

MEMORIES OF EARTH

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‘The most beautiful order: a heap of random sweepings.’

– Heraclitus

I used to have a ZZ Top beard. I cut it off after a kid shouted from the back on the top deck of a bus: ‘Oi! Catweazle! Get a shave!’

I noticed walking down the High Street with Mouse on mushrooms that all the shops were just fronts, there was nothing behind them. I told Mouse and she said: ‘They’ve always been like that. You’ve only just noticed?’

Once I walked down the High Street on the way to the library and came across three stabbed policemen and one stabbed policewoman lying on the pavement in pools of blood. I’d just missed a maniac.

I half knew a guy at college in the chemistry department one year below me who developed a fascination for phosphorescent substances. He used to steal them from

the lab and set them up in bottles on shelves on the walls in the living room of his flat. He used to sit there looking at them for hours. He died sitting there and they had to break the door down. I wonder what they thought with all these bottles giving off their unearthly glow.

I was sitting on 'the slave's grave' in the Garden of Memoriam. A little black boy came up to me and said: 'You shouldn't sit on graves.' I said: 'Dead people can't hurt you.' He said: 'I know. It's just respectful.'

Derek had a pet rat called Fink. He filled a rubber glove with molten chocolate and made a chocolate hand for Fink to nibble at. He woke up one morning screaming with pain. Fink was nibbling his hand.

Down a back alley walking home late one night I came across a dead black cat lying in a perfect oval of blood reflecting the full moon. It was a strangely beautiful sight. Then I noticed four or five cats crouched down on the wall watching from the shadows. I thought one was going to speak for a moment.

I was coming home late with Louise and she wanted to go to the toilet so bad she squatted down and had a piss in the alley. 'We're nearly home,' I said.

Louise worked at Pizza Hut. When she was on her period we'd have sex on her red Pizza Hut tee-shirt. 'I'll tell them it's tomato.'

Louise wanted to be an actress. We had a game where she would suddenly take on another character and try to embarrass me in public. I was all for it, it was fun. She'd pretend she was an angry hooker and I was her pimp at the checkout in Sainsbury's. Once she did it in a pub in the West End, slagging me off like I was her pimp. Pub went quiet, everyone was looking. Then she pretends to notice and goes back to her lovely Somerset accent: 'Oh, sorry, I'm practising for a part.' She gestures towards me as if I was the director. She got a round of applause, everyone laughing. We both took a bow.

I was walking quickly across the road in Soho with Tania. She turns in the middle of the road and points at me, the way my long coat is flapping crossing the road, and says: 'You look like a film director.' 'Really? I look like a film director?' 'Not now, then.'

When I was a kid I drew a map showing where all the deadly nightshades were.

I can still remember dogs chasing cars. Or maybe it was just a stupid dog where I grew up. Cars weren't that new then.

What happened to all the dinner parties I used to attend with friends? That doesn't happen any more. Was it just a thing of the time? Are friends still having them but without me? Perhaps because I'm not middle class. I'm still Bohemian. Back then I guess they hadn't quite decided yet. Though it was always obvious to me which way they were going.

I'd like to get a cat, and yet I wouldn't after seeing all the lost cat posters pinned and taped to trees. I wouldn't want to lose my cat. Instead I feed a visitor cat. He's always outside the back door by the time I wake at 3 in the afternoon.

Nothing happens any more, save for hallucinations and dreams.

I forget when exactly I became more secluded and things in the world stopped happening because I wasn't interested any more.

I just watch the bees on the lavender now. Gazing at electricity pylons and gulls, crows, and geese.

I'm surprised I used to be so interested, but that was when all of life was ahead of me and I was still playing the game. You're still a child, but childhood's gone. Then the thought you'll get married, have kids, one day. But that's gone too. Yours was a life of come-and-go relationships. Never wanted kids anyway. But you're not old like other people your age. Some kids on the train asked me how old I was and were surprised when I told them. 'What's the secret?' said one. 'Lots of drugs,' I said. They agreed heartily and shook my hand.

The council sent me a letter saying my lavender was halfway onto the pavement in the front garden and I had to cut it back or else. I was glad when it was gone. I was always annoyed watching wankers out the front window keep on snatching at it and pulling bits off instead of lightly brushing their hands through it like civilised people.

When I was a teenager I thought I'd die in a nuclear strike. I still think that. That's a strange thing to have hanging over your head all your life. Does it improve mental stability, like having a long time to integrate

the PTSD from nothing having happened yet of that nature? I have always felt more of an aftermath kind of person, but it'd probably be quite a bore after the initial excitement of no more government, no more of so many things that are so tiresome about living in this age. Trying to find clean water and food would soon become a pain. Maybe it wasn't so bad before after all.

I was walking down the road in Walthamstow just after 9-11 when I overheard an old woman talking to someone over her gate: 'I'm not bothered about Al-Qaeda love, I was here during the war.'

I sometimes feel like putting one of those DIY blue plaques on my house: 'So-and-so, renowned diabolist, lived here.' I saw one down the road where someone who packed balloons into boxes used to live. Is the idea to celebrate mundanity and 'normal people'? Who packs balloons into boxes for a living?

I don't know whether it's a Palestinian flag or a Brazilian flag and it's to do with football in that window. I should look them up but I'd rather look up a colourful moth I saw. In fact I did, it's a Jersey Tiger. I knew that, I'd just forgot.

When I blow a tiny fly off my arm I do it first with a small puff, to give them a bit of warning to prepare. They cling on surprisingly well. Then comes a bigger puff and they're off and I hope I haven't damaged them. Insects that can't fly I wonder how they got there in the first place, but those I let walk onto the ivy.

Small spiders can keep their webs in my house, but big ones I scoop up in a dedicated cardboard box and put outside.

I hate treading on snails by accident, particularly on wet days when I have gone out of my way to keep an eye out for them.

I was once chased by a black panther. It was in a zoo in Argentina. The black panther had a short chain round his neck attached to an iron pole. You could walk right up to him. I approached close to have a good look. As he stood up, yawning a big wide rolling-tongue yawn, I saw he had been sitting on coils and coils of chain. I ran like hell chased by the panther, the chain rapidly uncoiling behind him from the pile. I imagined he was amused by the situation and not trying too hard to catch me. After all, that was quite clever of him to hide the chain like that.

I sat on a wooden bench in a park in Buenos Aires I had read had a lot of feral cats. There weren't any around at first, but then I noticed dozens and dozens of cats heading towards me from all directions. But these weren't the feral cats you might expect, they were all posh very well groomed cats. Soon there were about a hundred cats around me.

The big eyes of dragonflies when I look at them clinging to a garden cane I am convinced are intently watching me.

What age was I when I stopped picking up conkers and pinecones and putting them in my pockets? What am I talking about, sometimes I still do it.

God has a lot of eyes if his eyes are the eyes of all the insects and birds and fish and animals and humans. The wildebeest is watching the tiger and the tiger is watching the wildebeest, and an eagle is watching both of them.

I met a man in a park in Quito, Ecuador, who stopped me so he could practise the English he was learning from a book there with him on the grass. I managed to teach him the Wolverhampton accent I thought I'd

lost. He took me back to where he lived. It was a small outhouse attached to the side of a big house, low roof, no room to stand up in. I thought at first he lived in the big house, but no, this was where he lived. He told me as we approached that he had been burgled a few weeks before. 'But it won't happen again,' he said. 'Why not?' I asked. 'You'll see,' he said, unlocking the padlock on the door. Inside, with a few English books and utensils, clothes, and bedding, was a beautiful young puma. He gave it me to hold in my arms, I was amazed how strong it was as it struggled to be put down. We went walking with it on a lead around the back streets of Quito. Old women crossed the road on seeing it, such that I could see that this was not a normal thing here.

I love watching banded demoiselles by the riverbank. The male ones are blue the female ones are green. What a great difference between the sexes.

There was a group of us in the pub. This American guy was over with his new girlfriend. They'd just been on holiday to Egypt. She was attractive but a bit dumb. I went to the bar to get a round in, she came over to the bar with me to help me carry them. 'D'you like my bag,' she said. 'Yeah, nice.' 'I bought it in Egypt, it's Fifth Dynasty.' I looked at her. 'Oh yeah, did they have

zips in the Fifth Dynasty?’ Suddenly she realises that guy in the bazaar wasn’t telling the truth and looks a bit sheepish. But she looks all the more attractive for it and finds it as funny as I do.

I was walking in a park in Peru, I think, somewhere in South America. It was twilight. I was looking at a book as I was walking, when I suddenly stopped without intending to. Right before me was a huge hole in the ground, without any fencing around it. And at the bottom of the hole was a bear looking up at me. Sometimes one has no idea what is going on.

Something my nan used to say to me: ‘I’ll buy you a blood orange for Christmas.’ I never knew what she meant. In later years I realised it must be an idiom of some sort. I asked my mum what it meant. She told me she used to say that to her as a little girl. She didn’t know what it meant either. I never got a blood orange for Christmas. ‘Maybe it means something cheap,’ said mum as an afterthought. It was probably said when a child asked for something their parents couldn’t afford.

Angela told me an idiom her mum used in Wigan: ‘Doll’s eyes and railway arches.’ It refers to a shop that sells everything.

I periodically remember I am Lucifer, who is not only the light bringer but also the revolutionary god. This certainly explains why, during my phase of evoking demons from *The Lemegeton* in the late eighties, that those demons I encountered showed the utmost respect for all of their growling and fearsome countenance. I didn't think I was that lucky, but that I commanded them according to some power I was not fully aware of. The demon Astaroth, recorder of the fall of the angels, even told me I was Lucifer but that I had hidden the knowledge away for another time, and I forgot again. It does not seem knowledge that it is advisable to keep hold of on a daily basis. Too mad. But when I remember again, it is not at all frightening. On the contrary, I love being Lucifer. But I cannot explain it with any ease.

I will never forget how Astaroth manifested. The first time I uttered the incantation, from A E Waite's *Book of Black Magic*, it didn't work, nothing happened. I did research in old manuscripts and books in the British Library and discovered a word was missing from the incantation I had, presumably an error or deliberately left out by Waite who deemed it too dangerous to give in full. I set up again to evoke Astaroth. Lamen with his seal around my neck painted in red on green cloth, I sat on the floor cross-legged about two metres

from the fireplace. A painting I had done of Astaroth from imagination was affixed covering the space of the cold hearth, incense lit either side. The fireplace and mantelpiece protruded about six or seven inches from the wall. I drew no magic circle around me for protection, I never did. I was not on any drugs. I looked into Astaroth's eyes in the painting having no idea what might happen as I uttered the full incantation. Perhaps I thought I might see a face in the incense smoke or something like that, something doubtable in retrospect but convincing enough at the time. As I ended on the words 'Come, Astaroth, come!' the entire fireplace shot out of the wall leaving a kind of corridor behind it, it was now inches away from my face. I was somewhat petrified at the unexpected event and sat even stiller staring right into Astaroth's eyes in the painting, which now seemed to breathe with life. After staying there for some elongated seconds as if Astaroth was weighing me up or wanted to be sure I was appreciating the immensity of this occurrence, the fireplace shot back into the wall. I felt like the survivor of a plane crash, yet invigorated, as Astaroth conveyed his knowledge to me, as if he had been waiting a long long time to receive my invitation. Something else was that this event coincided with the great storm of 1987, in the early hours of October 16. When I began my preparations

there was no hint of it. Yet who can believe such a story, but it is true, in every detail. It was then I knew I was a magician.

One can tell stories of the past, but in the present there are a few brown leaves already coming to the London plane trees in the street in August, the fallen ones are gathering in the gutters of the road for crackly walks by children and adults who remember their childhood brown-leaf-crushing footsteps. And not long now until one is stubbing out frozen puddles with a boot tip on hoarfrost pavements.

I left behind magick, but it didn't leave me behind.

I just saw something red on the floor in the kitchen and wondered what the fuck it was. How did a strawberry get there, I haven't had strawberries in weeks. I bend down to pick it up. Oh, it's a small tomato.

I have committed adultery twice, though once really, I don't count the first one since I didn't know at the beginning.

I haven't yet committed murder, though I have woken up several times from a dream thinking I have. It's

probably the same but you don't need to clear the blood up or dispose of the corpse.

I set up an occult group and interviewed people for it to weed out any nutters. One guy called Buzz told me he had a house in McCloud Ganj a small town in the mountains in India near the Dalai Lama and that the ring he wore on his finger was made for him by the Dalai Lama's jeweller, a personal friend. He seemed to have a lot of tall stories, yet he had an ability. He said I was a cat and that I have nine lives. That I always land on my feet. That I agreed with. I decided to see him a second time before admitting him to the group, just to make sure. Before I saw him again I had a dream about an earthquake and a year. Round Sean's we looked up earthquakes in his encyclopedia. There was one that year near McCloud Ganj. Next time I saw Buzz I said: 'What can you tell me about the earthquake?' He knew exactly what I was talking about and reeled off the year and date and all the details. His first suggestion at the group was that we should forge our own swords. Not too practical in the absence of a forge but I had to hand it to him he had some good ideas. In the end he just disappeared. His girlfriend who was also in the group said he'd done a moonlight flit after saying his number had come up. The pub where I interviewed him and the

others was the Admiral Duncan before it was painted pink and became a gay pub, before it was nail-bombed. After we'd done the occult work we needed to do we turned the group into a poker school.

I left a town on the shore of Lake Titicaca before the water level rose and killed most of the people in the hotel I had been staying.

I was nearly run over by a stationary car in Lima, Peru, which has the worst drivers in the world. A car smashed at speed into the back of a stationary car I was walking in front of but I was out the way just in time.

I had the most lab explosions of my year in chemistry. Once I went to the weighing room to weigh out some chemicals on the very exact balances and when I came back my bench was dissolving and hot green slime was dripping from the high ceiling and everyone was standing around looking at it. They gave me a round of applause as I came back.

The most freaky explosion was when I was alone late at night in the lab watching my experiment bubbling away in a flask. I was sitting on a stool close by just staring at it. Suddenly I saw an orange flash in the

murk of the flask and it made this growling noise, an unearthly growl like the hound of Hell, and I quickly backed away just out of range as it exploded.

Second-year lab no-one cleaned their lab equipment and my bench was one of the worst. The head of chemistry, Nobel Prize winner Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson, who never directly spoke to me the entire time I was there, stood by my bench and shouted to the lecturer in charge of the lab, though it seemed he was just shouting into the air: 'This place is a tip! Kick someone's arse!' I supposed he meant me.

I loved Professor Dennis Evans' lectures. He was a chain-smoker and used to perform ether extractions on the front bench in the lecture theatre with a lit fag dangling out of his mouth. He was good mates with William S Burroughs and synthesised DMT for him and sent it to him in an envelope to Tangier. When Burroughs was in London he'd come into Dennis's lab to weigh out his heroin. They were both members of the Chelsea Arts Club, along with Bridget Riley. He also shared his flat with Christine Keeler of the Profumo scandal for a while and recruited people from his local pub for his own personal DMT trial. One was Timothy Wylie, who later went on to be one of the founders

of The Process Church of the Final Judgment. Dennis once synthesised DET late one night in his lab, diethyl triptamine, DMT's scary big brother, and tried it on himself.

I was sitting in a lecture theatre one morning when a physics lecturer ran in breathless crashing through the double doors and said: 'We've just discovered the W-particle! Five minutes ago!' A huge cheer went up. The head of CERN came from our college that year so we got to hear of it very early, he'd just been on the phone. Though we hardly understood it, it seemed a special privilege. The physics lecturer was rushing all round the college to tell everyone. I was glad I hadn't stayed in bed that morning and missed it.

Once late at night I had to fetch a big whiteboard on wheels from the student refectory. I didn't put the lights on, I could see it by the moonlight through the windows. As I was wheeling it to the door there was this strange scurrying and cracking sound. When I got to the door I turned the lights on. There was a path of crushed cockroaches following the whiteboard, and a sea of live ones washing away into the corners of the room startled by the light.

It's funny how many things you can remember when you make a point of it. Usually my mind is empty, less to be a bother.

I came across a tomb in La Recoleta Cemetery in Buenos Aires that looked like a black glass-fronted TARDIS. Through the glass there was a single pale yellow tulip in a thin-stemmed vase and a spiral staircase leading down into the crypt below. I stood back and looked for the name of the occupant at the top of the tomb. It said: Dr Sinistero.

In the morning I turned right out of the hotel in La Paz, Bolivia, intending to walk all over the city in search of a good charango, like a small Andean lute made with the shell from the back of an armadillo. I traipsed all over La Paz and found nothing. When I got back to the hotel in the late afternoon I saw that the best charango shop in all of South America was next door, had I turned left in the morning, but by this time I didn't really want one any more. Just more to carry and I didn't want to support a trade in armadillos.

I stoop on a pavement in Antwerp watching a man in the basement facet a diamond through the street-level window.

In the docks of Rotterdam I suddenly heard a man with an electronic voicebox speaking behind a hedge. Never come across that again.

I sat on a traffic island in Belgium just outside Ghent and brewed a cup of tea with a camping-gas burner. Locals looked at me and ran off and bolted their tall gates. A hippy on a bike cheered and smiled as he passed by.

I was hitch-hiking in the Netherlands and was picked up by three people with a fur-lined van who passed out beedi joints. On the radio there was news of a bank robbery in the town I'd just left and we were speeding away from.

A Spaniard who spoke no English shared his cigars with me and a Frenchman who spoke a bit, outside the railway station somewhere awaiting the dawn. He spread out his sleeping bag so it was more pleasant sitting on the cold marble. Later a municipal vehicle came with a water cannon to hose down where we were sitting, but had moved off for it. Everywhere was opening now, the sun was coming up, just a pity to say goodbye to interesting company.

I got into a field late at night where the wire was bent down. In the morning when I woke up there was a bull in the field. I took my things and made for the fence. I couldn't see where it was bent down so I made to climb over, but the wire was electrified. The bull was coming after me so I took out my push-button umbrella and pressed it aiming it at the bull. It scared the bull away long enough to see the bent-down wire.

I once slept under the dodgems in a fair.

I once slept on a pile of apples in a barn. I said hello to the farmer as I walked down the road in the morning, apples in my pockets.

Me and Sean and Jim, when Sean got into proper rockets with rocket fuel, went in the car looking for an open field to let off his latest rocket. We found a field and on a concrete square in the middle of it let off the rocket. It zoomed way up high. Then I noticed the barns. 'Do you see what's in that barn?' It was a military helicopter. We decided to make a quick exit, especially with Sean being Irish.

When I was a Samaritan the police came in because the IRA had used our branch to phone in a bomb warning.

They played the volunteer who took the call recordings of lots of men with Irish accents to see if she recognised the voice. But she'd already been told to say no to all of them. The Samaritans don't identify callers even if they are IRA.

I remember being petty impressed when the IRA fired a mortar on Downing Street out the back of a van a few streets away. Friend of mine who worked in the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries told me that when that happened a man they thought was just a doorman collected them all up and ushered them to what they all thought was a stationery cupboard but it turned out to be the door to a secret corridor leading to a bomb shelter.

When I edited the student newspaper there was this freelance journalist called Stuart who hung around the office telling stories: 'If you see one fire engine go past, ignore it. If you see two fire engines go past, ignore them. If you see three go by, chase them!' He was full of tips like this. I liked him even though he was a bit of a scruffy Fleet Street hack. He asked me whether I could get him access to ARPANET, he wanted to research a story on the new yellow gas pipelines and their potential for explosion. I was surprised he knew

about ARPANET, it was 1981, hardly anyone knew about it. ‘Yeah, I have access to that.’ We had to wait until the satellite was over before we could get onto it from the college library on the transatlantic satellite link from SDAC, the Seismic Data Analysis Center in Virginia, to NORSAR, the Norwegian Seismic Array for the detection of earthquakes and nuclear explosions, via the Tanum Earth Station in Sweden. There was a terrestrial link from there to London. We were one of the few places in the UK on the network. NORSAR was the first non-US node on ARPANET. It was only long afterwards, when I saw an episode of *The Americans* with a similar storyline, I wondered, was Stuart KGB and I gave them access to ARPANET in 1981? Never crossed my mind at the time.

During the Iranian Embassy Siege I lived just across the gardens behind the embassy. There was a police camera in my back garden pointing to the back of the embassy. When I left late at night to go to the 24-hour shop I had to pass two policemen guarding the entrance to the street. Sometimes they’d ask me strange questions. One copper as I went out said to me: ‘Ere, me and my mate here are trying to decide who composed “Flight of the Bumblebee”. Was it Khachaturian or Rimsky-Korsakov?’ I thought a moment and said: ‘Khachaturian

I think.’ When I came back with food 25 minutes later I said to the copper: ‘No, it wasn’t Khachaturian, it was Rimsky-Korsakov.’ They opened the gate and let me through. It was only when I got to my door I realised it was two different coppers and they hadn’t asked to see my ID.

I was sitting on top of my bed revising for chemistry finals when the SAS stun grenades went off. I felt the force of it through the French windows all the way across the gardens. I think I had twigged something was going to happen that day as there were twenty ambulances parked down Prince Consort Road and a news blackout about it.

We wheeled the upright piano from the Union Concert Hall to the front of the Iranian Embassy during the siege and had a rousing chorus of ‘Give us our policeman back’. Only *The Telegraph* saw it correctly as students larking around having a laugh. *The Guardian* reported it as some activist thing.

Sean had his photo on the front page of *The Telegraph* spread-eagled against a wall patted down by coppers on the Bobby Sands march, the hunger strike. He had it framed in the hall.

Wandering around the mews in South Kensington you'd sometimes come across a police outline of a body in the street. There were a number of political assassinations in the late seventies round there that never seemed to get in the papers. We drew one outside our student house and squirted tomato ketchup on it.

Nick was a big fat barrister who edited the student newspaper *Grayhound*, the paper at Gray's Inn. We saw him at the NUS Student Journalist Conference sitting drinking on his own and went over to talk with him as he looked interesting. I shared a house with him later with another guy when he was working at the tip as a weighbridge clerk and used to bring home trays of condemned cherries. 'There's nothing wrong with em,' he said, depositing cherry pips into his ashtray along with the cigar butts. 'It's EU regulations, they have to be discarded, but they're fine.' Sometimes I'd ask him for legal advice when people threatened me with a libel action. His standard advice was: 'Can't you just hire someone to beat him up in a dark alley?' Then he would give me some proper advice and write a satirical put-down for me in legalese that I could publish. It was that house where I was first abducted by aliens, in the garden, February 11, 1984. Nick often sat in the lounge writing stories under a female pen-name, Harriet something-or-

other, most of them seemed to involve naked maidens bathing in milk. If you got up early enough you'd see Nick frying sausages in the nude.

I used to grow *Psilocybe cubensis* mushrooms in my bedroom in that house, in an old aquarium turned on its side with a polythene flap on the front. I grew them in sterilised jam jars with diluted bleach sprayed around into the aquarium to stop various moulds competing with the mycelium. Me and friends used to trip almost every weekend on a 5g dry-weight 'heroic dose', in Terence McKenna's phrase. It was during one of these that I became convinced there was something out in the garden, a flying saucer came to mind. I rushed out into the garden and noticed what I first thought was the sun, except it was in the wrong direction. I felt I was levitating rising up to a craft and held onto the washing line to steady myself. I came round from unconsciousness seemingly having knocked my head on the edge of the house. The washing line was broken. I couldn't remember what had happened but surmised that I had been swinging on the washing line, it broke, and I fell and knocked myself out. I staggered indoors and sat down in an armchair. Then I had flashes of being on an operating table in a stainless steel environment. I couldn't move but in peripheral vision I could vaguely

see small scurrying figures about the height of the table, when a large alien with oval obsidian eyes bent over into my field of view to examine me. It quickly withdrew out of my sight, perhaps realising I was conscious, and a kind of comforting anaesthetic mantra came over me: 'We're helping you. Don't be afraid, we're helping you.' Then they started drilling into my left temple, where I thought I had hit my head against the house. Then I found myself sitting in a chair at the typewriter on the desk in the lounge. I touched my fingers to my left temple. Bright red blood on my fingertips. Then I remembered the operating room again, but couldn't tell whether it was happening now and I was bilocated or it was a memory of something that had happened earlier. When I woke up in the morning my head was stuck to the pillow by the blood from my left temple. That was the start of my extraterrestrial journey to now. I should point out that I had taken psychedelics many times before without being abducted by aliens.

Life goes on, fantastic things are put to one side, even though they are directing your entire life now.

When I was a kid I used to melt lead in a saucepan on the kitchen stove while my parents were occupied in the front room watching *Coronation Street*. Then I would

pour it into a washing-up bowl of cold water. If the lead slipped in easily it would form teardrop ingots of lead, but sometimes it formed frozen metallic splashes if it hit the surface tension of the water a different way. Dad worked for the Post Office and had a bag of lead tags for sealing up postal sacks. Once I wondered, how far away is the melting point of the aluminium pan from lead? I was pretty sure it was 300 degrees higher but for a moment I thought the pan might melt before the lead.

I had a chemistry textbook when I was a teenager that was published in the 1920s and had all the dangerous experiments in it that you couldn't find any more. In the seventies when I set up my shed laboratory you could get practically any chemical. I was making the detonator nitrogen triiodide which explodes, when dry, by simply touching it. I left some in its safe wet form to dry outside. I heard a bang and came out to find bits of sparrow.

I made a spontaneous combustion chemical by adding concentrated sulphuric acid to potassium permanganate crystals in a very clean test-tube. It formed a thick viscous dark green liquid (manganese heptoxide). If you added a drop to any organic material, such as a cotton handkerchief, it would spontaneously combust it was

such a strong oxidising agent. Obviously you didn't want to get it on your skin. I have a false memory that I took a bottle of it to school and got people to hold out their handkerchief, four kids each holding one corner, and I'd pour some on it and it would go up in flames. It must be a false memory, created from something I thought of doing, because I don't think I was stupid enough to walk around with that in my pocket.

I painted myself green for a sex magick rite. We couldn't be bothered to wash it off before going to sleep. We woke up a bit late, I had a job at the time, I was an editor on *The Lancet*. The green wouldn't come off, we'd used the wrong sort of paint. So I just scrubbed my hands and face and left the rest green under my clothes. I remember thinking if I get knocked over this is going to look interesting. Towards going-home time I told a few of the others what had happened. Daniel who sat opposite and wrote the world's first dogging novel on *Lancet* time often used to say to me later on: 'Are you green today?'

There was nothing better than camping in the Scottish Highlands, I felt I could live all my days like that. Then the midges came. But even with the midges it seemed the way to go.

When I went to the big school everyone said that the Latin teacher Mr Dacre would hold you outside the window by your shoelaces three floors up if you got the Latin wrong.

I rolled a hard-boiled egg down Silbury Hill one Easter.

I've always liked trees.

I enjoyed smoothing out dishevelled feathers, making the bits hook onto each other again.

I could watch crabs walking across the sand for ages.

Once a friend had a dinner party and served sliced kiwi fruit, which I'd never had before. 'What is it?' I said. 'Sliced jellyfish,' she said. Well I knew it wasn't that because she was vegan but otherwise I hesitated long enough to give the impression I actually thought it was.

Every time we went to the curry house in a group with Clive he'd say 'Popadoms?' and then he'd order a ridiculous number like twenty-seven while we were still looking at the menu.

Jimmi Rocket (James Charles Beck) rang me up one night from America Christmas 1987. He corresponded with Charles Manson. He told me Squeaky Fromme of the Manson Family had escaped from prison and there was big manhunt for her going on right now but she'd come to his place and was sleeping on the couch downstairs. 'D'you want to speak to her?' 'Yeah okay.' He went off to get her and his wife Opal came on the phone, they did magick together. She was a stand-up comedian and told me the Sasquatch were breeding in Oregon. 'For real?' I said. 'Why, yees,' she said in a delicious sultry voice. I couldn't tell whether she was joking or she meant it. Jimmi came back to the phone: 'I can't wake her, poor thing's been on the run all day, tired out, best to let her sleep.' 'Okay,' I said.

Jimmi asked me if I wanted Gaddafi's direct private phone number: 'You can phone him, he likes talking to people. Just say you know me. I've spoken to him a few times now.' Jimmi had channelled additional material from Aiwass to add to Aleister Crowley's *Book of the Law*. He'd sent me a copy of the printed book, that's how I got to know him. He told me Gaddafi was interested in setting up a Thelemic state. 'I probably won't ring him,' I said, 'but give me his number anyway.'

Years later the bodyguard for Gaddafi's wife when she was on a shopping trip to London was in my *I Ching* group. He always turned up a bit early and we'd chat in the kitchen before everyone else arrived. He was a tough guy, you could tell he was a bodyguard. He told me about Gaddafi's troupe of female bodyguards. 'All hot,' he said.

I saw an old school-friend back in Wolverhampton after I had been away at university in London for a few years. He'd stayed in Wolverhampton to do art at the polytechnic. I hadn't seen him for ages. All I had to talk about was taking acid, I was very enthusiastic about acid. He hadn't done acid. Or any drugs. I gradually began to see in his reactions that I'd really moved away. His cat Torchie, the mother of my cat Sandy who was now dead, was still alive.

I saw an old school-friend who'd left after 'O' levels to go and work in a factory. We went for a drink when I was back from university for a short while. I needed a piss so I just had a piss against a tree in the street. He walked on a bit embarrassed. 'Do they do that in London?' he asked.

I looked on Friends Reunited out of curiosity, signing up under a false name. I found an old school-friend who'd left to join the air force halfway through 'A' levels. On his page he'd written: 'You'll never guess what I've been doing. Only in Germany with my finger on the bloody button!'

I didn't see footage of the planes going into the Twin Towers until three months after it had happened. My TV had gone in the bin years before and my internet was on a dial-up modem. It was like waiting for porn to load at 40 kbps so I just gave up. It was just news. I wasn't interested in news.

Alan worked at the National Physical Laboratory. He gave me a driving lesson on the internal roads there on a Sunday when no-one was around. I was driving like a madman around the nuclear reactor. But the director was there and saw us and told us to knock it off. The days when you could drive like a nutter around nuclear reactors without much fuss.

Six of us shared a flat in the second year of college. One morning, I was sleeping late, Alan woke me and said he'd just heard on the radio that his sister had been blown off a cliff on her honeymoon and was dead. 'Are

you sure it's her?' 'Same name same place.' I said: 'You'd better go and ring your parents. I'll get up.' We had no phone in the flat. We would speak about it in the lounge for weeks afterwards after the others had gone to bed. He kept saying: 'All I can think of is a pile of strawberry jam.'

Me and a girlfriend, Rikki, were nearly blown off a mountain in the Isle of Skye.

I lived in an old coachman's cottage in Kew that had a poltergeist. As I was going up the narrow staircase one day I saw a shape come out of the lounge at the top of the stairs. It physically grabbed me by the shoulders and turned me sideways forcibly so it could rush past going downstairs. I sometimes saw it sitting in the armchair in my attic bedroom, I called it the meaningless shape, it would drift from the chair across the wall like a large blob of ectoplasm that could assume different forms. I didn't feel it meant me any harm although when I heard it crawling across the roof one night I thought that was pretty freaky. One time I was sitting on the floor consulting the *I Ching*, throwing the three Chinese coins to the ground six times to form the hexagram, when in the middle of it an old English penny dropped with them out of the air. I could surmise it had been lodged

for decades in the rafters above my head and just fell at that moment, but I couldn't help but think it was the poltergeist joining in and being rather intelligent. I looked up of course, perhaps half expecting to see a grinning old man up there, but there was nothing. It was here I started *KAOS* in 1985.

Funnily enough just before I lived there I was a freelance journalist and hooked up with this reporter Doug from *The Daily Mirror* to work on a story I'd brought to them about master-keys and Government buildings. I didn't know at the time but he was the guy who broke the Enfield poltergeist case on the front page of the newspaper a few years before.

I told Doug I'd noticed that the Barbican had ASSA high-security locks, but I didn't know whether the ASSA R37 super-grandmaster I had opened doors there or not. I'd already gone a fair way out into London's subterranean spaces with it, otherwise locked off by dungeon doors in tunnels that the key opened, and accessed some secret places, including doors with bio-hazard signs, underground labs. One night I opened a locked door on the fifth floor of a darkened building that opened out onto an empty fall to the ground. The other half of the structure had recently been demolished

for rebuilding, the door would eventually connect to a new corridor. Just caught myself on the edge going through unthinkingly into the blackness before my eyes adjusted and I saw the crescent moon. Never step out too eagerly, I learnt. A lesson about thresholds. The tarot Fool. Doug said a friend of his lived in the Barbican so we went round there one evening. The R37 didn't work, nor any of my flat master-keys. The guy was a bit freaked seeing those go into his keyway. 'To bypass the profile,' I said, not explaining any further. I would have done, if he'd asked. I'd brought my lock equipment with me and said I could tell more if he let me take his lock apart. He was a bit wary, understandably, but he agreed to it after Doug assured him I knew what I was doing and was trustworthy, not some gangland safecracker between prison stays. So I took his lock apart on the kitchen table to see whether there were splits in the pins and where they occurred if there were. 'Have to be careful with this bit,' I said as I removed the cylinder 'or the springs in the barrel will go flying all over the room and we'll never get it back together.' This guy kept looking at Doug as if to say, 'Who the fuck have you brought round here?' He was relieved though when I was able to tell him there were no splits in the pins so his lock was not on a master-key system.

When I was in hall at college I had key rivals who would no doubt want to get into my room with a grandmaster, so late one night I took apart my lock and rearranged the split pins to take it off the grandmaster for all the halls of residence but keep it on the staircase sub-master that they gave the cleaner so she would still be able to get in and suspect nothing, as well as the individual key to just that door. One night I came back and found a note on my pillow from my key rivals. I couldn't work out how they'd got in. They could have picked the lock but I thought not. They're not that easy these high-security ASSA locks and I was pretty sure they didn't have any picking skills, just master-keys. They'd have turned up with a grandmaster expecting to get in and have been frustrated. Next time I saw the guy who left the note in the bar I asked how he'd done it. He laughed and said: 'You left your window open.' He could hardly contain his amusement as it dawned on me his route of entry. He'd got into the room next to mine with the grandmaster, opened the window, and climbed across, six floors up. 'Fair play,' I said, 'fair play.'

When I was attacking Genesis P-Orridge in *KAOS* in the late eighties I used to regularly have Ouija sessions with two others. We had the letters and 'Yes' and 'No'

on cards in a circle around the table and an overturned glass. One of the people in the Ouija sessions was Lorna who was an old-school clairvoyant type used to dead people coming through. I didn't want to talk to dead people so we got 'The Three Lords of Kaos'. Stephen was the other person, now a high-ranking magus in the esoteric freemasonry and Rosicrucian scene. The Ouija had just spelt out that Genesis P-Orridge had sent the demon Saleos against me. I asked when, it spelt out 'Now'. Then at that moment there was a rustling in the chimney, we turned our heads, a little soot fell down, followed by a dead blackbird, onto the hearth, no fire lit. Lorna I could see was a little unnerved by this, but she calmed seeing I appeared to be in control for all I was surprised. Me and Stephen examined the dead blackbird. We sat back at the table and I asked what I could do. The Ouija told me to fetch an automatic drawing I had done a few days earlier and to tape it to the table. It was the drawing of a face in pencil. Then the Ouija said to rule three straight lines across it, which it specified by the glass travelling from, say, B to P for one line, travelling across the face of the picture. After I had drawn the three lines on in pen I asked what this was. The glass spelt out: 'Restraining spell against Genesis P-Orridge.' I noticed then that the drawing looked a little like him. I published it on the cover of *KAOS* 8, along with the

title, and told the story of Orridge sending the demon Saleos against me, but I didn't mention the Ouija or the dead blackbird.

Orridge sent Saleos against me because in *KAOS 7* I had revealed he had had a meeting with David Rietti of the Caliphate OTO and was planning to join, thus selling out all the members of his cult Thee Temple ov Psychick Youth, whose blood-and-wank-stained cards he hoarded to maintain a powerful magical link, sent in by a bunch of impressionable youngsters just getting into music and magick. It can be a form of magical enslavement to have another's bodily fluids. I was always amazed people offered these things to him, but that's naivety for you. It had been Mouse's job to sort these cards for a while until she split apart from him some time after he got his Prince Albert stuck on her uvula. I never mentioned that it was the Ouija that told me about this meeting with Rietti. I published what it dictated not caring whether it was true or not, I thought it was a good story. But as it turned out it was true. It was reported back to me by people I knew who were close to him that when Orridge read *KAOS 7* he was tearing his hair out in his 'skull room' pacing back and forth shouting: 'Demons are among us! Demons are among us!' He thought I myself was a demon. Alan Moore

later told me he found this hilarious because Orridge had maced his partner Melinda Gebbie at a party and he'd been wanting to put him in a wheelchair.

Presumably everyone knows about the guy finding his way up to the stage and shoving a voodoo doll down Orridge's trousers at a gig in the States? The story about how he was staying at Rick Rubin's house just after the gig on April 11, 1995, guest of the band Love and Rockets, the house caught fire and Orridge injured himself trying to escape from the second floor. He had been dreaming about the voodoo doll when he awoke surrounded by flames. I was told he was impaled on the railings but the official version is that he fell on the concrete stairs. I was living next to mountain becks and walking in the purple heather by this time. Demons a thing of the past.

There was an Indigenous probably Quechua graveyard in Peru with a small temple at the centre of it. I went in the temple, little more than a hut, no-one in there, and sat in front of an altar with a painted human skull on it. The painted skull was so beautiful all I could think was that I wanted it. Maddening thoughts ran through my mind of me slipping it into my bag and smuggling it out of the country, the bright colours of

the painted skull exerted such a fascination. Then an Indigenous woman came into the hut and prayed to the skull with such devotion. What was I thinking? Obviously an important ancestor. Amazing it was just left sitting there. Watching the Indigenous woman praying to the skull broke the spell of my stealing it. What *was* I thinking? How would I ever have got it out of the country anyway? I could hardly believe I had contemplated such a thing. Then it dawned on me, the skull itself had implanted these thoughts with its magic, for me to come to realise myself by watching the woman's devotion to it, that its power was great and it was never in any danger of being stolen. I left the hut having learned something while she was still addressing the painted skull. I felt it had given me something, a power not to want. Wanting was a curse.

In the witchcraft market in La Paz, Bolivia, American tourists were taking photographs and dropping their used flashcubes in the street. After they had walked on stallholders collected up these cubes, not to pick up the litter but to use them in magic. A man who spoke English pointed to some dead animal dried up on a stall and said: 'Do you know what that is?' 'No, what is it?' He explained it was dried llama fetus, which is buried in the foundations when building a new house.

As I was walking through a market in the high Andean town Cuzco, near Machu Picchu, I could see mestizos drawing a tripwire across the path ahead of us. I told the girl I was with about it and said not to panic just carry on walking towards it. Just before the tripwire I waved my hands about and shouted like a madman and scared them off.

I bought a painting from a guy who was selling them in the street, they were attached to the railings outside a park in Lima. I rolled it up and put it in my backpack. I wondered why I'd bought it, now I had to carry it with me everywhere I went. A couple of nights later the bus pulled in very late in a dangerous town. As a few of us were heading up the road there were what looked like a gang of ne'er-do-wells milling around in the distance. I took out the rolled-up painting and started batting it into my hand like a club. They dispersed as we approached.

To have a hot shower in the Gran Casino Hotel in Quito cold water was passed over a live electric wire. You could see it sparking above your head. A man told me to stand on my right foot and turn it off with my right hand so if anything went wrong the electricity

wouldn't go through the heart. I decided cold showers were perfectly fine.

During the war a German incendiary bomb fell from a plane through the roof and into my living room. I only know this because I met an old man at a local writing group who asked me what number when I told him the name of the street I lived in. It turned out he lived opposite as a kid during the war. He saw the incendiary bomb drop and him and his mates kicked the door down and put the fire out. It feels a bit odd sitting most of my time exactly where a bomb exploded.

I sometimes wonder whether a body is buried under the floorboards.

Louise was scared of spiders. I said you should see this massive bird-eating spider my friend who owns this place has got in a glass case and rushed off to the spare room to find it. By the time I got back the front door was wide open and Louise was out in the middle of the road. 'Look,' I said, 'isn't it massive?' 'You bastard,' she shouted, 'take it away.' 'It's not alive,' I said. I went and put it away, hid it behind the bookcase where it had been and Louise came back in.

I saw Catherine, after years not seeing her. 'I thought I'd never see you again,' I said. 'Oh you would have ...' she said, '... on television or something.'

The last thing I saw on my television before I put it in the bin and smashed the screen in with a hammer for the joy of the implosion of the vacuum in the cathode-ray tube was the second part of an *X-Files* double episode with the set turned ninety degrees on the floor because that was the only way it would hold a picture, with me lying on my side on the carpet to watch it. Ridiculous, but I wanted to see the end of the story. I haven't had a TV since then, over thirty years ago. It was good to be free of television, until the computer became the new TV. I agree with that book, *Four Arguments for the Elimination of Television*.

Louise showed me something she'd learnt in a previous relationship. Take a gulp of hot tea then give a hot blowjob.

I was at a new year's party at a club on MDMA and K and got talking to some people about my old chemistry professor Dennis Evans and how he made DMT for William S Burroughs. One said: 'You're not Heisenberg are you?'

I was in the queue outside a club one night when a bouncer spotted me and shouted: 'It's David Bleedin Ockney! Let im through, let im through!' He took me by the arm and conducted me and my friends into the club, no charge, past the big queue. I couldn't tell whether he was taking the piss and having a laugh or he did think I was David Hockney, but I wasn't going to argue.

At another club someone asked me whether I was a Goldsmiths arts lecturer taking students on a field trip. 'No, but I am an artist.'

At another club I met this interesting guy who turned out to be a love child of Kim Philby.

Sometimes I wonder whether other people's lives are as strange as mine or whether I have an unusual aptitude for it. It doesn't seem that strange to me really, it's just my normal.

You forget how much has apparently happened, when you become convinced nothing has ever happened. But such conviction depends on a philosophical definition of 'happening' – see my *Form & Void* – you can still talk about it as most people mean it.

I've taken hallucinogens with some people who read the news on TV.

I remember I used to get into deep black despairs. But then I decided to spend my life learning to overcome them. It didn't occur to me until later that most of them were to do with relationship breakups. They dissipated when I was no longer interested in relationships. I still get philosophical despair, but then it's an opportunity to observe at close hand something of Hell or Apocalypse.

I have a perfect dreikanter, a pebble tumbled by countless tides into the shape of a prism with rounded edges. I found it on the beach at Rhyl when I was eleven. It truly is perfect, far far better than the examples of dreikanter in the British Museum. Dreikanter is German for 'three-sided'. When I was into the *Book of Revelation* and doing a lot of acid and mushrooms I recalled the dreikanter, I was sure it was probably at my parent's house in a box in the attic. I became convinced that it was the pebble mentioned in *Revelation* and that I was either the first or the second horseman of the Apocalypse. I returned to my parent's house and retrieved the pebble. As I gazed at it I could see lots of numbers on it. You could see them in the pattern on the stone. I even saw $E=mc^2$ on it. I haven't been able to find that again. I showed it to

my dad and he was sitting there reeling off numbers he could see on it, it didn't seem like he was just humouring me. I took it to a tarot reader in Wolverhampton market who was also a psychometrist and got vibrations off objects, just to see what she might say about it. She held it in her hand and closed her fingers around it. She looked at me and asked: 'Do you believe in mermaids?' 'I'd like to,' I said. It was the least cynical answer I could give. 'I think it's a mermaid's crystal ball,' she said. I decided not to mention horsemen of the Apocalypse.

I read all of Nietzsche back-to-back in my twenties. Great way to stoke a will-to-power and go mad at the same time, especially in conjunction with conjuring demons.

I bought a carved wooden human skull in Quito from a guy who made fake but realistic shrunken heads. Later I drew the seal of Astaroth on its crown in my own blood to use in a ritual.

To shrink a human head the Jivaro tribe would cut from the nostrils to the mouth and pull the skull out. You couldn't shrink it if the skull remained. This is why the skin is tied up with stitches from nose to mouth in examples of shrunken heads. No skull in there.

I once had a job washing reusable snail shells in a French restaurant. The snails came in big tins like paint cans, already shelled and were boiled up, each one shoved in a snail shell that had been used before and then a dab of garlic butter was plopped in the hole after it. I'm sure most people think that snail came with that shell. It had Michelin stars too, in Chelsea.

The French chef used to tell stories about having lots of banknotes under his bed while he was tossing frog's legs in the fryer. I never saw a whole frog, the frog's legs came in frozen bags.

I knew a girl with a brightly coloured parrot tattooed on her leg. Before we met she told me she'd crossed the abyss. When I met her I took one look at her and said: 'You haven't crossed the abyss.' She bit her lip slightly.

When I was fourteen I wrote to Porton Down asking for information on how to work there. They sent me a load of pamphlets on how to get a job in chemical and biological warfare. Years later, after I'd gone a different direction, I watched a documentary about Porton Down in which a chemist was making sarin with a smile on his face, asking the camera crew to film

through the glass window in the door 'just in case'. He reminded me of me.

I gradually got used to solitude and welcomed not having to have thoughts about what I should be doing in relation to other people. Earlier it always seemed a tussle between going further into the world and going further away from it. In the end, events choose for you. Or you choose the greater tranquillity you've been shown. And if it was the wrong decision, it's too late now so may as well carry on. You become like a hidden master. I was reading the poetry of Chinese and Japanese mountain hermits in my late twenties and thirties, sometimes in the mountains. The way was mostly laid out for me, I just had to follow it.

Life wouldn't be life without regrets, but they're only habits of thought showing how thin and pale they've become. Still, easy enough to take them by the hand and walk a little way with them, honouring someone one used to be for a while.

I had a chemistry PhD all set up at the University of Queensland. I decided not to do it getting sunburnt on a boat in the middle of Lake Titicaca talking to a New Zealander who had just finished a PhD and wished he

hadn't done it. I said to myself that if I wanted to change my mind about this then I had to come back to the same place to make that decision. Things just seemed clearer in the middle of Lake Titicaca, so vast you cannot see land any more in any direction.

I once met a guy who enjoyed walking into deserts without a compass, he would walk just a little further so he could no longer see where he had come from, and sit down.

I saw my first mirage in the Atacama Desert, Chile.

At night in the Highlands I wondered why the stars only started so far above the horizon, then I remembered there were mountains there.

When I was a boy I saw through the window a sparrow feeding a huge cuckoo chick on the paving slabs right by the house. Dad called me over to look.

There were two cash machines outside Barclays Bank in Cambridge. During the night some scallywag had painted 'WHITES' above one and 'BLACKS' above the other. It was the height of apartheid in South Africa, which Barclays supported. There was a queue of white

people at the WHITES one. A black guy breezed in and used the BLACKS one that no-one was using.

In childhood I learnt the names of most wild flowers, trees, butterflies, insects, birds, and mammals. I didn't know the name of a single car. This is still the case.

I remember thinking television was the enemy. I have capitulated to the computer.

At university we programmed a computer that was in its own hermetically sealed room with punchcards. Recently I found a punchcard used as a bookmark in a second-hand book a friend had bought. He didn't know what it was.

Ellisdon's joke catalogue, from which I bought plastic cat shit, a clammy severed hand, wind-up chattering teeth, and other things, advertised a 'fully working time machine'. I wanted to buy it but mum wouldn't let me spend my pocket money on it, saying: 'It couldn't possibly work.' Then she added: 'Not for 2/6d.'

I wonder how much I've forgotten of my life, but am surprised by how much I remember.

I thought the bees had finished with the lavender for this year, but one or two have found a few new open flowers.

Polite clapping in the field from the cricket punctuates the afternoon.

Looking at the brown dried blossom of the lilac tree I remember when me and Benita formally buried under it the huge dead grasshopper (probably a locust) in a painted coffin. A headless cormorant buried under the firethorn behind it.

Every year I got annoyed about the number of sycamore seedlings I had to pull up dropped from the tree just behind my back garden wall. Until I noticed that the seeds remaining on the tree were a winter foodstuff for squirrels.

As a kid I was fascinated by turning a glass of water upside down with a piece of card on top and the water wouldn't fall out. I have just tried it again for the first time in fifty years to see if it still works. Of course it does. And it is still amazing.

You don't see plastic statues of little boys in leg braces collecting money outside shops any more.

Now smiley women rattling collecting cans for children with cancer think you don't care when you walk on shaking your head. They probably don't realise you disapprove of animals being used in cancer research.

I was on a bus in Quito when a troupe of Hare Krishnas got on board. They were the same as everywhere else.

I have become obsessed with remembering things I have forgotten about. Actually I should be pleased to forget even more. A friend told me she didn't remember much of her childhood. I wondered whether that was true and she preferred to forget about it. Unless I make an effort, I don't remember much of anything. I just listen to the breeze in the tree and watch butterflies fluttering around. I don't even remember who I am, by which I mean who I'm supposed to be in terms of this planet, and then getting more local, country, city, street. But these just seem things for a registering authority in the absence of the immediate proximity of friends to whom I am supposed to appear to be someone they have known for some while. This however is not a difficult recollection, since their faces tend to jog the memory.

Once as I was coming out of the front door there was a person in the street passing by who walked back and

smiled. I looked at him as if he were a mad person. He walked on looking disappointed and embarrassed. I remembered him as a friend I hadn't seen for several decades as I was walking down the street. Maybe he thought I was someone else he had mistaken for me. A pity, but that's how it goes sometimes. You tend to forget how much of a blankness you've become, since objects don't abandon you for all you've abandoned them and you are just the void sitting there taking in the sights and sounds.

People don't offer me leaflets in the street any more, I must look too shunning in advance. Except Christians, they still think I might want their leaflet and to attend their church. I had a conversation with a Hare Krishna girl who stopped me to ask: 'Are you interested in being enlightened?' I said: 'I'm already enlightened.' She smiles and dip snaps: 'Wicked, man!'

I saw a sign outside a church. I thought it said 'Christian miniseries' and wondered when it was on.

A local church had a copy of the Turin shroud on display. Surely that only shows you can make a fake. Still, I would have gone and had a look at it if the exhibition hadn't just finished.

I have experienced autoprosopagnosia, the failure to recognise your own face in the mirror. I kept going back to see if I recognised it yet. I just found it fascinating, though I imagine some people would panic.

I used to hold the moulded plastic trays from chocolate boxes in front of the two-bar electric fire and they would go back to a flat sheet of plastic.

I got stupidly electrocuted a few times. In a school chemistry electrolysis experiment I was holding the anode in one hand and someone gave me the cathode to hold in the other.

Once, at university, I demonstrated to a friend the special whistle I had to call my cat in from the fields, and when he heard this whistle it sent him right back to childhood to a time in Singapore when he and his sister were out flying dragonflies that were tied to thread and flying above them with the end of the thread twirled around their little fingers and this was the whistle their dad used to call them in from the jungle.

There was an ugly girl at school who smelt of ointment and wee. No-one liked her, she didn't have any friends, which as a result accentuated her unpleasantness towards

everybody. I didn't like her either, but I felt sorry for her and did not join in with the taunting of her. Years later when I was briefly back at my parents' house in Wolverhampton she passed me in the street and said hello. She seemed happy and normal now. I wondered whether she remembered me as the one who didn't hate her as much as the rest.

On mushrooms I plunged my hand into a bowl of water in the sink and was surprised to find it wasn't wet. Probably because I could form no conception of what wet meant.

On mushrooms I felt a nuclear bomb had just destroyed London but we'd been transferred to a simulacrum world. I didn't know whether I was alive or dead, and the best I could come up with by way of finding out was to go out into the street and ask somebody, which I didn't do.

On mushrooms I plonked my thumb into a ripe tomato, a spray of gelatinous seeds spurted out onto the tabletop and sat like two dozen tiny eyes looking at me, blinking, alive where they fell as if the natural eyes of the table, normally asleep, awoke.

At school there was a small kid called Nicky Rogers. He had a gang of bullies I was always curious how he managed to be in charge of. He had an interesting kind of power over the five or six others he always walked around with like henchmen. Except on one occasion I was walking down the road on a Saturday and he was walking, on his own, on the other side. He saw me and called over some abuse and I immediately crossed over the street and grabbed him by his shirt collar and said, 'You haven't got your gang with you today and there'll be other times when you haven't got your gang with you, so remember this moment.' He looked genuinely shaken. I let him alone and walked on. After that, whenever I saw him with his gang, there was an understanding between us.

I was never much aware of 'being in a family', save for two events on the TV, the moon landing and the first film of Komodo dragons in the jungle, and we gathered round in excitement. Probably everyone who was a kid at the time of the moon landing remembers that but I don't know whether many remember the Komodo dragons in the same way, but to me the two are linked as events of magnitude solely on the atmosphere of dad and gramp and me, and mum standing by the door, when these things were shown on the TV, an air of

wonder in the room, and with the moon landing it was something everyone in the world was watching, and when the *Express & Star* came through the letterbox at 5 o'clock they had a special full-colour pull-out that I saved for years and years until one day I thought what am I saving this old dog-eared souvenir for and threw it away and dropped wet teabags on it, only a little part of me dying inside, though bigger if I cared to look in its direction. Slowly slowly I bade farewell to my childhood in such little acts of vandalism, seduced by a sense of overwhelming meaninglessness that only a pang of sentimentality could rescue, for moments at a time.

Back when I was experimenting with Goetic demons I allowed one to possess me to show me a new form of magick by making use of my hands that I later called 'juxtapositional magick'. It cut out a picture of a man from a magazine that was lying around and drew a beard and moustache on it until it resembled Gerald Suster, an occultist throwing his weight around on the occult scene at the time. He wrote books on Crowley, Nazis, and boxing, and terrible novels. As a teenager he used to box with the Krays. The demon, with me watching, stuck the picture to a piece of corrugated card and slid unlit matches into the furrows. I took it as an example of making use of things around you. Then using my hands

it wrote some indecipherable writing on the card with ink and told me it was a spontaneous human combustion spell against Gerald Suster. I hadn't asked for such an example. I don't think I took it literally. Then it placed it in an envelope and addressed it to Mouse. When I grew concerned that I hadn't drawn a circle for protection, as I never did, as a sign of power, that I didn't need one as I had my own power of protection without external apparatus, the demon graciously pointed out that I was standing in a circle created by the coiled electric flex of the two-bar fire, which was on, as if to underscore that I had a certain luck. Yet I couldn't help thinking it was fire related too. I posted the envelope to Mouse in the morning without thinking about it. I just wanted to show her, rather than make her part of it. A few days later I was talking on the phone to Geraldine Beskin, proprietor of the Atlantis Bookshop, and mentioned how I got possessed by a demon and it did this spontaneous human combustion spell against Gerald Suster. She went quiet for a moment, then said: 'Haven't you heard?' 'Heard what?' She told me that Gerald had just returned from Cyprus. On his first night there in his hotel room he leant too close to the electric fire and singed the arm of his jacket. Next day he went to see a friend of his and found him burnt to a crisp in his apartment. Then Gerald was arrested for his murder

on account of the singed jacket. But he was released and he'd just got back. Next day I went round to see Mouse and Matthew at their place in New Cross Gate. Mouse had been annoyed at me for involving her. We sat on the rug in her third-floor room of the house and I told them the story Geraldine had told me. 'Bloody hell,' said Mouse. The doorbell rang. Mouse went down to answer it. She came back into the room followed by Gerald Suster, who sometimes came round to Mouse's. He sat on the floor with us and told the same story I'd just told Mouse and Matthew. We were exchanging glances as this strange happenstance unfolded. A week later I got a postcard from John Balance of Coil from Thailand saying: 'I hear you burnt the Beast's bumhairs! Congrats!' I put it on the mantelpiece above the portrait of Astaroth. This event was relayed among a few people in the occult scene and doubtless sealed my reputation.

I carved my initials in a wooden post on the shore of Loch Treig.

I preferred to go away, than stay.

It was always something deeper in me that drove me. It hardly mattered what it was, yet of course it did, I just knew it was for the best if it was kept secret from

me. At heart I just wanted a simple life of few ties. So I became hidden and what others sought but rarely found. I had answers, they had questions. I became invisible in their very midst. I didn't care if I was forgotten about, but even my disappearance became famous.

I buried a burgundy robe in Epping Forest one night to put my interest in magick to rest. It was like burying a body.

When Rikki had a second-hand car we drove to Epping Forest in the middle of the night to have sex in the snow. It was very beautiful watching the snowflakes falling. It was too cold for sex.

Nick the barrister who worked on the tip got a load of old *Playboy* and *Penthouse* out at the British Library. He said he was researching the time before pubic hair was shaved off. He had to sit at the table right next to where the librarian sits in the North Library, known to everyone as 'the porn table'. Nick was shameless, holding centrefolds up in the air in his pinstripe suit, everyone looking up from their research under the wonderful glowing green library lamps as Nick let out the odd murmur of admiration.

Once me and Stephen met Nick at the Admiral Duncan before it was a gay pub and nail-bombed. Nick, who wasn't an occultist, started talking knowledgeably about the occult. We found out later that he'd just read *Bluff your way in The Occult*. Nick said: 'I'm finding it very difficult to get virgins these days.' Nick is very straight-faced when he puts his mind to it. We play along with the occult scenario. The guy on the next table was earwiggling our conversation. We eventually left the pub but once we'd got outside Nick remembered he'd left his silver-topped broly inside so goes back in to retrieve it. He finds the guy at the next table just staring at it in a trance. Nick swoops in and says with his eyes glowing: 'You like my magic umbrella?' and the guy is somewhat freaked out as Nick snatches it up and walks away.

As a kid I practised levitating a pencil for ages. I held it horizontal in the air with the point sticking into the left forefinger and the end held with my right. Then I would take the fingers away. Sometimes it seemed to stay there a moment. I also tried to push my hand through the wall in bed. Sometimes I woke up having just done it.

The first time I came across the occult in London was at university in the Union Bar. A guy called Charlie, who I knew a little and who always struck me as a strong chap, pretty together, recounted a story to me and Gareth about getting ‘mixed up with a Crowley cult’. As he told the story he was visibly shaking. He had encountered some sort of demonic force that had broken him. There was terror in his eyes. He advised us not to pursue the occult. It had a deep impact on me. But my reaction was not perhaps what would have been the reaction of others, to stay away from this. On the contrary, I found myself thinking I must look into this, I must experiment with this, I must find out what this is all about. I didn’t realise it then, as I didn’t consider myself especially brave, but I had a fearlessness towards occult exploration that was deeply embedded. I was not going to be a dabbler like Charlie who would come away with burnt fingers, a shattered man whose inner strength had abandoned him, rather I would burn my fingers and plunge in deeper still. Essentially I already was a magician, but didn’t yet know it, I didn’t need to become a magician. I just needed experimentation with these forces to awaken something already in me. And doubtless Charlie’s mistake was getting involved with the ‘Crowley cult’ as a beginner. My anarchic antipathy to hierarchy would keep me away from that.

There was an overgrown wasteland behind my parent's house, with holes and hills and long grass and bushes and weeds. I used to send the cat there to hide then I would come over the fence and try to find him. The cat seemed to understand perfectly what the game was and would creep up on me in the long grass. Suddenly his paws would grab my leg. The winner.

I made a hut in the yard out of old carpets, polythene, and wood, so the cat had somewhere to sleep if he came back in a storm and everyone was in bed. We didn't have a cat flap. But the hut was big enough for me so I ended up staying inside it when it was raining, with the cat.

I remember kids who had burn scar tissue that everyone said was because they'd fallen in the frogspawn. I was very careful of it when collecting tadpoles.

Certain things connect childhood and adulthood. Furry caterpillars, for instance. Sweet peas firing off their seeds. Dragonflies. Watching the rain. The tune of the ice-cream van.

I wanted to be a demonologist after watching *Night of the Demon* on the TV as a teenager. I'm sure I didn't think though that you could actually be one.

When I still attended college reunions others would tell me what they were doing now, journalists, advertising agency executives, various corporate positions. They'd ask me and I never used to know what to say. If I said 'I write' they'd ask me what and it wasn't a conversation I wanted to have. Eventually I just said I was a diabolist. When they said 'Really?' I'd say 'Oh yes'.

Some other flowers have come out for the bees. A sunny day is not complete without bees. And the sound of a good breeze through the trees.

I had Patrick Magee as a neighbour in Hammersmith, his garden backed onto mine. When he was out digging with a fork he would look around as if he were burying a corpse. The most he said to me in his distinctive voice was: 'What business is it of yours?' I hadn't said anything to him, he read my mind. Maybe he didn't say it, that was what his look said.

When I see all the people who have died I think what did it matter that they lived. But I think the universe has a grander plan than that.

I thought I might become a perfume chemist if I didn't become a forensic chemist, but then I ditched that idea

because of testing on animals. Then I thought I might research silver salts for burn ointments. Then I just dropped out and became a freelance journalist phoning in stories to copytakers on the newsdesk from a phone box. Then I dropped out completely and explored underground society, drugs, and other dimensions. I thought one day I might sell a few paintings or a book, and I did to some extent.

I always thought the mercury channel in the lab was very clever. It ran all round the edge of the lab on a slight slope to an exit point. If anyone spilt any mercury it would roll to the mercury channel and around to the exit. Someone had designed the tilts of the floor so that would work and pools of mercury wouldn't gather anywhere but there. Not that anyone spilt mercury much. Except deliberately, to see whether it went to the mercury channel.

If I pulled a face mum would say: 'If the wind changes you'll stick like that.'

When I asked mum how old she was she'd always say as a way of not saying: 'As old as my tongue and a bit older than me teeth.'

Gramp would say to mum: 'If I doe see yow in the candle I'll see yow in the wick.' (See you in the week.)

Nan once said to a little girl dancing: 'Yam like a fairy on a gob o' lard.'

I heard a teacher say of a thlicko in my class: 'He couldn't write "bum" on a wall.'

One Black Country or family saying was: 'We all know what happened to Moira when the shithouse fell down.' I never did discover who Moira was.

I loved the language I heard as a child, so full of idioms. If mum's dad wanted to imply a distant relationship he'd say: 'Our cat ran through their coalyard.' If he saw a bow-legged woman: 'Er cor stop a pig in an alley.' If anyone was wondering about something with useless worry, he'd say: 'Wonder? You'd wonder till the crows nest up yer arse, then wonder where the sticks come from.'

Whenever I asked mum how long she'd be she'd say: 'Six coaches and an engine.'

Gramp would never say shut the door it was always 'Put wood in ole'. If he had a roaring fire going he'd say: 'Tek yer coat off or yow woe feel the benefit.'

The first school I went to I was the only white kid. When I went to a mostly white school I knew how the black kids felt.

I like the thick dark clouds, waiting for it to rain, yet it probably won't.

I like not being able to remember anything, as if there has never been anything.

I remember the photograph that everyone has seen of a spontaneous human combustion, the old lady's unburnt lower leg, charred at the knee, the Zimmer frame fallen over, and the ashes, with only a small burn hole in the rug. I think it was in a book of the strange I got out the library as a kid. Everyone seems to have seen it that I have spoken to. I used to wonder whether it could happen in the bath.

I like forgetting everything I've done and starting again. It's one way to add to what has gone before. As if there is for ever nothing.

The strong gusts are blowing brown leaves from the trees, dancing and tumbling in the air before they land.

Often it seems there isn't any memory there, but what can one say about that?

Why should things come to mind? Apart from what is immediately present, gulls calling in the distance.

Sometimes I look at the fallen brown leaves and think each is positioned perfectly, but I can't say what makes it perfect.

The world where I did things seems a different place.

I remember feeling secretly dangerous at school. Bullies better watch out.

I always used to think life is just around the next corner. Now this is it. I think I was expecting something else. But I always wanted to care less, to be satisfied with what it was when it was it, not something else you had to wait for. Technically, I decided becoming was a plague. That's why nothing happens any more, there's no investment to 'make things happen'. What happens is birds singing, the sound of the wind in the sycamore,

dark clouds rolling on, the sun coming back. I suppose at some point I said to myself I'll concentrate on those. And then, after years, that's all there is. Apart from, as I said, hallucinations and dreams. Even daydreams feel prompted to encourage a creative flow and are soon dispensed with. Memories retain a mystery and seem to define someone, but even memories don't have anyone in them, just paintings of fleeting scenes, a person as much a part of the scene, for scale or completeness, not someone who exists now, or then but then one may have given the idea more credence.

At some point I felt I've learnt enough about being human and went back to something I'd glimpsed in many trips and experiences of *satori*, but it wasn't as if I'd done anything, more noticed it in retrospect. Now I just watch the crows with fellow feeling. There is a reticence to call it any kind of achievement, because it's nothing.

When Princess Diana and Dodi died I went to the sites of national mourning, the road up from Buckingham Palace, outside Harrods, and Kensington Palace where the young princes met the crowd. It was more affecting than I expected, something extraordinary was going on. While watching the crowd interact with the princes at

Kensington Palace I looked up and saw a flashing light up high. It looked like a UFO. I couldn't think what it could possibly be. I looked around and saw some way off a man holding something under his coat. I walked over and realised he was holding the end of a kite, the kite up high was silver and revolving catching the sunlight. I congratulated him on his realistic UFO. He told me he sometimes flew it at night and shone a powerful torch on it.

I used to be into photography. I went out taking street photographs on Charles and Diana's wedding day. The best photo I got was a copy of the newspaper with them both on the front cover already in a bin.

Prince Charles paid my rent in Hounslow. I was on housing benefit but the council was experimenting with how long they could withhold people's housing benefit before the crime rate went up. It was getting desperate, they hadn't paid it for four months. I asked the *I Ching* what to do. It said to inform the prince. Normally I would just have taken that metaphorically, but this time I thought, well yeah, I could couldn't I. So I wrote to Prince Charles telling him about the situation in Hounslow with housing benefit and how it didn't just affect me. In just a few days I received a

letter from the prince's equerry giving every impression Charles had read my letter. Within a day a huge black car pulled up outside and two people from the council came to the door and presented me with a cheque for my back rent. They were very deferential. So yes, Prince Charles paid my rent in Hounslow. That was where I wrote *The Exorcist of Revolution*, just before moving to Hornsey opposite the Garden of Memoriam, where I evoked the demon Astaroth.

When I was working freelance as a journalist Doug from *The Daily Mirror* took me one day to this private club for newspaper people, or was it just blokes? I forget. We sat drinking when a fight broke out between two gents in suits. Proper fist-fight. Doug said: 'The police won't be called.' They were from rival newspapers. Some gathered round to watch the fight, others just carried on drinking as if it were nothing. Doug said: 'This doesn't happen all the time.' I was glad it had, it was a side of London I hadn't seen before. Everyone in the club was from national newspapers. I didn't realise it was this heated below the surface.

When I got off the plane in Quito you had to walk across the runway. The tarmac was melting and stuck to my shoes. I didn't get altitude sickness but it was

tough walking up the steep streets. I realised I was somewhere else when I saw a man carrying a small shed on his back up the street with five live roosters tied by their feet to his waist.

A few people were waiting at a bus-stop in Quito with three coffins leaned against the wall. I saw an undertaker displaying tiny child coffins outside the shop like a greengrocer displays apples and pears.

I wanted to be an investigative journalist, but the desire didn't last more than a couple of years after taking acid for the first time at Stonehenge Festival 1982. I realised I had a different path to follow and gave up work after taking hallucinogens almost every weekend for a year. On February 11, 1984, I was abducted by aliens for the first time on *Psilocybe cubensis* that I grew myself. The second time was on the summer solstice at Stonehenge Festival 1984 on three tabs of White Lightning acid. I finally saw my path. I was twenty-five. My life became dominated by an extraterrestrial agenda and the occult became the means.

I sometimes think I haven't done enough. Then I think how can I do less?

When Thatcher went the station announcer on the Tube told everyone on the platform and a spontaneous cheer went up. A few people danced a jig. The next train came in and everyone on board saw all the commotion and asked what's happened and we said 'Thatcher's gone' and another cheer went up.

Memories seem like dregs.

It's shocking how few memories I have, while seeming to have many. Perhaps it is the extent to which so much isn't worth remembering. I've always been anti-memory, drawing them to the surface as a prerequisite to getting rid of them, abandoning them to words. The words can keep them, I don't want them. A preparation, perhaps, for having nothing I want to keep at death. Or what passes for death.

I want to have the experience of death, but when I wake up from sleep and become aware I just wasn't there, I think well if I died during that what would I know of anything. Yet I hardly believe in death, it's a word for those I indulge the illusion will be left behind, but what world is that to me? I can hardly think it will exist. Yet the nothingness all about is not nihilism. So saying, a jay lands on a fence post. Haven't seen a jay for ages.

Sometimes, when a gull flies low overhead and calls down, I get the distinct impression it is talking to me. I always look at them and they always look at me.

A gull was flying low in a straight line right for me from the other side of the reservoir. I thought he is surely going to go up higher when he gets a bit closer. The gull kept on coming directly for me not getting any higher. It's a test of wits, a game of dare. At the last moment I ducked. The gull cackled in amusement as he glided over the top of my head. I don't think he meant me any harm, he just wanted to communicate.

Sometimes a crow will come running and hopping up to me, then think better of it and fly a little wheeling away.

I was in a café-bar somewhere in South America when suddenly the owner pulled down the shutters and told us to stay inside, there'd been a coup. A quite enjoyable lock-in.

I was advised by the stationmaster to take the train for the short journey across the border from Chile to Peru. He was insistent with a big smile on his face. I asked why, he said he wasn't going to say, just take it, you'll find it interesting. So I did. No sooner than the train

had set off into the desert all the Indigenous women started removing toys from their garments, dolls mostly. Then I saw men on horseback riding to catch up with the train and the women started throwing the toys out of the windows. The men on horseback gathered them up and rode off. When the train pulled in I passed the stationmaster's office there, the door was open, an Indigenous woman was being searched by a policeman. A doll was pulled from her clothing and tossed onto a pile of toys in the corner. Well the stationmaster at the other end of the line was certainly right there, that was an interesting journey. I was never quite sure whether they were smuggling drugs or toys.

I still enjoy the sound of many gulls over the reservoirs at twilight.

In a village in the Andes near Christmas that had no electricity I saw a hut with Christmas lights on. In the middle of nowhere.

Early one Sunday morning I was walking down an empty back street in Lima when suddenly men started appearing from every side street. They were all going somewhere and so I followed them. They were going to a cock fight, which I sat and watched with them. A

lot of betting, and razor spurs attached to the feet of the cockerels. I can't forget the razor spurs.

I'd never seen a bullfight, so I went to one in Lima. Grubby and bloody, even more than I expected.

What of all the things not remembered? Days like now staring into space, listening to the breeze rustling leaves. How many days like that? Days sitting by the lapping water at the reservoirs. You remember anomalies, the mother duck with her five ducklings trying to protect them by sailing close to the walls of structures emerging from the water, under bridges. I never realised the gulls would take ducklings until I saw a gull lift a duckling out of the water in its beak. But it dropped it back into the water and the duckling rushed over to its mother as if nothing had happened.

I saw two magpies working together. One distracted a moorhen off her nest while the other stole an egg.

I was woken by the sound of many crows. I looked through the curtains at the sycamore, it was full of crows, fifty or sixty. Usually only two in the tree. A crow moved and the sun blinded me, they were blocking out the sun, eclipsing it. I wondered whether the pair

of crows who nested in the tree were being visited by all their offspring from over the years. Gradually they all flew away in pairs, one pair at a time, until only what I assumed was the original pair was left. It made me think of black-suited mourners leaving a funeral. It seemed like an omen, but of what? Next morning I was woken by my alarm radio. Straight into news of the Dunblane massacre.

I free bees if I see one get entangled in a spider's web. You have to be quick, the spider can rush in and bind them up in no time. I move spiders if they spin a web on the lavender that proves a nuisance to the bees.

I say the *nembutsu* to the tune of the ice-cream van when it comes in the day.

On days of no great difference every crow's caw is something special, every wild flower something perfect.

I no longer seek for anything to happen. There is the self-made task to write, but I'd like to think I could write about crows cawing and fallen brown leaves for ever, to capture, somehow, the sense of a life so much less. Variety is gulls calling as a change from the crows. I am not much interested in missiles arriving in the

imagination of worse times, of a time so sooty and dark the crows and gulls themselves will be distant memories of peaceful days hard to imagine now.

I was wearing a suit, I'd just been to a job interview. I was sitting on an empty Tube platform reading when some street person decided to hassle me. 'What you reading?' he said. I showed him the cover. *The Naked Lunch*. His attitude towards me changed completely. We exchanged some words about William S Burroughs and he went away. Respect matters, cuts through clutter.

A mad-looking geezer was staring at me on the Tube as if I had horns and he could see them. It's interesting how a mad person latches onto you and their gaze can't shift. As the train came into the station he got up from his seat and advanced towards me threateningly. Still seated I raised my hand in a magical gesture to halt him and said: 'This is your stop.' He looked around confused for a moment then rushed off the train. As the doors closed and the train began to move off I could see him puzzling why he'd got off. The other people in the carriage smiled, I smiled back. They'd seen a little magick in operation but doubtless couldn't encompass it fully.

I was in a curry house at the end of the night with a friend. A guy from the street came in and started hassling my friend for money. He made the mistake of giving him some so of course the guy wanted more, he was being a total nuisance and my friend didn't seem to know how to handle the situation, trying to engage him. I just observed for a while then bellowed extremely loudly at the guy: 'GO!' He was off like a shot through the door to the street. I've noticed that sometimes I appear to be able to access a hidden command and control structure in humans.

A bloke left an item of his shopping at the checkout and was rushing off. The till girl tried to call him back but he wasn't hearing. I shouted very loudly: 'HEY!' Half of Sainsbury's turned round in shock. Some old women were clutching their hearts. My shout hit the guy like a brick chucked at him and he turned round. I pointed to his left item. I said to the till girl: 'Sometimes you just have to shout a bit louder.'

A gang of Hell's Angels was blocking the shortcut to the pub. Invisibility can come in handy in such a situation. There is a way of walking so that no-one notices you. Sometimes it's good to have a chance to test out a skill you know you have. And I saved myself five minutes.

A policeman stopped me and took out his notebook to take down my details. So I took out my notebook to take down his details. It seemed to freak him out and he decided against and let me go on my way.

I never realised how loud I could shout until I was in an isolated part of the Cairngorms and stood on a boulder in the middle of a beck and shouted out the *nembutsu* for half an hour. Oh, so it can be even louder than that, gradually raising the volume until it seemed I was in tune with the mountains, the waving grasses, the running water, and there was nothing that was not the *nembutsu*.

I saw a fogbow in a small valley in the Cairngorms. A heavenly archway loomed white in the mist. I didn't know what it was, I'd never heard of such a thing then. It seemed close, as if I was going to walk under it.

I like the sound of an unseen bee passing by the ear.

Even though I took DMT years ago, I have never been able to shake the sense that a blue sky with clouds is a theatrical backdrop. Not that I want to shake it, just more amazed it persists. The night sky with moon and stars is more realistic, though of what I cannot

say, save an illusion of great distance. But then what would an actual great distance look like? Like that. So it is clever in its way. I fully remember how the world reconstructed itself in front of my eyes on return from a DMT wonderland. First horizontals and verticals, having no idea what was forming, no recollection of Earth. Then a place I recognised from 'before', though the concept of 'before' had no meaning at first. Then one accesses a kind of familiarity program that tells you who you are and what this world is, as if this is where you came from 'before'. But the theatrical backdrop of the blue sky and clouds, sitting there looking at it, stayed like a little gift.

People say that because DMT only lasts ten minutes you can't get into too much trouble, but I point out that in the ten minutes you could have an experience that seems to last ten thousand years. You could live a whole other life, including going to work every day, as some have reported. Thankfully I never had that. The most horrific, perhaps, was viewing the eternal wheel of reincarnation, like a giant mechanism. I thought at first I had died and I was heading back into it to be born again, but then it seemed I was an angelic being watching over it. It seemed I had skills of getting out of tight spots of illusion and back to nirvana. But it impressed

upon me the dire need to solve the great matter of life and death. It is easy to say that something is an illusion, not so easy to negotiate it when it seems one is drawn into it. Look at the world. This is why I prefer to have little to do with it these days. The stripped-down phenomena I indulge, watching birds and butterflies, growing tomatoes, gazing at the blue skies like the wall of the bubble, seems enough to root an investigation into the nature of things. And I always remember the Buddhist saying that this world is a morning dewdrop, soon evaporated, or one night's lodging. I no longer tell people, most seem dead-set on another course, though I can hardly write about anything else. It is all I have pursued, even when I thought I was pursuing something else. It was just waiting to break out.

Long after I had left the occult behind, at least the occult scene, I was coming back late and had just got on the second escalator down at Holborn Tube when something darted out of the shadows on the landing, a figure of a man, I turned my head and saw it was Gerald Suster who got on the escalator behind me. There was absolutely no-one else around, place was empty but for us two. It was one of those occult encounters. Gerald looked extremely wary of me and quite frightened I think, but I just smiled and extended my hand to

shake. I could see he was in two minds but then he decided to trust it and shook my hand. 'Nice to see you Gerald.' He looked terrible, in an alcoholic stupor but also something malevolent was about him, like some other being cloaking him. We chatted on the escalator down. I seemed to be able to reassure him that I bore him no ill will, that our previous history was 'just a thing of the time', and the best side of him came out, in which he could genuinely recognise that I meant it, that he had nothing to fear from me, for all of the darkness between us in the past. We parted, me to go north, him south. A week later I was passing the Atlantis Bookshop in Museum Street and saw a display in the window with a framed photograph of Gerald, black votive candles on either side, and the date of his birth and death. He'd just died. It seemed ever more an occult encounter on the escalator at Holborn, as if we needed to make our peace.

Once when I went to check out a few occult sources in the British Library there was a stunningly beautiful girl in front of me in the queue for the book hatch in the Round Reading Room. She got out a tall pile of books all on the Devil. I quickly scanned the titles to make sure she didn't have anything I needed. I sometimes used to wonder whether I got into the occult because the Devil

has all the best birds. Trouble is, they're usually batshit bonkers. And the blokes too, come to that. It takes a bit more to maintain equilibrium in the abyss. In the end, you'd be wise to make your way away from the occult. Few have anything to teach you, they are placeholders of a spectacle. But if you come from another world, you can use them as camouflage.

The Round Reading Room, now a museum exhibit and no longer a working library, has amazing acoustics. If someone sneezed it reverberated all around. One day I heard a massively loud shout: 'YES!' Someone had had a breakthrough in their research. People in the rows smiled to each other.

I once saw a documentary about the British Library. They showed a piece of old film where a uniformed attendant of the Round Reading Room remembered Karl Marx personally. He said: 'Oh yes, Mr Marx, he was a very nice chap. He used to come in every day and sat here. Then one day he didn't come in any more. I don't know what happened to him.' I got the distinct impression he otherwise didn't know who Karl Marx was, just a nice man who came to the library and said hello to him. Wonderful.

When I evoked Astaroth, for some days afterwards there was a strange atmosphere in my flat. I'd come in after walking through the rubble and blown-over trees smashed into cars, energised but also weary. I would sit on the sofa with my feet resting on a stool and momentarily nod off. The moment my eyes closed I found myself lying balanced on a tightrope spanning an abyss of fire. I opened my eyes, it was the room again. I closed them, the abyss of fire. My only defence was to stay absolutely still.

The object of this writing is to get down everything I can remember. Often these things pass through my mind so quickly that if I don't think to write it down as it occurs a moment later it is gone and I can't recall it.

After Alexander Litvinenko was poisoned with radioactive polonium-210 by the FSB I was walking down Piccadilly and noticed a sign on the door of a closed restaurant: 'Due to a recent espionage incident, we will be closed for the foreseeable future.'

I remember the Georgi Markov assassination with the ricin pellet delivered by an umbrella. It was the start of my second year in London. London was an exciting place. Punk, and now this.

The days are drawing in. The green tomatoes aren't ripening as quickly, many won't. It's raining most of the time. But I like the change of the seasons.

Me and Louise had a party. Fiona's bloke the Hell's Angel rode his bike right up to the front door, revving like mad like he was going to come in on it. He was a scary looking geezer but he steadfastly refused to take my voodoo doll when I took it off the mantelpiece and made to hand it to him when he was sitting on the floor. Seemed I'd also said who I was. He didn't say a lot but after he came back from the bog he said: 'All I can think of is a large green egg.' We all just looked at each other and assumed he was stoned. Later, I went to the bog myself and noticed that the shadow of the open toilet seat against the lid looked like a large green egg on the green bathroom suite. I came back into the living room and pointed at him: 'Large green egg,' I said. 'Large green egg,' he said. Mike chipped in: 'Now I really must go to the toilet.'

The wind rustling the leaves of the tree is more 'me'. After I'm 'gone', you'll still be able to hear me in the trees.

I used to have a lot of books. I got rid of most of them as I moved too often. By the time I didn't have many books any more, I didn't need to move any longer. I just kept the ones I'd read again and were important to me in some way. Surprisingly so few. Three shelves of a small bookcase. And yet maybe more than some people have even read.

Maybe I read too much, but what else is there to do?

I remember before the internet. I get it back by not switching on the computer. I don't have a phone. The internet seems to make it easy for hostiles to condition people. We only had newspapers and television to go away from. Only books are on our side, and the internet ensures they are hardly read any more.

Momentary enthusiasms combined almost seem like drive. It's good enough.

I wonder why I do what I do, when doing nothing is always preferable. It must be that what I do is a thinly disguised doing nothing.

I saved the tall tomato plants blown over by the gale-force wind, even though they were near the end of their

lives. I strengthened them with extra canes and wire. I have made myself their keeper, it is what I should do.

I watch the effect of sunlight through the tree waving its leaves around in the gale, the light comes through the window and onto the wall in a rectangle containing numerous overlapping circles of different brightnesses in continuous movement. What is most curious is that the circles are roughly all the same size. It is a really quite beautiful effect. Who needs television? This is there at the same time every afternoon when the sun is out and the tree has leaves and I am there to see it, yet is as transient as a rainbow, as a passing cloud proves.

Are the things happening now, which hardly seem 'memorable', what I will remember of the world when now is a smoking ruin and nuclear winter is the only season I know?

I used to have fantasies of heading up north out of London after it is destroyed, to join the fires of good people I met at some of the smaller pagan festivals. And then on to the extraterrestrial landing point known only to the few. But then I think my destiny is here. How can the extraterrestrials allow London to be destroyed while I remain here? After all the trouble of getting me

precisely where I am. Oh, that is not part of the fantasy.
Save in other moods.

One can overestimate one's importance, yet destiny is for ever teaching one to estimate it even more. For this, destiny must come through. What surprises me is how often it does. Or perhaps I am looking through a telescope at small signs. Day to day, 'I don't know' is a reliable philosophy. And a blank mind a gift.

Blue tits on the milk-bottle tops, a robin on a spade handle. A reservoir of images persuasive of having lived. A chair in my line of sight that has remained that chair for as long as I have known it. What stubborn patterns form a world. We are grateful for them remaining the same, yet the same as what? Itself in fickle memory. No wonder it can stay the same when it only has to be there now. Is it straining to collapse? A bomb would do that. A heavy hammer knocking it apart. Instead, it lives peacefully, undisturbed in one corner of the room, the room itself taken for granted, holding back its mystery in perceived ordinariness extending over time without strain.

Blowing a gale outside. Is it dusk coming or storm clouds on the dwindling light?

Somebody has put a large mirror on a tree in the street with this written on it: 'Are you never accountable? Be kind to all kinds.' They've screwed it into the tree. Obviously they don't give a fuck about trees.

I'm sick and tired of everything to do with the world except the wind and the rain.

I'm still using the Parker mechanical pencil I found outside the Onslow Court Hotel in South Ken in 1977. This was the hotel the acid-bath murderer, John George Haigh, got his victims from. I still remember what he said when asked in court how he knew how much acid to use: 'It's a matter of experience.'

In Santiago I asked about San Félix Island at the Military Geographical Institute after purchasing a wonderful extremely long concertina map of Chile. The man on the counter asked me to wait. He came back with a man in military uniform who asked me to come with him to a room in the back of the Institute. He sat down at his desk and invited me to sit. As I was doing so he took his pistol from its holster and placed it on the desk, saying it was digging into his side. He asked me why I was so interested in San Félix Island. I could hardly tell him the real reason so I said I'd just noticed it on

the map and was curious. I opened up the map, which was longer than his desk, and pointed to it. His English wasn't very good and neither was my Spanish but after trying to explain – 'How you say . . . ? Strategic military importance. Can't go there.' – he said something about Manchester United and John Lennon. I smiled and said: 'Ah Manchester United. John Lennon. Yes.' As I was leaving I heard him say in Spanish to the people on the counter that I was English. They laughed.

All the consternation about what is happening goes away when you just realise Britain is a corrupt country. Some part of us likes to hold onto the idea there is something noble and honest still. No, it's just a corrupt country and what's to be expected. I gave it the benefit of the doubt for far too long. Even its history is of murderous thugs who called themselves royal. The illusion of nobility is about ready for the dustbin. Perhaps the survivors will do better, though they could just as easily be racist marauders.

A dragonfly in the garden. Simple nature never occasions any despair. It took a long while to realise I was in favour of human extinction. Not that I identify as belonging to that disastrous evolution. Someone sent to take notes on it, that's all.

I always think, when I die, it'll be months before my corpse is discovered. The maggots will be wriggling under the door.

A warm sunny day, after you'd thought they were over for another year, is appreciated more than the heatwaves of summer.

The better circumstances of others are always something to transcend.

I can go weeks and weeks seeing only the back garden as representative of the world. Tiny though it is, it's far better than anything further afield. Even at the reservoirs it is patrolled by busybodies these days. I often think I'd like to live in the mountains, but now I'm just rolling down to death so that fantasy has less pull. And besides, my philosophy is that where you are is perfect, and sometimes bees come to make it less of an effort to believe. Not that it's a matter of belief, only quiet revelation. Tranquillity comes creeping up softly. And one wonders why one bothers with the noise of some other world that is nothing more than a spectacle.

I do not travel any more, save to other dimensions.

Life in the mountains can be harsh. If it's freedom you're looking for, find it in the wind, the rain, insects, flowers, birds.

Calm the anxious sea.

The older folk in Asunción, Paraguay, all looked like old Nazis from the war.

There was this guy in Asunción. The hotel keeper. I went to pay and entered his musty-smelling room. A slow electric ceiling fan was revolving. He sat reading the newspaper in an old four-poster bed with mosquito netting hanging down completely enclosing him. A scene of lassitude and faded values. His hand came out through the netting and I placed some dirty bills and coins in it. He didn't bother counting it or even looking at it. He hardly looked at me. His world seemed stifled, but it was his world and he didn't appear unduly bothered. Old furniture. Smell of furniture polish and stale cigarettes. And slowly the fan revolved as if a symbol of slow dawdling existence. There were no mosquitoes about but living under your mosquito net becomes a life, peering out at everything through a gauze. The humidity and closeness of the air. Later I was walking in the shanty-town by the festering river

and came across a woman in a fine gown playing a large harp in the mud at the centre of a group of shacks made out of old doors. No-one was standing listening to her but me, poised on one foot as if not intending to stay, just passing, just loitering. And she could play that harp. Such an incongruous sight. A scrawny dog carries an even scrawnier plucked chicken like a thief past her and disappears down a mud alleyway of old carpets and doors until the humidity breaks open and a sheet of water drops down from the bursting sky and I wander back onto the streets where exiled Europeans stand in doorways.

A bank I went to in Buenos Aires had a pillbox in the corner with a machine gun poking out of a slit trained on backs of the customers.

In Buenos Aires at night they danced tango in the street. This was just before the Falklands War. I'd moved on by the time it started.

I was in a large restaurant in Buenos Aires when a black man outside walked by the windows. Every head in the restaurant turned to look. I hadn't noticed until then that most people were white.

I had an uncle when I was a kid, Uncle Fred, who as a young man went off to the Argentine Pampas and became a gaucho. He came back 26 years later and married his childhood sweetheart. I haven't thought about him for years. He once burnt his arm setting fire to petrol he was pouring into his mower. I was impressed he just laughed it off as 'Nothing'.

The miles and miles and miles of Pampas viewed from the train is such a sight to behold. The Argentine couple on the seat opposite share their bombilla and gourd with me, sweet mate tea sucked through a silver straw. Such wonderful people, the Argentines. The empty Pampas for miles and miles a hypnotic lullaby.

I went up Helvellyn in the snow. I walked out to the edge to look down, when I suddenly realised there was no rock beneath this snow, it was a snow shelf clinging to the edge of the mountain. I very carefully backed away.

Once I was at a bar and had to squeeze by this big guy sitting on a stool blocking the way to the counter. He turns around and grabs me by my shirt collar and says: 'If you ever brush by me like that again I'll fucking kill

you!' I just looked at him calmly and said: 'Kill me now.' His eyes sunk away in their sockets like two pickled onions dissolving in concentrated sulphuric acid and his fist loosely fell away from my shirt collar. Bartender brought my drinks smiling and said: 'I thought you knew each other. I thought you were having a laugh.' As I was walking away I heard him say quietly to the guy on the stool: 'Don't you know who that is? Christ man, choose yer battles.' I couldn't help laughing. Every time I saw the guy in the bar after that he immediately lowered his eyes and stood aside like a simpering dog. That's why a reputation is useful. Not many even try.

In the pub one time surrounded by office girls on a Friday night, big guy into the 'What do you do?' line of discussion, now he's told me he's an accountant. He won't give it a rest, I told him I was a writer so he comes back: 'What do you write? Who are you?' This kind of conversation does not appeal to me. 'I don't give a flying fuck who I am, d'you think I'm going to sit here spouting over the side to someone I just met in a pub?' I said to him loudly. 'I just want to know who you are, you're denying your self, you're not being authentic.' I stared at him for a second, thinking I could let the conversation go that way, but spontaneity decided and I leant over and grabbed the feller by his expensive shirt

and dragged his face in close to me. I raised my voice: 'You wanna know who I fuckin am I'll tell you who I fuckin am I'm the guy who's holding your fuckin shirt right now asshole. Is that authentic enough for you? This is what I fuckin write, this is what I do. Is it clear enough for ya?' The girls were getting freaked, and I'd been such a pleasant guy up until then. Turns out the geezer dug where I was coming from and insisted on lighting my cigarette like Sidney Falco to JJ Hunsecker in *The Sweet Smell of Success* – 'Match me Sidney . . .' To write about life you have to include all of it, and drop the pretence of being a good person (not that anyone who's ever met me would think otherwise, unless they got on my wrong side). What's more important: how you're seen or what you are? This is what I am.

I recall as a child watching houseflies on their backs spinning round and round and round on the windowsill. Don't see that any more, probably because I don't have any windowsills.

Once up near Glencoe I followed a trail of brightly coloured toys scattered through a fir wood, intrigued by what they were doing there. The trail led me to the burnt-out shell of the gamekeeper's cottage, flamed by poachers I later learnt, sooty children's clothes still

hanging on the washing line, the scorched walls still warm. Somehow the juxtaposition had a sad beauty to it, so much was encapsulated in this discovery, a scene of happy daily play becoming one of hurried abandonment, perhaps even tragedy. The explanation for the toys left in the wood was far from what I expected, yet I had sensed that it meant something.

I camped in that fir wood. During the night I heard noises like an old man gobbing up phlegm, snoring and hissing. It was a little unnerving at first, then I realised it was a barn owl.

In the Highlands I got lost but it was fortuitous as I came across a wood full of massive anthills. Never seen anything like it again. I touched my finger to one and ants were onto my arm in seconds.

I watched *The Omen* on *Psilocybe cubensis* mushrooms. During the film the veins on the back of my right hand bulged up to say '666'. Then when the film finished I went over to the video recorder to take the cassette out and noticed that the counter was on '666'. I had to lie on the floor in crucifix posture for some while to dispel feeling very strange.

I was standing on an empty Tube platform waiting for the train when suddenly I heard the station announcer addressing me by name over the tannoy. It kept on for some time: 'Mr Bir-o-co, I can see you. Mr Bir-o-co, I can see you.' I ignored it, wondering whether it was incipient schizophrenia or there was someone I knew in the control room having a laugh. It never happened again.

Once I was carrying a black wooden locked box with a handle, a quite unusual item of luggage, and put it down between my feet to wait for the Tube. Another guy came and sat down beside me and put an identical black wooden locked box with a handle down between his feet. He was looking at my box as I was looking at his. I was wondering whether he had in his box what I had in mine, and I guess he was wondering the same. We both briefly began to turn our heads towards each other as if on the verge of a smile, but both backed away at the same time and let it go. I certainly didn't want to tell him what was in my box and I suppose he didn't want to tell me what was in his either. When the train rolled in I made for a different carriage and so did he, in the opposite direction. Such encounters are magnificent, destiny's little sign.

When I lived in St Anne's Road near Turnpike Lane, where I grew *Psilocybe cubensis* mushrooms and was first abducted by aliens in 1984, there was a continental grocer at the end of the street that sold live snails and melons by the juggernaut load. When I went out early the snails would be just beginning their escape along the walls out of the boxes. By the time I returned in the late afternoon a lot of them were quite a long way down the street. We used to put the rubbish bags in a small hut attached to the house. One day I decided I wanted to get a stroboscope to do some experiments with it while tripping, but I wasn't sure where to get one. Later in the day I went to shove a rubbish bag in the outhouse and noticed a box I hadn't recalled seeing before right at the back in the dark. I pulled it out. It was a stroboscope.

Trevor Leggett, who introduced judo to the UK and wrote books on Zen, once demonstrated a Zen shout in my presence. It was like there was a transmission to me. I immediately went off to a pretty isolated part of the Cairngorms to practice away from people. You just can't shout like that with lots of people around in London, it's a weapon. Obviously if you need a weapon you don't hesitate. A one-off zine I did after *KAOS* 13 was entitled *Kwatz!*, a Zen shout.

My path into the occult began with alien abduction. The second time, Stonehenge Festival 1984, on three tabs of 'White Lightning', me and Dale were walking on the outskirts of the festival site, the lights and hubbub and sparks of fires rising a little way off. Out here it was darker, less populated. We were approaching a dirt-track crossroads where a few people were milling around looking confused. As we approached I got the overwhelming sensation something was falling out of the sky and would hit the moment we reached the centre of the crossroads, but we couldn't turn away, we were drawn on like a moth to the flame. I had the sense it was a meteorite. By the time we got to the centre of the crossroads I could feel an invisible column of energy the width of a football, I could feel it between my outstretched hands. I said: 'There's a force here, I can feel it.' Those milling around before were galvanised by my belief and no doubt tripping as well and looked at my hands, now moving up and down to trace out the extent of the force. As my eyes were raising upwards the force column widened and suddenly flickered into bright light, a beam from a craft above now moving over me and drawing me upwards. A kaleidoscope of imagery beset me. One of the more startling moments was when I opened my eyes to find myself nailed to the cross, a thorn piercing my left temple. It was as if

the extraterrestrials were showing me a 'live' history of the planet Earth, but then it did not seem so much that I was rising up in the beam but being lowered down, as if I came from the craft. I recalled education in the craft concerning nuclear weapons and was shown visions of an Earth destroyed. I was told I could come away with them now, since with them was where I belonged, or I could choose to stay and do something about this, continue the mission I had been chosen for. It was the kind of choice, after seeing the destroyed Earth as something already happened to those of the future, that one cannot refuse, or at least I felt I had no real choice, it was just a formality to show me that at some other time I had chosen this. Then I heard Dale shouting: 'It's an illusion! It's an illusion!' And I fell to Earth in the dry dust of the crossroads. I stretched my hand back and took up a rock and squeezed it as if it were mud to the shape of the inside of my fist, saying: 'The jawbone of an ass.' (A reference to Samson.) Dale was still saying: 'It's an illusion.' I didn't know what he had seen of my behaviour in my time away to conclude this was a useful message for me to hear, the others were standing around looking extremely agitated in utter confusion. I said to Dale: 'Shut up now. This is serious.' I sat there in the dirt trying to encompass what had happened. Already it was fading behind the

amnesia seal, just leaving remnants from which to forge a conviction of an extraterrestrial agenda of which I was part, perhaps central. It connected to what had happened to me in the first abduction four months earlier in London, as if it was all the same event.

I told no-one about what had happened to me for a decade. Oh, I wanted to, but I would open my mouth to tell the story to a circle of friends gathered around a fire, or in the dying embers of a party, and no words would come out, as if a force was preventing it. But, soon after, I gravitated towards the occult scene feeling this was my place of camouflage. I think I had been told by the extraterrestrials to go there, to be myself there, to carry out my experiments there. Though I had no real idea how that would turn out, that I would soon begin *KAOS*, experimenting with forces I seemed to have some natural control over.

After ten years of telling no-one, I had got to the point of doubting these experiences with extraterrestrials were anything other than hallucinations. I didn't quite believe they were, but I had at least reached the point of considering the possibility. Then on September 27, 1996, at 2.40 AM, I was outside in my garden in Walthamstow viewing the total lunar eclipse. It was a fabulously clear

night, the moon was half eclipsed, when suddenly three orange balls of light in an equilateral-triangle formation swooped down from high up and hovered over my head at about twice the height of the sycamore. Each ball of light was relatively large, at that height each had the diameter of approximately the full moon. I could make out texture in the orange light, perhaps technological. It stayed there for a number of seconds, as if communicating with me, some side of me other than me that resided in me, a different me I would much later come into equilibrium with, at this time though of far greater power than the human could match and so it stayed cloaked. At first I thought the three orange balls of light were attached to the corners of a triangular craft, but when it took its leave floating off fast and silently in a straight line I noticed a slight perturbation between the balls of light as it made a sharp 45 degree angle and headed off in another silent straight line over towards Chingford. All I could think was: 'They're here.' Any doubts about what had happened to me in 1984 simply vanished. I came inside and did several paintings of what I had witnessed, including a triangular piece of card with the balls of light on a black background such that when held above the head at arm's length and mentally projected upwards to twice the height of the sycamore conveyed the size of what I had seen. They

were checking in on their compatriot, I could see it no other way. I hadn't taken any psychedelics at this time for about a decade.

I was on an autoferro in Ecuador, like a bus on rails, heading into the Andean mountains. As we began rising we stopped by a glass case on wooden legs containing a statuette of the Virgin Mary. Five or six wooden crosses by the edge of the mountain where people had died. We had a collection of small change to place in the glass box for the poor. This happened several times. A little later as we were cruising along on the edge of the mountain there was a loud crash and the autoferro came off the rails and nearly went over the edge. It was hanging over the edge. We stumbled out into the darkness. I saw fireflies for the first time in my life. I followed them up with my eyes and saw the southern hemisphere's great number of stars. An Aussie girl said she had been dreaming of the autoferro going over the edge when the crash had woken her. We could see now that the autoferro had crashed into the previous autoferro that had come off the rails that no-one had been able to tell anyone about yet. Don't know where the people went. I was talking to a Frenchman and said: 'So much for putting the money in the Catholic shrine.' He said: 'I was thinking just the opposite.' As soon as he said it I

thought, yeah he's right, that was a narrow miss. We eventually got the autoferro back on the tracks, with a lot of levering and manhandling, everyone working together, and were on our way.

From my attic-flat window in Church Lane, Hornsey, I had a good view as the light was slowly sucked out of London to blackness as the Great Storm took hold. When I walked to the kitchen it was at first as if that side of the house had been blown away so dark was it, then looking up I noticed a dim trickle of dull orange through the tungsten filament of the 60-watt bulb.

Sir Geoffrey Wilkinson was rumoured in the chemistry department to have been on the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. Years later I moored a narrowboat in Todmorden (the only place named after death twice) and was wandering around the back streets and came across a blue plaque on his childhood home.

There was a kid standing around watching as I was opening the lock gates on the canal in Todmorden. I asked him if he'd seen any UFOs in the area as it was known to be a flapzone. He said: 'No, but I once caught a pike right down there that didn't have any teeth. That's weird innit?'

Jed played psy-trance on his jaws harps all night round the fire at Pendle Witch Camp. As dawn broke Ade said: 'This must have been the only acoustic rave in the country.'

When Ade came to pick me and Tania up at the railway station he had written on the side of his white van: 'Painting, Decorating, Handyman, and Psychic Events.'

Ade wore bright yellow camouflage trousers. I said: 'Where's that going to be useful camouflage?' Quick as a flash he replied: 'In a lemon grove.'

There is a place in the Scottish Highlands called Luibeilt. When I was there in the early 90s there was a building in ruins and a few trees. There is a beck flowing by. I camped under the trees. It felt like being on an island of strange energy, like a small patch of 'the Zone' out of Tarkovsky's *Stalker*. It felt to me a place to return to 'in the aftermath'. I have a specific conviction of this, but I can't recall how it arose. Years later I heard on the radio some impressive ghost stories of this place from the time the building still stood. I never thought I'd hear the word 'Luibeilt' again. In 1973, February 3, two climbers came across the house and hoped to find shelter. It looked occupied, they could see dishes

in the sink through the kitchen window, but there was no-one there. They managed to get in through an unsecured window. They found a dining table set for Christmas dinner, crackers still to be pulled, but the place was as if suddenly abandoned. During the night intense poltergeist activity broke out, their ice axes flying across the room, noises upstairs, books turfed from the bookshelves towards the ceiling, shelf by shelf. On another visit two years later one of these climbers found messages painted on the wall, 'Do not sleep in this house', 'This house is haunted', and 'This house is evil'. Apparently on April 26, 1890, the man who lived there, a gamekeeper, hanged himself in a barn attached to the house. He was discovered by his wife. But I knew nothing of the place's history when I was there. Another visitor told a story of hearing footsteps on the floorboards upstairs. Eventually he investigated, only to find there were no floorboards upstairs, just the exposed joists. Listening to these tales, I felt a reconnection with the place from years ago, as if it were a sign, the place was calling to me. Nothing of the nature of these climbers' experiences had happened to me, perhaps because I camped under the protection of the trees, the house in any case a ruin. Perhaps I was recognised by the place and admitted, as it were. It is true to say that what happened to me at Luibeilt has stayed with me all

my life, yet I can hardly say what it was. It had none of the creepiness of these ghost stories. I stayed a few nights and didn't want to leave. I remember bidding it farewell aloud, like something I knew well. The only noticeably odd thing was that I awoke the first morning unable to move in my sleeping bag. I was a little confused at first, but it turned out it was frozen solid. The sun was out, it was the height of summer, it wasn't a cold night. But more than this was the peace I felt there. And the sense something had happened that had slipped out of my mind. Just left with a cross on the map as if this were a place of refuge in the future, somewhere to go if the worst happened.