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LONG AS THE RIVERS RUN

by

Angelee Sailer Anderson

Susan both loved and hated waiting in airports. Loved, because the rumbling of jet engines was a call to distant shores, and the call held within it the sure promise of adventure. Hated, because promise's silver wings bore away others, but never herself.

So it was with this present waiting. She was not sipping hot chocolate that was sickening-sweet and not hot, in a crowded terminal at Los Angeles International, till she should be summoned to destinations and destinies beyond mountains and over seas. She was biding time till her grandparents' British Airways flight set down from London, at which arrival she with her father and mother would assist in carrying suitcases fresh from the realm of the Pendragon and the two Elizabeths. Luggage loaded in car, she would be on her way home -- still the home of her parents, though her adolescence was behind her. Such was Susan's portion in adventure.

Such it was. Yes, but what if -- the melancholy of "if" she knew well -- what if the call *had* come to her, rung out to *her*, pealing without repeal? What if she, her chocolate downed and the ladies' room visited, were to be boarding a plane for Heathrow within the hour? England was the haunt of her dreams both sleeping and waking; it was her heart's right nesting place. Susan knew, when English authors and poets spoke the secrets of her thoughts, when words shot into her hearing from the melodic bow of an English tongue. England's history was her root, its legends her flower; the rain-kissed ground was her framing skeleton and the running rivers her blood. "That this the meed of all my toils might be / To have a home, an English home, and thee. . . ."

But she was not going there, would go perhaps never. No English home -- no room in an English inn. There was not money for it; and if there had been money, Susan was not certain that she, fearing destiny's lead even while she longed to follow, would have the courage to venture there alone. She would rather not go than go with her parents, who did not hear the call or understand.

If only that call had come to her at birth, not permitting a continent and an ocean to wedge themselves between. If she had been born to an Englishman and to wholly another life, while still remaining she. Her ancestors were English; they might not have emigrated. Once again, knowing melancholy would

so be goaded into misery, Susan lost herself in that peculiar brand of speculation which had marked her imagining since she was a child.

If the essence of Susan were distilled through a different history of genetics and environment, what would Susan be? Would Susan still be Susan? Susan believed in the eternal spirit, in a core of selfhood untouched by the transiency and externality of physical being. To be composed of other flesh, to feed one's lungs with an alien air, and yet stay the very same self -- could one be recognized, recognize oneself as the same? Did well-adjusted people indulge themselves in visions of alternate existences? Susan doubted it. She, on the contrary, indulged herself inordinately. Mostly they were English existences, though she had in passing toyed with tropical, desert, or arctic ones, and ones in centuries besides the twentieth. If her speculations were romantic, springing from boredom with the mundanity of her actual life, yet there was also in them a measure of disinterested curiosity. If she could by an act of will "cross over," change her hereditary equation as a chameleon its colour, her new hide's-hue might seem unremarkable as the old to the strange creature who would then be she. Still the shades of disillusionment did not bedim the thrill of wondering.

So engrossed in that wondering had Susan become, staring into the dregs of her cocoa-cup, that her father broke in on her thoughts to learn what they might be. From experiences past Susan knew explanation to be futile, knew any attempt at it would leave her sounding foolish even to herself. Yet there was hope in her, if not of being understood, at least of having the value of her thoughts acknowledged. Self-consciously, she unfolded to her parents her idea of alternate existences, ending with the metaphor of the chameleon.

"My daughter, the lizard," was her father's comment.

Her mother said nothing, but looked at her in blank discomfort -- wishing, Susan supposed, that she would find a nice young man to marry her and forthwith renounce her morbid fancies.

Susan and her parents abandoned the coffee shop and began to stroll toward the gate at which her grandparents' flight was due momentarily to arrive. Susan felt her skin prickling with embarrassment and

frustration at the just-finished conversation. She wished that she were far away -- not in England; that was not far enough -- but somewhere on a polar ice cap where she need not speak to anyone.

"I'm going to the restroom," she said abruptly, and veered off.

In the ladies' room, Susan examined her face critically in the mirror. The lights in these places always made her look sickly. Aside from its pallor, it was not so unfortunate a face; but she would have preferred it if it were the face of an English farm girl, or -- why not? -- an English heiress. . . .

She was doing it again; she could not help it. Fantasy was her defense against all besiegers, and especially against the loose moorings of her self-identity. She defined herself in her fantasies. And she shifted, radically as glass slivers at the twist of a kaleidoscope, from one definition to another with frequency and suddenness. The puzzle-pieces that made up the thing called Susan split, scrambled, and rearranged themselves wholly apart from her wishes or willing. It was as though she had indeed lived multiple existences within the confines of her own mind and heart. It might, perhaps, be a relief to light on one identity and remain there; she was not certain that it would be a blessing.

Susan groped through her purse's chaos until at last she found her comb, and ran it through the flaxen tangles of her hair. Being fair herself, the blonde mystique was lost on her. Dark, night-dark hair, lava-black -- that would be mysterious and enchanting. And to be Valkyrie-tall, of noble height, not preciously petite. . . .

She returned the comb to her purse, and in so doing her hand brushed her passport. The call *had* come to her once, when she was seven years old; she had been in London for a day on the way to Brussels where her father had held a job for a short time. This early encounter with lands far-off had continued long enough to whet her wanderlust, and then it had ended, leaving her curelessly malcontented with California life.

Though Susan's passport to the unfamiliar had expired years ago, she carried it with her on treks to the airport as a talisman of hope. It bore the stamps of several European countries, England included, and contained an unflattering -- imbecilic -- picture of her childish self. As she approached the restroom's exit, she drew out the passport and opened it.

The tall man with silver-grey hair set down the book through which he had been leafing and looked at his watch. His 9:30 flight -- ten and a half hour pilgrimage to the green and pleasant isle that harboured his estate -- was twenty minutes from departing. The plane would be boarding directly. He turned from the book and magazine stand, picked up



his briefcase, and left the gift shop, thinking all the while of his daughter. Since the death of his beloved wife, now twelve years gone, his daughter had been his life's joy; he had cursed the business affairs that had forced him to travel, leaving her in the care of governesses. She had now for some time been of an age to govern herself, forsaking him for foreign parts as often as he did her. Her particular passion was for the South Seas, and she had just spent a month in Tahiti, flying home by way of LAX two days ago. She was perhaps at this moment preparing for his return -- brightening the rooms with fresh-cut flowers, polishing his favourite pipe, buying the makings of a fiery curry for tomorrow's supper. Statuesque, gypsy-dark, his daughter was the near-perfect image of the mother she had been named for. Susan. . . Turning from the shop towards the boarding gates, the man passed by the doors to the restrooms just as a girl of about twenty-three emerged from one of them. His glance touched her. The girl halted, swaying in precarious unbalance.

Happy shock flooded the man's face. Retracing two long-legged steps, he caught the girl gently by the arm.

At once scolding and adoring, he exclaimed, "Susan -- why ever are you here, still? I had thought you were in England yester morning."

The girl looked at him silently. There was a suspense in her gaze, a deep dislocation, as though she had been a naked spirit struggling to reclothe itself in a body's solidity. The man felt for a terrible in-

stant that the gaze was a stranger's, peering unnaturally upon its universe through the eyes of his child. Then the girl spoke, and the terror dissolved -- it was his daughter's voice.

"I waited for you, Daddy," she said.

Susan opened her passport, and a thing happened to her which could not happen, humanly. Miracle entwined her like a gordian knot, never to be unloosed in life.

A peculiar jolt rocked her equilibrium. The floor seemed suddenly a further distance beneath her than it ought. Is this what Alice felt when she drank from the bottle in Wonderland -- or was it the cake that made one taller? In her dizziness Susan tipped over her unfastened purse, spilling out her comb. When she lifted the comb to replace it she saw that someone else -- someone with thicker, darker hair -- had been using it. She had not noticed this when she had combed her own hair a moment ago. She shook herself sharply, trying to right what had gone topsy-turvy in her senses, every one of which seemed to be receiving its data in some subtly different manner than before. Even her cherished passport felt unfamiliar, stiffer and bulkier in her hand. As she pressed her other hand against the door leading back to the main terminal, Susan looked down at the page to which the passport was opened.

It was one of the pages on which visas were stamped. She knew the stamps by heart, the ones from France and Belgium, Italy and Austria; and particularly she knew the series from the London stop-over ending with "* Immigration * Officer * (622) Embarked 24 July 1970 Heathrow (3)." Instead of these she saw a confusion of stamps from places to which she had traveled only in literature and imagination: New Zealand, Africa, Tahiti, India, Japan. . . . Blinking to clear her malfunctioning eyes, she turned the passport back three pages to the front. "Name: Susan Paddock." Yes, that was her name -- that was her name. She was recovered. Then, following her name, she read: "National Status--British Subject: Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies."

Whose passport i_s this -- how has it come into my purse? Turning one page more, she looked where her child's photograph should have been, and saw the picture of a full-grown woman with black, black bewitching hair.

Susan observed, as if from a vantage outside herself, her own mind struggling to stem the tide of strangeness which rushed upon her. She snapped the passport shut, revealing the Royal Coat-of-Arms upon its cover; she slipped it into her purse, remembering within it, "Birthplace: Pangbourne, Berkshire, England." She stepped through the restroom doorway, and as the door swung closed behind her her struggle was overflowed by cresting inevitability and

drowned.

Her eyes locked with those of a silver-haired man. She swayed as a fresh surge forced her deeper. The man was a stranger, and yet was known better by none, was dearer to none than she. Taking tender hold of her arm, he spoke in the accent best loved by her and in the tone of one loving her best of all that lives in the world to be loved.

"Susan -- why ever are you here, still? I had thought you were in England yester morning."

Sir, you must mistake me for -- but the words would not form themselves, not on her lips nor even at the edge of thought. Feeling all at once ill unto death, Susan caught sight of her own reflection in the gift shop window.

She opened her mouth, and it was as if a costume which had not hung straight fell suddenly into its proper folds.

"I waited for you, Daddy. As a surprise -- I hope you're pleased. I know how you do brood on long flights alone."

The illness passed; she heard herself speaking. The accent was English. The voice was hers.



Now, from her seat at her writing desk in the library of her father's manor house, that first speaking with another voice was separated from her by more than the many thousand miles traveled or the week of days past. The chameleon-change that had come upon her had deepened since that time. Through the airborne hours of speech with and sleep beside her father -- moneyed nobleman bearing a

humble man's heart -- along the roads of Berkshire as they motored together to their Pangbourne home, she had grown ever less whom she had been, ever more whom she now was. At the outset of the change, the existence of the English Susan had seemed one of tenuous reality; for the American she had stood overlooking it from a place apart, as ourselves observe us play-acting at possibilities in dreams, knowing that we dream. Yet little by little these roles had reversed; and now, a few days after, the California girl had taken on the dream-role and the Berkshire lass the dominant. Should this progress continue, the memory of the first Susan would soon vanish, ghost-like, into the burial-ground of the second Susan's subconscious.

But what was it that had happened to her, and how possible, and of what meaning? The very strangeness of the change prevented her from too well contemplating its strangeness. Where now were her first parents and what was she to them, now; had she ceased to be, to ever have been, in their frame of existence as suddenly as she had begun to be in this? It must be so; and for this the Susan who loved them grieved. But grief's grasp was weak in a world of such wonder as she now inhabited. She could not compel herself to question if it would last; wonder of wonders, it was to be for as long as it would be. She could not think beyond this trust in the cascading destiny that carried her.

Now as she sat looking out upon the manor's gardens, she dallied with the thought of keeping a journal of her experience, lest one day this or that Susan wholly forget. Absent-mindedly, she began to leaf through the various papers, notebooks, and correspondence on the desktop; she turned over the pages of her appointment calendar to today's date, 12 August. She stared at the page a moment not seeing it, then noticed that there was something written there in her own, much-improved, handwriting. It said, simply: Jim, 7 o'clock.

7 o'clock -- morning or evening? If the former, she had stood up her date. But it must be evening -- yes, it was evening; she remembered now. And she remembered also -- not by a gradual trickling into the mind as she had remembered her life with her English father and dead mother or her English friends -- but with a sudden in-pouring, on seeing his name, she remembered Jim.

She had met him on the day before she left for Tahiti, at an early music concert in which he played the lute and the *viele*. He was the son of one of her father's wealthy associates, and was judged a black sheep because he used his inherited assets not for business investment in the family tradition, but to support his interest in music, poetry, and the culture and history of his birthland. Susan had not got on well with the other men she had met through her father's connections, and her father had suggested that Jim

might be better suited to her impractical, romantic nature. So she had gone to the concert and introduced herself.

And something had happened between them, she did not know what. It was not her memory that was at fault, for she had not known it then. It was thing in process, not wholly happened yet, even as her transformation to this other Susan had hung suspended from the point of her lost equilibrium until she spoke. She remembered that they had talked briefly of poetry and that his favourites, Coleridge and Keats, were hers. They had discussed The Rime of the Ancient Mariner and The Eve of St. Agnes. Something was preparing to be between Jim and she, and she must keep her 7 o'clock tryst to learn what it was.

At 7:00 she was waiting in the drawing-room when the maid escorted him in. He had brought her an orchid to wear in her hair, remembering her love for the South Seas. He grasped both her hands in greeting, and told her that, if she liked, he would take her to a show in London; but he thought she might prefer a quiet supper in an inn he knew where they could talk in privacy for as long as they wished. He believed that they must have a great deal to talk of.

Never could the Susan that is or was recall all they spoke of that night, for before a word was exchanged she had been stricken at heart unrecoverably. The maid had showed him into the drawing-room; she had looked up, and the thing that had only threatened came to pass fully and for all time. She saw his features wherein boyish innocence and experienced manhood met as one, his slender build of a height with her own, his dark red-brown curls and deep wizard's eyes, the half-smile more joyous than any whole lighting his face as he looked back at her. And she knew the meaning of the strange, sweet incarnation she was enacting, the meaning of Jim, 7 o'clock.

She knew the meaning, and the tragedy. Whether this life were to be but for a hour or four score years, she had not felt duration as important. Now its importance was infinite. Now she knew the tragedy of the ticking clock whose pendulum stays not for pleading, of dreams that wither into waking and wings which are only borrowed. Transient butterfly, she was summoned to re-enter at her end the cocoon in which she had begun. A month, six months, or six years -- but the days of the Susan to whom Jim had happened were running away one by one with every drop of English rain. Time was a gilded blade, priceless to her in its content and perilous in its passing. To have found this, and not to last.

August passing on to September, the peril was with her. Tramping through fields, jeans tucked into boots and Jim's setter by their side, the blade drove between her and the gladness of sunshine on

the dog's coat and the wild smell of the grasses. Riding together on one horse, it pierced her in rhythm with the pounding of the stallion's hooves. The spray of the breakers slapping the cliffs of Cornwall wounded her with it; it twisted in the wound as they walked the autumning woods. The blade turned to discord the strings of his lute, caused his bow to stroke his vièle falsely, wove needle-like within and without of his voice as he read to her their special poems.

As steering from lock to lock along the Thames he read to her that poem of Coleridge which the former Susan had loved even as she:

CONSTANCY TO AN IDEAL OBJECT

Since all that beat about in Nature's range,
Or veer or vanish; why should'st thou remain
The only constant in a world of change,
O yearning Thought! that liv'st but in the brain?
Call to the Hours, that in the distance play,
The faery people of the future day--
Fond Thought! not one of all that shining swarm
Will breathe on thee with life-enkindling breath,
Till when, like strangers shelt'ring from a storm,
Hope and Despair meet in the porch of Death!
Yet still thou haunt'st me; and though well I see,
She is not thou, and only thou art she,
Still, still as though some dear embodied Good,
Some living Love before my eyes there stood
With answering look a ready ear to lend,
I mourn to thee and say -- 'Ah! loveliest friend!
That this the meed of all my toils might be,
To have a home, an English home, and thee!'
Vain repetition! Home and Thou are one.
The peacefull'st cot, the moon shall shine upon,
Lulled by the thrush and wakened by the lark,
Without thee were but a becalmed bark,
Whose Helmsman on an ocean waste and wide
Sits mute and pale his mouldering helm beside.

And art thou nothing? Such thou art, as when
The woodman winding westward up the glen
At wintry dawn, where o'er the sheep-track's
maze

The viewless snow-mist weaves a glist'ning haze,
Sees full before him, gliding without tread,
An image with a glory round its head;
The enamoured rustic worships its fair hues,
Nor knows he makes the shadow, he pursues!

"The only constant in a world of change" -- but what if I change worlds? I am not she whom you believe me; I am ephemeral as the snow-mist, insubstantial as the shadow. Love me not, for your own heart's sake; but do not ask that I should not love you, for though I pass away yet shall the glory round you never. Only shelter with me from the storm, until a

metamorphosis more ruthless than Death's take this porch for its own. But do not love me.

None of this could Susan tell him; it was to be her burden alone. If Jim had seen the spectre of the blade's flashing as it slipped between them in their dearest intimacy, he put it down to Susan's moodiness and it seemed not to trouble him. How could she trouble him with such a truth as would slander to him her sanity and label their love perverse? It was perverse; it should never have been -- or perhaps he would not judge it so. If any could conceive of her miracle which had now become his, it was Jim. Still she could not tell him.

She could not, even when, setting aside the book within which the just-read poem glistened like a rare gem in its setting, he said: "Becalmed barks and mouldering helms were the tale of my life until your coming into it. Now at last I feel I'm riding on waters that flow to a purpose. Will you ride with me, to the same purpose, for as long as the rivers run?"

Earlier in this afternoon they had read "Kubla Khan," and had delighted in imagining that the Thames was Alph, the sacred river, running with them afloat upon it "through caverns measureless to man." According to the poet Alph ended at a sunless sea, a lifeless ocean; to Susan even in the midst of playful pretense that destination had seemed ominous. Now she knew why. For as long as the rivers run -- but they are not eternal. They flow to a purpose, that of losing themselves within the last repository, the transfiguring deep. When that transfiguring has worked its work upon our love, will there be recognition? Turn back, Jim; row against the current back to the headwaters, while time remains. While time remains -- but time is a gilded blade.

Susan answered, "For as long as the rivers run."

They stood among the rockeries of the inn's garden, he in his wine-coloured smoking jacket and she in her sheer black gown, beneath the lingering dusk of haunted October. They had been wed at a tiny village church with only Jim's parents and Susan's father there to witness, had talked awhile with the kindly, holy priest, and with Christ's blessings upon them from his lips had taken a peaceful supper at the inn. Their joint vessel's anchor had been weighed; no fork in the stream had appeared as yet, nor had they trembled at the sound of waves upon the shore.

But the blade danced its danse macabre in the shimmer of moonlight upon the water; Susan's eyes saw as polluted what to Jim's ran clean. One bend more in the river perhaps, or three or seven by grace, but the sea would gather her into its crypt-cold, everlasting arms. It would gather her, though now the arms of her husband bore her carefully as a gift of the magi up the narrow stairway, into their room whose westward wall formed a half-turret. It would gather

her though the oaken fourposter encased them as protector; though he etched the eternal core of her indelibly, instilling in her his never-dissipating essence, leaving no vacant recess more. She heard the wheels of a pumpkin-carriage creaking outside the door, preparing at the stroke of twelve to send its mouse-couchmen scurrying for shelter into the wainscoting before the flood. One glass slipper had dropped from her foot, and the second was soon to fall. The sea would gather her into its arms; it was but few pulse-beats away; the arms of Jim could not hold back the turning that was slated. Yet Susan's heart besought him, and his own consented, to cherish her apparition to the last.

When Susan woke, the half-light adorning the bed seemed to her to be not of dawn but of creeping dusk. She lay still for a moment till her disorientation passed; then, propping herself on one elbow, she turned to watch Jim sleeping. The night was in its death-throes; yet not too quickly would she forget the savour of the lips whose kisses had lulled her into dreams. The night and his love had so confirmed her within this body that the wake of the self who had worn another could scarcely be traced. It was that trace remaining which had invested the daybreak with its aura of twilight, which caused her now to feel like a princess in a fairy story that makes one weep. That the tale should end unhappily did not bring tears, but that it should not end. With what neither ends nor moves onward no human heart can rest.

Jim was coming awake. He moaned contentedly, uncoiled his drowsy limbs to their full length, and rubbed his eyes. Then he reached over and touched Susan's cheek. "Good morning, love," he said, groping with his other hand for the pack of cigarettes on his night-table.

Susan hated cigarettes. Smoking was Jim's solitary bad habit, at least the only one she knew of not having lived with him as yet. She supposed that all lovers needed some such unlovable bit of reality to remind them of the frailty of their ideal object. Still, she would not hesitate to

convince him to quit if she could.

Jim removed his hand from Susan's cheek and tapped the pack against it, only to discover that the cigarette he had smoked at midnight was his last. "Damn," he swore gently. He began reluctantly to rise; preparing, Susan knew, to go downstairs and purchase another pack from the rude young son of the charming couple who kept the inn.

"Don't get up. I'll go," she said abruptly. She was not sure what had made her offer; her abhorrence of the habit was a strong deterrent to considering this a natural instance of being nice to her husband. But seeing Jim's pleased expression, she was not sorry.

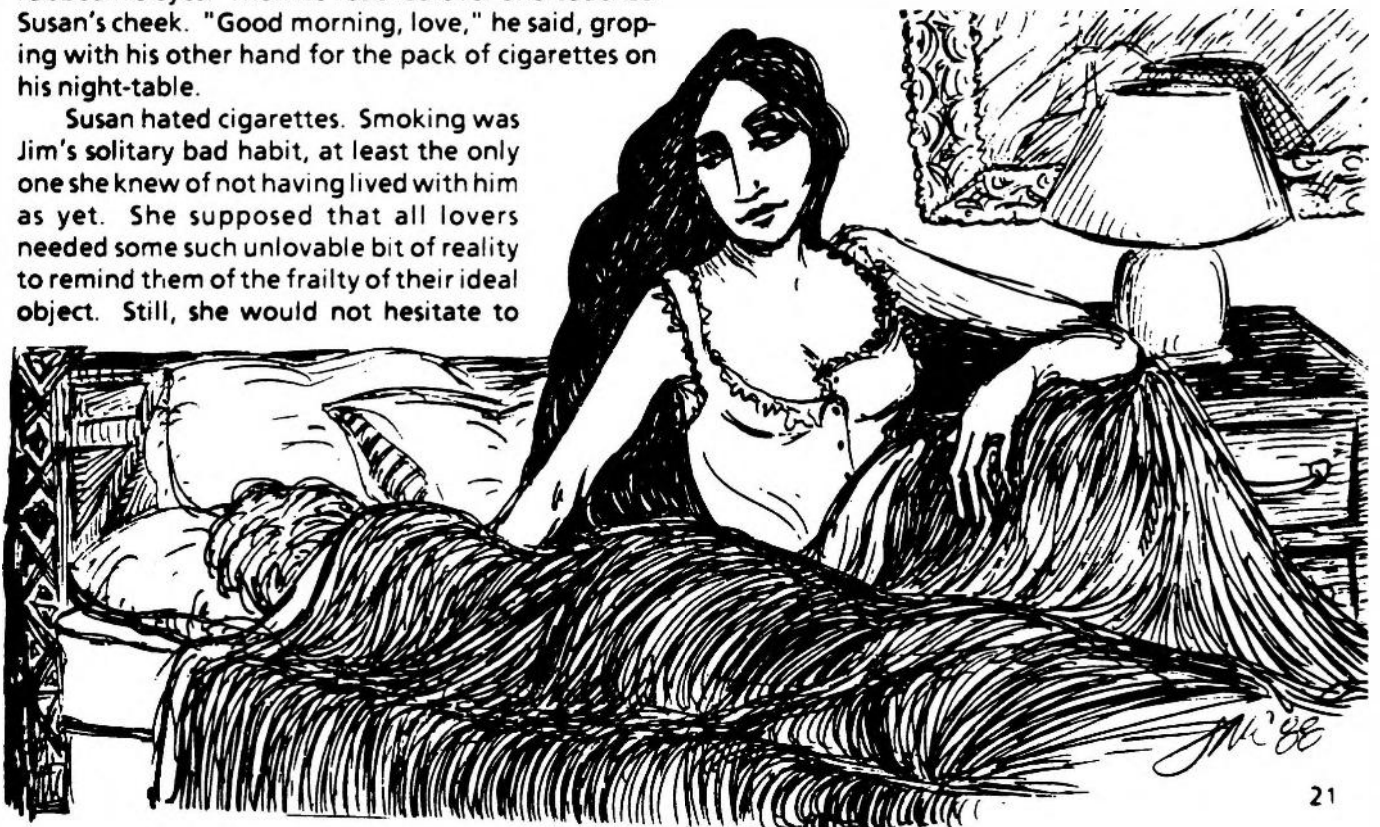
"You're a miracle, Susan. Only promise me that you'll go on being what you are, and I'll promise you love that runs in torrents."

His words jarred Susan like a brawler's blow, dislodging something in her. The request for a promise was rhetorical, not expecting of a reply. She rose from bed and dressed, picked up her purse, and opened the door. "For as long as the rivers run, Jim, I promise you to remain as I am. Should they freeze in their courses, I will go on loving you."

"Upon that thought I'll dream happily," he answered, re-burying himself beneath the down comforter. By the time she returned with the cigarettes, he would again be asleep.

Susan stepped into the hall. Looking long at Jim once more where he lay, she closed the door behind her.

As she walked slowly to the stairs, she had the sense of gliding in sleep towards an imminent goal of waking. Her perceptions were still fused with her dreams, yet not so much so that she did not notice the



stray hairs lying blonde upon the black wool of her sweater. She brushed them off and descended the steps, feeling her feet come down oddly hard upon the wood. As she fumbled in her purse for her wallet, her hand fell on the ticket to Tahiti which was her honeymoon passage. The South Sea islands held her devotion only less than her own England; still she had, for some uneasiness she did not understand, resisted this choice of honeymoons. But Jim had never been to the islands and yearned to go, so they had booked seats on a noon flight to Papeete by way of LAX.

As she reached the bottom landing, Susan pulled out the ticket and opened it. Her forehead furrowed in irritation -- the reservationist had made a mistake. The ticket showed her disembarking at Los Angeles with no connection to Tahiti. She hoped there would not be trouble in getting it changed; she disliked postponing travel plans. And she would have no pall of trouble laid upon this trip of all trips, most deep in consequence of any to be made in her lifetime.

She continued to frown as, arriving at the desk that served as the inn's registry and shop counter, she asked the innkeepers' son for a pack of Jim's brand of cigarettes. The young man matched her frown with one of his own, and lazily went to get them.

Susan reached into her wallet for the money to pay. Jim had been to the bank in preparation for the trip and had put some bills in her purse. Now to her confusion she seemed only to find U. S. dollars. Had he planned, without telling her, to spend time in California? Otherwise they had no need of American money; and even so, there should be francs here as well. . . .

The money, the ticket, the colour of the hair she had plucked from her clothes, united in a heart-numbing trinity of understanding. Susan stood for a moment unmoving. Then as the lad returned with the cigarettes and laid them on the desk, she felt for her passport, and, without removing it from her purse, looked inside it. "Her Britannic Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs requests . . ." -- but that was not what was written. The request for protection of citizens was in the name of the Secretary of State of the United States of America.

She turned from the desk and began to walk, not back to the stairs but onward to the inn's front door. She had not borne before her turning to read the guest roster, knowing what it would not say: "Mr. and Mrs. James . . ."

"Forgot your cigarettes, Miss," the innkeepers' son called after her.

Susan glanced back without seeing him; a mist had gathered before her eyes. "It doesn't matter. I don't smoke," she said; and then, "Would you call a cab for me, please?"

She continued to walk, hearing the telephone receiver lifted from its cradle with an ejaculation of,

"Bloody insane American women."

She waited among the rockeries of the garden, dawn unfolding into full-blown morning. This was the hardest hour, harder than all that might come after. The strength of will to resist re-entering the inn and climbing the stairs was nearly more than was hers. One look, only one -- he will not know, for he is sleeping. Yet somehow and in some way she knew the look would be fatal. She must follow the chameleon-river to what colour it flowed; the choice of becoming a salt pillar in the desert was the choice of the faithless. But it was hard, unfathomably, knowing that he would not remember that she had been his, that she had been. If it were possible -- and in light of the wonder that had befallen already she could not swear it was not -- that she should find him someday again on the other side, his spirit might recall the secret of the countless times when hand in hand it had walked with hers as one. But she could not hope, nor was it lawful now to pray for the granting of a second miracle. As the cab pulled into the drive, Susan saw that the wedding band was gone from her finger.

She opened the cab's door, and, managing a polite smile to the cabbie, got in. "Heathrow, please."

The plane accelerated on the runway and lifted its wings into the rain-scattered sky. Susan glanced from her window-seat at the green below, then looked away, weaning her eyes to accept the sight of the sun-curst brown land to which she went. The self of the near-whole of her life was curling back upon her; by the time she had reached L.A. the return would be complete. Her parents would be there awaiting her; she herself would wait there with them for her grandparents to arrive, perhaps on this very plane in an alternate existence of its own. She would wait as though she had never ceased to wait, and reveal nothing. Quick to flood and slow to ebb, so ever had been her tide of being, river upon river running and the sea like a philosopher's stone transmuting all. Would he, her English father, be waiting, too? The plane divorced her by cloud banks from visions of earth, and her thoughts, forsaking all souvenirs of their unutterable holiday, were immersed in Susan's journey back to herself.

But in her purse, among the evidences of change and parting, there remained one memento which the mercy of the waters had permitted her to keep. It was a slip of paper, folded with care, such a trifle as lovers cherish in their sentimentality. So much of the miracle endured its baptism; so much residue of gold had the blade of time and destiny left with her in its passing. It was a calendar page, dated 12 August, and written upon it: Jim, 7 o'clock.

