

AA-BA

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THE WORLD OF ILLUSION

Chapter A-2 **THE IMAGINARY STAIRS**

Chapter B-2 **THE HEAVEN ABOVE**

THE IMAGINARY STAIRS

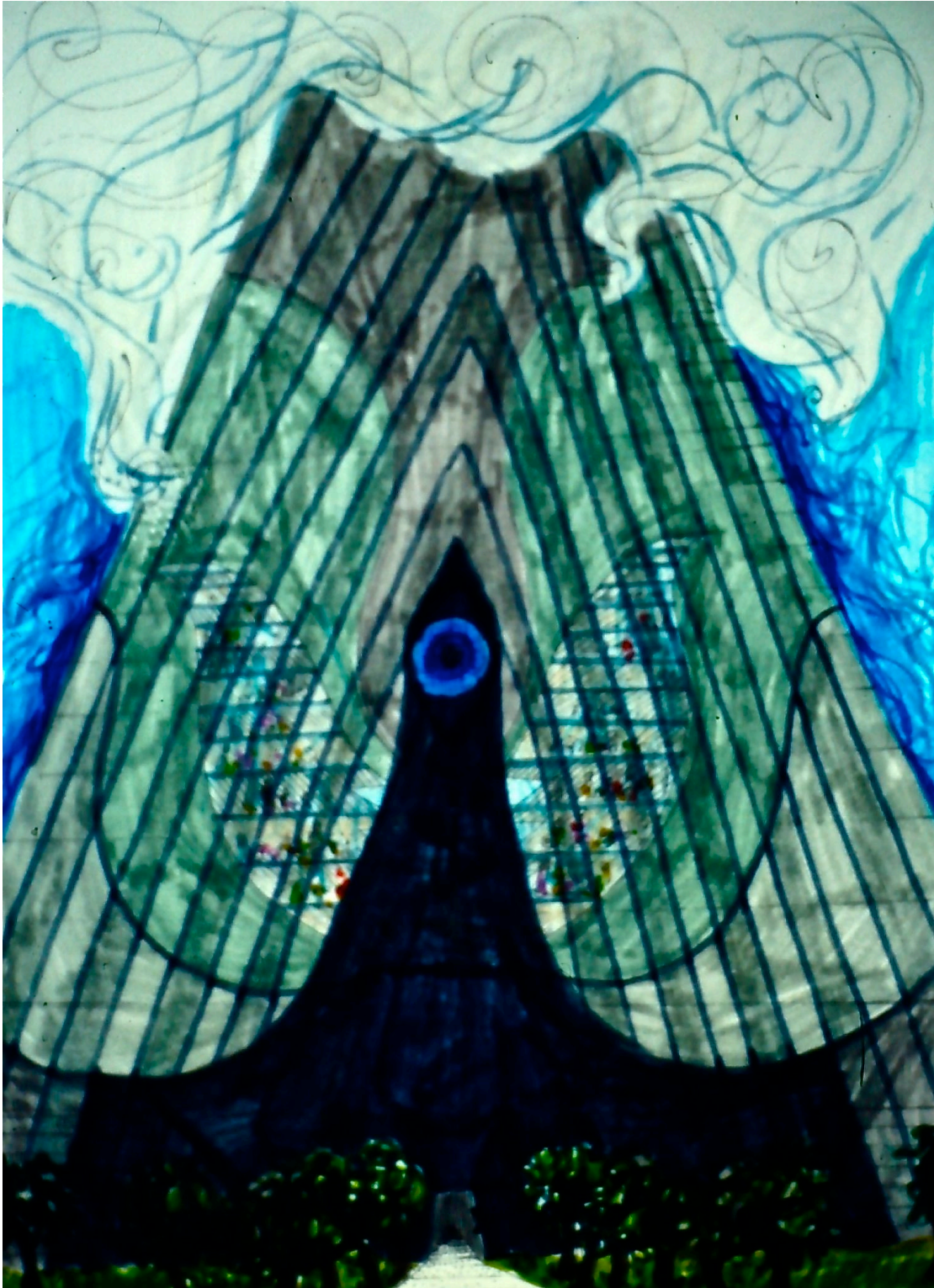
[CHAPTER A-2]

Aa was alone once more, away from those congested creatures with which it had recently become acquainted and had observed with so much zeal while visiting their nest. Aa was swamped by all the new impressions and imprints with which its mind was faced. Fortunately there were still some open areas left to compensate for the otherwise crowded and overpopulated river of memory. It would take some time for these rapids of recollection and remembrance to calm themselves. Anyway, there was the occasional calm spot ready to receive whatever may decide to swim or dive into it. Aa proceeded into the future happy at its rediscovered solitude.

All around nature and Illusha reaffirmed their glory and wisdom. There were lush and vibrant forests with murmuring and groaning trees, vast and endless beaches, mountains groping for the sky in extended stretches, dry and windy deserts proudly threatening in their austerity. Life and force were all around. The outer differences and dissonance that Illusha used to fool fools with did not trick Aa; it saw the unity and openness of the land and sky. What infinite joy it felt at breathing the air, at being in the air. To be the air was to be life itself. Aa was just this. How then could it not be at home wherever it found itself?

As Aa moved along contemplating itself, it did not take notice right away of the large grey building that was beginning to reveal itself upon its path. The closer

Aa came to it, the more material did it become ... the more density did it acquire.
Soon Aa was simply forced to acknowledge its presence.



Since the structure happened to rise so clearly in its path, Aa did not avoid it but continued to move in its direction; how could anyone ignore such a fateful manifestation anyway? Aa did not even have to seek a new destination; the destination had found Aa. Aa succumbed without any resistance or protest. In just a few short minutes, it found itself at the foot of the immense structure. The grey building seemed limitless in height. The pinnacle could not even be seen since it was obscured by clouds. It stood like a monolith.

A bizarre hum ensued from the very walls of the architectural marvel filling the air around it with vibrancy and tension. The building hummed and roared ... sang and chanted ... it spoke. As if hypnotized, Aa began to rise upwards, inching along the wall of the structure as if ordered by the sound, the voice – as if pulled up by some unseen force. The climb seemed endless. Aa passed solid walls, translucent glass, mirrored windows. Then, quite spontaneously, without planning to do so, Aa ceased its upward surge and went straight for the wall ahead. With Absolutely no fear or thought, Aa passed through the particles of cement and earth. For one breathless second it remained within the very wall, feeling the density, the slowness of movement and the restriction of oxygen. Then, it emerged on the other side of the barrier.

Aa was now inside the building. The voice surrounded it completely, filling the entire interior. It was tremendously loud. But what space! There were floors and floors of open areas, chambers, cubicles, corridors, passages. There were levels upon levels of space. At the center of the rectangular building, a spiral staircase appeared leading to even more elevated levels.



Aa peered around amazed ... it had never been in a place like this before. It was surrounded by beings of every sort imaginable. Illushans were here too although they constituted only a small percentage of the inhabitants.

On each level were thousands of these creatures. They sat or moved around; some slow, others quick; some crawled, others flew. All waited though, whether they themselves knew or not, they waited ... but for what? What was strangest of all was that the staircase leading up was practically deserted ... none ventured to use it to ascend to higher levels. Probably it was because most of them could not even see the way up, whereas the rest were either too lazy or too frightened to move in an upwards direction. For the time being, most were content where they were at present ... happy to indulge in their pleasures and fancies.

As had the Illushans in the nest, these creatures looked extremely busy also. They sat in small cliques and groups talking, or simply murmuring to themselves. Aa could see the palpitations and movements of the mouths and frontal orifices of the creatures ... seeing them flexed and relaxed, moving and still. The sounds they were making were inaudible to Aa ... only the creatures themselves could hear and understand them.



The sound Aa heard did not come from the mouths of these inferior creatures, these spectacles. Perplexed, Aa moved towards the center of the structure, the spiral staircase. Perhaps that was where the sound was made ... it transcended up.

The energy on the subsequent level was clearer ... less chatter, more silence and solemnity in the waiting. Still higher, there were even some creatures straining to hear, to see some indication or clue as to the way leading upwards. The higher Aa climbed, the more aware did it become that it was not the only body-less being in this space. Every so often it would see a streak of white zoom across its line of vision. It moved so fast that it flashed almost like lightening. The higher Aa moved, the more elevated it stood, the slower did the flashes move – perhaps the ability to see was being accelerated.



Aa now found itself at a point where it could go no higher. Above, the stairs seemed to end ... they simply vanished in grey mist, becoming less and less visible.



Aa was on the highest floor accessible to the creatures. Here it saw no movement among the multicolored beings. They sat still and waited in seriousness and clarity ... aware that they waited, humble in their trust that sooner or later it would be their turn to see and hear ... to transcend. The mood was very calm and patient. Full of faith and compassion, these creatures sat and purified themselves, brushing off the remaining dirt from the floor below that still clung to their minds.

Aa turns its gaze from the creatures to the stairs. The sound must come from above! Just then, a flash descended from the mist. It seemed to move much slower for Aa was seeing much faster. Below, the rate of evolution had been so slow that these apparitions could not be seen at all ... the higher Aa had gone, the more visible had they become. Now at long last one such flash stood before Aa. In greeting, the being sent forth a sound from its head since it possessed no lips to speak with ... Aa heard it – it was the very sound it had been hearing ever since it first saw the building from the outside! So it was these body-less and invisible creatures that spoke, it was they who chanted!



Abruptly Aa looked back as it heard a shuffle behind it. One of the bodied Creatures had suddenly opened its eyes and ears and had finally seen, for the first time, the white apparition. The mystifying three eyes of the white one ordered the un-blinded one forth. It obeyed; discarding its very last attachment, the body that had been its home till then. In a dense-less state, the creature moved towards the white clarity. The closer the newly awakened came, the more did it resemble the white figure before it. It was as if it became a mirror, reflecting more and more clearly the pure mind, the white light before it. Soon one could no longer tell which was which, they were both one mind - identical ... glistening in their purity.



Aa realized that there had been thousands of these enlightened one everywhere. They roamed through all the rooms on all the lower floors inciting the sleeping ones to awake and through seeing them, se themselves as they truly are beneath the coverings and possessions. The three of them – Aa and the two white ones stood looking at one another. Their joy was felt even if not one of them had lips to smile with and express it thus ...

Aa was thrilled at being seen for the first time by others; for the time being, it was no longer invisible. Together, all three floated towards the staircase. These body-less creatures knew the stairs continued up if only you could imagine them ... so they did and the steps materialized before their eyes. As they climbed, the steps vanished as gracefully as they had appeared. They revealed themselves only to those who were ready to see them. Aa and its two companions emerged on the uppermost floor. There were identical looking white-gowned beings everywhere. The clear air around them was immaculate. All was white and clean ... not a speck of dirt anywhere. Clouds of white mist passed by; within them the beings could be distinguished. They appeared and disappeared, materialized and dematerialized. Here, there were no stairs, rooms, floors ... all these were only a concept, not a physical reality. The bodies of the white ones were an idea also. They had no real form or mass, they only seemed tangible for moments at a time.



As Aa moved through the mist, alone once more, it noticed that the voice of the building was growing progressively louder. Soon it was so tremendous that it enveloped everything. The only way Aa could keep from being injured by the intensity of the vibrations, was by becoming the sound, letting it fill Aa totally ... surrendering to its force and not externalizing it.

Then it saw! Before Aa sat seven white ones. They sat in a circle. At the center was one, the remaining six gathered around it. Upon their heads were instruments ... the voices of the mind. The six outer ones had their instruments mounted upon the upper part of their heads, the middle one had the voice grasp the lower part of its skull. From the encircling bands attached to the heads, bands of white glistening substance extended into space. They were flat and straight, curving upwards at

their ends. The middle one had an instrument that had curved and wavy extensions. The seven would, with one of their six fingers, strum the ends of the white extensions. A heavenly chant would follow. It was as if the mind itself spoke; the fingers only acted as mouths transmitting the voice. The middle one had the loudest voice ... the spokes it strummed were longer and stronger than the rest ... most powerful.



This was the very center of the entire structure ... the control center ... the mind of One. It and the six ones around it spoke thus non-stop, day in, day out. With their meditations and their song they awakened all those sleeping beings below them on all the remaining floors. They would sit in this manner till all the ones below would become full of inner light ... full of purity ... en-lightened. Occasionally,

although not very often, all seven would strum simultaneously ... it was only then that one awakened below. The being at the center was definitely the leader and conductor of the whole orchestra. It was that one mind alone that existed. The six around it were only reflections of the central mind ... echoes of one voice. All the other white ones were only reflections as well. The One mind would send the reflections down below to mirror and transform the newly initiated ones, as well as to transmit the sound produced above using the very same instruments. Once all those below would see and hear the white ones, all reflections would disappear – along with the entire building. The mirror and the mirrored would be one ... no more need for reflections would exist.

Aa was invigorated and refreshed at seeing all this purity and oneness ... it was like being a witness to the enactment of something one has felt all along. By seeing its truth confirmed, Aa was filled with the strength it needed to carry on with its journey. Brave and strong, it could now return to a world where none saw it or heard it ... where all were deaf and blind to its existence. Aa left the cloud of white light full of warmth and love for all the sleeping ones around it ... soon they would be born ... soon. From now on Aa would not complain at not being noticed or seen. It would be enough for it to see. Aa too had awakened through this experience; it had gained humility – the power to do good without hope or desire for any reward or acknowledgment – and compassion for all living things. Doing good was now enough for Aa, praise was no longer needed or craved ... Aa was freed. It emerged from within the building renewed and enthusiastic towards what was ahead, whatever it may be.

THE HEAVEN ABOVE

[CHAPTER B-2]

Somehow fate seemed to put Aa and Ba on the same paths at the same time. Now Ba too found itself facing the immense grey structure that obstructed its passage. Ba heard no hum or chants though; it was attracted to the sound of voices chattering instead. The melodies of various languages and dialects, none of which Ba could understand, did have a certain enticing flavor to them. In no time curiosity took over completely and led Ba through the gigantic gate leading to the structure. Now not only voices could be distinguished but music as well. Fragrant smells seeped through the walls tempting Ba, urging it forward. Incense and flowers, perfumes and lotions could be smelt; encouraged, Ba hurried forward, now really impatient and anxious to arrive. Taking one last look over its shoulder at the greenery it was leaving behind, Ba entered the building.

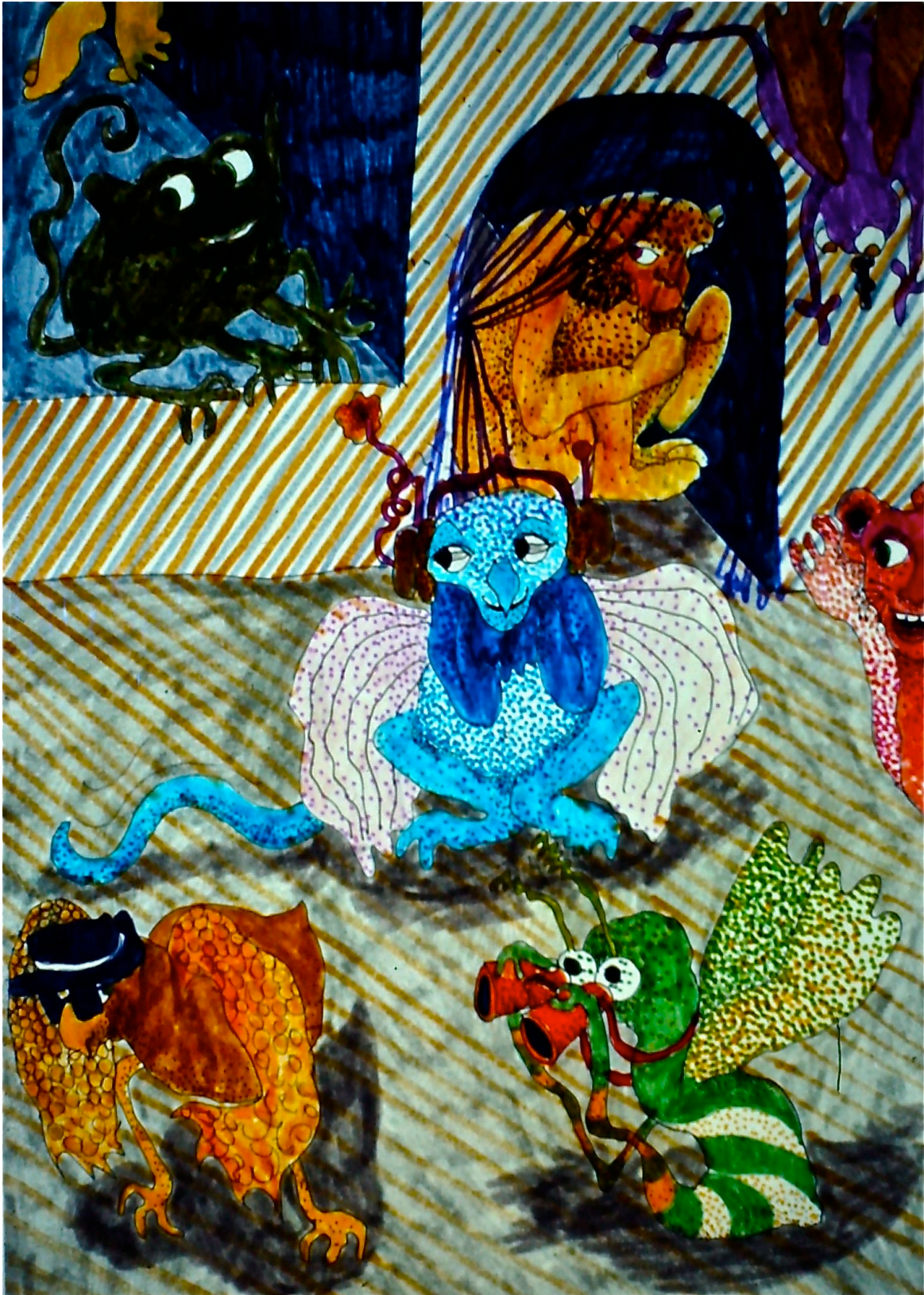
It was as immense inside as it was outside. The enclosed space was huge. Ba could hardly see to the other end of the long hall in which it now found itself. This ground floor was very confusing, like a labyrinth or maze; dead-ends, secret passages leading to no particular destination, broad alleyways that led one in circles. All these looked inviting yet once pursued, they disillusioned the traveler, leading him astray ... actually one could hardly keep from getting lost. The scene was crowded as well. There were creatures of every sort all around. The Illushans with their masks were there as well. All the various being were lavishly dressed and heavily ornamented, carrying bags and bags of possessions.



They wandered aimlessly through the passages and corridors seeking more and more things to hold and cherish ... to own. Each road baited them for a different reason. Some bent towards riches, some food, others power. Each had a fetish that needed to be pacified, a passion that had to be calmed. They would simply follow the roads that attracted them – being subtly seduced by their own desires. Ba looked at them with pity; they appeared so successful and directed, yet how lost they really were. Ba continued to wander through the ground level slightly lost as well. Eventually it came upon a funnel of space leading upwards. At the very center stood a beautiful stairway curving gently yet steeply towards the upper floors. Empty as it was, Ba proceeded to follow it. There were no spicy morsels to draw the decorated creatures forth, so none ventured up.

Ba went up past numerous floors, skipping quite a few since they were so similar to the ground floor with the attractions being slightly less material. Ba climbed still higher. The further up it was, the more earnest in their search did the creatures seem. Already there were some who knew that they needed to find something; what, they knew not. All that they were sure of was that they could not find it where they were. The thing they searched for was not a thing, but a state of mind. But on this floor they still searched for it as if it were a physical object. They looked and looked, never finding, dissatisfied and discontented. Already the ornaments they wore were simpler and less cumbersome – the bags they carried were fewer.

Ba took to the stairs once more. The next floor it visited showed the creatures mystified by something. They were becoming more and more aware that what they searched for was not a something sitting somewhere else, but a something that was right in front of their noses. They now began to think in terms of 'how' to get it, not 'where'! They were very suspicious of each other here, keeping their eyes and ears open in the hope of overhearing some clue or indication as to HOW. Hence their manner was highly secretive. Ba could see the various creatures looking through peepholes, peering around corners, listening to earphones, glued to keyholes, spying through binoculars and so on. Yet even when they saw or heard that the stairs were the way towards the elusive HOW, they refused to take them knowing they would have to be changed in some way ... they were too comfortable and secure where they were.



Only the daring, determined, and fearless followed through with their discovery. They were willing to adjust and change ... to make sacrifices.

Ba advanced still higher. At these heights the search was no longer secretive: The beings shared in their quest.



Already there were rumors of the way there, the path. Suggestions of a heaven above were heard, a heaven where 'how to find' would be answered.

The higher Ba went, the fewer creatures there were. They appeared more ascetic as well. They sat still more and more instead of scurrying around aimlessly. A peaceful calm began to appear. There was quiet talk to be heard, the playing of soft instruments, reading of large books, and studious self-observation.



Ba climbed even higher, there seemed to be no end to this staircase. On the subsequent levels Ba saw being in simple robes slowly pacing up and down the corridors in silence.



At last the stairs ended ... the last step was reached as Ba emerged on the topmost floor.

Silence and simplicity dominated. The beings positively knew of a heaven above their heads, they just waited for it to be revealed to them ... freeing them from their bondage and eternal quest. As Ba sat among them, they simply nodded their heads in acknowledgments and returned to their meditations. Beside Ba sat one creature with two heads. Its four eyes were half closed.



The two heads were solemn in bearing, nodding slightly with each inhalation of the long serpentine winged body. Ba could even hear the slow and methodical breath

of the striped creature. Ba observed its neighbor even more closely. It saw that one half of the two headed serpent was light in color, the other dark. The inner eyes were blue, the two outer ones red. The expression on the two faces was calm and peaceful ... neutral.

Suddenly, the creature stirred. An expression of surprise appeared on the faces. The eyes opened wide. The two heads then began to turn towards one another. Obviously this was a movement experienced for the first time by the winged being, since its bones could be heard as they cracked under the strain. Abruptly as the two halves of one being saw each other for the first time, a radiant smile was born.



Upon recognizing themselves as one, the four eyelids dropped as very slowly till the eyes closed never to see again. Then to Ba's surprise an eye emerged in the center of each forehead. It glistened in its silvery brightness, rays bursting from its center. The two heads saw once more, yet for the first time. They came closer to each other till the lips touched.



As they joined, the two central eyes closed, as had the others. Then ... the body of the creature fell back ever so gently as the last breath was expelled.

Ba could not believe what it then saw. Suddenly a point of light opened in the ceiling. It spread apart to allow a cloud of white smoke to descend. The smoke formed the remaining stairs that were missing from the staircase. A glistening cloud

in the shape of the fallen creature rose from the discarded body and sprung up towards the aperture.



A loud gong thundered in the distance ... the ghost evaporated. The stairs slowly disintegrated as the ceiling sealed itself off, and all was as before. The only remaining proof of what had passed was the lifeless body that now lay beside Ba. It was only then that Ba understood. Slowly it picked itself up from the floor and began to descend. It now knew that it was not ready to be here. Ba still had a lot to learn and do while in the body. Its home had not yet been used to its full extent and was not ready to be discarded. Ba still needed and felt attached to it. But it now knew what would happen when it was ready to leave its flesh and all attachment to it. Becoming detached from form was certainly a beautiful thing to look forward to.

Ba left the grey monolith joyous at having learnt something. Aa had acquired humility; Ba had lost its fear of death. Both were on the road again. Who knows where they would appear next?