

THE DAWNING OF ENLIGHTENMENT

Well, of course, if the case were not an odd one we should not have
been driven to ask you for an explanation.

Arthur Conan Doyle (1893)

No one can advise and help you, no one. There is but a single way.
Go into yourself.

Rainer Rilke (1903)

[Maigret] was drifting. Impressions formed and dissolved. He had
lost all sense of time and place.

Georges Simenon (1944)

All comprehension is temporary.

Frank Herbert (1985)

The state of the early universe was *not* chosen randomly among all
possible states. Everyone in the world who has thought about the
problem agrees with that. What they don't agree on is *why* the early
universe was so special—what is the mechanism that put it in that
state?

Sean Carroll (2010)

Thoughts don't necessarily happen one at a time. They come in
starbursts and waterfalls and explosions.

Lee Child (2010)

This morning in my waking haze the final penny drops. The list of phone calls should have been enough. None of them *for* her. Not one. Every few days or so a polite call on some pretext from someone's secretary. Sussing us out. After a while you can tell, without them saying, they're calling *about* her. They won't come right out and ask the question but they want to know if she's for real. In answering, *I'm* backing *her* credentials! Then there's her travel. And her phony names. Her secrecy. Her pile of money. Her damn-fool project. And now ALICE.

It's embarrassing because it's obvious. We're some kind of *maskirovka*, Frank and I. According to the Soviet Military Encyclopaedia, a *maskirovka* is 'a complexity of measures, directed to mislead the enemy.' I recall it from a Clancy classic as one *nekulturniy* plot designed to hide another. I feel used and foolish, with

two questions nudging at me: Whose *maskirovka*? And who is the enemy? Clearly, she must be involved.

Mid-morning, while my head's still spinning, the phone rings. It's Frank. He *never* phones. Now he wants to know if I know where she is today. Like he imagines I keep track? Well, of course I try but he's not briefed on that. He seems to sense I have antennae up. He backs off in a hurry, too much hurry. But then he casually, too casually, asks who is calling us of late. Of this I tell him even less. He mutters vaguely and hangs up. Something tells me he will soon abandon ship. Or have I got it wrong? Is he checking, maybe *for* her, fishing for some inkling about what I'm making of the mail? I tap short-term memory to rerun what he said.

And then right at this moment Frank, my Frank, shoves the phone call and the package and the *maskirovka* out of mind. A picture of a very different kind, a kaleidoscope of ideas, is somehow coming into focus. It's fragmentary; it's erratic; it's elusive and yet simple. He says something, more an incoherent outcry than a word. Some essential element, a puzzle piece or maybe more than one, falls into place. And suddenly we see it, or enough of it to know it will all soon be there, with an abrupt, confusing kind of clarity. The pieces come together all in a commotion. They don't make a picture yet. Again I have this feeling that they will. It blurs and he is babbling. He makes no sense.

Later he tries to tell me how it feels.

"You've found the map. It is a thrill. You haven't got the treasure. But you *know* it will be there."

So he feels! And while I'm thinking of the double game she's playing he is on the case? Some pieces come together and suddenly he has it all? Or rather, suddenly he knows he *will*. Or so he says. To me it is incomprehensible. Without meaning it to happen, right now, at this moment, he's off taking what I laughingly was calling the Big Leap?

Maybe the tip-off was Lemaître.

"Georges got a bum rap," he said, apropos of nothing, earlier today.

The Beginning was, it had to be, just as Lemaître says, a single quantum. *Not* an atom. Just a quantum. Only one because more wouldn't meet the Primal Principle. And, for this reason, nothing else. No space. No time. No vacuum. Especially no nothing. As Lemaître says, 'If the world has begun with a single quantum, the notions of space and time would altogether fail to have any meaning at the beginning.'

In his mind some kind of dawn is breaking: Dividing? No; multiplying really. I can't really see it. Is this what he thinks makes space?

The 'primeval atom' doesn't turn to fireworks. It just replicates? I think: Like a virus?

“No . . . not like a virus!”

His mind’s racing. Or is mine?

The Beginning—he is seeing far ahead of me—unzips into space and time. Maybe a way to quantum gravity. No singularity. A reason for strings’ six dimensions. It’s possible that it’s all there. Feverishly he is groping. Where’s a pen? His brain’s on fire. It fits. He’s got to write it down.