

ELLEN GILCHRIST

BLACK WINTER

First published in *Fantasy & Science Fiction*, June 1995

I am writing this from the cave, grandchild of mine, baby boy I left behind. If you live, if you are alive, over there, in Germany, where I pray the skies are clear. Strange, it began the day you were to be born. February 27, 1996, as we measured time. Will there be time when you read this? Is Europe there? Is anybody there?

I must not waste paper. We have ten bank envelopes and the notepad that was in the car and the grocery bag and *The Tulsa World*. We will learn to make paper, if we survive. We swore that last night, Tannin and I, when we divided up the paper that we have. I love you, James Ingersol Martin. If she really named you that, after what has happened. If you were born, if there is a world and you are in it. It is so dark here. There is light in the middle of the day for five or six hours sometime. We have a watch. A Timex I put on for a joke that morning. I never wore a watch. We almost bought a watch at Saks in Utica Square, also for a joke. We wish we had. And we wish we had bought the coffee we looked at there. Godiva Coffee, Hazelnut, not to mention the candy we didn't buy, We might have had a pound of Godiva chocolates with us instead of the junk we did finally grab, in that last ten minutes, in the convenience store by the filling station.

We had gone to Tulsa to see *Four Baboons Adoring the Sun*, which was playing at Eton Square. I adore Stockard Channing. So does Tannin. Tannin McCaslin, from Nashville, Tennessee, age twenty-six, your grandmother's protege and best friend in this her sixtieth year to heaven. I am writing to you, James Ingersol, because I think you are my best bet to be alive. The other ones are, or were, in the state of Mississippi. From the one conversation we have had in the last months, I don't think Mississippi is there anymore.

We still have a small amount of gasoline but we are afraid to use it, even to keep the battery in the car running. It's a terrible problem, trying to decide what to do about the gasoline. We're in Oklahoma, for God's sake. Surely we could find some gasoline if we looked for it. Unless it all blew up.

We don't think the clouds look like they came from gasoline fires. They are thick and nearly cover the sky but have no smell.

We were about five miles from downtown Tulsa. We had stopped to get gasoline, on our way home from the movie. The sirens were going off everywhere. They didn't stop and I knew what they were. I had been watching the news. I knew what was going on in Russia, in North Korea, in Iran, in the Ukraine. Tannin had been writing all week. He wasn't well-informed. "Go in there and get some food," I said.

I'll say this for him. He didn't question me. "Get what?" he asked.

"Anything" I answered. "Run."

He ran. He came back in a few minutes with a sack of food. There had been no one to pay for it. Cars were driving strangely everywhere. I wanted Tannin to drive but I was behind the wheel. "Get out the map," I said. "Tell me how to go to the most desolate place outside of town."

"What's happening?"

"I think it's nuclear war."

"Take I-44. The Cherokee country is as desolate as it gets."

Then I drove. Did I mention the coat? I had just bought a full-length fur coat on sale at Saks. Tannin had bought some jeans and a summer sweater at The Gap. That is a store we used to have, when Oklahoma was here. Eight months ago. When you were born. If you were born. I'm getting tired. I tire easily now. There's so little sun. So little food. I'll write more tomorrow. When there is light.

The sun came out for a while this morning. Tannin thinks the clouds are growing thinner. I think so too, in the day. In the afternoon it all seems so hopeless. We think we should go southwest, but in the desert is where we had the silos for our missiles. It might be worse there. Probably it's the air currents that matter most. We have drawn what we remember from television weather maps on the wall of a dry part of the cave. The currents changed all the time, of course, and the force of the explosions could have caused more changes. Not to mention the heat. We used to have clinical, rational discussions about such things. A few months ago. But now we are just trying to survive. We haven't given up. We just quit pretending to be left-brained.

This morning we had a chicken. Tannin catches them in the woods now and then. Traps them. There must have been chicken houses around here because the woods are full of chickens. They have grown very large and are quite noisy, nesting in the pine trees. It makes us sad to kill them. Also, we

boil the meat until it is almost tasteless. I don't know what all this boiling is about. Radiation is not bacteria, but we are twentieth-century primitives and boiling is all we know to do. Tannin thinks we should stay inside as much as possible and cover our skin when we go out. His father and brother are physicists at Vanderbilt, or were. We don't talk about our families. We're going to talk about them, but not yet. But anyway, we boil those chickens to smithereens.

If we had been exposed to radiation we'd be dead by now, If we were exposed why would those chickens still be alive? Here is where we were after the sirens went off. In a convertible for an hour and forty minutes going east. Then in a stone church near Lincoln, Arkansas, for ten days. Then in the car for an hour. Then we were in the cave. But I need to go back to the beginning.

Tannin threw the sack of groceries in the car and I started driving. Most of the other cars had stopped. People were running into steel buildings. We drove I-44 to the Cherokee Turnpike. By then the radio stations were all static. We had been listening to NPR. I thought that meant that New York and the east coast had been hit. There was never any reception after the sirens went off. Only static. "Don't drive too fast," was the only thing Tannin said. "We don't want to use up all the gas."

"Where should we go?"

"I don't know."

"Who is bombing us?"

"I don't know. North Korea. China."

"If we aren't at ground zero we want to get away from the prevailing winds. I think south is the best way to go."

"The turnpike only goes one way."

"We should find shelter, Rhoda. We shouldn't be in a convertible."

"I want to find a side road and head for the woods. There will be rioting. I don't want to be where people are."

"We'll be in Siloam Springs pretty soon. We could go to that park by Lake Wedington."

"We need to find a building."

"It might be too late for that."

"We didn't see a burst of light."

"Is this happening?"

“Just drive the car. Find us a place to hide.”

Forty minutes later we were on a back road leading to Lincoln, Arkansas. It was a road I knew from when I had a hippie boyfriend. He had had friends who built themselves a sod house on this road.

The skies were clouding up. Nuclear fallout? We didn't know. Everything was ominous now. There were no cars anywhere. Where had all the people gone? Why were no cars on the roads? What had they seen on television that had made the houses and the roads so still?

Seven miles down county road 385 we found a stone church and decided to take shelter there. We pulled up to the door and unloaded part of our supplies and went inside and lay down on the floor.

“Is this happening?”

“Yes.”

“Will we die? Are we going to die?”

“Maybe not.”

“If we're radiated our skin will fall off. There will be holes in our skin.”

“We didn't see anything. We didn't see the flash. Maybe it's just the east coast. It will take a while for the radiation to get here,”

“It will blow here. It will blow everywhere. Where are all the people, Tannin? Why weren't there any cars on the roads?”

“They had television. They knew what to do.”

“Our radio went out. Why would television stations be operating?”

“I don't know. I'm just guessing. We were right to leave the towns. There will be rioting. We have food and they will want it.” I moved closer to him. He put his arms around me and we lay like that and talked and slept.

Here is what we had with us at that point. The car, with a tool kit and a small first aid kit. A waterproof car cover. A spare tire. Maps. Two sacks full of crackers and candy bars and beef jerky. Three quarters of a tank of 89 octane gasoline. A bottle of Evian. Ten Cokes. My new fur coat. The clothes we were wearing. Tannin's new sweater and jeans. A pair of running shoes and a pair of socks I had in the trunk of the car.

“We were right to leave Tulsa,” we both kept saying. We knew it was true. There had been riots in cities all year. Ever since President Clinton was killed the dispossessed had rioted everywhere. I counted the trouble from the day the doctor killed forty people in the mosque on the West

Bank, in the occupied territories, in Israel, at dawn. It had spread all over the world, in the near east, in South America, in Africa, in the United States. But why am I telling you this. If Germany survived you know all this. If this gets to you. If we ever get out of here. If you are there.

We don't know what to do. We don't know if we should go or stay. Still, the chickens are alive. They have grown very long tails, but Tannin says it's just because they are nesting in the trees and are free. They look like long-haired hippies. I think we should stop eating them. The meat is tasteless after it is boiled. There are roots and berries and nuts in the woods. But we are running out of other things to eat.

I will try to describe the darkness. It is like early November or March. There aren't clouds. It is all one cloud. From horizon to horizon. No break for ten days now. No wind. Tannin says that is good. He has started to use his left brain. So have I. It's very cold in the left brain and makes me click my teeth together when I try as hard as I can to remember every practical and scientific thing I ever learned.

Three days of darkness have passed. We have kept track of every time the watch passes twelve. Now, finally, at two in the afternoon the sky has lightened up a bit to the south and west. There are pale shadows on the forest floor. We will mark the length of the shadow of the nearest tree. We will mark it each afternoon at two. Tannin is wearing a hooded garment made of the microfiber car cover and with a huge cover on his head. I don't think it makes any difference. I'm not sure, but I think radiation can go through anything, even steel. I think lead absorbs it but we don't have any lead except a little bit in some pencils and I'm not sure that's lead. I think it is against the law to put lead in pencils because kids chew on them in school.

Anyway, he puts on all this stuff and goes out to mark the shadow. He won't let me do it. I'm thirty years older than he is. I should be the one to take the chances.

Every day now the sunlight lasts longer. The cloud seems to be moving to the east and north. It has not rained and Tannin says that is good as the gamma particles will rain down on us and they are what carries the radiation.

I don't know what to think. I spend hours looking at my skin waiting for it to start falling off. It hasn't yet. We couldn't be this lucky, could we? Could we have lucked into being alive? It was totally nuts to drive that car for two hours and yet, here we are. With some food and a cave and a car and my fur coat and the woods full of living chickens.

We have a horse. Or, he has us. He came walking up wearing a torn gray horse blanket. We took it off of him and tried to mend it but we don't have a needle. It reminded me to find a needle if we ever go anywhere, or else learn how to make one out of bone. Our clothes won't last forever. Even the fur coat, which we take turns wearing at night or sometimes use for a blanket. That fur coat cheers us up. In the first place it is warm. In the second place I'll never have to pay for it. Mainly it makes us remember we could have had a pound of Godiva chocolate and a box of Godiva coffee if we had bought it. What I would really like is a baked potato and a steak. A bottle of orange juice. And I wouldn't mind some whiskey. I would really like some whiskey.

We make tea with different things we find. We are going to make some dishes soon. We might build a kiln if we decide to stay here. It's hard deciding what to do. I would take hikes to find out what's around here but Tannin doesn't think we should go outside unless we have to. He is painting a mural on the wall. It is a picture of us going to the movies. Sitting in seats eating popcorn and drinking Cokes and watching a screen. On the screen he drew the volcano from the movie we were seeing in Tulsa that afternoon. Stockard Channing in *Four Baboons Adoring the Sun*, by John Guare.

The horse doesn't do anything. He just hangs around. He has a halter on his face and I wanted to take that off too but Tannin said to leave it on. He is probably used to it and he has had enough changes in his life. I can't believe we don't go and see who is alive. What are we afraid of? What is there left to fear?

We have aspirin, hydrogen peroxide, merthiolate, antibiotic cream, sunscreen lotion, toothpaste, toothbrushes, shampoo. We found a canoe shop on the river ten miles from here. We had been searching for food. The thought of being in the cave all winter with nothing to eat scared us so much we had taken the car to look for food. We followed the road along the river and found the shop. There was a store with nothing touched. We almost killed ourselves eating things. There was sugar and honey and cookies and canned drinks and bottled water. There is enough stuff to take care of us for months. We packed everything we could into the car. Then we put a trailer hitch on the back of the car and loaded a canoe with the rest of the food and supplies and pulled the canoe back to the cave. We have a store of outboard motor oil.

We do not know where the people had gone. Why didn't they come back for the food? We will go back later and make sure there is nothing there that we can use.

Also, there were some guns. We took most of them and all the ammunition. We don't want anyone else to get hold of them.

We have a visitor. A biology teacher from Minnesota. He came on a motorcycle. His name is Mort Ricardo. He has books with him.

“What do you know?” we asked him.

“The east coast is gone,” he answered. “And the south. People are living in camps. There is nothing now, no government, no communication. You're lucky you're way out here.”

“How did you find us?”

“I'm trying to go to the equator.”

He is six feet three inches tall. He has brown hair and blue eyes. He has with him the King James Version of the Bible, The Collected Works of William Shakespeare, a calendar of Florentine art. Tannin wept when he looked at it. It's the first time he's cried since this happened. He said it was because his mother took him to Florence when he was a child. As I said, we never talk about our families.

Mort has *The Orestia* by Aeschylus and a small anthology of British Poetry of the 18th, 19th, and 20th centuries. He took what would fit in his saddlebags. He has dried food and lots of Bic cigarette lighters. He says it is going to be a long winter. His family was in Atlanta when it happened. He got on his bike and headed south. He is going to the equator with the books. There are other things. A medical textbook, an anatomy, a book of physics, an atlas. He thinks Europe is still there and maybe parts of central and south America. He is trying to figure out when it will be safe to cross Texas. He thinks he can find gasoline for a while, then he will walk the rest of the way. He's asleep now. He has talked to a lot of people between here and Minnesota. He says they are mostly holed up waiting to see what happens. He said there isn't going to be any more food in North America. Next year he says there probably won't be any.

Here is part of one of Mort's books. “The detonation of a nuclear weapon near the Earth's surface raises enormous quantities of dust into the atmosphere and causes deadly radioactive fallout. Nuclear fission of plutonium (and uranium), the process that triggers all nuclear explosions, creates dozens of unstable atomic nuclei that decay over periods of hours to years into more stable forms. In the act of decaying the unstable nuclei release alpha, beta, and gamma radiation. Of these, the gamma rays -- a very energetic but invisible form of light -- are the most dangerous. Typically, gamma rays can penetrate a foot of concrete, one or two feet of dirt, or two or three feet of water. They come from two principal sources:

the initial 'prompt' gamma rays produced during the nuclear explosion itself, and the 'delayed' gamma rays emitted during the radioactive decay of residual unstable chemical elements synthesized in the explosion. The prompt gammas irradiate the region already subject to intense thermal radiation and blast effects. For this reason, their lethal effects are comparatively unimportant. Dead is dead; it doesn't matter if those killed by falling buildings or burned to death are also fried by gamma rays.

"The delayed gammas, however, are emitted by debris that can be carried by winds hundreds or thousands of miles from the explosion site before falling out or raining out of the air. The radioactive elements involved tend to condense onto dust particles. In the rising fireball of a surface nuclear detonation, the intimate mixing of surface particles swept into the fireball with the newly generated radioactive elements scrubs most of the radioactivity out of the air and onto the dust. Hence the radioactivity is distributed over a large area as the dust settles downwind of the detonation. . . ." (Page 52, *A Path Where No Man Thought*.)

"Where were the explosions?" we had asked him. "Do you know what cities were hit?"

"The east coast. Nashville, Atlanta, North Carolina, Cincinnati," he kept on naming them. I think half of it was a guess. There has been mist here for several days now. Thick dark mist.

We are staying in the cave.

"If all the explosions were east of the Mississippi I think we have a chance," Tannin said.

"Then why is it so dark here?"

"It's lighter than it was. It was worse a few months ago."

"We were in a stone church, then in this cave," I told Mort. "I think we have a chance, don't you? If we had radiation poisoning we'd be sick by now."

"How thick were the walls of the church?"

"I'm not sure. Pretty thick."

"I think you lucked up so far." Mort put his chin on his hand. He looked from Tannin to me and back again. Then he sat up very straight. "You can go with me if you like," he said. "Just because it's been safe here doesn't mean it will stay that way."

"Why are you going to the equator? Tell us exactly why again."

"Because even a nuclear war can't push the earth off its axis. It will get

colder and colder in this hemisphere. If life continues it will be near the equator. I want to see some children before I die.”

We have decided to go with Mort. We will pull the motorcycle behind the car on a trailer for the canoe. We will drive as far as we can. Then we will throw away everything but books and the needle and food and walk. Anything is better than staying here waiting for the chickens to start keeling over.

We will leave in ten days. I am starting to abandon things, our map on the wall, our calendar of days, our shadow marks outside the cave. I don't know what to do about the horse. The leaves on the trees are growing sparse. Vegetation is looking more like something in Alaska than Arkansas in late summer. And it is cold.

The more I think about the equator the better I like the idea. We have the guns if we need them. I might go out and shoot one one day soon. Just to make sure I know how. We have three rifles and seven handguns. We will only be able to keep this arsenal as long as we find gasoline. Mort says we will siphon it from abandoned cars or get it from farm supplies. He says all farms have tanks of gasoline and we will find some in Texas. There is a town called Appleton a few miles from here. I want to drive through that way and buy some apples if they have any left. It was just a tiny little town with orchards all around it. Tannin says he doesn't want to see orchards. He says there is a chance they will look like late Van Gogh and scare us all to death.

After we go through Texas we will come to the Atlantic Ocean. No matter what has happened the ocean will look like life and peace and purity. All my life I have loved the ocean. And all bodies of water. I want to dress in white for this journey. If I had a long white blanket I would make a pilgrim's robe of it. This is a pilgrimage, I guess.

October 30, 1996: Six Tibetan monks are here. They came walking down the path at noon yesterday, walking toward us as if they knew where they were going. They have been in Fayetteville and brought us news from there. They had gone there in late February to put on an exhibition of temple dances. It was part of a one hundred and ten city show to raise money for their new monastery in India. They are from Drepung Monastery in Lhasa which was destroyed in 1959 by the Chinese Communists. Their leader is Gangkar Tulku, recognized from childhood as the reincarnation of a high lama from Eastern Tibet. Gangkar speaks English, as does his second in command, Bhagang Tulku, also a high reincarnate lama. The others were all born in India after 1959.

Tannin and I were not surprised to see them. Lamas have come to Fayetteville before. There are several psychiatrists there who visit back and forth in India and Tibet. One of them had prayer flags flying in his yard and I saw them every day when I would ride my bike to the park in nice weather.

As soon as we saw them we went down the path to greet them. They were still wearing their red and saffron robes and sandals although they were also wearing large woolen shawls and warm hats and gloves. "How did you find us?" Tannin asked.

"We asked where there were caves. We asked a geologist at the University. He drew us maps. We were looking for a place to begin a monastery. Are there other caves nearby that you have found?" They were standing in a circle now.

"Come inside," I said. "Have tea with us. We have tea we found in a canoe shop. We don't like to stay outside unless it's necessary. Come in. Tell us about the town."

"There was much rioting and disorder. People were living in the basements of buildings on the campus, afraid to go outside. We went with the people we were staying with, a doctor and his wife, to live in the basement of the physical science building. Some people with guns guarded the doors. The mayor and the head of the university were there with their families. The doctor who was our host went out each day to the hospital to care for people. There were many suicides, all during a week when the earth was dark."

"What did you hear of the rest of the United States?"

"There are people in the west who survived. Ham radio operators have sent messages. There is not much left east of the Mississippi. Not many cities left."

"What of the radiation clouds?" Mort asked. "Do you have information about them?"

"The worst went north-north-east, but there has been sickness many places. No one has invaded the country. There are still missiles in silos that could be sent against invaders. They say the nuclear submarines are still running. The NATO commanders command them now. The headquarters are in France. This is the news we heard."

"Why did you leave?"

"It was time for us to go and be alone. We have much to meditate upon."

“Stay with us,” we said, almost in a breath. “There is food here. Did you bring food?”

“We have flour and oil. We will make bread for you in our skillet.” One of the young monks pulled a copper skillet out from the folds of his robe. It was about six inches across, with a steel handle. I imagined the sweet flat bread being lifted from it. My heart went crazy at the thought of bread.

We sat in a circle and talked for many hours. Mort told them we were going to the equator. They listened very intently to all we told them.

“We're going to Mayan country,” I put in. “The Mayans might be cousins of yours.” I thought suddenly of my cousins. Of my family. It is not always possible to keep from thinking about them. Jimmy, Teddy, Malcolm, Little Rhoda, the names rang in my head.

“I will tell you a story,” Gangkar Tulku said, as if he were reading my mind. He looked directly at me and stood up and began to play little cymbals on his fingers. “Once, long ago, mankind lived on another planet. On that planet he did not need to eat meat or vegetables. When he needed nourishment he looked up into the stars and the starlight fed him. At that time we were rainbows and could travel any distance in a few seconds. Some of us came to earth and saw the other creatures here eating and drinking meat and vegetables and we ate and drank with them to be polite. Because of this we became earthbound. Now only our minds are rainbows. Now our bodies cannot travel in the ether. Still, at Drepung Loseling Monastery we remember rainbow travel and put on our rainbow costumes and dance for one another and are not sad. How happy we are that our minds are still free to travel and tell each other stories.”

It dried my tears to hear Gangkar's story. Perhaps my children and grandchildren are rainbows now. Perhaps the end was swift, unexpected, clean. Perhaps they live. No, they do not live. I must not think like that.

The monks have put a beautiful cloth painting of their monastery on our wall. It is painted on the lightest silk imaginable, but it is very strong. Gangkar showed me the paths that led from one part of the monastery to another. There had been seven to ten thousand monks there before the Chinese came.

They kneel in prayer for many hours each day. They are very careful of everything they eat, thanking and praising whatever gave up its life to feed them. I don't know what they think about peanut butter Nabs. That's a lot of different ingredients.

Tannin and I kneel with them as long as our knees can stand it. Mort likes them. He thinks it is good karma that they have shown up but he

won't kneel with them. He has been busy with his instruments measuring the slant and amount of sunlight and monitoring the direction of the winds. He has several notebooks full of scientific data. We gave him one of the ones we found in the canoe shop.

Mort wants to take a trip to Fayetteville before we start for the equator but Tannin and I are afraid to. It was our home. I can't stand to see it mined. I asked Gangkar and Bhagang about the children of Fayetteville. They said most of them have been gathered into the basements of the thickest buildings and are not allowed to go outside for anything.

“What do they do?”

“They play and study. They have an orchestra and put on plays and concerts. They are heavily guarded at all times.”

I thought of the children I knew there who were especially dear to me. I thought of three children who were caught up in a terrible divorce on the day the nuclear devices ruined the world. Now the divorce would not matter to anyone. It would never come to court. They would never have to choose between their mother and their father.

Last night Mort spread out all his charts and talked to Gangkar and Bhagang about his theories. About atmospheric science and the destruction of ozone and how he thought the only place it would be warm enough to grow food would be near the equator.

I told them about the Mayan rains in Mexico and Belize and how much they resembled the painting they showed us of their monastery.

“In short,” Mort said. “Tannin and Rhoda and I would like you to go with us if you want to go. We will take the vehicles as long as the gasoline lasts. I think I can convert some of the motor oil but that will be a last resort. We can pull a trailer with supplies and any of you who won't fit into the vehicle. We will have to walk sooner or later but perhaps we will be in south Texas or Mexico by then.”

“There's no point in staying here,” Tannin added. “These woods are going to die.”

“It will be an adventure,” I put in. “We all have good walking shoes. I'm not worried about gasoline. As long as we are moving in the right direction. We are going to the sun. That's how I look at it. Nine baboons searching for the sun. We want you with us if you will go.”

That night the monks chanted for many hours. Then they had a long debate that lasted almost until dawn. They were in the front of the cave. I could have found a quiet place to sleep but I stayed awake listening to

them.

At last they slept. In the morning, after they had gone outside and relieved themselves and boiled water for tea and drank tea and chanted for another two hours and then argued again, Gangkar came to us and said they had decided to accompany us to the equator.

“We have chanted away our hindrances,” he began. “We see the joy in this new beginning. We embrace your journey and humbly offer ourselves as your companions. Only Bhagang is worried about your horse. What will you do with your horse? He cannot ride in the vehicles and if we leave him here he will perish without company. Have you thought of this?”

“We will drive slowly enough so that he can walk or run beside us,” Tannin said.

“It will use too much gasoline,” Mort answered.

“You can go ahead with the vehicle and we will follow at the pace of the horse,” I suggested. We talked about this and Mort calculated the amount of gasoline it would take to drive forty miles an hour as opposed to fifty or thirty or sixty and we agreed that would be our plan.

“He is eating the grass,” I added. “As long as he is alive we are not in a radiation zone. He will be our canary.” The monks looked from one to another and smiled. I guess it amused them that I had to have an excuse to love a horse.

We have made our plans to leave. We will follow whatever roads we can down into Texas and Mexico. Then to Central America. Every two hundred miles we will have a meeting and rethink our plans.

“We will take the guns,” Tannin told Gangkar. “We have rifles and pistols that we found in the canoe shop. I know this is against your religion so I wanted to warn you about it.”

“Take what you need.” Gangkar answered him. “If they become too heavy you may wish to stop carrying them.”

We leave tomorrow. Tonight the monks performed their dances for us. The same dances they have performed in cities all over the world. They put on their costumes and danced:

THE INVOCATION OF THE FORCES OF GOODNESS

then,

THE DANCE OF THE RAINBOW BEINGS

then,

THE INQUIRING AND PROVOKING MIND IS THE BASIS OF ALL
ENLIGHTENMENT

then,

THE WORLD OF CONFLICT AND SUFFERING BECOMES THE
CIRCLE OF ECSTASY

then,

THE ECHO OF WISDOM

then,

AN AUSPICIOUS CONCLUDING SONG FOR WORLD PEACE

It was very beautiful although I fell asleep several times during the chanting. Afterward I lay down on my soft bed that Tannin made for me from rushes and moss and canoe rugs and slept on it for the last time. I dreamed all night of rainbow people. I named them all the names of the people east of the Mississippi River whom I had loved. Mother, father, sister, brother, child, friend. Then I got up to finish this and wrap it in plastic and leave it here for you. Whoever you will be. It doesn't matter to me anymore who you will be. Undifferentiated consciousness. That's what I'm striving for. We must finish packing now. We must be moving on.

The End