And I, I did not know it.

While galaxies surged and flared above, Jacob saw only what needed to be done—he smoothed his bedroll, tidied his sandals, all the small things before sleep—his lamp’s glow a shield against the unfathomable dark. When he lay back, though, despair slid over him like a stone so heavy it would take three men to shoulder it from the mouth of the well. Yet as smoke spiraled from the candle’s wick, patient stars lustered up like a forest of trembling, luminous leaves, like fluorescent reefs in the deepest sea, and the earth tipped, plunging him into sky; angels scaled the ladder of his spine; his body hollowed, a conduit for the divine. Waking, he saw what had been there all along—quartz veining the stone beneath his head, the tear in his bedroll darned by his mother, how his sandals held the press of his soles; he saw the site holy and said, God is in this place and I, I did not know it. But why the double I, the nervous stutter? In that moment of sight, it was not God but himself he’d unnoticed—freeing him, for an instant, from the self’s hold.

Even our feeble flames are enough to divert us from seeing, so we access God by unknowing the I, taking us back to ourselves, fully, for the first time, in a place made holy by simply being seen.

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