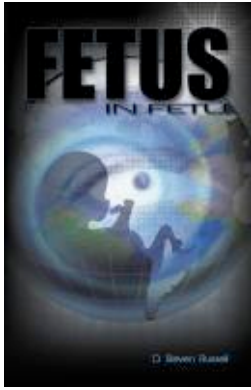


FETUS

IN FETU



D. Steven Russell



A pregnant Chilean boy finds an unlikely path from village scorn to life as a brilliant astronomer. His love for Beverly, a young surgeon from Tucson, Arizona, becomes more radiant and enlightening than the vastness of space.

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ISBN 978-1-62141-750-7

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Introduction

Job 2

1 On another day the angels came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came with them to present himself before him. 2 And the LORD said to Satan, "Where have you come from?" Satan answered the LORD, "From roaming through the earth and going back and forth in it."

3 Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil. And he still maintains his integrity, though you incited me against him to ruin him without any reason."

4 "Skin for skin!" Satan replied. "A man will give all he has for his own life. 5 But, stretch out your hand and strike his flesh and bones, and he will surely curse you to your face."

6 The LORD said to Satan, "Very well, then, he is in your hands; but you must spare his life."

7 So Satan went out from the presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. 8 Then Job took a piece of *broken pottery* and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes.

Job 38

1 Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm. He said:

2 "Who is this that darkens my counsel with words without knowledge? 3 Brace yourself like a man; I will question you, and you shall answer me. 4 Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. 5 Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it? 6 On what were its footings set, or who laid its cornerstone 7 while the morning stars sang together and all the angels shouted for joy?"

8 "Who shut up the sea behind doors when it burst forth from the womb, 9 when I made the clouds its garment and wrapped it in thick darkness, 10 when I fixed limits for it and set its doors and bars in place, 11 when I said, 'This far you may come and no farther; here is where your proud waves halt?'"

12 "Have you ever given orders to the morning, or shown the dawn its place, 13 that it might take the earth by the edges and shake the wicked out of it? 14 The earth takes shape like clay under a seal; its features stand out like those of a garment."

15 "The wicked are denied their light, and their upraised arm is broken. 16 Have you journeyed to the springs of the sea or walked in the recesses of the deep? 17 Have the gates of death been shown to you?"

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Have you seen the gates of the shadow of death? 18
Have you comprehended the vast expanses of the
earth? Tell me, if you know all this.”

19 "What is the way to the abode of light? And where
does darkness reside? 20 Can you take them to their
places? Do you know the paths to their dwellings? 21
Surely you know, for you were already born! You have
lived so many years!"

22 "Have you entered the storehouses of the snow or
seen the storehouses of the hail, 23 which I reserve for
times of trouble, for days of war and battle? 24 What is
the way to the place where the lightning is dispersed,
or the place where the east winds are scattered over
the earth? 25 Who cuts a channel for the torrents of
rain, and a path for the thunderstorm, 26 to water a
land where no man lives, a desert with no one in it, 27
to satisfy a desolate wasteland and make it sprout
with grass?"

28 "Does the rain have a father? Who fathers the
drops of dew? 29 From whose womb comes the ice?
Who gives birth to the frost from the heavens 30 when
the waters become hard as stone, when the surface of
the deep is frozen? 31 Can you bind the beautiful
Pleiades?"

"Can you loose the cords of Orion? 32 Can you bring
forth the constellations in their seasons or lead out the
Bear with its cubs? 33 Do you know the laws of the

heavens? Can you set up God's dominion over the earth?"

34 "Can you raise your voice to the clouds and cover yourself with a flood of water? 35 Do you send the lightning bolts on their way? Do they report to you, 'Here we are'?"

36 "Who endowed the heart with wisdom or gave understanding to the mind? 37 Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens 38 when the dust becomes hard and the clods of earth stick together?"

39 "Do you hunt the prey for the lioness and satisfy the hunger of the lions 40 when they crouch in their dens or lie in wait in a thicket?"

41 "Who provides food for the raven when its young cry out to God and wander about for lack of food?"

Job 39

1 "Do you know when the mountain goats give birth? Do you watch when the doe bears her fawn? 2 Do you count the months till they bear? Do you know the time they give birth? 3 They crouch down and bring forth their young; their labor pains are ended. 4 Their young thrive and grow strong in the wilds; they leave and do not return."

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5 "Who let the wild donkey go free? Who untied his ropes? 6 I gave him the wasteland as his home, the salt flats as his habitat. 7 He laughs at the commotion in the town; he does not hear a driver's shout. 8 He ranges the hills for his pasture and searches for any green thing."

9 "Will the wild ox consent to serve you? Will he stay by your manger at night? 10 Can you hold him to the furrow with a harness? Will he till the valleys behind you? 11 Will you rely on him for his great strength? Will you leave your heavy work to him? 12 Can you trust him to bring in your grain and gather it to your threshing floor?"

13 "The wings of the ostrich flap joyfully, but they cannot compare with the pinions and feathers of the stork. 14 She lays her eggs on the ground and lets them warm in the sand, 15 unmindful that a foot may crush them, that some wild animal may trample them. 16 She treats her young harshly, as if they were not hers; she cares not that her labor was in vain, 17 for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense. 18 Yet when she spreads her feathers to run, she laughs at horse and rider."

19 "Do you give the horse his strength or clothe his neck with a flowing mane? 20 Do you make him leap like a locust, striking terror with his proud snorting? 21 He paws fiercely, rejoicing in his strength, and charges into the fray. 22 He laughs at fear, afraid of nothing; he does not shy away from the sword. 23 The

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quiver rattles against his side, along with the flashing spear and lance. 24 In frenzied excitement he eats up the ground; he cannot stand still when the trumpet sounds. 25 At the blast of the trumpet he snorts, 'Aha!' He catches the scent of battle from afar, the shout of commanders and the battle cry.

26 "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread his wings toward the south? 27 Does the eagle soar at your command and build his nest on high? 28 He dwells on a cliff and stays there at night; a rocky crag is his stronghold. 29 From there he seeks out his food; his eyes detect it from afar. 30 His young ones feast on blood, and where the slain are, there is he."

Job 40

1 The LORD said to Job: 2 "Will the one who contends with the Almighty correct him? Let him who accuses God answer him!"

3 Then Job answered the LORD: 4 "I am unworthy—how can I reply to you? I put my hand over my mouth."

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Chapter 1 *Plummeting*

Man had chronicled the season, birthright, and way of the eagle, the doe, the lioness, the hawk, the raven, the eagle, and the wild donkey.

Horses—no match for machines—were bred, refined and raced, then became carnival ponies and, enduringly, gambling fodder, bologna, and glue. When animals were no longer magic wilderness, or *approved* junk food, man fenced a zoo and hunted the lame as paid sport to make the counting and discounting easier.

The donkey was whisk away with the dust bowl and the ox served as domestic burgers. Man searched for leviathan and, finally, satisfied that nothing could exist five or eleven miles deep, disregarded her as myth.

Man opened his mouth wide, proclaiming great wisdom and understanding. He looked to the infinite stars yet felt safe on a small, unstable glob of potter's clay and saltwater. Five billion years and a thousand refinements of God saw man supreme—the consummate orbiting and evolving will of God.

If time or space were real...it was a space in time when men debated if the universe was 11 billion light years—or 15 billion—to its “edge.”

A small pink rock perched in the dulling eastern and western sky as man's next horizon for western civilization, and even it soon hid behind a dangerous moon.

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News docudrama and digital science filmed bearded men and ratty-haired women running around, sun-baked, stoned, agglutinated, intelligent, and halfcocked, as the bankrupt earth sat melting and rotting like a giant hazel and blue apple.

Bugs mutated and seeds grew seedless as nutrients bleached leaking poison under the cultivating plowshares of man.

Gulfs and oceans suffocated beneath broken pipes of mile-deep oil as an angel carefully poured his destined bowl of prophesy into the waters.

Looking up, to ignore what was below, silos of men forgot that Einstein's child-fascination was with the stars and heavens themselves and not with bending time or the diminutive light which man perceived as birthing existence. Perhaps he should have kept silent and never put away childish things.

At Argentina's Pierre Auger Observatory, a cosmic tree from whence the apple fell drew attention, but no one saw that the tree was already sleeping 'neath the inevitable shadowed wobble of an approaching final solstice. How *could* they know? There was no honest measure in Earth's cramped history and—as with the universe's fading exhale of 15 billion light years—man's astronomy was a *tabula rasa* baby, 400 years old.

Now, impotently documented, theorized, and misunderstood, the big bang would suddenly *inhale*—a *gasp*—to cleanse its violent bloodstream.

In displacement, Earth's moon seemingly continued to move away at a rate of about 3.8 centimeters, 38 millimeters—or, to Americans, about 1 ½ inches per

year. It moved about a tall man's tiptoed reach in his lifetime.

Tsunamis, earthquakes, and hurricanes toyed subtly and unnoticed with growing tidal bulge and friction.

Accidents accelerated, miners died, and intelligent man became chaotically angrier 'neath the light of each approaching full moon.

The delicate balance of Earth, moon, and sun had begun to stretch to that disparaged, brittle moment when a rubber band breaks and its spitball flies, misaimed and unfettered, into the gawking eye of an ornery bystander or back into the face of its child creator.

In the midst of dying jungles, raped oxygen, and rising oceans, miniscule seasonal effects lounged exaggerated or unnoticed.

Carbon gas and greenhouse effects explained beautiful pictures of drifting icebergs.

Photos of isolated polar bears emailed around the world.

However, that was not even the point. It was as significant as fleas dying on a frozen dog, a brief swarm of flying termites, or ice cubes melting in mint juleps 'neath an August Georgia sun.

A Midwest farmer thanked God that he did not have to water his crops this season, and then cursed heaven as he watched them pounded flat by harvest-season hail.

A neighbor's mile-wide wheat field was sucked upward into an F-5 tornado and sprinkled out as seeded clouds on concrete streets, 80 miles away.

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An ice trucker praised and cursed unseasonable cold while a Maine sea captain worried that late Atlantic hurricanes and brutal winters were nor'easters gone wild.

Tornados, floods, fires, ice, snow, earthquakes, and hailstorms were commonplace around the pear-shaped orb as economic obsolescence distracted, lied, reinvented, and strained the unnatural attention span of man.

Plastic nonsense, the net, peddled flesh, and electronic fantasy evolved as temporary global respite—an anesthesia for decaying man, dying fleas, colorful icebergs, and drifting cubs.

Chapter 2

Pondering

CELESTINO TOMÁS DE AARÓN was destined to sit atop a mountain, muttering obsessively to interrupt—or interpret—anxious daydreams in Spanish and English, looking for...*something*. He did not know what, but he knew that it would be trembling beneath him and visible in the night sky.

He discovered that his name loosely translated to *Heavenly Twin of the High Mountain*, or, perhaps, *Twin Heavenly of the High Mountain*. He was not sure which, and he was not sure why it mattered, but he *knew* that it did—as when a pilot knows that the difference between north and north-northeast on a compass will soon matter.

The heavens were a life obsession, and, so, he mensurated himself in the context of man's lifespan against that of the celestial whole. In microseconds of thought, he *understood* a “billion light years” and knew that he had to work fast doing...*something*.

His destined sobriquet had passed down a bit at a time, so he felt blessed to know its convergence. He knew that his life was a calling—a sign and wonder from the heavens.

His grandmother's name was Celestina; his father's name was Tomas de Aaron, after Moses' brother. That is what the name meant to his father: “Twin of Aaron,” not “Twin of High Mountain.” He discovered the meaning of his special cognomen cipher at age 13, in Catholic School Latin class in rural Chile.

The biggest day of his outreached life would be when he attended a lecture by Dr. Lyman Spitzer, Jr., the renowned astrophysicist, and heard him utter the poetries of space.

He would see the vision of telescopes in orbit and know that looking beyond this vision was the meaning of “Celestino.” That hour, the symbol of his destined name would unlock. Tino, as people informally called him, would still be young, studying at the University of Arizona, Tucson. All “intellectual” else would be meaningless from that moment. He knew a promised word—his glimpse of the universe—perhaps even humankind’s place in his peering heart.

He had a natural love for colliding galaxies. He loved *anything* that collided—especially car wrecks. He had seen enough collisions to know the wake of debris. In college, he would study high-accident intersections and wait there to explain auto chaos, usually disappointed. He hunted nature in anything perceived.

To him, God was once an excuse for low esteem, bad physics, and wanting technology. He felt damaged by religion, silencing it under torrid resentment. Nevertheless, he had faith in God’s stars.

He wondered if stars truly sang or if galaxies felt intimacy for those who searched their throbbing twinkle. He concluded, finally, one night, with the naked eye, that they did. Somehow, sleepless and late at night—seeing that and KNOWING it—he saw and rediscovered his mountaintop God. Now he could focus and search clearly with eyes of faith. Not ignoring an attraction for all creation, he planned to target only

colliding spiral galaxies, and, more precisely, only those that were becoming *one*.

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IT TOOK TIME to realize that one could not see one's story unfolding. One could not even read the final page to see if it were worth reading. Besides, Tino's final chapter would seemingly be his worst. If the final line defined his life, he would never have begun it. It did not. Rather, his life defined the final line. Though there were passions worth writing, he simply had a hand too numb to finish—and, so, any line might be his last. Any line now would be numb.

Tino finally looked at the coming solstice. His brother taught him that *believing was seeing*, but man—with blinding years of knowledge—had almost persuaded him of the opposite.

He had sat in enough restaurants watching people destroy the beauty of Spanish and the crudeness of English with stupid conversations and family fights—yet he savored the soothing murmur of it.

He had heard enough women fake orgasms and known enough real ones to discern the cry of passion and the echo of panting lies. More importantly, though, he could *smell* the difference. He had a superhuman sense of smell. It was the curse and blessing of his journeys.

Long ago, as a child, *smell* made Tino explore something different in the night sky. The smell of mountains, the smell of rain, the smell of snow, the smell of food, the smell of horseshit, the smell of sparking wires, the smell of chemicals—and, finally,

the smell of infidelity—taught him that, most of all, women carried a smell *unique* to their flesh and passions.

When he was young—watching dogs, horses, goats, cats, cows, and, sometimes, his parents—Tino believed that sex was an attraction of nature to perpetuate the species. Now he knew that it was, in fact, a collision created by misguided attraction, deceitful habit, and a morality of agnostic surge. Flesh desired fulfillment, not by choice, but as a microcosm of the pulsing universe.

He marveled at the prospect of warm flesh—in any form—growing from the scattered rocks of cold space. He had a long season of believing in human love, but only one season. The interval had taught him the joy of newness, the hell of lonely growth, and the fading of flesh to a final harvest.

Few humans truly loved. Perhaps he had met only two. He accepted love as a scarce element in the laws of physics, and, like gold, knew its sheen. He now spent no time searching for gold or love.

Tino had known the purest love—and had walked through the Refiner's fire to behold that purity. A spiritual friend once asked him, "Do you know, Tito, how the Master knows that his gold is ready?" He did not. "It is finished when, molten, it reflects the Maker's face."

Capturing anything from the universe took a miracle, but he had already captured infinity—for others, missing it by a centimeter missed by eternity. He had learned that only man needed time, not the heavens. Man was flesh. Flesh was dust. Dust was

only smart enough to bury man and, then, recreate him.

Tino had no remaining days for love or commitment. An internal void was now God's sore-pressing caress.

He lost the smell of morality when he lost the Love of his Life. He still believed in God; he simply chose to defy Him.

Tino started as irrelevant, but moral, became efficacious, then amoral, then immoral, then devoted, abandoned, and, finally...only mortal. He lived now with *ache* as a soul and *loss* as a heart. Only his flesh and beclouded curiosity remained alive. He gave God credit for all of that.

Ah, he smelled it again now and pondered the genius that had been so near fruition. His ego ultimately beguiled that genius, while brokenness dragged it into the Refiner's furnace. It had simmered in debris until he finally *chose* love as the purest element.

Genius lay discarded as he finally replaced ego with loss and as he realized that *simply knowing* was sufficient. Ego became meaningless when he realized that sensing the universe was better than mapping it for men. It took a deluded lifetime to become only a man.

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TINO CURRENTLY RESIDED with a poor family in La Serena, Chile, on the Cerro Pachón Mountain where he worked. He liked the simple life—wine, little talk, masturbation, Spanish poetry, simple food. As he

jockeyed for rotation at the Gemini South Observatory, he prayed for nothing. He knew enough already.

Yet, numb and shallow, he was eye-fucking the wife of his host. She was a pretty, dark-eyed woman who likely had intense, clenching orgasms and knew fine blends of lust and hospitality. She offered squibs of flesh and he took them. Her husband was hospitable and Tino took that. She was a warm, sterile woman who did not believe in love.

He had drifted without an honorable woman for some time, so it was the first (and last) time he had sex with his friendly host's wife that he finally realized the full, colliding nature of loveless attraction—or was it the attracting nature of loveless collision? He was not sure, but as a physicist, he looked at principle things without judgment. Judgment was not a moral compass; it was a set of skills for not experiencing consequence.

Carefully trained, and anticipating her scent, he slowly sipped the power of his hostesses' searching eyes over meals.

She smiled in carnal buildup as they looked downward, blushed, and exchanged secret glances. As flame beneath a vial, it started in profligate trust—above, beneath, behind, and beyond a husband's seeing. Over months of crackling fires, it grew, weaving into the salty savor of evening meals.

Finally, room temperature wine, cool goat's milk, mint candles, and sweet breath became a pre-scent as her longwinded husband was called away to repair a distant transformer that snowy mountain evening.

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Attraction, night cold, secrecy, opportunity, and wanting-void seeped a pheromone—tingling, trembling, and deceitful. Fear, backdraft firewood smoke, wanting stares, leaking animalism, avoidance, a too-late “**no, please stop,**” sparks of touching, pushing away with moist hands, pulling-in the arch of her back to deep kiss, and the collision of succulent flesh released it—eyes, fingertips, lips, shared undressing, hot breathing, attraction, wet impact, dilating eyes. It was immeasurable and left a violent scent of creation in the air. Yet, there was no creation.

Ah, it was another irrelevant affirmation of his life’s work: Hot or cold, rocks or flesh, the violent universe—when intimate, or accidental—leaves and creates scents.

Thus concluded his fascination with scents in space—celestial olfactometers, borne of detached gazing. Like a scientist’s Bell Curve, smell had once become the apex of his genius, but irrelevance now punctuated its beginning and his end.

At hope’s peak, he believed he might see, smell, and even measure the morning breath of God. He nearly did. Finally tested, however, he walked away with only human bitterness, remembered love, deflated ego, pleading colleagues, and an awareness of man’s finite time—all enveloped within the belly of a God too vast for one to worship or praise.

He deliberately fucked her, extracted three clutching orgasms. He then took a sip of warm red wine and smiled at how shallow he now was. He put on ONLY his hat, and walked into the snowy night.

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*“Ah, My Brother, snow surrounds the warm smell of
a newborn baby...”*

Chapter 3

Puberty

Tino was born in a small mountain village in southern Chile. He was one of nine children, Machi, Catholic, pigeon-toed, stringy haired, poor, and curious.

He was gaunt, and never had enough to eat but had a belly that protruded like the pregnant women in his village. He starved himself to shrink his runaway guts and lived in a state of pumpkin-like embarrassment, an outcast called “embarazadito” or “chica embarazada” or “*embarazatino*,” the most common slang. When he later saw the English word resemblance, it would have amused him, if he had humor left. He would not.

Only his grandmother called him Celestino; his family called him Tino, or Tito, as a pet name. His brothers led the village in mocking him. Whatever named, he hated his fat, hungry life.

Tino was a keen student, brilliant and reserved. He craved sugar and fat but fasted each waking hour. Sometimes nuns would force him to eat every gristly morsel. “It’s a sin to waste food, child,” they scolded. Then, he would vomit.

His stomach ached, crawled, and jumped like a caught fish as he tried to sleep at night. He awoke from nightmares, screaming, whereupon his eldest brother would beat him. He often grabbed a canvas sheepskin sack—like a sleeping bag—to stuff his clothes in, and then snuck and slept atop a shallow

wooden perch of the neighbor's porch, where he would stare at the night sky and count shooting stars.

When it was cold, he crawled beneath the neighbor's house and warmed himself from the wood-burning stove above his head.

He both loved and resented the village man who started an electric generator each afternoon at about 2:00—a man who promptly shut it down at 4:00.

Tino resented the electrician because he did not understand the nature of electricity and was too young to ask of it. He intuitively knew that electrical distribution was stupid compared to energy in the universe, but he did not yet have a better idea than wires and generators.

His mother, a “secret” *Machi/curandura*, would normally heat bath water with sticks and dog, horse, cow, or goat dung instead of electricity. Electricity was worthless to all but a few in the village. Poverty ensured that. Nonetheless, Tino marveled at its powerful beauty.

Also, sometimes he would watch branches and leaves in a passing breeze, feel the chill or heat of a winter or summer sun, and ask God of *desequilibrio*—imbalance. He sensed it all around him: Cold trying to be warm, noise stilling silence, silence suffocating sound, wind sweeping away calm, gas, air, hard, soft, life, decay, touch perceiving anything—or nothing—as pain or pleasure, the goat's tail flicking at a fly, or his own body sweating and chilling.

Tino would sit in an occasional warm bath and marvel at sensations of wet and dry. His bloated

stomach would float, surge, and swim joyfully in the bathwater, offering his only moments of rest.

When a boy in the village taught him to masturbate at 10, he wanted more. The warm hand of a smelly visiting girl, and knowing the joy of a first wet dream at 12 or 13, was indescribable. Thus, even warm-on-warm created a form of energy.

Pondering it all—and converting chronic pain to a sense of daily *numb* for his growing fat belly—gave him the idea of *el motor de la inestabilidad* (an “instability drive” motor). He saw it one day as he peeked at the electric man through bushes near the power plant.

He watched the electrician jerk away his hand, cussing, from a rusty, spinning-shaft housing—as though from a hot stovetop—sound, friction, heat, the smell of an un-oiled driveshaft, the magic and putrid smell of sparking wires, the blue and yellow light of pumping electricity. Why, even wasted heat and a man’s ability to sense *and repel* it were dancing energies...magic.

Tino looked up as raindrops wet his face that day, and as lightning exploded nearby, sending fire downward through the wires and slapping the electrician like a gourd-shaped, blue stickball. A yellow ball of fire rolled away, buzzing, and then exploded into nothing.

As the old man arose, shaking his hand, mumbling and dusting off his ass, it was as though the world were yelling an answer. But...what *was* the question? La pregunta...búsqueda? It was all so primitive, untamed...timeless, and alive. He grasped the helpless

delusion of man in an untamable world of flesh, dirt, wires, energy, and machinery.

He visualized the imbalance of all things working, like water, to find balance and visualized his machine fueling itself from ALL of the imbalance—hot turning to cold, cold to hot, sound to silence, wind to calm—all vibration to energy, with everything working together to power a machine. Why, it could fly, drive, or even produce electricity. It could be a toy. It could do anything.

His mind then watched a thermometer to show him a *“mercury drive motor.”*

He mentally filled a cold, circular metal tube with mercury. He carefully closed the round tube so it could not leak. He then used a candle to heat the tube’s bottom, making the mercury rise and push itself, spinning inside the tube, in a constant circle. It spun a gear at the circle’s bottom, which drove a transmission and turned larger wheels.

Soon, the gear heated from spinning—like the electrician’s hot shaft. It heated the mercury as a natural, friction based, heat source—more heat, faster mercury...faster mercury, more power...more power, more spinning...more spinning, more heat...etcetera, etcetera, etcetera. More heat...Ah, no need for a candle now; candlelight was only to start the process. Why, it also could fly, drive, power a toy, or even produce electricity.

Yet, it could be better, better...His mind began to cool the mercury at the top apex of its closed loop, speeding its descent in the tube—heat at the bottom,

cool at the top, spinning mercury faster, turning a gear...spinning, turning.

Tino's mind *burned* from thought without tangible proof of his working theories. He could not build these things in a primitive village.

He knew that they would work, but he could not build them. Maybe the electrician could help him. No, he was a basic, dull old man.

Tino felt a frustrated, burning madness. SO frustrated, frustrated! As burning frustration heated his mind, it spun...reheated his frustration; frustration heated his mind...It was a closed loop creating—nothing. For all of his inventions, he had created only an unstable mind.

Suddenly, Tino felt cool raindrops, dripping from wafting green leaves of tender bushes. He instinctively touched pubic hairs growing beneath his armpits. He then opened his pants and peeked uncomfortably—like a crane's neck—around his belly to study other new growth. He instantly masturbated. It relieved the frustration and translated the wisdom.

Through a green silhouette, the electrician wobbled around, seemingly mildly drunk now, and dazed.

"Skin is so temporary, yet so goddamned wonderful," thought Tino, as he squirted a first large, warm raindrop of white fluid that smelled like bleach.

"The squirt has always been *clear* before," he mused: "So wonderful...yet so, *débil*. Like mercury, it *must* be scarce and should not be wasted."

Tito had much to learn.

Chapter 4 *Purificación*

Why Tucson? It would be simple, really. That is where the doctor came from who sliced a soul from its ripe inhabitation. She would later pluck Tito and carve his heart out as well. She could not help it.

He was turning 20 when he met her. She found him on an “*accidental*” jaunt through his village near Chaitén, Chile. When the destined moment came, she likely knew his being as their eyes first met.

Her curious glance would make unguarded pupils dilate with unabashed want. Her spotting of his secret monster would allow her to violate him—mercifully—that first day.

As Elizabeth’s son, John the Baptist, had jumped for Christ, Tino’s belly would flutter as though it were going to jettison in her stare.

Her first look at the boy Tino would be but one of curious flesh, and he would see that. She would mask it with social intelligence, but he would discern the carnivorous studying. He would see that she wanted to carve him open on the spot. That was when she knew him best, as a day’s hidden stars aligned to sever his corpulent life.

Preceding those hours of parturition, the full moon peeked briefly and then it rained. It had been raining for days. Roads were impassable, so the naive use of a car was punitive to the doctor and her travel mate. At that first sighting, Tino would thank God for hawk eyes, superhuman smell, and a photographic mind.

They walked into his village around sunrise and knocked on the door of his neighbor. Then they stepped back from the porch, perhaps a dozen feet from Tino's night perch. Soaked, cloaked in his sleeping bag, and near naked, he peeked from his rooftop and saw the morning rain drip from her charcoal hair onto a warm caramel-colored face.

Though wet, her hair was beautiful, pulled around her ears, tied with a silver barrette, and flowing to the shoulder.

She was light-skinned black, not white, and probably not Latin. Intelligent, wise—guarded—dark pupils filled sweet brown eyes. Her powerful eyes peeked from eyelids that fell unnoticeably downward on the corner from smooth, upwardly stroked eyebrows.

Her face gently balanced a round, supple nose that sat above provocative lips and a saccharine smile. She smelled wet and desirable from heat-activated remnants of a fading perfume.

There was a small, almost unnoticeable scar beneath the bridge of her nose and sweet, subtle dimples formed as she smiled shyly. Her lower lip, and not her upper, seemingly unveiled her smile.

Her neck was thin, muscular, and perfectly proportioned to her face and body. Her legs were strong and her waste curved perfectly into her hips and butt.

Gently curved, trapezoidal feet had a delicate ballerina feel with gently slanting toes—each perfectly shorter than the other. Her toes were painted orange. They tied as five artistic digits to singular, perfect skin.

That skin wrapped a dancer's foot and wed it to narrow ankles that perfectly balanced her erect posture.

A white cotton dress hugged her braless bosom and awakened Tino's desire to nurse. His fatty companion shared this moment with twisting demand and wrenched him with a stabbing, temporary pain.

He removed and unrolled the makeshift pillow of his clothes from the bed of his lambskin, pulled them on, and entered the neighbor's home, politely, but uninvited.

Gossip quickly brought the entire village gawking. Word quickly spread that a doctor and a nurse were visiting. People collected to meet the wayfarers. Most brought food and, so, a small crowd—including his mother and grandmother—dropped by and invited themselves in.

Following introductions, and as the young doctor was fed and warmed, Tino stared at her. He noticed a large diamond ring on her left hand, but did not think her to be married.

Suddenly, their eyes met and locked for an uncomfortable length of time. She had a hard-coated look as though she had once confronted and mastered personal pain. The doctor's white companion had a head that twisted and bounced like blowing limbs as she laughed nervously.

Thereafter, the doctor—not her humanness—unaccountably studied Tino's protrusion with dozens of peripheral glances, and, after breakfast, a damp parting handshake led to the exchange of some sort of energy.

There was a calm, uncomfortable moment of morning sunlight that allowed another clear meeting of eyes before he became the sideshow. 20 years of grueling travail had not prepared him for the helpless dropsy. When it happened, all he remembered was *EVERYTHING*.

Hell grabbed his flesh within a long hour of their first sighting. As Tino backed away from a farewell gaze, the clawing tumor ripped his lung, pierced his stomach, and stabbed a hole into his kidney.

The foray of trained rejection-abyss began not in his brain this day, but in his groin...surging upward.

It was as though the tumorous beast that he had harbored all these years demanded sight and introduction from its organic cave. It was as though Atlas arose with Tino's innards cloaked on fibrous shoulders to body-slam and dominate from within.

He felt blood pour from his nose and mouth as he coughed, convulsed, pissed, and watched bloody urine puddle on his white pant leg and then on the floor. His stomach stretched wide and flat and his ribs became a washboard of pulsating ripples.

Gathering neighbors crossed themselves and hurled backwards as though they were seeing a demon manifest. Even his mother and grandmother seemed aghast in the presence of this birthing. Only the doctor knew wise instinct. She instantly gave instructions.

He recalled the family dragging and toting him on a makeshift stretcher to the electrician's house. He saw the old man's planked table turned into a surgical station as the electrician rushed and obeyed a young doctor's impatient orders to "*create power, rápido!*"

Tino heard a tense, running and fading voice of the limping electrician, obviously pointing and commanding, “luz, luces...ahora mismo!” to neighbors who had electric lamps, as he scurried to the power station.

He watched the young doctor administer power-plant ether as her companion grabbed and rolled out a minimal set of tools to gut him. He remembered the solvent smell and a buzzing chicken wire, fainting sensation before he regained full awareness but found himself catatonic, unable to speak or move.

He remembered the lights flashing on and off, on and off...off...on...blinking and off...blinking...on...and the doctor demanding that every mirror and light be placed at niches of her pointing.

Neighbors continued to bring in lamps until there were no plugs left. The electrician’s wife opened shutters to allow a flood of sunlight.

Tino remembered his eyes staring into blinding light and, then, adjusting only a little to behold the ripping pain as she sliced his gut-mountain open with a well-honed carving knife. He felt and beheld her cutting him lengthwise then across—upper and lower—and ripping open the skin and muscle as though he were a flesh double cellar door.

He saw the horror on her face as a clawing hand grabbed at her and scratched her arm bloody with ghoulish fingernails.

“What the fuck is *that* motherfucker?!” she blurted in an English that he recalled.

Her companion sprayed more ether in his nose, but it did nothing. He was still awake, but lay as though

he were dead. He remembered cursing peripheral vision and thanking God for years of pain and beatings as he adjusted to the realization that ether did not work on him.

Tino beheld his mother and grandmother screaming *Machi* rebukes and blessings as they realized that a beast—not a tumor—lived within the flesh of their flesh.

He remembered the doctor dousing his innards with a new bottle of *Pisco* and, then, stabbing the monster in its triangular shaped “head” to silence its threshing.

“Die motherfucker, you’re interfering with my medicine.”

As he felt a small tingle from the alcohol, he observed the doctor long-guzzling a third of the bottle, wiping her brow, pointing, and rattling English words, that he did not understand. Bloody fluids gushed from his trapdoor onto the table around him.

After a doctor’s rebuke, Tino recalled her nurse-companion becoming an angel at her command and producing household items that he had never conceived might be used in that way.

“Get the fuckin’ shit **in order**, Joyce, ya slow-assed bitch. Yer doodling is killing my patient, and there ain’t no motherfucker doin’ that to me...‘specially **you!**”

He felt pulling, snipping, cutting, sharp and numb ripping, wiggling, and clawing sensations—and excruciating pain, loin to throat—as the two fought his monster and finally ripped it from his belly.

a fetus in fetu

He recalled his *womb* being swabbed and emptied as they turned him on his side to splash liters of bloody juices on the table and floor around him.

The doctor had used needles to pin the flesh of his opening to the flesh in his sides. The doctor and her mate held his innards with spread hands as they turned him to pour out remnants.

He did not know the terms then, but recalled them sewing and then burning shut holes in his lung, kidney, and bowels with red-hot branding irons that were flamed by the electrician's wife on an open stove.

Tino recalled a pinched nose and a slow, inflating wet kiss from the companion as the doctor sewed and burned shut holes in his lung. That inflation followed the doctor's chiding. He learned later that it's called "goin' black" on someone.

"Don't act like you've never given a blow job, sister. Do it slow, long and gentle like ya did ole man Marlin. Remember that? Just pucker yer lips and gently blow warm, wet air till it feels like he's cumin' in yer mouth. I'll do the rest. No fighting cum and spit in yer mouth...we still have a hole or two to patch; got it?" They were such grand friends.

He observed with shame as his neighbors scattered horrified for the door and then murmured, sang, and prayed only for themselves and their village while casting harsh judgments at his suffering.

His mother became only Catholic and prayed, "*Dios te salve, María, llena eres de gracia, el Señor es contigo. Bendita tú eres entre todas las mujeres, y bendito es el fruto de tu vientre, Jesús. Santa María, Madre de Dios,*

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ruega por nosotros, pecadores, ahora y en la hora de nuestra muerte. Amenand.”

His grandmother simultaneously prayed and walked around him with eggs, herbs, and sticks that she had dipped in his bowel fluid. She commanded screaming, guttural, and whispering Machi and curandura curses upon the contorted, gristly white and bloody fetus that lay on a cutting board to his left. Bugging eyes through Tino’s light flooded, fluttering shutter of eyelashes saw it all, as the doctor rebuked her.

The shark-like ogre twitched, wiggled, and made wet fart and burbling sounds from its abandoned shelf as though it demanded life and attention—but none was given. 30 centimeters of bloody, black hair and two-inch-long fingernails stabbed and scratched haphazardly at the cutting-board with dying clamors of deprivation. When demanding failed, Tino could sense it communicating with him, begging for attention and demanding a baby’s justice, but Tito was powerless to answer.

He remembered the doctor using sewing snipers—cutting and cauterizing blood lines with swift efficiency—as her companion poked and looked around in his bleeding cavity for leaks and, then, examined the dying beast, telling her friend where to look for mirror arteries and disconnections.

He peripherally watched the doctor snip a long, hose-like, dangling artery from his sibling and sew it as a drainage tube into his lower abdomen. She unpinned and pulled it all shut with whatever

a fetus in fetu

remnants of multicolor thread the electrician's wife could produce from her sewing box.

She poured the remaining *Pisco* across his rectangular stitched portal and, then, held the empty bottle, dripping above her mouth.

Someone handed her water, but she refused and ask for more *Pisco*. The electrician's wife had plenty.

As the doctor guzzled it, Tino could see that her hair—though still pulled back in a cascading black ponytail—was soaked with sweat and blood splatters. He unwittingly remembered the tense, soft lines of her face, mouth, shoulders, and neck. It was soothing like post-surgery anesthesia.

He remembered, most of all, his physician goddess placing a bloody, sweating palm upon his forehead, kissing his face warmly, pulling wide open his eyelids, and gazing down into his eyes.

He saw the love of a woman for a boy, of a mother for her child, of a mourner for her potential corpse, and of a doctor for her Frankenstein.

At two moments, he observed it all from the ceiling, knowing the vast caress of death. At those moments, he was warm and tired; he knew that he could float into the horizon and choose his latitude in space...but their lives were stitched by cleaved flesh now, so he chose to remain.

His mutant brother lay dead with only this adventure known to his birthing flesh.

Tino felt a ripping of his soul when they finally removed the twin and he felt its life pass; yet, he knew now that only he had always generated brainpower. Some thoughts and desires had come from his belly,

though, and he would remember them, honoring the life of his child. He lost little thought, but most—if not all—of his soul when they delivered the crumpled tumor and pronounced it a child.

20 years of companionship was severed by their common desire to touch a single woman. Each had obtained their proclivity—at great cost—but, only Tito would know her indeed, as his twin remained a nameless accursed—the devil grandchild of Machi shaman curanduras.

“Es un demonio,” said his grandmother. “Un ogro!”

“No...*not* a devil,” corrected the doctor, examining her delivery. “It was a child within a child...Un *feto en fetu*...they’re very rare.”

No one cared or understood. To them, it was a devil monster and **TINO** was its *father*. GOD KNOWS what he had unleashed on the village. Even as he fully “awakened,” he heard village murmuring and saw fear and murder in their eyes. Even his mother showed it.

La Doctora used horse antibiotics and examined the wounds hourly. She looked at Tino now as though she had knitted herself to him in some surgical manner.

Conversations were few and weak, but the look in her eyes became compassionate, honest, and relieved. Love seemed to seep into passing contemplations. Tino had never felt love, but thought it something he felt now. He prayed to keep her, but knew it to be a patient’s delusive attachment.

The doctor left after seven days.

a fetus in fetu

In days to come, village people would treat Tino worse than before, seeing his fruits. They tolerated him, compliant in his presence.

Double hormones remained in him. He would quickly grow handsome and nourished, changing his entire countenance, appearance, and manifestation; but this village considered him damnation and he knew it.

Even in thanking the electrician and those neighbors who had helped him, he saw blank judgment and hopeless salvation. They saw him, not as the saved, but as *Legion*, now that he dissatisfied their fatty humors.

He was no longer a laughable child, but a curse, a damned man, a village sorcery. His miserable fat life now found itself traded for one of empty contempt and lean isolation.

It was as though he had broken out of jail. Even his family spoke and acted as though he had done something to deserve this extended sentence.

And, what of his brother?

In flashbacks of still sleeping and trying to revive, he relived the parting bustle of a near-empty village with its lynch mob posse, off to enchain the dead. Said and done, his brother was lucky, interred in the outer fields.

A traveling priest came, but refused to bless the grave of *a monster*. Rather, he exorcised the ground in a small ceremony at the shallow “grave” where village men had cast him under sparing shovels of dirt and a cartload of stones.

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Yet, even now, a castaway soul remained alive and called to Tito for the love of a maternal brother.

They were indeed a *Heavenly Twin of the High Mountain*—connected, and interconnected by the universe. Tito felt his twin more each day, though the twin was never spoken of again to Tino.

The unnamed gristly being lay, tossed as an atrocity—and covered with round and egg-shaped stones—in the wooded hills of a trembling mountain near Chaitén.

Chapter 5

Power

Within three seasons, Tito became tall, strong, clumsy, then agile and athletic. Soon he was a head taller than any man in his village. He ate with a frenzy that could not be filled.

His isolation by the mere tolerance of others was painful, but he converted a lifetime of being their blubber jester into a soft-spoken—rarely speaking—wall of cynical humor and an acceptance that he was now the untrained and unmerited keeper of village hatred.

His mother and grandmother scorned him daily as evil and credited his “*aborto*” with the sudden drop-off of their curandura business.

He sometimes tried to find out where his brother lay buried, but no man, woman, or child would speak of it. Faces turned red and eyes looked away. It was forbidden. He felt pain to know that he had been unable to sustain it—to be his brother’s keeper—though he knew that it was not his fault.

A wooing from the countryside called to him on the wind but he denied it for fear of being right. If he could walk to its beacon he would have to admit faith, or something beyond reason, and he despised that prospect. Therefore, he ignored it.

Then it called louder for six days and nights from each half-moon to la Luna llena, and the mountain gently trembled, though, perhaps only he could feel the quakes. With it, he could feel a growing hole in his

heart and stomach—a pull at the remaining silver thread of his soul.

One day, Tino entered a pick-up game of soccer and found that he was incredibly talented at the sport.

The ball was a 1950's 18-panel, under-inflated globe that looked like a pig's brain. His "friend" had actually been to a city and had an old tire pump. The boy's father—a lying braggart, womanizer of some village renown—had given his son the ball.

Talent aside—and still clumsy—Tino kicked the ball too hard. It wedged in a treetop. The sow brain's mean-spirited owner—also the meanest and fattest of his *friends*—sarcastically said, "Too bad we didn't stitch up your bambino, Tino; we could have used *it* as another ball."

He could forgive the fatness. However, red faced with shame, and in the midst of laughing muchachos y hombres, he knew that any bond with this village was impossible. Deep defiance surged. He fantasized pounding the arrogant esnob de la montaña into dust, but, instead, swallowed angry humiliation, smiled, and climbed the tree to get their brain. He would not play so kindly again.

That night, not pain, but dreams of pain, awoke him screaming. His oldest brother, a dull fool of habit, began hitting and cussing Tino. This had always led to flight and a bed on the neighbor's rooftop. But, this night, soccer-anger regurgitated through Tino's fist. His brother lay bleeding and crying after only one punch as Tino discovered spacious physical strength. None would be stronger again.

He scoulded his older brother, “¡Por favor, actua como un hombre!” and went off to sleep on the neighbor’s roof.

As the full moon hung, his fetus trembled the earth and visited on a breeze. He awoke to follow its calling, sure that only mania deluded him. And, what the hell, a moonlight walk would be enchanting. He had always been sheltered from such things by pregnancy.

He had done nothing beyond the gates of his village; he had been too fat, too tired, too short of breath, too afraid. Defiance boiled. Perhaps a Chilean Recluse or a never seen poisonous snake would bite him and he would leave this empty plateau for the heavens. No, there was nothing poisonous or dangerous here. He jumped from the porch and walked westward.

A klick down the overgrown path he felt a need to turn sharply left.

There was no path, only trees and thick overgrowth. Moonlight filtered as a yellow candle across the meadow while he pushed aside branches and vines. The “feel” of his brother was near now. The ground trembled with a small shiver.

Suddenly a strong quake tripped him and he fell forward, grabbing for something to break his fall. His head struck a round stone and he felt something warm drip slowly onto his left eyelid. He perched on bended knees to gather himself and run diagnostics on his condition.

Tino wiped his eye and saw that he was indeed bleeding. A warm breeze tickled his face from three directions as he clearly saw a wooden sign tangled in

vines and vegetation: “maldita es lo que existe aqui.” Evil exists here! He wept with faith for his lost brother.

With head bleeding, he lay face down on the gravesite, sprawled across stones and weeds, sobbing.

Suddenly, he was sitting in space. He looked at the blue Earth beneath him and the Moon behind. He could see a dividing light of day and night. Stars were beyond comprehension, as crystals.

He looked around, gasping for breath and, then, realized that he did not need to breathe...he was spirit. It was as though he had retaken the option of dying when he hung on the ceiling watching the young doctor dig out his belly.

He sensed a kneeding envelopment and began to fly away from the Earth.

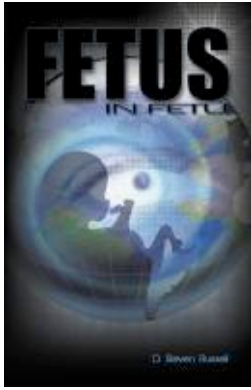
He moved slowly at first, then gained speed, then passed traveling light, then simply WAS. He was a companion of his brother in a place where his child was lord. No less than he knew his brother’s guiding to find this grave, he knew faith in his brother’s flying. He WAS in space...seeing it...traveling through it...being it. Telescopes would be necessary for man to capture this place, but he needed no telescope to see eternity. He knew eternity. It was that timeless second when he realized that knowledge—and ultimately technology—was a growth of ego to document vanity and persuade another of one’s wisdom.

Forefathers had seen this without sharing. He saw giant interlocking spirals and black whirlwinds. He smelled, umm...something like chemicals, methane, burning grease, a spinning shaft, flowers, and electricity.

a fetus in fetu

Tito awoke to morning birds and bug bites, refreshed and excited about his epiphany. Humanness told him that it had all been slumber from a bump on the head, but something in him knew better. It was...real.

A brother's soul was his captain. While Tito's flesh might be his brother's touch; his brother would be his soul and spirit. They were indeed one and, now, HE was the *fetus in fetu*.



A pregnant Chilean boy finds an unlikely path from village scorn to life as a brilliant astronomer. His love for Beverly, a young surgeon from Tucson, Arizona, becomes more radiant and enlightening than the vastness of space.

a fetus in fetu

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