

THE WAY HOME.

Until he was almost 9 years old, the kid believed in some form of life after death. He was not sure exactly what this life after death would be like. The conventional conceptions of heaven and hell, as well as all these ideas about reincarnation seemed obviously false, quite naive and unrealistic; or at least never 100% convincing. Nevertheless, the kid's belief was beyond doubt. It was based on an emotional certitude beyond reasoning, almost like a physical sensation; the kid just knew, with all of his being, that there had to be something.

On a certain day without any remarkable incidents at all, at the age of 8, he walked home from school, as usual.

The walk took maybe 10-15 minutes, most of the way going along a quite straight small road in a residential area. There was not ever much traffic going there; the asphalt of the street was light gray. To the right side stood some detached houses with gardens, fences and small walls around them. The kid was always walking on the left sidewalk though; in some of the gardens were dogs he was scared of, because they unpredictably jumped up behind the fences and barked at passers-by. On the left were no dogs; there was nothing but a long hedge. Behind the hedge a steep ditch covered with messy wild grass went approximately 10 meters down to a parking lot and a couple of larger apartment buildings.

It was early summer but not sunny with clouds of the same light gray color as the street covering the sky. The diffused, even light made the area appear even less interesting than usual. Because walking home from school was the kids ultimate routine, and he knew every step of the way by heart, there was nothing to see, and he only seemed to stare at the sidewalk in front of his feet.

Once on another day, this sight made an old man who was coming from the opposite direction feel the need to cheer the kid up. Of course he could not know that the staring down he assumed to be out of sadness, was only a result of concentration. The kid wanted to avoid walking with his feet bent inwards, which he had noticed a couple of classmates doing and considered an extremely unaesthetic way of walking.

On this specific day there was no one else around, but when the kid had walked about halfway past the hedge, something changed.

Without any cause, he all of the sudden realized how he had been mistaken. It was evident and bright as the day - the intuition or feeling the kid had trusted had been betraying and misleading, and had actually been nothing else but the inability of his brain to even imagine something as abstract and twisted as his own nonexistence.

Instantly, and from that point ever on after, the kid knew that at some point in the future he would simply die. Nothing more and nothing after. The thought didn't seem exceptionally sad or scary, nor even special enough for him to pause the walk for a moment or look up from his feet. There was no other human being in sight, but if a spectator would have watched the scene closely enough, they might have noticed that the kid's concentration was disrupted for a few steps. All of the sudden he was walking quite normal, instead of pointing his feet outwards like an old cowboy. He felt a wave of excitement. He was thrilled by the idea of how many things there must be beyond his grasp, unknown and fascinating, that he was just incapable of imagining, rather than being discouraged by the first anticipation of his own limitations.