiness on earth or in heaven. Thus, I have learned like others to live by the toil of my hands, and for my part, I chose the craft of faith in a home I greatly love, but feel do not belong. God could have made a more righteous vessel and perhaps He did, but I have again lost my nerve and my spiritual guide. Again, I have torn apart the very basis of Trinity. In the most spiritual doctrine, I am a man who fights with wavering energy against the temptations of the flesh in the very literal sense, and here sin again has entered this doctrine. At the feet of my Master, I was able to observe my victories and defeats. I had used to find ingenious excuses for any particular fall from grace and knew that it was the power of temptation that held me in its grip and I was its slave. I always wished to live a simple life, but wanted to be excellent at it. Truly, an irony in the making. The very goal of my life is a

fine example of this irony. I strove to be a man of God with all my being, but when given the opportunity to be with Him, I failed to allow my transgressions forgiven. I am priggish and foolish, isolated and agitated. Is it so? Or perhaps my life is yet another description of melancholic beauty with all the fullness and richness of impressions made upon me by faith and failure? However, my failures come and go, but my convictions are steadfast. I will dream again.”

Thinking that I will read more of this book and finish it for sure, I grew very tired and needed rest. This was one of Tyler’s most somber and virtuous works indeed, but by no means rare compared to his other writings. I noticed the fact he gives no historical explanation of the decadence in his life, except for the brief information about sin. Clearly, Tyler hounds his Master and cannot look upon Him even in death. I understand this well, for I am unworthy and do not suppress this fact about myself. I can also relate to the truthfulness of the Lord’s merciful judgment. Mainly, because I do not have the strength to

believe it any other way in the wake of my own sins. There is ample enough foreshadowing that goes on within my heart of what is to come of me after death and it disturbs me so.

The novel itself was never published, but I do not know if this was due to Tyler's inhibitions even to try. From what little I read, the book consists of immensely tumultuous accounts of life on earth taken perhaps from Tyler's own experiences. Having people understand him has meant everything to the author and I can understand his fear of this not being the case. Therefore, he shelved the novel. I don't blame him. Many cannot judge the validity of their own actions least the criticism of another's work.

Powerless to stop the book from slipping from my hands before falling to the bed with a soft thump, I was falling fast asleep. And, soon I will dream – again.

A HOME FOR ALL SEASONS

Chapter Four

When I awoke, it was already nearing noon. From the east window of my bedroom, I noticed the sun was high and still climbing. It was then I realized I had fallen asleep while reading, however, the book was neatly resting on the nightstand, along with my spectacles, folded and sitting atop the book. He must have slipped them from my face, I thought and smiled. There are two more novels associated with this particular book, a three-volume set that lends itself to the overriding message of *Trinity*. Although, I've read all three and have decided to re-read each one again, I still cannot find the strength to read the set's introduction once more. It was heartrending

the first time I read it and it nearly destroyed me. The dedication was hard enough. Before I could flip the page, the words caught my eyes and slammed into my brain. I will never forget them. They were twenty of the most difficult words I had ever read up until then. The dedication read, “For [Spudie]. My son. Loving him is the closest I’ve ever come to believing God lives in all of us.” Pondering the words painfully over in my mind, I thought he must care for his son very much.

The series, *What Trilogy is This*, has had a strong revival in me because of events since reading the three volumes years ago, and it remains a classic work, the model of a solid, concentrated, and sure art. Many shorter essays continued the descriptions of heaven and earth, always devoted to the religious element that, in the eyes of the reader, made God’s promise comprehensible. Tyler analyzes the redemptive piety of the world and reduces it to chaotic instinct. He writes in one of the chapters, “...and our taste for self-humiliation is the

essential and distinctive traits of humanity, but what of the spirit and faith retaining the binding in all humans – love.”

I hardly recognize the marvelous countryside of man’s heart as depicted in Tyler’s novellas and I marvel at how he has preserved this belief in not only himself, but also all the world. It is important to note that this trait does not breathe freely and shows itself only in the pages of Tyler’s books. His eyes tell another tale altogether of how they mourn after all he has seen of the ugly and the false. As part of a sonnet Tyler once penned on a piece of scratch paper, he wrote. “Why? So that You Will Do Better Than I.” The piece had something to do with passing on a grand tradition of love by means of written prose. I shall have to find that and I’m sure Tyler has it tucked away in an old box somewhere. Tyler threw nothing away of his writings and it has become quite evident that he meant to save them for not himself, but another for sure.

The smells of breakfast still lingering were making my stomach growl, but I hesitate to leave the bedroom and join Tyler. There is much I want, no, need to tell him. Difficult words to say and hear. I haven't the courage right now and need some sort of motivation. Perhaps I should read the book's Introduction in order to remind me of many important things. One of which is why I am so full of trepidation all of a sudden. Fine then. Let's have it over with and I gingerly picked the book up off the nightstand and turned to the first page of the Introduction. Within the first paragraph, the emptiness within the pit of my stomach now felt like stones the size of grapefruit. Read it, I said to only myself. Read it because it will set things in motion that I must do this day and after. Even fools have moments of heroism. For want of a better start, this will be my moment and I began to read.

[Introduction]

In a quite different spirit, [What Trilogy is This (2019-2024)], Volumes I-III were written as a counterpart to *The Four Hearts*. The books are portrayed as if remembered by an unworthy servant of God. The author is not an optimist in relation to his master and has very little force to change his life for the better. Responsible for his sins and those of his son as well, the author (I) suffer the most severe consequences his accusers could have desired. In effect, one finds in the volumes a large measure of surrender to the silent pain that passes through Tyler. Using his birth name, the author depicts a picture of truth masked in a fictional light; it is filled with irony. This is due in part to the kind of reconciliation that Tyler strives for, but fails to believe he may possess. Taken from *Chapter Four, Volume II*, He writes, ‘...as likely to see the Father as to hold my son once again – on earth and after.’ Having paid his debt by death, there is a sweet vision of heaven before a divine presence (Jesus the Savior), but the author finds this kingdom undeserving. Mainly, because he feels he has failed his only son and therefore not fit for salvation delivered unto him by the Son of Man. A dream of heaven and a dream on earth, but yet only a dream. Further into the first volume and throughout the second and

third, the author becomes more frustrated with a changing world. He also fears as the years past that his son's youth was ruined by the hatred of the boy's mother for any type of relationship with his father. This also pushed his anger to the point of rage when he thought his son's pure and imaginative power was being quelled by the cruel and jealous nature of his mother, the richness of the boy's life being taken away from him. Not that the author felt he was a better parent, not in the least, but because he never would have separated his son from the only mother the boy ever had. During the long years without his son, the author wrote intensely of his failed relationship and his own struggles with God the Father. He, Tyler, often thought of taking extended trips far from all that knew him in order to find peace in the abjuration of life. This idea was always thwarted because he was fearful that his son would need his father while away, thus, losing perhaps the only opportunity to be with his son once again. Therefore, Tyler stayed and waited in misery. More often by the strongly accentuated contrast between the dreaming of Heaven and the harsh reality of the world, the author wrote the novellas. Still, tying to remain both the key subject in these books and also

separate himself as a different character altogether (as shown here in the introduction), the author (I), have attempted to write this series based upon the imprint created by the tragedies resulting from malicious people and the comprehension of a greater spirit not mine, of course, or of this world. Often within each volume, the author simplifies the subject of faith and suffering by restricting himself to his own experiences in order to develop the principle idea that he has not suffered in vain. The complexity of this hope compounds the fact that it all comes down to Tyler himself when confronted by God. As with the proclamation, “Just say the Word and I shall be healed,” the author cannot mutter a sound. The reason is born of his separation or abandonment from or by his only son. The following passage further supports this belief, *Chapter Six, Volume I*: ‘The principle idea that I am not worthy is no more evident in the fact I was not good enough to keep near me a wayward son. Too close was my love for him and its intensity ignited his hate. After a life of ceaseless thirst for the bond to become real again between father and son, sets the old man into the world now dry of power and the old father’s consciousness bitter and blind.’ By the end of the third volume,

there seems to be a reckoning between the author and his son. This, of course, is pure fantasy and I write it only to portray my own distorted view of a better day. The deformation of the truth is at the very least all that remains as a choice between pain and succumbing to senile pleasure. The author only as far as he can show in what a pitiable manner he surrenders, like a bursting bubble. It is the judgment of the pitiless world pronounced against his character and leaves him feeling insignificant. However, there is hope. The author writes of a singularity resolute art in the belief in God. For example, the following quote is taken from *Chapter Fifteen, Volume III*: ‘In place of this enemy I have made of thy self, cast out the vanity and restore a dormant comfort in knowing there is a greater calling of my spirit and it will know its divine command. Nearing the twilight and judgment of sin, there is always the omen of condemnation. Guilt essential, which has pushed me toward the fate of absolution. These life’s consequences of the war between good and evil will end and I shall discard the fear. So dear, you are my son and despite everything earthly, it has been my duty to remain vigilant to the severe light of our suffering. What I have lost this day, I suffer to believe I will

regain in heaven. My memory will abide after death and it is filled with the vision of you.’ With the strongest of reasons, the Introduction was written in the first, second, and third person by the author himself. It was a somber clear-sightedness of all the author’s vices and faults to do so. For under all repellent things, he (I) saw something of an indestructible bond between Father, father – and son.

The second read has finished me. Years ago, when I first stole the books from Tyler’s closet and shoved them beneath the clothes inside my suitcase, I had read them in the safety of my own home. The first volume, which now lays a top my lap, still bears the dent in its spine from when I threw it against the wall immediately after reading the Introduction. To say I had been angry would have been a grave understatement. After a short time, I picked up the book again which looked to be exactly like a limp and lifeless bird sprawled about my floor. Its pages like wings bent and flattened against the wood, the words mercifully facing downward. When I

began to read again, the pain subsided only a bit and with great moral stress, I pressed onward. Reading each of the three volumes was a painful experience. It was as if the entire force of gravity bore down upon my chest with each passing word. So full of immense torture were the passages and I was alone reading them without a place to hide nor the strength to turn away. I did try to take leave of my senses and pretend these written works had nothing to do with me, to ease my heart and allow my mind to drift away – where the wind goes and no one follows. In this manner, I could take leave of the present, forget the past, and see a brighter future. However, from the inexhaustible hoard of difficult memories, I wasn't able to depart from reality. Instead, the pain and agony to create and re-create in mind and soul what it was I had done to draw these words from Tyler. My destiny conceived and therefore no longer the opulence found only in refutation – I admit to the empty room, mute angels, and myself that which the mastery of psychology

has allowed me to deny for so many years – I was born his son.

From the bed I now sit, there is but a thin impediment made of pine that separates us, but it might as well have been the Great Wall of China. All joy and desire has left me. The color and brilliance of new hope seems to be gone for good. What state of mind had been so essential that I would not listen to my heart? No good reason comes to mind. Although something inside of me signaled the return to this house, I cannot seem to gather the might to follow through with its intentions. I feel condemned to death and my old superiority once believed over Tyler has withered.

Within our history, the place of child and parent has been clearly lost and its importance I did not recognize for a long time and almost without any divergence of opinion. My dear friend has followed the tradition of the good Shepard in stressing the unwavering staff extended to save his wandering sheep from falling over the steep bank

and into oblivion. He would have fallen for me. My observations are now real life based and I declare a unique precision of these observances. I now resist all temptations to forget the words and never will I make little of what I see and above all, sense. Rendered with the most exact loyalty, I will from this day forward seek that eminent and secret talent given unto all humans. It will be the imprint of my masterpiece to the work of this earthly existence. The picture of my life has been incomplete due to the disposal of a task so demanding. From his hands, I left and to those firm, but gentle hands I shall return. At this instant, I pray from the comfort of this bed my friend will receive me. It is a simple prayer and heartfelt which provokes the most vehement feelings of sorrow. Dear God, please help me remember the faces of my fathers.

I threw the bedclothes off my legs and swung them onto the floor. Just past the doorway, I was still trying to put together the right words in which I would say and realized I was clearly unable to do so. I did know beyond

any doubt, no other event in my life would give me so much legitimate satisfaction or anguish than what would transpire in just a matter of seconds. Rounding the corner, I moved slowly into the great room, in a daze and still fighting for what I would say. Nothing came. Looking up, I saw Tyler and suddenly I was flooded with torment. Thinking of only myself for so long, remorse overwhelmed me. I thought that in the solitude and silence of our relationship, there was a profound meaning. How foolish I have been. Seeing what was most likely absolute horror on my face, Tyler quickly rose to his feet and stood only a few steps from me. Close enough to catch me when I fell from utter exhaustion and anxiety. Wrapped tightly in his arms and weeping with fever, I found my voice and only one word, but its depth and meaning was quite satisfactory – Father – and the man that I addressed in this manner, for the first time since I had been fifteen, wept along with me.

Realizing it had always been my own doing, I no longer feel cast away. Unsurprising and with great relief, my father has taken me back. How perfect that description – it is truly a home for all seasons. After our embrace, there was little talk while we ate a hearty breakfast of jelly cakes, waffles with peanut butter, milk, toast, and coffee made from freshly ground beans. Settling down into our chairs, my father lit his pipe and smiled at me over the curling smoke. I would begin to speak first, because much of what I needed to say was my liability. It still ached to call him by his rightful name, but for a more splendid reason. “Dad,” I began, “who am I in truth?” Not a question for him, but for me. “To answer, I am an exile enjoying the hospitality of my father’s house, to which I likewise owe an eternal debt of gratitude. But, let me say that irrespective of my person and my deficiency as a son, your patience in me has been a gesture of great beauty.” My father remained both silent and motionless throughout as I continued speaking. “It is

necessary that there should be times of absolute independence in our lives. Away from the next and far from the opinion's of parents. However, I left for all the wrong reasons: hate, prejudice, and animosity. Represented in the unity I now feel, I thought freedom of thought and conscience meant breaking the tie that bound us together. For me, especially, freedom became dogma and meant more than the breaking of your heart. I had no idea that I could have been free and independent. My choices were limited by the cult of loathing within the home I shared with Mother.”

“Few words will ever explain my admiration for you. I wanted you to know as well, the literature you've written alone does justice to the pain our separation has caused, but the letters of love and learning you sent me continuously over the years has helped me a great deal. The world has changed and it has not been for the better. Father, I want to find the noble bond you speak of. I yearn to become an illustrious soldier fighting for love

between us, making this world glorious for at least two human beings. Your faith in the majesty of God has rubbed off on me and I am going to be chivalrous, a free thinker, no longer a stranger to you, and full of honor. I profess these sentiments to you in the most profound respect and pray you feel the deep emotion as I do. Father, I've come home to stay. Will you have me?"

"No other position in this world has given me more privilege than to call myself your father. The brilliant subtleties of your soul shine this moment like the golden laurel of a heavenly crown. You have, my son, saved me from a vanishing wish, and in doing so, you have most meritoriously continued the glorious traditions of our purpose on this earth. I say with earnest, we are here to unfetter those burdens set upon us for simply being of this world. I sincerely thank you for giving me the most valuable picture of salvation as Christ intended it. May my feelings of gratitude and sympathy be of some comfort to you in the glum of regret, but never again will you find

yourself, both in heaven and earth, in exile. Welcome home.”

A HOME FOR ALL SEASONS