

Fall 2015

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Trinity-Site's Last Stand

I. Trinity-Site plots a comeback

I was 5:29:45 AM Mountain War Time, July 16, 1945; the light seen before the embryo's first dream; the source. Everyone knew my name, grabbed at my clothes, tried to sneak into my hotel room. Now I stare out the window all day at flying dust. My tiny room smells of old man pee.

I'm going to get it all back. I have a plan. I will be the beautiful ancestor, returning to them that vague, ineffable something they have lost. I can already see the book jacket blurb: *Who looks deeper into the dark? Who can unravel nature; reveal it in its intricacy? Who will return us to the eternal cycles? Trinity-Site.*

I will be healer, scribe, talk-show circuit icon.

2. Trinity-Site and the agent

I look around the office. It smells of stale cigarettes, reminds me of a Hollywood that only existed in noir films. Mort is in a suit he must have bought in the late forties. There are ancient photos of Mort with Rhonda Fleming and George Sanders on the wall. Is it possible he could have been their agent at one time? Looking at him now, I don't see how that's possible. On the desk is a more recent photo of Mort...with a clown. The one agent who calls me back works with birthday clowns?

"So I was thinking that we could start out doing some appearances in a mall or two," Mort says. "The Glendale Galleria, if we play our cards right. Nuclear power is the new green. Your comeback is in the bag."

Mort lights a cigarette, watches the smoke float toward the ceiling. There's a fan up there, coated with lint, grease. He probably eats Chinese take-out in here, making cold calls for his birthday clowns. (I imagine him going through the birthday registry from some local elementary school: 'Hello, is this the home of Jeffy Roberts, the birthday boy?')

"Maybe we can do some kind of tie-in at a few of the cancer centers," Mort says. "Loma Linda, St. Jude, Mount Sinai." I stand up, stare down at him for a few seconds, then ask if he really understands who I am, where I've been, what I've seen.

He shrugs. "We'll do a book." I walk out of the building, into the sun.

3. Trinity-Site writes a book

I wrote the book. Nothing about how I became Trinity-Site. No one was interested in that. I recounted various drug habits, wicked ways with my many wives, tawdry affairs. The book reached a peak of pathetic self-indulgence when I recounted hitting a kid on a bicycle while driving drunk down Hollywood Boulevard. Hit and run – or was it? I wrote in the book that when I woke the next morning after the hit-and-run I didn't know whether the incident had been dream or reality. I scoured the papers for news of a hit-and-run, a dead kid, a mangled bicycle, and never found it. It was the usual celebrity confession: hit rock bottom, rehab, happily ever after.

All a lie. I don't even drive. But how else was I going to get anyone to listen?

4. Trinity-Site sifts through his cave, looking for the reality bone

I lift another empty whiskey bottle, swing it in a cool circle just inside the abandoned mine entrance, and let go. The sound of breaking glass echoes off the walls. Shards fall through me. How long have I been here, drinking, wallowing in self-pity?

I cut a petroglyph into the south wall. It's a replica of a human shadow made by the blast of thermal radiation at Hiroshima. (No bodies were ever found near these shadows, only shadow remained.) It speaks to me. It is not bitter, enraged, or even sad. (Because it has no connection with the body that formed it?) It is my only friend now.

The irony is not lost on me. "What are you looking for, friend?" it says. "I'm trying to get back something I lost," I answer. "What have you lost?" it asks me. I think on it a long time before answering. It's an important question. I want to get it right.

"I've lost the mystery," I finally say. "The mystery hidden in the eternal cycle: research, design, production." I was a scientist, a mystic. Now I am a ghost in a cave talking to the replica of a shadow I made at the height of my power.

Outside, a black hawk circles the sun. The hawk's shadow skates across a small pool of rainwater sitting atop a sandstone boulder a few yards from the mine. The water ripples.

5. Trinity-Site gives up on the idea of being the Last-of-Days-Angel and passes the baton

I have been walking along this desert rail line for days. It suits me, all this sage and black brush. The desert is where I began my career, so it's right and just that this is where I should end it. There is nothing more pathetic in the eyes of the young than watching some old celebrity try to claw their way back into the limelight. Let's face it: there are too many Last-of-Days Angels in the world now. They are all standing in line, waiting for their chance to audition for nameless, faceless, low-level executives.

The world is running down slowly, too slowly. Two days ago, I walked past an old woman cradling a rag doll, picking at the doll's eyes, and I thought "this is my competition?" Since then, it's been prickly pear and broken glass; wadded toilet paper where someone once squatted between the ties.

I believed for years that for any ending *to last* the conclusion had to be swift (and so merciful). This morning, I watched a red-striped caterpillar crawl across lightning charred bark. It was a shock – the juxtaposition of red on black; so small, under such a vast empty sky.