Two

Abruptly,
instantly.
Effortlessly,
out of stillness.
A dream.
A stirring.
Waking to the
Real.
5.

THE JUNGLE, PART I

"Open your hidden eye and come, return to the root of the root of your own Self!"
- Rumi

I

A FINAL DISCLAIMER, A NECESSARY ONE, before we get on with the story already. The task here is to tell the story of what happened in the jungle. There is no reason to do this, no 'point' to the story. The Understanding itself cannot be talked about, can only be pointed to, and that is all that can be done now, is what everything that happens through this mind/body thing is. Talking about the experiential events in the dream that led up to and surrounded the 'pop' of perception, the realization, the waking out of the dream, is meaningless; it is just more dream story.

There are those who have asked for this story to be told, perhaps to be able to evaluate for themselves. Fair enough;
here are the circumstances surrounding that event. Ultimately it is only the Understanding itself which is of value, not the story of the mind/body thing. But the story is asked for, so here it is. This is what happened in this mind/body. So what? Who cares?

When Ramesh Balsekar's book *Who Cares?* was published, I found that in typing the title, these fingers (creatures of habit) would inevitably misspell it by inverting two letters and typing *Who Carse?* It brings a smile every time, a little gift in Consciousness. The title of Ramesh's book is not meant dismissively or rhetorically but rather, in the tradition of Ramana Maharshi's "Who am I?" as a question to be investigated: "Who is it that cares?" So too this: "Who is this 'carse'?" Who indeed. No one at all, and what does it matter? The accepted social norm is to emphasize the individual: the individual character, the individual effort, the individual experience, the individual story. In fact, nothing could be further from having any significance.

So please do not make the mistake of reading this to find out something about this so-called life, some pattern or path or some chain of causation. The perfect unfolding, the infinite expression in Consciousness is indeed perfect, is indeed infinite. There is no path, except in hindsight; and then there are infinite paths. If you read this story and add it to your collection of stories of pathways to enlightenment, and study the similarities and chart the differences, the story will be of no help and may actually be a massive hindrance.

Like any practice, any work, any trying, any thinking, any book; the only possible help it can be is if you spend your whole life doing it and finally realize it is of no value,
doesn't get you anywhere. Forget it. The Tao that can be
spoken is not the Tao. The story that can be told is just
more noise. Be still. Who is the 'I' that Is, in stillness? That
is what you want. Not this. Read this for entertainment in
the dream, if you must, but don't be sidetracked.

The story is thoroughly saturated with language making
use of the words 'I,' 'me,' and 'my.' See how silly this story
thing is? This is pure fiction. There is no such entity. 'Me' is
a mythological idea. The story is told of events happening
to someone; but there is no one here, no one to whom events
can happen. The personal pronouns are used as neces-
sary conventions of language, but they refer only to this
body/mind organism, which is empty of any personal self
or entity to refer to. See how vacuous this whole thing is?
So what? Who cares?

This cannot be emphasized enough: the first parts of what
happened in the jungle consisted of a series of experiences,
and so can be thought about, remembered, talked about.
In this case there were what could perhaps be called deep,
transformative, even dramatic experiences. But it must be
remembered that this part of what happened in the jungle,
the preparatory part, however deep and wonderful, was
still only experience, experience occurring in or through
this mind/body thing. As such it is essentially without any
particular significance. Dream events in the dream life of a
dream character have no lasting significance.

Spiritual teachers sometimes remark that you can
consider yourself fortunate if you have not had dramatic
spiritual or mystical experiences. Perhaps I have not been
as lucky; there have been experiences, some of which are
related here. Such is the script for this dream character.
Perfect Brilliant Stillness

But with them, the clear seeing that experience is neither understanding nor wisdom, but only the circumstances under which these may or may not occur. An experience of awakening is not Awakening.

And so the story about these experiential parts of what happened in the jungle has nothing directly to do with what came later, with what we call Awakening or the Understanding. The first parts, the experience parts, the parts that don't matter, (although of course, like everything else, they play their part in the infinite unfolding) can be described more or less as they happened. The last part, an instantaneous event out of time and out of experience, can only be pointed to more obliquely.

II

We had been in the jungle for several days; living in the Shuar village, going for treks in the forest, working mostly with a village elder and one of their vegetalistas; a medicine man, herbalist. The experience of traveling through Ecuador, coming into the rainforest itself, and living with and getting to know the people of this little village had all been pervaded by a sense of quiet well-being. Although of course it was all very different and strange, in another sense the jungle also seemed very familiar and welcoming, as if I was coming back to a home I'd forgotten.

But after a few days there came a time when this feeling of well-being abruptly wore off. Between midday and early evening of one day, my internal state went from open acceptance and trust to a growing unease, which escalated rapidly to serious fear and then to outright panic. I became
5. The Jungle, Part I

convinced that I was going to die if I didn’t get out of there immediately.

In the context, there was some rational basis for the fear. There had been some incidents: a close encounter with a small but extremely poisonous jungle creature; a minor accident on one of the treks; misunderstandings with the shaman about the ingestion of certain plants. Clearly, slight missteps could have grave consequences.

When I had informed family and friends about going on this journey most had simply wished me well, but I had almost immediately received two phone calls with a different response. A family member and an acquaintance, who did not know each other and who called completely independently of each other, were each extremely concerned and tried to convince me not to go. The two women both have intuitional senses that I had appreciated and respected in the past; now, one had had a dream and the other simply a strong intuition that they could see me going on the trip but not returning. They felt that the trip posed extreme danger for me and tried to convince me to reconsider. I had taken their concerns to heart but on balance had decided to make the trip. Now, remembering their warnings only fed the thought that I was not going to make it out of there alive.

The mind took all of this and ran with it far beyond any rational basis, as the mind is so good at doing. What had been an adventure of exploration now seemed, like the fecund jungle around me, to have grown wildly out of control. I was in way over my head, and there appeared no way out. There was a quiet talk with the trip leader in which I was assured there was no possibility of leaving for at least several days, as the weather would not permit the
Cessna to land at the grass strip up river. Of course, the alternative was to withdraw from activities and try to keep to myself in the bamboo hut that had been assigned to me. But something prevented my taking that option.

In the midst of the fear that was growing in my gut, the certainty that I was going to die if things continued as they were, there was also a deep sense that what was being offered here was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for what at the time I thought of as "wholeness." The awareness was imprecise, in fact quite confused, but nevertheless very strong that whatever spiritual force had brought me here to the jungle had done so with the purpose of offering an opportunity for deep transformation and healing of what I saw then as my self: body soul and spirit. To retreat to safety would be to miss that opportunity and leave the jungle as I had come, a conflicted, restless and anguished soul. That option reeked of failure and meaninglessness: what would be the point of safety if achieved at that cost?

The conflict reached its most intense point in the early evening. I skipped the evening meal and was sitting in the communal thatched longhouse, staring out past the fire smoldering in the center and out the opening in the bamboo wall of the other side. The jungle began immediately outside, and the rain was falling through the leaves, its sound blending with that of the millions of insects as the rainforest slipped quickly into the evening darkness. The fear was intense, physically and mentally. The mind was running scenarios of various disgusting deaths in the jungle, the pulse was hard and rapid, and it was not only the increasing darkness that was causing my tunnel vision. I wanted to run, but the only place to run to was back to my hut and dismal defeat. So I sat and stared into the jungle.
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Presently the mind went quiet, the scenarios stopped running, and a new thought appeared. It was quite calm amid the panic, and it went like this: “Well, if I’m going to die, (and I am going to die, if not here than somewhere, if not now then sometime) then if that’s what is needed, if that’s what it takes, then this is a good place to die, and this is a good time to die.”

A good place. I had felt very at home in the jungle. Familiar, welcoming, nurturing. So obvious in its cycle of life and death and rebirth; a very appropriate place to leave a body. And, a good time. There were fewer loose ends in my life than usual; business deals and projects had been wrapped up and accounted for, and new ones not yet started. There was no relationship and no unresolved personal issues or responsibilities. Prompted in part by the concern of my sister and friend, I had even made out a will and left it on my desk when I left home. If I am going to die (and of course I am), then to an amazing degree this actually is a very good time and place in this life for that to happen.

Once this thought occurred, both the body and the mind went quite still, and there was a feeling as if someone very strong and gentle had walked up behind me and placed their hands on my shoulders. “Good,” I thought, “this is very good.” And I completely let go and relaxed into this new awareness that for this body to die here and now was a very good, appropriate thing, that this was why I was here. This was not resignation to something unwanted, but wholehearted acceptance and surrender in joy into what was known to be right and perfect. In mere moments the entire thought and feeling and physical symptoms of extreme fear for my life dissolved and gave way to pure joyful acceptance which even the certainty of death could not take away.
Perfect Brilliant Stillness

But the most remarkable thing about this transformation was that it was quite clear to me that I had not done it or caused it or earned it. One moment the fear was there, intense and graphic; the next moment there was only its complete opposite; peace and joy and clarity, and appreciation of being so well cared for by the unknown force of 'Spirit' that even death would be arranged and carried out in an appropriate and 'perfect' manner.

Yet it was clear that I had not worked the fear through, I had not resolved anything. To suggest or argue that I had somehow faced my fear and by some psychological process broken through it to the other side would have, in context, been a fabrication.

This new state of mind and body, surrender and acceptance, had simply landed in my lap without any accomplishment on my part. It seemed clear that left to my own devices, I could just as easily still be in that agonizing state of paralyzing fear and anguish. That I was not, but was instead sitting there in pure gratitude and joy and acceptance, was obviously pure gift. It was astonishing.

It would only be much later that I would realize that my sister, my friend, and that intuitive sense of panic all turned out to have been right. In fact, no 'me' made it out of there alive. As it turned out, no individual named 'david' would ever return from the jungle.