

Chapter 8 of *The Debate*, Vol. 2 by B. Douglas Robbins

douglas@medialawgroup.net
bdouglasrobbins@gmail.com

Copyright © 2000 by B. Douglas Robbins.
All rights reserved.

“Good morning Elreec K. Grundle,” said the green lamp girl. She woke me, as the threatening blue dawn grew. She gave me a bottle of mountain water and instructed me to drink it all. I still had not urinated all night long.

“How do you know my name?” I was half surprised and half impressed by my own correct use of English. Where does it come from, I wondered.

A dull ache slipped through my skull discretely, while I tallied my surroundings. I remembered climbing the fire escape. I was in the Museum! It was under some sort of earthquake renovation paused in mid-morphosis. A mixture of hundred year old beams and brand new ply-board tattered the dusty, high ceiling. Exposed brass pipes, retrofitted and reinforced steel girders crutched huge pine crossbeams, pinned by two-inch alloy bolts. Some walls were gutted while others were in the process of reconstruction. Twentieth century sheet rock mixed with nineteenth century rough hewn.

All that was deteriorating, the shardy studs and the water weakened planks, expressed sub-dermal doomsaying. I do not know what else it could have been. Season worn wood splintered and buckled where belts and brackets held it all together in combat with entropy. A mighty war. Tiny splinters fell away through air and soft water workings. A losing battle. I was terrified all over again, about trespassing and visiting off-limit realms. *I could fall right through the floors!* But as soon as that arose it was forgotten, I mean really **forgotten**. I could not remember what I had just thought or why I was so riled up.

The windows were cross thatched with iron or copper. Off behind an adjoining wall was a fake Christmas tree and ornaments. I could see by leaning back and bending my neck in a weird way.

“You come from Inglewood, California, you’re a junior here, and you don’t have a girlfriend. How come you don’t have a girlfriend?” The green lamp girl sat, tucked under, at the foot of my bedding. Her hair was thick and wild as if it had not been washed or combed, her eyes were shaped like kindly swollen seeds,

sensitive and darting, and turned upside-down in soft little crescent moons when she grinned. Her lips knew an expression of all the woes and charms in equal proportion like a golden mean. She wore a hodgepodge of fabrics and textures like furniture material, mostly browns and earthy greens and some chunky amber, like floral sprouting.

“You were very sick,” she rose, walked over to a green camping stove propped up on crates and poured herself some tea from a blue enameled pot, “Drink your water, it comes from the mountain, you know.”

I unscrewed the virgin cap and drank as commanded.

“How did you get so sick El, Elreec?” she sipped from her metal mug.

“I don’t know,” I was still in a kind of shock. I was shocked to have been there in the Museum’s attic. I was shocked to be suddenly cared for by a benevolent wood-fairy, and I was shocked that the whole thing, the whole sickness and everything had gone as far.

“Why didn’t you go home when you got sick?”

“To Inglewood?” what was she asking?

“No! You have a place to live, here in Palo Alto, don’t you?”

“Ohh!” that’s what she meant.

A pause.

“My name is Hailie, like the Comet.”

“The Comet?” I thought of cleansers but could not get the connection, “Do you live here?”

“Uh-huh. You won’t tell will you. Please don’t tell.”

“You’re not allowed to live here are you.”

“No, but I’m not allowed to be anywhere, so here’s as good as anything,” I could not tell if she was making sense. She might have been, I couldn’t tell.

“Where do you belong Elreec K. Grundle?”

Belong? “No where, I guess.”

“Oh!” she clapped her hands, “You’re just like me then!” She jumped but made no sound at returning.

“How do you live? I mean what do you do?” I sipped my water.

“There’s nothing **to** do, Elreec Grundle. Nothing::::at all::::to do.”

“How do you afford food? Where did you get these blankets?”

“Here and there. What I need, I’m allowed to have.”

“Who allows you?”

“Whommmmmever. God. **The Devil!**” her eyes lit up comically, and she brought her fingers to her chin like claws, “People don’t see what they don’t want to see, that’s where I live, and no one bothers me.”

A pause.

She asked, “So Elreec-”

“Elric.”

“Elriek, oh I’m sorry. Okay Elriek. So, Elriek, why did you come to visit me last night?”

“I don’t know,” I said dumbly.

“Did you come to get well?”

“I didn’t come for any reason, except I saw your light.”

“What light?”

“Your green lamp.”

“You can see it from the ground?”

“Yes—I could.”

“And that’s why you came?”

“I suppose. I don’t really know. I mean I had no **reason** to come, or anything, I was just so sick.”

“Do you feel better now?”

“Yes, much. Thank you, uh, Hailie. Thank-you. I really do feel much better.”

“You were very blocked up.”

“What?”

“Your chakras were all blocked up.”

“Chakras.”

“Your energy flow was a twisty mess. Here!” she threw me a red paperback entitled *Das Energi*, “Open to any page. It will help.”

I randomly opened page 38: *You know what has to be done. Why don't you do it?* That was all it said. The rest of the page was blank.

I was suddenly tense again. My hands chilled. I glanced down, took off the parka, left the bottle of water on the creaking floor. I rose too quickly and fluttering lights tinkled while my head pounded. The picture went dim and then back again.

“I need to go,” I said.

“You’re still sick, Elriek, you need more water. You’re very, very dry.”

“Yeah, I know,” I said feebly, “I’ll get some water, but I have to go.”

Hailie was silent. Her broad eyes turned downward at the ends. I could not look at her. I gazed about the floor at red lines surrounding the bedding. I followed the lines around the circumference over and over until it bloomed into shape. Criss crossed red planks, crossed above, crossed below, up down, left right, the triangles...A pentagram. I slept within the corolla of a red, five pointed star.

I rushed through the hanging wire tentacles, through the short hallway, full of stacked Harris monitors, obsolete hard drives and keyboards, while my head swelled oversized. I opened the fire escape door and hastened down the paint flaked stairs.