

At least on paper, nothing about **the first guide** I **Michael** chose to work with sounds auspicious. **The man** lived and worked so far off the grid, in the mountains of the American West, that **he** had no phone service, generated **his** own electricity, pumped **his** own water, grew **his** own food, and had only the spottiest satellite Internet. I **Michael** could just forget about the whole idea of being anywhere in range of a hospital emergency room. Then there was the fact that while I **he** was a Jew from a family that had once been reluctant to buy a German car, **this fellow** was the son of a Nazi - a German in **his** midsixties whose father had served in the SS during World War II. After I **he** had heard so much about the importance of both set and setting, none of these details augured especially well. Yet I **he** liked **Fritz** from the moment **he** came out to greet **me him**, offering a broad grin and a warm hug (I **he** was getting used to these) when I **he** pulled **my his** rental into **his Fritz's** remote camp. This consisted of a tidy village of structures - a handmade house and a couple of smaller cabins, an octagonal yurt, and two gaily painted outhouses set out in a clearing on the crest of a heavily wooded mountain. Following the hand drawn map **Fritz** had sent **me him** (the area was terra incognita for GPS), I **Michael** drove for miles on a dusty dirt road that passed through the blasted landscape of an abandoned **mine his** before rising into a dark forest of cypress and ponderosa pine, with a dense understory of manzanitas, their smooth bark the color of fresh blood. I **he** had come to the middle of nowhere. **Fritz** was a tangle of contradiction and yet manifestly a warm and seemingly happy man. At sixty five, **he** resembled a European movie actor gone slightly to seed, with thick gray hair parted in the middle and a blocky, muscular frame just beginning to yield. **Fritz** grew up in Bavaria, the son of a raging alcoholic who had served in the SS as a bodyguard for the cultural attaché responsible for producing operas and other entertainments for the troops - the Nazis' USO. Later, **his** father fought on the Russian front and survived Stalingrad but came home from the war shell-shocked. **Fritz** grew up in the dense shade of **his** misery, sharing the shame and anger of so many in **his** postwar generation. "When the military came for me [to serve his period of conscription], " **he** said, as **we they** sat at **his** kitchen table sipping tea on a sunny spring afternoon, "I told them to fuck themselves and they threw me into prison." Forced eventually to serve in the army, **Fritz** was court martialed twice - once for setting **his** uniform on fire. **He** spent time in solitary confinement reading Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky and plotting revolution with the Maoist in the next cell, with whom **he** communicated through the prison plumbing. "My proudest moment was the time I gave all the guards Orange Sunshine that I had gotten from a friend in California." At university, **he** studied psychology and took a lot of LSD, which **he** obtained from the American troops stationed in Germany. "Compared to LSD, Freud was a joke. For him biography was everything. He had no use for mystical experience." **Fritz** moved on to **Jung** and **Wilhelm Reich**, "my hero." Along the way, **he** discovered that LSD was a powerful tool for exploring the depths of **his** own psyche, allowing **him** to reexperience and then let go of the anger and depression that hobbled **him** as a young man. "There was more light in my life after that. Something shifted." As it had

for many of the guides I Michael had met, the mystical experience Fritz had on psychedelics launched him on a decades long spiritual quest that eventually “blew my linear, empirical mind,” opening him up to the possibility of past lives, telepathy, precognition, and “synchronicities” that defy our conceptions of space and time. He spent time on an ashram in India, where he witnessed specific scenes that had been prefigured in his psychedelic journeys. Once, making love to a woman in Germany (the two were practicing Tantrism), he and she shared an out of body experience that allowed them to observe themselves from the ceiling. “These medicines have shown me that something quote-unquote impossible exists. But I don’t think it’s magic or supernatural. It’s a technology of consciousness we don’t understand yet.” Normally when people start talking about transpersonal dimensions of consciousness and “morphogenetic fields,” I Michael have has little (if any) patience, but there was something about Fritz that made such talk, if not persuasive, then at least... provocative. He managed to express the most far fetched ideas in a disarmingly modest, even down to earth way. I Michael had the impression he Fritz had no agenda beyond feeding his own curiosity, whether with psychedelics or books on paranormal phenomena. For some people, the privilege of having had a mystical experience tends to massively inflate the ego, convincing them they’ve been granted sole possession of a key to the universe. This is an excellent recipe for creating a guru. The certitude and condescension for mere mortals that usually come with that key can render these people insufferable. But that wasn’t Fritz. To the contrary. His otherworldly experiences had humbled him, opening him up to possibilities and mysteries without closing him to skepticism - or to the pleasures of everyday life on this earth. There was nothing ethereal about him. I Michael surprised myself himself by liking Fritz as much as I he did. After five years spent living on a commune in Bavaria (“we were all trying to undo some of the damage done to the postwar generation”), in 1976 he Fritz met a woman from California while hiking in the Himalayas and followed her back to Santa Cruz. There he fell into the whole Northern California human potential scene, at various times running a meditation center for an Indian guru named Rajneesh and doing bodywork (including deep tissue massage and Rolfing), Gestalt and Reichian therapy, and some landscaping to pay the bills. When in 1982, soon after his father’s death, he met Stan Grof at a breathwork course at Esalen, he felt he had at last found his rightful father. During the workshop, Fritz “had an experience as powerful as any psychedelic. Out of the blue, I experienced myself being born - my mother giving birth to me. While this was happening, I watched the goddess Shiva on a gigantic IMAX screen, creating worlds and destroying worlds. Everyone in the group wanted what I had!” He now added holotropic breathwork to his bodywork practice. Eventually, Fritz did an intensive series of multiyear trainings with Grof in Northern California and British Columbia. At one of them, he met his future wife, a clinical psychologist. Grof was ostensibly teaching holotropic breathwork, the non pharmacological modality he had developed after psychedelics were made illegal. But Fritz said that Grof also shared with this select group his deep knowledge about the practice of psychedelic therapy,

discreetly passing on **his** methods to a new generation. Several people in the workshop, **Fritz** and **his** future wife among them, went on to become underground guides. **She** works with the women who find their way up the mountain, **he** with the men. "You don't make a lot of money," **Fritz** told **me Michael**. Indeed, **he** charged only nine hundred dollars for a three day session, which included room and board. "It's illegal and dangerous. You can have a person go psychotic. And you really don't make a lot of money. But I'm a healer and these medicines work." It was abundantly clear **he** had a calling and loved what **he** did - loved witnessing people undergo profound transformations before **his** eyes.

FRITZ TOLD ME HIM what to expect if **I he were was** to work with **him**. It would mean returning here for three days, sleeping in the eight-sided yurt, where **we they** would also do "the work." The first afternoon would be a warm-up or get-acquainted session, using either MDMA or breathwork. (**I Michael** explained why in **my his** case it would have to be breathwork.) This would give **him Fritz** a chance to observe how **I Michael** handled an altered state of consciousness before sending **me him** on an LSD journey the morning of the second day; it would also help **him** determine a suitable dose. **I he** asked **him Fritz** how **he** could be sure of the purity and quality of the medicines **he** uses, since they come from chemists working illicitly. Whenever **he** receives a new shipment, **he Fritz** explained, "I first test it for purity, and then I take a heroic dose to see how it feels before I give it to anyone." Not exactly FDA approval, **I Michael** thought to **myself himself**, but better than nothing. **Fritz** doesn't take any medicine **himself** while **he's** working but often gets "a contact high" from **his** clients. During the session **he** takes notes, selects the music, and checks in every twenty minutes or so. "I'll ask you not how you are but where you are. I'm here just for you, to hold the space, so you don't have to worry about anything or anyone else. Not the wife, not the child. So you can really let go - and go." This, **I Michael** realized, was another reason **I he** was eager to work with a guide. When Judith and **I he** had **our their** magic mushroom day the previous summer, the simmer of worry about **her** welfare kept intruding on **my his** journey, forcing **me him** to stay close to the surface. Much as **I he** hated the psychobabble y locution, **I he** loved the idea of someone "holding space" for **me him**. "That night I'll ask you to make some notes before you go to sleep. On your last morning, we'll compare notes and try to integrate and make sense of your experience. Then I'll cook you a big breakfast to get you ready to face the interstate!" **We they** scheduled a time for **me him** to come back.

THE FIRST THING **I he** learned about **myself himself** that first afternoon, working with **Fritz** in the yurt, is that **I he am is** "easy to put under" - susceptible to trance, a mental space completely new to **me him** and accessible by nothing more than a shift in the pattern of one's breathing. It was the damndest thing. **Fritz's** instructions were straightforward: Breathe deeply and rapidly while exhaling as strongly as you can. "At first it will feel unnatural and you'll have to concentrate to maintain the rhythm, but after a few minutes your body will take

over and do it automatically. " I Michael stretched out on the mattress and donned a pair of eyeshades while he Fritz put on some music, something generically tribal and rhythmic, dominated by the pounding of a drum. He Fritz placed a plastic bucket at my his side, explaining that occasionally people throw up. It was hard work at first, to breathe in such an exaggerated and unnatural way, even with Fritz's enthusiastic coaching, but then all at once my his body took over, and I he found that no thought was required to maintain the driving pace and rhythm. It was as if I he had broken free from gravity and settled into an orbit: the big deep breaths just came, automatically. Now I he felt an uncontrollable urge to move my his legs and arms in sync with the pounding of the drums, which resonated in my his rib cage like a powerful new heartbeat. I he felt possessed, both my his body and my his mind. I he can not remember many thoughts except " Hey, this is working, whatever it is! " I he was flat on my his back yet dancing wildly, my his arms and legs moving with a will of their own. All control of my his body I he had surrendered to the music. It felt a little like speaking in tongues, or what I he imagine imagines that to be, with some external force taking over the mind and body for its own obscure purpose. There wasn't much visual imagery, just the naked sensation of exhilaration, until I he began to picture myself himself on the back of a big black horse, galloping headlong down a path through a forest. I he was perched up high on its shoulders, like a jockey, holding on tight as the beast scissored its great muscles forward and back with each long stride. As my his rhythm synced with that of the horse, I he could feel myself himself absorbing the animal's power. It felt fantastic to so fully inhabit my his body, as if for the first time. And yet because I he am is not a very confident rider (or dancer!), it also felt precarious, as if were I he to miss a breath or beat I he might tumble off. I he had no idea how long the trance lasted, time was utterly lost on me him, but when Fritz gently brought me him back to the present moment and the reality of the room, simply by encouraging me him to slow and relax my his breathing, he reported I he had been " in it " for an hour and fifteen minutes. I he felt flushed and sweaty and triumphant, as if I he had run a marathon; Fritz said I he looked " radiant " - " young like a baby. " " You had no resistance, " he said approvingly; " that's a good sign for tomorrow. " I he had no idea what had just happened, could recall little more of the hour than riding the horse, but the episode seemed to have involved a terrific physical release of some kind. Something had let go of me him or been expunged, and I he felt buoyant. And humbled by the mystery of it. For here was (to quote William James) one of the " forms of consciousness entirely different " from the ordinary and yet so close by - separated from normal waking consciousness by... what? A handful of exhalations! Then something frightening happened. Fritz had gone up to the house to prepare our their dinner, leaving me Michael to make some notes about the experience on my his laptop, when all at once I he felt my his heart surge and then begin to dance madly in my his chest. I he immediately recognized the sensation of turbulence as AFib, and when I he took my his pulse, it was chaotic. A panicky bird was trapped in my his rib cage, throwing itself against the bars in an attempt to get out. And here I he was, a dozen miles off

the grid smack in the middle of nowhere. It went on like that for two hours, straight through a subdued and anxious dinner. Fritz seemed concerned; in all the hundreds of breathwork sessions he had led or witnessed, he had never seen such a reaction. (He had mentioned earlier a single fatality attributed to holotropic breathwork: a man who had had an aneurism.) Now I Michael was worried about tomorrow, and I think he Fritz was too. Though he Fritz also wondered if perhaps what I Michael was feeling in my his heart might reflect some psychic shift or “heart opening.” I Michael resisted the implied metaphor, holding firm to the plane of physiology: the heart is a pump, and this one is malfunctioning. We they discussed tomorrow’s plan. Maybe we they want to go with a lower dose, Fritz suggested; “you’re so susceptible you might not need very much to journey.” I Michael told him I he might bail out altogether. And then, as suddenly as it had come on, I he felt my his heart slip back into the sweet groove of its accustomed rhythm. I he got little sleep that night as a debate raged in my his head about whether or not I he was crazy to proceed in the morning with LSD at any dose. I he could die up here and wouldn’t that be stupid? But was I he really in any danger? Now my his heart felt fine, and from everything I he read, the effects of LSD were confined to the brain, more or less, leaving the cardiovascular system unaffected. In retrospect, it made perfect sense that a process as physically arduous as holotropic breathwork would discombobulate the heart. Yes, I he could take a rain check on my his LSD journey, but even the thought of that option landed like a crushing disappointment. I he had come this far, and I he had had this intriguing glimpse into a state of consciousness that for all my his trepidations I he was eager to explore more deeply. This went on all night, back and forth, pro and con, but by the time the sun came up, the earliest rays threading the needles of the eastern pines, I he was resolved. At breakfast, I he told Fritz I he felt good and wanted to proceed. We they agreed, however, to go with a modest dose - a hundred micrograms, with “a booster” after an hour or two if I he wanted one. Fritz sent me him out on a walk to clear my his head and think about my his intention while he Fritz did the dishes and readied the yurt for my his journey. I he hiked for an hour on a trail through the forest, which had been refreshed overnight by a rain shower; the cleansed air held the scent of cedar, and the barkless red limbs of the manzanita were glowing. Fritz had told me him to look for an object to put on the altar. While I he was looking and walking, I he decided I he would ask Fritz to give me him his pledge that if anything whatsoever went wrong, he would call 911 for help regardless of the personal risk. I he returned to the yurt around ten with a manzanita leaf and a smooth black stone in my his pocket and a straightforward intention: to learn whatever the journey had to teach me him about myself himself. Fritz had lit a fire in the woodstove, and the room was beginning to give up its chill. He had moved the mattress across the room so my Michael’s head would be close to the speakers. In somber tones, he talked about what to expect and how to handle various difficulties that might arise: “paranoia, spooky places, the feeling you’re losing your mind or that you are dying. It’s like when you see a mountain lion,” he suggested. “If you run, it will chase you. So you must stand your ground.” I

Michael was reminded of the “flight instructions” that the guides employed at Johns Hopkins: instead of turning away from any monster that appears, move toward it, stand your ground, and demand to know, “What are you doing in my mind? What do you have to teach me?” I he added my his stone and leaf to the altar, which held a bronze Buddha surrounded by the items of many previous travelers. “Something hard and something soft,” Fritz observed. I Michael asked for the assurances I he needed to proceed and received them. Now he Fritz handed me him a Japanese teacup at the bottom of which lay a tiny square of blotter paper and the torn scraps of a second square - the booster. One side of the blotter paper had a Buddha printed on it, the other a cartoon character I he did not recognize. I he put the square on my his tongue and, taking a sip of water, swallowed. Fritz didn’t perform much of a ceremony, but he did talk about the “sacred tradition” I Michael was now joining, the lineage of all the tribes and peoples down through time and around the world who used such medicines in their rites of initiation. Here I he was, in range of my his sixtieth birthday, taking LSD for the first time. It did feel something like a rite of passage, but a passage to where, exactly? While waiting for the LSD to come on, we they sat on the wooden skirt of decking that circled the yurt, chatting quietly about this and that. Life up here on the mountain; the wildlife that shared the property with him because he didn’t keep a dog: there were mountain lions, bears, coyotes, foxes, and rattlesnakes. Jittery, I he tried to change the subject; as it was, I he had been afraid during the night to visit the outhouse, choosing instead to pee off the porch. Lions and bears and snakes were the last thing I he wanted to think about just now. Around eleven, I he told Fritz I he was starting to feel wobbly. He Fritz suggested I he lie down on the mattress and put on my his eyeshades. As soon as he started the music - something Amazonian in flavor, gently rhythmic with traditional instruments but also nature sounds (rain showers and crickets) that created a vivid dimensional sense of outdoor space - I he was off, traveling somewhere in my his mind, in a fully realized forest landscape that the music had somehow summoned into being. It made me him realize what a powerful little technology a pair of eyeshades could be, at least in this context: it was like donning a pair of virtual reality goggles, allowing me him immediately to take leave of this place and time. I he guessed I he was hallucinating, yet this was not at all what I he expected an LSD hallucination to be, which was overpowering. But Fritz had told me him that the literal meaning of the word is to wander in one’s mind, and that was exactly what I he was doing, with the same desultory indifference to agency the wanderer feels. Yet I he still had agency: I he could change at will the contents of my his thoughts, but in this dreamy state, so wide open to suggestion, I he was happy to let the terrain, and the music, dictate my his path. And for the next several hours the music did just that, summoning into existence a sequence of psychic landscapes, some of them populated by the people closest to me him, others explored on my his own. A lot of the music was New Age drivel - the sort of stuff you might hear while getting a massage in a high end spa - yet never had it sounded so evocative, so beautiful! Music had become something much greater and more profound than mere sound.

Freely trespassing the borders of the other senses, it was palpable enough to touch, forming three dimensional spaces I **he** could move through. The Amazonian tribal song put **me him** on a trail that ascended steeply through redwoods, following a ravine notched into a hillside by the silvery blade of a powerful stream. I **he know knows** this place: it was the trail that rises from Stinson Beach to Mount Tamalpais. But as soon as I **he** secured that recognition, it morphed into something else entirely. Now the music formed a vertical architecture of wooden timbers, horizontals and verticals and diagonals that were being magically craned into place, forming levels that rose one on top of the other, ever higher into the sky like a multistoried tree house under construction, yet a structure as open to the air and its influences as a wind chime. I **he** saw that each level represented another phase in **my his** life with **Judith**. There **we they** were, ascending stage by stage through **our their** many years together, beginning as kids who met in college, falling in love, living together in the city, getting married, having **our their** son, Isaac, becoming a family, moving to the country. Now, here at the top, I **he** watched a new, as yet inchoate stage being constructed as indeed one now is: whatever this life together is going to be now that **Isaac** has grown up and left home. I **he** looked hard, hoping for some clue about what to expect, but the only thing I **he** could see clearly was that this new stage was being built on the wooden scaffolding of earlier ones and therefore promised to be sturdy. So it went, song by song, for hours. Something aboriginal, with the deep spooky tones of a didgeridoo, put **me him** underground, moving somehow through the brownish black rootscape of a forest. I **he** tensed momentarily: Was this about to get terrifying? **Have Has I he** died and been interred? If so, I **he** was fine with it. I **he** got absorbed watching a white tracery of mycelium threading among the roots and linking the trees in a network intricate beyond comprehension. I **he** knew all about this mycelial network, how it forms a kind of arboreal Internet allowing the trees in a forest to exchange information, but now what had been merely an intellectual conceit was a vivid, felt reality of which I **he** had become a part. When the music turned more masculine or martial, as it now did, sons and then fathers filled **my his** mental field. I **he** watched a swiftly unfolding biopic of **Isaac's** life to this point - **his** struggles as an exquisitely sensitive boy, and how those sensitivities had turned into strengths, making **him** who **he** is. I **Michael** thought about things I **he** needed to tell **him Isaac** - about the surging pride I **he** felt as **he Isaac** embarked on **his** adult life and made **his** way in a new city and career, but also **my his** fervent hope that **he** not harden **himself** in success or disown **his** vulnerabilities and **his** sweetness. I **he** felt something on **my his** eyeshades and realized I **he** had wet them with **my his** tears. I **he** was already feeling wide open and undefended when it dawned on **me him** that I **he** was not talking to **Isaac**, or not only to **him**, but to **myself himself** as well. Something hard and something soft: the paired terms kept turning over like a coin. The night before coming to **Fritz's** place, I **he** had spoken to two thousand people in a concert hall, tracked across a stage by a spotlight as I **he** played the role of the man with the answers, the one people could depend on to explain things. This was much the same role I **he** played in **my his** family growing up, not only for **my his**

younger sisters, but, in times of crisis, for **my his** parents too. (Even now, **my his** sisters stubbornly refuse ever to accept from **me him** the words “ I don’t know. ”) “ So now look at me! ” **I he** thought, a smile blooming on **my his** face this grown man blindfolded and laid out on the floor of a psychedelic therapist’s yurt, chasing after **my his** mind as it wandered heedlessly through the woods of **my his** life, warm tears - of what? **I he** did not know! - sliding down **my his** cheeks. This was unfamiliar territory for **me him** and not at all where **I he** expected to find **myself himself** on LSD. **I he** had not traveled very far from home. Instead of the demons and angels and various other entities **I he** was expecting to meet, **I he** was having a series of encounters with the people in **my his** family. **I he** visited each of them in turn, the music setting the tone, and the emotions came over **me him** in great waves, whether of admiration (for **my his** sisters and mother, whom **I he** pictured seated around a horseshoe-shaped table - like the UN! - each of **them** representing a different ideal of feminine strength); gratitude; or compassion, especially for **my his** father, a man both driven and pursued for much of **his** life, and someone whom before this moment **I he** had never before fully imagined as a son, and a son of ferociously demanding parents. The flood tide of compassion overflowed its banks and leaked into some unexpected places, like **my his** fourth-grade music class. Here **I he** inexplicably encountered poor **Mr. Roper**, this earnest young man in a cheap suit who in spite of heroic efforts could not get **us them** to give a shit about the sections of an orchestra **he** mapped on the board or the characters of the various instruments, no matter how many times **he** played Peter and the Wolf for **us them**. As **he** paced the classroom in **his** excitement, **we they** would wait in breathless suspense for **him** to step on one of the upturned thumbtacks **we they** placed in **his** path, a thrill for which **we they** were willing to risk staying after school in detention. But who was this **Mr. Roper**, really? Why couldn’t **we they** see that behind the cartoon figure **we they** tortured so mercilessly was, no doubt, a decent guy who wanted nothing more than to ignite in **us them his** passion for music? The unthinking cruelty of children sent a quick shiver of shame through **me him**. But then: What a surfeit of compassion **I he** must be feeling, to spare that much for **Mr. Roper**! And cresting over all these encounters came a cascading dam break of love, love for **Judith** and **Isaac** and everyone in **my his** family, love even for **my his** impossible grandmother and **her** long suffering husband. The next day, during **our their** integration session, **Fritz** read from **his** notes two things **I he** apparently said aloud during this part of the journey: “ I don’t want to be so stingy with my feelings. ” And, “ All this time spent worrying about my heart. What about all the other hearts in my life? ” It embarrasses **me him** to write these words; they sound so thin, so banal. This is a failure of **my his** language, no doubt, but perhaps it is not only that. Psychedelic experiences are notoriously hard to render in words; to try is necessarily to do violence to what has been seen and felt, which is in some fundamental way pre or post linguistic or, as students of mysticism say, ineffable. Emotions arrive in all their newborn nakedness, unprotected from the harsh light of scrutiny and, especially, the pitiless glare of irony. Platitudes that wouldn’t seem out of place on a Hallmark card glow with the

force of revealed truth. Love is everything. Okay, but what else did you learn? No - you must not have heard **me**: it's everything! Is a platitude so deeply felt still just a platitude? No, **I he** decided. A platitude is precisely what is left of a truth after it has been drained of all emotion. To resaturate that dried husk with feeling is to see it again for what it is: the loveliest and most deeply rooted of truths, hidden in plain sight. A spiritual insight? Maybe so. Or at least that's how it appeared in the middle of **my his** journey. Psychedelics can make even the most cynical of us into fervent evangelists of the obvious. You could say the medicine makes you stupid, but after **my his** journey through what must sound like a banal and sentimental landscape, **I he do does** not think that's it. For what after all is the sense of banality, or the ironic perspective, if not two of the sturdier defenses the adult ego deploys to keep from being overwhelmed - by our emotions, certainly, but perhaps also by our senses, which are liable at any time to astonish us with news of the sheer wonder of the world. If we are ever to get through the day, we need to put most of what we perceive into boxes neatly labeled "Known," to be quickly shelved with little thought to the marvels therein, and "Novel," to which, understandably, we pay more attention, at least until it isn't that anymore. A psychedelic is liable to take all the boxes off the shelf, open and remove even the most familiar items, turning them over and imaginatively scrubbing them until they shine once again with the light of first sight. Is this reclassification of the familiar a waste of time? If it is, then so is a lot of art. It seems to **me him** there is great value in such renovation, the more so as we grow older and come to think we've seen and felt it all before. Yet one hundred micrograms of LSD had surely not propelled **me Michael** into the lap of God, as it had Leo Zeff; even after the booster (another fifty micrograms, which **I he** was eager to take, in hopes of going deeper and longer). **I he** never achieved a transcendent, "non dual" or "mystical like" experience, and as **I he** recapped the journey with **Fritz** the following morning, **I he** registered a certain disappointment. But the novel plane of consciousness **I he** had spent a few hours wandering on had been interesting and pleasurable and, **I he think thinks**, useful to **me him**. **I he** would have to see if its effects endured, but it felt as though the experience had opened **me him** up in unexpected ways. Because the acid had not completely dissolved **my his** ego, **I he** never completely lost the ability to redirect the stream of **my his** consciousness or the awareness it was in fact **mine his**. But the stream itself felt distinctly different, less subject to will or outside interference. It reminded **me him** of the pleasantly bizarre mental space that sometimes opens up at night in bed when we are poised between the states of being awake and falling asleep - so called hypnagogic consciousness. The ego seems to sign off a few moments before the rest of the mind does, leaving the field of consciousness unsupervised and vulnerable to gentle eruptions of imagery and hallucinatory snatches of narrative. Imagine that state extended indefinitely, yet with some ability to direct your attention to this or that, as if in an especially vivid and absorbing daydream. Unlike a daydream, however, you are fully present to the contents of whatever narrative is unfolding, completely inside it and beyond the reach of distraction. **I he** had little choice but to obey the daydream's

logic, its ontological and epistemological rules, until, either by force of will or by the fresh notes of a new song, the mental channel would change and I **he** would find **myself himself** somewhere else entirely. This, I guess, is what happens when the ego's grip on the mind is relaxed but not eliminated, as a larger dose would probably have done. " For the moment that interfering neurotic who, in waking hours, tries to run the show, was blessedly out of the way, " as Aldous Huxley put it in The Doors of Perception. Not entirely out of the way in **my Michael's** case, but the LSD had definitely muffled that controlling voice, and in that lightly regulated space all sorts of interesting things could bubble up, things that any self respecting ego would probably have kept submerged. I **he** had had a psycholytic dose of LSD, one that allowed the patient to explore his psyche in an unconstrained but still deliberate manner while remaining sufficiently combobulated to talk about it. For **me Michael** it felt less like a drug experience - the LSD feels completely transparent, with none of the physiological noise I **he** **associate associates** with other psychoactive drugs - than a novel mode of cognition, falling somewhere between intellection and feeling. I **he** had conjured several of the people closest to **me him**, and in the presence of each of them had come stronger emotions than I **he** had felt in some time. A dam had been breached, and the sensation of release felt wonderful. Too, a few genuine insights had emerged from these encounters, like the one about **my his** father as a son, which turned on an act of imagination (of empathy) that even grown children seldom have sufficient distance to perform. During **our their** integration session, **Fritz** mentioned that some people on LSD have an experience that in content and character is more like MDMA than a classic psychedelic trip; maybe what I **he** had had was the MDMA session I **he** had had to pass up. The notion of a few years of psychotherapy condensed into several hours seemed about right, especially after **Fritz** and I **he** spent that morning unpacking the scenes from **my his** journey. As I **he** steered **my his** rental car down the mountain and toward the airport for the flight home, I **he** was relieved that the experience had been so benign (I **he** had survived! Had roused no sleeping monsters in **my his** unconscious!) and grateful it had been productive. All that day and well into the next, a high pressure system of well being dominated **my his** psychological weather. **Judith** found **me him** unusually chatty and available; **my his** usual impatience was in abeyance, and I **he** could outlast **her** at the table after dinner, being in no hurry to get up and do the dishes so I **he** could move on to the next thing and then the thing after that. I **he** guessed this was the afterglow I **he** had read about, and for a few days it cast a pleasantly theatrical light over everything, italicizing the ordinary in such a way as to make **me him** feel uncommonly... appreciative. It didn't last, however, and in time I **he** grew disappointed that the experience hadn't been more transformative. I **he** had been granted a taste of a slightly other way to be - less defended, I **he** would say, and so more present. And now that I **he** had acquainted **myself himself** with the territory and returned from this first foray more or less intact, I **he** decided it was time to venture farther out.