

I had come in on. About two miles along that road, I found another dead man, very old, who had collapsed on the side of the road.

But then I saw that he was still breathing, so I bent down and held his hand. He held my hand tightly. It was like holding a socket wrench.

“It’s alright,” I said.

He whistled to me. “The ground man.”

“Just relax,” I said.

“The ground man,” he whistled. “The ground man.” He did this very faintly and then he stopped moving and I heard no further breaths from him.

I said my dunes.

I walked for a few hours back on the path. It was many hours of walking, many of hours of mundane trail. It didn’t look quite as fascinating as before. The stream looked smaller, I tried to see it as I had seen it yesterday. While looking in the stream, I found a red pencil with a green eraser. Words were embossed on the side of it in gold: THIS IS TIME WELL SPENT. I put the pencil in my coat pocket.

Eventually I arrived at the clearing where the men had all peed the day before. I stopped and ate some bread and hummus. Then I urinated, stocked up on blackberries, and got back on the path.

Just as I was leaving, I saw that a few men were coming toward me. One of them was “Herbert”! On his shoulders was a young man playing the piccolo. I couldn’t understand the tune, as I was too far away, and anyway, it seemed somewhat beyond my level. But it was an exceedingly jubilant group, because they would end each little song with shouts of dune and raised fists.