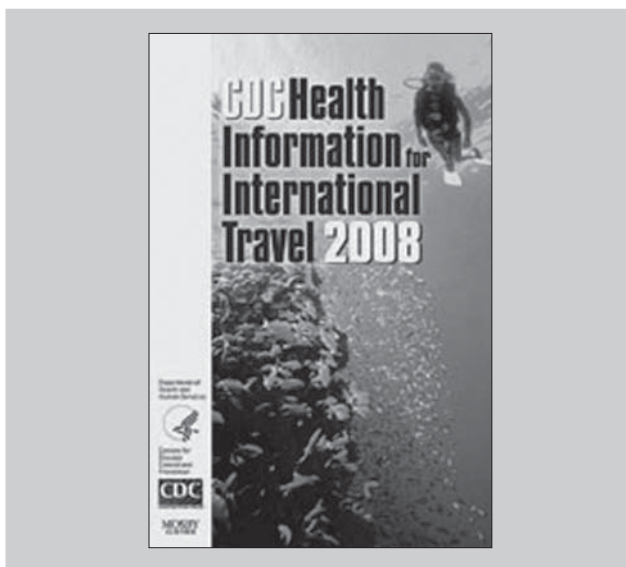


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## Midnight Cave, Texas: The Experiment

— For Michel Siffre

**AI Zolynas**

A man descends into a cave  
long abandoned by bats. For six months  
the electrodes and wires of science  
bristle from his head.  
in the dark chest of the earth,  
a hundred feet beneath the seasons  
and with no clock but  
the wound timepiece of himself,  
he seeks his own rhythms.  
Above him colleagues monitor  
his vital functions  
and turn the lights on  
and off at his request.  
His dreams, of course, are his own,  
part of the self's short-circuit,  
not to be monitored by the surface crew.  
After the 130th cycle  
there are no days), after waking  
in panic in absolute darkness,  
he writes, "When you find yourself  
alone, isolated  
in a world totally without time,  
face-to-face with yourself, all  
the masks that you hide behind—  
those that preserve your own illusions,  
those that protect them before others—  
finally fall, sometimes brutally."  
The man sits on a rock  
in the circle of light  
around his pale-blue tent  
for a succession of eternities  
swaying mindlessly. He daydreams  
of the dense jungles of Guatemala,  
the sunlight filtering  
through wet leaves. His boyhood  
fantasy of finding Mayan relics  
somehow sustains him:  
"I will go to Central America  
and I will regain control of my soul."  
On the floor of the cave  
the dust of ancient bat guano  
filters, particle by fine particle,  
through itself.

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