

THE SAMSON JOURNALS

By Ken Grobe

(7,526 words)

July 8/Reno, Nevada. 3:27 p.m.

I've got him. Let's hope I can save him this time.

Six months after the world thought the Hulk dead, I've finally tracked down the Hulk in Reno, Nevada. Once Tiboldt and I made it to Reno, it was typically easy to find the Hulk: merely a matter of following the trail of wreckage from Rick Jones' house. But this time the trail was surprisingly short.

Even I was surprised at what we found at the end. In my time as the Hulk's friend, enemy, and occasional psychotherapist, I have seen him in several forms. But never like this. We found Banner kneeling amidst street wreckage, a shambling, deformed composite of three bodies: Banner's human form combined with the green-and-gray musculature of his irradiated alter ego.

The last thing I heard from it was Banner's voice, after which it reeled back as if struck, and fell unconscious, changing completely to the form of Bruce Banner as it did.

That last exclamation: "Banner is the strongest one there is."

Banner won out. Banner.

This may well confirm my hypothesis. For his sake, I hope it does.

July 8, Deane, Nevada. 9:30 p.m.

I've found Bruce at an incredibly opportune time, and must work quickly before I've blown my window of accessibility.

For expediency's sake, I've taken Bruce to St. Vinton's of Deane, the closest hospital outside Reno city limits. I had to do some fancy footwork, admittedly. Being a world-renowned psychiatrist/phenomenologist has its perks.

It was a simple matter to contact the head of the psychology department, Dr. Joel Messner, and tell him the following story: That I was working on an important, high-security experiment in the area. I required bed space, office space, and complete confidentiality of myself, my patient, and Tiboldt. In return, I offered, I would be happy to credit the hospital as the place for my studies in the published work. Messner agreed and allowed us space in a

secure wing of the facility. I'm not entirely certain I can trust him, but by the time he becomes a problem, I hope to be done and gone.

After setting up Bruce in his room, he brought me up to speed on what's happened since we last met. The fact that Bruce is currently the controlling influence will allow us entree into Bruce's psyche. Now Tiboldt and I can begin work. The sooner the better, I believe, before we've blown our window of accessibility.

Bruce is exhausted from today's ordeal. We'll begin in the morning. This gives me this evening to prepare.

First, a few points of reference:

Everything I have learned about the Hulk has led me to believe that he is a creature of not only separate personalities, but personas, separated all the more by the drastic physical changes associated with each one. The control personality, Bruce Banner, is the original, the human being affected by Gamma radiation as the result of a treacherous testing conundrum. Another, universally known as The Hulk, is an eight-foot, half-ton monster of pure muscle, pure power, pure ignorant, childlike rage. The third personality, actually the second by chronology but buried for some time until recently, calls himself Joe Fixit. Fixit is a behemoth nearly as massive as The Hulk, but possessing sufficient intelligence and subversive demeanor to be treacherous in his own right.

In my many years of attempting to cure the Hulk, I've concentrated largely on the physical: Using repeated doses of gamma radiation, Attempting to drain the gamma energy from his body, et cetera. My more recent studies have led me to believe that the Hulk and Joe Fixit were not created by the Gamma Bomb, but by Banner himself.

This would explain why I and others like me have attempted, with no lasting success, to "cure" Banner by addressing solely the gamma energy that Banner harbors. Banner's recent breakdown leads me to believe that there are more ingrained issues that must be addressed in order to help him. If I can approach Banner through modern psychiatric means, I may be able to address his multiple personalities, and in so doing, cure him in a lasting, permanent fashion.

It has occurred to me that I have not mentioned Maynard in my notes as of yet. Maynard Tiboldt is a specialist I have recruited to help me in my analysis-related endeavors. He may be better known as The Ringmaster, the leader of the infamous Circus of Crime that subtly terrorized audiences nationwide for some years. Maynard is a master hypnotist with a proven record of being able to hypnotize superhumans, even one as powerful as the Hulk. I took the liberty of having him released from jail on my recognizance.

More than ever, I have the opportunity and the means to save both Bruce and the world from his destructive alter egos. I think I can cure Bruce Banner.

July 9, St. Vinton's, 5:47 am.

Just noticed I've worked through the night in preparation for today's initial analysis. It may well be for the best; It's allowed a significant block of time without distraction. Tiboldt seems to have slept through the night. Bruce as well--no mean feat for someone who fears drastic transformations on a nightly basis.

Checked tape recorder. Fresh batteries. Plenty of pens, paper, etc., courtesy of Messner. He brought them in himself, in an attempt to ingratiate himself to me--and make a few clumsy inquiries about the work. Oh-so-professionally sent him on his way. A bit of a weasel. It's amazing how many I've encountered in the psychiatric community who take me for a fool because of my physique.

Going back over my notes to confirm my starting point today. Gamma radiation at the level Bruce received it has one of two affects to the human body: fatal cellular decomposition (e.g. cancer), or superhuman-level mutation. Of the latter cases, it can increase their intellect dramatically, as it did Bruce's long-standing enemy The Leader. For others, such as The Abomination or myself, it increases their physical strength while leaving their intellect intact. All of the latter group's cases are similar in that while the gamma radiation's effects range on the bizarre, they are typically wholly transformative. That is, You're changed or not changed.

Neither the Abomination nor I have ever "changed back." The Leader reverted normal human form only when he lost his cellular gamma stores. Banner, however, changes constantly--between three different bodies, no less. In addition, each form carries a separate personality. I believe the key to his problem is Multiple Personality Disorder.

In a standard Multiple Personality Disorder case, the mind uses certain methods to physically establish its various alternate personalities, or "alters." Usually, these bodily changes are limited to decreased or increased eyesight, coordination, nervous tics, etc. Banner's gamma-irradiated cells take this lead from these multiple personalities to instigate wholesale physiological. Hence, the root of Bruce's problem lies not in the gamma radiation (as I had believed for many years), but in Bruce's mind. I believe that Banner's psyche harbors multiple personalities who have taken advantage of the gamma radiation to create actual physical forms for themselves.

Maynard will prove invaluable with the means of analysis I will attempt to perform upon my patient: to conduct individual sessions with each personality, without the gamma-powered metamorphosis. In short, we will attempt to talk with Banner, the Hulk, and Joe Fixit, each time from Banner's body. It's safer for Bruce, Tiboldt, myself and the hospital. Tiboldt and I have discussed the particulars; we believe we can do it.

As regards analysis technique, Bruce is a special case. I'm forced to combine standard psychiatric analysis with a more informal approach. Bruce is the most receptive to the work, but possibly the least open to standard therapy. The Hulk may well be open to both methods, but standard analysis may be lost on him. Ironically, from what I know about him, Joe Fixit may be the most open to a tight weaving of both.

Tiboldt and I will start later this morning, with The Hulk alter as our first subject.

July 9, St. Vinton's, 9:00 am.

INTERVIEW #1: HULK

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

SAMSON: Hulk, do you know what a memory is?

HULK: Me-mo-ree?

SAMSON: Yes. Here's an example: Let's say you pet a pretty bunny this morning...

HULK: Where is the pretty bunny?

SAMSON: There aren't any bunnies here, Hulk. It was just an--

HULK: Why did you say there was bunny?

<pause>

HULK: Hulk wants to pet pretty bunny!

SAMSON: Hulk, was there a time when you petted a bunny?

HULK: Yes. In the desert. Um. Before.

SAMSON: Okay. Are you thinking about it now?

HULK: Huh? Of course Hulk is thinking about it!

SAMSON: Good! That's a memory--when you think about something you did before!

<pause>

HULK: Oh.

SAMSON: Now Hulk, I'm going to ask you an important question. What's your first memory?

HULK: Huh?

SAMSON: Hulk...what's the very first thing you ever thought. In your head.

HULK: Hulk want to be left alone.

SAMSON: Very well. We can continue this...

HULK: No! First memory. Hulk want to be left alone.

SAMSON: And were you left alone?

HULK: No! Soldiers come. Soldiers attack Hulk. Soldiers use guns.

SAMSON: Do you remember what you did?

HULK: Hulk made soldiers go away.

SAMSON: Did you hurt the soldiers?

HULK: Made them stop bothering Hulk. Hulk smash soldiers! Hulk is strongest one there is.

<pause>

HULK: Where are you keeping bunny from Hulk?

July 9, St. Vinton's, 11:30 am.

It was at this point that I made a mental note to edit the Hulk's audio transcripts. Suffice to say that Hulk's thought process seems to be centered around the following: Hulk Just Wants To Be Left Alone, Hulk Hates Soldiers, Soldiers Always Use Guns, and Hulk Smash. Oh, and Hulk Likes Bunnies. John Steinbeck, eat your heart out.

However, as maddeningly circular as this first session turned out, it did reveal several important points. Most important, though not noted in the transcript, the Hulk does not seem to share any memory with his other two personalities. Hulk has no memories--no matter how rudimentary--of any of Bruce Banner or Joe Fixit's experiences. This would imply a distinctly separate personality.

In addition, The Hulk seems a being without remorse for the targets of his devastating power. Unsurprising for the Hulk, but surprising when applied to a scientist who suffered constant derision from his army employers for his pacifist leanings.

July 9, St. Vinton's, 12:30 p.m.

INTERVIEW #2: BRUCE BANNER
[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

SAMSON: Okay, Bruce. Let's start by--

BANNER: Leonard, I just want to say, before we begin, that I appreciate all you've done. Thank you for all your help.

SAMSON: Don't thank me yet, Bruce. Let's lick this thing first. Are you ready to begin?

BANNER: <deep breath> Let's.

SAMSON: I thought we might start with your parents.

BANNER: Oh, come on, Leonard. You're not dealing with an ammeter. You're not actually going to start with "tell me about your mother," are you?

SAMSON: Humor me, Bruce. Just think of it as a way for us to start the dialogue.

BANNER: <sigh> All right...My mother was...well, she was beautiful. And kind, and gentle, compassionate...She took care of me, until my father hired Nurse Meachum...who barely paid attention to me, wouldn't hold me when I cried, left me wet for hours...last I heard she'd moved to South Carolina to live with some sister of hers who made her pay--

SAMSON: Bruce.

BANNER: Hm?

SAMSON: Your parents?

BANNER: Oh. I saw them so rarely, Leonard. My mother especially. I'm fairly certain my father kept me from her, actually. I remember my mother as a very loving woman...a woman of great compassion, endurance. I suspect she had to be strong in the face of her duress. <laughs to himself> I suppose she was much like Betty in that regard.

SAMSON: Do you see Betty as being under the same kind of hazard?

<pause>

BANNER: No. I suppose not.

<pause>

SAMSON: Well, what sort of similarities do you see between--

BRUCE: Leonard...I'm eternally grateful that you're helping me. You've been tireless in your efforts to try to cure me of the Hulk... I also realize that we're closer than we've ever been. But please...I don't want to talk about Betty.

<pause>

LEONARD: Bruce. I don't mean to press, but I'd prefer that we didn't hold anything back now. I'm sure you'd agree that too much is riding on this.

<pause>

BRUCE: I don't want to talk about Betty...with you.

<pause>

LEONARD: Can we at least talk about why you don't want to discuss her with me?

BRUCE: I'd have hoped that you'd understand why by now.

<pause>

BRUCE: It's a failing. Sometimes I can't help but dwell in the past.

<pause>

BRUCE: I guess that's why I'm seeing a shrink. <short chuckle>

July 9, St. Vinton's, 4 p.m.

The balance of my session with Bruce, though lengthy, unearthed little. As is wont to happen in many standard therapy sessions, Bruce and I went around a variety of subjects a few times. We re-affirmed that Bruce shares no memories with the Hulk or Joe Fixit. This came as no surprise, as Bruce has often related stories of his "waking up" somewhere, quickly discovering that immense amounts of damage had been caused by one of his alters.

Bruce was consistently quick to avoid subjects involving his father. I don't find this much of a surprise, given his history: His father, Brian Banner, constantly abused both wife and child. Then, when Rebecca Banner attempted to take Bruce and leave her husband for good, he murdering her in a fit of anger. Bruce learned to fear anger at an early age, and fear his father more.

It is not unusual for Bruce to avoid this painful subject. What did surprise me was the way he did it initially--by using the subject of his wife Betty against me. It's true that an infatuation I harbored for Betty led to my first failure in my attempts to cure Banner of the Hulk. But that was years ago, and I've proved my dedication to Bruce--as well as my objectivity in his case--several times over. Either he's harbored resentment for me all this time, or he's becoming uncomfortable with my line of questioning.. If so, he is unconsciously erecting defenses that will hold me at bay within the context of our analysis. It's an irony, and to Bruce's detriment, that his own intelligence is allowing him to avoid approaching the very issues that may help him. Still, I am optimistic about gaining progress with Bruce.

I only wish my optimism held for my next session. While I aspire to complete objectivity, I must admit to a certain amount of distrust for Joe Fixit. His stature and intelligence level would imply that he was actually the first alter to make its post-gamma-bomb appearance--a brutal, devious creature with much of the later Hulk's raw power but none of his naiveté; Hyde to Banner's Jekyll. Fixit had become the "host," or "control personality" for about a year and a half, culminating in the subject's six months in Vegas. This was the most recent stretch of any length of time one of Banner's alters had maintained control of the body. Fixit's input may well be invaluable.

July 9, St. Vinton's, 6 p.m.

INTERVIEW #3: JOE FIXIT
[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

FIXIT: You look a little nervous, Doc. Don't be. I'll bet there isn't a serving of fauva beans and chianti in this whole dump.

SAMSON: I'm not nervous in the least, Joe. May I call you Joe?

FIXIT: No. You call me Fixit. How you doing, Maynard?

TIBOLDT: Just fine, er, Fixit.

<FIXIT motions to Tiboldt's hypnotism device>

FIXIT: That the same carny hypno-device you used in your sideshow act when I'd kick your butt for pickpocketing?

TIBOLDT: As a matter of fact, it's vastly improved, as you should plainly--

SAMSON: Maynard. please. He's taunting you. Fixit, I'd appreciate it if we kept the conversation between you and I.

FIXIT: You're the shrink. I'm just here on a group discount.

SAMSON: Fixit, how old are you?

FIXIT: Ooh. A straight shooter. I like that. Roughly 25 years, more or less, Doc. Y'know, the gamma bomb explosion. Hell of a birth.

SAMSON: That's curious. The gamma bomb explosion was less than 20 years ago.

FIXIT: Oh. Must've miscounted. Oops. Got any more fascinating questions?

SAMSON: Let's try this one: What's your first memory?

FIXIT: Jeez. My very first memory? Tough one, Doc. I was such a widdle bitty Hulk at the time--

SAMSON: Are you going to answer the question?

<pause>

FIXIT: Well, it--it's difficult, I must admit. Let's see. It must have been junior year. I had Susan Jacobson in my room, we were going at it pretty heavy, and I was just about to reach around and unhook her--

SAMSON: Look. Maybe we should change the subject.

TIBOLDT: Do we have to?

SAMSON: Maynard...

FIXIT: Hey Maynard--rough guess, over the years, how many of your bones you think I've broken?

SAMSON: Fixit, we're not here to talk about Maynard.

FIXIT: I thought you wanted to change the subject! Look, Lenny. I'll talk sports, I'll answer whatever stupid questions you want. To be honest, I welcome any chance I get to be without my roommates. You got questions, lay 'em on me. You don't like my answers, go screw. But don't waste my time with this touchy-feely crap. Capeesh?

July 9, St. Vinton's, 10:12 p.m.

Well. That was an ordeal. Three hours of playing the straight man in Fixit's derisive vaudeville sketch. Not a pleasant scenario for a psychiatrist.

But a fascinating one. Fixit's crack about being born twenty-five years ago...would have put Bruce Banner at college age--the same time-span Fixit set that story about Susan Jacobsen. Perhaps there are grains of truth among the crap Fixit's spreading.

July 10, St. Vinton's, 8:35 am.

Got called into Messner's office this morning, to hear him scream at me. Says he finally remembered where he'd heard the name Maynard Tiboldt before. Finally I.D.'d him as the former Ringmaster of the Circus of Crime that played the small towns for years. Asked me how dare I bring a known criminal

into his hospital. I explained to him that Tiboldt was on loan from a correctional institute, helping me on a goodwill program. I assured him that neither Messner nor the hospital had anything to fear from him.

Fortunately, my explanation placated him sufficiently. He reluctantly conceded and left with one eyebrow raised. I stifled the urge to lower it for him.

July 10, St. Vinton's, 11 p.m.

A breakthrough. A major breakthrough, I think. Dreading another question-and-answer exchange with the Hulk, I decided on using the Frohmin photo exercise--a means of coaxing identifications by using a series of photos. The Frohmin is a newer test, usually used to gauge media saturation in pre-schoolers, it's generally used as a simple, immediate means to illicit response, measure recognition and analyze a child's naming rituals. I felt pictures might be a potent way to communicate with the Hulk.

The transcription follows. I've added notes throughout.

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION]

[photo 1: Rick Jones]

HULK: Is Rick. Rick is Hulk's friend. Hulk likes Rick.

[photo 2: The Rhino]

HULK: Is horn-head. Hulk likes horn-head.

SAMSON: You *like* him?

HULK: Horn-head likes to fight Hulk. But Hulk is stronger than horn-head. Hulk always wins. Hulk likes to smash Horn-head. Horn-head is weak. But he always comes back for Hulk to smash.

SAMSON: I see.

HULK: Hulk is strongest one there is.

SAMSON: Yes, I know.

This exchange revealed a fascinating detail: Though the more violent and simplistic aspects of his violent and simplistic nature are still obvious, the Hulk also exhibits a comprehension of relationships and more importantly, the ability to reflect on them. The simple comment that in some way the Hulk actually "likes" one of his most consistent enemies reveals previously unrecorded depth--even if his reason is that he likes to brutalize and dominate the person in question. Could this imply a trickling-over of consciousness from Bruce--or Fixit?

[photo 4: Igor Kaledovich, Bruce Banner's assistant the day of the fateful gamma blast.]

HULK: Hulk not know.

SAMSON: You don't recognize him?

HULK: Hulk not know who he is.

SAMSON: What if I told you he was a scientist? Does that help you know who he is?

<pause. Hulk is focusing intently on the photo.>

HULK: No. Hulk not know.

Interesting. Igor is infamous to Bruce Banner as the Russian double-agent who posed as Bruce's assistant, and by whose treachery Bruce stumbled onto the gamma-bomb test that turned him into the Hulk. Arguably, the man in this photo is responsible for the single most tragic moment in Bruce Banner's life. And yet, the Hulk shows barely a spark of recognition of him. This reinforces for me that Banner and the Hulk do not have a shared memory, and therefore have distinctly separate personalities. Made a note to explore this further with Fixit.

[photo 3: myself]

HULK: Huh. Is green-hair. Is you.

SAMSON: Very good, Hulk. And what do you think of the person in this picture?

HULK: Hulk likes green-hair. Hulk knows Green-hair helps Hulk. But sometimes Green-hair tries to hurt Hulk.

SAMSON: How does Green-hair hurt you?

HULK: Sometimes with machines. Sometimes Green-hair traps Hulk. Green-hair is smarter than Hulk. But Hulk always escapes. Sometimes Green-hair fights Hulk. But Green-hair fights bad. Heh. Maybe Green-hair is weak.

SAMSON: <clears his throat> Very well, Hulk. And who is this?

[photo 4: Bruce Banner]

HULK: Is BANNER! Puny BANNER!

Almost immediately upon seeing the photo of Bruce Banner, the Hulk flew into a rage. In this case, "flew" is a relative term, as Tiboldt ensured me that the hypnotic suggestion placed in the Hulk's mind ensured that he would not make any sudden moves or violent motions.

I had truly hoped I could trust him on this.

TIBOLDT: Samson! He's resisting my hypnosis!

HULK: HULK HATES PUNY BANNER!

SAMSON: Can't you increase the dosage?

TIBOLDT: I'm not a pharmacist, Samson. I'll increase the speed of the hypno-wheel and see if that works.

It didn't. Banner's limbs tensed and shook. His face turned red from increased blood flow, then green. Bad news. Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed Tiboldt edge towards the door.

The Banner/Hulk clenched both fists. His chest muscles tensed, then grew.

HULK: HULK SMASH!

TIBOLDT: <expletive deleted>

SAMSON: Maynard, you open that door and all the Hulks in the world won't stop me from finding you.

Maynard and I watched in fear and intrigue as the sheer power of Hulk's hate fought the work of one of the most powerful hypnotists alive. Veins bulged from his neck and arms. His muscles began to crawl, then morph. I shot out of my chair into a defensive combat stance, ready to restrain the Hulk if possible. As Rick might say, "shhyeah, right."

But before the Hulk could raise his head fully, his eye seemed to catch something on the floor. No sooner did it than he yelped as if stung, his anger draining like air from a punctured raft. His skin tone and musculature returned to normal.

HULK: Hulk stop. Hulk sorry. Hulk be good.

As I turned to replace the chair, I noticed what the Hulk had looked at to give him such a shock. It was my stack of photos, now spilled upon the floor, all turned face down but one in plain view, uncovered by the others.

The picture in question was Photo 11: Dr. Brian Banner. Bruce Banner's father.

As I pondered this, Banner, who remained in Hulk-mind, rocked in his chair, hands folded, and continued to mutter meek apologies into the space in front of him.

HULK: Hulk be good. Hulk is sorry. Please don't hurt Hulk.

I heard Maynard exhale loudly. It wasn't until then that I realized I'd been holding my breath and had best do the same.

July 12, St. Vinton's, 4:13 am.

Going back over my notes to help determine the results of the Hulk's Frohmin test. Perhaps it's the late hour (not to mention my sporadic sleep patterns), but I can't help but taking a self-centered slant to my current train of thought. Have I been, in fact, hurting the Hulk, as he'd implied? The diverse occasions I've tried to help him have, for the most part, involved abduction, submission, and a variety of drugs, techniques, and technologies, both experimental and conventional. Rarely, if ever, has it occurred to me, that I may have done him more harm than good. My intentions were always philanthropic. It had never occurred to me that I might had caused the Hulk undue pain and anguish.

That little crack of Bruce's about Betty didn't help either. Have I been remiss, or worse, misguided in my methods?

Fortunately, this current line of therapy is considerably more humane than my previous attempts. Hence, this conundrum is more of a personal one, and is therefore is of a lower priority. Best that I pursue it after finishing my work with Bruce.

Make a note to try and speed up the sessions if possible. This is far too late to be staying up and reviewing materials. A lesser man would be begging for sleep at this point.

If consorting with Bruce's relatively normal psyche wasn't refreshing, I'd find it irritating. Whereas the Hulk doesn't know better and Joe Fixit takes amusement in analysis, Bruce seems to put up actual, if instinctual, resistance.

July 12, St. Vinton's, 2:30 p.m.

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION]

SAMSON: Bruce, MPD can occur as early as age 5 or 6, sometimes earlier. It usually comes as a defense to trauma, even at that age.

BANNER: Interesting. <sigh> Well, it's no surprise that my mother's death a source of trauma. But still, Leonard. Do you think that a single event like that, even one that trau--

SAMSON: It's often triggered by abuse. A history of abuse.

<pause>

BRUCE: I'm sure you can understand, Leonard, that's a very tender subject. Can we really risk touching on any subjects that might cause me undue stress?

SAMSON: I usually take a great deal more time and caution during analysis. But you and I both know that we don't have

the opportunity for either. Maynard's here, I'm here, and you seem to be in control of your alters for the first time in recent memory. But we don't know how long this could last. And we can't afford to wait. Frankly, if there's any time we can do this, it'd be now.

<pause>

SAMSON: Bruce, I can't impress upon you how important it is at this stage--

BANNER: He hurt me Leonard, OK? Is that what you wanted to hear? He hurt me like no one else ever will. The Abomination, the Leader, Glen Talbot, the <expletive deleted> Gremlin, that crusty old son-of-a-bitch Ross--

SAMSON: Bruce--

BANNER: No one hurt me like Brian Goddammed Banner. He bullied me, beat me. Called me a monster, Leonard. I'm five years old and that--that animal is knocking me down and calling me a monster! And no, Leonard, I don't *know* how many years it lasted for. But it was probably started from when I could first remember and ended *the day he went to jail for killing my mother...*

SAMSON: *Please*, Bruce--

BANNER: God *dammit!* That's what you wanted to hear, wasn't it? Is that what you're trying to drag out of me with your clumsy prodding and rote questions? You want to hear that my father abused me, just to justify your theories?

<pause>

BANNER: No. Don't say it. Don't even bloody say it. Just take your pound of flesh and spare me the biopsy.

St. Vinton's, July 12, 4.19 p.m.

Bruce grew increasingly fatigued and irritated, and asked to stop the session in order to turn in early. Because of the rigorous nature of that day's analysis, I consented. Despite the tone of the session, a triumph. I've gathered the necessary information from Bruce to establish cause for MPD. Despite my coarse--though necessary--methods, I have presented to Bruce, perhaps, the single most formative subject of his entire life's experience, and hopefully, helped him to understand how it may well be the source of his problems. But on top of it, I have made a startling observation. This exchange provoked tears, raised voices, anger. Nothing more.

He didn't change. Possible the most intense, (uncovering) verbal exchange of his life and he remained Bruce Banner.

Though it may be once again at the cost of his pain and anguish, I am heartened by my subject's progress. (Banner may be able to serve as the anchoring persona after all.)

St. Vinton's, July 13, 3:03 a.m.

Stayed up late working again, decided on an early-morning jog around the area instead of sleeping. Came back to find Bruce waiting for me, disturbed, wishing to talk. Though this wasn't an actual session, he consented to my recording the exchange.

BANNER: Leonard, you're going to merge my three personas, aren't you? My three personalities?

SAMSON: I won't be able to decide that without more data, Bruce. It may be an option.

BANNER: Wait a minute. If you do, how can you guarantee that I'll be the dominating personality? Or wait a minute-- can you guarantee me that I'll be part of the personality at all?

SAMSON: Bruce, anything's a possibility at this point. Don't--

BANNER: What if I'm not? What if Fixit or the...Hulk is the only persona left? Would I die?

SAMSON: Bruce, calm down. There's no information that would imply that. After all, you're the root personality. I can't actually give you hard facts on this--

BANNER: I don't want hard facts! I want you to tell me whether or not I'm going to live through this!

<pause>

SAMSON: Bruce. This is not an exact science. I don't have charts and graphs to show you. But *if* we decide to manipulate, merge, or remove personalities, I am convinced that your persona will *at least* figure heavily into the ultimate result. Now please, go back to sleep.

I took him back to his room, whereupon he slept soundly until morning.

I am sorry that he forced my hand on the issue. The concept of the merging personalities--and the toll it implies--weighs heavily upon him. However, my condensed time-frame allows me limited opportunity for subtlety. Despite my training, I am having difficulty empathizing with him. This is but one trauma on a road of traumas, leading to his ultimate well-being. I'm reluctant to stray from that road.

After he awakened, I decided to spare him for the day and interview Fixit instead.

St. Vinton's, July 13, 6:05 p.m.

Probably due to his ability to share group memory, Fixit has suddenly taken an interest in the methods and goals I had just discussed with Bruce. I saw no reason to hold it back from him, particularly since any conversation with Fixit may suffice to draw him out further. He took the bulk of our time to campaign for himself as the reigning persona.

FIXIT: So tell me, Doc. Who of the three of us is most like a person? What's the criteria here? Who've us has held down a place of residence for any length of time? Or a job? I'll tell you one thing, Lenny. It ain't Banner. He's got a big hole in his resume that reads, "wandered planet and beyond, possessed by monstrous alter-ego and somber theme song." There's only one of us who's remained in one place long enough, and you're looking at him. Sorta.

SAMSON: Make any friends?

FIXIT: Nope. You?

SAMSON: We're not talking about me.

FIXIT: Awww...what's wrong Doc? Afraid once I know who they are I'll find 'em and kill 'em? Smart man.

SAMSON: Some might suggest a lack of conscience would indicate a lack of wholeness.

FIXIT: Yeah, thank you, oh Ancient One. Lemme show you my all-seeing Eye of Ahblome.

SAMSON: All right, then, doesn't it bother you that you don't have your own body?

FIXIT: What are you talkin' about, Doc? I have my own body. Grey skin, built like a concrete dump...Nobody else'd want this body. Banner tried it once or twice, he didn't like it. Betty's not too fond of it either, if you know what I mean. Marlo, on the other hand...

<pause>

FIXIT: Okay. Enough stand-up. Let me tell you somethin', Samson. That gamma bomb gave me life. Then, for

whatever reason, I hadda go bye-bye--for years--just cause a' whatever was going on in poor little Brucie's head. For the last six months, I've just been livin' the life I deserved. A real life. And I'm gonna let you pull the plug on me? I'll tell you one thing, Doc. I ain't going so easily.

SAMSON: I hate to break it to you, Joe, but you might not have much choice in the matter. Everyone from me on up to S.H.I.E.L.D.'s tried everything else to cure the collective "you"; and It's resulted in thousands of lives lost and billions in property damage. So now we're trying it this way.

FIXIT: You're beginning to sound like that brown-nose Talbot. Y'know what he'd call it? "Losses." "Hits." "Solutions." Y'know what he meant? Murder. Ever occur to you that you don't want to cure all of us, just wanna kill off me and big green? You think taking us out of the equation is gonna bring back the dead? All those people who were unlucky enough to have the last thing they hear be "Soldiers attack Hulk? Hulk Smash"?

<pause>

SAMSON: I'm just trying to prevent any more, Joe--including yours, by the way. You want to call it murder, I say fine, even coming from a loathsome beast like you. But consider it self-defense.

FIXIT: Self-defense? Bull, Samson. It's euthanasia. It's culling. Don't call it what it isn't. You're using your power to lower the odds. And if there's something I know about, it's power. I remember every punch we've thrown, every tank we've crunched, every life I've taken, whether we've meant to or not. Think about who I've got in me, Doc. I've got a big green destruction machine with the brain of an Olsen twin, I've got the man who created the most powerful weapon in the world...and I've got little old me. Who've you got in you, Doc?

<pause>

FIXIT: Aw, come on...there's not that many "gamma spawned accidents" roaming the earth, now are there, Lenny? Why'd you irradiate yourself in the first place? Power. How'd you get to be such a noted monster doc? Power. You think I don't remember why you got yourself all juiced up? Come one now, say it with me...power.

<pause>

FIXIT: It's wasted on you, Samson. You've spent it tailing my purple seat when you could do whatever you want with

it. Love whoever you want to love, take whatever you want to take--

<page from the hospital intercom>

PAGE: Dr. Samson. Dr. Leonard Samson. Please dial extension 236 immediately. Dr. Samson--

FIXIT: --Hate whoever you want to hate...

St. Vinton's, July 14, 2:31 a.m.

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

<helicopter sounds; gunfire>

V1: Stay on it, men, we've got it cornered. No <unintelligible> run. Fire when ready. Keep it <unintelligible> jeep <unintelligible>

<helicopter sounds; gunfire>

V2 Sarge, nothin's <unintelligible> loaded half a belt into that <unintelligible> he ain't <unintelligible> hell it barely--

<helicopter sounds; gunfire>

V3: Sarge, <unintelligible> lock on the jeep. Those two boys are movin'. They're <unintelligible>

<helicopter sounds; gunfire>

V2: Sarge, it's pickin' something up!

V1: EVASIVE! EVASIVE AC--

<loud crashing sound>

[END TRANSCRIPT]

The preceding transcript comes from a desolate stretch of desert sixty-three miles from St. Vinton's. The voices in question are of army personnel on night maneuvers--three in a helicopter, two in a jeep, both parties heavily armed.

The "it" they are yelling about is not, I repeat, not the Hulk, nor Joe Fixit. "It" is me. God help me for what has just happened.

It started when Messner interrupted my session with Fixit to call me into his office. Transcript follows.

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

SAMSON: Messner! What is the meaning of this? You interrupt me in the middle of my work, you *page me by name*--

MESSNER: Don't get so self-righteous with me, Doctor! That's Bruce Banner you've got in there, isn't it?

SAMSON: Messner, the identity of my patient--

MESSNER: --must be preserved. Yes, I know. I assured you that you and your personnel would be kept secret. I didn't say anything about monsters! Samson, are you so clueless that you have no idea what could happen to this hospital if the Hulk went on a rampage?

SAMSON: Doctor, I promise you, as I did before, I have everything under complete control. All I need is a couple more days to--

MESSNER: I can't believe what I'm hearing! You have had the Hulk under my roof for *three days* now! Do you have any idea what kind of risk you are putting my hospital--my patients under? Please don't tell me that you're as dumb as you look.

<pause>

SAMSON: That was unnecessary, Doctor.

MESSNER: What is unnecessary, *Doctor*, is the liability I am taking by harboring you and your little sideshow. A particularly unequitable one, at that. However, if you and I can come to terms, it needn't be.

SAMSON: I beg your pardon?

MESSNER: I have a proposition for you. I haven't bothered telling anybody about your presence here...yet. That page was local to your suite of rooms. However, It illustrates my value to your project, don't you think?

SAMSON: Messner, if you think--

MESSNER: Shared risk for shared benefit. Cut me in on the credit or I blow the whistle.

<pause>

MESSNER: Don't be stupid, Samson. I can be your friend here. All I ask for is a little compensation for my trouble. I'm

risking the lives of my staff, my patients, just by harboring that maniac. Now, I'm willing to do that for a share of the glory.

<pause>

SAMSON: Messner. You insist, despite my assurances, that my patient could cause great damage to your hospital. But, you're willing to risk that for fame? Who's the monster here?

MESSNER: If you like, we can let the authorities decide, Samson. Don't be stupid. Take the deal. I'll give you until morning to decide.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

Seven hours to decide. Felt very, very tired. Considered getting a bit of sleep, then making the decision rested. Decided on a desert jog to clear my head instead. I often find that a good cardiovascular-driven increase in my body's metabolic rate, coupled with a subsequent ingestion of bulk nutrition (i.e. food) will often suffice in place of actual bodily rest.

Having said that, perhaps first and foremost I felt driven by the urge to run.

What follows next is terribly, terribly simple. So engrossed with my thoughts that I didn't notice the jeep. I had stumbled onto an army base during night maneuvers. The jeep plowed into me, costing the Army one jeep and two injured but (fortunately) living soldiers. Their support helicopter swooped in, fearing the worst. And perhaps they'd found it: A gamma-irradiated meta-human, hounded by soldiers who prevented it from just being left alone. Me.

I crippled the 'copter, spared the soldiers, and escaped.

Now here I am, back at the hospital, counting the hours. I have four-and-a-quarter left. Less if the soldiers find me.

St. Vinton's, July 14, 4:38 a.m.

Three hours, twenty-two minutes.

I can't decide. I can barely think. I almost killed humans tonight.

Men. I meant to write "men."

Have I had a dark, violent side, waiting to be given access, vent? Am I a monster?

I drown in memory, of the mistakes I've made. Or rather, the mistake.

From the first time you saw Betty and Bruce, you knew they had to be together. That's what inspired you to devise a plan to save her life and cure him of the Hulk, so many years ago.

But was it, Samson? as soon as you got the chance, you used the excess gamma energy siphoned from Bruce on yourself--and you know damn well why. You wanted to be a superhero. A man of mind and muscle. Doc Samson, the gamma-powered super-shrink. And what did you do as soon as you achieved your comic-book fantasies? God help you, you made a play for Betty.

You felt like a kid with a new toy, didn't you? And you just had to test it out. But the test didn't work out how you planned, did it? Sure, you got your first lesson in super-powered humility by getting snubbed by her. But not before Banner re-exposed himself to Gamma radiation out of sheer jealousy. You were weak, Samson. And it cost you the life of a good man, a fellow scientist.

But more than that, it cost the lives of soldiers and civilians all over this planet. Hell, all over the universe. That's why you've been trying to save Banner. To atone for the thousands of lives destroyed by the Hulk since your mistake. Since your failings.

Now you're damned to a life on the run. A hell that starts in less than three hours.

Trapped with no one to turn to.

St. Vinton's, July 14, 5:04 a.m.

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

SAMSON: Fixit.

FIXIT: Bit early for analysis, isn't it Doc?

SAMSON: Fixit, before, when you said I had others in me--

FIXIT: Oh, that. I was just tryn'a make a point, Doc. Banner and the cabbage and me, we need to be more like you. You've got it together, Doc.

SAMSON: What?

FIXIT: Look. You've been at this stuff almost as long as us, only you've fought the good fight, see?. You've proved that the gamma-rad doesn't corrupt outright. It doesn't make you evil and it doesn't have to make your demons real.

SAMSON: Doesn't it? After tonight, I'm not so sure.

[END TRANSCRIPT]

St. Vinton's, July 14, 5:30.m.

[AUDIO TRANSCRIPT]

FIXIT: Oh, come on. You got some humans scared of you. They shot at you. You made 'em stop. Boo hoo. Occupational hazard. Hell, you're a gamma boy, like us. Between that and your wardrobe I'm surprised you don't get in more--

SAMSON: All right, Joe, I get the point.

FIXIT: First, you get me to a phone. Then I call up Siegal General and we get a room.

SAMSON: I've never heard of a Siegal--

FIXIT: 'Course you haven't. It's only available to folks in my...profession. Y'know, away from the authorities. And they aim to keep it that way, if you know what I mean. They take a lot of after-hours patients like me with no questions asked. Lord knows I've put enough of 'em there. Guy on the board owes me a favor. He'll give us cover and all the time we need. Oh, but you might need to take out the main generator here, to cover our escape. Bring Maynard to zap people if you don't wanna take 'em out yourself. I'd help, but I seem to be in the body of a wuss.

SAMSON: I'm not comfortable with this. With trusting you.

FIXIT: Have you figured out yet that I'm smarter than I look? I need you, Doc. I've tried to ace both'a these rubes myself. If I've got pole position in this head and I can't get rid of 'em, then we need this crap solved, one way or another. We need you and Maynard to try something else--maybe try mergin' us. We talked about it, Doc. You're the last chance.

SAMSON: You...talked about it?

FIXIT: Didn't know about that, didja? Just me & Brucie, really. I still wanna show big green his glass jaw, but Banner's been keeping us apart so far. Can we leave now? I'm getting the itch to pound someone and I'm sick of Banner's whining.

Ben Seigel General Hospital, Somewhere near Las Vegas, July 14, 11 a.m.

Without a hitch. We narrowly escaped the army because we waited to make sure the back-up generators kicked in. I insisted on that.

I am pleased that Joe's plan worked, rattled by the fact that I listened to him in the first place, and truly amazed that he is in fact not Joe Fixit or rather, not "just" Joe Fixit. He's Bruce Banner, a man with the mind of a genius, the eye of a hitman, and the heart of a child, split into three distinct parts--though perhaps, if I have anything to say about it, not for much longer.

My fault was in discounting each of the three personalities. Each represents a valuable part of Bruce Banner's psyche; each has something to offer. Each are parts of the whole.

So here we are, sequestered in an unknown mob hospital, preparing to merge the three personalities into one whole person. A single, whole, gamma-powered entity. Like me.

Hell, he could do worse.