

the test

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He walked down the road to the beach.
 Turned off it.
 And walked to the shore.
 He stood there — looking.
 At the incoming surf.
 At the rising tide.
 At the sand on the beach.
 And at the eye upon him.
 A baleful, bloated, pollution-redded, shimmering, sinking eye.
 Sol.
 He stood there—listening.
 To the thundering evening surf, echoing in his drugged mind.
 To the whistling summer breeze.
 He looked around.
 The beach was clean.
 Except for a patch of darkness high above tide level.
 An obscene spot of oil.
 Looking like a midnight amoeba.
 With its dinner ensnared and devoured.
 A few bones and feathers.
 The remains of a masterpiece of God.
 A gull, or a duck, or something else.
 He knew not what.
 Still slightly stoned he faced the sun.
 He looked at all before him.
 But saw it not.
 He was thinking.
 And he knew.
 He knew the answer.
 The answer to the question of Man.
 He knew "Why?"
 In its billions of variations.
 He knew "Why?"
 And he could not take the knowledge.
 Knowledge that was not to be known by Man.
 And the burden of unwanted knowledge weighed heavy on his mind.
 He sighed.
 He shouted.
 He cursed.
 He prayed.
 But the knowledge remained.
 He took a step forward.
 Looked at the evening tinted sand beneath his feet.
 And knew why it was there.
 Why the ocean was before it.
 And the sky and the sun above.
 And the Moon and the planets and the stars and the nebulae and
 the galaxies and the universe before it and him and Man.
 And he was frightened.
 Again he looked at the cooling sand.
 And desired to walk in it.
 He removed his boots knowing why an animal had died for them.
 Why they fell as they did when he dropped them.
 Why he dropped them.
 He looked at his shirt.
 At his jeans.
 At his bare feet in the sand.
 And he knew why.
 At everything he looked he knew the why behind it.
 And he was frightened.
 He fingered his shirt.
 Ripped it off.
 And felt the warm summer sun.
 It felt good.
 He looked at the peace symbol hanging around his neck on a chain.
 And knew why it was a hopeless wish of man.
 And knowing it was hopeless he admired those who refused to
 believe it.
 But he removed the symbol.
 He knew better than to hope for the hopeless.
 He looked at the waves.

And wanted to be clean.
 Of the things of Earth.
 Of the dirt on his body.
 Of the knowledge in his mind.
 He removed his jeans.
 And walked forward.
 Facing the descending sun.
 Into the eternal sea.
 Knowing it was eternal.
 Knowing why it was eternal.
 Why it was a sea.
 Why he walked to it.
 He stopped when the water reached his knees.
 Knowing why.
 Always knowing why.
 He reached his arms to the sky.
 Shouting.
 Screaming.
 Asking.
 "Why?"
 But as his voice echoed maddeningly into eternity and was
 muffled by pounding surf, he knew why.
 Always knowing why.
 He lowered his arms.
 Knowing why.
 Silenced his voice.
 Knowing why.
 Started walking forward into the warm welcoming waters.
 Knowing why.
 He felt a wave smash into his chest.
 Knowing why.
 With the setting sun his only witness.
 He walked on.
 He asked.
 "Why was this done to me?"
 But he knew why.
 The waters rolled over his head.
 And he breathed deep.
 And he knew why.
 And he knew why he knew.
 And he knew They knew he did.
 He knew that if had been a test.
 He knew he had been a guinea pig.
 He knew that he/Mankind had failed.
 He knew he would not be the last.
 He knew They knew.
 He knew They watched.
 And They knew Mankind was not ready.
 To know "Why?"
 They would wait.
 And They would try again.
 Later.
 They knew the result would be the same.
 But They must try.
 They knew They must try again.
 It was Their destiny.
 As it was Man's destiny to fail.
 Until maybe one day Man would be ready.
 And could accept the knowledge.
 This alone They could not be sure of.
 And he knew this.
 He breathed deeply.
 And again.
 And finally knew no more.
 And They knew why.
 And the tide rose.
 Tugged at the discarded clothes.
 Of a body that would never be found.
 And when the tide went out.
 The beach was clean.
 Except for a patch of darkness high above tide level.
 And They waited.