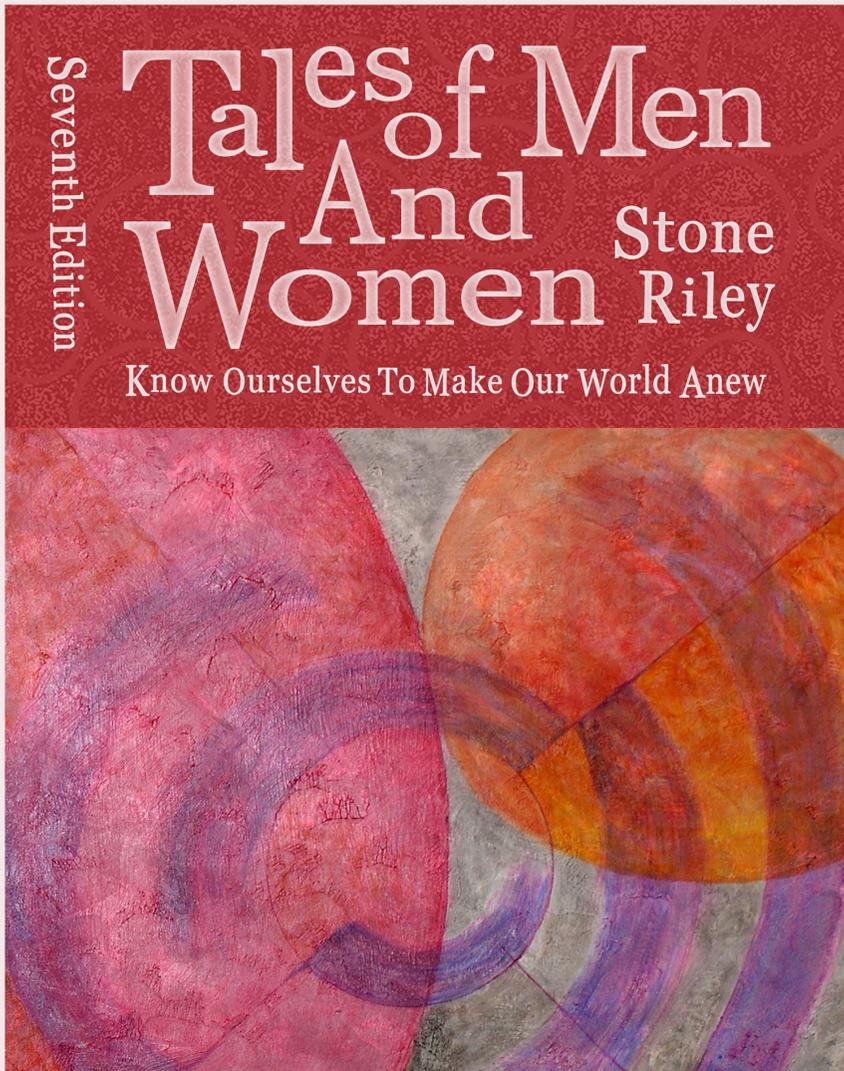


# Tales Of Men And Women

Book Preview In A Pdf File

Representative Excerpts From  
Stone Riley's Big Book



[- The Front Cover -]

[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 1 -]

# **Tales Of Men & Women**

## **Book Preview In A Pdf File**

7th Edition Subtitled:

**Know Ourselves**

**To Make Our World Anew**

### **- What Is This? -**

Stone Riley here presents 31 excerpts from the 500 pages of his lavishly beautiful magnum opus. The big book offers 98 written pieces with 159 pictures. You may find this sampling to be more manageable.

### **- Dedication -**

To all our Goddesses and Gods,  
in love, respect, thanks and praise,  
and to our beloved descendants  
in the Good New Age,  
this work is hereby dedicated.

### **- Publication Information -**

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### **- About The Author -**

Stone Riley is a Pagan multi-disciplinary artist,  
a member of the ADF Druid fellowship,  
an enthusiast of the Seth Material,  
living in New England U.S.A.,

and keeps a huge website with work of many years  
available to the public, mostly free of charge.

He is a pro-Earth pro-democracy non-violent  
anarchist concerned with social justice causes.

We can build real democracy.

We can build the Good New Age.

The author's website: [www.StoneRiley.com](http://www.StoneRiley.com)

Get books or pictures: [www.StoneRiley.com/retail](http://www.StoneRiley.com/retail)

# **Part One: About The Book**



## **About The Book**

Digital image based on an acrylic / canvas painting  
by Stone Riley

**7th Edition Preci:**  
**This Time Of Destiny**  
**a poem of reality**

October 2016, nearly Samhain:

I am a Darwinist. Darwin's final paragraph of his first great book has come true, and in my lifetime I have seen it coming true.

That paragraph predicted that as we gathered data to check Darwin's theory of life's natural evolution, our knowledge of ourselves would grow much more complete and true. It has done so. That means, as Darwin knew it means, that we are all together proven to be children of Earth. I have watched our culture gaining wisdom in response.

And I am a Jungian. Indeed, the Pagan movement in our country is precisely the journey Doctor Jung prescribed: We inmates of the prison of the Modern World can escape through the doorways of our souls out to universal realms, bringing consciousness with us, and return here conscious of sacred freedom and power in our hands.

That has been our Pagan movement's constant tactic and strategy, which I can testify from being present ever since its birth. And now we see this new faith in the human soul's deep freedom accepted as a piece of common knowledge in our country, spreading widely, giving hope.

And I am a web technician. I've made a living as a software engineer since before that job title existed, then later made one of the first artist websites on the web. So I can feel a spark of pride when saying the idealistic hopes we felt back then have been fulfilled. Indeed, nowadays that handiwork opens many windows that were shuttered tight.

But do I dare to tell the most vivid current case I know of the web usefully opening secrets? It is a case of horror. It is a YouTube video of real horror, and an undeniable proof against a brutal ancient tyranny:

The video is from a hand held cell phone camera inside an automobile somewhere, streaming up to some small corner of the web, there recorded for immediate worldwide distribution. It is some day last month. The scene inside this car is shady, for there appears to be a shady tree outside the window, and the unseen hand that holds the cell phone is remarkably steady while the picture slowly scans.

Then we understand the person with the camera is the driver, because we see the person in the passenger seat who is slumped toward us, leaning on the driver, and this person's eyes and face are definitely asleep – or maybe dead – and now the camera pans down enough we see a huge pool of blood covering the person's shirt front.

If you are American, you have by now decoded the passenger's facial composition, so you've seen this here is one of our underclass, legally semi-human and anciently enslaved but now fodder for our prison industries, but now deceased.

You've noticed that if you are American, so now the camera slowly comes up and shows a fist with a pistol in the window, trembling with fear and/or fury, pistol pointed right at you with its finger on the trigger – although really pointed at the unseen driver in your place – so of course you strain to see the gunman out there and with no surprise you see a policeman's hat out there.

And all of that is true and none of it is new except the fact that now you and many thousands more have seen it, and nowadays you've likely felt the freedom of your soul to challenge lies, and nowadays you've likely heard of proofs that we are all together here Earth's children.

So now let's build the Good New Age.

## **A Note On Verse Style an opinionated poem, codicil to the 3rd edition**

Written long ago in the age before hip hop:

In many of the poems here, I've used a verse style drawn on the ancient mode: declaiming for a present audience from memory, instead of modern styles meant to be read in silence, monk-like, slavish word and jot and tiddle softly tick by tick exactly from a printed page into the velvet cave of single consciousness, preferably, for mercy's sake, without your lips even moving.

Therefore here extreme metric elasticity, scaffoldings of metamorphing metaphor behind all merely aural dissonance or rhyme, and other technical peculiarities of pseudo-extempore verse you may be unfamiliar with unless, of course, you've ever heard a good announcer on the radio.

Apologies for any inconvenience.

But may I be quite frank in my opinion?

Poetry in America today doesn't work very well. It speaks thinly and vaporously, compared with what it ought to do. It's far too dogmatic in its recipe of sweet luscious distillate of consciousness of consciousness.

You'd almost think that ours are not the broad horizon days of Homer nor of Shakespeare nor (to put the case more seriously) of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, despite the obvious fact of course they are. Our poets chain themselves to Robert Frost, the watercolor man, with rare exception, all in fear of exile into Tartary. Even our primordial Titan of the worldscape's edge, even Ginzberg, must assume a neat and tidy parlor space behind your eyes as the reverberating chamber for his enormous Howl,

even felt required to stand still in some private room behind his eyes or in some small walled garden like mad Dickinson kept so fragrantly watered, as his starting place for each stride out to meet the universe.

Your average poet scarcely peeks outside the realm of "me!" at all.

No wonder so few people listen to the stuff. It's mostly dull as dust. It's ready for a re-think.

But me? Well, I plan to seize the listener's attention. I want to grab him by the short hairs of his brain and shove a picture in his gaze. Is that too rude or something? I have a lot to say.

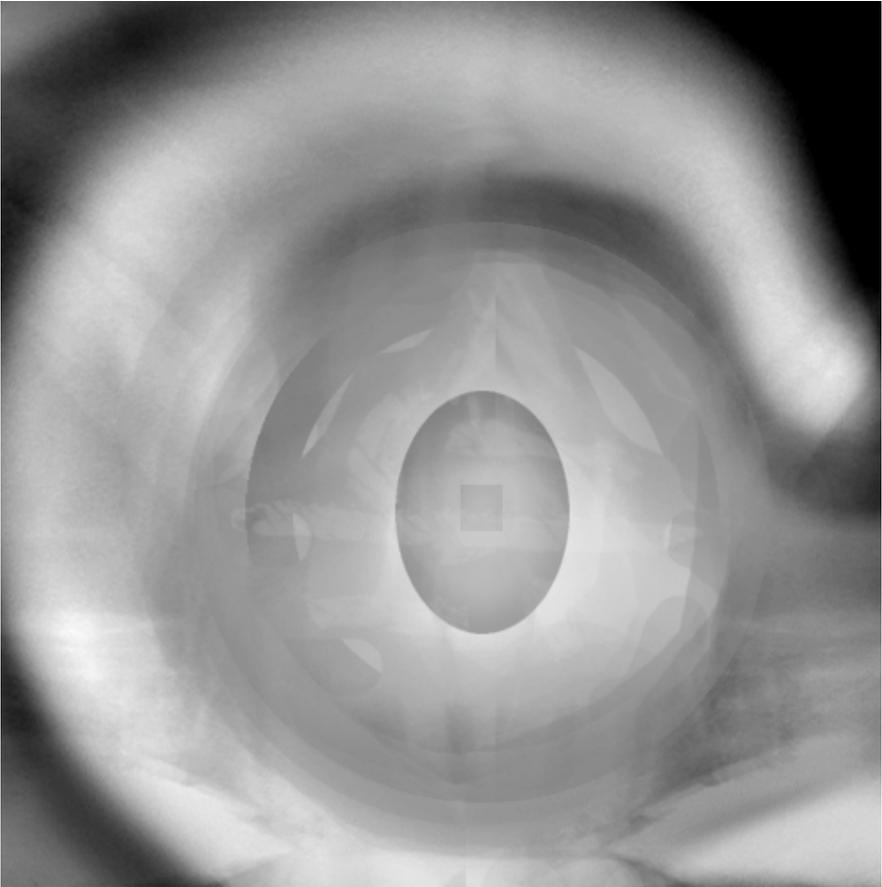
We have a lot to say.

It's time to tell our story.

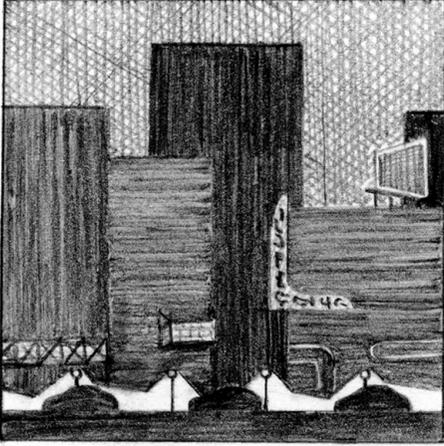
I don't mean journal entries. I mean it feels as if the world is tumbling upside down and there are cries all over of alarm. I mean it seems like Sartre said: the god who led us here is dead and we are left to riddle out the horrifying situation. Like Jung and Joseph Campbell and Margaret Mead and Dorothy Day said, we need to tell the truth in such a way that we can understand it fully deeply broadly with our whole selves. It's really not enough to press our faces to the page. We need real paintings too.

It's now as though the hallways of Lascaux stand empty waiting for a brush.

**Part Two:**  
**On The Threshold**



**On The Threshold**  
Digital image by Stone Riley



**Seven Of Swords**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley

## **Picture Story**

### **a memoir of beginnings**

It was Boston long ago, back when that was a home front of the war in Viet Nam. I was a young ex-soldier, poor, doing some political action work, not yet doing art.

One day I chanced to see a photograph exhibit, all one artist, all black and white but quite an opposite to Mathew Bradey, small exquisite stuff, in a very sunny space at the Boston Public Library, and one of those pictures really caught me.

I called her up. Why not? Her phone number was put out there for the public to see, which included me, and it was local. Her female housemate or friend or lover answered and I politely asked for her. Because that picture clearly showed, at least to me, an ideal I had been clinging to for a while.

She came on and I politely asked if it was possible to buy a print of that specific one. She hesitated but then – quite reluctantly and largely out of curiosity, to judge her voice – gave the address and said to come over. It was a subway ride across the river.

The apartment was about like mine, as you might imagine. Old sofa, old chairs in a dingy old Victorian parlor. And it was an awkward conversation. How to ask me who on Earth I was? She soon got to it though, explained her situation briefly, politely

let me understand that she ordinarily sold professionally to publications.

I responded quite sincerely with the simple truth: I'd seen the show and that one had struck me and the reason why it had, me an ex-soldier. And besides, I was putting up some pictures (in my old dingy apartment with old furniture and with my friend or housemate or lover) and that one was a picture I would like my home to have.

She thought. She asked me if I hung around the artist scene, of which I hadn't thought before and so I mainly shrugged. She tried to think of more to say or ask but finally nodded, still rather dubious, undoubtedly for several nonspecific reasons, and disappeared into the cellar stairway door.

Her friend or lover or housemate poured some tea but not some conversation.

She came back up, switching off the stairway light bulb by its string, waving the new print in the air to finish drying it, slipped it in an inexpensive paper mat and charged me less than the cost of materials.

And that was my admission to the art world.



**Treasure**  
Polymer clay  
sculpture by  
Stone Riley



**Image Of Two**  
From *Alphabeticon*  
Digital image by  
Stone Riley

## **Journey To The West** **a poem of clear consciousness**

Love is not the thing, nor hate. Hope is not the mouse's scurrying feet and owl's sharp beak, no more than these are fear. What is the purpose of the poppy's fate then, or the logic of my heart blood's heat, or yet the celestial motive of the sky's Great Bear? How do we live? Why has the Cosmos brought us here?

When I was full of hope, I thought that was the beginning and end of all things. Then, full of yearning to be loved, I dreamed love was the wellspring of delight. But then, immersed in deep despair, I chose to live this life for purposes that were far too obscured in smoke and flame for me to know and name. Why did I, in that dark hour, choose to live this life? Why did I not yet fly away?

Love is not the thing, nor hate. Faith is not the prisoner's chain, nor doubt the prophet's holy flame, nor greed the mother's teat touched to the sleeping baby's lips, nor is blessed charity the tyrant's grip. All this is life, but what is life? What is the melting of all opposites?

There is a man I truly hate; there is a woman whom I love. That man is dead as he once wished for me, the woman never met although my eyes search through the worlds for only she. Where is this woman who'll return my glance? Where is that ancient foeman now when in my hands I hold his broken

blunted lance? And where am I? Where is this land wherein I stand alone? What is this place? Is this my home? I simply call this place my Skysealand.

One year when I was young and starting out across this continent, I strained my eyes to look ahead to map the way. That year, each Monday I would take a poem from an ancient wisdom book and I would fold up the coded rhyming wisdom neatly into my purse. Then for seven days I'd search the curving trunk of every tree and every mottled turtle's shell that I might pass beside the way for explications written there by unseen hands for me. Well, the Gods were generous and kindly gave some of their secrets up, but the boy I was then did not know their language well.

An eagle's mighty flight; a turtle shell; amid the lovely ripples of a brook, the various colored pebbles very artfully arranged; I made the best of it I could. Indeed, several turnings of the way and crossroads were very helpfully pointed out to me in advance by these magic signs. But now I've come a good way further on and, even though the sunlight and the stars and meadow flowers and hills and snow now all sing and whisper to me audibly; and even though the web of jewels of which all things are made stands manifest and visible and palpable to my fingers; yet even so, more hidden secrets still remain.

Buddha says that all is bliss. Solomon recommends a carefully considered trust. Christ says you should take his word on faith. Ganesh and Krishna both respectfully suggest that you can dance your life with happy grace. But for me, Merlin stands with a lantern held high in his hand, leaning on a wooden staff up on a windy mountain top. That wind blows down to gently touch my face and it speaks to me in a woman's voice and all she says is just: "come".

No, love is not the thing, nor hate; not victory nor defeat. Whatever guides my fate, whatever it may be that lures me on, whatever it may be, it is not anything that I can know so as to name.



### **Temperance**

Acrylic / canvas  
painting for  
Spirit Hill Tarot  
by Stone Riley

## **Going Home a contemplation of reconciliation**

It's often said that we cannot go home again because it isn't there. There is an ancient aphorism saying we can never step into the same river twice because it's constantly a different river. There is a famous poem "Death Of The Hired Man" in which the poet offers cold comfort by only saying home is where they have to take you in.

But on the other hand, it's also said that at the end of the longest journey we come home to ourselves. I do believe it. I do believe for all of us there is a place of calm and rest deep in our soul waiting somewhere at the end of struggle.

In the tales of Jesus there is a moment very near his death when he cries to Father God, "Why have you forsaken me?" In all of Christian lore, this is certainly the moment which I find most difficult to reconcile with my understanding of that faith's central comfort.

To me Christianity seems generally a path of hard-won joy, not surrender to despair. And I know joy is possible in this world, not only in a paradise elsewhere. That story well depicts the very furthest point of struggle but I feel disappointed that the writer did not paint a picture of peace one little step beyond. That passage of that scripture story only says that after uttering

that cry Christ sighed and gave up his soul, nor does that writer even say to who or where he gave it.

But in that sigh, as in a drop of water, may we find a hidden universe?

Also in the Bible, the deepest two of King Solomon's books use two different storytelling modes to demonstrate the human meaning of that sigh, which all we human beings sometime sigh.

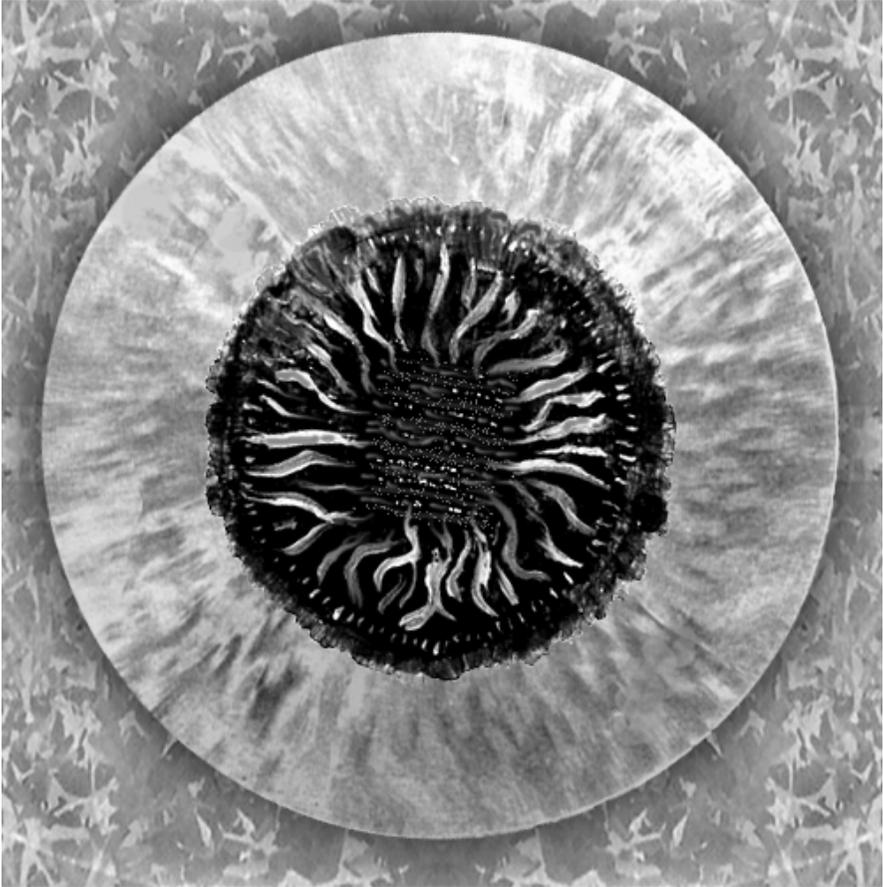
Ecclesiastes, at its culmination, finally shows an elder speaking from a place of wisdom to the generations of the human world. So far so good. But then in Job that same author made the ending like a childish fairy tale in which all the happiness that was lost before is magically restored. Perhaps from reading those great books together, perhaps I should paint for you a picture of a rainbow's end and it would also do as well.

There is a wise and passionate striving in the human heart toward home. We struggle so but only long to hear a murmured lullaby of peace, of rest, whispering that our failings are forgot and love has found us now at last. Should we not say that is a wise passion?

So here at rainbow's end, here is a landscape of the heart's desire, the place of suffering's end, the dreaming place where all that's gone before is reconciled in mythic understanding, dissolving to the glow of fiery light in watery mist.

Should we say, in fact,  
our contemplation of that lovely place  
is, in fact, our journey there?

**Part Three:**  
**The Feminine Path**



**The Feminine Path**  
Digital photomontage by Stone Riley



**Earth  
Dragons**  
Acrylic /  
canvas painting  
by Stone Riley

**Also The Dancing Ground Again  
historical fiction, a poem on religion in ancient  
Greece, a chapter from the novel Dark Of Light**

There was a moment when she knew her marriage bed and all of that would never be. Or rather when she knew that if all that were never done then still her priesthood would be worth the lack of it. Or rather when she first with conscious judgment chose her priesthood absolutely past all that, regardless what might be. It was so hard for boys to take a girl like her but by that time, that afternoon of choice, her dearest childhood chum already had a husband and a newborn.

A stitching bee. She was home for the holiday. Old Auntie Kettle plucked a random fussy little child from underfoot, examined it and knowingly declared "Oh, he wants to eat!" And with a glance about the little yard where they were sitting at the work she then of course thrust the hungry child into the bosom of the only healthy milking woman present. Of course, and yet . . .

Sixteen herself, her infant then days old, scarcely yet a week of life between she and the tiny one she loved above all else, and it her first, and never yet another child had she yet put to tit, and sleeping unsuspecting of this breach, this

betrayal of a holy trust, this fracturing of sacred love, it sleeping unsuspecting nearby in a shady basket cradle wreathed with dainty flowers.

Old aunties know their work. There was a choice to make – community or selfishness – and now was time to get it made.

The young mother's face was blanched in horror and she stared.

And the priestess girl, the closest friend, the cousin tried and true, the intimate of bygone times, now come home for the holiday, was sitting just beside with mouth agape, astonished at the shock of such an ordinary thing. And her own tits were yearning to give suck. And yet she understood it all intensely without jealousy.

No spite and yet suddenly the tears burst out in panicked grief that such a life as this, of such surpassing beauty as this was, would not be hers. Where would her Goddess take her? Was she a stranger here already? The temple's early years – the years they gave the girls and boys who would apprentice back into the village rites – were almost done and no one thought that she would leave Elfesus. So could she ever again be home in this loved and dreaded village yard, this place of utmost courage? Was she a stranger here already?

Here was, in fact, the tragic fact that had and has informed great tragic song and poetry across that culture-world from Ur to Ireland. To live where they were living, with the means of living that were then in hand, humans must compromise continually between competing demands which were, despite the contraries of those demands, so doubtlessly innate to human nature or else so innate in the way that they perforce must live, as to be both, contrary though they were, doubtlessly sacred. These people danced a labyrinth with every step.

And then she understood that understanding this so well – that seeing this eternal tragic majesty of human life so well

– was more than human heart could bear at such close reach. She was not made to be one of the aunties here where every instant of your life demanded so much acquiescence to the Fates. And this was just the very thing the village boys all feared of finding in her bed, this wish for knowledge over faith. This constant groping in the cavern of the well behind the eyes. This blaze of unaccounted thought. This laughter bursting from her weeping heart. Indeed, they understood her to be mad. And here and now – on this particular ground at this particular moment of this life – she was.

It can't be said the fit of laughing weeping took her unawares this second time. She felt it shadowed when she saw her well loved cousin start and stare. Then when the well loved cousin nodded, pulled the chiton down and held the hungry one to let the hands and lips seek out the teat, she felt it like a storm of knowing rushing up her spine. Then when an eager voluntary squirt dripped down the little cheek the fit came fully on.

She sat there slumped down on her stool just like the other time, the stitching things all fallen from her violently shaking hands and trod beneath her tapping feet, but this time knew exactly why she laughed and wept. The world was just so beautiful. And yet, what was the use of this? The dire frustration of these crippling fits – the inability to work, the liability it placed on her companions – all came exactly to this point: They who were so beautiful, how could she ever serve them as a lunatic?

But then her well loved cousin looked her in the eyes to gain attention, looked down at the child she had at breast, looked into her eyes again with dire anguish manifest in each contour of her face and silently clearly asked: "Dear priestess friend, is this a crime that I have done?"

Did they see she looked at things they did not see? Did they realize that this insanity was saturated all and all with holy revelation?

Apparently they did. For it was Auntie now who stood behind her quaking body, embraced to try to hold her shoulders still, and – even while her head was bobbing to and fro and even while the sobs and laughter barked out of her throat – the old matron bent to speak distinctly in her ear: "Is it a crime what I have done?"

The fit then passed immediately and never would return. She sagged into the old woman's arms. She gulped and gasped for breath. She cried out hoarsely as the spittle flew: "It is so beautiful! It is all so beautiful! There is such courage! What is good is done!"

And in that moment she had chosen priesthood far beyond all else.



**Six Of Wands**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley



**Queen Of Wands**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley

## **Gemini**

### **historical fiction: a short story of the Pagan movement in America**

He said; "I haven't got a thing to give you."

His eyes fell away from hers in such a perfect look of shame that for a sudden instant she was quite convinced it must be false, an act, and she was made a fool again. He was a professional actor.

But then he drew breath, a deep breath to speak some more, and the firm thick flesh of his barrel chest expanded against her hand between them. She felt his words vibrating through her hand and through his hand that pressed so near her heart. "I feel so very old!" The soft drawl pulled and twined the five harsh words out almost into a melody. The graceful accent seemed exotic to her, foreign, full of times and places. But now she really felt the pain in it and realized that he, like she, was a poet true, regardless of the falseness in this world. The man shook his head again. He looked back to her eyes.

They lay there face to face, embracing lightly in the morning sun, the woman's blouse by now pulled off and tossed aside. Their knees were intertwined among her skirt. The man's gauzy sleeveless robe was open and thrown back; one arm was his new lover's pillow.

She replied too lightly, smiling, with her voice coming out surprisingly throaty and hoarse; "What? Do you think this

is a girl here looking at you? You are a very beautiful old man!" Surely time had been quite generous with him.

Her free hand was on his thickly muscled thigh – in fact, it was the fervent way she had grasped him there that just one moment past had somehow forced him to stop and look away and make confession – so now she very gently petted where her hand lay, comforting as she would have touched a troubled grandchild.

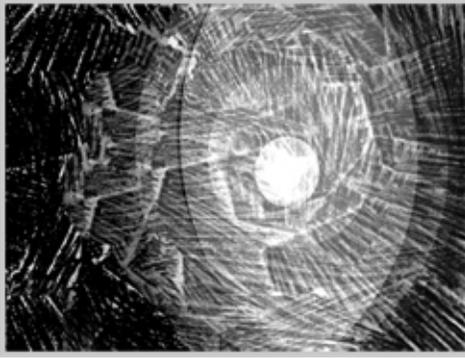
She stretched her toes to rub his ankle too, and leaned to press her mouth very tenderly at the center of his bosom.

His face seemed deliberately quieted now and open so she returned his glance seriously. And in his eyes it was a shock to find the man's spirit standing in there still and quite prepared to be examined through and through. The fellow was holding up his soul to another's gaze in simple courage such as one will seldom find. The shock, and it had hit her immediately, was knowing that she'd have to dare to give this gift that he was giving her.

But she accepted. She reached imagined fingertips to touch the being standing there in his eyes. Something suddenly happened like a high gate swinging wide and suddenly she was looking deeper, gazing on a panorama full of pride and grief and much else too, a lifetime of achievements and mistakes. So, yes, here was a storyteller worth the name.

She looked a moment then withdrew. Here was a powerful earnest soul, but with much sadness. She felt her own nature rise up full of yearning, but would hers find a mate and twin in him? Even for one true day? His spirit had a way of flowing forth in such brutal honest eloquent words, and it could touch so tenderly with such thick hands.

And the long white curly locks that fell across the well-shaped face, the forthright white soft curly beard, the web of wrinkles round the sad deep glowing eyes and tender lips; this was a countenance that knew its own soul well.



**The Soul's  
True Yearning**  
Digital image by  
Stone Riley

## **The Soul's True Yearning a poem contemplating wisdom**

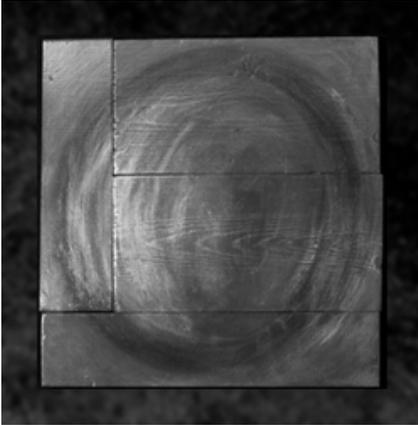
The soul's true yearning is to make itself known.

That is a common thought among our most poetic thinkers. After all, it makes such lovely sense of our intimate experience in inward contemplation, when we go to find and understand the things within, behind the masks which we ourselves present the outward world. Go in courage through dark places seeking truth about yourself, and familiar but forgotten forms do stand forth from the dark toward light and consciousness. Hidden faces do appear and even speak.

And it makes such lovely sense about the hidden nature of all things. If the soul of all the world, like her daughters for each being, yearns toward the unity discovered in the flickering but brilliant candlelight of consciousness, then we are the Hieros Gamos. We are all the holy bride and groom.

And it makes such lovely sense about the way before us. Do we lose the wit to do good in this world? Do we close our hearts and fall among the evils here? Does the bridegroom stumble on the way to bed? Only for a moment. If we simply truly love, then ecstasy is in our reach; passion and compassion lure us truly on.

The soul's true yearning is to make itself known.



**Chop Wood  
Carry Water**  
Acrylic / wood  
painting by  
Stone Riley

### **The Lure Of Adventure a poem of spiritual dedication**

One time there was this bright young girl, quite enthusiastic, who took the summer off to hitchhike all around the country looking for the meaning of life. Right off she started hearing people talk about some guy named "Cousin Howard".

The first time was a mini-van covered with day-glo peace signs and flowers. They pulled up where she was standing and she looked them over and there was a big Egyptian hieroglyph decal on the window so she climbed in and they were all jabbering in their freaky stoned out way about Cousin Howard. Apparently a rock musician. That guy had cosmic vibes, they said. They had just come from a concert or something of his in Seattle and were going home now back to Frisco but were headed east and almost to Des Moines. Hearing this, she climbed over a naked woman to a window, opened it for air, declined the pipe when it was passed and got out at the next motel. But all night she couldn't get the slowly throbbing tune out of her head that the freaks had been trying to hum.

Next day or so there was the pair of Mormon missionaries, young guys in a white convertible, top down, screaming to the radio they turned up blasting but white shirts buttoned up with neckties pinned down neat like they were let loose on

the world and didn't know what to do with it. Stacks of Bible tracts were fluttering and flying off into the wind. She was fascinated by their energy. She leaned up from the back seat and asked where they were going. Why, to see Cousin Howard in Albuquerque, they shouted. To ask him about God. They swerved to narrowly avoid an on-coming bus and she parted company with them at a waffle house.

But by then her curiosity was piqued. To tell the truth, she had begun to seriously ponder what she would ask someone who knew about God. And that tune kept playing in her head.

Next morning she caught her first bad ride. She'd slept out at a campground, bed roll under the starry sky, and frankly looked a mess and therefore felt relieved to have this very respectable seeming man her father's age, black but her father's age and the kind of business suit he wore, in a family kind of station wagon with Michigan plates, pick her up.

But he began to talk about his family and very soon began to weep. His wife had recently passed on. The man was inconsolable, no matter what she said. She felt so young and ignorant. "Don't worry about me though," he said through his tears, "I'm going to talk it all out with Cousin Howard in L.A." She frankly couldn't stand it anymore, weeping with him, mile after mile of relentless grief stabbing her heart, and kissed his cheek goodbye at a truck stop.

But she was questioning herself: What should she have told him? Could someone teach her that, someone who knew about God? And the tune took on a soft mournful wail.

Then there was the rusty old chugging school bus full of migrant Mexicanos – men, women, children, boxes tied down on the roof – going to a rally in Salinas where Cousin Howard was scheduled to announce next year's labor union plan. They made her share their scanty meals.

They broke down where the road rose steep into the mountains and she was sitting among the skinny listless children,

wondering at the struggles of the passing generations of the human race and wondering at the inevitability of grief and wondering what she would ask someone who knew about God, listening as the tune took on a kind of mariachi beat, looking out as the mountain shadows lengthened across the breathtaking land, her eyes full of tears from some emotion which did not seem to have a name, until a couple of brothers from the bus coaxed her to go on ahead in a car full of contemplative nuns who happened by.

Now, these nuns somehow took a notion that she was a wandering prostitute. Therefore they insisted – absolutely insisted – that she must spend a day or two at a lovely retreat their order had just up the road. Chance to clean up and think a bit and maybe pray and everything was free. They'd soon be by again in case she wanted to go hear Cousin Howard preach about divine light in Butte. Divine light? Was that what she needed?

She lay there in the simple room on the simple cot, moonlight and scent of pines on a gentle breeze through the open window, exhausted but unable to sleep for the empty ache of ignorance she felt. All these miles and all she had was questions. What thing, what kind of thing, was she seeking?

She went to gaze out, saw a tiny fire twinkling among the trees down by the lake and thought perhaps the sisters there wouldn't mind company. Hot dogs and marshmallows maybe. Wrapped in the blanket, sandals on her feet, she found her way.

But it was a man, alone, sitting gazing in the flames. His face was old and creased in the flickering light. His hair was caught back in Indian braids and a single dark feather graced his tattered hat. As she approached he gestured toward a place across the fire. She was welcome.

Was she dreaming? She took the invitation. But immediately when she sat, she said "Cousin Howard?"

He smiled and shrugged. "Who else?"

"I have so much to ask!" she blurted.

"Shhh" he whispered, a finger pressing on his lips, and smiled and seemed to sort of wink.

She tried to hush herself, to hear the breeze, to gaze into the flames, to relax into this dream which seemed so distressingly real, but her heart was demanding answers.

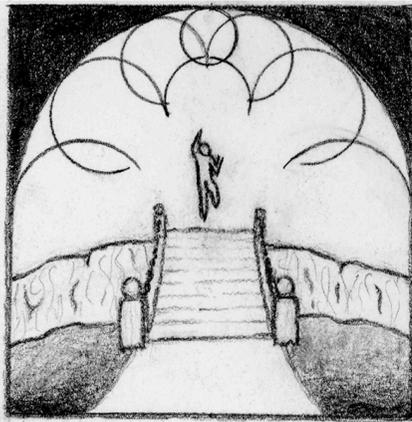
She tried to think what were the questions but nothing came.

She opened her mouth and one word "Why?" sighed into the air.

Instantly his finger pointed somewhere and he cried, "Look!"

She looked out through her veil of wonder. There was the rippling moonlight and the glowing water. There were the singing shadows of the trees. There was the boundless circle of awareness that filled her soul.

There were no other questions.



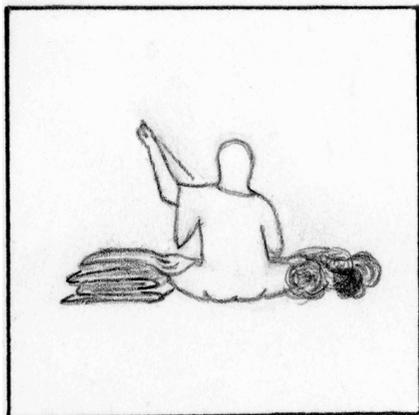
**Nine Of Cups**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley

**Part Four:**  
**The Masculine Path**



**The Masculine Path**

Digital image based on an acrylic / canvas painting by  
Stone Riley



### **Three Of Coins**

From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley

### **Sunflowers a poem of art**

Van Gogh began with black wax crayon, pocket knife and tough cheap commercial wrapping paper cut in squares. Equipped like that the young man taught himself to paint. No, better if we say he let himself be taught.

He'd hire in old men from the pension house around the corner. Each chosen one would climb the narrow stairs up to the flat the genius shared with a depressive sometime prostitute who was his Guenivere,

then sit there in the open window light with a threadbare black wool overcoat hanging from their shoulders, sometimes leaning forward on a cane. A few copper sous which he could scarcely spare, that was their honest fee.

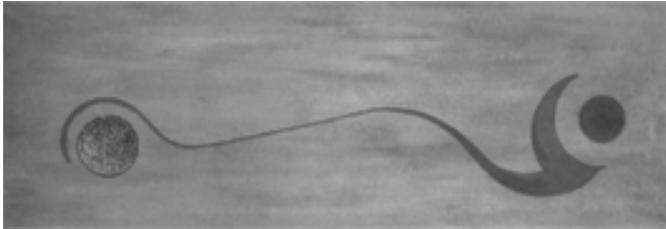
And this was Van Gogh's Paris. No more the merchant's son he'd been in Amsterdam, no more the stiff and stilted peasant scenes he'd drawn on proper artist pads, for here and now the thing had come down to a nub.

And this ensued: War veteran or horse drawn taxi cabman or carpenter or gardener or thief, each old man would open out the soul with which he'd learned to face the world.

And each immortal spirit, thus unfolded, a manifested work of art itself, would rush in through the staring eyes down through the arm down to the fingertips which gripped the hard wax stick which were let move,

so it might sculpt the likeness on the sheet tacked to a board held in the artist's lap. A bit of careful scraping with the knife to catch the highlights right.

Sunflowers.



**Memory Of Veronica**

Acrylic / canvas painting by Stone Riley  
(Depicting a tragedy in which  
the artist was not innocent.)



### **Do The Hard Work**

Digital image by Stone Riley  
based on a drawing by  
Devon Keelin

### **Do The Hard Work a poem of war resistance**

Shouldn't there be snow? It's February in the outlying reaches of the Alps in southern Germany. We are out on the porch of a tavern that clings to a steep valley's green grassy wall, nursing mugs of beer in the rising twilight.

We are the tavern's only customers. We scarcely speak and scarcely make a sound for we are keeping secrets, each their own.

I go lean on a rail to watch the darkness move. It's coming toward me, rising from the valley's shadows far below. The air is still and clear and it's not even really cold.

We are five men. Our little truck is parked up by the road. It's 1971 and we are U.S. Army soldiers, stationed in this country on a Cold War stalemate line instead of being sent to fight in Viet Nam.

The old sergeant, commander of our little journey for this evening, he who kindly halted here and even bought the beer, comes to lean against the railing beside me. The young corporal who is driving also comes and sits down on a bench beside and slowly takes a sip.

The old sergeant, this professional soldier, to show he's talking to me, looks out there where I am looking. And he breaks the silence: "I admire what you're doing."

I've just done thirty days in army jail for doing war resistance work. He and his corporal are transporting me and two other malefactors also just released back to our regular duties. He has now given me military information about morale.

He has spoken very softly.

Surprised, I look into his face and look away. I whisper thanks. So: What does this means that I ought to do?

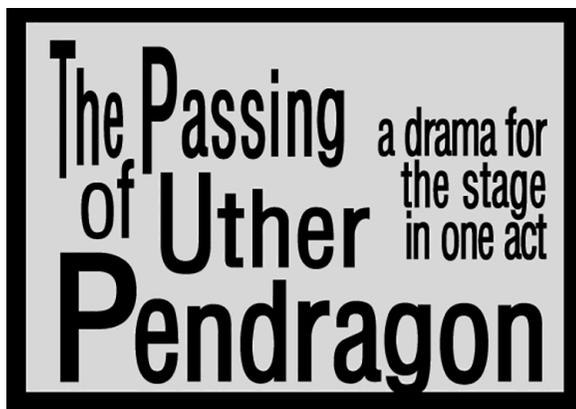
And then, down there below, laboring to rise out of the rising night, low to the grassy ground and laboring up this hillside, I see a crow at wing.

Do the hard work.



### **Blessings**

Polymer clay  
sculpture by  
Stone Riley



**Uther  
Playbill  
Title**  
Digital  
image  
by  
Stone  
Riley

## **The Passing Of Uther Pendragon**

**a one act play in King Arthur's time**

### INTRODUCTION

This version of the play is arranged for very informal presentation by two actors with no stage setting and little preparation. Two actors read from scripts held in their hands. It would be best for them to walk about a bit, posing and gesturing, but nothing of that sort is definitely required. They might just sit still on tall stools the whole time and simply concentrate on good dramatic voice. Thus, in a pinch, one single rehearsal shortly before the show might be enough.

In this script the two parts are denoted "Woman" and "Man" but please do not feel bound by their gender. It would be best if the two performers have distinctly different voices but they needn't be female and male. In any case, whatever else, their voices should express their parts. The Man's character is generally militant, willful, demanding, while the Woman is most often cool, contemplative and deep.

Some care should be given to your dress. Plain black clothing would certainly serve, but on the other hand you might prefer a bit of dash. If you have a shirt with stars and moons printed boldly on it, that might be ideal. Just keep in mind that this

play takes place beneath a midnight sky; don't let your clothing distract the audience from that.

## THE SCRIPT

*Woman:*

The Passing of Uther Pendragon. A dramatic play by Stone Riley. The audience all take their seats. House lights down.

*Man:*

Curtain up. A few plain wooden chairs at center stage. Stage lights up but dim; light like guttering torches; shadowy, complex and flickering. In fact, the stone walls at the backdrop of the stage show that we are in a torch-lit medieval castle hall. Perhaps there are festive ornaments hung about the walls, for we have come here to a feast.

*Woman:*

No. No ornaments are hung about at all. The dark high stone walls are bare except for one tall wide stone-built window over there, up stage left, that now stands shuttered tight.

*Man:*

Actually, see, this great window over there is a screen on which various pictures will be projected as the play goes on. It looks like great wooden shutters now, with a bar across, but that's just the picture projected on it now when the curtain goes up.

*Woman:*

Hush! The Young Man enters at stage left.

A spotlight follows him.

This Young Man wears a jester's suit, for he's a comic entertainer, and in his hand he grasps the scepter of his office, a stick with on its end a grinning puppet's skull. The Young Man enters; he runs and dances toward the further wing.

*Man:*

Hark! My Mistress comes! Oh, she is good! You'll see!

[ - The rest of this dramatic chapter is omitted here - ]

## **The God At Noon** **a painting, poem and commentary**



**The God At Noon**  
Acrylic / canvas painting by Stone Riley

The poem:

The tremendous fascinating mystery,  
which we can easily see  
each time we look out at the world  
looks back at us too  
and it beholds us  
with an infinite number of eyes.

The commentary:

Here is a very ancient vision of divinity:

How often has a human caught the glittering eyes of fox or mouse or deer or bear or lion in the teeming forest or the grassy plain and – with a shudder or in sudden awesome ecstasy – they felt everything outside themselves look into their being? How often have the voices of the wind told someone that the spirits of the land are watching? How often has the twinkling light of stars stabbed deep into a human soul? How often has that penetration broken through the calcined layers of a wounded heart so it might love again, or opened darkened

places to the light of self-understanding so wisdom could begin? How often has the awesome power of beauty caught us unawares?

True, now in the modern world today most times we find ourselves outside that forest and that grassy plain. But find ourselves, we do.

So then, where does one meet the infinite here in the artificial places where we live so many days? Often we will cling to one another, finding sanctity behind a lover's smile, in compassion for some wounded one, or in the mysteries of a little child. Or often we will find the mirror of the universe among the things bequeathed by old ancestors, in some carven bit of rock or on a painted wall or in a tale of ancient heroes.

Our masks of god do change;  
the world around us changes.  
And yet the vast and holy consciousness  
behind all masks is there alive as ever,  
still awaiting our returning glance.



**In The Beginning**  
Subtitle: Meditation  
On Guaguin's Wood  
Carvings, acrylic /  
canvas painting by  
Stone Riley

## **Merlin In The Garden**

### **a non-socratic philosophic dialog on war, peace and the life of plants**

I must tell you, patient friend, that in that one full summer of peace amid the savage war (while King Uther Pendragon threw himself into the civil duties of Great Magistrate which he had so long neglected) that in that one peaceful summer the Great Druid of Britain did become a true friend of the Garden at Chalice Well.

Perhaps you'll notice that I choose to capitalise the word "Garden" as though it had been the generally accepted title of some thing. In sad fact, very few people ever gave the garden at Chalice Well any name at all because people saw the whole place as one thing and instinctively felt the water spirits were its ruling force. For a national institution that was so well loved, Chalice Well was poorly understood. The average Celtic Briton of Uther's time probably just felt that the whole hillside and steep little vale of the sacred precinct was a fount of miracles which they were glad to have and let it go at that.

For their own part, the deep granite spring itself and the two stone-lined pools and the two rocky streams which the spring fed on the grounds were thriving from all the worship. As you know, humans who took the waters there very commonly experienced divine visitations – indeed, in good weather there

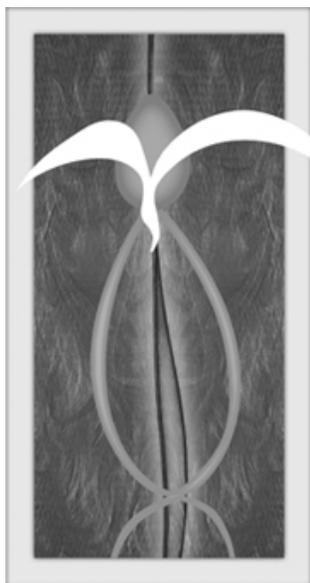
[- Now we skip far ahead to the very end of this long chapter -]

[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 36 -]

Ah now, my friend, you must know too that it was very well for the Great Druid to partake in this bit of strength, for he would soon be called back to his duty.

Five times since Uther's wooing, the glowing Moon had turned the face she shows the human world so that on that peaceful summer day, the Lady Duchess Igraine would stand the sea cliffs and trot the stone-fenced country lanes of her Cornish realm with belly well swollen and many distant thoughts.

Only five moons more there were ere Yule when she would pace up and back her privy chamber again in yearning expectation of a different man, now with her ladies present too. She would shout for Merlin then, shout silently with all her might and grief for a great druid to come quick and spirit off this new man to long years of hidden safety, this child of brilliant light who was not her husband's but her nation's and the world's.

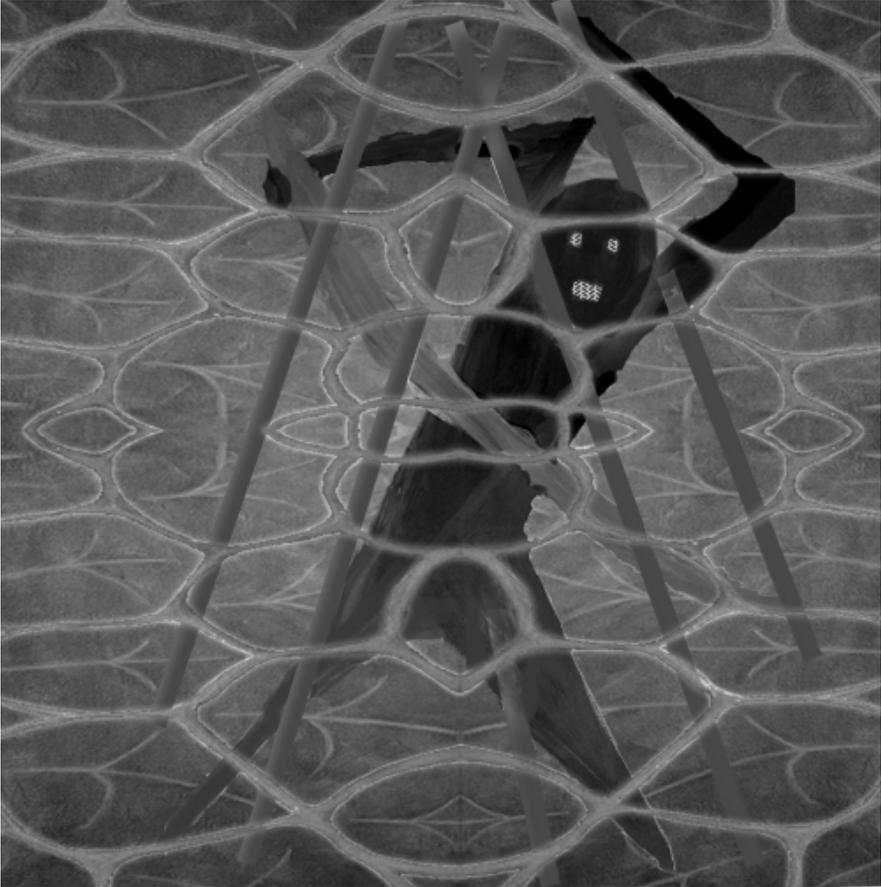


### **Horus Rising**

Digital image from  
acrylic / canvas painting  
by Stone Riley

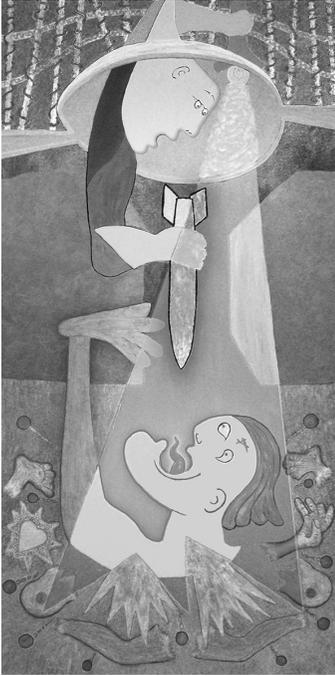
# **Part Five:**

## **Dire Confusions**



### **Dire Confusions**

Digital image based on two paintings by Stone Riley



**Drone Strike  
In North Waziristan**

Acrylic / canvas painting by  
Stone Riley, Often shown at  
the artist's anti-war poetry  
and story performances.

**Drone Strike  
In North Waziristan  
a memoir poem of war and love**

My son and his wife just had a baby, a beautiful  
new astonishing human child.

Last month two women went out to a water well  
at night and were rendered into bloody pieces.

I cannot pretend that these two things  
are different sorts of things,  
pretend that they are not  
the same type and quality of fact,  
for they are human facts.

I cannot say, Oh one is mine and one not mine,  
for my one human heart strains to encompass both  
and strains  
to examine them with the fear and hope and joy  
and shame and trembling pity that are all alike  
the province of one heart.



**Clockwork**

Digital image from  
acrylic / canvas  
painting by  
Stone Riley

**Shock And Awe  
a war poem**

Here's a combat story from Iraq that I heard on National Public Radio one morning.

The report was very brief so please forgive me if I have to fill in some details. That's really what you do with a radio story anyway and the incident apparently was pretty typical; so I probably can't go very far wrong.

Anyway, the lead point element of one of our mechanized divisions has reached their current designated spot on the road to Baghdad. They halt, drive off the road and they form up their vehicles around the landscape like they should. The commanding officer of course naturally sends some guys out in tanks and Bradley armored vehicles to scout ahead a certain distance up the road. The radio reporter happened to be a passenger in one of those particular Bradleys so he tells about this.

So pretty soon they spot a major ambush attempt. Our guys, well trained and still alert despite the sleepless grind, see it in time with their computerized vision screens. The enemy has put some tanks, maybe half a dozen tanks, probably

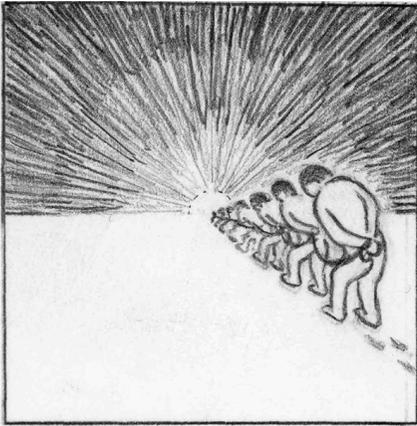
big T-72's I guess, lying in wait, hiding in among the little houses and the little mosque and palm trees of one of those dusty little adobe desert villages.

Our guys stop and deploy and – while they're still maneuvering outside of the enemy's effective range – they pop all the enemy tanks with one round each. They all explode and burn. That's good shooting. And pretty quick our guys are on their way again.

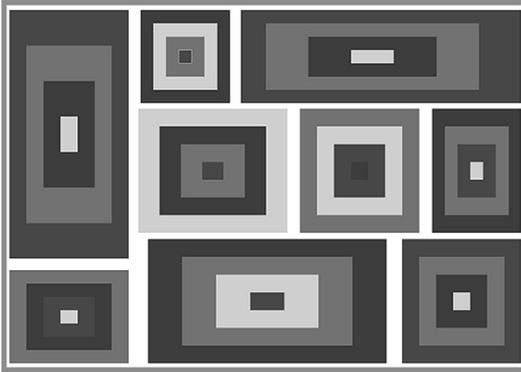
Now here's the thing. They go as far forward as they're supposed to go and turn around so now they're rolling back. They reach the ambush site again. Now here's one single enemy soldier left alive, all alone on foot, and he starts shooting at their armored vehicles with an ordinary AK47 rifle.

They pop him with a cannon round.

That's what we're calling “shock and awe”.



**Ten Of Swords**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper by  
Stone Riley



**Corridors**

Digital image,  
design for a  
painting by  
Stone Riley

## **What Is Money?**

### **a pamphlet about economics**

Issued by the author as a pamphlet on the streets of his city during the Occupy Movement in summer 2012.

**Important:**

**Please see the 2016 addendum at the end.**

Money is a way to do arithmetic with human lives.

It is a kind of magical arithmetic that lets us try to represent human relationships and interactions as precise numbers, to try to record and weigh our doings properly and fairly. It is used by most practitioners to try to bring secure balanced justice into their lives, and as a vehicle for their honest creative skills, but it is used by some to lie (with tall tales, misleading metaphors, masquerade, etc.) and thereby to steal.

In all of human history for which we have discovered and deciphered news reports – the last few thousand years – people have been complaining that money doesn't work right.

People feel it ought to be a kind of stuff, solid real stuff that accurately records human rights and skill, a proof of the honest rights of those who own it, but it's always fantasy pretend stuff instead. That is to say, the calculating and recording (of which money actually consists) often yield astonishing results

**[- The rest of this chapter is omitted -]**

**[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 42 -]**



**Eight Of Coins**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper by  
Stone Riley

**Madness  
And Hope**  
**political analysis**

Written in 2005:

In old British stories – Shakespeare's Lear and MacBeth, the King Arthur tales, others – there is an understanding that when the king is sick in soul, a pall comes on the land. Today our President is mad. By all appearances that we can see, he is insane. And yes indeed, as real as anything it feels like a twilight permeates the air across the country, an ashy twilight that is dirty on the lips and tongue. Our story of our America has crumbled into this. Like in the old Greek land of shades, it is as if our bread has turned to dust.

The other evening on the radio I heard an excerpt of a speech that Mr. Bush is currently giving to assemblies of admirers. He said his scheme for Social Security, in which the government would borrow trillions, would save Social Security from going broke. He is not saying this patent nonsense to anyone except admirers and the White House spokesman has quit pretending that it's true. And similarly, long after the world had learned there was no cooperation between Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein, long after Mr. Bush himself had nearly said as much to reporters, he continued saying to supporters that there certainly was, and the fact was worth our children's lives. Did he think no one would notice?

What else? There are far too many aberrant behaviors for us to do more here than pick at random. What comes to mind?



**Knight  
Of Swords**

From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley

**The Long Roads**

**historical fiction: a novella  
of the Roman army in Gaul**

I was just walking down the road minding my own fucking goddamn business – gimpy hobbling really, with my aching back, I remember that, and hanging on a tall walking stick or something; something such as that. When was this? Clear as yesterday, I swear. I'm sure it was an actual road for sure, but a dirt township track really, a small road with gravel underneath and built up along the sides with little rocks, the way they always were, with the brown old winter leaves and needles wearing down to a dampish dirt just then as I scuffed along and putting down another year of padding on the top, and rather soft already, if I do recall, even through my worn-down sandals. I had army sandals. I was coming back from leave that time. No I wasn't; that's not it. Shit.

Hello sweetheart, can you pour my cup full? Bless you dear. Can you leave the bottle, please? I think these kind young handsome gentlemen will pay. Thank you very kindly, sir, and you sir too; you have a noble air, a gentleman's nod.

This was when? I was young. I had on combat gear. I think . . . that's it! I was a young kid and they sent me on a courier trip. That was it! I was one of our brave lads gone out to make some money and save the filthy Gauls from their disgusting Celtic ways, and it was a courier trip. But why in a god's Hell would they send an asshole kid with a sprained

[- Now we skip ahead to the end of this thrilling adventure -]

[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 44 -]

That huge gusty rain for an hour in pounding sheets, rushing down the drain pipes, misting through the cracks of the lumber walls. No doubt it ran in on the floor. The donkey chuckling and stamping. More thunder closer and the donkey brayed.

I brooded on the curse. Of course it would not leave my mind. Tomorrow, home or else my Fate fulfilled. Then cold water is dripping down to awaken me and then, almost at once, a full strong stream of it comes splashing on my breast and face while I lie helpless for lack of will. Now what on Earth is this? The chickens squawk and fluster all about in the air and cuss the way chickens do.

Scarcely can I see, but I had inspected the hayloft floor above when I lay down and now suddenly a torrent is rushing down between the hayloft boards. I reached into my shirt and find that ivory signet ring on its string, and clutch the sacred relic of my love.

The screaming donkey kicks his stall door loose and bolts out to the night. I lie still in the gushing silence, drowning in that pitiless flow. The timbers crack and then come crashing down.

I hear the thunder yet, and I have not been home.



**Druid Game**  
Digital image by  
Stone Riley



**Antigone**  
Acrylic / canvas  
painting by  
Stone Riley

**Merlin  
And Vortigern**  
**a legendary and metaphoric  
ancient history of folly and wisdom**

At one time, long ago, the king of Britain was a man named Vortigern. Now you have surely heard of "Good King This" and "Emperor That The Great" and too, as well, "Potentate Whomeverwhich The Wise"; but Vortigern was a bad king, a foolish one, a man of no accomplishments at all beyond the grand theatrical air of power and bold command in battle.

Here was a person concerned with nothing more than his own desires, and so constantly, of course, here or there in the nation, people would rise in arms against him, trying to replace him with a better one or at least some other.

But Vortigern was very rich and had no conscience. Thinking that he must be firm against all such impertinent rebellions, he sent a minion sailing over the rolling sea to Saxon lands and there he hired whole tribes to fight as mercenaries for him against his own native people.

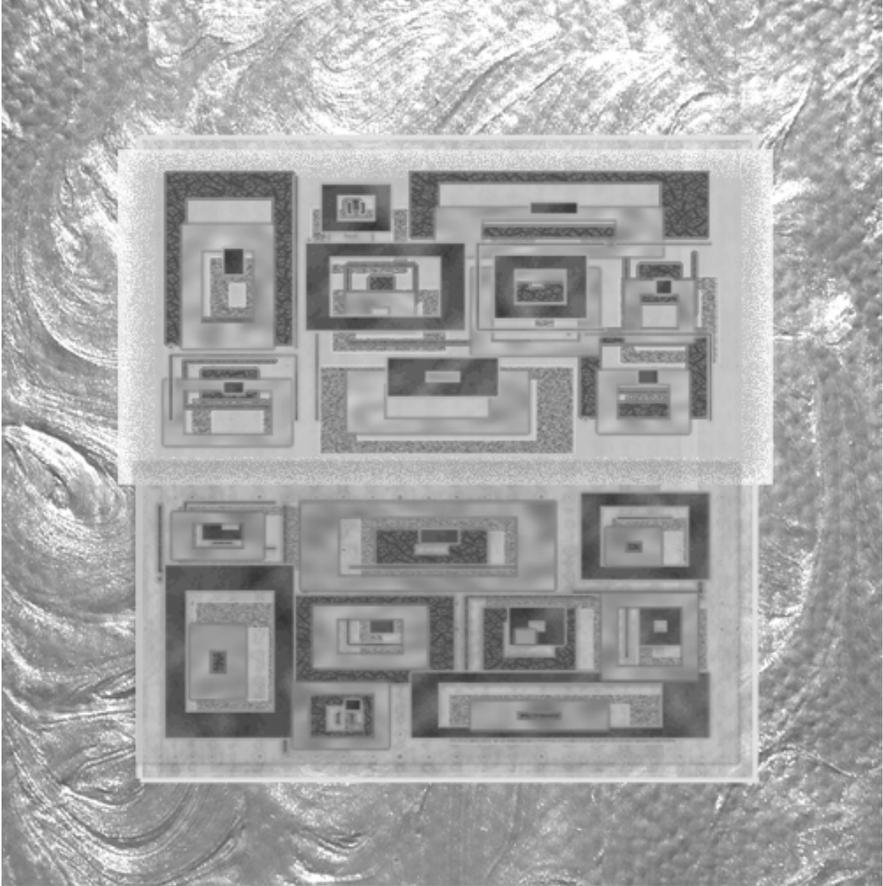
This vile plot seemed to achieve its purpose – so it seemed to him – for seven years. The alien soldiers filled his army and his court. They tortured or slaughtered or robbed to poverty anyone who stood up to even speak against him. And they seemed content to bask in the luxuries which he allowed.

But then Vortigern ran out of money. The Saxons wanted land as payment. He confiscated goodly broad estates in the

[- The rest of this chapter is omitted -]

[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 46 -]

# Part Six: The Human Path



**The Human Path**  
Digital image by Stone Riley



### **The Fig Tree**

Digital image  
by Stone Riley

### **The Fig Tree: Where The Paintings Came From**

**memoir of art and love  
note: this is document #5 in the  
book *Documents For The Reader***

Beauty is our surest source of Wisdom; Nature is our clearest source of Beauty; Love for each other is our strongest voice of Nature.

There was a fig tree where I was a child, filling one corner of our little house's little yard. Its beauty was amazing.

Indeed, after my childhood study of that tree, beauty seemed so mysteriously far beyond human knowing that the word “beauty” seldom even passed my lips for the next forty-odd years. Instead, I would speak and think of “joy” as the real spiritual fundamental of existence.

I would remember stretching out my little self through the summer's sweet close fragrant shade along thick viney limbs, the green light kaleidoscopic in my human eyes, the stiff big leaves rustling like paper in the breeze but so fuzzy against human skin, the fruit so strange and good. In unaccountable entwining ways the fig tree was perfection far past knowing. That was beyond.

But joy was inside me. I am joyful; I exist. That was knowable and known.

Then suddenly there was another summer day – me now far away and fifty-five years old but still there consciously a spirit in the fig tree – but now knowing more.

Now suddenly my self was felt to be obviously the viney wood – the sun soaked leaves, the strange good fruit and all – and all of this was known by its self, the self which was its self, my own self, to be extremely beautiful surpassing joy.

Of course the mode of this awakening, at last, was erotic love.

[- Now we skip ahead to the end of this beautiful romance -]

Before she speaks to answer him, she moves. It may be at first a gesture simply answering the friendly invitation in some normal way but then it is a dance. It becomes unmistakably an artist's pose.

Then it is indeed an apt quotation from great famous art which Neighbor loves, great art I know he loves because this pose of hers is photographed exactly and repeatedly in a photo reference book of South Asian temple architecture he recently took from his private shelf and opened to those pages of those photos with a lover's tender touch and then generously lent that book to me his painter neighbor.

In this brief dance, this divine erotic dance, the Lady took my arm to wrap around her back to put my hand exactly at her waist and there she holds it, her hand pressing mine with every silent signal of human touch that I must hold that curve of her fervent soul in strength.

So we are relaxed and yet we have embraced securely. And so, if I may say it in this way, the Lady's substance entwines in mine:

Her other hand goes up behind us, appearing on my farther shoulder and it grips; she gives her weight. She lifts her far foot just enough to put its heel above her near foot's ankle, so her knee arising slightly as the toe points obliquely down. So she is reclining on me like I am reclining in such languor on the wooden doorway post and I feel her relax, her substance now becoming mine so familiarly in an act of love.

So what is this? Are we truly beings carved above the temple threshold steps, truly? Are we not? For this blessed place where all this glorious mysterious art is done for such hidden reasons; is this not a place of miracles for that whole summer long – which has not ended yet – and are we not its clergy?

Somehow in true, true fact – in facts somehow assembled there out of the actual substance of reality by brilliant workings done in beauty – we are the fig tree now. And thus the powerful reality of beauty has been proved.

For me this is an ecstasy.  
And it resolves deep riddles  
of human joy and meaning.



**Rainbow Serpent Woman**  
Acrylic / canvas painting by Stone Riley



**The Ecstasy  
Of Saint Theresa**

Acrylic / canvas  
painting by  
Stone Riley

**August Evening  
a poem of love and courage**

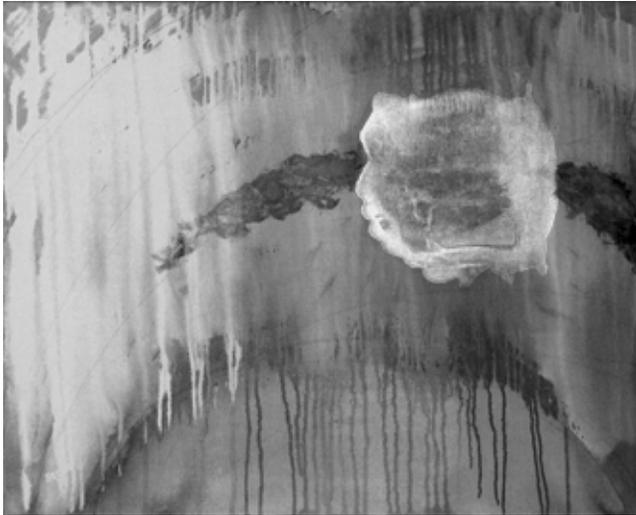
We are not imprisoned in ourselves and we are not alone. Your soul is not a single seed isolate in frozen ground nor is your heart a stone. No one can put up castle walls to hold themselves with any lock and key, for we are creatures of a teeming world.

Though we at times may fear the overawing beauty of a sunset or a dawn, the foreign eyes which penetrate our eyes, the grip of birdsong on our throat, the touch of whispering wind on naked cheek; though we at times may fear the loosening of the knotted strings of individual identity these intimate invasions bring, still soul beyond your soul is everywhere and crowding close.

Sit in company with a weeping woman, sharing grief for her beloved gone beyond the veil, and then up on the picture screen inside your brain behold a presence standing right there beside the woman's shoulder in an aureole of other-light, presenting emblems of some sort about some message they would have you speak.

Will you belie your claims of courage? You will not.

So turn an ear to seek a whisper from the very depths of mystery, and study carefully and breathe and speak.



**Prophecy Of Global Change**  
Acrylic / canvas painting by Stone Riley

## **Prophecy Of Global Change** **a philosophic essay**

The best book on Shakespeare that I know is a volume of lectures by A.C. Bradley, an old Scottish Oxford don, published first in 1904. In these lectures he teaches Shakespeare's greatest tragedies: Hamlet, Othello, King Lear and Macbeth.

Not only for the old professor's lively speech do I love him well – you can see personae rise up from the printed page and act like beings now alive – but also for the Great Bard's vision that the old professor squeezes out of terrifying wrenching tragedies and stands before our eyes. Here's what he tells us Shakespeare saw:

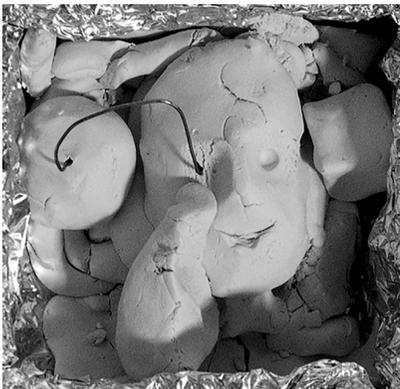
Through some lapse or defect in our character we find ourselves in train with evil; once we have confirmed or acquiesced in such a progress there is no other end for us but destruction. Perchance by some goodness in ourselves we may soften that destruction though to make it less cruel and more gentle.

Perchance then in this way there lies not oblivion but our freedom.

Now today the Earth is warming. Quite like some Aztec deity of violence, the Sun flies through a melting sky. And we, as though we stood and drew countless intersecting arcs through all the land and sky, we are today scientifically charting and diagramming all the countless overlapping spheres of ecosystems, economic systems, politics and realms of individual experience wherein the beings of this planet dwell, for all these realms are now changing simultaneously.

What is our proper hope? We will not change our ways till massive death has overtaken our own species; though many minds may change no hope remains by now to change enough to leave the world unscarred. It is much too late to stop the consequences of the age-long depredations.

And so my hope is this: To tell the story truly. To let the children of a future day know how and why we did this thing, and as well some understanding of some better wisdom which might have led us through a better course. This so our children and their children and their children may do better. Perchance beyond the cataclysmic tragedy there lies a different age of peace and reconciliation. Toward that day our finest duty is to learn and teach.



### **Hindsight**

Polymer clay,  
aluminum foil,  
paper clip by  
Stone Riley

**Part Seven:**  
**Telling The Tale**



**Telling The Tale**  
Digital Image by Stone Riley



**Knight Of Coins**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper  
by Stone Riley

## **The Blessings Of The Sacred Process Notes For An Art Career a memoir poem**

The week, three weeks ago, when the “Not Afraid” mantra and its flyer came to me, I was very busy with other but related work.

Do this for forty years or so: Make art as beautiful and fine as you have ever made it, always striving to be useful for the prophesied Good New Age that Earth has now at last recently birthed (so let us say) and take it to the public. Do your best at that for forty years and you may find, as I have found, that periodically the work resolves down to the very focused point of feverishly preparing for a lavish little show of some kind somewhere. This new mantra came to consciousness for me in one of those very busy weeks.

Out of place, maybe; you wouldn't say the “Not Afraid” mantra nor its flyer are beautifully fine, unless their sheer utility seems marvelous enough you might consider saying so for that. But last year I heard a speech by Presbyterian minister adventurer Chris Hedges that brought some clarity to my long campaign and made me even dare to buy a good harmonica.

It was an interesting speech of many parts, but in one corner of it Hedges told how, when he was with the revolution in El Salvador as a war reporter, their revolutionary platoons would always carry novels and poets and musicians to a village when they came. In his telling of it I could see and hear the music playing, which he gave to understand was rousing and consoling ballads on rough instruments of rural troubadours. This rousing and consoling work, he said, was quite essential to their victorious struggle but meanwhile, he said, the novels and the poets brought beautiful fine art to assure the soul that it is good.

If your revolution is for life, then seeing deep beauty anywhere – in the land, or in the sea or sky or in Divinity, or anywhere – can be a revolutionary anti-slavery act. This seeing can let you know you have a soul and it at least is free. But seeing deep beauty in a thing compounded in particular of human art may give even more, as this can help you know – because a human soul like your soul has brought that lovely thing and that lovely thing speaks human language – your humanness is noble.

My harmonica work is very rough as yet – too unskilled to play in public anyway – but I did it, sitting inside our little art installation in a Unitarian church basement two Saturdays ago. My wife and I were sitting in it, and she smiles saying I'm getting better at it, even one time saying it was pretty. That was very nice, especially as our exhibit felt distinctly like a female kind of space, like sitting at a hearth. Harmonica is the world's easiest instrument for making warm pretty notes, but of course all I hoped to do that time was just practice with it, tried to show the public how to stick pretty notes together struggling through a practice session, quizzing your soul and the universe thereby, and inching maybe toward a tune.

This was not Chris Hedges' revolutionary ballads, but it did win some sympathetic attention from the public. A stumbling earnest practice mouth harp session as the live soundtrack to an

exhibit of two old people plus homemade bountiful fine art objects in lavish towering profusion, all of it masqueraded as a retail sales booth complete with charity bake sale and raffle, among a basement full of other booths. And the new "Not Afraid" flyer, with its bold big print, was tacked up on church basement columns framing our display at left and right. You could wander in and walk up and examine with your touch, and maybe buy, startlingly beautiful home crafted things unseen before and have delicious pastry. This when people feel a terror of their future.

It was the annual Pagan Pride event of Southern New Hampshire. If you are a Pagan in New England I guess you've likely sometime chanced on a vivid little performance or display or production of many sorts which my art career conjures periodically in our supportive lively small community. If not, then maybe I'll insert a web link >>here<< so you can view the unseen-before weatherproof prints – prints of paintings with breathing beauty that may stop your breath – prints which, that Saturday, were carpeting the wall behind our retail table floor to ceiling, each vivid print with its big charity raffle number tag attached, or the raffle tickets costing fifty cents, or the unusual books of poetic picture prose that stood on offer on our table, or the Tarot decks that talk to you through your eyes. Maybe they would testify to you that I'm not lying. This forty years has been startlingly real. And I am no longer afraid.

Of course you know there have been several decades, in and before the art career, when hope was a stranger to me. Because I am a creature of these times.

Political awareness waking: 1956: Me a little Texas boy come visiting, hanging out with older boy cousins and their pals, us shadowed in a fragrant summer evening, shadowed by the bright lit stands of a small town Georgia baseball game, they each solemnly affirming, pledging to Protect The White Race, me silently deciding not, and that weird moment now still lingering, that moment still blazing with despair and

hope, still lingering for my whole lifetime at a center of our whole world.

And Global Warming rushing, which I have watched since 1959: The Scientific American magazine, serving me for a little school report, foretold the great catastrophe, and really nothing done about it ever since just so the Death White Empire could thrive, and my tremendous grief for these green lands where my old heart at last glows love of intimate intense presence.

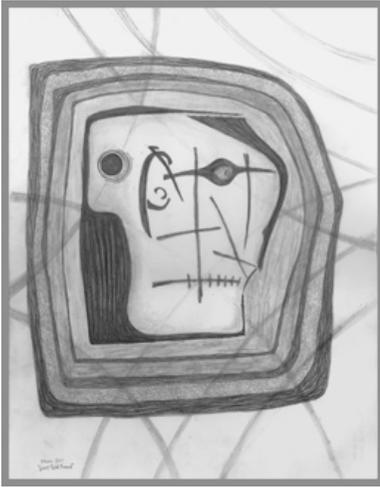
So (to speak of grief) summer 1969: Me a young man, me a young soldier, by luck myself evading war and yet myself behind another face – a friend companion there where we are serving empire – he is chosen bride of its war machine and promptly taken and promptly dead amid enormous slaughter, and me speaking No among the soldiers and taking punishment but soon escaping.

So then the Paganism we built in this country, and its radical declaration of human freedom and human dignity and human power to do good, and then the magic coming real and coming real and coming real, and prophecies, and so the forty years of art in service to the Good New Age.

And so this month the mantra: “We are not alone and we are not afraid. We stand by Mother Earth now in her time of need.”



**Page Of Swords**  
From Simple Tarot  
Pencil on paper by  
Stone Riley



### **Lost Girl Found**

Pencil on paper by  
Stone Riley

### **Lost Girl Found**

**a poem on strength and madness,  
to a young woman in the Occupy camp**

Oh dear and darling daughter  
whom I knew for brief and passing days,  
you of grief and will to worthy deeds  
here in this world,  
and human failings too;

I pray all goddesses who ever are  
in past and future present time,  
to fill your life with worthy deeds  
and blessedness and peace  
and hero's glory.



## Tarot World Map

Digital image by  
Stone Riley

## Invitation To A Student Of Tarot a magic poem

Here is a fortune telling system, a magic book,  
a diagram of human life and soul wherein your intuition  
speaks the truth your self can never know or soon forgets.

Here is the classic deck of picture cards,  
the old city of 78 squares, the ancient map drawn  
up as though life were an ever-shifting game of 78  
tiles whereon each human token at each moment falls.

In this book of pictures, poetry and prose  
you will come upon a certain numbering of roads,  
a careful survey of the gods and men in their abodes,  
a full accounting of the ancestor odes.

Naked, clothe your self in daring  
and simply touch the flow of an infinite  
and ever-present moment which you know is now;  
feel at once the night and morning; thus come to be  
like a dolphin touching echoes in the ever-present sea.

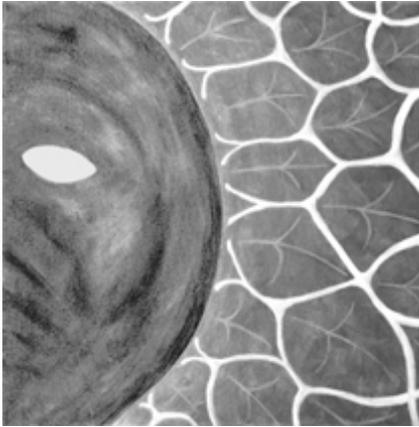
Ask a question, touch a page; there study what  
good fortune and your own eye have to say. To learn of  
life just ask for guidance; your own hand can point the way.

If you wish now, come with me; stand upon  
my shoulders as I walk the sea. Repeat the journey  
trod when you were young; hearken to the tale from  
your own tongue. At every marker stone embrace the view;

**Comprehend the truth and speak it new.**

[- At this point 1 chapter is omitted from this preview -]

[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 60 -]



**Green Man**

Acrylic / canvas  
painting by  
Stone Riley

**Personal History**  
**non-socratic philosophic**  
**dialog on war and peace**

Caution: Difficult extreme symphonic realism style:

June 2010, New England, a warm summer. In my third year now as a retired engineer with an adequate pension, and after searching desperately for quite awhile for something beautiful and good to do with my time and other personal resources, I have finally settled in at an excellent volunteer job, and been doing it for half a year so far, doing what's called "historical interpretation". In other words, I have become a costumed character in a history museum.

So, one summer afternoon I'm there portraying a store-keeper, supposedly a typical successful New England storekeeper of a previous period. I am standing in the back behind the back counter of a simulated successful 19th century country store among antique household items that are supposedly for sale there in my store and kegs supposedly containing nails and gin and whale oil and house paint pigment and shelves that actually display real handthrown jugs and handblown bottles and handsaws with gorgeous hard wood handles, a cornucopia of merchandise, some quite attractive, and all of this tableau got up to show a typical successful New England country store and its keeper in the year 1838, and me well trained to

talk about it. This is a major museum and the training here is excellent.

So there I am, presumably a sharp old bastard, standing there inside and toward the rear of one building in an extensive recreated village with a village green and mill pond and mills and a real working farm and trees, fences, roads, bridges, live-stock very much like 172 years before, this being a well known and highly respected large living history museum.

A boy and two soldiers walk in. My heart dissolves in pity.

I bid them a polite hello, a very brief greeting but meeting the demands of courtesy, not unfriendly but not smiling either, tentative, and they reply in kind.

What I've said exactly is one of my standard greetings: *"Good afternoon. Welcome to Judge Asa Knight's country store."*

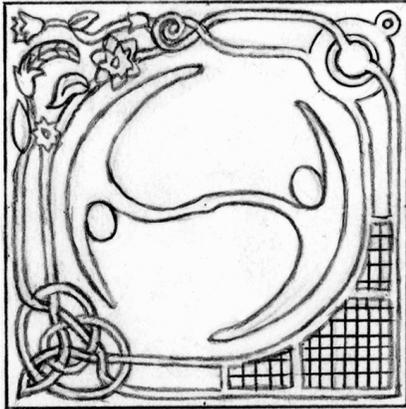
And what all three of them, the boy, a sturdy healthy clear eyed lad about fifteen, and the two soldiers, who are men in their thirties looking fit enough I guess but thin, have done in unison is this: Nod to me and answer *"Good afternoon."*

This is America in 2010. Our country's empire is a crumbling castle in occupation of a crumbling island world. And our country's army has been wasted. It was puffed up on propoganda and then ground down. During my lifetime I have seen that done.

And so our soldiers, different from the distant time when I was one of them, now seem to live in a strange fantasy of clean heroic virtue that is horribly absurd. In fact, our army's practice of the art of war now openly includes a full repertoire of cruel violations of the law of war, law that was signed in their grandfathers' blood. And yet you can hear the claim of virtue in their talk and see it in the poses struck so often by so many of them, as if their suffering makes them good.

And now I can see that desperate tragic awful fantasy of military virtue, in a ghastly pose of sunny optimism, on these two men.

[ - The rest of this fascinating but difficult memoir is omitted - ]



**Two Of Coins**  
From Simple Tarot  
Digital image  
by Stone Riley

### **To Make A World a poem of the good new age, contemplating wisdom**

Finally when we have won the fight – when we have won the struggle to decide the shape and contour of the New Age at its birth – when we have chosen freedom decisively and irreversibly – then certainly we will discover utter depths of grief that human souls have never known before, for we will then be free to mourn all that were murdered in the age when murder ruled supreme.

And in that holy sacrificial state of grief we can begin to heal the Goddess Earth.

But can a new age be different from the old? That is to say, can we be different human beings than before when we were deathly sick with loneliness? We can and will.

“Tintern Abbey” is a nature poem by William Wordsworth composed in Wales in 1798. It’s often said to be his best loved work.

In the sweet touching rhythm of its verse the poet tells that he is visiting a very beautiful valley he last visited in youth. Now he is grown older. Now the hardness of the human world has changed him, quenched a sort of desperate delirium for beauty he felt then.

And now here this scene he sees is real. This is a real valley, not the land of sweet fair dreamy memory that kept his faith in gentle human life alive through coarser years.

And yet the poet reassures us finally – convinces us – that it is good and that it feeds the soul.

By the poem's end we are willing to hear and feel that reassurance because along the way he has proved extraordinary familiarity with spiritual affairs, by vividly describing some of our most profound sensations of the movements of our souls in quite realistic detail.

So we should listen to this Wordsworth person on our current pressing emergency question of what nourishment a normal healthy human soul requires. Will such food be available to our human race in coming times?

Well, in this poem Wordsworth tells us this:

First he recognizes now that human beings take part in the natural world and he now welcomes that duty and he says we can do it well.

Next he tells a joyful spiritual experience of our human presence in the soul of Nature, for he now sees that we are soul-deep in the mountains and the meadows and the vast blue sky and all.

But finally he rejoices that his beloved human mate is there, his soul mate sister – to reflect, share and then remember – so these internal things are real. And in their companionship, when they are together, that's when the poet sings the highest praises of the nourishment that Nature brings his soul.

That is to say, Nature sets a spiritual feast before us when our human company arrives together.

And that, I think, is brilliant wisdom.

And I'm starting to see a working program in it: How about you and I each find some beautiful small poetic quote, some very small but brilliant line, which tells the actual fact that "I am you and we are All entire." (That one is from William Blake.)

Now memorize the little bit you picked. Probably think up some slightly fuller way to say it too, 20 words or less, for when you're asked.

(If you prefer a currently living author and don't know where to look, my first suggestion would be “The Faraway Nearby” which is a recent book by Rebecca Solnit.)

Now every time you're in a meeting where people are pretending that the vitally important fact is not true – this would be a political, religious, government or business meeting maybe, or a book club or a barroom chat – where people are pretending that human beings, or some human beings, are separate and apart, or pretending like we're not all part of Earth – then let's you and me just stand up and just say our little bit as a reminder that actually “I am you and we are All entire”.

Since most anyone who just consciously thinks about it for a moment discovers they already know it's true and it is good and sacred, and since more and more people today are waking up from a hypnotic trance and starting to think consciously, then this action plan, or something like it, might have good results.

It would be like inviting people to a feast.

Perhaps, as our culture changes, that supremely lovely vision of sacred unified reality might even become instituted in our newly built culture as some kind of on-going permanent communal planetary celebration, as a feast of Nature's spiritual gifts.

And I guess that would be a key to open the reality of the Good New Age for all of Earth and for our human race.



**Beloved Little  
Child Recovered  
From Illness**

Wax crayon  
on paper by  
Stone Riley

## **Necessity**

### **public service bulletin**

December 2016

One of us should tour our Dakota camps with a military eye, inspect the methods of supply, interview troops from both sides of the struggle there, and write a study. We need to understand the military aspects of our revolution.

For example, I have seen one single tantalizing photo said to show the main Sacred Stone Camp's perimeter, with one of our people standing inside of it and a policeman standing outside on a road beyond. This long barrier looks to be made carefully of heavy materials – showing hard labor and practical thought – so its form surely gives information on the parameters of a struggle like ours in these times. So I have studied the photo, considered experience personally at Occupy, and gained some understanding of the barrier's functioning.

Or is that kind of thinking obsolete already? I have also seen today's urgent news from scientists at the Arctic Ocean, news of overwhelming pivotal significance for our struggle and all others in this age on Earth.

Methane is now escaping in unmeasurably huge quantity from melting arctic tundra, the gas of rotting prairie sod that was instead frozen until now, has been trapped in hard frozen arctic ground ever since a year two million years ago when the last ice age began, but now observed released by global warming, observed now rising from the ground in uncountable huge columns lighter than our low levels of Earth's air, rising very high where it is spreading, not restrainable by any conceivable human effort, crossing all human boundaries, spreading now to add a pale pale sheen to the blue high sky, a worldwide mirror to hold sun heat in here even more.

This coming year will be a year of great disasters, like last year and like the next, but maybe this coming year will be the first to land blow after brutal blow and stunning blow and blow decisively on the huge collapsing empire of America and so our revolution's current hopes will disappear like most all other current hopes. This year or soon, this is indeed when things will come down to a nub.

So then will we struggle on for the life and breath of our descendants? As best we can, we will. But how?

First, it is essential that we tell the story of these heroic times, and tell it beautiful and true, and to that end we must truly live our story too, and that legend is our only means of communicating with the future ones.

And second, we must each do any effective work toward sanity and love and beauty that we can, by any means applicable, under leadership of our own heart and soul, with whatever help and courage comes to hand, for that is our only available principle of organization.

And third, some other rule that will come clear undoubtedly to fill the desperate needs of mere survival. And some other rule for health and healthy children in a poisoned world. And some rule for living overwhelmed with grief. And some rule, at least some rules of thumb, for sheltering from drought and hurricane and ravaging armies and nuclear bombs.

Or maybe what we need to do is this:

Tell ourselves that while we live we ought to really live, and tell ourselves that when we die we die and may perhaps find better understanding there, but through it all remember who we were and what we strove for.

We are Earth's children  
and our strivings are  
for Her.



**Odysseus Before  
The Gates Of Troy**  
Subtitle: *Self-Portrait  
In Confusion, Acrylic /  
canvas painting by  
Stone Riley*

**Shamanic  
Vision Dance  
spiritual memoir,  
poem of beginnings**

Back some years ago, while the last glow of the great flowering of the 1960's was finally fading in the dust of the latter 1970's, I and several thousand others started the Pagan movement in America. I do remember it clearly. Basically, we asked a single question of the universe and of ourselves.

Our question was this: Given all the truths that anthropology, history, psychology, mythology, and all sorts of other traveler's tales now in this age of myriad books, and photographs and documentary film as well, can teach a serious student of the human race; and given all the teachers of the whole world's ancient ways then still alive; and given our own astonishing encounters with the infinite mysterious divine; and given our own weary thirst for understanding; and given all the particular and general evils we saw gathering – given all of this – what sort of good religion could be built up from whatever solid ground there is to find, up into that world in which we lived?

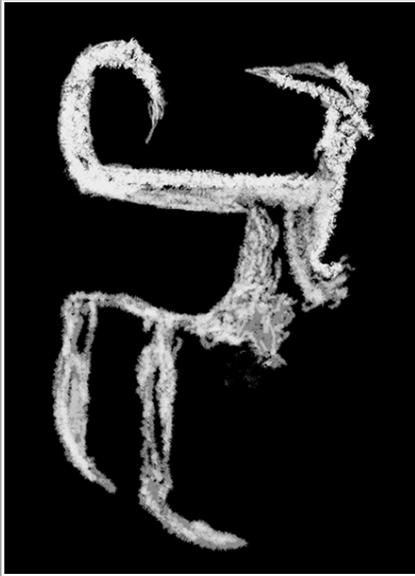
It turns out now that the answer is not surprising. Paganism in America has become a faith and practice similar in many ways to what most thoughtful people in most times and places choose.

I do recall a cool and breezy summer day in Boston. The Public Garden, a lovely sturdy well kept park in the city center. This was most likely 1975. This day was, for me, a threshold of a beginning of a start. I, a poor man of the city, working hard to find a living and full of worries, and with a suffering woman in ill health who would widow me, and yet a thinker, coming out alone to stroll amid a country recently released from war, had found here in this park the dappled sunlight and the shade and great green trees and brightly colored radiant erotic graceful flowers and strolling crowds.

At the Garden's center is a good sized pond where, of a summer, flocks of ducks quack very seriously. Wooden boats creak to and fro and lovers laugh with children. There where the center of the pond is built to narrow, where all paths of that very tame wood converge and simultaneously curve away, there a tall arched bridge of carved gray stone is built above the darkly gleaming rippling water, above among the surrounding skyscrapers' gleaming window lights glittering with Sun in countless multitude, this bridge across from grassy bank to bank. Lured by the open light, I climbed the gray granite span. There high on the zenith of the bridge I stood, seeming to be nearly among the rustling foliage of the trees and yet nearly among celestial glitterings, between a Sky and Earth suspended. My stroll had found its goal and halted. I stood there leaning on the smooth stone balustrade and breathed.

In those bright dark days the most intriguing most ingenious thought I'd had was this: We only need to look to see that all of this is one. This fundamental fact – that all is one and all is knowing living flesh, and that there is no need for proof of this because we only need to look to see this great reality which changes human attitude and therefore actions – this thought had lured me safe and sane through other troubles then already.

But now, gone as far as one might go into that level of life's maze, I wondered what else could be known, what further



### **J Is For Jack**

From Alphabeticon  
Digital image from  
acrylic / canvas painting  
by Stone Riley

### **Songs Of Heroes a poem of endings**

An old blind man up by the table's head  
rises carefully to stand on wobbling legs.

Some good girls and boys assist this blind old gentleman  
to find the chair that some have run to set in a shady spot  
beneath a tree.

Our local champion poet brings the painted harp  
and gives it, bowing by his knee.

And so he strikes the first note on the strings.  
He begins to sing amid the ringing chime.

This reedy thinning voice cries out the tale  
of great Odysseus  
who came home.



**The Author's Hand**  
**In The Universal Human Peace Sign**  
Digital photo by Stone Riley

[- This is on the paperback's last page inside the back cover -]

[- Official Book Preview Pdf File © 2016 S. Riley - Page 71 -]

# Here is the official preview for Tales Of Men And Women 7th Edition

Stone Riley here presents 31 excerpts from the 500 pages of his lavishly beautiful magnum opus. The big book has 98 written pieces with 159 pictures. You may find this sampling to be more manageable.

**Text from the back cover of Tales Of Men And Women:**

**How can you live a good human life?**

That is a very ancient question, very urgent now when we must rebuild society on wiser passions. So here is one thinker's lifelong attempt to answer it deeply, a brilliant creative artist, an old free American Pagan.

**A few brief excerpts from this book**

The tambourines had come out of the basket first. One of the women stayed there in the cave on this side of infinity and sang a song so they would not be lost and then the rest flew off or swam or ran or climbed far off beyond our human realm onto a certain distant mountain peak or craggy island. There they set a camp and sang and danced and struck their little jangling drums.

An old blind man up by the table's head rises carefully to stand on wobbling legs. Some good girls and boys assist this blind old gentlemen to find the chair that some have run to set in a shady spot beneath a tree. Our local champion poet brings the painted harp and gives it, bowing by his knee. He begins to sing amid the ringing chime. This reedy thinning voice cries out the tale of great Odysseus who came home.

I cannot say, Oh one is mine and one not mine, for my one human heart strains to encompass both and strains to examine them with the fear and hope and joy and shame and trembling pity that are all alike the province of one heart.

**Tales Of Men And Women  
Book Preview In A Pdf File**

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