

APOPHENIA GOLD  
The Story of Honey Savannah

By Rose C. Lane

APOPHENIA GOLD

The First Book in a Series....

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## COVER

The cover painting was produced by the author in 2024. It is an oil painting that is a copy of a painting made by Clara Rettich in 1911, which was designed by Rudolf Steiner. This painting is a copy of the Fifth Apocalyptic Seal.

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For R.S. 1861-1925

## PRELUDE.

*Five Years Ago.*

James pictures himself as the plain mason jar on a shelf filled with fluted champagne stems, cut crystal tumblers, and bulbous snifters. This is the image that sinks into mind every time he sits down again at one of the Sunday afternoon weekly dinners hosted by his parents, at which his unhinged sisters often show up, and replete with guests of exotic occupations, catering staff, and his mother Edna's five-foot long (tail to tuft) Macaw named Romulus. Next to the Macaw, and easy to miss with his more modest plumage, was Remus, the African Grey, who manages to latch onto and repeat whatever last, most embarrassing comment had been uttered at the raucous

afternoon affairs.

Last week, Remus had announced, “*all’s fair bubba in love and negooootiations bubba,*” which was an amalgam between two conversations ongoing at the same time. Edna had nodded proudly, her red hair bounced and then unraveled - dyed mahogany bright with a streak of pure white down one side - as she jumped up to treat him a pistachio. “Good birdie.”

James had that picture in his head, of the past Sunday dinner of artists and eccentrics, parrots and caterers, in the stone mansion where he grew up, where every surface was adorned and extravagated, when he first noticed her. This plainly dressed woman sitting outside the coffee shop on the East End. Her hair was cut to chin-length, but held in place by four barrettes. Her ears each had several tiny gold earrings, but he saw no tattoos. That was a relief. He always wanted to wash tattoos off a girl’s skin.

And she was just sitting there, scribbling in a notebook, cross-legged on a summerscape bench outside the coffeeshop, her hoody balled up like a pillow to prop her notebook on her lap. He sat down nearby. Near enough that she should have looked up, but did not. She just kept writing. Her glasses were clear plastic frames sliding down her nose, a little.

Ten minutes had passed. He finished his coffee, and she had not looked his direction. He was seated only three feet away, at most. The street was Friday morning casually busy - so he did not feel like he was encroaching, and it was the only other place to sit outdoors - but finally he said: “Are you writing a book?”

She looked up, unsurprised at the interruption, as if she

had been expecting it. She looked at him, her eyes momentarily narrowing as they focused. Her gaze held him frozen. Then, she half smiled, mimicking Mona Lisa, and said, “No, I’m not. I’m taking notes from an interview.” She tugged at the tiny earphone in her left ear, pulling it out. Its pair had been dangling by her side all along. She pressed a button on her phone, looked back at him, and waited. She did not close her notebook.

“What kind of interview?” He asked.

Again, the half smile, as if she was considering. “I suppose you could say: with a whistleblower.”

“Oh! Are you a journalist?”

She half smiled again, but kindly, and self-deprecating, said: “Ha. I suppose you could say that too.”

He took a breath and a chance, and moved over onto the bench next to her. “Can I sit here?” He asked.

“Fine with me.” Still, she did not close the notebook. He glanced at it, now just two feet away, spread across the hoody on her lap. It was - just scribbles - not words. Wiggles. Nonsense. For a brief instance, he thought, *oh my god. This is an insane person. What a fool I am. I’m just drawn to crazy people* - But she had seen him look and saw his face blanch. She laughed out loud and said, “Haven’t you ever seen shorthand?”

He did a faux face-in-hand-plant, and then said, “But you seem so modern. Almost futuristic.”

She laughed again, tickled, and stuck out her hand. “I’m Honey.”

“Wow. That’s your name? Oh. Sorry. I’m James.” He shook her hand, which was wiry and strong. He held on a



moment too long, and she gave him a knowing look.

“Yeah. It’s my real name. Are you local?”

“Very much. A few streets over. You?”

“I’m having my van repaired around the corner.”

“Are you one of those nomads I’ve read about?”

“Oh. Sometimes. I have been. I guess I am now. At least compared to you, right?”

James felt like he had seen a glimpse into a future that might make sense. This woman - with her modern oddness, her many pierced ears and no (visible) tattoos, her old fashioned shorthand - could she be the one he matched with? Did she just tell him she lived in a van?

“How long do you expect the van repair to take?” He asked.

“I’m staying in an AirBnb. Because it wasn’t quite clear.” She grinned, and threw her arm into a gesture towards a street on the bay side of the peninsula. “And they told me they don’t work on weekends.” She mimed looking at a watch, which she wasn’t wearing. “So....at least a few days.”

Tomorrow was July Fourth. His mind was working. He wanted to get her number, or email, or twitter handle, or whatever it was she used. He asked instead, “You have plans to watch the fireworks?”

“Well, the place I rented has a roof deck. But no.”

*A roof deck?* He paused, adjusted his estimation of her. He had pictured this van dweller staying in some single room in a shared house, not a roof deck apartment on a holiday weekend. *Hmmm.* He looked again, more closely, his eyes for labels and

materials and make, trained through decades in the Mason house, the stone mansion on the West End of the peninsula. She wore clean Chuck Taylors, laced up tight around her ankles. A nice pair of skinny, worn-in jeans. The hoody was brand-less. The notebook looked high quality.

“Want to go for a walk?” He said. “Do you know the city?”

She jumped up, grabbing her hoody and notebook in one smooth motion, and sliding them both into a lightweight nylon backpack, also with no branding. The earpiece and the pen she stuck into the front pocket, and then pulled both straps over her arms. “Sure! Let’s walk.”

James noticed she was tall, but still shorter than him. She gave the impression of long-limbed ease, just short of grace. She was efficient when she was moving, and then very still when not.

So James said, “Have you ever seen a five foot Macaw?”

“Is that the parrot that looks like a cartoon?”

“Yep.”

James could tell nobody was home the moment he opened the front door. It had been left unlocked, as they often did when going out for a croissant or baked goods, or the fourth latte of the day. The foyer, two stories open, had black-and-white tiled floor and floor-to-ceiling red velvet drapes. And every inch of the walls was fitted with framed paintings, of all types and eras. It was as if the decorator had been more interested in making them all fit - like a jigsaw puzzle - then in any sort of logical arrangement based on theme or century.

It was not like inviting a girl he just met into his *own* apartment, he figured. There was a respectable remove, and the house presented its own obstacles, with all its relevance and stonework.

He watched Honey take it all in, her eyes sliding up the floor-to-ceiling red velvet, and then across the jumble of art. “As I said, my parents are artists....and collectors.” He knew it sounded apologetic. Still, she said nothing. But, she stepped closer to one wall, and seemed to be examining a small piece, set just above eye level. She looked down quickly, at the jumble of shoes lining the walls, and grabbed the small step stool, as if she knew it was set there for just that purpose. Then she positioned it. *How had she identified that one out of the hundreds, and so quickly?* She stepped up, so she was eye-to-eye with it. It was a small icon, very old, and with a gold leaf background. A Russian medieval piece, more valuable than most of the rest of the house.

From the other room, Remus croaked out, “Mother Mary, Mother Mary, Mother Mary.” Honey jumped off the step stool and grinned at James.

# *Chapter One*

## *Present Day*

It was time for the yearly pruning. She pictured her physical world like a fruit tree, always shooting suckers up to the sky - but in this case, they were seeking tendrils of stuff that aimed to latch her into place on the earth.

James was at work. While he knew about the routine, she preferred to engage the ritual in private. The moment he left, she looked at the kitchen stove clock. 8:07 am. Like usual, she would

use their bedroom to stage the sort. On a new sheet of notebook paper, she outlined a little tree:

Clothing

- |— seasonal
- |— outerwear
- |— shoes
- |— basics

Personal Effects

- |— money
- |— crypto
- |— mementos
- |— books
- |— jewelry
- |— luggage
- |— lockbox items

Work Tools

- |— The Journal
- |— Voicework

Toiletries & Body

- |— etc

As every time, her goal was for all personal possessions to fit onto the surface of a king sized bed. It was a reasonable facsimile for the storage in a camper van, such as she had lived in for several years, pre-James. And it approximated well the psychological object-weight she could handle.

Deliberately, she removed items from drawers and closets, until every piece of clothing was folded on the bed, and every pair of shoes lined its foot. Familiar piles of grays, blacks, and navies, sprinkled with buff and gold. The only color was in the

plastic tub of body stuff.

She picked up each object, remembered its last use, and sorted it into Stay or Go. The clothing made up a larger donation bag than prior years. *Getting soft, Honey*. Too much stability. Electronics required a special sort of care and erasing prior to the discard. A few completed notebooks she set aside, to be bundled into a Fedex envelope and shipped to Aunt Lillian. Eventually, they would be added to the Tupperware boxes of other notebooks in the locked shed Aunt Lillian had gifted her nomadic niece. Finished books were moved to the joint bookshelf in the living room. James could be responsible for their weight. He would not even feel it pulling at him, already attached to the place as he was.

The pruning was successful.

And she felt a little like she was waiting for something to happen.

Honey took the rhubarb lipstick and dabbed some on her cheeks and lips, then rubbed it vigorously with her fingers. She examined the marks left on each side of her nose by eyeglasses. Her eyes, after which she had been named, were light brown, nearly honey colored. Her hair was the same color, and she cut it herself, into a choppy shoulder length style. Sometimes she added bangs, but right now it was mostly one length. Eight tiny gold earrings cast delicate shadows.

She gathered the remaining March outdoor layers - a black wool hat, technical gloves, a wool jacket - and her bag with

notebooks and pens. After the pruning, this was to be a typical day. But there was a tickle that she acknowledged. Things seemed to be ready to shift.

In the last few years, the social world had been quaking, becoming more jagged and unforgiving. Honey watched all of this happen, and carefully rechecked all the security procedures she already had in place for remaining an anonymous, boring woman in the north east who worked recording audiobooks and other types of voiceover work.

Security through obscurity. Hiding in plain sight. She had perfected the skill that she dubbed “invisibility” - she made herself just boring and small enough that people might seem to not see her. They would not go so far as to run into her like an invisible wall, but they did not make eye contact, and they seemed to barely notice her existence when she put on this psychological cloak. As the social world had grown more tenuous, she gained appreciation for this skill, and for the fact that she always applied the same rule to her life online as well.

The way Honey saw it, there was the real world, that physical material space that we all share on Earth, and there was an emerging netherworld, an inverse world, decorated with the neon lights of progress, abundance, and wealth, slowly taking shape. A parallel universe. She heard someone once refer to it as the Eighth Sphere, and this was now the name she used when thinking or writing about it as well. Names are useful.

The Eighth Sphere, as might be expected of a dystopian parallel universe, presented itself as a world of endless comforts, entertainments, perfect freedom and perfect information. When

the first spidery limbs of this netherworld began to infiltrate the real earth - back in the late nineties - it had seemed so unthreatening. It was a clumsy little stick figure of a child, a little hastily drawn spider, that was attempting to crawl around and do some not very useful things.



She had been given the name Honey Savannah on a lighthearted lark. Her parents, both academics, never intended to marry. One summer, after taking a road trip across the back roads of Georgia, they alit in the riverfront city of Savannah, known for its Spanish moss and meticulous parks. There, in a hotel near the river, they likely conceived their first and only child. And so, Honey grew up with a name she shared with neither of her parents. Their last names were, respectively, Abel and Cain, a sort of terrible joke they told and retold. They never considered taking on the same name, and prudently decided that perhaps their honey-eyed baby girl did not need to go through life with that hyphenated moniker. The original schism did not seem the most fitting start for an innocent baby.

As a teenager, Honey, somewhat regrettably, had realized that her name sounded like a pseudonym, or a stage name, and it did not blend with the typical New England English or French Canadian or Irish names by which she was surrounded. She grew reticent about her name, sometimes just introducing herself



as ‘Savannah’.

Honey’s parents were both college professors, and they taught economics and anthropology. Their life, in those days, was much the same from day to day, in a comfortable apartment in a converted Victorian mansion on a quiet tree-lined street in their small New England town. They shared an old Volvo and drove together to the university. Honey was the only child, the accident they decided to keep. Having been early concerned participants in the environmental movement, they fully intended to never procreate in their personal effort to limit their impact. Honey was the surprise who was not aborted due to a deep-seated Catholic superstition, despite having long ago rejected all outer trappings of religion. They raised her without much attention or concern, making sure she was fed and washed and clothed and then leaving her to her dolls and books and writing.



There was a coffee shop about two blocks away that she liked to sit at for a few minutes most mornings and collect her thoughts or notes about current projects while sipping an espresso. It was not a very popular or hip coffee shop, and so there was little chance of running into peers, friends of James, or other acquaintances.

Today, she ordered her double to stay, and the barista walked it out to her table in a porcelain mug, nodding at her

absently. Honey was working on 'borderline invisible'. She did not feel the need to completely disappear today, in an unhip coffee shop such as this one, but neither did she want anyone to take much notice of her. She could work through strategies better when other people were unlikely to interfere. This was all much easier than one might assume. People generally only 'see' another when there is a surface upon which their own type of personality quirks reflect. In other words, most people can only see themselves. Honey made herself 'invisible' by providing no reflective surfaces with which the personalities of others were likely to engage.

Today, her plan was to read through her notes from the most recent series of interviews, and think through structure for the next article she was writing. It was Honey's other profession - not the voice work - that she liked to keep private. Only a handful of trusted people knew about the project. It was, essentially, an independent journalism effort to interview and then write about the experiences of people who had some connection to - shall we say - what might be called conspiracy theories. Honey published these works on a website called *The Journal for Apophenic Research*. She had been doing this for about eight years now, and had set up and maintained the site with a decent level of anonymity. All her interviews were made either in person or over the phone, and the articles were written in a serious journalistic style. Since she was never collecting or accessing secret documents, there was little risk to her legally. She had decided on anonymity for both herself and her subjects early on, simply because it seemed a more likely route for people

to open up and speak with her. Then she grew to like the anonymity, and the invisibility it provided.

Most recently she interviewed an English woman named Vivian, a self-described ‘targeted individual’. Vivian was in her mid sixties, born in Britain to parents who had immigrated. She was a lawyer, or had been, until the targeting began. Honey noted Vivian’s extremely dark bluish-purple aura. It was an unusual color. Most people she associated with were primarily greens and turquoise shades, some straight blue. She remembered few who were surrounded with that shade of blue-purple. It looked heavy too. It was the Vivian interview and notes that were contained in the notebook on the table next to her espresso. She needed to re-read the forty pages of shorthand, and then begin to structure an article.

It was through Vivian that Honey had first heard the phrase *the Eighth Sphere*. “It was,” she murmured in her upscale British accent, “the inevitable trajectory of the electrification of everything, of the internet of things and the interconnected world.” Vivian went on to tell a story, familiar to Europeans of a certain ilk, about a research scientist working out of a castle in remote Isle of Mull, Scotland, who had written a book that never touched the internet. The computer on which it was typed was never connected. The files of the book were passed on disk by hand to a printer, who created leather-bound books using traditional techniques. The dedication to the project was phenomenal, and Honey admired it. The scientist himself took great pains to not use the internet at all, describing it as an incarnation of the beast. Vivian had whispered to Honey that

this scientist had been working on a new form of power - *“beyond electricity. And that if we don’t learn to use this other form of energy, it will all, inevitably, sink into the Eighth Sphere.”*



Honey met Vivian on one of the older woman’s infrequent trips to the United States. Vivian had reached out via email: “A friend showed me your website. I wonder if you have written about targeted individuals. If not, I’d like to introduce myself.” As it happened, Honey had not yet written about the curious phenomena, one of which she was skeptical anyway. She was familiar with the idea, from her many years of fringe research amongst fringe thinkers, that there were groups of individuals who believed themselves to be “targeted” by the “government,” and had found solace and community online in various support and discussion forums. Because the alleged targeting was something that invariably only occurred in the individual’s head, Honey was uncertain how one might distinguish it from the better-known voices-in-the-head phenomena called schizophrenia.

But she was curious about Vivian’s email, sensing an intelligence behind it, coupled with a self-awareness. They met in a suburban public library, south of Boston. Libraries, she had found, were nice, neutral meeting places. And it was usually possible to find a corner where quiet conversation was tolerated. That was the first meeting, which had lasted two hours and resulted in a dozen pages of shorthand notes.

Honey encouraged her interview subjects to speak freely about anything and everything they believed might elucidate the topic in question. Honey herself undertook these interviews like a mirror: she folded all the personal, interesting, arbitrary, and particular aspects of herself inward, like a piece of origami, leaving only a reflective surface upon which the interview subject could project their story. It worked. Many people in this world are desperate to talk to someone who seems like they might make sense of the shreds. As she watched Vivian talk, Honey observed that the woman mostly had control over her energies: she was conscientious, and pulled back to recenter whenever her energy started to spill over into criticism or inappropriate judgement.

Vivian spoke extensively on the spiritual dangers of technology and the internet, referencing various researchers, but primarily the one scientist holed up in the Scottish castle. His work had become a flame for certain seekers in her European social circles, and for Vivian, it explained her own situation. She believed herself to be targeted through the electromagnetic spectrum. Her hypothesis was that “government workers” had made a sort of scan of her personal frequency and her brain wave signature, which allowed them to specifically target her in a way that was imperceptible to those around her. The targeting was experienced as a screeching or screaming in her mind, verbal abuse of various types, and other internally available perceptions, primarily of the auditory type.

“Why you?” Honey asked, the first and obvious question.

“I’m a lawyer, and I was getting too close to the truth.”

The woman answered swiftly, then veered right back to the

targeting. It took many dull attempts for Honey to gently steer the conversation back to “the truth” for which Vivian had been targeted, “the truth” that she had been researching.

Throughout this conversation in the library, and the two subsequent interviews - one in a British-themed tea house, the last in a co-working space where Honey had rented a conference room for the afternoon – Honey continued to hear Vivian reference the dangers of the digital “two-headed beast” technology, and the dangers of the internet in general. Vivian spoke, in abstract terms, about the other form of energy that the scientist in Scotland had been researching.

“Is it a sort of Tesla inspired free telluric energy?” Honey had asked.

“No. It’s....” Vivian’s aura shot through for a second with blue lightening as she sought the right words. “It’s a means of channeling the life force, say of plants and seeds, into a form of power that we can use for machines. And it can’t be abused in the way that electrical power can be, in the way the electromagnetic spectrum is used against me, and people like me...”



As the coffee shop door opened, blowing in a few snowflakes, Honey looked up. Three women entered in a swirl of scarves and satchels, older than Honey, and talking amongst themselves in a language Honey could not quite place. Was it a Slavic tongue? Greek? Some Arabic dialect? They sat down,

arraying themselves around one of the large corner tables. Honey watched them, keeping herself as uninteresting looking as possible.

The women might have been related, though she did not gauge them as three generations. Perhaps they were all in their fifties and sixties. Sisters? The oldest looking one had long gray hair, ornately braided and wrapped around the crown of her head in an old fashioned style. A very unusual look. She was wearing a mens-cut unstructured wool suit, but several sizes too large, such that it draped almost as though it were fashionable. The woman with the braid-crown began to rummage through her satchel, eventually pulling out a complicated knitting set up and a selection of yarn balls and needles. It was a large project, perhaps someday to be a sweater, in shades of teal and blue with wisps of angora and flecks of sparkle.

*How odd.* Honey thought, observing the incongruity of the braid, the wool suit, the knitting, and the unidentified language. Like the eldest, the other two women settled themselves, and also pulled out handwork projects. The younger two women both wore winter-weight cotton or linen dresses and rubber boots. They too had long hair, but worn in more conventional braids hanging down their backs.

The barista was also eyeing this trio with interest and a touch of annoyance, and when none of the women stood up to order at the counter as was expected, she called out, "Can I get a drink started for you ladies?"

The youngest looking of the trio jumped up immediately, and went over to the counter, bubbling in American English void

of any foreign accent, and said, “Oh yes, my goodness, we will have three double lattes, please, for here, and three of those scones,” pointing to the pastry case. She paid with cash as Honey watched.

After the three lattes and three scones had been delivered to the table, Honey hid her face but focused her inner and outer ears on the trio of handworkers. She could catch the occasional English word in the stream of the unknown language. *oulaya uway zan ukhalal lil museum m art - hai capuccino hena sei dan - ha-im unlana taxi....*

The middle sister, as Honey was calling her, pulled out a pair of scissors rather large for coffee shop use, and began measuring out pieces of yarn about the length of her arm, and cutting them swiftly. Finally, she wound each piece around two fingers, making a tiny, loose skein.

Just then the one with the braid crown dropped a bit of scone on the floor. She bent to the right to pick it up. One large ball of aqua shaded fuzzy fiber slid off her lap, and rolled across the floor, stopping at Honey’s feet.

Honey picked the yarn ball up, wondering if she should wind it as she returned it or just gather the yarn into a clump. None of the sisters had noticed the errant ball, and were speaking rapidly in their obscure language. Honey half-heartedly wound the string as she returned it the ten feet or so to their table. They all looked up in one motion, like birds, when she reached the shoulder of the eldest.

“You dropped this.” Honey said, with a mild smile.

“Oh my, yes she did!” The youngest spoke again, while



the eldest nodded her head vigorously and smiled. Honey returned to her seat and continued to listen. They had switched topics, because she no longer caught interjections of the odd English word. She closed her eyes and focused on the gist of what they were saying, looking for images. It was hard.

The women were discussing something that did not appear to involve image memory, because not even a flicker was coming across. Until the eldest began drawing shapes with her hands and Honey started to see a picture in her mind's eye.

Honey sipped the last drops of her espresso, and began to pack up her bag. It had been an unproductive session, but one with interesting distractions. She would focus better at home, she decided. She returned her mug to the counter on her way to the door. As she opened it to leave, she almost bumped into a man coming in from outside. He was odd-looking as well, though she could not quite put her finger on why. Did he look like he recognized her? He nodded his head, and she passed through the door.

“You dropped this.” She heard behind her. The man was holding out her notebook towards her, the one she had just packed away in her zippered bag. Honey hesitated. She could see that it was hers, recognizing the countless small imperfections that a few weeks of frequent handling had bestowed. But there was no way it could have fallen out of her bag, still zippered at her side.

“Thank you.” She took the notebook, replaced it carefully, and looked the man directly in the face, aiming to

memorize every nuance of his expression. There was something about the light pattern of lines around his eyes that she found familiar. Automatically, she made a mental snapshot, scanning for identifying marks.

*Average height and average looks. Perhaps 45, an average age as well.* Tan, brown hair, eyes blue or green or gray. The light made it hard to tell. A jacket in a neutral color. A flash of gold on his wrist. A watch? A chain?

The condo was drenched in shadowed aloneness, facing away from the sun at this hour of the day. Honey liked this time alone in the quiet. The desk was one of the older pieces from James' family, a graceful writing surface paired with two columns of small drawers up each side, and a shelf above. It made a little nook of privacy, built for a time when writing was done by hand.

She opened the notebook with Vivian's interview, and there, on the next page, was someone else's handwriting:

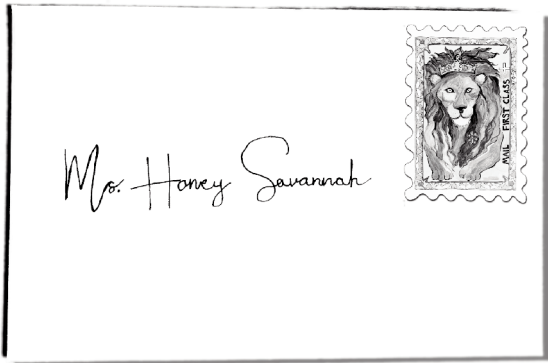
*For further insight, please see the letter.*

The notebook had not left her possession all day, except for the 30 seconds when she had returned the ball of yarn to the other table. Honey drew back her memory and checked to see if she had written anything after that incident. No, she had not. She looked back at the notebook page. She saw now that the unknown writer had underlined one of the sentences that Honey had written in her outline that morning. It said, Something is going

*to happen.*

The condo complex had one of those letter boxes where each address had a separate key, and the postal carrier could open them all at once for efficient access. The tiny gold key was third on Honey's keychain. She slotted it into their mailbox and opened the little door. She heard footsteps in the hall. A neighbor she did not recognize jingled a set of keys. She tried not to freeze.

There was one letter in the box, with a stamp and no address, neither of recipient nor sender. On the envelope was her name, written in a hand that matched the message in her notebook. The stamp, attached purely for decoration, showed a lion wearing a crown, painted in an art deco style. She extracted the letter, and held it up to the light. The envelope was a heavy cream paper, the type a nice invitation might come in. Nothing strange showed through in the sun.



Honey sat down on the park bench just outside, warmed by the sunlight, and ran her hands along the surfaces of the

envelope. Should she trust it? Memories of white powders in envelopes hovered in the background. *Nope, it was not that.* A jogger passed her. She watched his feet hit the pavement. A small tangle of ... something rolled after him, and then lurched to a stop in front of Honey's feet. She picked it up, and unraveled the piece of yarn. A bright red wool, about an arm's length. A chill ran through her back.

She dug her fingers into the paper, and opened the envelope. Inside, a single sheet of heavy paper, again with the same crisp handwriting.

*Hello Ms. Savannah, and thank you.*

*You are no doubt wondering why you have been contacted in such a strange and elusive manner. Please bear with me while I explain.*

Honey wondered why the green-eyed man in the coffee shop had not just handed her an envelope or a folded up sheet of paper with this letter written upon it. Why the drama? Would she have immediately dismissed it, discarding it like a proselytizing pamphlet? Granted, this treasure hunt had piqued her curiosity and perhaps the sleight-of-hand notebook trick had been intended to prove some capacity. She was quite certain this had something to do with her website, but still had not sensed a threat. She continued reading:

*Firstly, please note that this invitation is rarely extended and when it is, it is done so with the utmost care and consideration of all factors surrounding the*

*invitee's life and circumstances.*

*You may interpret this invitation as a call to action, a call to arms, or a call to attention. It is all, in different facets.*

*You have, as you know, skills that are rare. Yet, you have chosen to remain silent about these skills, even going so far as to obscure them. Few do this.*

*The life you have built for yourself is simple, almost isolated in its simplicity. This call, this invitation, if accepted, takes someone away and apart from a more conventional life of career and family. So, on this measure as well you have already chosen in a way that is aligned with the proposed mission.*

*Finally - hidden within you is a potential of which even you are unaware. This potential can only become manifest in specific circumstances.*

*You no doubt have some sense of our alignment, as well as the potentialities that these words herald.*

*If you choose to proceed with this path, it will start with a choice.*

*With kindest regards,*

*The Magician*

Honey looked at the piece of yarn, its measure at her

side. The ephemeral nature of the letter caught at her. Every paragraph was accompanied by a stream of dream-like images. She rolled them through her mind one more time.

Reading the first sentence, she could now see the face of the green-eyed man, the Magician, as he was today, tan and handing her a notebook. But behind and in parallel with this modern visage she saw the same man, with different faces and names, as if he were flowing through time. She saw him carrying water at a river in the desert. *The river Jordan*, as the name came to her. She saw him dressed regally, with elaborate calligraphy tools, seated at a work table in a palace in ancient Baghdad. He was translating, Latin or Greek, into Arabic. She saw him again, riding a horse and carrying a banner through some middle European landscape, and then sitting with a paintbrush before a canvas in what must be Venice, painting a religious allegory. And finally, she saw him again as she had that morning, in plain clothing, carrying her notebook.

Honey glanced at the first paragraph: *Firstly, this invitation is rarely extended...* In her mind's eye, she saw an elusive, morphing image, not of this world, of a giant angel-being with a shining sword, gently tapping first one shoulder, than the other, of a small person kneeling, head bowed, in front of him. It was the gesture of bestowing knighthood, in another world altogether.

As she reread the sentence, *all factors surrounding the invitee's life and circumstances...*, she saw, clearly delineated, the simplicity of her life. Her complete lack of responsibilities towards dependent creatures. Not even a goldfish lived in the condo she shared with James. Her life with him was pleasant, enjoyable, but not

intertwined. If she left for six months, or forever, he would be fine. Her parents, healthy and still young in their sixties, and her circle of friends, none too close. Nobody relied on her, and she kept her secrets and her little exit strategy in a few careful locations. As she watched, the vision showed her a web of social connections, golden light strings tangling, tying, and binding others together, but very few at all around her own heart and mind. She saw that she could simply move to the other side of the world and disappear from her current life, and few heartstrings would be disturbed.

Honey reread the words *call to action, call to arms, or call to attention*, and again she saw images from the other world, the ephemeral world. She saw legions of soldiers all carrying shining swords and riding steeds of light. She saw these light armies gathering, and the environments of the earth spread out below them.

She read the next line, and saw herself like a vibrating chalice, nearly full of energy and potential that she ignored, and she saw this self-chalice walking around the routine of her daily life, organizing the kitchen, sitting at her desk, drinking coffee, and she sensed an incredible frustration, building to a rolling boil.

*This call, this invitation, if accepted, takes someone away and apart from a more conventional lifestyle of career and family.* Honey watched as a series of potential vistas unfolded, both on this world and in the other veiled place. There was travel to distant lands of palm trees and sand, of places with elephants and flowers, and she saw indistinct otherworldly travel through colors and shapes. The images came quickly, like half remembered dream images. She

saw a giant and strange Victorian house on a rocky coastal hill top, and then the squares of Savannah, Georgia, which she had visited in the past. She saw people, and other beings, demons and angelic ones too. She saw a tremendous threshold under a giant gate, reminding her of a medieval walled city.

Honey read the fifth paragraph: *Hidden within you is a potential of which even you are unaware....* She saw herself again as a vessel, a woman in an allegorical renaissance painting, standing at the intersection of a lemniscate, acting as the converter, the transmuter between one level of culture and consciousness and another. The image was lush, flowered and gorgeous, detailed, like a piece by Botticelli, and the figures and scenes were arranged theatrically, with her woman-vessel figure at the center.

The image shifted, and she saw the dangers present on both sides of that middle path. Hubris, the hubris of manifesting one's will like a god and falling into the left side, filled with gleaming structures shimmering like a mirage. On the other side, she saw the lure of intricate vastness in the made world, all the systems laid out like visualized trees, each node of information connecting to the next, but descending further and further until there was no breath and no life and all was gray and dead.

Reading again the lines of the last paragraph, *if you choose to proceed on this path...* At the very faintest margins of her mind, she saw a doubling, herself in her current form, silvery and moonlike, while next to and beyond that, a brightly colored, vivid and glowing version smiled, covered in sunlight.

Honey bowed her head on the park bench, gently folding the letter into its envelope again, and closed her eyes. She felt a



little like one who had been touched by a moment of grace, of clarity. She did not know yet what the choice was, and she did not even know if she would take the choice, but whenever the screens of life part for a moment and we see the grandeur of which we are made, even fleetingly, it brings with it a sense of calm, of order, and of gratitude.

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