

MIRACLES

My illness was already a thing of the past. A common cold might cause me recall moments from my ordeal. But I never again had to fear such a terrible onslaught against my person. As the events started to become more and more distant from me, I started forget many of the details of my sickness. I remembered a time when I had been seriously ill. But I was no longer sure of its cause nor of the full nature of my debility. We had never determined the actual source of the disease. So that added to a general obscurity about what had happened. These vague memories only created the overall feeling that my sickness was of a moral nature. In my development, my recovery meant that I had definitively emerged from the darkness into the light. Although a host of shadowy presences still characterized my religious devotion, I lived a significant portion of my life in a domain ruled by very different sympathies. As much as I needed to offer sacrifice to my former protectors, I accustomed myself to more hospitable circumstances.

The final stages of my rehabilitation were marked by the long walks that were so much part of my identity. I again able to explore on my own. My limbs became stronger. And I could breathe more freely. Once I reached this point, I felt that I could cast off my disease for good. For a while, my whole life had revolved around getting better. I felt that I had no existence separate from that drama. It was difficult getting back to myself.

I couldn't rely on others to help me accommodate. They had done their best to help me through the disease. But there was nothing that they could really do to help me fight off the worst. They couldn't understand how difficult it was to come back to the world. In a sense, I was not returning all the way. I was marked by my experience. Only others who had suffered the same thing would understand my transformation.

Even though I was better, I couldn't jump back into my usual activity. Things made no sense. I couldn't stay home all the time. I knew that. But I was almost afraid of the world. I feared a new kind of sickness, a sickness of the heart. I didn't want to appear too sensitive. I would have to harden my outsides so that I wouldn't be crushed by the world. Inside, I was like a marshmallow.

When I was alone in the woods, I felt all protected. I immersed myself in the activity. Even the scary patches welcome me. I was reliving the process of my illness. There was still so much unknown in the world. I would have to learn how to deal with these surprises.

The process of healing had been so clear. It was like putting the parts back in place. What was happening now was much more difficult to understand. I was waiting to figure it all out. I believed that one day, I would wake up, and it would all fit. But it still wasn't like that. I wanted to make things happen on my own. But I was working on something that was so demanding. What was in front of me seemed to be receding before my eyes. I didn't know how to hold on to anything. I had healed all my physical organs. The mental side didn't allow for an easy solution.

If there were forces that were acting beyond my control, there was nothing that I could do about it. I had to learn to deal with what was at hand. I did my best at juggling it all. I still felt as if I was going to fall in the middle of a field, and there would be no one there to help me out. I was reaching out my hand in the darkness. I wanted someone to lead me to the light.

I didn't have the confidence to make it on my own. But I was so far beyond everyone

around me that they couldn't really offer me the support. I'd sit outside and look at the world in front of me. I wasn't moving. I almost feared a relapse.

It took a while for me to feel confident about my good health. I was worried that I might be susceptible to some new ailment. If I ate a wild raspberry, an unusual contaminant might be infecting me. A mosquito bite could be the beginning of a new outbreak. Maybe the butter had turned bad and was about to upset my stomach. Any little thing was enough to throw me. I needed to be careful. But I wondered if I was being overly cautious. Was I afraid to live my life?

It wasn't just a fear of germs that was upsetting me. I was becoming superstitious. If I crossed the railroad tracks at the wrong angle, it would be bad luck. I was always looking for a four leaf clover. If I spilled the salt, I had to toss a pinch behind my back. I could never be the last person to leave the house. I'd call one of my sisters back just so that she would be the last one out.

I tried not to be so obsessive. I was barely able to act since I was cataloguing every detail to make sure that I wasn't doing something wrong. I couldn't afford to have another bad cloud descend on me. It was that dreary feeling that I'd get when I'd accidentally plunge into a big puddle. I had tried to avoid getting wet, and now I was soaked through and through.

My recovery wasn't supposed to be so tenuous. I had enough of a foundation to resist any recurrences of the disease. More than that, I was strong enough to ward off any other illnesses that might take others down. I needed to take pride in this immunity. At the same time, I had to accept a meager trade off. I was surviving in this half-world between good health and sickness. For this reason, I would constantly need to retreat to a place of safety just to recharge. There were times when I almost felt as I was sleepwalking. I didn't want to go crazy when I felt the signs of fatigue overwhelm me.

Through all my experiences, I could place my trust in my will. I would be at the end of my rope, and I'd still have enough in me to hold on for the next moment. Nothing could knock me down for good. Even while I slept, I could feel an incessant rhythm whirr from the heart of my being. This vibration would not be stilled under any circumstances. As much as this rhythm seemed to dominate, it was somewhat hidden from my conscious mind. I wanted to understand better how my actions were influenced by a deep well of perseverance.

I continued on for no other reason than that was my very nature like a timepiece that never ran down. And as I observed myself, my sense of determination became greater. What had been vague and hidden now came into focus. And with its clarity, I impressed more of my character into its structure. I was sculpting my reflection, and it took on a form that gratified my independence. There was nothing vain in my notice. Every aspect of my view corresponded to a distinct effort on my part. The dynamic machine's incessant throttling could hardly be seen as self-absorbed. It was all that it could do to stay in operation. This did not mean that I was merely accompanying the theme. I simply accorded myself with a harmony that was attuned to the rest of the universe..

More than ever, my resilience helped me to ground my physical reality. Formerly, I searched for a more spiritual anchor for my beliefs. I had felt a connection to a rare form of existence. But my illness had broken that link. I no longer rested my faith on such an obscurity. What had appeared as more mysterious now made itself known in its immediacy. I found particular joy in this relationship. It was hardly founded on the extremes of passion. It was more

clearly an apportioned reality where I broke of just enough to maintain my continued survival. I would always push just far enough ahead of any challenges to come out unscathed. But I was not moved by a great transcendence. And I was not advancing a deep philosophy. I simply made peace with my body, and I did everything that I could to bring a sense of comfort to each day.

I felt that my recovery was more than a blessing. My illness had been so severe that only a serious twist of fate could have allowed me to survive. I felt particularly fortunate for such a turn of events. The cure was nothing short of miraculous. For me, such a development was a milestone. Why did I believe that the outcome was of a spiritual nature? Weren't the healing faculties of the body sufficient to enable me to get better on my own.

If a miracle had been granted in my favor, then I felt particularly lucky that I had been chosen for this sainted honor. The only reason that I would be allowed this privilege was if I had overcome the fundamental corruption of my soul. In other words, the sickness had descended upon for no other reason than the fact that I was perilously near eternal damnation. Otherwise, the full effect of the miracle could scarcely make sense.

Even if I wanted to think of myself as a good person, I had to admit that my own actions had taken me into an area of mortal danger. While I was willing to consider this failure on my part, I had difficulty atoning for actions that seemed out of my character. My teachers had constantly emphasized the corruptible nature of the soul, I had listened to their lectures. But I had difficulty putting too much stock in that bit of dogma. I felt I had spent days trying to figure out what sins I had committed which had been hidden from my view. In getting to the root of my evil, I was disentangling a forest's worth of bramble bushes. And my yield still seemed rather meager.

What was I missing? Every aspect of my sickness had struck me as the culmination of a streak of misfortune. But I needed to think about the rest of my experience in a similar way. Corruption implied complete state of decay. I hadn't simply mistepped. It was part of my character. How could I be that dastardly?

I seemed to be reasoning in reverse. If terrible things had happened to me, I must be terrible inside. That style of argument almost let me off the hook. If I failed to find the source of my depravity, then I could simply claim that I was a victim of awful circumstances. It was just that I had never thought of myself as the instigator of dastardly deeds. A great deal of my self-knowledge was due to my refusal to give in to this kind of analysis. But if I was truly damned, I needed to figure out why. It wasn't only a result of my stubbornness to avow to my own imperfection. I needed to trace the wickedness back to my own actions. This seemed impossible. It wasn't as if I never caught myself off the beaten path. I simply didn't want to see my independence as something bad in itself.

When we were by the water, I cherished out time in the sun. And I recognized that there was something basically carnal in our behavior. I had never been so attracted to the pleasures of the body. But I was hardly a driven creature. Once we left, I was ready to put away all those thoughts for good. Instead, they seemed to follow me home. They reminded me that I was given to my curiosity more than I should have allowed. So the straying was not simply an occasional lapse. That was why I had an adventuresome side. I continued to pay tribute to the wandering soul within.

The moral order depends on a much stricter allegiance. I could never physically attain

that level of commitment. I didn't seem myself as bad. That was how things were. But Church doctrine was not so flexible. And that was why I curtailed my own spiritual development. In a rigid social environment, such a move was tantamount to heresy. That was the very basis on which I was condemned. If I did not somehow correct my wantonness, I would never be able to throw off the hold of sin. I was going about it all on my own. But that only made me more susceptible to grievous failure.

I needed to realize that the miraculous gift of grace was not a reward for my faith. That would only mean that I had made a secret agreement with providence. Things weren't supposed to work that way. At any moment, I possessed only a small picture of my overall spiritual condition. I had every reason to exaggerate my superior moral state. I may have sought help. But how authentic were my pleas. Did my weakened physical status only make me more desperate for some kind of intercession? That hardly meant that I was any more deserving.

Under the circumstances, if my illness had been so crushing to the self, then I hardly appeared chosen. Everything spoke of my damned nature. Why would I be an ideal candidate for grace's blessings? Especially if my sickness was a by result of my own actions, I would have to acknowledge how unlikely I was for spiritual rescue. Thus, my beliefs were no guarantee that I would be chosen. Such an effect would be nothing short of miraculous.

In the early stages of my illness, I was convinced that my suffering had been a consequence of my misdeeds. Even as I scoured my conscience, there was little that I could uncover to demonstrate my fallen state. Nevertheless, I could quite readily notice my shortcomings. That alone was sufficient to indicate my moral blindness. More than ever, I needed intervention from on high to settle my spirits. It wasn't simply a matter of exchanging my waywardness for a life of virtue. A series of good works wasn't going to get me any closer to salvation. This was something that I couldn't change on my own.

I clearly understood that I inhabited a place that was so far from any sense of redemption. Therefore, my desires had no effect on the decisions in heaven. That may have been the foundation for my eventual deliverance. I could not claim that I was privileged for such an end. Indeed, I was feeling just the contrary. And there was no sense that I was trying to meddle in the affairs of divine governance.

I was completely alone in myself and crying out for aid. None was forthcoming. That only made me feel more dejected. And my body was giving in to this powerful force. Personally, I never let up. I would not surrender to feelings of hopelessness. But I had little to work with. Sure, I could pretend that there was a core of resistance that was seeing me through the crisis. But the facts didn't seem to bear me out.

There was this obscure give and take between my body and the disease. I did what I could to pierce this veil. I believed that my knowledge would be factor in moving the infection away from my person. But such a belief could also be a symptom of the delirium. If I summoned all my effort, nothing seemed to budge an inch.

My wishes for a change weren't enough to alter the situation. And I couldn't learn enough about what was going on to influence things by my own actions. If I had understood things better, I was too weak to do anything with my knowledge. At the same time, the smallest effort, when it was multiplied over time still didn't amount to anything of significance.

There was absolutely nothing in my personality that could have brought an end to the

sickness. At that point, everything was totally out of my control. No exercise of will could alter that reality. I could take comfort in my steely resolve. But that effect was entirely psychological. Matters of faith could not be determined through reason. And the state of my health was a testament to the limits of our intellectual capacity. It made me wonder about the true nature of my physical existence. As much as the world made itself prominent through the workings of the body, there was so much that remained hidden. I could not use my will to get closer to these events. Medicine sometimes gave us a glimpse into the inner workings. But there was a point when even the doctors would just throw up their hands.

I could walk around now free from the deleterious effects of the disease. But I had not overcome the powerful lesson. It weighed on me even more. When I was sick, my utter helplessness led me to a point of despair. I was physically drained. My resources were spent. If miracles originated from within, that should have been the point that one kicked in for me. Nothing of the kind happened. At that bleakest of moments, I had to face a reality with regards to my spiritual existence. I did not call on some kind of magical spell. But I continued to hold to my faith.

It was frightening to contemplate how much physical suffering was allowed. That alone should have been reason to make me a non-believer. For that reason, I became more committed to my own inner strength. And I accepted the basic mysteries of my faith. If the world was meant to be a more hospitable place, we would have no need to ask for help. So I balanced my personal independence with my religious belief.

During the most severe attacks that resulted from my sickness, there was barely the possibility of counteracting its effects. I felt in the grips of total despair. I did not want to surrender my will. But there was little that I could to surmount the incredible odds. These feelings alone should have been enough for the compensatory miracle to take place. But I remained in the darkness.

For far greater offenses, others had appeared to have been less burdened. I hardly had chance to live my life. And here I was about to be struck down. It hardly seemed just. I was still trying to analyze what was happening in terms of reason. Reason could provide me the basis to work through the problems of this world. But it could not clarify matters of the soul. I needed to defer to a higher power. All our combined endeavors would never be able to match such majesty. I could demand a cure from my doctor; however, there was nothing more that he could do. He had not commended my soul to a darker intent. What was going on was beyond his means. And he was willing to admit as much.

Where could I turn? I knew that there would be a time when my faith could stand forth. But everything was so confusing. And I had no energy to try to figure it out. If this was a crisis of faith, it was propelled by the very conditions that allowed belief to develop in the first place. This was not about playing a chess game with the gods. The Church was correct in this matter. If I risked heresy at other moments, this was not one of them. I clung to Church doctrine not for some foolhardy reason, but faith was the very bedrock of my existence. It was the foundation of my will. I encountered the physical world according to the constraints provided by my spiritual beliefs.

My outcast state was not a condition of my psychology. My body spoke to the fact that I was deprived of all my faculties. And my physical weakness was an indication of a further

spiritual privation. I couldn't make a go of it on my own. In recalling the depths of my despair, I was highlighting a total absence that had overtaken my being. There had been no way to reason through my dilemma.

If I had been healthy, such an extreme could be rendered as melancholia. But I would have none of that. I was not encumbered by the weight of a disordered psyche. I wasn't able to attain sufficient awareness to predicate such a belief. I was totally dilapidated.

All in all, this should have been the moment when the light finally shone on in my direction. But the darkness became more incredible than ever. What was it going to take to extricate me from this terrible mess? My cries had no effect on a deity who remained obscured deep in the shadows.

My faith was being tested to the highest degree. I was almost being asked to create something from nothing. That was all that I had to work with, and it seemed as if I was getting nowhere. Why should I have continued to believe when all the evidence seemed to point me towards total scepticism.

Belief was a tricky thing. It gave the individual a starting point. But where was I supposed to go after that. There was the Church doctrine and the ritual. And deep in my heart, I was supposed to feel touched by a spiritual presence. I followed all the teachings to the letter. But I was continuing to have difficulty eliciting anything more from the experience. I kept telling myself that I was engaged in a conversation with a higher being. And everything about my life confirmed that belief. The world seemed to be the answer to all my questions. For a long time, I was content.

My fainting spells pointed to my deeper misgivings about my faith. But I worked through that challenge. The sickness was another story. My belief was no longer the solid foundation to ground my search. I drifted through the maze with little to hold me together. On the other hand, my past experience had served me so well. I thought that it would be wrong to abandon my religion during my suffering. That would be too easy, I was only there for the fair weather. I hoped for some reciprocity. As I became sicker and sicker, I started to doubt the rightful balance of the universe. Not only were things out of whack in the physical world, the whole puzzle was coming apart. This was where my religion offered me a semblance of security. I fought to retain this veneer. In normal times, I could always work it into something more. Would I ever reach that point? I struggled in the hopes of attaining a resolution. If none came, what could I do?

I knew that religion was a complex experience. I was beginning to understand all its twists and turns. I remained on the outside of the deepest turmoil that drove the cosmos. I was no saint. But I fed off the same energy. I needed to tap into that vigor to help sustain myself. All the while faith became this thinner and thinner link to something more. Even as it stretched, it did not break. Its promise meant that some future time would reveal all the splendor that was now held in reserve. I wanted the fruits of my effort to be released to help me further. But I only felt handcuffed.

If this was a game at the roulette table, I would have folded. But faith didn't allow an easy way out. So I kept on. I didn't even have enough strength to blink an eye. Yet I was marshaling everything I had just to make it to another day. I was relying on what little remained of my body. And I kept playing under such incredible odds. This was more than astounding. I

was risking my eternal soul.

As much as I understood my commitment, I did not comprehend how far I would have to travel to achieve some kind of spiritual acknowledgment. To some extent, faith was meant to be self-sustaining. It wasn't a bargain that was made between the individual and providence. The Old Testament covenants were based more directly on the material object that worked as a sign of the agreement. Under such terms, concerted prayer would result in the healing of the body. Such a result would occur once the devotion on the part of the penitent appeared totally genuine. At the same time, the divinity seemed held by the terms of the concord. My belief was based on a much more flexible arrangement. While I needed to give of myself completely, I received no assurance that what I was doing was right. I was meant to suffer in darkness. The only way to accommodate my extreme pain was my total dedication to my belief. Even that was not sufficient to receive grace. Ultimately, the end was not my decision to make.

I couldn't just snap my finger and make a miracle happen. It wasn't a matter of filling in my prayer book and receiving the prize that was waiting for me. A miracle was meant to be an unusual occurrence. If it happened all the time, then it would upset the physical order. Such a reversal would mean that we would never have to work through the circumstances of our material existence. Salvation would be more or less automatic. Such a state of affairs would only encourage. We would feel that we could get away with anything. There would always be a miracle to bail us out.

Reason could not explain all the spiritual mysteries. But such a view was not incompatible with science. We used our knowledge to give us a deeper understanding of our time on earth. It allowed us to inform our behavior with a recognition of who we were and how we influenced the world. Our examination of conscience was predicated on such an awareness. If we were hurting others by our actions, no matter how complex, then we had to learn how to end this pain. In order to achieve this profound awareness, we needed to be attentive to the ways of the world. Science created its laws and made its predictions based on such knowledge.

If we inhabited a world of constant miracles, then there would be no way to achieve certain knowledge about our circumstances. We could never be held accountable because we could always claim that the world was changing. We could wriggle out of the worst dilemmas by working a little magic. Superstition was based on the universe in this kind of flux. It didn't matter if a twig really had special powers. Our belief was sufficient to give it the ability to cast spells or to help us fly.

Once we accepted this line of argument, we opened the flood gates. We could turn our back on science. We could delight in our ignorance. Any constancy in the world could easily be reversed through miracles. Good works would make no difference. Suspicion and connivance would be an appropriate substitute. After all, trickery could help us through the worst mess. Our smiling faces would be the perfect cover for our dishonesty.

When I was alone in the woods, things would come alive around me. There was a time when magic seemed to enliven the shadows. And my fears spun me around this maze. It was so entertaining. But I couldn't abide with these myths. There were only part of my childhood. During my illness, I did what I could to recall the wisdom of the forest. That alone would not carry me out of the darkness. I was hit by the stark reality of the disease.

If there was a miracle that would finally deliver me, its origins were so remote that I could

not easily classify its nature. It obviously wasn't consistent with the rules of science. But its violation of those principle needed to be so exceptional that we could still maintain our clarity about our time in the world. It existed in such a sliver of time that it did not upset the physical order. At the same time, it was miraculous because it was something that hardly every occurred. In a sense, it projected its reality outward from the material complexity of the universe. In so doing, it was not physical in character nature. But it needed some kind of connection to the physical world in order to do its work.

In the realm of superstition, I could be handed a magic potion that would ward off whatever was ailing me. A medical doctor could offer me a remedy that would counteract the effects of an infection that had affected my body. I could even use my will to make me stronger to fight any diseases. At time, I had felt a cold coming on. Rest and my inner strength seemed to fight off the sickness. But my illness had been too severe for any former cure. The doctor had nothing in his bag that would end its effects. I needed a change that was unlike anything that I had ever encountered. Even time hardly seemed to do the trick. I had nothing on my side.

When I lost consciousness, I was sure that it was for good. Everything had been tried to save me. Nothing had worked. That was the end. My awakening was so unanticipated that I had to check myself twice. I knew that I hadn't been transported to the pearly gates. But the positive resolution had been so unforeseen that it took me a while to understand what was going on. I was in such a weakened state that I couldn't celebrate. But I knew that I had sustained myself through a crisis. And my limited awareness was a significant improvement over what I had been undergoing. The miracle manifested itself in that marginal edge over what had been affecting me. The heavens did not open up. It did not appear all that extraordinary. But that simple event was enough to allow me to escape the worst effects of the illness. Most of the symptoms remained. But disease ceased its ability to drain the core of my being.

The miracle was not a phenomenon of consciousness. I could observe its effects. It made itself known in the feeling that now resonated throughout my body. But it did its work in a place that remained hidden. This made it all the more mysterious. It wasn't an aspect of my self. The miracle existed independently of me. Even though it touched me in a favorable way, I did not made it happen. It did not result from my continued requests to heaven. And I couldn't observe its effects and reason back to its cause. The source was out of my grasp. I could only pull on these straws in the hopes that I might get closer to what made it all work. As I began to discern a pattern, it all receded from view. I was not meant to be that close.

Through it all, I was discovering something more revealing about myself. The river had made a promise to me. I had given myself completely to that experience. But it nearly destroyed me. I recognized that I could not be a person so devoted to myth. It had played havoc with my faith. All the while I believed that I had come in contact with a side of myself that had always remained repressed. It seemed almost impossible to bring out this nature without jeopardizing my being.

How could I get a clearer image the self that was hidden from me? The miracle gave a contour to this being. It shone a light in the darkness. My emotions seemed to escape from me. The myth seemed the only way to hold on to the hope.

The Lady of Shallot had been forced to abandon her place of splendor. I had familiarized myself with Tennyson's lament. Dreams were lost to his poetic subjects. In the process, they had

approached the promise of Camelot. But it remained out of their reach. I felt the allure of this otherworldly gift. It may have been somewhat unclear in its dimensions. But my sickness had revealed a more lasting aspect of the vision. Since I could not muster the wonders of a great seer, my compact worked in reverse. The great distress that I had undergone gave me a glimpse of another way of being. In order to dispel the immense ache, I had to let go of the hold of my body. This allowed me to cherish the temporary respite offered me by my thoughts. I could hear the poet's calling. The phrases echoed in my body. And in this chiming, I relived the poignant moments of these noble characters. I learned to draw particular comfort from the sedentary lifestyle. That alone helped me see myself through my troubles.

If I could savor such ideal moments in my immediate experience, could I ever discover my own Camelot? My salvation took the form of a wondrous place that beckoned me. It was inspired by books and movies that I had encountered. But it was also deep inside of me. The sickness had not destroyed my dream. To the contrary, it became more vibrant. I simply had to pursue it.

I found it stupendous that these poetic creatures could use their will to give dynamic to the imagination. Thus the imaginary came to life. Such a hope seemed incredible. But I never thought of it that way. After experiencing a miracle of my own, I was ready to further explore this land of Nod. I could look at the moon and feel its invitation to an endless waltz. The bright light was such an enticement. Thus, my feeling was more intense than the attraction felt by a moth to the light.

I would not let go.

How could I ever be one of the illustrious subjects in the enchanted kingdom? I spent days contemplating my invitation. The more that I observed the world that was proximate to me, the more that I understood that it was a sign to a kind of existence so unlike the present that I could embrace its sweet blessings. Even if this meant that I would have to keep wandering all my life, I was ready to take on an avian form to reach my goal. I was learning how to use fantasy to transform my being. My metamorphosis was all the more important because my sickness had brought me down. I needed the cheering.

My being was like the willow tree by the proud river. I felt sorrow for my former existence. But I appealed to a time when my self could again be liberated. I had served my penance. I wanted to be free.

Kings and queens had battled over a faded legacy. I wanted more. No wonder the poets spoke of a time beyond the regent's trust. It was not about the might of the sword or the appeal of golden treasures. The sparkle was always more intense when the sunlight reflected upon the great waters. This was the bug that had bitten me and dragged me down. I was fighting for my identity. The harp rang out my song.

These fierce heroines worked away to make up for the excesses of their suitors. They sang of their independence. They lost themselves in the reflection of the mirror and the glitter of the lake. How else could they escape? In coming so close to death, I had engaged a part of existence that remained untouched by the rest of the world. My Camelot had walls so high that nothing could assail me from without. The miracle allowed that charge to flow all through my body. I had snuck in past the guards. No one had seen me make a break for the throne. When I finally had the bird's eye view, it all made sense.

My own sentimentality had been getting the better of me. But that was only part of the picture. These magical forms were coming in to focus. I could accompany the Lady of Shallot so that I could better understand my own journey. The water again beckoned to me. And I felt that this potent reflection would always be there.

Poetry warned the listener if she became overwhelmed by too much of a good thing. But my moderation was preventing me from living. The illness demonstrated to me that I could no longer watch things from the sidelines. But I still need these fictional characters to follow through for me. Their sentiment struck me emotionally. My sickness had almost killed me. I did not want to live under a bad star. I did not want to be beset by a curse. I was fascinated by these characters who used tragedy to propel them to a deeper level of awareness. I cried with these marvels as I read their tales. If I was going to share their fate, my illness would have to become my way of life. But I was not this sort. I could not control the world from the side of my bed. It didn't hurt to indulge myself now and then. It was my poetry, not my reality.

I didn't want my life to spiral out of control. There was nothing romantic about being sick. Most of all, I wanted to live. I knew the consequences if I extended myself too much. And I feared that part of myself was slipping away. I just had no idea how to hold it together. I didn't think that I needed to worry about it. I could read about the elegance of exotic cities. But I didn't seem myself as that extravagant.

I abhorred the idea of making a deal with providence. And I had used the benefits of a miracle to sustain my being. But I couldn't maintain myself through this intense drama. I was already making a mountain out of a molehill. And my body had done something even worse in letting the infection overcome me.

My solution was simple. In prayer, I would only ask for a little. That way I could hardly be steered wrong. I wasn't looking for magic. I just needed enough inspiration to make it through the day. I promised myself that I would never go down for the count. But I needed that boost just to get by.

Was I asking for too much? Were my little favors only adding up to another Everest. What was the way through the daily muddle.?

I wasn't made for miracles. I understood that things like that happened. They helped hold together all of creation. But it was just better that I didn't have to deal with all their effects. It was almost a burden. I would have to explain why I was special. It was enough just being who I was. Perhaps, I was only giving in to my pride. I just didn't want to feel that I was under the magnifying glass all the time.

I needed to break my life down its most basic routines. This was one of my guarantees of staying healthy. I'd monitor my breathing. I'd watch what I'd eat. I made sure to get my exercise. If I worked on my self, I wouldn't have to worry about anything major. I would only need miracles if I was again at the end of my rope.

Each day I would use my ingenuity to survive. My religion was there to help me along. But I would have to make an effort to make things happen. And I was convinced that I could not remain in this community longer than I needed to. I would have to motivate myself to leave. I would be striking out in the unknown. But I had all the skills that I had developed over the years. And I had an inner resilience that allowed me to get over anything. At the end of the day, if I just had my own room, I could withdraw there and take back myself from the world.

I could feel myself getting pulled into the craziness with my brothers and sisters. I loved being part of my family. And they did what they could to help me out. But it was no longer going to be as it was. I had to accept that.

My disease showed me that I wasn't meant to feel at home anywhere in this world. I had uncovered a sickness of the soul. It was almost a home-sickness as the soul longed to be in its rightful place. It could never feel comfortable in the body. And disease was an irruption from inside coming in contact with the outside world.

This was all too much to think about. I could take this many ideas at once. I needed something more substantial with which to relate. I didn't like philosophy that much. I couldn't meditate about things all the time. I needed to do something. I wasn't a drone; I was a worker. I kept looking for things to do on the farm. It was almost as if I was never sick. I just seemed stronger than ever. I had bounced back completely.

Like my illness, miracles seemed to be part of my past. It wasn't as if life seemed bleaker. The colors filled in where the outlines had previously dominated. I could immerse myself in the richness of experience. As I felt the cold air descend at nighttime, there remained a sense of disquiet. The crickets song kept things active. But I was turning more inward. I couldn't let any depressing thoughts overtake me. I exchanged all my questions for fatigue. I just wanted to go to sleep. After a good night's sleep, my confusion quickly passed. Sleep was the only miracle that I needed. During the day, I didn't let things bother me. If I became a little clogged up, then I took a nap. Now and then, I would cough out whatever was bothering me. I couldn't let a new affliction overtake me.