

I whistled, “The old man.”

He nodded. “Dune.” And then he whistled, “He is dead.”

I said, “Dune?” I whistled, “The little boy.”

He said, “Dune.” He whistled, “I am the little boy.” He was certainly wearing a black turtleneck and jeans and the New Balance, too.

I said, “Dune.”

Then I ran down the hill, asking each of the men along the way, “Where’s Herbert? Where’s Herbert?” No one could tell me. I went back to the cave and took out a sheet of paper and a pen out of a plastic bag. I wrote the date on the top of the paper. I figured it was July 12th, 2010. As I fumbled to write, I noticed that my hands were shaking very badly. And what’s more: my hands looked dry and wrinkly. I yelled in horror and closed my eyes. I grabbed my head and sobbed, saying, “There’s a disease. They’re all sick.” I looked again at my hands, taking a chance on them again, and I saw that they weren’t that bad.

I stopped shaking and walked into the hazy light outside. Were my hands very old? I couldn’t tell. They seemed not too bad. They just seemed dirty.

I went back and began writing again:

Does this look like old man’s handwriting? Test. Test.

It wasn’t as terribly shaky as I thought. It was just more slanted than I usually write.

I went down to the “flute box” looking for Herbert, but he wasn’t there. So I brought my suitcase out of the cave and went walking down the trail that