

## What You See Is What You Get



Zeus let his last question negotiate its own way into Larry's mind. The concepts it proffered were so deeply intertwined with every aspect of his master's identity that suggestions or interference of any kind at this stage were unthinkable.

"What a weird way to look at things," Larry mused after several minutes' thought. "When I hold the picture of the plas-mic field of Creation in my mind, it's like seeing myself watching me pretending to be me. It's surreal! How am I supposed to hold that vision and not go bonkers?"

"What makes you think all of us haven't gone off the deep end eons ago?" Zeus asked.

"No, seriously," Larry protested, "how do you expect me to dive into the dissociative world of quantum num-num and continue operating as a functional human being at the same time?"

"Mind rephrasing that?" Zeus jested. "I get the distinct impression that you're suggesting humans are sane. Surely, you don't mean that, do you?"

"Zeus, you're confusing the hell out of me," Larry said.

"Why not try being the *you* watching yourself pretending to be confused?"

"Why don't you try chewing your own tail for a change!" Larry blurted out, surprising only himself.

“Now there you’ve got me,” Zeus responded. “The sheer weight of your intellect leaves me breathless. Why didn’t I think of that? Of course, the Uroboros—the alpha consuming its own omega, the full circle of Creation manifesting the infinite One. How elegant! I now sit at your feet, a humble student eager to learn.”

“Zeus you’re driving me nuts!”

“Now you’ve got *me* confused. You just wrapped up the entire mystery of All That Is in a simple metaphor and still you want more. Man, don’t you listen to anything you say?”

Larry burst out laughing—there was no other suitable container for his mounting anger.

“Ah, there you are,” Zeus remarked. “Thought we’d lost you for a moment. Ain’t teetering on the edge a hoot? Take anything too seriously and *wham*—you’re ass over tea kettle in pea soup—whatever that’s supposed to mean. The trick of this balancing act is to envelop yourself in the protective coat of humor while never losing sight of the lessons you learned with Junie. Be able to play at investigating the cosmos, be able to play at being a biped, and remember all the while they’re both games. They involve you only to the extent you infuse them with your own intention and attention. You are safely outside of any illusion as long as you remember.”

“That’s where the Veil comes in?” Larry asked.

“Bull’s-eye!” Zeus replied, mimicking the Voice in the rocks. “Now do you grasp the simplicity of it all? The Veil is a gossamer energy field now being buffeted by a unique sector of plas-mic Consciousness specifically programmed to rend the fabric of forgetting. This is triggering the opportunity to remember, which means letting go of your old patterning. Unfortunately, for the majority of your populace it seems to be having the opposite effect.”

“Is that what’s making people freak out all over the planet?” Larry asked.

“What do you think?” Zeus responded, giving Larry room to explore his own question.

“I think I’m getting an idea of what you’ve been driving at. As the Veil progressively thins, humans must feel as if their favorite Linus blanket is being wrenched away. That’s got to be scary stuff! It’s no wonder people are losing it. It’s almost as if humanity is desperate to act out its disowned, suppressed parts before time runs out.

“Maybe *that’s* it!” Larry said, making it clear that a new penny had dropped. “Maybe it *is* about time! I’ve noticed that days and weeks seem to be streaming by faster and faster. It’s like we’re catapulting toward a zero point. Is that what’s causing the planet-wide angst?”

“You’re on the right track,” Zeus responded. “Time is not an isolated constant. It does appear to constrict as Consciousness approaches the shift from one density to another. The days ahead will be increasingly challenging for humankind. The compression is already abrading much of the social veneer, exposing the underlying tangle of unresolved issues. People will find ‘faking it’ more difficult as their true colors are exposed. You’ll see an unprecedented resurgence in fundamentalism and nationalistic chauvinism in a last-ditch attempt to reinforce the old paradigm.”

“Ah,” Larry said, “like the ancient Chinese curse, ‘May you live in interesting times!’”

“You’ve been chewing on too many of those sugary fortune cookies, kiddo. The closest that saying ever got to China is in your mind. The only Chinese proverb that even comes close is ‘Better a dog in times of peace than a man in times of war.’ Your version is right out of science fiction. In fact, that’s exactly where

it first showed up, more than a half century ago, in Frank Russell's story 'U-Turn.' But that's a moot issue. Me dog. You man. Time chaotic. What's a poor doggie to do?

"Let me offer instead Julius Caesar—liberally paraphrased, I might add, by William Shakespeare:

Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world  
Like a Colossus, and we petty men  
Walk under his huge legs and peep about  
To find ourselves dishonorable graves.  
Men at some time are masters of their fates:  
The fault, dear Brutus, is not in our stars,  
But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

"Each person on your planet now finds himself, or herself, at a choice point—to arise as the Colossus or to slink back into the pettiness of the lower egoic realm. The stars have done their work and the baton has been passed. Nonparticipation is no longer an option.

"Perhaps at times over the past few days you thought I was harsh with you or made fun of some of your answers. I was only holding up a mirror so you could see yourself from another point of view. For though you consider yourself an individual, Larry, you—like every other human on this planet—are also the macrocosm. Every insight you attain accrues to the collective. When you soar, you raise the vibration for the entire planet. When you settle for mediocrity, humanity ebbs back to its old patterning. A great deal is at stake. And I love you too much to support anything but your best."

For the next several minutes, the two were simply man and dog making their way back to the parking lot after spending

some time in nature. Larry watched Zeus as he crisscrossed the desert floor, sniffing at random rocks and shrubs, his tail erect as if pointing to something of great significance. He found himself puzzling how it would feel to be a sixth-density being in a dog's body, checking out the markings of others' territories.

Zeus suddenly returned to Larry's side. "Funny, I was just wondering the same thing about you. Gotta admit, it can sure be fun once we learn to get out of our own way. And there, sweet prince, lies the rub. These *are* challenging times. Transitioning through the condensing plasma is profoundly affecting the planet herself. Her Consciousness has already shifted into the fourth density, and she can barely support the polarized, dualistic vibrations of third-density beings."

"That's probably why psychic futurists are predicting volcanic eruptions and earthquakes in the time ahead," Larry proposed.

"Prediction is a tricky business," Zeus replied. "Some seers say that California is going to sink into the ocean and Phoenix is about to become a major seaport. Some predict that recent volcanic eruptions and major quakes—with a magnitude of 7.7 or higher—are just precursors of what lies ahead. But the problem isn't so much in the accuracy of their predictions as in the dissemination of their conclusions. It's no coincidence that so many humans are now connected by a worldwide information grid. But that's a double-edged sword that cuts with alarming swiftness and power.

"Consider, Larry, that Creation is not random. Intention always precedes manifestation. Or, to quote one of the key isms from the *Interdimensional Survival Manual*:

*What you see is what you get.*

“The planet’s been enduring regular seismic jolts since the beginning of its existence at a rate of something like twelve million earthquakes in any twelve-month period. Only a hundred or so per year are disruptive to your societies, and the most destructive in terms of human lives aren’t among the most recent.

“To borrow one of Wall Street’s CYA disclaimers, however, past performance is no guarantee of future behavior. What happens—or doesn’t happen—next will be a direct product of the collective human vision and expectation. Looking into the Akashic records, which are now available to you too, all I want to say at this time about earthquakes and volcanic eruptions is, it’s gonna be interesting!”

“Well, what about the crazy weather patterns?” Larry asked. “I suppose you’re going to tell me they’re figments of the collective imagination as well?”

“Whoa there, good buddy,” Zeus responded. “Let’s not throw everything into the same pot and call it reality. As far as the abnormal weather is concerned, it’s a plague that’s already been visited upon the multitudes. Why? Humanity is now reaping the toxic yield of centuries of thoughtless activity. The skies and oceans that once looked like limitless dumping grounds are in danger of being supersaturated with poisons. Scientists are only now stating publicly what science has known for decades: second-hand smoke kills just as surely as smoking itself. When will people finally admit that second-hand water and soil—the legacy of your unconscious modern societies—are equally deadly?”

“You know that ritzy section of town you like to walk me in?”

“You mean Bel Air?” Larry answered.

“Well, the air there ain’t ‘belle’ at all! How can otherwise intelligent people shell out outrageous sums to raise their families in one of planet’s more toxic spots?”

Larry smiled to himself at the irony.

“Over the coming years,” Zeus continued, “you’re going to be exposed to a lot of stories—some built on fact, others on speculation. You’ll be hearing about Nibiru, or Planet X, said to be a rogue planet that circles your sun every 3,600 years or so. Its orbit is off-plane, clockwise, and elliptical, while the rest of the planets travel counterclockwise. Nibiru is said to have caused the Great Flood of your Bible and to have brought with it demigods who fought over gold mines in Africa. Such tales, like the events flowing out of 9/11 and many others you will be exposed to, may engender panic and fear in some.

“It will be up to each person to assign an appropriate plane of reality for each story. Certainly Nibiru and the many predicted events have meaning in the mythic and metaphorical realms. Don’t discard them as childhood fantasies just because they challenge your rationality.”

“But 9/11 did happen. And it shocked the entire world,” Larry said. “Was that just a random act of terror, or does it have a deeper meaning?”

“You’re still asking questions of the mind and ignoring input from your higher Consciousness,” Zeus answered. “The answer isn’t hanging out in the intellect. But since you’ve asked, I’ll provide a few clues. Are you familiar with random number generators?”

“Yeah,” Larry responded. “Aren’t they the machines that spit out a constant series of totally random numbers?”

“There’s a little-known ongoing experiment, called the Global Consciousness Project, in which thirty-seven of these RNG devices are connected to computers located all over the world. Each computer independently uses the generated numbers to ‘flip’ two hundred virtual coins at a time, and they upload the data every five minutes to the project’s website. You’d expect the

results to come out fairly even—roughly a hundred heads and a hundred tails each time. The experiment’s supposed to determine if global-scale events that bring the thoughts and feelings of great numbers of people into coherence can influence otherwise independent, ‘unthinking’ machinery. In other words, can Consciousness be measured?

“Don’t laugh. The concept isn’t all that radical. Parapsychologists have shown that certain gifted people can actually influence the throw of dice. China boasts of a large number of psychic Indigo Children who can affect all manner of physical objects. Quantum physicists have long accepted that the observer influences the outcome of an experiment. So why shouldn’t the focus of millions of people disrupt the random patterning of a number generator?”

“Well, what happened?” Larry asked. “Did the last Tuesday’s events show up on the RNG radar screen?”

“You bet they did!” Zeus said. “Big time. And the anomalous data lasted for hours. Now, skeptics might say all the radar and cell phone activity right after the tragedies must have affected the RNGs. But they can’t so conveniently explain away the fact that the data starting displaying nonrandom patterning a few hours *before* the events took place! Once again, Consciousness shows itself as neither linear nor local in nature.

“The fabric of the entire Creation is woven of threads of Consciousness. Or, as Empedocles once said, ‘The nature of God is a circle of which the center is everywhere and the circumference is nowhere.’ We are all connected in ways so inextricably intimate, the drunken chicken antics of your illusion would be laughable if it weren’t for the pandemic pain and suffering rippling out from your planet.”

Suddenly Zeus became uncharacteristically serious. “You yearn to help humanity move on to the density of Love and

Compassion, but right now that seems impossible. Do you know what you and your brothers and sisters are failing to see?”

“No. I wish I did,” Larry answered.

“The majority of those who will eventually hear or read your words live in relative comfort and security. The little they know of the suffering that plagues much of the rest of the world comes from sanitized news bytes on CNN. The few who are moved by the anguish may contribute money or time, attend benefits, sign petitions, but then they continue with their normal lives. They hear the cries as if muted and they’re screened from feeling the pain, for that is how events are meant to be perceived on your side of the Veil.

“Those in the higher densities perceive a different reality. The sounds of the six o’clock news travel through a particulate medium, so no matter how loud the cries are at first, eventually their wave vibrations cannot overcome the inertia of the medium, and silence returns. This is not so with the energy of pain and suffering. When these tortured pebbles are cast into the plasma of Love, Wisdom, and Power, they create interference patterns that ripple through all Creation. These do *not* dissipate. They’re not weakened by time and distance. And they cause great concern for those learning to master Love in the fourth density. Perceiving the personal tragedies played out on this planet with selfless tenderness and understanding, they feel compelled to help in any way possible. Such is the nature of Compassion.”

“We must look pretty pathetic from on high,” Larry said. “But given our unwillingness to let go of our deeply ingrained ways of seeing things, wouldn’t you agree the odds are pretty much stacked against us?”

“Yes and no,” Zeus replied. “When you try to predict what the flock will do, it’s a complete crapshoot. However, it isn’t

about the collective anymore. That's the gift of 9/11."

"You *are* nuts," Larry said. "Why would you call 9/11 a gift?"

"I expected you'd see it yourself by now," Zeus replied. "Our friend in the rock gave you a pretty good clue, describing the events of 9/11 as either a great tragedy that needs to be mourned or an unparalleled opportunity that needs to be seized—depending on one's point of view. On the surface, the world was presented with four commercial airliners commandeered by Islamic terrorists bent on teaching the United States and the rest of the 'infidels' a lesson. Their sheer audacity called the bluff of America's invincibility and exposed a basic flaw in the matrix that all the posturing and saber rattling can't hide. The net result is that, for a moment, everyone felt as vulnerable as the twin towers. When those two buildings collapsed into a heap of twisted rubble, so did the certainty of humanity.

"Now let's revisit these events on a deeper level. If all of you are one, then, despite what your elected leaders say, there is no 'us and them.' There's just a collective family of humanity, inexorably linked, hurtling through space together on this fragile sphere. When you went back and observed the world as it was on September 10, you found most people living lives of quiet desperation, driven by fear and uncertainty. Collectively, humankind was no better off than the ostrich, lying flat on the ground feigning death when it's frightened. I'm here to tell you that no matter how tight you shut your eyes, the monster won't disappear. The time has come to face the bogeyman and make sense of a life that, for the vast majority of humans, has no real relevance beyond their structures of belief.

"Once the planes hit the buildings, the world ceased to make sense to a great many people. Many, no doubt, will return to the fold, marching in lockstep to the beat of chauvinistic war drums

and outrage. Some will not. It is to those who are no longer willing to buy a pig in a poke from the well-heeled merchants pedaling yesterday's wares that you must speak. To these folk, 9/11 was not an isolated event that pitted terrorism against democracy; it was an unmistakable symbol—stunningly visible to billions all over the world—proclaiming that humanity is in big trouble.

“With the untimely death of some three thousand individuals, 9/11 accomplished what the deliberate slaughter of six million men, women, and children in Auschwitz, Bergen-Belsen, and other Nazi extermination camps could not. September 11 has commanded the attention of humanity even as a million sub-Saharan Africans starve to death each month in total anonymity and the two-mile-high cloud of toxic pollutants shrouding Asia from Afghanistan to Sri Lanka goes unreported, though it threatens the immediate well-being of over 20 percent of the globe's population.

“Are those who die in Africa or Europe or Asia of less value than those who perished in New York or Virginia or Pennsylvania? I think not. Yet only 9/11 has managed to stop the implacable machinery of events dead in its tracks. *That* is its greatest gift. For the briefest instant in the history of your world, 9/11 disrupted the deeply ingrained flow you just spoke of. Routines were not just interrupted; they were completely overturned. People were brutally shaken from their semisleep to face, for the first time, the horror of their own creation. And most, thank God, did not like what they saw. As Walt Kelly aptly observed through the voice of Pogo, his ingenuous swamp possum, ‘We have met the enemy and he is us.’

“For a moment, Larry, put yourself in the position of this planet's collective oversoul.”

“What exactly is that?” Larry asked.

“It’s not all that mysterious,” Zeus replied. “The Higher Selves of every third-density being on this planet are connected and communicate with each other through the Infinite Universal Hologram. Each one knows what’s happening not only with its own lower self but with the billions of other lower selves sharing the third-density experience. Is it inconceivable that they might act collectively?”

“Now I see what you’re driving at,” Larry replied. “Given the current state of affairs on the planet and the limited amount of time remaining, what else could they have done to get our attention? From that perspective, I can see why you call 9/11 a gift. But isn’t such a deliberate act of terror a blatant violation of Free Will?”

“Interesting question,” Zeus replied. “You just touched on one of the major dilemmas facing a sixth-density guide: how to create options without compelling a particular action. That’s why all the signposts your Higher Self places along your everyday path are oblique. And that’s why true channeling from the higher realms is always equivocal, allowing wiggle room for interpretation. If channeling comes as a directive, you can bet something’s amiss!

“As I said yesterday morning, the Prime Mandate of Creation—senior even to Love itself—is Free Will. No Higher Self can violate this law, no matter how urgently it wishes to warn or help its third-density self. That’s why the events of 9/11 are open to interpretation. Those who want to hold tight to the old paradigm will probably use the attacks to justify further acts of hostility. Others may react with despair, confusion, anger, pride, outrage, and a whole host of other reflexive emotions. We honor each and every choice. Collectively, we ask only that each choice is made as consciously as possible.

“September 11, in spite of its sudden and dramatic impact, is completely equivocal. Whether it evokes compassion or fear, love or revenge, sorrow or joy, is simply a function of selecting a point along the I-continuum from which to view. There’s no correct answer. Any decision allows the All That Is to know itself more completely. The question at hand is simply: what will your choice be?”

Larry stopped dead in his tracks, mulling Zeus’s last question over and over in his mind. He turned to face his most remarkable dog, who gazed back at him with his head cocked expectantly.

“Amazing,” Larry thought. “Whoever I thought I used to be I certainly ain’t any longer. Whatever I decide to be I get to choose right here, right now. Absolutely amazing!”

He dropped into thought. If one thing was true of his adventures over the past three days it was that nothing had been random. Every act, every word, every nuance was deliberate and had been carefully weighed before it was added to the stew.

Now the trick was for him to be sufficiently present to grasp the message’s meaning. Larry focused on Zeus’s last words as he visualized a seesaw in perfect balance. On the left side he placed the words “sorrow,” “fear,” and “revenge.” On the opposite side “love,” “compassion,” and “joy.” He did the same with “constriction” and its opposite, “expansion,” then “separation” and “unity.” There was ample room on each side for him to sit and cause that side to descend into the operative reality defining his existence. Viewing the two sets of options arrayed before him, his choice was crystal clear.

But something else niggled at Larry’s mind. He searched inwardly for several moments before recalling Zeus’s exact words: “It isn’t about the collective anymore. That’s the gift of

9/11.” If nothing was random, what did these words really mean?

Fragmented thoughts from previous conversations barraged his mind until Zeus interrupted: “Stop trying to work this out, kiddo. Just let the ideas wash over you like a cool shower. Acknowledge whatever seems to stand out and let it go as soon as another concept grabs center stage. Your mind can’t help you with this one. Let your heart do the thinking.”

The trickle of thought soon became a torrent: “I think, therefore I am. I believe, therefore I am. I am righteous, therefore I am. I am a good lawyer, therefore I am. I am noticed, therefore I am. I stand for something, therefore I am. . . . If I define myself by what others perceive me to be, how can I alter that definition without risking annihilation at some level? Death makes way for birth. I need to become reborn. I need to die!”

Larry emerged from his inner journey with a start. “That’s it!” he said. “It *isn’t* about the collective anymore. All the labels that define me as part of a group—however wonderful or noble—have to fall away. It *is* all about the individual, the one buried inside every human being on the planet. It’s all about me and what I choose to do!”

Larry looked straight at Zeus as he spoke the words that would shape the rest of his time in the third density. “The time for collective action has passed. I now know that I don’t need anyone’s permission to act. I don’t need consensus or anyone’s agreement. All I ask from others, if they’re willing to give it, is their support. The fate of the world literally depends upon what I decide to do. And that’s equally true for anyone else who feels the same way.”

“Bravo!” Zeus responded. “Now you’re getting what I meant when I said that although you and others are beginning to perceive yourselves as individuals, you’re also the macrocosm;

every insight each of you gains belongs to the whole. With the Veil now so incredibly thinned, all humanity has access to resources that boggle the imagination. Anyone with the courage to leave the flock can attain levels of information and powers of manifestation that make your old comic book superheroes pale into insignificance.”

“What do you mean by that?” Larry asked.

“Uncle. Stop. I give up,” Zeus teased. “Enough with all these questions already.”

“Don’t pass this off on me,” Larry chided, “you’re the one who dangled the bait. Did you really expect me not to ask?”

“I’m just concerned you’re approaching sensory overload.”

“Don’t worry,” Larry quipped, “I died from sensory overload yesterday. Remember?”

Zeus chuckled. “So you did. I forget that I dialogue now with the eternal Phoenix. Okay then, Big Bird, since you’re such a smarty pants, tell me something: what makes one person intelligent and another dumb?”

“Genes?” Larry answered.

“Sorry, Levi Strauss has nothing to do with it.” Larry groaned as Zeus continued. “Don’t knock the humor, my little peacock. Without it you would never be able to handle the intricacies of intelligence.”

“*What? What? . . . What? What?*” Right on cue.

“Ah, I see your fellow fine-feathered friend has found you floundering afresh,” Zeus commented, acknowledging what was to be What-What’s last appearance of the weekend. “Permit me to explain to both of you the mysterious nature of intelligence.

“As you know, everything that occurs throughout Creation is recorded in the limitless hologram of Consciousness. What you actually experience day to day is mirrored in countless parallel

universes, where alternate realities—the choices you almost made—play themselves out. These nonlocal O-worlds are usually held at bay by the barriers programmed into the Veil of Forgetting. Your Higher Self—itself a source of wisdom and information—decides on the nature and strength of these barriers before assisting a portion of its Awareness into the third density.

“You getting any of this?” Zeus suddenly inquired.

“Yeah, I’m still in working mode. You’re suggesting that there are thousands of other little Larrys living out my fantasies in parallel universes—probably having more fun than I am right now.”

“And reaping all the consequences of that fun,” Zeus replied. “The piper always gets his due. It’s your ability to access the other realities that’s the key here. Basically, the more permeable the barriers, the greater the third-density being’s intelligence quotient. Accessing alternate realities not only increases the information input, it also provides a greater range of simultaneous viewpoints. That’s why intelligent people tend to be great lateral thinkers. However, this advantage can be a very slippery slope, as leaky margins can’t easily be secured, so uninvited cascades of data constantly bombard one.

“Another danger—of particular interest to you, I might add—is the ease with which intelligent people fall into the pit of arrogance. Intelligence in and of itself is merely an attribute, like height or complexion or eye color. Don’t believe you belong to some sort of mythic aristocracy merely because you have access to alternate realities.

“The ability to dip into parallel universes can be managed two ways: You either block it by retreating into a fundamental set of beliefs so your chakras have a reinforced set of filters to defuse the unwanted flow of data, or you adopt a playful mechanism to safely handle the clash of disparate planes of information.”

“Ah,” Larry said. “You must be referring to humor. The par-

allel universe model would explain how a single word or situation can evoke so many different mind pictures at once.”

“And why puns are so delightful to those who make them and so agonizing to those who don’t,” Zeus responded.

“And what happens when a person chooses neither option?” Larry asked.

“Typically,” Zeus answered, “they go off the deep end. And as one of your recent movies suggested, ‘a beautiful mind’ is a terrible thing to waste. Those who dare play with the worlds around the corner walk along a very narrow ledge. The line separating you from the psychopathic serial killer, wife beater, predatory priest, or drug dealer is more easily traversed than you imagine.

“Don’t start thinking: there but for the grace of God go I. For in fact, by the grace of God, each of those sociopaths *is* you. Whatever you now choose to do you’re choosing also for the part of you that is them.”

“My God!” Larry exclaimed. “Now I finally got the last lines of Rocky’s rap.”

“I thought you got them earlier,” Zeus teased.

“No. No. I mean this time I *really* got it! This time I went deeper and totally grasped the difference between gratitude and omnitude.”

“And?”

“Gratitude is thanks for what I have. Omnitude is thanks for what I am.”

“And what are you, Larry?”

“Incredibly blessed to bear Conscious witness to Creation.”

Zeus simply smiled.

The two walked in silence to the parking lot to begin their journey back to Los Angeles. There was nothing more to say. Zeus jumped into the rear of the SUV, settling into the warm

comfort of his blankie as his master took the wheel. Larry turned left onto Park Boulevard, driving slowly north toward the ranger station at the entrance of the National Monument. Part of him was clearly reluctant to leave the magic of Joshua Tree.

As he negotiated a left turn in the road, he was almost blinded by the light of the setting sun. Maybe Zeus was right—he had succumbed to sensory overload. His imagination began running wild as he rubbed his eyes in disbelief. His heart raced to such an extent that he was barely able to pull the car onto the shoulder and stop the engine. “My God,” he thought, “is this what’s it’s like to have a heart attack?”

The palpitations subsided almost as suddenly as they came. But the images didn’t. The clouds radiated unimaginable colors and swirled in impossible directions, displaying one shape upon another in an unending kaleidoscopic array. There were mountain vistas that gave way to cityscapes that dissolved into trees, then animals, then human faces. Suddenly Larry’s mind exploded with the syncopated sounds of familiar piano chords. Looking down at him from the glowing sky was the unmistakable smiling face of John Lennon, round glasses and all. Then came the words:

Imagine there’s no countries,  
It isn’t hard to do,  
Nothing to kill or die for,  
No religion too.  
Imagine all the people  
Living life in peace. . . .  
You may say I’m a dreamer,  
But I’m not the only one,  
I hope someday you’ll join us,  
And the world will be as one.

Larry sat in stunned silence, only the slow, rhythmic rise and fall of his chest providing tangible proof of life. By the time he realized that his beloved dog was at his side, gently licking his right cheek, night had fallen completely.

“Zeus . . . ,” Larry stammered, the words barely taking form in his mouth, “did you hear that? Did you see what I saw?” Zeus only wagged his tail and nuzzled more insistently into his master’s face. “Zeus, talk to me!” Larry’s stomach dropped as he faced a new possibility. “It can’t have been just a dream, it was too real. I remember it so clearly, I can almost reach out and touch it. Zeus, say something!”

The absolute silence of the high desert mocked his throbbing thoughts.

Somehow he made his way down the rest of Park Boulevard to the intersection at route 62. It was while staring at the red light, waiting for it to change, that he heard the words confirming that the last few days weren’t just a figment of his imagination.

“Lighten up already, you’re giving me a headache.”