The Dreams Of Verisimilitude

John Sheehan

St. John Fisher College
The Dreams Of Verisimilitude

Abstract
In lieu of an abstract, below is the essay's first paragraph.

"In varying degrees do we hold the attainment of our goals. To some, ambitions are something to be shunned and avoided, the reasons for which we will allow someone of a greater authority to ponder. Some make a halfhearted attempt at achievement, greater the relief found in the termination of the experience than the despair of failure in the endeavor. Some put forth an honest effort, learning from failure, holding a new perspective, with new talents and abilities. And then there are some who will stop at nothing to achieve their lofty dreams, the fuel of their existence, an ever-elusive answer, idea, or thought. These are Babel's children, builders of the ivory towers."

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Dream One: Babel's Child

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The scientist sat thoughtfully in his lab, contended in all ways his position was stable, his research interesting but not even worth mentioning in the local college journal. He didn't need excitement; he didn't want excitement. The childish intuitive spark was extinguished long ago in the monotony of his routine, and more recently in the go-nowhere project that occupied his hours.

Work continued as usual, observations made, data logged. The results were anticipated as to be a waste of time. But this morning, something different was to appear under the microscope, something whose patterns or numbers did not match. He checked again for error, not to even entertain thoughts of something beyond the ordinary. The numbers checked a second time. What could have caused it? What was the catalyst behind this new development in the experiment? Somewhere in the back of his mind the fire was again lit, the fire of desire, the passion to know. He felt it well up inside him. He felt an animalistic sensation that had abandoned him so long ago. What was the answer?

At that moment there appeared in his laboratory the base of an ivory tower. It was completely circular, perhaps thirty feet in diameter. There was a door at this base, and within it stood an elf of sorts. Adorned in the clothing of a jester and grinning from ear to ear, the small man shook himself tauntingly at the scientist, the bells on his outfit tinkling noisily. "I know what you're looking for," said the jester in a nasal tone. "I know what you're looking for." The scientist advanced a step and said, "Giggled quietly, "Tell me," said the scientist. "Tell me what I need to know." The elf turned his thumbs in his ears, stuck out his tongue, and danced through the open door. The scientist followed into the base of the tower and found himself standing at the foot of a spiral staircase that wound its way up the wall of the tower. The elf was standing on a landing some way up the stairs. "Catch me if you can," he shouted, "and I'll tell you what you want to know." So saying, he mounted the stairs and furiously scampered onward. The scientist ran after, taking the steps two at a time, passing a window on the first landing and continuing upward, around and around. He stopped at the second landing, panting, out of breath. The jester looked down from one landing up, laughing with glee. "I have the answer! I have the answer! La la la! La la la!" The scientist continued the pursuit, past the second and third landings, racing around the steps, higher and higher. But still the elf eluded him, giggling hysterically, his little feet pounding up the steps, the bells jingling, the colors of the suit flashing by the banister. The scientist again stopped. "Tell me! Tell me what I want to know!"

"You have to catch me first!" was the reply, and the chase went on. Landing after landing was passed, and soon the top of the tower was within sight. The scientist saw the elf duck into a room that adjoined the top landing. He stumbled up the last few steps and into the room. The door closed behind him. Before him was a large window set into the wall of the tower. The elf had his back turned to him, his elbows were on the sill, and he was resting his head on his hands. The scientist stood panting, watching the elf. "There's no place to run now. Tell me what I want to know."

The elf slowly responded, his words coming forth through a sob. "I can't. I can't." The man approached the window and looked down at the elf. There were tears streaming down his face, smearing his make-up. The man looked out the window. From the top of the tower, the whole world was visible. He saw children playing in a park, a pair of young lovers walking on a beach, a boy throwing a frisbee to his dog, a baby crying in its crib. He saw life. In a wave of emotion it all came over him. He knew what was important and what was not, what was living, and what was just existing. He realized the futility of his chase. The elf was sobbing beside him. The scientist turned to the door, determined to live again. The door was locked from the outside. He wheeled around and the elf was gone. He walked towards the window, the light being so that he caught his reflection in the glass. He stood looking down at the world around him, a world full of life, of joy and pain, of hopes and dreams. He stood clad in the suit of a jester, make-up covering his face, a tear streaming down his cheek.

Dream Two: The Fool and the Wise Man

Three men sat on an enormous log that spanned the deepest ravine on the planet. The gorge was so wide that neither end of the log could be seen. The three casually hung their legs over the edge of the log, swinging them in the breeze as they watched the clouds and the occasional bird pass below them. A river was barely visible snaking its way along the valley floor, and if one looked hard enough, he could pick out the black blotches of pine dotsting the rock walls of the canyon.

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moment. The first man looked up and said, "I am a poet. Wouldn't it be romantic to die by throwing myself from this log to plummet to my final resting place amongst the pines and streams of this valley?" And so saying, he took a deep breath and lunged himself forward, spiraling down through the mist to his death on the rocky floor. It was far from romantic. The second man blessed himself while the third quickly jotted something on a piece of paper. The second man looked up saying, "I am a priest. Surely my God would not let me die in such a brutal manner. I have faith." After saying this, he too thrust himself from the perch and plummeted to a similar death, his rosary still clutched in his hand. The third man again jotted something on a piece of paper, and turned his head to the sky for a moment of serious contemplation. He removed a knife from his pocket, engraved the following on the log where the three men sat, and walked off towards home.

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