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Passenger

(A Divinely Inspired Comedy in 13 Books)

By: Tygarjas Twyrles Bigstyck

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Commentary by the author:

You may take it as a metaphor, you may take it at face value. You may take it for its symbolism, or stagnating lack thereof. You may take it as fact, or you may take it as fiction. You may take it as a simple story, no more, no less, or you may spend your life analyzing it to death. You may take it as you like, or you may leave it if you dare. But, when all is said and done, it is only what it is, and you will see it as you are.

For all those in my life whom I have called “Teacher,”

For *She*, who returned to me *my* breath.

For my Father-Mother who art in Heaven, *and* one Earth,
Haloed be *Our* name.

Do you remember?
Hearts were too cold
Seasons had frozen us
Into our souls

People were saying
The whole world is burning
Ashes were scattered
Too hard to turn

Upside out
Or inside down
False alarm, the only game in town
No man's land, the only game in town
Terrible, the only game in town

Passenger
-Peter Monk

Believe it implicitly
Love is tranquility
If you don't know that
Then nothing is known

Lady Simplicity
-Robert Hunter

Speak muse of *One*
on a journey without end.
Knowing all of Life's joys,
***and*, knowing all of Life's sufferings.**
Knowing Heaven,
***and*, Knowing Hell.**
Knowing Death,
***and*, Knowing Life.**

Book 1

The Bus Arrives On Time or *All* Aboard!

He caught the last bus leaving after he had finished work at the data processing office. He walked up the stairs of the bus; the door of the bus shut quickly behind him with a definitive “CLACK!” and the wheels of the bus began to roll ‘round. The bus was empty save for the seats, the driver and himself. He heard a voice that sent a sudden chill down his spine, and the words formed by that voice, “Destination Hell, please take your seat!”

Looking up quickly to the driver’s face, Tim gasped in horror to see a sight he could not believe. Matching the voice he couldn’t believe he had heard was the face which was impossible for him to be seeing, that of his father. Gawking for a moment in disbelief, Tim hesitantly forced himself to speak, “A . . . Are you my father? I mean, you look just like . . . and . . . and you sound exactly— . . . But, you died . . . I mean . . . the casket . . . it was closed . . . and I couldn’t bring myself to . . . I mean, that’s not how I wanted to remember . . . But Mom, she saw and . . . the news . . . the bus *did* crash . . . and you . . . what . . . what is this? Who are you?”

A grim chuckle and a minor laugh arose from the driver’s lips. Full lips, amazingly smooth and attached to a face that looked about 50 years of age with a moderately long, full, snow-white beard. “Son,” the man began, “as I stated a very short while ago, you have just boarded a bus with Hell as its destination. Don’t fret, there’ll be a couple of stops along the way where you can stretch your legs, but you won’t be leaving this ride until we have reached the bus’s destination, the very heart of Hell. Now, if you would be so kind as to take a seat, I believe you will find that once you settle yourself into a comfortable sitting position, you will have a much smoother and more pleasant ride. Oh, and to answer your other question, your father was a good man who knew the light of the gate of Heaven and will reside in said realm for an indefinite period, and has hope of transcending even that place. But, I find I am weaving from the straightest path that answers your question,

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so, to put it into simple terms that you may begin to be able to grasp, let's just say that my form and voice are presented to you as they are to make your journey a bit more . . . palatable."

Tim wanted off, but in the short time he had mumbled his disbelief and the driver had responded, already the bus had passed the onramp and begun speeding north on Highway 101. Even if Tim could get away with opening or breaking a window or a door, a leap out of a bus at this speed would be suicide, and that's if there happened to be no cars to hit him when he hit the ground.

Tim took a seat as the driver had bid him do and sat quietly in a deep confusion for several minutes, trying to make sense out of his situation and reconcile the fact that this was no dream. And, assuming that this really was happening, what had he done to warrant . . . Hell? He didn't attend church every single week perhaps, but he tried to live up to his faith. He tried to do the right thing. Maybe he had had sex out of wedlock and liked to drink a beer every now and then, but he was neither a womanizer nor an alcoholic by any stretch of the imagination. He wasn't a thief. He tried to remain humble and true to his belief in one God. He hadn't killed anyone. Maybe a fistfight or two under extreme circumstances, but neither party died and the other guy never looked worse than he did when all was said and done. God knew as well as he that he wasn't perfect, but Hell? Was he really *Hell* worthy?

The bus was now passing San Francisco International airport, and the bus seemed to be going toward the city. Normally Tim would have been very happy to be heading into San Francisco, he loved the city. He loved the music and the theatre. He loved being able to get the best Chinese food in the country in the first Chinatown in North America. He loved the wharf and the bustle and the hipsters who still made the city what it was 40 years after the days of the flower children and the hippies. He didn't always care for the level of crime or various unpleasant characters that one might sometimes run into in entire sections of the city, but as a whole, he loved the life that ran through the city and usually loved spending any time there he could. Today, however, as much as he may have wanted to be overjoyed to be heading into the city, he simply

couldn't pull his attention away from the fact that his ride was taking place on a bus that his dead father was driving, apparently to bring him to Hell.

After processing his thoughts for the better part of twenty minutes, Tim finally felt as though he should try to attempt speech again. He began to form a question with the best of his ability considering his circumstances. "Am I dead? I mean, how . . . when . . . how did I . . . die? Why Hell? I went to church— . . . I never . . . no murder . . . no cheating . . . stealing. What did I . . . why Hell?"

"You know, boy," began the driver, "my answers to your questions will be much easier for you to even *begin* to comprehend if you learn to ask just one at a time. But, to answer your previous string of questions, not to mention statements, I'll begin by telling you that you died just like your father in a horribly painful bus explosion on your way home from work. Talk about a coincidence, eh? Anyway, we have this 'sins of the fathers' clause that you had to fulfill, and basically since you had no son, the buck stopped with you, so to speak. Hit you doubly hard, in fact, because of the whole 'exact same death as Dad' thing. When all's said and done, all this combined earns you a one-way ticket to Hell."

Tim became deathly pale and extremely silent.

The driver turned his head to look at Tim, and then burst out in uncontrollable laughter. "A joke, a joke," chuckled the driver with a fat grin on his face. "Sorry 'bout that kid, I was just pullin' at ya a bit there. Look, from where I'm sittin', after an eternity and a half or so of carting folks to Hell as the general order of things, one's sense of humor can begin to warp a bit, if you catch my drift. I meant no ill by it. The truth is, slugger, I'm not really given the particulars of why a soul was separated from its body or what that soul did to earn itself a trip to ye olde place'o'damnation. Hey, if it's any consolation to you, that which arranges trips such as these does try to make the journey as smooth as possible. So, lay back, enjoy the view, and don't sweat it so much. There's nothing you can really do to change it anyway. It's a nice, long ride to Hell, so enjoy a last glimpse at this beautiful earthly plane you've called home for as long as you have, and I'm sure by the time it's time to

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get off the bus for good, all of your questions will have been answered.”

Tim began again, “But why—”

“Look kiddo,” the driver cut him off. “Heck! I probably can’t answer whatever question you’re going to ask anyway. Look, the why of just about any matter you could find to inquire after really isn’t all that important. Like I was saying just a moment ago, the really important stuff lies a lot more in how you handle what you’ve got to work with. A big slab of rock in Michelangelo’s hands, and you got a “David” that people rave about for God only knows why and for far longer than Michelangelo could have guessed. So, relax. Let yourself enjoy the ride. You’ll be doing yourself a lot better than if you fret over the inevitable, eh?”

Tim was silent. He sat back watching the scenery roll by, and suddenly the world outside seemed a whole lot brighter. It was as though this road he had passed on many times, he had never noticed in such detail before. It was like living life with fresh eyes, newly grown with the knowledge that he was not likely to see any of what passed by his window ever again.

After another twenty minutes or so, the bus was still riding the 101 and, unless the road suddenly arose into the sky--or for that matter, lowered into the earth--the bus would be passing through the city shortly.

Sure enough, no roads approached lowering into Hell, and indeed, the skyline of the city did appear. Tim had assumed that the bus would be making for the shortest route to one of the city’s two more famous bridges. He was surprised, therefore, when the bus turned onto an offramp and headed into the city’s heart.

Tim began to lose his sense of complete terror and awe as they entered the thick of the city. There was something about the point of the Transamerica building, the smell of the bay,

and Oriental characters on the windows of every other restaurant that had a naturally calming effect on Tim. Despite still having quite the appreciation for the world around him, and a subtle sense of horror running through his blood, in his head an obvious though improbable notion began with speed to form: ESCAPE!

He wasn't fully aware of this thought simmering in the back of his mind, a thought simmering since practically the second he had stepped onto the bus, until he saw the people of the city walking past the bus while it was stopped at a crosswalk. Perhaps the incredible improbability of getting out alive when on the highway had conditioned his mind against any sort of escape attempt, but now that the bus was frequently stopping completely in short intervals, and people were all around. Tim, for the first time since the ride began, took to the notion of fleeing a predicament he deemed worthy of dissociating himself from as quickly as humanly possible.

Thinking no time better to act toward getting the hell away from this hell bus destined for Hell, as the bus stopped at the next red light, one in which many pedestrians were passing in front of the bus, Tim flung himself at the bus's door with all his might, trying to get it open. Failing that, Tim tried to gain the attention of the passers by flailing his limbs wildly, mixed with yelling and beating at the door with every ounce of strength he possessed. Tim pounded and pounded and grew noticeably red in the face as he used every bit of energy he could find in his being toward the end of trying to escape his unpleasant fate. He clawed at the windows, trying to find some way to break them or open them. He threw himself as hard as he could against windows and door alike.

The light turned green, the bus rolled on, and the driver spoke. "You know, had you beat just a teensy bit harder . . . still absolutely *nothing* would have happened. I bet you'd sell your soul to get away right about now, eh? Sorry kid, just a little satanic humor for you there. Look, kiddo, that which made this bus knew what they were doing when they put the thing together. And besides, as far as the earthly realm is concerned, you don't exist in the physical right now. Look, I'm not really supposed to be telling you this sort of thing 'til we

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exit “Earth proper,” but for now, think of yourself as being on a non-interactive tour as a sort of final allowance, or “gift” if you will, of seeing a place you won’t be seeing again for a good long while. Like say an eternity or two. Enjoy seeing of the Earth what you can *while* you can. As I’ve tried to tell you before, enjoy yourself while enjoyment is still an option.”

Tim sat down again with the strong feeling that he had probably been better off when the notion of escape hadn’t arisen to the top of his mind. If anything at all of benefit had come from his attempt to get away from this bus of ill omen, it was that he was now so utterly exhausted from exerting energy that for the first time since he had gotten on the bus, he began to give in to the urge to give up and let the bus take him wherever it intended on taking him. He was almost beginning to be able to relax, and that didn’t feel altogether unpleasant, even though just about everything else regarding his situation did. So, Tim let his head rest against the window and watched the activity of the city as the bus rolled along.

Half an hour or so had passed when Tim noticed that the bus seemed to be heading toward the Castro district. Now, generally Tim was very accepting of people’s varying perspectives, but there was definitely a feeling of discomfort that sparked within him at the sight of a pair of men holding hands. He may not have attended church every single week, and he may not even have taken just any old thing he had been taught to heart, but it seemed to him that there was absolutely a fundamental aberration to the order of nature that any pair of men would . . . choose to hold hands. It made sense to Tim that his priest, without absolutely damning homosexuality, did take a strong stance that homosexuality was not beneficial to what God had intended. He also felt that any doubt he might have about the validity of a blind belief, no matter how much sense it made, was absolutely affirmed by science. He could see easily the way of nature. Men were meant to be with women; otherwise both parties would have been designed differently. Homosexuality was so obviously a perversion of nature, and

worse than that, he felt more often than not it must also be as much a distortion of the nature of the mind as of the body.

Suffice to say that while seeing two men hold hands caused Tim a spark of discomfort, at seeing more interaction than a simple grope of two hands Tim's spark would be fanned into something of a minor flame. Generally Tim would extricate himself from such awkward situations he might find himself in, lest his small flame of burning discomfort be fueled further. The one time he could recall being forced to drive through the Castro, he had endured a discomfort verging on what some might call a total psychotic meltdown. So, upon realizing, beyond any remaining shred of doubt or hope, that he was about to enter the Castro, a place historically less than comfortable for Tim, whatever shred of relaxation he had managed to grasp at since his failed attempt at escape was quickly replaced by a tension he did not think his body was physically capable of. He felt almost as though there were muscles tensing upon muscles which he hadn't thought existed within his body to begin with.

The bus entered that district so disquieting to Tim, and as it did, Tim's ease slipped swiftly from his being. The driver also seemed to tense a bit, though apparently not out of discomfort, but rather as though he was becoming more alert to the world around him.

At the outskirts of the district Tim would occasionally see a pair of women holding hands, which oddly enough he didn't seem to find much discomfort with at all, or a pair of men holding hands, which he felt discomfort at, but was able to endure. Tim did see a pair of gentlemen leaning in for a kiss at one point, but he was able to jerk his head quickly away before having a chance to see how far his level of discomfort could be pushed. Tim barely noticed that as he was pulling himself away from the window, jerking his sight from the kissing couple, the bus driver had twitched a bit toward Tim.

The bus cruised ahead further into the district, and Tim became more apprehensive the further they went. His head dodged the sights of the streets rapidly as the bus drove through. Men holding hands began to become overbearingly frequent. Tim's head jolted back on almost a secondly basis

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now, or at least it seemed to him, as he dodged the sight of watching two grown, consenting men kiss in public. He didn't mind watching a couple lesbian couples making out on a street corner or two, but the one time he accidentally saw a comparable maneuver performed by a pair of men, it was all he could do to keep from vomiting. Every hug between two men made him shudder, every pair of hands held made him antsy, every kiss made him want to leave his skin, and every rainbow flag seemed to hang in mockery of all that was proper for the world to be. As he grew ever more rigid, if that was possible, with every hug sighted and pair of hands held, he noticed that the driver would show a similar, though incredibly more subtle, reaction of some sort; a twitch, a low moan, a shake of his head.

After ten minutes or so riding around and through the Castro/Mission district, the bus was coming to Market Street. Knowing this, Tim began to relax ever so slightly at the prospect of not having to be surrounded by such filth and wrongness any longer. The bus turned, and much to his dismay and horror, he found that the bus had just put itself in the middle of San Francisco's annual gay pride parade. He suddenly found himself surrounded by floats, colors, men and women in bright, happy costumes covered in sequins, and other costumes revealing more than some would deem strictly appropriate for all occasions. He found himself trying to cope with a circumstance altogether unexpected and was suddenly unable to process the data streaming past his eyes and flowing through his head in any sort of coherent, intelligible capacity. Put simply, he now felt himself overload at the sudden shock of being where he was. After several seconds of pure horror trying to reconcile his mind to his eyes to his perspective of the nature of things, he had an even more terrifying thought: what if Hell for him was to be brought to the center of the city he most loved, only to be fucked up the ass by gay faggots the rest of eternity? Considering thus, Tim crouched down on the floor into something resembling a vertical fetal position. He closed his eyes and began rocking slowly back and forth while humming to himself the first song that came to his mind, the Star-Spangled Banner.

The bus driver turned and looked down at him, giving him something of a funny look. The bus driver then inquired in a queer, half-sincere half-mocking tone of concern, "What, pray tell, are you doing, *boy?*"

Tim didn't seem to hear the bus driver, or, at the very least, simply didn't answer the driver's question. The bus driver posed his question a second time, this time a little bit louder, but still he received no answer. Finally, the bus driver raised his voice significantly louder, though without any change to his strange tone, and asked him a third time to explain his behavior. To this third posing of the exact same question, Tim glanced up at the driver with a scowl on his face, and in a shaky voice uttered almost inaudibly, "Can't take it. People like these . . . the . . . these corruptors of nature and everything normal and have no reason or place to exist . . . they shouldn't be . . . and I can't take it!" Tim finished on a louder note than when he had begun.

The bus driver looked down at him crouching practically under his seat, fears contorting his face in the strangest ways, betraying feelings of vileness and sheer contempt. As slowly a warm smile rose to the bus driver's face, he responded to Tim with a sort of joviality in his voice, "And I suppose you think that squatting in fear and making a pretzel out of your face at the first sign of some vibrant costumes is completely normal? Regardless, I was informed by a bird or two that you were no happier in life than when in this city, and you were supposed to be enjoying this pre-Hell ride. You obviously don't care for the city as much as I was given the impression, however, so rather than torture you any further, I'll have you out of this place in a jiff and riding through some country perhaps a little bit more to your liking."

As promised, it was a matter of only seconds before the driver turned the bus down the next street and away from the parade. As the bus turned, like the parting of the Red Sea, the cops seemed to automatically know to separate the barricades dividing the spectators from the parade, and the crowd split before the bus and closed behind it after it had passed through. The bus now headed toward Golden Gate Park.

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After traveling another two or three minutes, Tim decided that it would be safe to sit up next to the window again. Ten minutes or so later, they had come to the Golden Gate Bridge. As the bus rolled toward the end of the bridge, Tim found himself beginning to suffer pangs of regret that he wasn't able to see any more of the city that he had held so close to his heart for so long. He looked backwards toward the city for as long as he could, feeling a loss that he slowly realized perhaps he could have even for a short time put off, had he not been so anxious. But then, he reminded himself, it was probably far better to have gotten out of the sheer torture he had found himself in and leave the closest thing to Heaven he had ever known than to stay and harm himself further. He sighed bittersweet as the bus left the city behind.

Save for a touch of lingering regret he couldn't seem to shake, Tim was actually able to relax himself far more fully than he had been while in the city. It had taken a good ten minutes or so once out of view of the cityscape to calm himself again, but now he felt as though only one set of his muscles were tense rather than two; a marked improvement from before.

Shortly after Tim's said moment of relaxation, the bus driver, with uncanny timing, began to speak. "So skipper, the boys upstairs told me that you really loved the city and that a cruise through it for a while might be a good way to ease your nerves during this . . . time of transition. What got your goat back there that you decided to blow a gasket and have the ol' proverbial meltdown?"

Becoming edgy again at the driver's question Tim slowly responded with a hint of aggravation, "I already told you back there, I just can't stand those fu— . . . those . . . those damned gays!"

"Not to burst your bubble, sonny boy," responded the driver in a tone half quizzical, half jolly, "but they didn't look like the damned ones from where I was sitting." The driver stared at Tim with a penetrating smirk on his face while his hands easily steered the bus around a bend in the road.

“Look,” Tim was more than a little on edge now, “I told you before, it . . . they . . . it just isn’t natural, and that rubs me the wrong way.”

“Actually,” responded the driver, “I remember exactly what you said before. I believe that you mentioned not only that you felt homosexuality was not natural, but that homosexuals are ‘corruptors of nature and everything normal,’ and that homosexuality has ‘no reason or place to exist.’ Unless of course I’m mistaken?”

“Hey, you apparently work for God, don’t you?” Tim was becoming more agitated by the moment. “What of it? You tell me!” A moment after saying this, Tim realized he might have inadvertently been a bit hasty and arrogant in his response to the guy driving him to Hell.

“Well,” the driver responded with his eyes now primarily on the road, looking back toward Tim every so often for emphasis. “For starters, I couldn’t help but notice that you weren’t disturbed too greatly by those who you accuse of being ‘corruptors of nature’ being a pair of kissing *women*.” Tim grew a little red in the face and was further agitated as the driver noted his observation. The driver continued to speak in a cool manner, both matter of fact and jovial, “As far as male homosexuality goes, you’re right. I *do* know God a little bit better, it seems, than you. So, I’ll be more than happy to alleviate your confusion, since you’ve asked so nicely. Perhaps you don’t fully consider this when you’re thinking about the world around you, but, and let me remind you that your mind can’t even begin to grasp these notions in such a way that you may even begin slightly to understand them, as far as you’re concerned, God is the *reason* for all that is brought into creation, and therefore, brought into being. God is responsible for every atom, every twig, every blade of grass, every planet, every cosmos, every queer, and every smart-ass condemned to Hell. That’s the *nature* of God, you see; *he* brings into being *exactly* what she feels She needs to keep the universe running as He sees fit. No more, no less. This being *God’s* nature, neither homosexuals nor the over-quick-to-judge Hell-bound, nor anything else in this universe, of which the Earth, lest you forget, is a rather miniscule piece, is capable of *anything* short

of being natural. And further, by these same elementary principles, there is *nothing* that can corrupt the ‘normal’ and ‘natural’, since *every* manifestation is natural, and therefore, normal.

“Now, as far as a reason and place to exist go, well . . . It should be obvious even to you that everything inhabits some *place*, and so, let’s chalk that part of your statement up to bad wording on your part and a half-assed snide response on mine, shall we?” At which point the driver looked over his shoulder with a warm smile on his face, and for a brief moment Tim, upon seeing the likeness of his father smiling at him, let himself relax. Quickly remembering where he sat and why, however, Tim became almost as tense, though not quite as he had been a moment before, and the driver, whose eyes were now on the road again, continued to speak. “As far as reason goes, well, as I said before, God has ‘reasons’ for everything from the smallest quark to the largest supercluster of galaxies and everything beyond and below. Your level of focus being as myopic as any common human, it seems you need the obvious pointed out to you; namely that in this case the true topic of question isn’t the reason of the existence of homosexuality on *this* planet, but the *cause*. The difference, you see, is that the reason for all phenomena in the universe, objectively speaking, is the same. And the knowledge of that reason belongs solely to what in ignorance you have no better word for than ‘God,’ as well as those very blessed who *experience directly* that knowledge.

“Since cause, then, becomes the question, to the question of cause I will give an answer.” Tim’s interest began to waver at this point, and he began to relax himself in the manner of one about to be subjected to a boring, pointless, and rather irritating lecture. It was just as his mood began to change thus that the bus driver’s tone of voice changed from uplifting and light to suddenly harsh and almost chastising. Noticing this quick change in the driver’s tones of voice, his ears immediately perked up anew as the driver continued. “You see, what you are apparently completely oblivious to is that some percentage of these people whom you are so quick to judge as corruptors were battered and abused until the only way they could continue to tolerate living was to take up the lifestyles they now hold. Some are the genetic result of a brother

marrying a sister. Some are the genetic results of two heterosexual people with 'normal' upbringings whose blood is being introduced to each other for the first time since the dawn of time. Some are confused by a confusing world in which they have never had guidance to remedy their confusion, and thus they grope to find love any way they can. Some want to share as much love as they can with *anyone* they can, because what feels better than sharing love? Some have a minor hormonal imbalance that alters their sense of attraction from conforming to what small-minded dolts might typically consider 'normal.' Some seek kindred souls regardless of what face or genitalia it entails. Some love the one it feels most right for them to love, just because it feels right and is right by any and every criteria that could possibly matter to any objectively thinking being. And some," and here the driver's tone became more jovial again with a slight hint of mockery, "God put in place just to screw with the foundations of your poorly built belief system."

At this point the bus driver's voice shifted again, this time to the tone of voice most closely described as his "regular" tone. "Look, partner, the point *is*, there's a 'cause' or 'reason' for everything. I could give you a long-winded lengthy lecture about the laws governing every manifestation in the universe and quickly lose you in some very sophisticated rabble about sevens and threes, but the simple fact of the matter is that even if I could keep your interest for more than eight seconds, you wouldn't be able to understand me much past the ninth. So, how about I give you the 'Reader's Digest' version of how God works, so to speak? It all basically boils down to something one of the wiser beings of your planet wrote a short while ago. If memory serves me right, and it's never done anything but for as long as I've had it, I believe the sentiment goes, 'All is coincidence! One thing begets another.'"

Tim spent a moment attempting to fully take in and assess all he had just heard. He felt in part disquieted and disjointed, in part awed. In part he felt as though he may have just learned something very important, but didn't quite know what to make of it yet. In part he felt strangely detached, as though what he had just heard he had no place to hear. Coupled with all of these odd feelings floating through him was the idea that he

had just been fed a crock, and that this image of his father driving him to Hell may well have been talking out his ass.

In part, Tim saw his fears of homosexuality as silly, self-induced, pointless and destructive. This part of him was suddenly a bit angered that he had apparently sacrificed his last chance for the rest of eternity to see the place in the world he loved best, to temporarily feel better about something that he probably shouldn't have flipped out about to begin with. Another part of him felt as though there was some much greater lesson to be grasped that for some reason was for the moment out of his reach. The last part of him thought that the driver was completely full of shit and wanted to resist, deny, and ignore all of what the driver had just said to him. Being the most dominant parts due to the fact that it was these parts irritating him the most, his ignorance, or rather his lack of a fuller picture, coupled with his desire not to know, triggered his response of asking the bus driver, "So what's your point? Are you trying to tell me some 'profound' notion about how the universe works, or is this just your round-about way of telling me I should like fags?"

Tim having asked his question, the bus driver pressed down hard on the gas pedal, shifted gear, and the new momentum of the bus pushed him back stiffly against his seat. For the brief moment before he blacked out, he couldn't move his head to look at anything aside from the big windshield of glass at the front of the bus. In it he could swear that he could make out some large, round, white object next to the driver in the reflection, but for the life--or death, as it seemed at the time--of him, he had no idea what to make of it.

For a brief moment he perceived no light, and yet it seemed to him only an imperceptible moment of darkness had passed over him when suddenly he was looking out at the most amazing sight his gaze had ever beheld.



Looking out through the front window of the bus, he witnessed before him a sight of pure marvel and awe. Galaxies spun everywhere he looked in a black, endless void; a view he

had not just in the front window, but in every window he dared to turn his head toward. The universe stretched out before him in a way it never had before and humbled him to his inner-most being. As he began slowly to float from his seat, he found himself wishing as he had never wished before to have his feet firmly planted on the soil of his native planet.

The driver looked at him with sincerity in his eyes and said, “This is the point. This is the reason every atom exists. This is the reason every blade of grass exists. This is the reason every twig exists. This is the reason every ‘queer’ exists. And, this is the reason that even one condemned and as lowly as you, exists. The point is that should any snail sliming its way down your sidewalk not have been created in the way it was, this could not exist as it does.

“The point is,” continued the driver, “that you say to a servant of a being a bit more privy than *you* that your excuse for being mired in fear over a manifestation of God, is that that manifestation goes against the God that created it! The point is that the harm you cause yourself for no *good* reason could easily be avoided if you would merely accept what can’t be changed; accept discomfort at being around those of no less value than you, even though *you* may be made a bit uncomfortable because you find yourself unable to accept something you are presently unable to understand. The point is that since no great harm comes from passing through a street that allows you a chance to examine something of a foreign world, you might as well relax and enjoy, if nothing else, some really snazzy costumes. The point is, Tim, instead of making something ‘groovy’ out of the last sights you may ever see again, you curl into a fetal position lest you see what by your judgment constitutes an ‘inappropriate’ expression of love, which, objectively speaking, does not exist.”

Those final words leaving the bus driver’s lips, the driver changed gear again, and a bright light filled Tim’s eyes. When his vision returned and he was able again to perceive objects, he found that the bus was heading down a road surrounded by a large Redwood forest.

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