

## Easter Sunday

On Easter Sunday, Dave Coal let himself sleep late instead of getting up early enough to meditate. A brunch at his neighbor's nearby apartment awaited him. He uncorked a bottle of Sonoma Country red Zinfandel and poured a tall glass. The other bottle had yesterday become the property of the same neighbors having the brunch. Dave did not want to go altogether uninitiated with the liquid on account of his generosity. On the contrary he drank a second fill.

In the street the sun beat down like a representation of God. Few cars passed. The short walk brought Dave Coal to a gate of thin black bars and an accompanying panel of buzzers. He rang the middle one in the lower row. There was no attendant sound.

After a sizable pause Dave did hear a buzzer allowing him in. He pushed the heavy door inward and prevented it from slamming as it closed, recollecting this instruction from his last visit a few weeks ago. As he climbed the winding, carpeted stairs, a greeting came.

"Hello!" Shelly called.

"Hello," Dave Coal replied.

"Dave! How are you?"

"I'm soooo good," he said warmly, returning the question.

"I'm not quite *that* good," Shelly said by way of comparison. "But I'm glad you're here. We have plenty of food." Tacitly invoking the holiday, this repast consisted of Egg Stuff, a meal devised in the South by Shelly's mom. The main ingredient was eggs, dozens of eggs, all of them hard-boiled and halved and sinking in a thick miasma of melted butter and orange cheese. For Dave Coal this arrangement represented the holiday insofar as Easter involved eggs and also rebirth, which somehow closely compared to birth in general and so consuming ova.

Dave Coal was a vegetarian leaning toward an eggless diet of late. Nevertheless, the most recent evolution of that lifestyle was no more fully

hatched than the morning's eggs themselves, and by its vague incipience permitted a breach. Dave sat up straight in a wooden wicker chair with three horizontal supports and inhaled the pervasive smell in the apartment. The stove resided beyond his view in the far corner of the kitchen.

"Dave Coal, this is Linda," Shelly said, the introduction slightly delayed.

"Hi," Dave Coal said, standing to shake hands.

"Hi," Linda said, shaking Dave's hand. Linda's hand was meaty around the palm and the fingers were short. They extended to blunt tips almost like triangles. Dave Coal considered this geometry as he released it, musing that Easter, as an acme of Christian devotion, should conjure a passing triangle or two since the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit often formed a triangle in Scripture. Or did that analogy derive from exegesis of Scripture?

Dave Coal could not keep it straight and did not try to. At some point in his past the distinction between primary and secondary sources dissolved and Dave moved into the belief that it missed the point anyway. In his opinion, written discussion of sacred text was another form of directly writing sacred text since the sacred gained an audience by both paths. In this perspective Dave bore a strong similarity to early Talmudic scholars, who suggested that discussion of the divine between two or more interested parties was a means of entirely summoning the divine to any proceeding. In other words, divine presence graced any shared contemplation of it.

But Dave Coal did not share his God vocally, and therefore differed from the scholastic model also. In fact, he believed it a violation of his God to speak on the subject instead of practicing an airtight reticence. In that context, the best expression of the divine was by mute example, which hopefully communicated the spirit without explaining exactly how. Dave Coal believed you could not explain how anyway, no more than your words of explanation could grow wings and fly. Verbal analysis always fell short. And worse, it led to misrepresentation and comprehensive ruts and baggage, all of which cluttered any path to salvation like so much flagrant indifference.

Yet Easter had communicable meanings for some people present. Shelly's boyfriend William likened it to Christmas for using fictitious benefactors—in this case a bunny—to draw in the children on a commercial level. William leaned forward in his chair, scratching his neck with a very long arm as he launched this sociological comparison.

"Shelly got me a bunny," he said sweetly, pointing to the bookcase, where it sat in its large box behind a thick plastic window.

"It's solid," Dave Coal observed.

"They're best!" Linda voted.

"Yes, they are," William said.

"It was the only solid one in the whole store," Sherry explained, peeking into the room from around the corner near the stove. She wore a dilapidated oven mitt and waved a wooden spoon gently, hinting at her surprise about the news.

"You did good, baby," William said, lapsing into a slight Southern accent despite his Wisconsin origins and pointdexter glasses. Sherry disappeared around the corner again and the sound of sizzling momentarily amplified.

"Did *you* get chocolate?" Dave Coal asked Linda.

"Me? Oh no way. No, not chocolate for me anymore."

"Did you used to?"

"Sure, before I grew these generous hips."