

Epimetheus dreams of homecoming: of a life-giving career, of affordable housing, of shelter beyond refuge in his beloved '68 Ford Falcon ...

Epi's dream was conceived in late 1968 with the flight of Apollo 8, when his congenial despair was shaken by Moonbound visions of the generous Earth: "If the Earth is so beautiful, why do we make it so ... *ugly*?" Gravid hopes flourished with the joys of Apollo 10 and 11, whereon Epi knew he had to seek his own Tranquility Base, only to find, with Apollo 12, that he had made "a bull's-eye landing on the Ocean of Storms."

The rage to fly to his own Moon had transmogged to the Rage of Rejection, all brought maddeningly home in the faces of headlined killers of the day. How to transcend defeat, and not succumb to such violent despair?

By invoking the epic tradition, he resolved to endure all trials, including the descent into Hades—not to forget the return—a journey doubly mandated by his drafted participation in the Winless War. His faith was wavering in 1971 when Apollo 15 was launched, whereon Loxian Phoebos dispatched a prophet to affirm the landing of the lunar module: "A little later, Falcon will give birth to the Rover."

*A sign! A sign!*

Epi at once forgot that slight adverbial phrase, "A little later ..."

Even so, he ne'er forgot a phrase from a book read in the Summer of Apollo: to live one's life "in the light of eternity." If one's fading name is to be remembered, what spirits will it evoke?

In turn, in another decade, Epi found another guiding light: "But what the poet dreams of is the strenuous effort, physical, mental, and moral, of waking up to one's true humanity."





“Whoever would kill most thoroughly, laughs.”

–Nietzsche, *Zarathustra*

“We are in the kill business.”

–Steve Harvey to Nathan, Little Big Shot Comedian



A study in Epi ignorance:  
What he don't know could fill a book.

Keith Fahey

Go, litel tweet, go, litel myn comedye:  
“Educate the hell out of my lower self ...”

Swiftcurrent Lake and Mount Gould:  
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Slow Edition

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@EpiBound

Mountain and dolphin graphics by T/Maker ClickArt;  
also eagle, owl, and pigeon. Ancient letter of permission on file,  
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The Yellow Reading Frog is from an otherwise blank t-shirt, gift from  
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Hinted drawings from The New Yorker include artistry by BEK  
(Bruce Eric Kaplan), "Help! It's a sprawling epic," Item 8472958;  
by Charles Barsotti, "O.K., if you put it that way," New Yorker  
Item 12677218, and by R.E. Leighton, "The Beginning Is Near,"  
published in The New Yorker Oct. 22, 2007, page 89.

Seeking New Yorker permission was abandoned since multiple email offers  
to submit agreed sum were ignored. With regrets to the artists ...

Cover design by Scott Cruickshank and Keith Fahey,  
made possible by Apollo and Hubble and Astronomer Bob Williams.

With apologies to Monica, Susan, Mr. Teddy, my '68 Ford Falcon,  
mechanic Jim Stonehouse, my '98 Marin Larkspur,  
bike specialists John and Ray and Andreas, not to forget Twin Karen,  
I dedicate this book to

The World's Fatherless Sons



## Fragments for drifters ...

Amusing notion: many things that I would not want to tell anyone, I tell the public; and for my most secret knowledge and thoughts I send my most faithful friends to a bookseller's shop.

–Montaigne, “Of vanity,”  
from *Complete Essays*, translated by Donald Frame, p. 750

Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested ...

–Francis Bacon, “Of Studies”

“But these thoughts  
Full counsel must mature: peace is despaired;  
For who can think submission? War, then, war  
Open or understood, must be resolved.”

–*Satan*, *Paradise Lost*, I, 659-662, *John Milton*

The daimonic will always be characterized by the paradox ... that it is potentially creative and destructive at the same time. ... Rilke then is right: if he surrenders his devils, he will lose his angels too.

–*Rollo May*, *Love and Will*, pp. 163-64

So long as antimilitarists propose no substitute for war's disciplinary function, no *moral equivalent of war*, ... so long they fail to realize the full inwardness of the situation.

–*William James*, *Introduction*, “*The Moral Equivalent of War*”

We don't want them to be soldiers on the court, just following commands. We want them thinking more like special forces, generating their own collective energy and confidence.

–*Travis Knight*, *Gonzaga basketball conditioning coach*

He has all the makings to be a killer.

–*Pharrell*, on *Braiden Sunshine*,  
15-year-old singer on *The Voice*, *The Battles*, Part 3 [Season 9]

Its desire is for you, but you must master it.

–*Biblical God to Cain*, after rejecting his offering,  
*Genesis 4:7*, *Confraternity Translation*

I am driven by a *murderous* curiosity ...

–*Einstein*, letter to *Paul Habicht*, 1907  
*Einstein: His Life and Universe* by *Walter Isaacson*, p. 143

In turn, on *The Voice*, Season 9, some judge says of one singer's killer performance: “I feel like, vocally, he just took everyone to church.”





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*Help! It's a sprawling epic!*



## Canticle 1

### Tenth Anniversary of Apollo 11



**O**f dreams and delusions, I sing; of Epimetheus, who lived in his car because he wished to be a singer. O Cynthia, Goddess of the Moon, announce me as your acolyte: I bring news of Apollo, who loves a joyful noise. Now, Fit Reader, you who care to know the effect of the Apollo Moon Flights on a common youth; who care to know the effect of the Winless War on a common draftee; who care to know the effect of assassins on a common student—O, gather round to commune with the gods! 'Tis all magnet! Apollo calls Epi to transcendence: to soar with the epic tradition, to rise above himself, descend into hell, and return with a longing to live: no more death-wish, no more seizures to kill one's Self, or savage Others. Now, Strong Reader, you who care to know of deeds and undeeds; who care to read a book of thirtyfour monstrous canticles; who delight in headlines as chief caesura; come pause with me: O, such a challenge for multi-taskers, smart phones in one hand, remote-control basket in the other! Now, as when viewers in the Land of Nor settle in to watch Slow TV for onehundredthirtyfour hours, pacing themselves to enjoy a grand cruise for self-resolved hours each day, now, Fit Readers, find your own solenoid link to Epi's World, along with all his gods and friends, and healthy spirit guides.

Come out, Goddess; recall how you helped Epi at all turns, we can make a book of it, all to proclaim your glory. Let us stitch in events and ideas, your radiance beaconing through dark matter, rising o'er Glacier peaks, where you dance round Going-to-the-Moon, the great god-haunted mountain. Now, Goddess, guide me in your Moon Dance through the rants and glooms: Grant me access to your power. Hear me! I sing the rage of Epi, twin son of Evelyn and Julian: Epimetheus, quick to laugh, quicker to sulk, in turn brooding on books that freed him, then bound his brain in a box. Now, Goddess, Queen of Tranquility, let my thoughts rise high with the Eagle: from gravitas to levitas, lightened by ensample of maimed Cervantes, who kept strong the will toward joy; lightened too by fate-driven Aeneas, who trekked from Troy bearing his father, refusing to yield him to the flames. O son of Jules, make glad the song he felt so bitter!

Then those who escaped destruction were home, still reeling from heavals of the Sixties. Wishy Epi, longing for woman and homecoming, was detained by queenly Degree, bright among Goddesses, who entranced him into her smooth caves, wanting to matriculate him. But when in the circling of Moons that every year comes, so on July 20 Wishy Epi dreamed of emerging from the hollows, the ecclesiastical time for true homecoming: July 20, around the ascent of Sirios, always a time for fresh beginnings. Still in that year, with ten summers behind him, Epi was not yet free of his trials nor among his people. “If they can get to the Moon, why can’t I [fill in the blank]?” O soar eyes, a common plaint of Apollonians! Many gods pitied him, but not Poseidon Earthshaker, who remained relentlessly angry with fishy Epi, who wanted to crawl up from the sea and become a man.

But now was come the tenth anniversary of Apollo 11. Poseidon was away with the far Cousteauans, most distant but reverent of men: vigorous seagoers who knew the Moonshot was scarce a blip to the Coelacanth, the enduring fossil fish that keeps its cool in deep-sea grottoes, biding its time for hundreds of millions of years. Now, tendering refuge from the madding celebrations, the far Cousteauans invited the sea god for a hecatune of crustacean tuna and most holy mackerel, feasts proliferating at a popcorn screening of their latest venture, *Skyfallen River*. There, aboard the far-ranging Calypso, Earthshaker popped his pleasure, most honored of gods.

Meanwhile, other divinities gathered at Many Glacier, where Cynthia sits in the Leto Library of hallowed Mount Gould. At her call, Homer, Vergil, Dante, Milton, Chaucer, and Ariosto enter, followed by Aeschylus and Melville and other demigods too numerous to name, all prompted by hint that another nobody was making an epic noise. Anon, Zeus, Father of Gods and mortals, shook his majestic locks toward the Eternal Flame:

“O for shame, that Kennedy missed the glory of Apollo! The son of Joseph, fired by a query from a rocket boy in an orange suit, roused the race to reach the Moon and return astronauts safely to Earth. He dared hard things joyfully, only to be slain on that Black Friday by the Dragon Assassin—a crime so shocking, coming so soon after the Saigon coup, with its assurance of safe-conduct for the dislodged tyrant (a promise he failed to call in), some still call Jack’s death Karma Diem. Yet his spirit lifted NASA through calamities, in turn launching Saturn’s Eagle into the heavens: Armstrong and Aldrin touching Tranquility, roaming the Moon and patrolling, while Huckleberry Collins rattled round Selene in his mini-cathedral, not landing, yet content to team so close.

“We meet not to heed idlers who allege assassin conspiracies: which way they fly is Hell, in wandering mazes lost, like dour George Carlin who



longed to return as JFK's assassin so he can claim the scoop on Dallas. Let them seek the truth without us. We meet to consult on Wishywashy Epimetheus Kohoutek, son of Julian and Evelyn: Julian from the Land of Ire, and Evelyn from the Way of Nor, Dionic devotees whose longing for spirits turned blessings to blastings. College held no lure for Julian and Evelyn, their world bounded by high schoolisms and speakeasies. In that cold December they heard no Sterne errant warn them of thoughtful parenting, their embrace conceiving the twin-begottens, who in August birth were at once bound to seek comic relief. In time's turning Julian and Evelyn became laureates of Whitey's Wonderbar, and despaired of remedies: Julian swallowed a rifle, splattering the Chevy wagon with his life's blood, and Evelyn drank till her brittle veins burst, her motherblood flooding the hospital bed, where daughter-twin Ktimene stood helpless, assisting as off-shift nurse. Epimetheus longs to transform this legacy, and so renamed himself, but knew nothing about choosing names, as when in evolving eras, LL Cool J and Queen Latifah stepped into winsome personas. Even so, he took one small step in his early teens: his mirror revealed an Elvis sneer, wherefore he relaxed his lip, massaging its snarl. Anon, what makes him smile doubles his suns!

"Yet he remains convulsed by visions of Oswald, whose Gorgon lips smirk at Kennedy's exploding skull, the Furies unleashed, the world shattered by a proud aspirer: fatherless Lee, a god in ruins. Epi was seared, groynynge, whelmed by endless flashinations. 'His infuriating smirk!'—a rage Epi can master only if he lets his work master him."

At once Athene, Goddess of Wisdom: "O Son of Kronos, lordliest of the mighty, I have a soft spot for seekers who dare the descent. Epi is the first in the house of Julian to take this path, but he knows nought of heralds dispatched to Oswald, whose head was filling with monsters. It was 1963, the Year of the Dragon: a dragon malign, about to unleash holy horrors across the generous Earth. Oswald began humbly: 'I would perform a heroic deed of unheard-of prowess for your sake.'"

Zeus: "O my prince, my captain, my Lee Harvey Bobo! Our Prince Likhoi longed for fame and glory, most piteous dream of fatherless sons! Apollo the Healer dispatched Hermes to stir responsibility in cause: 'Its desire is for you, but you must master it.' Hermes nudged Rimma the Guide and Translator, who prompted Lee to read Dostoevsky's *The Idiot*. The Prince declined, and Atê won the day. Alik strayed from his humor, unwilling to lighten dyslexia by wresting with comic ways."

Athene: "Likhoi was a curious reader, but by no means voracious. He read thus far and no farther. He ne'er sensed the comic in tragedy, but was entranced by Fame with its Gates of Gleaming Ivory. He saw in Rimma no Sibyl bringing comic warning and warning, and so suffered

the worst of pangs, more violent in a lonely zealot than a dragon's tooth. O, a willful rage that rankles restraint! He invoked no gods to guide him to the ways of true power, wherefore he got his mail-order rifle, and then there he lay in drizzly dreams with the wonderful monster in his arms: all thinking changed by feign of easy solution, all defeats conquered by a single thoughtless goal. In turn his final wail became a gape of despair: black-hole wounds like dumb mouths, his ruby lips ne'er to find true voice by wresting with the far-seeing Muse."

Zeus: "His will became his fate, ne'er patient to transform rages into a labor-loving man. O, it makes Norm rant! Lee could have been a poet, not a liar; a grateful epigone, not a gaping fish, all poet-tential thrashed in death's pallor. And with it a dismal epitaph: streetside scandalmongers cheering news of his shooting."

The Father of Gods and Mortals paused, looking to Homer and Vergil and Pope, as if seeking a prompt from poets translated to this higher blessedness. They laughed. Joy from harp-tuning filled the hall; a falcon in wingèd glide graced the Glacial air: a paper fell from his talons. Aeschylus retrieved it. It was a cartoon by Robert Leighton, a fish emerging from the deeps, legging onto volcanic shores, bearing a sign: "The Beginning Is Near." Wolves howl, frogs croak round, all Nature in soft amphibial accord. One army of frogs sang *Qua*, another sang *Frok*.

Laughter-loving Aphrodite interposed: "Let us not forget the assassination of Vaughan Meader, whose *vigabrus* career was murdered in Milwaukee on the day the laughter died."

Eftsoones, Aristophanes and Jung entered; Cervantes too, with George Meredith, who palmed a small green Japanese *kaerú* or frog, to hint a fable, as in cheer of the Egoist's evolving Self. Zeus Lykaios, e'er eager to converse with the best, brightened to see Montaigne, whose Gasconite Muse brings joy to the dailyness of Many Glacier. All present were bemused by Epi's Quest for epic intelligence; all struck by this Wishy who rouses his feeble powers to play with epic spirits in a new way.

Athene: "Epi's mind oft fills with monsters too: another slow learner with a quick temper, longing for epic cool. He turns to godlike epigrammers for insight. He sees Likhoi as functional illiterate, a sulky dyslexic whose vision was wrought by seductive gun journals: heaps of arms to invert life's compass, vaunting his battered bullied youth to reach beyond his bounds. Likhoi ne'er learned the rage of Orlando, who, eager for face-to-face *aristeia*, tossed such lightningbolts into the deeps."

*Aristeia*. Among such rhapsodes, the Goddess could lightly display her learning; they knew it meant show of valor. She continued: "The Prince knew not of wrathful Ishmael, who sought comic substitutes for pistol and ball, nor was he mindful of Thoreau, who omitted the gun



when walking the concords of Walden. And he dismissed Rimma's Gift, a chance to read *The Idiot* and laugh with Myshkin, who embraced the worst that can happen: a laugh at one's self. Wherefore Likhoi missed the gorgeous guffaws that lifted Ippolit, who longed to blast from his skull some mighty thought. Prince Lee longed to give the world something to think about: a brooder who closed in on himself like a clam, seeking fame beyond his scope. He now belongs to the rages."

Zeus: "A clam in a rush. Had Likhoi trusted Nature's chafing ways, a great pearl might have evolved—and might still evolve if Wishy Epi keeps his eyes on eternity, e'er trusting the gods' search for man."

Zeus hesitated; turned a blush to Athene and Cynthia, who knew his meaning, even as the Moon Goddess glanced over a ha-ha into a dark hole dubbed by a sign: **A Big Dose of Discord**. Zeus reified: "I mean gods' search for 'man' in classic universal, inclusive of females, though of course few mortals of either gender—or transgender—ascend the Madiba Heights to meet their higher Self. Why, even the malleable gods find such speech tripplesome: man, humanity, humankind: remove 'man' and what's left? Hu, huity, hukind. Change is hard!"

Athene: "And so Prince Likhoi, blood blossoming his clothes, was whelmed by the Dragon, now a toxic tode, perishing in that ghastr Stygian pool. Into the Nothing rushed the Dragon Assassin, unleashed to sneer and snarl at will, its black flames blasting and smoking even unto today, killing and stifling souls across the generous Earth."

Fyodor entered. He'd heard the gods weave round in many voices, here borrowing, there stitching. Absorbing Athene's words, he knew "toxic tode" meant poisonous corpse, Oswald's ghost disinterred, his sad smirk swirling o'er discontents in every age.

Athene: "Son of Kronos, O lordliest of the mighty, smirking Oswald was indeed struck down in a death well remembered. JFK's toadies had lived haply in the halls of October power, thinking, seeking, discussing, poised to save the world from nuclear horror—tho' that honor goes to Vasili Arkhipov, a Soviet submariner of courage and restraint. Yet the New Frontiersmen seized the day until the monster stirred: that demon, that fiend, Envy born of Ambition, still haunting the moors, stirring whispering cesspools: a gloom so sad only Delphians guided by Metis can wend its sloughs. In these swamps assassin spirits thrive, their pitiless crimes woven into tapestries of every age. And JFK, near three winters a joyous chief, was slain, and the world became a different place.

"Yet Oswald was not always riddikulous, linked to vile undeeds by disdained Bobos. They were not destined for such doom; all were born to seek a higher estate. And so I speak for foolish Wishy, even if Goddess Degree, daughter of Atlas who bears the storm-tossed world, tires of him.

Now Epi feels bereft of his moira, his fate bound by Apollo's call: Apollo, who calls not the qualified, but qualifies the called. Nought can crush Epi if he seeks levity. Yet you, Thunder God, send not joys of Metis but ballooning brain clouds. O, grant strength to our One-Dream Seeker! Why, Zeus, are you so harsh with him?"

"My child, such doubts escape your faith's barrier! How can we slight Sir Vaunting Wishy, who beyond all epicants is a carefully chosen nonentity? Who else revives the gods and the epic, puffing myths beyond his scope? He remains resolved to harrow the Earthbound hell his father could not escape. The epic seeds will grow; he has the nurturing impulse. Why Epi is the first mythseeker in centuries to invoke the Argonauts, heralding his '68 Ford Falcon as errant transport. Wishywashy he is, a half-breed descended from myriad mongrels converging o'er millennia, yet most blessed. Whom else shall we send; whom else deem sufficient?"

"Nay, Goddess of the Gray Eyes, it is not I who balloons Epi brain clouds; it is Poseidon Earthshaker, all tasked and heaped by Wishy's longing to become a space cadet. And still Epi sings of JFK, who saw that mortals must reach beyond their grasp, or what's the new ocean for? Such talk was blasphemy to Earthshaker, whose pain convulsed the deep: words piercing to the Nothing, awakening many dragons, one called Assassin. Nature's daimonics were further unhinged by Wernher von Braun, who in Pleistocene parallel declared the first Moon landing equal to the day aquatic life first crawled up on the land."

Zeus Lykaios noted ancient undercurrents: "Athene, you know these conceits were beyond Epi's grape-sized intellect. Yet his sleepy brain was convulsed, and Earthshaker, son of drenchyng Saturn, now saw Wishy as Noisome Twolegs. For if this spineless wonder could rise from shallows to sing on his feet, fishy schools multitudinous were sure to follow in the brit: as when Orpheus played the lyre to appease Cynthia, savior of ships; Orpheus, who sang to shield the Argo from swamping waves, fishes leaping and breaching, Jason's dream their dream. Less buoyant is Wishy Epi, who, deep-sinking, darted blindly for Coelacanth caves, struck dumb by sheer lack of plans. In weary turn he returned to school, invoking Apollo and transcendence, dispensing his color TV to Charlotte in the summer of '76. Eftsoones, the Cyclops howled; Polyphemos raged to Father Poseidon that Nobody Wishy had gouged his eye. Yet Epi sought only to flee the flickering cave where countless dreamers die, their brains dashed out, a feast for the Cyclops' abominable appetite.

"But come, Athene, let us work out Epi's homecoming, where his slow-but-steady quest attracts Glacial Grace. Earthshaker shall quell his anger, and wrench his will to ours, divine wills united."

"*Wrench?!?*"





The word resounded, reverberating Glacial Halls. Divine eyes turned. It was Hera herself, Queen of Glacier and Goddess of Marriage, sprung from her throne, a divine hair disquietly falling. Her grief is sharp: “Ruler of the great heavens, why are you so slow to hear me, so slow to see—to see how that Wishywashy has bypassed twice-seventy nymphs with their splendid bodies, a bachelor e’er in swoon, yet fearing their soft beauty. Avast! this ingrate dilettante beswooned in epic folly leaves me dishonored, and cannot escape his gonad fate. Feminine splendor peaks his inadequacies; he is heedless of my power. In his thirtyfifth year he still ignores my worship, shuddering to take a wife who bears babes of Earthbound happiness, dismissing marriage as deadly to Apolline call. ‘Another blis before mine eyes I place,’ he says.” She steps forward. “I will not be *ignored*, Zeus!” Swirling: “O how unlike chaste Mother Teresa who hails the joys of skinful sex, inspiring billions in Trojanless worship to proliferate trillions of votaries to honor me, their Most Holy Mother, Glacier’s Most Honored Queen. Well, bachelor Epi, so be it; if I cannot stop your Apolline Fate, I can yet make it hard, hard.”

Apollo laughed: “He who seeketh hard things shall have it hard.” The god of truth and poetry saw in singledom not apostasy, but fidelity, and a stratagem for expiation.

Eftsoones, swift as thought, Hera was beside Eros, playing with erectile bones, his playmate Gonymede serving in Many Glacier Hall. Aphrodite perked an ear as Hera enjoined: “Fill wanton Wishy with lust, with chimeras multitudinous, as when wild mustangs, longing to be stallions bold as Bucephalus, morph instead to mute baffleheads. If Wishy will not woo Earth’s celestials, then wrack his nightful days with frenzy of the Pubic Wars.” Eros grabbed his quivers of lead, and was gone.

Cynthia looked from Sterne to Vergil, who whisp’ed to Athene: “Love of sex keeps war in war, and the Hero Heavens near-empty.”

Zeus reached for his chalice, the gold cup that stands filled forever. He drank; Gonymede the Glorious advanced to top the Thunder God’s cup with gleaming wine, a nectar sweetened with grapes from the generous Earth: food not of gods, yet accepted so.

Eftsoones, a soft voice filled Many Glacier Hall.

“You’re forgetting something.”

All Glacier turned. It was Dionysos, the roaring god, having entered via the Backbone Cove where he parked his bicycle, up from the Land of Ire where in pubs he is hailed as Dionyzeus the All-Fulfilling. All-Knowing Zeus hesitated in mid-quaff. “Who let you in?”

“You, Your Grace, when you raised a brow to Gonymede; so seeking to lift your spirits, you hailed a power greater than yourself.”

All-blushing Zeus: “What do you want?”



Lights in the hall flickered, dimmed—restored eftsoones by lightningbolts from Estcheemah’s alternate solar source.

Saith Dionysos: “Epi must learn, in the fullness of his grape-seed wit, that he wants initiation into my Bacchic rites.”

“He wants nothing of the kind,” Cloud-Gatherer stormed, missing the nuance, his word-sense skewed by the earthbound mix. “He wants to flee alcohol’s penthos, or escape his parents’ grief; to repair in himself the ruins of his parents’ fall.”

Dionysos: “Wants as in lacks; Epi lacks initiation into my rites. Until he wants initiation, he can ne’er find homecoming. He will go mad with rage first; his resentments will displace Apolline ideals.”

“You will incite this?”

“He incites himself. He rants that I’m parental destroyer, but merely tears himself apart, as a thistleball sunders itself from the aridambar tree, and falls into the street to spike bicycle tires. He must till his own mounds before founding his own home.”

Zeus: “You know Epi abstains; he scorns booze as Odysseus spurned the lotus, having but one drink since ’69, and that a black Jack Daniel’s, a lapse he rather regrets. (True repentance is hard, hard.) Still, he scorns your joys as delusive: not stimulants, but depressants to sap true powers.”

“More will be revealed, even unto you, mighty Zeus, and especially unto Wishy, who knows naught of Farrar Elementary, whose tadpoles arm themselves with books; nor does Wishy know anything of Aristophanes’ Frogs, whose descendants arm themselves with laughs.” The vine god gestured to the Vision of Apollo, a celestial wonder for World Patriots. He traced a circle around the Canosa wine bowl, wherefrom Glacier water-drinkers fill carafes of joy. “These communal spirits delight in abstinence; and, as I freed Amphibial Aeschylus to sing his Oresteia, whose Furies are treated with respect; and as I freed comic Euripides to sing of Pentheus, who hated my worship, so can I free Epi to—”

“What about my mysteries?”

It was Ares the Bloodstained, jolting Glacier anew. The divinities turned to see the god of war near a tapestry spanning the library wall, just unveiled by Athene, who placed it beside weavings of Troy, another hint of passing things. Cynthia stepped up, her glance bright as the Full Moon, beaming on the flourish of woven scenes. In the center, near a small map of Dien Bien Phu, stands Hera, the Strongpoint Goddess, drawn to the East when French troops invoked her Roman name. Now, from atop a towering limestone in the Tonkin Gulph, she beholds the night-gray sea and Shen Lung Descending: Shen Lung the Spiritual Dragon, who stirs up Tonkin Spooks for bright-eyed sailors eager to play at war. Shen Lung breathes, and luminous mists creep low round a wraithful PT boat



called the *Tantalus*. Pictoscripts hint the Year of the Dragon, when half a continent was loosed from its moorings, careening into Ha Long Bay amid Iliadic bafflements. Here a hugeous nation is dwarfed by Laughing Dog Wall and a stone forest of dragon spires; blue threads weave a profile that rears o'er a warrior nation, a brute giant dead-set in its flawed ways, flailing mightily. In the upper right is all-present Hera, watching tanks rowling from the Ho Bo Woods, some troops waving socks, laughing, all eager to take Sighgone, thence renaming it Ho Ho Ho (He Who Enlightens).

Ares strode by the tapestry: "Epi is shamed by doubts of cowardice, having no *aristeia* in the Footnote War. He had but faith in a vague ideal, something so small as his personal survival: 'I will not let this stupid war kill me.' And so he sulked in bunkers as battalion RTO, ingenious for himself, scorning the war as insult to his intelligence. Yes, he survived, a reverse Achilles who still sulks isolate a decade later, dying megadeaths daily from fear of trifles. His days as jawb-slave are far from over."

Dionysos: "Epi too has his courage. If living a war is different from fighting one, recall the battlefield bliss of your beloved disciple Greaves Zagreus, who enlisted to flee the writer's lonely call. Drawn to physical bravery, he loved the camaraderie of the Rangers amid hellish fire for a brotherly cause. He scaled the cliffs of Normandy, undaunted by D-Day terrors and wounds, all for his team and generations unborn. This glad warrior learned to love blasted trees; he saw each branch to best advantage, the fierce fires of gleaming steel far less terrifying than his unvoiced dread, going alone to his room to write: alone because he forgot to invite the Muse to sit by him. Yet, by grace of a brotherly gift, a book of essays by William James, Wishy Epi now seeks 'the moral equivalent of war.' He sometimes 'acts as if,' invoking the gods for wits to live manfully, despite years of rejection and inertia. Even unto you, Ares, his *aristeia* will be revealed."

Just so Glacier learned of the Roaring God's loving search for Epi. The gray-eyed Goddess rejoined: "O brother kalypsoed, hidden god of Wishy, by some called the Crushing God, it shall be done: Epimetheus of the clumsy designs shall find a home, he shall carve a comic trail: 1969 will be the fourth great date in humane history. On the others—1776, 1861, 1893—Citizens of the World served, and shall be asked to serve again. Let us dispatch Hermes to Washington State, to convey to lovely-haired Degree our absolute purpose, the homecoming of Wishywashy Epi. And I shall go to Pullman to stir up confidence in him." The gods raised their cups, and left the hall united like soldiers in a campaign—all except Ares, who clanged from the hall. He brushed by Socrates, who'd been asking Thomas Mann how mortals distinguish dreams from reality. Thomas, distracted: "What'd we miss?"

And Dionysos who suffers, the god who dies and rises again, said: “Away, Hermes Argephontes; announce to lovely-haired Degree our absolute purpose, that Wishywashy Epimetheus shall return to the City of Charlie’s Angels; to Phlegra, the Burning Land, where the Laistrygone Gyaunts have forged their Palace of Pride. And Epi, who seems alone in his raftery ’68 Ford Falcon, shall be chaperoned by *entheos*, the Many Glacier Gods within, who reveal themselves when he laughs at himself. By dint of reading Jax Myth, who oft raises tequila toasts to Mr. Gomez as master-builder, Epi evolves with a sense of deep play.

“Sing too, god of running luck, that readiness meets opportunity. Remind Epi of C.G. Jung: that reprobates are the chosen ones. Hint runes of Neil Diamond: of playful stones, of frogs as kings. Hymn buoyantly, as when Euphemos sang water-walking lyrics the reader is forbidden to see. O, those copyrot gods: Before Neil, I am!” He said.

The Vine God turned to Cynthia, no pallid nun of heaven, but a Goddess who can battle Poseidon strength for strength but doesn’t brag about it. The Celestial joyed to see an end to the old outrage, the endless dashing of Epi’s Apolline hopes. She cupped the chin of the Vine God in her hand, and gazed into grapeful eyes. “Now, Dion, Epi begins anew: Nothing sustains Tranquility more than a steady purpose in life.”

The Crushing God turned to Hermes: “Wishy shall again lie in the Falcon, there gathering lyric stones, glad to refrain from embracing; there too he ponders the Vision of Apollo and its mandalic harvest, Demeter divinely granting. Remind Epi too of Loxian Phoebos and the call of Apollo 15: ‘A little later, Falcon will give birth to the Rover.’ For it is fated that Epi shall find a home in the land of his unborn sons.”

He spoke, tapping the Messenger with thyrsus grace, allowing him to improvise. The quick-minded god in fair sandals soars beyond the globe, beyond Phoebos in his path to the Moon; he carries the Caduceus, the staff that dims eyes with sleep, or wakes again the sleepers. Anon, he gives Saturn a fly-by to view its solar eclipse; there Saturnalia Sylphs weave deep-space purple to brighten dark matter, interlooping platters of rings with fingers of light. Far distant from the flashing sphere he sees a spot of light, a hint of blue: the generous Earth. Anon, he alights amid an accepted wonder: spring in the Palouse. Hermes sipped from his flask, then alighted in coves of Ovary Hall, where shining Degree in highest faculty knew him, silent at his crimson flush. Wishywashy was away from his cardboard cubicle, off to the swimming pool. The Slayer of Argos, in overflight, saw Epi arc a jackknife off the three-meter board, ease to the side, then lift himself to Olympic edge to sit and moan, gnashing and groaning, e’er glooming on un-lived lives and unfilled dreams. Hermes laughed. The shining Goddess in her cups:



“What’s up, Hermes? What brings the Glacial Messenger to our blue-skied vale with white clouds wafting o’er fields and evergreens? Want some coffee and doughnuts?”

She spoke, and on a glassy table displayed her fare. The Courier God declined, ignoring her tease of protocol, sensing in the air a jest from Raphael, who loved to discourse on food for the ingrateful.

“Goddess Drusilla, since you ask, Dionyzeus sends me. You have the demitode who wretches himself beyond measure, still torn by the Winless War: the demitode who winged his way reluctant o’er paddies and jungles near the City of Ho for a 362-day tour. And in the fifteenth year, Ho’s Trojan tanks and troops sacked the embassy and sent the dark ’vaders fleeing, dust whirling the rooftops amid rushing feet, mothers with babes jostling, shouting or silent, in frenzied flight to the fleeing ships. The blissful gods watched as Darwin Judge hoisted three-year-old Becky on his back, running rabbity-split, thrusting her aboard a fleeing plane; watched too as John Riordan carried onehundredsix souls on his fearless back. Abandoned Viets wept, wondered about their luck, and finally went home, to await their destiny to come.

“O’er distant battlefields two spirits rose: Mike Hendrickson in the North, and Glenn Fish in the South: Epimethean schoolmates whose shades sear an age stalked by Assassin Furies. The blissful gods stared with glad mirth-marks as helicopter lifted off, winging their way to a host of ships that blotted the horizon. There, with no room and nowhere to go, their purpose mouldering, choppers were pushed off, splashing into the sunset of the South Viet Sea. On return to the World, many veterans offended Athene, who loosed a tempest against seekers who profaned *entheos* by letting their inner suns collapse into black hole glooms. As Epi’s companions perished in dead-end jawbs, the hollowing Winds swept him to Pullman, where the gods haunt: *What are you building?* Now Dionyzeus who suffers and rises again tells you to dispatch Epi with all speed. His fate is bound by the Song of Apollo: A little later, Falcon will give birth to the Rover.”

He spoke, and Goddess Degree answered in wingèd words: “So now the gods resent my keeping the demitode whom I saved when he failed to heed the warnings of Aeolus, whereon the Laistrygone Winds blew him to Pullman. Here I welcomed him to the arching caverns, willing to make a scholar of him—not grand as Northrop Frye, who loves to talk on Milton, and cite his verse; nor bold as Gilbert Highet, who missed a thing or two on Beowulf, but whose unconquerable grind inspires Epi as heir to Mr. Teddy, who did so gladly learn, and so gladly teach. Now Epi abuses his tailbone, insulting Apollo with endless odes to dejection, e’er bemoaning his glacial metempsychosis. Phoebos knows I tried to jolt him:

*What do you think you're doing! Make an effort!* Yet self-governance remains alien to his nascent *humanus*. He but dimly knows Odyssean wit and will; he still resists the wonder of being a Nobody, metaglooms from the unbuilt House of Julian, Furies hard to wrestle down. Why, now in his mid-thirties, Epi read Hardy's *Jude* most obscurely, not seeing a whit of the Oresteian parallel! And he just couldn't get Stendhal's Julien. More, he types odd papers, and benights his spotty brilliance by leaden lustfoolery, e'er swooning to straddle babes beyond reach of his small-stepping thighs. Fie on conveyance! Let him and the Falcon find their own way on the barren streets and cougar-killing freeways."

"Dispatch him," said Hermes, ignoring her rant. "And beware of angering Dionyzeus, who prompts Epi to invoke Jungian reprobates; to hymn the runes of Neil Diamond, and heed the call of Apollo 15." The god of wingèd sandals was gone.

Epi was tailboning by Olympic poolside, the joy of life draining from him. The Goddess stepped near:

"Epi, cut the sobs. My heart goes dark to hear you. Your dreams are invariably seventeen and a half Apollos high. And you can't even build publishable essays! You mustered a pass on your orals, a nod on your written test, wherefore we freely release you, amazed that the gods cheer you for their sport. And I was first to see your loss affects heaven! Put your stuff in storage, load basics into the Falcon, and return to Hesperia, since the gods insist. There in the City of Charlie's Angels you must muse on reprobates as the chosen ones, tadpoles as evolving royalty, demiwogs as Beëlzeflies—and incidentally, your father Julian Basil was a contradiction, by chance named both for a believer in Olympian gods and for a papist hermit who taught august heresies, not to say anything of Julian of Norwich who inspired T.S. Eliot to believe all shall be well, and all shall be well. Yet your father retained a fatal disposition to get married, turning from stern ambitions, tho' he was more haply called to the single life, meaning you're a mistake, unreal, impossible to mythify. O Epi Transcendent, ye shall be as todes! Ha!"

Like a lazy reader, droopy Epi got lost among frogs and flies, not hearing incidentals, especially when, in mid-harangue, the Goddess distracted him with a small green frog fashioned from dense glass. She pointed to Japanese cryptographs, *kaerú* and *káeru*: "The first means *frog*, the second, *return*." She turned, her scholarly smock trailing an afterthought: "To be recalled in future scenes: *ú* equals frog, *á* equals return. *Qua Frok*. And give some study to Dionyzeus."

She said. And Wishy of the Wailways shuddered, giving the vine god nary a thought, transfixed by the frog, brightly shining as by inner light, beaconing hopes for a transforming return, by some called *nostoi*.



*I must venture.*

Wishy dreaded return to Laistrygonia, a sprawling megalop that whelms todes in arid immensity. Nearby is Death Valley, land of the bottomless pit, landscape lovely to the discerning, to Epi a Waste Land Burning, as in dreadful Eliot vise: Here red sullen faces sneer and snarl from drug-cracked houses. *If there were water.* Here spellbound castaways spawned Charles Manson, the singer of self and fatherless wretch who in his raging Ruin became a wild-eyed killer, raised by his rebellion to the cover of Life. *If there were Vater.* Charlie spawns furies and glooms, his spirit moldering, leading the uninitiated into slothful desponds, down hell's horrid bluffs to the bottomless pit. Epi gloomed: Yet once more I must descend, still aching for a root-hold, my descent in its tenth year: *still* seeking the auroral lights of a small round opening to the upper air, wherethrough gleams, I hope, a re-raveling whirl'd.

*O Dis obedience! Easy is the going down to Laistrygonia; all day and all night the freeway stands unbarred; but winning your way to the upper air, that is the labor, that the task!*

Epi spoke: "Oh Goddess, thank you for easing descent to heatful Phlegra, land of beauty and horror; yet what you say is dangerous and hard. My Falcon has served me well, but my U-joint recently dropped out, and the mechanic hints other parts are aging. Dreadful too is the inflational horror, gas prices soaring to a dollar a gallon, up from an already ghastly sixtyseven cents; long lines again circle gas stations, many drivers in a homicidal snit. And can the palegreen really make it to and around the City of Charlie's Angels yet once more?"

"So say the gods," the Goddess said. "Remember Apollo 15: The Falcon will give birth to the Stover. And your bike will fit easily onto the palegreen's rafty trunk. As your Burbank bike helped you transcend the first gas crisis, when gas leaped to fortyfive cents, so your lightweight bike will ease return to Hesperia. But don't load another U-Haul. Take your primaries, including Campbell's *Goddess With a Thousand Graces*, Mailer's *Of a Fire on the Lunes*, and C.G. Jung's *Memories, Dreams, Deflections*. As epic errant, you must return from the wilderness by trusting survival to Apolline redundancy, as in Plan B, etc., e'er a solo seeker until dreams are wrested to life. Yet again you will trudge the travails of testy temps, seeking joy even in less glamorous jawbs. But beware: The Winds you long for blow you from yourself."

Epi fearly smiled, knowing as solo he was unfit to live with, painly distracted by female charms; yet he dismissed the Windsy alarm, cheered by Drussila's play with book titles: "Goddess and queen of collegial life, be not angry with me. You are immortal and ageless, but what I pine for is homecoming on shores of the Laistrygones: Better by far to live near

the Ocean of Storms. O Winds! If you batter me into the void, I will steel myself to endure it. Already I live the heartless immensity; already I know the dread, yet feel warmed by chill uncertainties. Wherefore I seek the light of Shelley's rumored solar wind: the moral obligation to be optimistic. Let this adventure follow."

He spoke. That night the Goddess and Wishy curled on the couch, reading Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. They were in the home of an English prof, away on sabbatical with wife and child. The trusting prof: Want to live rent-free for a semester? *Sure!* And Epi showed Drusilla his emerging thesis: "Guyon in Manson's Bower of Bliss." The Goddess yawned, hoping his final paper would be a bit more scholarly. Eftsoones, as when Vergil lay in the lap of sweet Parthenopê, enjoying studies of inglorious ease; and as Raskolnikov lifted Nastasya to joy by hailing the wealth of thought in his work, so Epi lay back to laugh with the brain-surgical genius of Mork, e'er a-wonder at alien Mindy.

Meanwhile, the lord of barren dreams stirred up spirits vacui. That night, from the deep-down larks of risible Dis, Archimago cast a monarch fishy-dream thro' the gate of ivory, assuring Wishy in glowing terms: "Hail, and thrice hail! To every fling there is a season! Take out an ad! Tell the whorld you're coming; proclaim your lyric passion! How lucky, more than lucky, to know your happiness! You'll soon be rich and famished, acknowledged Zinger of Apollyon at last!"

O Cynthia, shed your Moonbeams on Epi wits so feeble and riled: thrice-eager Wishy proclaimed his coming, and sent a check: over four hundred bucks, the no-talent rate. When he discovered the sting, Epi affirmed his talent. The agent hemhummingly agreed, but—the refund ne'er came, mayhap rerouted by Archi to help Wishy live the dream.

Athene observed these follies with interest, but was blocked from granting counsel. Unless Wishy asked, what could a goddess do? Lachesis, disposer of lots, was present at Epi's conception when the parents sought alimentary bliss, blind to Sterne truths; in turn Epi swirled in wombling wrath, intensified in the orphan years, simmered in juvenescence, oft erupted when bowling games went awry, and all, all rent asunder by the stupefaction of November 22, 1963. O Hekate, you with power to hearten those in trouble: how the Dragon Assassin stunned the sojourners of Goshen, abject and lost, under amazement at their hideous change! *Sing, sorrow sorrow*. As the nation, so Epi, seared by a furious howling woe: *Why? Why would anyone kill our beloved JFK?*

The Glacial gods laughed: Ask and you shall receive. Anon, the query began its slow singe, a great beaconing fire igniting atop the Arachnaion heights, speeding tirelessly to the secretory organs of Epi's blackening brain, thence to the sympathetic system, wherefrom with the speed of





Hermes' flight, some gossamer thread was flung from Verrières to Covent Garden and Gryffindor Tower, searing o'er the Brown House Millstone by Old-Grove Grace to Liberty Lady, there entrancing the Towering Cathedrals in the whirldly Celestial City, at once shadow-casting from the Johnson Space Center to the Moon, and back, zooming to Cholon and back to Grizzly Bear Heart, thence to the Clear Lake gloom-closet on Mildew Lane, eftsoones uprising o'er the Field of Doves, now a-down to the deathly hollows of Carlinite Hell, where a stymied comic seeks return to Dallas, and the gloss of conspiracy lore. O Hekate! multitudinous styles nod across millennia, now crossing the Sardonic Gulph where a Sirius shape uprears, and—laughs. *Cry, cry for breath.* Now Epi recalls the Eternal Flame; now the fluttering ankle-high flame leaps range on range, fire to fire, answering from melting Glacier Grinnell to screely Devil's Ladder, so piercing in its brightness it seems flung from the blissful gods, drawing Epi down, now leaping to Parnassus, that he may humbly accept the call, and the work expected of him.

*I'll do it! I'll do it! By Grove, I'll do it!*

Thither Epi 🐉

The Singer of Apollo: He felt it, felt it instinctively. *Lead, then!* It might break his heart, leaving him with nothing but ambition to cling to (as when rage and desire are bound in folly, and scholars and stingers dismiss his work as a fool's avocation), yet this Apolline summons, his call to a higher life, remains his most loving spur.

The mockers, the killjoys, the sad and sour spooks: *Apage!*

And so Athene Parthenos, drawn to bounders, appointed herself Epi's protector: the Gigglemesh of Epi, or the Epi of Gigglemesh. He called on her seldomly, but the Goddess of Exploding Skulls stands e'er ready with comic wit, poised to serve as civil prompter, e'er glad to help the foundling roused by the fires of oh so potent Apollo.

Natheless, thithering Wishy embraced small joy in the journey, raging at every defeat, rarely polishing talents in a burnishing pause. *A young toad went looking for the easy ride but couldn't find it anywhere.* Epi's singer ad was silly, it was dumb, it was foolish—but as he neared his thirtysixth year, hysteria whelmed reason, rather like Phineas Gage who had his skull and frontal lobe impaled, yet stunningly survived, tho' ne'er the same, all reason unbalanced by feeling: wherefore Wishy, unripe and unready, longing for instant at-one-ment, set out for welcoming Hesperia. Athene of the Glaciers knew her powerlessness: When divine favorites mispray, even the gods can but laugh, and stare.

In turn, the Goddess: "Who challenges the Dragon must be foolish as well as wise; enraged, yet restrained, the better to feel, then transform,



the assassin's fury. Nothing great is accomplished without rage." As when George C. Scott played Bert Gordon, who taught Paul Newman's Fast Eddie about patience and character; or when Una pursued the Redcrosse Knight to plead her kingdom's deliverance from the devouring dragon: so Athene e'er seeks Epi, awaiting his call for strength and sanity. Verily, as the Dragon flared forth near-daily, so Epi learned to cry for endurance, many battles belatedly seen as comic trifles. *Cry, cry for breath.* O Cynthia, vast deserts lay before him!

*If there were water.*

O, make it rain!

On the morning the ad appeared, the Glacier Goddess observed Epi's comic faith: Yet once more he fancied life on edge of Apolline turnaround. 'Twas a hypo spring day, pale blue sky filtering thro' an arc of reborn leafy trees; a robin, singing and snacking, pranced in choreographed hops on the family's front lawn; a few white clouds sailed o'erhead, casting shadows on an unseen blue-velvet worm near a lyric crocus. Here, musing on his Apolline fate, Epi sang "It's a Most Unusual Day."

Yet the seasonal singer gave no thought to Demeter, bringer of joy, goddess of fruits in their season, who sang anew this glad mystery: "Go with gentleness in your heart and a steadfast spirit. And be not beyond measure despondent ..."

And so the Gray-Eyed Una Balmer gave Epi his puff, and Wishy saw his Dantean future: e'er seeking a small round opening wherethrough gleams once more the stars. Anon, the Goddess hailed Green Cottenham, a freed man trapped in twentieth-century slavery: forced into the South's darkest pits in 1908, where he glanced back to see the last flash of stars not as beaconing, but as farewell. And as Hekate braced Mr. Cottenham, so she fortified Epi, whose heart quavered, sensing before him the same old abyss: "Courage," she said.

In turn Epi fled anew the broad way, accepting the fond and narrow, his Falcon dreams tied to epic canon, tho' for the nonce he forgot heroes who embraced the laughable worst. *I have dreams!* He chain-locked his bike to the rafty trunk, cycle wheels soon blowin' in the wind. O gracklin' posey! Find us a dream that asks great questions! *The meaning of my existence is that life has addressed a question to me.* His heart sank, seeing only the Mansonian wilderness, wherein insight into dreams must be converted into ethical obligation. *Failure to do so imposes a painful fragmentation.* Epi had a dark-crystal foreboding of more long years in the Burbank desert, under heatful suns e'er stifling: as a waterless lungfish, longing for rain and lakeful mountains, no mudskipper, all dry-muddled, bound to suffocate if he did not seek Love and Justice



in the upper air. *O Phoebos!* He had sought a crossway in the wood and all he got were circles and spins and multitudinous conjurations whirling his course! His eyes bittered fear and frictional faith: some joy, more rage: The Glacial Gods still give no guarantees.

*Give us a sign! Give us a sign!*

O Hekate, who can ope porous brain cells to see beyond desire and fear? The Divine Silence was a gag, disposing Epi not to knowledge of right action, but to flashes of sullen fury: *As you sow, so shall you reap.* The meditation singed Wishy anew, warrior dubious, who knew his wasteland might prove eternal. *If there were water.* O Goddess! such the chains of heritage weighing and drawing his Wishy soul! He e'er seeks the smallest sign, wherefore in light of Falcon maternity, Phoebos brings forceps to aid parturition: to lift a thought like a boulder from the mud of the mind, as when three Kittridge second-graders—Kyra, Celia, and Alex—saw a tiny rock in the Massachusetts schoolyard and decided to dig it out: a teaspoon-excavation that became the greatest epic in schoolyard history, spanning o'er half their teachable years, mostly digging on the sly, e'er discouraged and disbanded and dispatched to detention because that's what teachers do—stifle all rebels who persist in noncurricular escapades—but then a new principal came along, and lo! he gave the Seekers support and proper tools, and the tiny rock was midwifed as boulder: a boulder that became the favored seat of outcasts, who soon found themselves no longer sitting alone. O the joy!

Yet such glad musings were decades beyond Wishy Epi, who in '79 brooded fearly and darkly, e'er vexed that he must master his furies if he hoped ever to share in Nature's withering bloom.

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In Many Glacier, Diotima laughed at Wishy's enslavement to his fears and furies, bemused by his distorted views of Nature's fruitful ways; Diotima, disciple of Metis and Athene, who has instructed Seekers for centuries on the mysteries of work-love, and the vast sea of beauty that beckons all who nurture a boundless love of wisdom. Yes, Diotima laughed at Wishy, who had not even reached the shore of initiation; this Wishy, who had not yet glimpsed a vision of the Single Science, which is the science of beauty everywhere. To his guidance she could not proceed: Wishy knew nought of her, and could not lend even his passing attention.