

9-2019

**sep2019**

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**The man inside  
who dreams  
and tells me later**

**and stretches out the measure  
that holds everything together.**

**For we are two  
each one of us:**

**the one who lives  
inside my sleep**

**and this other one  
who talks to you now**

**and thinks I'm me,  
thinks I'm the only  
one I am.**

**But when the night comes  
I almost know the truth.**

*[The first eight lines, as such, woke me from  
sleep. I rose obedient to write them down. The  
rest is commentary and I suppose by me.]*

**1 September 2019**

## **IMPERIAL DESTINIES**

**Julius is still a relatively  
common name. August less so,  
Tiberius hardly ever.  
But Anthony is everywhere  
and Mark is legion.  
Which serves to prove  
you win by losing.**

**1 September 2019**

=====

**The slightly slightly  
faded green  
and the not quite blue  
above them tell  
us something slightly  
slightly tends to make  
us shiver at the thought.**

**1 September 2019**

## THE LETTER

There will be no answer  
to this letter--  
it means too much  
for any one voice  
to respond,  
and I am no pope  
to write to everyone at once.

No, this is just for you,  
to you and from you  
and about you  
the way you live in my mind  
or the grotto they used  
to call the heart, just you,  
and I care about you too much  
(love, as they used to say)  
to want you to waste  
your lovely hours and hours  
it would take to answer me.

**But I can't keep myself from  
writing again and again  
this letter to you, just you.  
Once long ago this would  
have been a sonnet and be done,  
but nowadays it just goes  
on and on. Read me someday  
if you ever have a chance.**

**1 September 2019**

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Have I ever  
said enough?  
The crows across  
the road are calling  
maybe laughing,  
their language  
loud and complex  
to drive a hawk away  
or warn us. Who  
am I protecting  
by saying so?

In deep belief I utter.  
Every word saves someone.

1 September 2019



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**Try not to doubt things--  
they're all you have**

**and they have you  
in their care**

**we are reciprocals—  
answering one another**

**makes the world.**

**1 September 2019**

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**Tell the story  
till it comes true**

**tell it till it comes  
to you ith leaves  
and shadows in its hands**

**never mind about fruit  
you eat too much already  
all those facts and histories  
people feed you, and they  
were once pure stories too.**

**1 September 2019**

## BRIGID

Her name is pronounced like *breed* or as *bree-id*. She is the goddess of wisdom as known to the Irish ancient and modern. Her wisdom embraces both knowing and saying what is known--thus she is, I think, the goddess of language and poetry.

Soon after I came to Annandale (a name signifying the Vley of the River Goddess Annan or Danaan, whose name shimmers still in danube, Boyne, Rhone and other of her older waters), this is half a century ago, and had settled in at Bard , the college ppointed a new young chief librarian, Andy Haig. His beautiful wife Pam was the grand-daughter of the famous Irish painter and mystic, friend of Yeats, George Russell, who chose to be known as A.E. In her great kindness Pam lent me a small handsome oil pinting by her grandfather.

For three years or so, until the Haigs moved on, the painting stood above the bookcase at the far end of the very long living room (the largest space this city child has ever inhabited). The painting showed the pale and lovely goddess, Brigid herself, filmy bright, stepping towards us on a gentle hill slope. Tender, intimate, as outdoors can be (post-impressionist, the air itself alive), the painting welcomes us, we are children idling towards a thoughtful mother or wise young aunt, the woman who will shape and forever haunt our dreams.

I loved having her image there, trying to welcome her into my life as it began to heal from the zigzags of adolescence and the wrath of young manhood. There she was for me.. And for many others, who had the benefit (noticed or not, acknowledged or not) of her presence. Robert Duncan stayed a week with us, and slept on the sofa under that painting, as did Stan Brakhage, Diane Wakoski, Paul Blackburn...

**I have every reason to think She spoke into their dreams. I think She poured into all of us new powers of utterance, new, but older than Ireland, older than India. Thank you, Pam, for the grace of your ancestress so richly given at a pivot of my life.**

**1 September 2019**

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***]in the dream academy]***

**recording the coning-into-being  
(birth?)  
of three beiungs  
(babies?)**

**Only two had, have, voices  
or made sound**

**And their names are switched—  
can change them at will**

**John and James?**

**James and Jesus—  
was iy Jesus then who went to Spain  
where alone in the whole Christian world  
*Jesus* is a name common for boys and men?**

**2 September 2019**

## **APOLOGIA**

**In two days my students will come. Then I will belong to them. The many childbirths of all my Septembers. The reciprocal bonds, the strange music of the other that I make them, they make me, hear.**

**2 September 2019**

**PARERGON TO *THE CUP***

**Q.  
There are holes  
in the rim of the cup—  
what good is that?**

**A,  
They let the light  
slip sideways into the wine,  
water, milk or blood—  
the secret sidewise sidling light!  
And as you lift the cup to drink  
s/ome always dribbles out  
and down your chin, your skin,  
so that you *bathe* in what you drink.**

**2 September 2019**



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**Crows flap  
hawks float**

**why is honesty  
so hard?**

**2.IX.19**

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**Nothing to type today  
nothing to tell you  
just my fingers  
counting the air,  
just hearing you,  
your quiet breaths  
beside me.**

**2 September 2019**

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**I made  
a new alphabet in dream  
and then forgot it  
at waking.**

**That happens  
every night, the doctor  
said, and to everyone.  
You see that storm cloud  
over Cedar Hill? That  
is where your language  
went--somebody has to  
make the rain, not much  
happens all by itself.**

**2 September 2019**

=====

**And why does it matter  
when things are?  
All the todays are just  
tomorrow, someone  
tumbling from a tower--  
this is God's house  
and you are the sky  
through which he falls,  
catch him, catch him  
before the earth does.  
That is your single task.  
You can call it your goal  
and invite all your friends,  
help me help me you'll say  
and pour them the new wine.**

**2 September 2019**

## **ALPHABET**

**A is the arrow that reaches the end**

**Z is the girdle that tautens your soul**

**B is the cabin you built in the woods**

**Y is the yew tree that stands by the door slim  
and tall**

**C is the call that wakes all the beasts in your  
barn**

**X is the crossroads where you wait day and  
night for a friend you call Love**

**D is a door you welcome them through**

**W is the wine you beg them to share, but true  
Love is abstemious and temperate**

**E is the little sign pinned to the door meaning  
come in come in if you are who you think you  
are**

**V is the dull knife you cut the cake with,  
makes plenty of crumbs you feed to the birds**

**F is the flag that flutters on your roof or the  
light that flickers from your eyes--you decide**

**U ah, U is the mystery, the bend in the river,  
the voice from the ground**

**G is the gold in the eyes of a panther or the  
coins on a plate, you stick them in meters or  
give them at church**

**T is Christ's cross, Woden's hammer, the  
double ax of Crete, the end of the road**

**H is woman who tells you to build,  
and also the house you obey her and make,  
and then your joyous breath, almost  
exhausted, welcomes her in**

**S is the sound all things make as they pass--  
listen hard and listen soft and cherish the  
differences**

**I is the girder holds up the roof you think but  
the house still stands when you snatch it  
away--so what can it be?**

**R is that very roof over your head and the  
other outer, the big blue one over your head  
where it all begins**

**J is the enlightened saint you will become,  
some of you are him or her already--listen!**

**Q is always a mystery, isn't it, quail in the  
thicket, queen on her throne, the day the fates  
appointed for your going, or coming at last**

**K is the candle you need in the daytime, the  
taste of food, the bird song that wakes you  
then you go back to sleep**

**P is the traveler you spot on the hillside, the hitchhiker on the highway you can't decide to pick up and you've passed, but P is also the hand he waves to you, the hand you dream about, your hand on someone's shoulder or knee**

**L is an outing on the meadow, loll on the lawns and look at heaven, heaven lets you see it clearly them, you lie on your side and look at a friend**

**O is the well your mother showed you once, told you of the Milk Lake where you were born, O is the organ they play in the church but you don't go anymore, you have a well of your own**

**N is the fish that swims through you when you're afraid, dark sea, o voyager, even on the brightest day**



**M is the middle, mama, Athene's owl gazing both ways at once, M is meaning and M is the mountain you climb to call yourself by your secret name, out loud, and the eagles will hear it forever.**

**2 September 2019**

**RED**

**When I look down at my underwer as I put it on I see the name Hnes pnted over and over on the wrist bnd of some, or just once on others. I know from ads that this is the maker's name, but it is also the Welsh word for story or tale. S every mrning as I get dressed I see this Celtic messge coming at me, Tell me story, tell a tale, summon a story.. Mostly I resist, preferring the subtler fictions of poetry on the way to its exiguous truths.**

**But today I felt guilty--who am I to resist the commands of my Welsh amcestors? So I appealed to the other side of my mind and it told, or started to, leaving it to me to finish.**

**So. Once there was a little boy, maybe eight years old and big for hi age, and his skin was red, rue red. Not gaudy fire engine get out of my way red, but softer, dark cherry, October maple. His mother and father were white, and all the neighbors and their childre werewhite--and by white I mean not the dead white of putty or the sweet white of ducks and swans, but the robust pinkish tone people mean when they distinguish white people from black people--and black people are not black either, in fact. But he was red.**

**His family treated jim carefully, as if he were a much loved sick dog, though he was healthy and active and strong. Active as he**

could be when hardly anybody on the block would play with him.

Once a girl asked him Why are you red? He had no answer to give her so she walked away.

So he rode his tricycle and later his bike, bounced a pink rubber ball off the neighbor's stoop till they complained, then off his own till his mother said no. So he rode to the park and rode to the river and rode around the big parking lot when the Sears was closed. There is always something to do, even if you're red.

He loved the rain but was usually told not to go out in it, so he'd sit at the window and watch the rain fall, and little voices of it would ping on the window and slip down the pane. Sometimes he'd have a thought that seemed

wicked to him. In church he had heard about Wicked Thoughts, but they never told him what they were, so maybe what he thought was one of them. This was his thought: what if the rain rained down all over me, maybe it would wash my redness away, and I'd be like everybody else. But that seemed wicked too, he sn't sure why, so he put the thought out of his mind (already he knew how to do that) and just watched the rain.

You can learn a lot from watching the rain-  
-how to be quick and how to seem slow, how to cover something totally and still be yourself, how to seprate yourself into streams and rivulets and drops and pools and still come together seamlessly and be yourself. So

sometimes he would send a stream of himself into some place he had read about, and then watch what that flow of him would do there, in the Himalayas or the horn of Africa.

He would do and do and do and still be himself, he could rule a little kingdom and wed a thousand wives and fly over the Matterhorn on his own wings and still be himself, still at home, still at the window, safe and red.

And sometimes he would sing.

That is as far as the story told me. One day I may get around to figuring out what happened to him later, if anything, where he went and whom he loved and what color he was at the end, if there was an end.

2 September 2019

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**I washed the glamor  
off the street  
until there was just me,  
no pretty girls, no nuns,  
no carpenters or beggermen,  
no pigeons even, just me.  
And I asked the empty road  
What are cities for?  
At sunset its answer came  
but it was in the language  
I had also washed away.**

**3 September 2019**

=====

**Coin on the table  
tell me the time.**

**Time to give me  
to someone, any  
hand will do—  
I come to life  
only at the touch  
of human skin—  
you call me copper  
or silver but I  
call myself yours.**

**3 September 2019**



**=====**

**The pagan faith  
keeps growing,  
gospel of weather,  
of light and dark.**

**3.IX.19**

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**I taste you  
all the way down—  
are you wine,  
are you the wind?**

**3.IX.19**

=====

**I watched the lake  
quiet, much sun,  
few swimmers.  
There is a grammar  
in people moving,  
coming, going,  
standing still or  
stpping up the shore  
with hair all wet  
and the smile that water  
teaches, and teaches  
mehow to read.**

**3 September 2019**

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*(I saw a little bird flying very high, and seeing  
it taught me this:)*

**The larger the bird  
the higher they fly--  
there is more air up there,  
a lift of heat they ride  
while down here the sparrows  
barely leap from tree to tree  
*the meek shall inherit the land*  
and leave the eagles to the empty sky.**

**3 September 2019**

=====

**Not a rhumba  
not a samba  
there must be something  
that isn't work  
and isn't play,  
isn't sleep or dream  
or consciousness,  
isn't music but you hear it,  
isn't a dance and yet you move,**

**there must be something  
in between, something  
that lives in luxury  
between the contradictions,  
something that will welcome us  
the day we find it.**

**Not a rhythm not a stillness--  
I know a man who called it  
noisy silence, and a woman  
called it joyful pain**

**but both were wrong,  
it is not in the contradictions  
but between them.  
irrational as snowflakes  
and just as precise.  
Forget everything I;ve just said  
and it may spring open in your hand.**

**3 September 2019**

=====

**I wanted to hear the Nineteenth Century  
and put on a record:**

**organ  
sonata by Horatio Parker  
who was Ives's teacher,**

**and suddenly the organ  
was everywhere  
shouting through the forests  
to find God.**

**Did it summon  
or did it plead? It ended  
with a fugue so I felt  
right at home,**

**we live  
in fugal times, when everything  
goes away and hurries back changed,  
folded in upon itself, we live  
in mirrors and the mirrors dance.**

**3 Sepyember 2019**

=====

**Was I born tomorrow?  
that's what music asks,  
sighing and bellowing  
and billowing and collapsing  
into quiet tenderness--  
we love music because  
music alone knows how to end.**

**3 September 2019**



=====

**Across the street  
and through the trees--  
my eyes are slower  
than she walks, in white,  
hidden in so many leaves.**

**The sight becomes a paradigm  
in the grammar of losing,  
of forgetting, of wondering  
where are they now  
who once moved before our eyes?**

**3 September 2019**

## IMAGING

it says over the hospital desk.

What can it mean?

Imagine means  
taking a picture  
of the inside you,

the insides of you.

At least they tell you  
that's you inside yourself,  
all boulevards and bells,

a city full of strangers  
wandering through your dark.  
Then the learned specialist  
tells you in simple language

what some part of you already know.

3 September 2019  
Rhinebeck

=====

**Learning the alphabet  
all over again  
start with a letter  
only you know Ж  
sounds like the S  
in measure, say,  
now let the old  
tired letters come  
dance around Ж  
till the town square  
is full of loud revelry--  
but do you really have a town?**

**3 September 2019**

=====

**Slepy fingers  
tend to skip pages—  
apply this truth  
to history.**

**3 September 2019**

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**Morning headache  
grey road glistens  
wind in the trees—  
another quiet day  
pretending to be me**

**3 September 2019**

=====

**Stand too long by the barn  
and something horse seeps into you.  
Or cow. Or old wood panting in the sun.**

**3 September 2019**

## OPEN DOOR

is made of air  
breahe in before you go  
blithely into any space  
there bfore you got here--  
almost be afraid. Wind  
comes in but never goes out  
again—think about that,  
the Lesson of the Open  
Window. Think twice  
about doors. Indoors  
and out, reasons for doubt,  
soft skin though of going in.

2.

Then chanticlear awoke nd sang:

*Put out*

*your doubt*

*the sun is here*

*come welcome her*

*into the spirals*

*of your fear.*

**And then the cock slept again  
waiting for his hens to wake  
he thinks of them but they  
belong to what they want to do.**

**3.**

**In the waiting room I sat next to  
a pale young woman pregnant  
to the max, she rubbed her belly  
from time to time she read  
flickering images on her phone,  
rubbed idly, softly as if to calm  
already the life inside her.  
I felt blessed to be beside this  
miracle, life-making at my side.**

**4.**

**For she had gone through  
the open door  
and the door was herself  
now and she stands  
ready to open up again  
and set the ancient message free.**

**4 September 2019**



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**Where would all that beauty go  
if it had no redoubt to shelter in?**

**I am a mountain tunneled by truth  
follow my dark to find where it lives.**

**4.IX.19**

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**Trees toss  
ideas around,  
catch what we can**

**4.IX.19**

====

**We like to dream at night  
about ordinary things,  
foods and friends,  
modest welcomes,  
amianle exchanges  
because waking life  
itself is very strange  
there is mpt much  
normal in normal life.**

**4 September 2019**

## MAN PASSED BY

Put the age  
back in agency,  
let the man  
stand  
by the pond  
even in winter  
as long  
as it takes  
for him to become  
the ONLY one  
he means to be  
by standing there.

2.  
I see him  
from the road  
again and again.  
I think:  
Is he dead  
he stands so  
still,

every time I pass  
he is the same,  
one leg bent  
as if he leaned  
close close  
to see the water,  
I fear for him  
yet there  
he is and there  
is agency  
in standing still.

3.  
Day after day  
and at night  
I see him  
moveless in dream,  
he wears red,  
cold weather,  
sometimes even ice  
around the margin  
someday should I  
call for help,  
help him I mean,

**I fear to trespass  
on that wintry solitude  
over the drystone wall  
a hundred years,  
should I do  
something too?  
What are the bonds  
of agency,  
how far does it spread,  
how deep is it,  
can I help him  
and still come back?**

**5 September 2019**

=====

**Some light in the southern sky—  
*the protectors come from the Southeast*  
how dark the mornings already are  
*east is wherever you are facing*  
east is always straight ahead  
*the protectors come from your right hand*  
even when you sleep you travel east.**

**5 September 2019**

## **ECHO CARDIOGRAM**

**Today they will make me listen  
to the sounds of my heart  
bubbling and chirping in a language  
of their machine—  
they can understand  
what my heart is saying,  
I cannot.**

**How did they learn  
the language of my heart?  
All these years it has been  
speaking in me, isn't it time  
I learned it too?**

**5 September 2019**



=====

I want to see  
a stranger in your face,  
I want the bridge  
that crosses our river  
to lead to another land.  
a third shore  
where the sun is born  
and everywhere is always east,  
every way you turn  
i turn to you.  
And then the stranger  
knows me as only a stranger  
can, and calls me  
with your voice  
and I am who  
I can be at last.

5 September 2019

## POSTAGE STAMP

Two lovers  
sit quiet  
for once  
at a table.  
On it a single  
postage stamp.  
One lover thinks:  
Remember  
how what I felt  
used to pour  
out of me in words  
and the words  
poured onto paper  
so everything I felt  
came into the world,  
thought became things,  
ink and paper,  
scribbles, scraps,  
feelings became things,  
fell into the world,  
floated, filled

**envelopes, waste  
baskets, desk drawers,  
flares in the fireplace?  
The other lover  
thinks: I want  
to pick that up  
lick it and stick it  
on my forehead  
and send myself to you.**

**6 September 2019**

## ESCAPADE

Orpheus our friend,  
our ringmaster, rival,  
way-shower, elder brother,  
god on a visit—

women and other lovers  
got angry at him  
because language knows  
so much about them  
body and soul,

how dare you know  
so much about me  
they cried and came  
angry at him so he  
hid himself in the sea  
where he goes on singing  
and you can hear him easily  
if you open your mouth and sing.

6 September 2019

## THE VOCATION

**Ink of the sky  
(*of means from*)  
ink of the sky  
runs down my arm—  
Write me, Write me!  
the world cries  
and life after life  
we try to obey.**

**6 September 2019**

## AUTUMN SOON

1.

First night sleeping  
with windows closed.  
Surprised after waking  
to find blue skies.

2.

The quiet road  
leads everywhere—  
the emptier the road  
the closer you are.

6 September 2019

=====

**I spend an hour thinking about you  
and I don't even know who you are.  
You walk ahead of me  
up the mountainside. On a level  
spot you stop, turn round  
and have something to say  
I'm still trying hard to hear.**

**6 September 2019**

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**But nothing has been said.  
The dream words  
shuffle off the stage  
and leave it bare.**

**I wait  
for Mitzi to come dancing in  
or some booming baritone.  
But the preacher waddles on instead  
heavy with sermons.**

**Go  
to the mirror, he says,  
go to the mirror and study  
your face not your scars.**

**I hate his habit of intoning  
but what he says is right.**

**7 September 2019**



## HUDOR

**The main thing is liquid.**

**We are water  
mostly, still the sea.**

**We solve. Dissolve.**

**We are water  
with some salt. Soul.**

**\***

**Soul is solid,  
sunburn, interlude,  
aftershock, songbird,  
tiger, tune.**

**\***

**The soul dissolves in the self  
a while. The salt is always there,  
even when the water evaporates  
from the goblet the salt skin's there,  
clinging to transparency, claiming.  
The soul is a claim.  
A name.**

\*

And it tells time  
a thing or two  
because it can.  
Stone caryatid on Acropolis,  
a Roma girl seducing businessmen.  
And suddenly it's now—  
the opera is over,  
the museum's closed,  
bend over, drink  
from the water fountain,  
it's all in you now.

\*

It can be the old fountain in the town square  
or the bubbler in the movie theater.  
A freshet in the Catskills  
or even, if you dare,  
the Danube's source up in the Schwarzwald —  
but bend to drink.  
Bend and drink.

7 September 2019

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**I want more than I am.  
Is that a ticket  
to heaven or to hell?**

**7 September 2019**

=====

**Autumn on the windows  
scribbles sunlight  
through the leaves**

**everything moves.  
*The wind, she is invisible--*  
but Botticelli  
shows them plainly,  
the fawn-haired girls  
who puff the air along**

**and turn the trees  
into dancers and their dance  
leaves traces, leaves leaves**

**and sun romancing the window glass.**

**7 September 2019**

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**At least taste it  
before you throw away,  
every culture  
as its milk  
just on the edge of spoiling,  
turning, as we say--  
is it music, is it church?  
Only a taste will tell.**

**7 September 2019**

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**Was there an Eastminster  
to balance the West-?  
A monastery maybe filled with monks in  
silent meditation  
or even quiet chant,  
not raving politicians,  
prelates in the church of greed?**

**7.IX.19**

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**To see and not be seen  
is the mermaid's art.  
to be the river and pass by  
having touched the lives  
of everyone and be gone—  
is this the benign dictatorship  
of death, the landscape over?**

**Seems right to worry  
about such things near a lake—  
a lake gets fed on secret  
waters, a lake swallows  
every cloud that passes,  
drinks all our weather. even  
takes us in, swimmers,  
floaters, boaters fisherfolk,**

**all silenced by the shimmering  
sheen of surface, pure surface.**

**For we must learn the surfaces of things  
because we ourselves are surfaces  
and God knows what beings live beneath.**

**7 September 2019**



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At any moment I may lose  
what I have said.  
The submarine fills  
up with ocean and will  
not come again. The punctuation  
falls out of the document  
and ambiguities arise  
not even talmudists can resolve.  
Silence always wins (quiet  
surface, cool day, quiet lake,  
the honor of our ancestors  
preserved in bony knees.  
Ibn Arabi writes some love songs  
Dante overhears. We copy  
birds as well as we can.  
What will happen when these words  
lose what little sense they make?  
The lake is beautiful today and calm—  
that is enough for me to know.

7 September 2019

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**When you have counted every leaf  
on this small bush, deciphered  
the rune veined out on each  
and set them all together to make sense,  
the song or story or sermon of that tree,  
then you may enter the pyramid—  
you know the one—and fall asleep.**

**7 September 2019**

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