

# The Well of Being

## Ollie

Very long ago but not so far away,  
Ollie awoke into a wiggly new day.

Try as they might, scouring Earth and Sky,  
neither Ollie nor anyone could find the Well.

Ollie had been very young when his quest began.  
That first glimpse of the Codex had sealed his fate.

## The Codex of Destiny

Back then no one could read it,  
though all the world's scholars and scientists  
had tried to decipher it for a thousand years.

The Codex had lay buried for ages unknown  
in a tomb of rainbow gemstone  
in the clutches of a giant, crystalline corpse,  
harder than diamond, glowing with its own energy.

Mining for plutonium, a mile-long drill had struck  
the impenetrable gem cluster. Hard as it was,  
it shattered like a wine glass on tile. Above the cluster the earth split agape  
opening a chasm into which the miners fell.

Weeks later a rescue team was finally able  
to reach the bottom where the miners had fallen.  
Though the miners had not survived,  
the rescuers stood agape in wonder at the gem vein.

The giant crystal corpse stood erect and encased  
like a twenty-foot pharaoh buried standing up  
with nothing but the Codex in its hands over its heart.

A crystal tablet, harder than diamond,  
glowing from within, like a slice of the full moon.  
Upon it was etched an array of symbols  
like nothing anyone had ever seen.

No one could make sense of the Codex,  
except for one piece that was incontestably obvious:  
the eye gazing into the Well.

For generations the best and brightest tried their hand to no avail.  
Gradually interest in the Codex waned. Indecipherable,  
shrouded in mystery, it got lost in the annals of time.

A thousand years after its discovery,  
the most devoted Codex enthusiasts, like Ollie,  
still carried a Codex card with them,  
a token of their belonging,  
a reminder of its awesome inscrutability.

## The Crone Croons

Until one day a musical mystic cracked the code,  
a loony old crooner who called herself Osa Niña.  
She lived in a cozy hut deep in the Siberian wilderness.  
It was a moonless autumn night when Ollie found that hut.

Ollie had set out following a clue  
from his favorite Codician, Shubh Anumaan,  
who claimed to have found the Well  
over six hundred years ago in the Hindu Kush mountains.

Explorers had since scoured every crag and pebble  
of the Hindu Kush, leaving it barren and ruined,  
a paved-in trash heap in the heart of Kashmir.

Anumaan's essential handbook about the Well  
had been translated from his native Kalash into 120 languages.  
In any form it remained an unconscionable web of riddles,  
like the one that had led him here to the crone Osa Niña:

**Moon painting birds  
as shadow woods shed sun  
sing ways to foam Well.**

And so Ollie found himself  
in early autumn on a full moon  
trekking into the darkest woods  
no one had mapped or trod  
listening for birds who sing at the moon.

Just as he realized he had lost himself in the forest  
the hut glimmered in the moonlight  
from under its woodsy camouflage.

Timid but brave, he strode to the door  
and before he could knock,  
the wild crone flung it open.

He gasped at her wild smile and fiery eyes.  
Osa wore the forest on her skin and in her hair.

The clawed toes of her bare foot  
scratched an invitation into the dirt floor.  
Ollie understood Osa's intent without thought or doubt.

Osa and Ollie stood and shared their hearts in a gaze.  
Ollie's hand found the Codex card in his breast pocket.  
He held it up for Osa like a mirror.  
She jolted Ollie with her thunderous laughter.  
Then Osa stretched out her arms and began to sing.

## **The Song of the Way to the Well**

The sunbeams buzzed and the trees quivered to her voice.  
Rainbows cascaded through the air in the hut.  
Ollie could taste fruits in the colors  
and smell flowers in the music.

Ollie felt his face melt into his chest  
and his anus pucker up into his belly.

Then as suddenly as the song had started everything stopped.  
Silence, dark and numb, drowned the world.

Ollie became aware that even in this void,  
even without the world, he was here.  
He became aware that he is always here and now, as we too are.

From that unbounded void, Ollie witnessed strands emerge  
of every size, and color, and shape,  
at every speed, and heft, and length,  
intertwining and weaving with every other strand  
in every way they can  
in more dimensions than a mere human could comprehend.

Yet Ollie could comprehend all of this.  
He found that he understood it all at once,  
and that he, in fact, **was** all of this.  
Eons passed and returned in the blink of an eye.

The strands danced and wove, taking every form  
Ollie had ever encountered  
and then every form he hadn't  
but could conceive.

He dreamed a million dreams at once  
and then a million million  
and then more still.  
Future and past epochs zipped by.

Ollie found that he was no longer a boy,  
but was the void of all of these possibilities  
aware of Itself, loving Itself, and playing,

knowing nothing and understanding everything  
without time or space, without stuff or shape.  
Pure potential, love without form or bound.  
Zero times infinity.  
And just like that he was a boy again.

He felt his inner eye snap shut like a guillotine  
and his outer eyes pop open like rose buds.

Everything and nothing was gone,  
and before him stood the magical crooning crone,  
Osa, covered in a woven bear fur coat  
softly showering him with the firelight  
flickering in her ember eyes.

But the world was reborn, rebooted.  
Now Ollie could see that everything was made of foam:  
bubbles within bubbles all the way up and down.  
And those bubbles were woven of the strands  
he had seen and been forever in that void.

In a glance, the flames in her eyes jumped into his,  
and Ollie knew that Osa knew that he knew what they know:  
the Well sits within, and we sit in the Well.

From the bottom of that bottomless Well,  
Ollie bowed with Osa for a timeless moment  
then swept himself out the door and back to camp.

## **Truth Can't Be Told**

As he hiked along in the silver mist  
the night birds tittered and hooted in the canopy,

painting the pale moon face in pastels  
as it smirked at Ollie between the leaves.

Firelight dancing in the canopy,  
shadow woods shedding sunshine,  
Ollie hovered a breath above the trail as he neared his camp.

His fellow Codicians on this Siberian expedition  
lay strewn around the fire on the pillowy pine needles  
commiserating about the futility and hardship  
of trekking today in all the ways  
Ollie had chosen not to go.

Only Ollie had left his GPS and compass behind that evening.  
Only Ollie had wholeheartedly heeded Anumaan's entreaty:

**Seek foam Well, you never find.  
Surrender lost, you fall in.**

Only Ollie had found the Well.  
But how could he share his discovery?

Rather than interrupting  
their discordant symphony of grief  
with the bell-clear tone of the ineffable,  
Ollie sat buzzing in harmonic resonance  
a fountain of the invisible light of insight.

Successful though he had been,  
the Well was not what they had thought.  
He wondered how he could convey the truth.  
He wondered whether they would believe him.

A tumultuous sea of Anumaan's riddlesome verses  
flooded Ollie's mind as he drifted off in his tent  
into the most peaceful slumber he had ever known.

**Sea without surface  
mountain without base  
seat leaks always peace  
gaze casts ever joy**

Awakening into the pre-dawn murk  
with the self-evident surety of a dream  
Ollie knew no one would believe him  
unless they too saw the Well.

In their swollen shoes, he wouldn't take anyone's word for it.  
It couldn't be so simple.  
If the Well was within us, we would have found it by now.  
Everyone would know about it.

After breakfast, he would take them to the crone.  
He would bow, and she would grin,  
and he would kneel and beg her to sing for them.

## **You Can Lead Someone to Well, But You Can't Make Them See**

That morning the other Codicians  
—Gracie, Hugo, Trix and Quentin—  
were up with the sun, hungry for worms.  
They grumbled at the cold, stoking last night's coals.  
Ollie sidled up to their shivering circle with a sly smile.



“Any of yall see that hut out there?” he asked.

“What hut?” Hugo jerked coffee all over himself.  
“Ain’t nothing but trees and toadstools out here.”

“You all heard ‘em back in Okunevo,” Gracie intoned.  
“No yokels a hundred miles from here.”

Quentin looked up from the cast iron pan.  
“Hang on, hang on, you say you found a hut?”  
He stirred the beans and flipped the eggs.  
“Where? Was anyone there?”

“Yup. Yes I did. About a click from here, due west.”  
Ollie reined them in.  
“Lemme show you. Let me introduce you to **Osa**.”

Trix raised a query.  
“Osa? You mean to tell us *someone else* is out here?”

“Yes, someone very special,” Ollie resolved,  
“enjoy your beans, then follow me.”

They slurped up their frijoles and set about assembling their kits.  
This time Ollie insisted they rid themselves of orienteering tech,  
which proved to be a rather stubborn infection:  
satwatches, tricorders, and smart maps,  
AI sherpas, and quantum astrolabes.  
Hugo even had magnetoboots that directed his steps.  
He borrowed Ollie’s spare moccasins.  
Trix quietly regretted their implants, but that ship had sailed.

Ollie could hardly contain his joy.  
As he led them off the trail,  
the elemental foam swelled to his steps and dispersed at his will.  
Gracie and Q clipped at his heels  
as Hugo and Trix dragged themselves to follow.  
No one noticed that Ollie didn't touch the ground.

As they neared the hut, Ollie hushed them close.  
“Steel yourselves, mates. This is it. Just let me do the talking.”

Then Ollie realized he and Osa hadn't spoken a word to each other.  
Ollie didn't remember when he had learned the crone's name.

The hut sat as unassuming and disguised as it had.  
Smoke trickled from the chimney,  
the cauldron babbled in the still forest air,  
and a sweet musty familiarity fogged up their noses  
transporting them to grandparents' basements and back in a timeless instant.

Once again the door flung back just as Ollie went to knock,  
and once again old Osa enticed them in with a scritch of her toe talons.  
Were those feathers sprouting from her cheeks? Gracie wondered to Trix.  
Trix received the psychic query and ran a cursory scan.  
The feathers were closer to moth whiskers.  
The quaint hut felt crowded this morning.



Ollie met Osa's inward gaze as before.  
Gracie giggled nervously as she flicked past Osa's flaming eyes.  
Hugo swung a cretinous tentacle around Q's shoulders; playful but too rough.  
Trix stooped behind the posse upon a log to monitor their logs.

And there they paused, uncertain and expectant.  
Ollie knowing nothing to say.  
Osa offering not a word,  
Hugo guffawed, which hardly mattered.  
“Леди, у вас могучая хижина!”  
 (“Mighty fine hut you got here, lady!”)  
The crone paid Hugo no mind.

So there they stood, uneasy but insistent.  
Gracie craved then averted her eyes from Osa's fiery gaze.  
Quivering hypersonically, Q couldn't help himself.  
"Mademoiselle, s'il vous plait, savez-vous où est la source?"

No matter. Osa didn't mind, and spoke no reply.  
Ollie sat serenely in the Well while they waited,  
the silence ringing and tolling in their ears.  
the cauldron babbling on aimlessly like a Mahjong table,  
the birds tittering about the weather and winds.

Trix were dutifully swiping through a teeming swarm of alerts,  
routing them to fastidious resolution within and among themselves.  
Hugo hufflepuffed, further constipating himself.  
Q puzzled, chewing runes into his cheek.  
Grace tightened a twirl of her hair, tapped its tip and let it unfurl.  
Osa stirred the soup in her cauldron with a long, oily spoon.

## **Is This What Success Tastes Like?**

It wasn't the first rodeo for these preponderant Codicians.

As she coiled up and released her tendrils,  
Gracie scrambled through her VR travelogues,  
scanning the backcountry of seven continents and seven seas.  
She was no stranger to the wild, but wore an old hat and a big girl's blouse  
when she didn't speak the language, of which she spoke 27  
and passably understood over two hundred related dialects.  
"Cunning is knowing when to hold your tongue and how to wag it,"  
with a wink she mentally translated a maxim from the Esperanto.  
Trix snickered behind their optics.

If you went into Jamba Juice and asked for a smoothie of NASA, Palantir, the Fifth Element, and alchemical gelatin, then poured it into a life-size-Barbie/Ken-shaped popsicle mold, you'd have Trix.

They were more machine than human at this point, more artifice than artist, more device than divine, but Trix possessed incomparably precise data describing the present moment in thousands of dimensions a nanosecond at a time with impeccable recall.

Quentin had read every word ever written about the Codex, or at the very least his mirror minds had scanned them for significant variations in material semantic index or net meaningfulness quotient.

The longitudinal extrapolative projections of his social memory complex placed him at the highest probability locus of the Well from moment to moment with steadily mounting sigmas of confidence. All signs pointed to the Well being right here, right now. Yet it still evaded Q. Where oh where could it be?

Hugo too felt that he couldn't get much closer to the Well without falling in. He'd been raised on tales of his distant ancestor Itchy Andy (अंधी इच्छा) who had burst the vein of adamantite gemstone where the Codex had lay buried for ages unknown.

In his own lifetime, Hugo had built a hundred billion dollar empire drilling and fracking the Earth's crust mowing down the jungles and rainforests and nearly boiling the oceans with his survey expeditions in search of the Well fabled by the Codex.

The Codicians inhabited a uniquely profound state of shock and denial, so while they were brimming with self-assured confidence, and had already begun congratulating themselves at having solved the biggest mystery humanity had ever known, Ollie's casual mention of this hut, and the profound humility of where they currently stood, had them quivering together in indignant disbelief.

And so they stood, until Osa stirred to toe-scratch out their seats and offered them each a bowl of soily soup. It smacked of the forest floor and its branches and crannies. They sipped politely, even reverently until the last slivers of sun slipped between the shadow woods.

All the while Trix had a thousand eyes on the situation, were analyzing the hut, and Osa, and each of them, the air temperature, humidity, and the wind currents, the soil composition, the architecture of the hut, this precise location in relation to every sacred site on the planet, and even the chemical makeup of the soup (which described how it tasted, but did it no justice).

Osa spoke not a word. Ollie continued to bow, knowing what Trix's sensor array, understanding what Quentin's archives, producing what Hugo's holdings, revealing what Gracie's travails, all sought to yield. And the night grew so thick they couldn't draw another breath. And *that was that*.

Ollie had found a nice old woman  
who lived alone in a hut  
deep in the Siberian wilderness.

They ate her soup  
and returned to camp  
and back to their relentless searches,  
the desperate strives they lived as lives,  
and never spoke of it again.

## **Return to the Well**

And so Olikós Élenchos,  
having scanned every speck of the cosmos,  
had found the Well of Being within himself.

And while he couldn't take anyone there,  
he understood that to foam well is to breathe easy.  
He went on to live his life and find his wife  
and tell their children these stories of his adventures.

He never worked another day in his life.  
But he cared for himself and his family and the whole earth garden  
in each moment with his whole being.

He sang of the Well,  
Anumaan's forgotten verses,  
but he never could quite tell you how to get there.