

*The
Messiah
Perspective*

The Messiah Perspective

Published by Jennifer Wherrett

<https://thelady.com.au/books-publications> (The Messiah Perspective)

Copyright © Jennifer Wherrett, 2025

The moral right of the author has been asserted.

This is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places and incidents are either the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, business establishments, events or locales, is entirely coincidental.

All rights reserved.

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without the prior written permission of both the copyright owner and the above publisher of this book.

*Come, take my hand.
Do not be afraid.
In this world of darkness,
I will show you the **L**ight.
If you will allow me,
I will show you the **T**ransference of **B**eing,
And I will prove to you
That you can exist in a **H**igher **D**imension.*

Table of Contents

	Introduction	6
1	The Puppet Master and the Actor	16
2	The Realm of Shadows	29
3	A Conflict of Scripts	52
4	Cornerstones, Constructs, Yardsticks, and the Mask of Conventionality	79
5	The Atlantean Priestess	111
6	The Right of Exclusion	141
7	Lady of Light	170
8	The Law of Love	209
9	To Dream Dreams <u>in</u> Perfect Alignment	238
10	The Ripple Effect	274
	Creating the Current	296

Author's note:

I deliberately use capital letters for the following words:
Love, Light, Truth, Wisdom, Fate, Destiny, Knowledge, Purpose, Will, Way, Work,
and Process to distinguish these as higher-dimensional concepts from the common
usage of these words and from the misguided mindsets of lower dimensionality, or
third-dimensional physical reality.

Introduction

Almost from the exact moment I reached the pivotal point in my life that triggered such momentous and, in many ways, calamitous change, I knew I wanted to write this book.

Lady of the Lake is the book of my soul, but *The Messiah Perspective* is the book of my heart. Well may you ask what the difference is. And a good question it would be, too. I did not make a conscious decision to write *Lady of the Lake*. In fact, I held within the intent to write a different book entirely, but when I sat down to write that book, *Lady of the Lake (The Lady)* emerged. She had a life of her own, and so took herself places I had no control over, though I did, at times, try for misguided reasons of my own.

Really, all I had to do was sit back and allow her to take the shape she wanted to be, a little like a potter sitting at the potter's wheel expecting to mould the lump of clay upon it into a bowl, but watching in surprise as a vase emerges in its stead. The analogy makes it sound simple. Yet I am ashamed to say *The Lady* had to fight my resistance. Caught, as I was, in the mindset of this third-dimensional physical reality at the time, I had other ideas for her, of course. Despite me, though, she came to life exactly as she was meant to. In a very real sense, what I wrote in *The Lady* took me years to walk into, to become, so that I wrote about concepts and principles, insights and realisations long before I was capable of fully understanding them.

What a disaster that book would have been – the book of my original intent – had I written it when I intended to. But then I realised, of course, *The Lady* was always meant to be its precursor, so that the concepts introduced in *The Lady* I could now expand on to my heart's content. In a sense, and to use the same metaphor, now that I recognised and understood the true shape (or nature) of the clay I was working with, I could relish the joy and the sheer pleasure of moulding it, working it, playing with it, and seeing what emerged. And so I have.



So, what of that crucial, pivotal point that so changed the landscape of my world, my life, and my view of myself? So much did it shift and alter my world, both inner and outer, looking back it is, to me, as if I have lived two quite distinct and different lives.

Before that point, I was an ordinary girl living the same life everyone else lives. Now, many years after that point, I am what I am, and what I am cannot be measured nor defined by anything in this physical realm, except to say, “that is what I am not”.

When I was younger, I barely gave due consideration to what I would do with my life because it never occurred to me I could or would live a life any different from those I saw around me. I never really had any desire of my own to be a wife and a mother, but I knew those roles were the natural, and only, outcome I was walking towards, for isn't that where the true fulfilment of every woman lies? Isn't that what most women strive for and must achieve if they are to be validated as women?

Until that part of my life materialised, though, I had no option but to build a career for myself. After all, I was intelligent and capable so to do anything else would be a waste, would it not? I had no ambitions, though, so what was I to do? All I knew was that I wanted to make a difference somehow. I wanted to make some sort of meaningful contribution to the human experience. So I chose medical research and became a bio-statistician. Once I started working, though, I realised very quickly that I was rare, and alone, in my desire to make a meaningful contribution, and, although I was unaware of it at the time, disillusionment set in and began to fester within me.

So, at what point did I decide to fill my life with those constructs upon which, and with which, an acceptable identity is built – one that fits comfortably within the society one finds oneself, and through which one's achievements and successes are measured, weighed, and balanced, and found to be adequate, or not: marriage, mortgage, a big house in the suburbs, career, wealth and assets, money to travel, a house full of material possessions, children, a broad social circle, and a closer circle

of friends . . . ? Well the truth is, I didn't decide. My life drifted inexorably this way because it never occurred to me there could be, or was, anything else.

And I wished, at the time, I could say I was happy, because I was certainly supposed to be. I had all those things in my life that make you happy and bring you fulfilment according to everyone else. And, if I admitted to being anything other than happy, then what on earth was I supposed to do to *be* happy? There was nothing left for me to add except children (I was yet to add that string to the bow of my existence). Apart from children, though, I had it all.

But deep within, in a place I kept rigidly and desperately contained, I knew that I really existed in a state that could be measured only in terms of degrees of *unhappiness*. And fulfilment, contentment, peace, joy, satisfaction, these were just words in the dictionary. So life wasn't joyful nor did it have meaning, but I successfully managed to keep the truth of this from myself.

Well . . . nearly successfully, I should say, because every now and then, often with no obvious trigger, I would walk straight into what I called my 'crisis periods'. These were times when the truth *would* bubble up into my conscious awareness despite my best efforts to keep it at bay. At such times, those dangerous questions would ring through me: Why am I really here? This cannot be all there is? Surely there must be more to life than this? What is the meaning and purpose of it all? Is this really who I am?

At one point, I found myself consciously thinking, I'm surviving . . . how am I doing that?

The silence and the stillness were the worst. In fact, these became quite terrifying in a way because they facilitated those horrible questions bubbling to the surface of me. Thinking was pretty scary, too, but thoughts can be controlled, quite easily as it happens. But in the stillness, I felt, or sensed, the emptiness within me, and in the silence, I felt, or sensed, the meaninglessness. The solution was simple, though, since those questions stabbed at my consciousness only in the silence and the stillness. Fill your life to overflowing so that you never have to *be* still and silent; so that you never have to stop long enough for those dreadful truths to bubble to the surface.

Always, though, when I walked into a ‘crisis period’, I walked out of it again after a few days, and was able to successfully pull myself back together and go on pretending to myself that everything was okay.

Sometimes, we stray so far from our Selves – our source, our essence – that we are barely surviving. I had reached that point of barely surviving but struggled to keep the truth from myself, to hide from it. Sounds melodramatic, does it not? Well, it would not have been so bad if I hadn’t felt so numb, so dead; if I hadn’t been aware at some level of myself that I was eroding away, crumbling into a dilapidated ruin. Something was horribly wrong, and I did not know what it was nor what I could possibly do to fix it.

Maybe I could have kept going as I was. But that choice, as it turned out, was not mine to make, hence that pivotal point.

It matters not what the pivotal point is in its physical manifestation. For each of us, it will be different. In fact, for some, this process comes on gradually and gently. What matters is what it represents and what it causes to happen within us. For me, my pivotal point cracked me open so severely and so implacably that I was wholly unable to pull myself back together. And so I found myself having to deal with those questions and the horrible emotional states they generated (depression and despair being the absolute worst). My ‘crisis periods’ had reached crisis point and now overwhelmed me to the point of feeling as if I was nothing but pain.

Every part of me – body, mind, heart, and soul – was in pain, as if I was on fire inwardly and outwardly (and which I describe in Chapter 7 of *The Lady*). It took me a long time to realise what was going on and what had happened so that another of those horrible emotions was thrown into the toxic mix in the meantime: bewilderment.

And it didn’t help that no one around me understood what was happening to me. What they unwittingly reflected back to me was judgement and condemnation – a reflection of my own whispering egoic voice: “Why can’t you just behave yourself!? Why can’t you just be happy with what you’ve got!? You’re so weird. You’ve gone off the rails, lost the plot. Maybe you should be on medication . . .”

Only the gradual dawning of understanding and realisation gave me relief from the pain and the condemnation . . . slowly, too slowly at times, but surely.

That pivotal point in my life occurred a long time ago. Now I understand perfectly what happened, what had gone wrong, and what was missing before that pivotal point. My Merlin saves me the trouble of articulating it by summing it up perfectly:

“You see, Niniane, humans are like onions. At the moment they exist on the skin of themselves, fearing and avoiding their pungent inner layers. *But the only way to the truth of who they are is through those inner layers.* ‘Tis an arduous and hazardous journey . . . peeling back layer after layer of fear and shadow.”¹

The truth is, before that pivotal point, I was buried under layers and layers of fear, ignorance (particularly self-ignorance), misguided belief, indoctrination, social programming, distorted perspective; trying to become what I thought I *should* be instead of being what I am; trying to be how everyone else is, even though I am not, in any way, like everyone else. And the pain? For some, walking through those pungent inner layers – that hazardous journey of self-discovery and inner transformation – is harder than for others.

Even though, physically, I had so much according to the subtle demands of society, in *Truth*, I had nothing, nothing at all, because I had no idea of who I really was. I was so utterly disconnected and separated from my Self, it was slowly killing me. I was dying from thirst and a lack of nourishment.



For those of you who wish to remain on the surface layer of yourselves, these discourses, stories, and dialogues are not for you. For those of you who wish to remain in the state of Perpetual Separation that now defines the human experience; that is, if you wish to continue existing as you now exist, and well may you desire that, for you may be one of those rare souls who has found true happiness in your existence, then my words are not for you. If you do not want to change, then, as *The Lady* warns you, do not read any more.

But for those who recognise that change is not only inevitable, it is upon us, then I hope my writing at least brings you understanding, if not the illumination of knowledge.

We know something is wrong with human existence. Do we admit it? Some do, for to some the evidence is all around us, demanding our attention. Should I list it all? Niniane (*The Lady*) already has so I'll simply quote her:

“War, violence, death, depression, illness, despair, fear, oppression, abusive exploitation, greed, lust for power, a total disregard for our environment, apathy, lethargy, grief, people hurting people. What are these if not chaos?”²

And these are merely symptoms. Symptoms, like pain, are a gift if you see and acknowledge what they point to. Mask the symptoms or treat the pain without dealing with the underlying cause and you will fail to cure the disease . . . and the disease, then, just might be your end. So what is the disease that gives rise to these symptoms?

The answer is so simple and yet, at the same time, is made quite complex by the degree of ignorance that pervades this world. Shakespeare (or the man who wrote the Shakespearian works) recognised it, though. He articulated it beautifully in the play *Hamlet* when he had Polonius say:

“This above all: to thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as the night the day,
Thou canst not then be false to any man.”³

For what if I was to tell you the true source of this world's ills lies in the very fact of humans ignoring, suppressing, compromising, negating, *dishonouring* that which lies at the heart of each one of us: the brightest, most powerful, extraordinarily beautiful spark of Divinity as it exists within us all.

Humans so desperately and actively seek God outside of themselves when He is, in truth, found *within* each of us. And within is the only place He can truly be found. Indeed, we *are* God, so to truly honour God, we have only to honour ourselves. And yet, we pay no heed to the part of us that *is* God. So we have separated ourselves *from* God, and now we accuse Him of abandoning us.

But to rediscover the spark of Divinity that lies at the heart of each one of us, to allow its expression and see it reflected in the eyes of those around us, we must first turn and face the other way. We are turned in the wrong direction, and while we are, we will never see the spark of our own Divinity. But then, if we *were* to turn and face the other way, we would be confronted by those pungent inner layers . . . and therein lies the true heart of the problem, for humanity will, now, do anything to avoid the reflection of its shadow. Such a reflection is too uncomfortable and, often, too painful to bear.



The responsibility for our human experience rests now in our hands. If we choose to handle what is to come by falling to our knees with our hands tightly clasped as we pray to God to keep us safe, then I'm afraid we are in trouble. 'God' is not going to stop the Process that has begun to shift human consciousness. 'God' is causing it to be. This we must understand and accept. It is not up to 'God' whether or not we become a part of the new paradigm of human existence. It is up to us. It is up to you.

We think the ills of this world can only be healed or fixed in the world itself. But we are wrong. The ills of this world have their source within *each one of us*, and so it is within *each one of us* that the source of the world's ills must be dealt with.

The human soul is beginning to stir. It is beginning to throw off the shackles and chains that have held it captive, imprisoned, bound, and gagged. And it is ignorance that perpetuates that slavery. Ignorance forms the bedrock upon which our existence is currently built. Knowledge is the key that will release the shackles of ignorance that bind and fetter us. In the illuminative light of Knowledge, neither fear nor ignorance can survive.

I existed on the surface of myself for far too long. It was a form of death. But I have traversed my own inner layers, and fought countless battles with my own inner shadows and demons. I have come back from the dead. I am, now, resurrected from the tomb of my fear and ignorance. And Knowledge was the means of my resurrection and release.



We have within us the power to be such a vital part of the Process that will shift human consciousness into this new paradigm we now find ourselves in. We have within us the power to set our Selves (our souls) free, to rediscover the spark of our own Divinity, and turn ourselves from Slave into Messiah. We hold within us the power to become our own personal Messiah, and truly I tell you, when you begin to view yourself, your life, and the world in which you exist from the *perspective* of a Messiah, you begin to exist in a world that is *heaven*.

And if enough of us are prepared to unlock our own spark of Divinity – to honour it and give it expression; if enough of us can find within ourselves the courage and strength necessary for becoming our own personal Messiah, then, collectively, we will begin to *create heaven on this earth*, and there won't be a damn thing the rest of humanity can do about it. We will create the *current* and, in doing so, will direct the *flow* of human Destiny that will sweep all and sundry up into itself and carry humans into the new paradigm of existence.

Then, we will shape a new reality, and oh what dreams may come.

What beauty, what sparkle, what magic, what magnificence.

What Light will then define the human experience.

And, how absolutely extraordinary we will become.



What follows is a series of discourses, discussions, treatises, and dialogues, all of which contain the higher Knowledge I have unearthed within myself in the course of my own journey through my inner layers. This is, then, the truth of human existence, human psychology, human spirituality, and human reality as I see it.

The Greek philosophers of the ancient world knew the best way to impart knowledge, particularly higher, esoteric Knowledge, was to set it within the context of a story and a dialogue. A setting and a conversation, like the sugar coating on a pill, make it so much easier to swallow, digest, absorb, and assimilate the knowledge contained therein. Moreover, for those who have the eyes to see, this

format allows one to see as deeply, or not, as one desires, and to glean as much or as little as one is willing to absorb.

Besides, this just also happens to be my favourite form of writing.

Jennifer



1. *Lady of the Lake*, Chapter 7, Part I, Jennifer Wherrett, 2013.
2. *Lady of the Lake*, Chapter 4, Part IV, Jennifer Wherrett, 2013.
3. *Hamlet*, William Shakespeare, various publications.

I am Come

*I am come
And I bring with me
A new age of human existence –
An age of beauty, peace and Light.*

*I am come
And I bring with me
A return to innocence –
A state of being without fear.*

*I am come
And I bring with me
An awakening
To the truth
And the revelation
Of who we really are,
And of what we're truly capable of.*

*I am come
And I bring with me
The illumination of Knowledge and Truth
That will shift perspective
Beyond the physical . . . well beyond.*

*I am come
And I bring with me
Light to illuminate the darkness.*

*I am come
And I bring with me
Love.*

The Puppet Master and the Actor

Helena watched the amphitheatre fill, the robes and tunics of the initiates slowly turning the rows of semi-circular stone seats from grey to white, like a carpet of scattered flower petals that, at first, punctuates the landscape with patches of white and then, as more and more petals fall, covers the ground as the patches join together so that the colour of the landscape is changed completely.

The buzz of dozens and dozens of conversations filled the amphitheatre, growing louder as more of the initiates arrived to take their seats. And the air of excited anticipation was building in a crescendo so that the atmosphere became more and more charged. It was impossible not to be affected by it, but Helena felt the excitement and anticipation for herself anyway. She'd barely slept the night before and had been among the first to arrive, making sure she got the position she wanted a few rows from the front, right in the centre – the perfect vantage point, she thought.

The sky above was putting on a show of its own, making its own contribution to the air of anticipation, as if it knew the significance of the evening. The setting sun had streaked the sky in brilliant colour, turning the light layer of clouds high, high above to burnt orange and bright pink, while the sky between them, where it could be seen, was bright blue. Helena's attention wavered between the spectacular sky, the slowly-filling arena, and the attendants who were lighting the torches around the stage and at the ends of the semi-circular rows of stone seats.

Although she felt the impatience that fills those few moments just before a long- and much-anticipated event is about to begin, there was also much to entertain and distract, so she was mildly surprised when Esubius, her mentor and teacher of the last five years, appeared on the circular stage and asked people to find their seats quickly. The sky was forgotten, as were the attendants lighting the torches. Esubius *almost* had Helena's complete attention. The stragglers who, for reasons she could not fathom, chose not to hurry to their seats were a niggling distraction that heightened her impatience.

Now that the moment had arrived, though, she suddenly felt nervous. Her heart increased its beat, and a myriad of little butterflies fluttered anxiously in her stomach.

Esubius did not introduce her, the one they had come to see. He merely asked for quiet as an attendant brought a stool onto the stage and placed it slightly off-centre, closer to the front than the back. And then she walked onto the stage as Esubius walked off it. He sat in the front row, two rows below Helena, but Helena took no notice. She was studying the one they had come to see, slight disappointment stilling the fluttering of nervousness, and settling with a dull thud in her gut. What had she expected? She wasn't sure. She didn't realise until this moment that she'd formed any expectations at all, but formed they had. The disappointment settling in her gut told her so, for isn't that what they'd always been taught? Disappointment always accompanies failed expectations.

She watched as the woman on the stage, the one they'd come to see, settled on the stool with one sandalled foot on the stone floor and the other resting comfortably on the rung of the stool. She wore a robe of turquoise similar in style to that worn by the initiates, and her hair, a mass of curls, was pulled up and away from her face and held in place by a series of thin silver bands, just like Helena's. A silver band, decorated with stones of turquoise, encircled her upper arm like a snake, winding around it. She was beautiful, the one they'd come to see, but so, too, were most of the initiates. 'Twas not by accident that those chosen, or those who chose, the path of initiation were physically attractive because the initiation process brought one's own inner beauty to the surface such that it was reflected in one's physical appearance.

So to Helena, the woman on the stage in front of her was just like everyone else she'd encountered over the last five years of her initiation, and therein lay the cause of her disappointment. She realised, now, that she'd expected or hoped the woman, the High Priestess of whom they had heard much, would look . . . well . . . ethereal somehow, certainly different from everyone else.

And then the woman smiled at the initiates, held out her hands, palms up, and said but one simple word: "Welcome."

Helena's nervousness evaporated, as did her disappointment. The restless movement of the initiates crowded onto the rows and rows of semi-circular seating ceased. Utter stillness descended. And with one word, the High Priestess was able to achieve what Esubius could not: absolute silence.

Look like any other person she might, but the radiation of Love in her smile, the Light in her eyes, and the power inherent in that one word was unlike anything Helena had ever experienced. Helena and the other initiates were captivated, their attention caught as if under a spell that refused to loose its hold. Helena could not contain the smile of pure, unadulterated joy that bubbled up within and found release, like a fountain newly and freshly turned on. Nor did she need to turn her head to know the same joyful fascination caught and held those around her, for she could feel that it had settled over all of them like a mist, lightly and gently but firmly holding them in captivated awe.



The High Priestess looked up at the sea of white-clad initiates before her.

“You have done well,” she addressed them. “You have persevered and worked hard to reach this, the stage of initiation we refer to as ‘Connection’. ‘Tis the stage of the heart chakra, and I can promise you ‘tis a stage of great reward. Now will you harvest the fruits of the last year’s labours.

“But for tonight, you may make yourselves comfortable. Relax and listen as I weave for you a tapestry that depicts the nature of human reality. Close your eyes if you must, for you do not require your physical eyes to see this tapestry. You will need only your inner eyes. My words will become the threads that form the tapestry within you. Allow it to take shape as it will, and we shall watch, with interest, the picture it forms.”

She paused to observe the various reactions on the sea of faces before and above her. Some sat unmoving, their eyes remaining open, but many more allowed their eyes to drop closed. She waited until she sensed their collective readiness. And then she began.



“Imagine, for a moment, the small stage of a puppet theatre. ‘Tis an elaborate little theatre, beautiful in its own way. It sits on two big wheels and can be opened like a cupboard to reveal a curtained stage decorated in red and gold. When the curtain is drawn back, the polished wooden floor of the small stage and the scenery at its back and sides, painted on sheets of canvas in bright colours, are revealed.

“But you do not see the puppet theatre from the front. You see it from an entirely different perspective, for you are the puppet master, and so you see the little theatre from above. And you are intimately acquainted with the small theatre because, as puppet master, you have painstakingly created every tiny detail of it yourself. In fact, you have created the little theatre and the scenery painted on its backdrop to fit, perfectly, the puppet and his story – a story conceived of and written by you.

“And, of course, as puppet master, you have created your puppet – lovingly crafted, with your own hands, each and every part of him. So as puppet master, your puppet does not *just* dance to the rhythm set in the pulling of his strings by your own fingers. As puppet master, you and you alone hold the knowledge of why the puppet was created. You and you alone hold the knowledge of how his story, his script, has been written to include all the experiences you know he is to have whilst on the small stage. You and you alone hold the knowledge of why your puppet looks as he looks, thinks as he thinks, and is as he is. You know, for example, why your puppet is male and not female. And, as puppet master, you and you alone hold the knowledge of the story of your puppet’s whole existence – the story and the script that directs him and that he will follow whilst on his small stage.

“But as the performance begins, something very strange begins to happen – something the puppet was not really created for. He looks, does your puppet, at the stage and the scene around him, and he begins to want for himself. He begins to want things *in* his reality, his stage – things you have not given him – and he begins to want things *from* his reality – things he is not really meant to have.

“And his wants begin to consume him so that when you pull his strings to take him in one direction across his small stage, he is looking in the opposite direction because that is the direction *he* wants to go. So you pull harder to make him go

where you know he must go. But he resists you. You pull, he resists; you pull, he resists, and so it goes on until he, your puppet, becomes angry, annoyed, and sulky, and he decides he will not follow your script at all anymore.

“So he wrests control from you, and you are forced to watch while he tries to obtain for himself those things he wants, and he tries to go in the direction he wants to go. He tries to rewrite his own script in order to satisfy his wants. And in trying to obtain those things he wants, and in trying to rewrite his own script, he hurts himself because he becomes more and more separated from you, the puppet master; more and more disconnected from you – the one who has lovingly created him.

As puppet master you can only watch helplessly, for while you try to regain his attention, and you try, desperately, to communicate with him, to tell him of his folly and warn him of its consequences, so consumed with want is he that he cannot and does not hear you, and he does not heed you.

“After a while, your puppet forgets your existence entirely, and so he also forgets that the small stage upon which his little feet do dance is just that – a stage. And he forgets that the scenery around him is just that – scenery. Unfortunately, too, all the experiences your puppet is supposed to have according to your script he does not have. So his little life that is supposed to be enriched with those same experiences is lacking – lacking meaning, lacking purpose, lacking direction. So he wanders through his life, across his small stage, lost and aimless.

“As puppet master, you mourn for him because you feel his bewilderment, his disillusionment, his disappointment, his confusion, and his emptiness as he obtains what he wants, and then wants again and again and again. And you feel his longing. You know what it is he yearns for, but he, in his disconnection, does not even know that he yearns. You see his thoughts and sense his feelings, and so you know he thinks, deep, deep within himself, that his life should have been better somehow, different.

“Unfortunately, too, you know that while he, your puppet, thinks and believes he pulls his own strings and is, therefore, in control of his own life, he does not and is not, for he has neither the power nor the means. He is, after all, only a puppet. So you watch as a nameless, faceless force dictates the rules of his existence, pulling

your puppet's strings and taking him in directions contrary to that of your script. You, the puppet's master, know that in wresting control from you he has lost control of everything. In separating himself, you know that he has, in fact, surrendered his strings to a power of darkness that cares not one whit for him; that seeks only the preservation of its own control.

“Such is the human experience.”

She allowed a silence to descend on the amphitheatre for a moment, and then she said, “You may open your eyes now.”



Helena blinked and as she did so the amphitheatre, its lit torches, the white-clad initiates in front of her, and the darkening sky above intruded, anchoring her back in her present circumstance so that the picture in her mind's eye dissolved and vanished. But not so the knowledge deeply embedded in the priestess's story. That knowledge at first settled in Helena's gut where once disappointment had settled, and then, as she began to digest and absorb it, spread through her veins like blood and was carried to every part of her body.

And as the knowledge permeated her psyche, a question took root, began to germinate and grow rapidly within her



She, the one who sat upon the stool on the stage, allowed the silence and the stillness to persist, knowing the seeds she had sown were taking root and germinating. And then she asked them to close their eyes once again.



“Imagine, now, another scenario,” she gently commanded them. “This time you are an actor playing the part of a character in a stage play. As the actor, you have worked with the other actors in the play to create the story and write the script of the play, so you know both well. So well do you know the story and the script that both are a part of you, for both are born of your very own creative ability, and from your very own experiences. So, as the actor, you know exactly how your character

fits within the story; you know exactly for what purpose each scene in the story has been written; you know exactly how the story will affect the character while he is on stage; and you know exactly what will happen to him in the context of the overall play.

“But as with our puppet, again, something very strange happens – something seemingly impossible given the fact that you, the actor, are playing the part of the character you have created so that separation is not actually possible, for you are one and the same. While you are on stage, the character begins to take over. He begins to believe he is real. And the more he takes over, the more he believes himself to be real, and the more he forgets about your existence.

“He, your character, believes he is in control. And so he begins to do and say things that are not part of the script. Indeed, he abandons the script, disregards it as if of little note. He even forgets the existence of the play and the stage, so that he looks at the scenery, at the other characters on the stage with him, and at the stage props around him, and believes it all to be real. Indeed, he responds to it as if it is real, and so he starts trying to change it to suit himself.

“And why does this happen? Why does the character take over and forget the underlying truth of your existence? Well, unfortunately, it happens for exactly the same reason our puppet wrested control from his master. He, the character, becomes focussed on, and therefore consumed by, what he wants for himself. He looks at the scenery around him and sees only what it lacks, what he wants. And in his quest to satiate and satisfy his wants, he resists your script, and, like the puppet, tries to write his own story.

“But just because *he*, the character, abandons your script, does not mean the script has ceased to exist. In fact, the script *does* still exist, and as the actor, you know this. And so you watch the character try to pull his own story in one direction while the story of the script pulls him in another. You watch the resulting tension build within him like the tension of a rope being pulled in two opposite directions. And you know that if the rope is not strong enough, or if he keeps exerting enough pressure on it, it will snap.

“You, the actor, watch helplessly as your character becomes embroiled time after time after time in situations that he does not understand and over which he

actually has no control. You watch as he struggles and fights and rails against the circumstances in which he finds himself, for these circumstances are, you see, not a part of *his* story. And you watch as he begins to sink, pulled under by the force of his own emotions – emotions that are, as you know, communicating to him, more loudly than if the heavens themselves screamed at him, the meaning and purpose of the circumstances he wishes only to be free of. In fact, you as the actor know that those very emotions that pull him down – those very emotions he tries to avoid at any cost – are the key to pulling him up and out.

“And you, the actor, watch helplessly as he attracts, and becomes entangled by, relationships with other characters in the play. But because he is no longer connected to and subservient to you, the actor; no longer following your script; no longer aware of the true nature of his existence and the reasons for it, he misses the point of both the relationships and the circumstances in which he finds himself. So, he attracts the same kinds of characters, and acts out the same scenes over and over and over again.

“You watch, and you know, but he, your character, does not pay you any heed because he has blocked out the truth of your existence. Indeed, as time goes on, all of the characters on the stage so completely and utterly forget the true nature of their existence – the actors, the story, the script, the stage, and the play – that it does not occur to them their reality could be any different. So anything that might point to the truth or cause them to remember fails hopelessly to gain their attention, and even if, by some miracle, they did pay attention, so ignorant of their existence have they become that they would not understand anyway, for they see only the stage and its props, and have not the wherewithal to see beyond it.

“Such is the human experience.”

A pause.

“You may open your eyes.”

~

Again, Helena opened her eyes. The question now burned within her. So much did it burn within her that she leaned forward on her seat, unconsciously willing

the woman on the stage to yield up the answer. Like a gnawing hunger or a raging thirst was the question now burning within and consuming her.



The High Priestess smiled, for she could sense the tension born of unsatisfied desire, the hunger of wanting to know. Rather than satisfy them, though, she chose, instead, to add fuel to the fire burning within them.

“Imagine that as part of our puppet’s story, the puppet master has his puppet play a game of chess. The puppet master knows the rules of the game. The puppet does not. The puppet master knows what each piece on the board does and how it moves. The puppet does not. The puppet master knows the aims of the game and is an expert, possessed of an incredible intelligence, and so has a master plan to win the game. The puppet knows nothing of the master plan. The puppet master knows the calibre and capabilities of the opponent. The puppet does not. But still, the puppet plays the game as if he knows best, and so he ignores and pays no heed to the puppet master when the master urges the puppet to move a piece on the board in a particular way.

“How well,” she asked them, leaning forward and speaking slowly to emphasise every word in her question, “can the puppet play the game in comparison to how well and how masterfully the puppet master would *have* the puppet play the game?”

She paused to allow them time to formulate the simple answer required in response to the question.

“And surely you can now see that the puppet would be so much better off – would be able to win the game in fact – if he would but trust his master even though he may not be privy to the master’s plan for winning the game. Some moves may not make sense to him but are still a necessary and vital part of the overall plan. And what happens to the plan when the puppet decides on a move of his own? Does not the puppet master have to alter and adapt his own plan to accommodate the puppet’s ignorant and misguided moves?”

She shrugged exaggeratedly to make sure even those in the back rows could see it.

“But still, we humans insist on playing the game our way.”

She smiled at the initiates then and leaned back.

“But would it not be easier if we just remembered the existence of the puppet master/actor, and became aware of the puppet master’s script, the actor’s story? Would it not be easier if we just allowed ourselves to be taken in the direction our strings are pulling us, and then to know *why* we must go in that direction? Would it not be easier . . .?”

She smiled again, for she could feel the question hovering over them all like a cloud heavy with rain, wanting to loose its load. She wondered if one of them would be brave enough to give voice to the collective question, and so she waited a moment. But they sat, as if in a trance, all eyes upon her, waiting, waiting, waiting.

“All right,” she said and smiled again, this time to herself. “Before I answer your collective question, let me ask *you* a question. You have already seen, in your mind’s eye, the *perspective* of the puppet master. You have already seen that he looks down upon the small puppet theatre and sees all. What, then, of the *perspective* of the puppet? What does he see or not see in comparison to the puppet master’s perspective? And remember, the puppet master’s perspective is not just underpinned by what he *sees*, but also by what he *knows*. So, again, what of the puppet’s perspective in comparison given the fact that he holds a distorted and misguided belief about his surroundings, the stage and the scenery, and has no knowledge whatsoever of the true script and the purpose underlying it?”

Silence.

Again, she wondered if anyone would be brave enough to answer, but still they sat, appearing to her like rows and rows of unmoving statues. She smiled again to herself, for she could feel the atmosphere changing. They were beginning to understand.

“The answer you yearn for is simply stated, but not, of course, so easily accomplished. It requires practice, dedication, commitment, and perseverance – all of which each one of you here tonight has more than adequately demonstrated.

“First, you become aware of the puppet master’s existence and of the existence of his script or, if you prefer the second analogy, the actor’s existence and the actor’s script. Become aware. Become aware of yourself *as* the puppet, the

character. Hold the knowledge within you of your own limited perspective, your inability to see beyond the stage and the props. Hold within you the knowledge of your own limited power. And, at the same time, hold the awareness and knowledge within you of the power of the puppet master/actor's script that flows through your life like an underground river, pulling you along in its powerful current.

“And then, allow that knowledge to become a part of your way of thinking about yourself and your reality. Know, for example, that nothing, no matter how seemingly trivial, comes into your reality without purpose or reason. Everything within and around you – your relationships, the fact that you are hearing this tonight, your thoughts, attitudes, and emotions, the circumstances, events, and incidents that affect you, even if as seemingly trivial as stubbing your toe – form the landscape of your reality for a purpose – a purpose that is governed by the puppet master's script/the actor's story.

“Seek it, that purpose, and you *will* begin to see it.

“*That* is your first step – the first step to reconnecting with the puppet master – the first step toward consciously placing your strings back in his hands . . . although, of course,” she added, smiling again, “in truth, your strings never really left his hands.”



The Realm of Shadows

*Without the Light of the Soul
The shadows exist with, and by, a will of their own.
Then, powerful are they
Such that they hold us in their grip.
Like fingers,
The tendrils of our shadows
Wrap themselves within and around us,
Enclosing the heart,
Choking its Light
Until the Light is all but extinguished,
And all that is left
Is the shadow.
Like tumours,
Our shadows consume us
And take us over,
Altering our sense of things,
Controlling our thoughts and actions,
Worming their way into and through our psyche.
Such is this, the Realm of Shadows,
And those of us who walk within it
Naught but wraiths,
Substance-less, insubstantial, ghost-like.*

*The two pillars of true transformational change
Are focus and perspective.
For, you see, **K**nowledge and **W**isdom
Are transforming, yes.
But it is focus and perspective
That are transformed.*

The Realm of Shadows

(**Note:** the fit of this dialogue into the chronology of *Lady of the Lake*, for those following the characters and story line, falls in Chapter Seven, and takes place just before Merlin and Niniane arrive at Luguwallium. It is, in fact, the last of their ‘Revelations’ dialogues.)

“And the second step?”

“Well,” Merlin said as they ambled alongside the rushing stream, he in front and she, leading Arondiel, following closely behind, “one must learn to disempower one’s shadows because ‘tis the shadows within that darken and distort the soul’s Light thereby keeping one disconnected from one’s soul. Of course, the actor, the soul, will lead an individual to and through each and every shadow if that individual allows him- or herself to be thus led.”

Niniane, distracted by the prettiness of the scene, stood holding Arondiel’s reins, Merlin’s words receding against the beauty that surrounded her.

“Aye, Niniane,” he said sombrely, “now you see why I brought you here.”

She nodded without speaking. The soft green grass she and Merlin were standing on separated an orchard of apple trees from a fast-rushing stream of water. The water, rushing over the rocks and pebbles in the stream like a collection of miniature waterfalls, caught the light from the noon sun, flashing like lights turned on and extinguished in quick succession. She watched the water as if mesmerised for a moment, a smile of pure pleasure playing with her mouth, and then she turned her attention to the orchard. Rows and rows of apple trees stood like lines of soldiers awaiting inspection, every tree full of red apples, larger than a man’s closed fist. The orchard was well tended. This was someone’s land . . .

“Do not concern yourself, my dear,” Merlin said before she had a chance to give voice to the question. “I have a long-standing, open invitation to help myself to the apples in this orchard and the water in the stream any time I choose. And since this place has a soothing effect on both the mind and the belly, I partake regularly.”

“An open invitation?”

“Long ago,” he explained as he led his donkey to the stream, “I granted the owner of this orchard a special favour, and he has never forgotten, nor will he, methinks.”

“What kind of favour?” she asked as she followed suit, leading Arondiel to the water. Both horses drank deeply.

“I put an end to a long-standing and dangerous feud. In fact, I would say I performed the seeming impossible by reconciling both parties. ‘Twas not easily done.”

“So,” Niniane commented, smiling, “the mediator in you was rewarded with both the knowledge of this place and an invitation to partake whenever you desire. And right now, I, too, am a beneficiary of that reward.”

Merlin’s smile sparkled at her like the sunlight on the rushing stream. “We’ve a need, you and I, of the quiet contentment of this place. One cannot help but absorb it.”

They tethered the horses, and then Merlin went to fill his cloak with as many apples as could be held in it while Niniane removed her boots and stockings, rolled up her sleeves, hoisted her skirts, and walked gingerly into the middle of the stream, taking careful, measured steps. The power and sheer force of the water threatened to sweep her legs out from under her. Heedless of her clothes, she splashed water on her face, arms, and legs, wishing she could discard her clothes entirely and immerse herself in the cool water.

“Do not let me stop you,” a voice, muffled with distance, crossed the grassy bank from the direction of the orchard.

She stood up, put her hands on her hips, and rolled her eyes. The gods damn it, she thought. Would she ever remember Merlin was privy to her thoughts?

But she took his advice, walking back to the grassy bank, and discarding her clothes. Dressed only in her shift for modesty, she waded back into the middle of the stream, sat carefully on the rocks, and leaned back. Bliss! The water rushed over her body, massaging, caressing, and cleansing it. Arching back slightly, she allowed the water to massage her head and clean her hair. As it had once before in a similar stream, the water took with it the dirt and grime and the fatigue of travel.

In no hurry and completely unaware of the passing of time, she stayed immersed in the stream for a long while. Merlin was right. The quiet, peaceful tranquillity of this place was special, sacred in its own way, certainly soothing to the soul. It made you simply want to stay and soak up as much of the tranquillity as you could absorb.

After a while, she sat up, pulling her knees up to her chin, using her toes to anchor her against the power of the water's flow, and watched Merlin prepare and light a tiny fire, just big enough to heat the stream's water in a small pot. She smiled to herself. They were going to be here for a while. Merlin was preparing to settle down with a cup of tea. No doubt his long, curved pipe would make an appearance before too long.

He chuckled. "Aye, Niniane. In my long experience of this place, I've learned, and learned well, never to leave it in a hurry."

Rolling her eyes again, and shaking her head, she bit back a reply and rose, instead, to wade back to the grassy bank. She wrung out her shift of excess water and then did the same with her hair before sitting on the soft grass opposite Merlin. Pulling her shift up as high as she dared, she flopped back onto the grass, allowing the sun to caress her body. The thought occurred to her that Merlin might be offended by so much exposed flesh. And then she sat up abruptly. Too late she remembered – a fact reflected in the loud chuckle from the other side of the small fire.

"The gods damn it!" she cursed. "My thoughts are like involuntary flowers that bud and blossom before I have a chance to stem them. Only after the thought has come and gone do I remember you are privy to it, especially at the moment while you are so focussed on me."

He grinned at her, thoroughly enjoying her ire. "Yes, I know," he said. "But they are so colourful and entertaining, your thoughts. I would hate to be deprived of the pleasure of them. And your naked legs do not offend me, my dear. Everyone has them, after all."

"Merlin, what if I seriously need to have a thought that is private – one I want to keep all to myself?"

He was concentrating on the pile of apples beside him, cutting them with a small knife into quarters and removing the core. “What thought could you possibly have that would require such privacy?” he asked without looking up.

In the instant he asked the question, the thought was there. Try as she might, she could not stop it.

He looked up from the apple he was holding and smiled at her gently. “Why does such a thought require privacy?” he asked her. “’Tis a beautiful thought, Niniane, beautiful. Actually,” he added, pointing the knife at her the way he normally pointed his pipe when he wished to emphasise a point, “’tis a sacred thought, for it contains an element of your dreams – the seeds of your destiny. So do not be ashamed of those thoughts, my dear. Let them come. Let them flow through you like the stream beside us, and they will wash you clean, remove all the blockages that stopper the creative flow within you. Then, you will create the thought, and oh what pleasure will be the experience.”

She pondered this. Finally, after a long silence during which he sat watching her, she nodded slowly.

“That’s beautiful,” she said. And then she added, “I can’t help thinking about him. The closer we get to Luguwallium, the more I think about him.” She smiled at him. “Even with all you’ve given me to think about courtesy of our conversations.” She paused and bit her lip in slight agitation. “And with my thoughts come these feelings and sensations. I’ve not felt anything like them before, and I’m afraid of them . . . I think because I don’t fully understand them.”

“You are afraid of being overwhelmed by them.” He pointed the knife at her again. “You are afraid of losing control. That’s why you try to contain or control those thoughts. And, of course, you are afraid of what will become of you if and when you lose control.”

She lay back on the grass, looking up at the clear blue sky. And then she sighed, closing her eyes. “In all seriousness,” she said, “everything about me, whether inside or outside of me, is a part of my Process – a Process you are wholly and soulfully privy to – a Process you are a part of, in fact – so there *is* no thought I could have that I would want to hide from you.”

When he didn't respond, she opened her eyes and turned her head on the grass to look at him. He smiled at her, and she caught and reflected it, smiling back. "Good," he said softly. "I'm glad we've settled that."

She was still smiling when she turned her head towards the sky again and closed her eyes, listening to the sounds around her – the water rushing over rocks and pebbles, Merlin's knife slicing through the apples, the horses munching contentedly on the grass – and savouring the feel of the sun caressing her body. The last vestiges of tension seeped out of her body, relaxing her muscles and her mind.

Movement beside her caused her to open her eyes. Merlin stood to take a goodly portion of the sliced apples over to the horses, and soon the sound of munching grass was replaced by that of crunching apple. Niniane laughed as she rolled over, allowing the sun to caress the other side of her body, and reached for a chunk of apple herself.

"I know what's going to happen here," she commented. "The four of us will eat so many apples we'll give ourselves a bellyache."

Merlin chuckled as he sat on the grass. "Aye, that may be," he said. "But there are far worse things we could overdose on, wouldn't you say?"

"Aye, I would say."

She reached for another slice of apple and watched as Merlin prepared two cups of minted tea in old, beaten metal cups. He handed her one and she sat up to take it from him.

"The blockages to my creative flow?" she questioned. "Are these the shadows you referred to when first we came upon this place? You said, did you not, that the second step to reconnecting with the actor and the actor's script, or the puppet master and his script, is one of disempowering the shadows that exist deep within us?"

"Aye, my dear, I started to say that, yes. 'Tis the shadows that exist within the human psyche – those *discordances* of darkness – that disrupt the flow of energy within and around an individual, and hinder, alter, and block the *resonance* of Light – the soul's Light to be exact – the creative energy of the higher-dimensional Self. Because, you see, when shadow exists within the psyche, an individual *is* that shadow."

He leaned back against his pack, closed his eyes, and breathed deeply, absorbing the ambience of their surroundings. A companionable silence fell between them. Niniane sipped her tea, content to wait for him to continue the conversation when he was ready, for once willing to allow her mind to remain empty of thoughts – a new and pleasurable experience. She suspected he was ordering the flow of his thoughts in his mind. Nay, she could feel it. Like parchments meant to be read in a particular order was he sorting through his thoughts, putting this one to the front and that one to the back. She smiled into her cup as she felt his absorption. But then a thought of her own intruded, and a question blossomed within – a question she felt compelled to voice even knowing, as she did, that it would interfere with the ordering of his thoughts.

She looked over at him. “Merlin, what is the soul exactly? I understand the analogy of the puppet and the character in relation to the ego, but what, exactly, is the soul?”

He took a moment to answer as he pondered the question. “Actually,” he said, opening his eyes, “’tis a typically good question you ask, Niniane, one that provides a very nice place to start. I confess I was at a loss as to where to begin, but you have pre-empted me and determined that yourself. After all, what is the point of disempowering and dissolving shadow if not to set free the soul?”

“’Tis not an easy question to answer, though, my dear, for to attempt to describe the soul in human terms, with the words of human languages, is to vastly reduce the power and magnificence of the soul. Words like light, energy, and vibration have been used to describe it, but though all are accurate, what does it really mean to you to have your soul described in such terms?”

“Humans,” he continued without waiting for a response, “are able to think only in terms of the third dimension, and the soul is not third dimensional. So the human mind is not, in its current, very ignorant state, capable of grasping the true nature of the soul. The soul is beyond the human *frame of reference*; that is, beyond the limits of the human experience and human understanding.

“And why is that? Because, my dear, humans are, now, so completely *identified* with the puppet/character-identity of our analogies that they can only perceive, grasp, and understand themselves and their reality from the vastly limited and very

small viewpoint of the puppet/character. So much is the human experience *identified* with the ego, the puppet/character, that if the soul were to fully reveal itself to a human without the proper preparation and training, that individual would be rendered insane, and I mean that in the truest sense of the term. The human mind cannot handle the truth of the soul, and *that* is why humans must be prepared and their consciousness altered.

“Still,” he said and paused again to gather his thoughts, “although what I just said is perfectly true, it does not answer your question. The soul is a fragment – a spark, if you like, of the Divine. It is a little piece of the Lady or, for those who prefer, of God – the stitch of the tapestry, and the tile of the mosaic, as we spoke about many days ago. So when one speaks of the nature of the soul, one is really speaking about the nature of the Lady Herself. But if one is truly to grasp the nature of the soul, it must be *experienced* personally, for as I said, it cannot be explained, and even if it could be, one would be hopelessly unable to grasp the meaning of the explanation without direct experience.

“What is a fable?”

The question took Niniane by surprise, for it seemed to come out of nowhere and held no real relevance to the conversation.

“A story,” she answered him.

“A story, yes,” he said. “But a story is just a story. What is it that makes a fable more than a story?”

She thought. “The underlying message and moral.”

“Aye, Niniane, ‘tis the message, or lesson, encoded therein that makes the story a fable. Such is the soul. It is the *Purpose* for an individual’s existence – the reason for all things in that person’s reality. It is the *Process* that underlies every incarnation. It is the *Knowledge* of the script that underpins that incarnation. It is the *script* itself. So, to exist without it, as this world now exists, is to exist without Purpose, Process, and higher Knowledge.”

Niniane absorbed this, and Merlin allowed it by sitting in silence while she did so.

“The ego, or the puppet/character,” he continued when he sensed she was ready, “and the soul do battle for the conscious awareness, as our analogies

illustrate. In the current paradigm of human existence, though, the ego wins hands down because everything in the material realm is in place to ensure the soul has little, if any, expression, and certainly no voice. Denial of the soul's existence and, therefore, of its true nature is one of the ways the third-dimensional realm succeeds in this. But things are changing, Niniane, and soon the ego will begin to lose to the soul. Already, the ego has *no choice* but to follow the soul's script. Very few people are aware of this, but it will not be long before the collective will begin to feel the effects of this fundamental truth."

Niniane nodded, understanding. "But for those of us who wish to pre-empt that collective Process, and to re-merge and reconnect with our soul *now* – to give it expression in and through us, to become it . . .?"

"One must learn to disempower the shadows that are wrapped around the human heart, choking its Light, for the heart is where the soul resides."

"Right," she sighed. "Back to the shadows. We cannot avoid them, can we?"

He smiled a gentle, light-filled smile. "To answer that question, one only has to look around at the state of the human experience. For aeons have humans ignored their shadows, thus allowing those shadows to dictate human thought and action, thereby empowering the shadows themselves in the process. And look where that has got them . . . Perpetual Separation, ignorance, apathy, slavery, and bondage. We will talk more about that slavery – the script of utter darkness that has humanity entrapped – in the days ahead, but for now let us discuss the disempowerment of shadow," he raised a finger, "for the Light of the soul renders that script of darkness utterly *powerless* and, as such, is humanity's only hope.

"Do you remember I told you that as one surrenders what is *not* real – one's shadows – one becomes what *is* real?"

"I remember."

"And do you also remember I qualified that truth by telling you this Process is one of shifting *identification*? That is, the Process causes a shift *from* identification with the puppet/character – seeing oneself and one's reality from the perspective of the character – *to* identification with the actor, the soul – seeing oneself and one's reality from the perspective of the soul."

"Yes, I remember that, too."

“Good. Well ‘tis human shadows or, rather, the shadows that exist within the human psyche that act as anchors and blockages, as hindrances and restraints, thus preventing that shift in identification, and thus perpetuating separation . . . hence the Perpetual Separation that tragically defines third-dimensional existence.

“Do you know what I mean by shadow, Niniane?” he asked abruptly as the thought occurred to him that she might not fully understand the term. He narrowed his eyes in concentration at her over the flames of their small fire, obviously honing in on her thoughts rather than awaiting her response.

She laughed at him and held up her hand. “Merlin, stop,” she commanded him. “Let me answer the question as it was put to me. If I miss anything you can fill in the gaps, and if I misunderstand anything you can set me right. But let me answer for myself first.”

He smiled in response and relaxed back against his pack. “All right,” he said. “Go ahead. I will leave you to the privacy of your own thoughts.”

“Thank you,” she replied, and then, thinking as she talked so that her words came slowly, each one measured carefully before she spoke it aloud, she answered his question, “By shadows you are referring to the shadow of fear, false and harmful belief, and the wants, needs, obsessions, and addictions that reside deep, deep within the psyche. These shadows are buried and hidden for the most part, particularly the most powerful ones as you told me at Matilde’s. And ‘tis the shadow of fear that spawns obsessive emotions like anger, hatred, rage, and jealousy. The way I’ve seen it when I heal is these emotions pour from fear like pus from a wound, and, indeed, fear is a wound of the soul, is it not?”

“Aye, Niniane, that it is. So you understand the nature of shadow then. But do you understand the *effect* of that shadow? Yes, yes, I know,” he said, holding up his hand to forestall her comment, “you see the *effect* of fear in the wounds and illnesses you heal. Such effects become manifest in a person’s reality. But do you see the full extent of the *effect* of shadow?”

She frowned, uncertain of what it was, exactly, he was referring to. “I’m not sure I do,” she said slowly, still frowning.

“No,” he concurred, “I’m not sure you do either. I am referring to that fundamental fact of the human psyche that ‘tis the shadows within that dictate and, thus, distort *perspective*, and trap *focus*.”

He was silent then as he watched her, for he knew she was remembering her experiences with her own fear. Silently, and slowly, she nodded. “It sounds like a cliché, does it not?” she asked him. “Shadow dictates perspective and traps focus. But if you really think about it, you see that it’s unavoidably true.

“Growing up with the other girls in the temple, my *perspective* of myself was determined by my fear of being weird, wayward, and ugly, so that their reactions to me became, for me, proof of what it was I most feared. And the whole situation trapped my *focus* because I then tried to prove to them I was not weird and ugly. So my fear controlled my perspective, my focus, and, thus, my thoughts and my actions. And the more I tried to prove to them I was not weird and ugly; that is, the more I tried to fit in, the more their reactions to me convinced me I *was* weird and abnormal. ‘Twas a vicious cycle that, in the end, was broken only by seeing the fear for what it was, and seeing that, as such, the situation was coming from me, not them.”

“Ah,” he said quickly, decisively, “and there you have captured a fundamental and vital truth where shadow is concerned, Niniane. But before we get to that, yes, my dear, you are right. When fear and its attributes – want and need, obsession and addiction – exist within, ‘tis an unavoidable truth that humans will see everything – their environment, their relationships, their surroundings, their circumstances but especially themselves – through the *colour and shape* of that fear.

“Now,” he continued without pause, “in our analogy of the puppet master, it was, if you recall, the *puppet master* who created the stage and the scenery, and who wrote the script.”

Niniane nodded. “I remember.”

He put his cup on the grass, sat up cross-legged to face her, spread his hands wide as if in supplication, and shrugged his shoulders. “Then what exactly is reality, Niniane?”

The question shocked her, pulled her up short, as if she'd been walking down a particular path but the question suddenly made her realise she was on the *wrong* path. Only, she couldn't go back or turn around or keep going, so she froze where she was. Try as she might, she could not make her mind contemplate the question. She looked over the fire at Merlin, and all she could think to say was, "Goodness."

Far from helping her out, though, Merlin sat awaiting a proper response, both his body language and his facial expression reflecting the fact. "Make yourself think, Niniane. 'Tis important that you reawaken the truth within yourself, for you know this as surely as do I, my dear."

She forced herself to relax, and even concentrated on the sound of the water. And then it hit her, and the realisation caused her eyes to open wide with wonder. "The landscape of reality – what is in it and what is not – is the *result* of the creative process. Thus must everything in one's reality be honoured as sacred whether one likes one's reality or not, for every single part of it is there because the soul has created it to be so."

"Beautifully said, Niniane," Merlin complimented her. "And you see, do you not, that you've always known this?"

She nodded slowly, still feeling numb from the shock of the revelation. "Yes, I see. But, Merlin," she paused as the revelation continued to unfold within her, "that means that the source of one's reality is *not* reality itself but, rather, what is within. I mean," she paraphrased, "the source of one's reality is . . ." She looked at him in utter shock.

"Consciousness?" he supplied helpfully, grinning broadly at her reaction, enjoying the moment of revelation.

"Consciousness," she echoed.

"Or," he added helpfully, "thought made manifest."

"Thought made manifest," she repeated softly as Merlin's well-timed comment spurred on her thought processes. "And yet we humans are so entrenched in the belief that reality is separate from us and mostly a random thing. Sometimes we control it, but most of the time we do not. Always, though, we *try* to control it."

"Ah," he breathed, still thoroughly enjoying the moment, "and therein lies the point I wish to make. And, yes, Niniane, with the revelation comes the knowledge

that *nothing* in one's reality is *ever* random. Nothing happens by chance. And with the revelation comes the knowledge that every single person on this planet is responsible for their own reality. But," he held up a finger, "how much, then, does this give them the scope to *change* their reality?"

Without giving her a chance to respond to the question, he asked her another, and this time he did wait to hear her response. "So if, in truth and in fact, reality has as its source one's own consciousness, what, then, of the human obsession with ignoring consciousness and trying, instead, to change reality by trying to orchestrate in one's reality what one wants and needs?"

Again, Niniane could only stare at him in shocked astonishment as his question generated more revelation within her.

Merlin again awaited her response, making no attempt to help her.

"The Lady have mercy," she breathed. "Therein lies the source of Perpetual Separation."

She paused to gather the thoughts that were racing through her mind like shooting stars, trying to capture them so she could articulate them. "Rather than focussing inward or . . . beyond might be a better word," she began, again speaking slowly to measure every word, "to decipher the symbolic meaning of the circumstances one finds oneself embroiled in at any given moment, thereby discovering a truth about oneself – one's innermost thoughts to be precise – humans are caught up in the physicality of those circumstances, entirely and always missing the point."

She frowned, trying to get her conscious mind around this fundamental but tragic truth. "Thus, instead of existing . . ." She looked at Merlin, "actually, *identifying* with the source consciousness, we identify with the puppet/character that wants, and so we focus on our reality as if reality exists by itself, independently of us, as if we *can* get what we want from it. So, because of the way we identify, we perceive reality as something that is happening *to* us instead of being created *by* us."

"Just so, my dear, just so. And it is shadow that traps and holds the human focus on and in reality in the manner you describe. The ignorance that pervades the human experience absolutely and completely facilitates this entrapment, of

course, but it is the shadow of fear that causes humans to *want* from their reality, thereby *focussing* on it.

“And you know, do you not, that I am *not* referring to the fear that makes one run from a dangerous situation? We call that the flight or fight response and it is entirely different from the fear you and I are talking about – the fear you see deep within when you heal.”

“Yes,” she agreed, “the fear I see deep within when I heal is vastly different from the fear aroused when someone jumps out at you when you don’t expect it. The former is about the deeper mind, the latter the conscious mind. So,” she said, “does that not lead us to that most vital of questions now? How do we disempower our shadows so that they release their hold on us and set free the consciousness of the soul?”

“Right, to disempowerment then. The Process of surrendering what is *not* real and becoming what *is* real – the Process of shifting identification – forms a fundamental, core Purpose for incarnation. The idea being, of course, that a soul works through, and walks through, for that matter, its shadows over many, many lifetimes. Imagine, then, if one could hasten this Process.

“By the way, Niniane,” Merlin said, digressing slightly, “the script of darkness that currently governs the human experience has been designed by powers not of this world to keep souls trapped in the cycle of birth, death, and reincarnation here in this realm. Do you know how?”

“Dear me,” she said in response. “By causing the very same wounds in the soul that we are talking about disempowering. The more a soul is wounded, as many, many souls will be in an ignorant realm such as this one, the more will it have to return here to face karmic consequences and to heal of its wounds. But,” she sighed, “instead of healing of the psyche’s shadowed wounds, many individuals continue to inflict more and more on themselves by committing acts which greatly dishonour the soul’s true nature.”

“Just so,” Merlin agreed. “This dimension is, now, one where individuals all-too-easily inflict the wounds on their soul that cause the soul to become trapped, as I said, in the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, unable to break free because there is not the means for them to do so. That is, because of the ignorant nature of this

existence, humans have not the wherewithal to transcend and grow beyond the human experience. Thus are they trapped in and by it. Of course, many do not want to break free, but many, many more do.

“All right,” he said abruptly, “how to disempower the very shadows that keep humans trapped here . . .

“As I said when first we came upon this place, Niniane, the soul’s Process, the actor’s script, will lead humans to and through each and every fear-shadow if they allow themselves to be thus led. ‘Tis a natural and unavoidable Process that forms, as I said, a fundamental Purpose for incarnation in the first place. One could say it is a natural law that governs this existence such that every soul who comes here must needs be governed by this law.

“The Process is one of *transformation* and can be likened to a whole series of mini-deaths, like a string of pearls falling off a necklace one by one, or, as we spoke about before, the peeling off of the layers of an onion, one after another after another. Fear, particularly the deepest of fears, always has many facets or aspects, each of which *must* die in order for an individual to be transformed, and each of which *will* die as an individual confronts it.

“So you could say the first step to disempowering shadow is to become aware of this Process, or law if you prefer, that underpins most incarnations. But,” he paused and held up his finger for emphasis, “the key to conquering each and every shadow within lies in becoming aware of it specifically. One must learn to *name* one’s shadows. One must learn to stop right in the middle of an uncomfortable circumstance and ask oneself those crucial questions: What am I to learn about myself from this? Or, if this be a manifestation of fear, then what be that fear? Or, if this part of my reality is a reflection of what is within, then what is that reflection?

“Naming one’s shadows, becoming aware of exactly what they are, is not an easy thing, especially at first when one is unused to this way of thinking. But,” he paused again for emphasis, “humans have been equipped with a powerful tool to help them with this Process, Niniane. Do you know what that tool is?”

“Emotion,” she answered without hesitation.

“Aye, Niniane,” he said. “Humans have been gifted with the beautiful language of emotion – a language that speaks more eloquently than words . . .”

“The eloquent language of our emotions?” she interrupted. “Many would doubt the *eloquence* of emotion, for to some, emotions can be downright brutal, not to mention painful. But yes,” she acquiesced as she thought back over her own experiences, “without exception and without fail, anger always points directly to fear. And hurts, or feelings of being wounded emotionally, *are* fear confirmed. ‘Tis why the same comment will gravely wound one person whilst another will be wholly unaffected by it. One person holds a fear within them, while the other does not. In that sense, our emotions do become valuable tools that will, if we allow them to, show us the way through by pointing directly to the shadow.

“And,” she added as she thought more about it, “*every* emotion is talking to us in this way. Even excitement, which many people would describe as one of the good ones, is the ego clapping its hands in glee because it’s getting something it wants. So you’re absolutely right. If we learn the language of our emotions, we will become better, and faster, for that matter, at identifying and facing our shadows.”

“And,” Merlin added, “with each shadow faced and dissolved, or disempowered, Niniane, one subtly but significantly begins to *alter* one’s perspective. Since shadow acts as an anchor, by dissolving it one sets free one’s thinking, one’s view of things, piece by piece, bit by bit, one shadow at a time.

“But, of course, naming the shadow is not quite enough. One must go one step further and *take responsibility for it*. Most people find that extraordinarily difficult. Blame, by far the easiest option, is the opposite of taking responsibility, but in a situation where one is angry at another person, blame is always the strongest tendency. If one is to face the shadow, though, one must look at the reflection and *see the truth*. This is unavoidable. Look outward at the person who is making you angry by all means, but make yourself *know* that he or she is merely the means by which your fear – the fear your anger points to – is being brought to the surface of your awareness.”

Niniane nodded her agreement. “If you sidestep or try to circumvent this step, the shadow remains intact and in control, and the opportunity must needs come around again in a different guise.” She laughed then. “But do you know, Merlin,

when you begin this process, it is all-too-tempting to convince yourself you're not *really* angry, just irritated. It's called 'letting oneself off the hook'."

"Ah yes," he nodded, "irritation it may be instead of anger, but 'tis still an emotion, after all."

"So it is."

The sound of the stream intruded as they both fell silent, and as it intruded, Niniane looked over at it. Caught in a hypnotic trance as she watched the water, she didn't at first hear Merlin's question. So he repeated it.

"Niniane," he said to draw her attention, "have you realised a profound and fundamental truth that the perspective of the separated puppet is always the *opposite* to that of the puppet master, the soul?"

She thought back over her own experiences. "I'll be damned," she said, "so it is. In that sense, the ego perceives reality inside-out . . . or should that be outside-in?"

He chuckled his appreciation of her play on words. "Outside-in, methinks."

He turned then to rummage through his pack, grunting with satisfaction as he extracted his long, curved pipe and a small pouch. Settling back against his pack, he opened the pouch and filled his pipe with the contents before leaning forward to light it with a stick from the small fire.

"The Process of Transformation – the Process of shifting identification," he commented while he worked, "of shifting one's focus and perspective is, for most souls, extraordinarily difficult and takes many, many lifetimes to accomplish . . ."

"Yeah, well, look at us, Merlin," Niniane interrupted vehemently, gesturing expansively to include the entire human race. "We are taught from birth to believe very wrong things about our physical reality. We are trained to look at reality and *want* from it instead of looking at reality and *learning* from it. Our false belief about reality is absolutely entrenched in our psyches. No damn wonder it takes intense training to exist with the truth. And what, in the Lady's name, is there to lead people back to that truth? Heck," she said violently, "show me the person who is prepared to turn that belief around and I will fall to the ground in utter shock . . . if I wasn't sitting already that is."

Merlin chuckled his appreciation of this outburst and then he leaned forward to skewer her with a meaningful look – a look only he was truly capable of – a look

that held such meaning as could not be ignored or misunderstood. But just in case she didn't get the message he said, "I'm looking at one."

In his inimitable way, his simple comment burst the bubble of her outrage as if with the touch of a finger, and her outrage turned to laughter. "Right," she said, still laughing, "everything starts with one, does it not?"

Since his mouth was occupied with drawing on his pipe, he raised his eyebrows in response. And then, when he'd taken a few satisfying draws, he removed it to grin at her. "Quite a profound statement that."

She chuckled. "Indeed."

"In truth, my dearest," he said, "the pull toward knowledge of one's higher Self – the soul – that which many call 'awakening' but which we call the Process of shifting identification – is a longing that exists deep within the hearts of many, many souls incarnate now. 'Tis the most sacred of spiritual quests, for that longing calls these souls to awaken to their own spiritual truth. But they must, first of all, allow themselves to feel that longing and to recognise it for what it is. As for you, my dearest, nothing but the purest Truth, Wisdom, and Knowledge will satisfy you because all three are the very stuff and substance of your own soul." He leaned forward. "And *that* is the best description of your soul I can give you, Niniane."

She nodded absently, remembering her own longing. 'Twas a pain she had found excruciatingly unbearable at times, particularly when there seemed to be no way through it. And the pain was often made worse by her own lack of comprehension and understanding as to what, exactly, was happening within her. It would have been far easier if someone had sat her down and explained a few things. But Merlin, for reasons of his own or, she suspected, for reasons of *her* own, had absented himself for the most part.

"'Twas not easily done," he commented, reading her thoughts, "not easily done at all, Niniane, for it was not my preferred option. But in staying away, I honoured your soul-desire, for you are, you see, more than capable of transforming your own consciousness on your *own*. The only way you were ever going to know that, though, was to experience it."

She nodded sombrely, understanding, and a very contented, companionable silence fell between them.

It was, of course, Merlin who broke the silence first.

“Humans,” he commented, not bothering to remove his pipe so that it sat propped in the corner of his mouth while he spoke, “think incarnation is a black and white thing. One is either incarnate or one is not. ‘Tis not that simple, of course. In fact, incarnation is a *continuous* thing if humans allow it to be. The more *conscious* an individual becomes the more *incarnate* will he or she be.”

Niniane watched him while he spoke, smiling at and partly distracted by the cloud of smoke that surrounded him. “Makes sense,” she said. “I’ve not thought of it like that before, but it makes sense. So what, then, of people who are not conscious at all?”

Merlin removed his pipe as he looked at her and raised his eyebrows in mild surprise. “I would’ve thought you of all people would not have to ask such a question. People who are not conscious at all are Zombies.”

“Zombies?” she questioned, not having heard the word before.

“Aye, Niniane, Zombies. A Zombie is one who has the appearance of being alive because he or she walks around as if that were so. But a Zombie is, in fact, dead. It has a heartbeat, yes, and it eats and sleeps like everyone else, but the soul has virtually no expression through it. Such a person, the Zombie, just *exists*, for it has no real will of its own.”

Niniane shivered. “That’s a horrible concept.”

“Aye, Niniane, a horrible concept it is, and an even more horrible state to be in for the soul. There are far too many Zombies in the human experience today, methinks. One could almost say they predominate. But,” he mused, “there is one small consolation for the poor Zombie. The experience of his or her emotions is quite limited, so in addition to being unaware of his or her condition, he or she also does not feel pain the way you do.”

“So,” Niniane asked, wanting to move the conversation away from the Zombie – a concept that sent shivers of eeriness running down her back, “what, then, of a *conscious* person who *consciously* dishonours the soul? What, then, of a person who *consciously* hurts and harms others in his or her quest to satiate want?”

“Ah,” Merlin sighed, sending smoke skyward with the sigh. “To answer that question, my dear, we must venture into the realm of two possibilities: a soul of

darkness and a soul *in* darkness. Souls *of* darkness are best not known about at this stage nor focussed on for that matter, and so we shall leave that conversation for another time. Suffice it to say at this point that souls *of* darkness usually come here to perpetuate the script of darkness that currently governs the human experience.”

“The beings you spoke of at Matilde’s?”

“Yes, the very ones. These souls would see the likes of you snuffed out as if you were but a flame on a candle, for you pose a very great threat to them.

“Now,” he said, “as for those souls *in* darkness, well, this is where shadow and the accumulation of shadow across many, many lifetimes comes into play, for the accumulation of shadow can cause untold damage to the soul. Some people spend a lifetime feeding their egoic wants, needs, and addictions so that the ego, or the character, becomes bloated on power or, rather, *empowerment*. Then, the ego grows so big and puffed up with its own sense of its own importance that it casts a very great shadow over the soul. In such cases, the light and beauty of the soul have little or no expression. This is a soul *in* darkness. An individual whose soul is in darkness – hidden and buried behind the darkest of shadows – is to be avoided at all costs, Niniane, for this person is capable of the greatest harm, and usually does hurt a lot of people. Of course, how much harm such a person metes out is entirely dependent on what that individual’s addictions are, and on what he or she is prepared to do to feed them.”

“So is it possible for people to be so shadowed they are souls *in* darkness that then appear as though souls *of* darkness?”

“Absolutely. Such shadowed souls usually do perpetuate the rule of darkness just as does a soul *of* darkness. Alarmingly, these shadowed souls are often *conscious*; that is, fully knowledgeable of what they are doing. ‘Tis a mindset I confess I cannot comprehend, Niniane.”

“Nor I,” she said quietly. The direction of the conversation was still causing ripples of unease within her.

“Now,” Merlin said, knowing full well what she was thinking and feeling, and wanting to set her right again, “where are we with disempowering shadows? I do believe we’re just about there.”

“We are?” she asked him. “Good. So,” she hesitated as she brought her thought processes back to the subject of disempowering shadow, “learning to identify one’s emotions is a good way to at least begin to identify one’s *shadows*, wouldn’t you say?” she asked him. “And, I guess, as a next step, to *interpret* each emotion?”

“Aye, Niniane, I would say that. Learning the language of one’s own emotions is a good beginning – a very good first step as it happens because one will begin to link the emotion to its underlying psychology.

“Of course,” he added, his tone subtly changed, hardened ever-so-slightly, “humans have fallen into the unfortunate trap of feeling only those emotions they *want* to feel. ‘Tis one of the shadowed reasons they tinker so obsessively with their reality. And ‘tis why addiction is so prevalent, for you see, addiction can really be defined as an obsessive need for an emotional high, or an emotional release.” After a pause, he added, “How absolutely typical of humans that everything gifted to them in Love is used as a means of self-gratification – things so sacred they cannot begin to comprehend the violation of abusing them. So, those highly sacred things like sexuality, emotion, and the human intellect – those things gifted to lead them *back* to the soul – are used, now, to keep the character-identity intact and separated *from* the soul.”

“Careful, Merlin,” Niniane teased him, “if I didn’t know better I’d say I detected a strong element of cynicism, even bitterness, in your tone.” And then, before he had a chance to retaliate, she asked curiously, “Do you feel emotion?”

Again, he didn’t bother removing his pipe from his mouth as he grinned broadly by way of a response, pure mischief sparkling in his smile. “In truth? No, I do not, but don’t tell anybody.” And then he pre-empted the obvious question by asking it for her. “So why did I appear to be so angry with Vivienne for sending you north with the sole agenda of having you crawl back to the temple with your desire to experience the world all but extinguished?”

“Yes, exactly . . .”

“Humans sometimes respond instinctively and involuntarily to the stimulus of other people’s emotion, particularly when that emotion is strong and strongly expressed. I was hoping my anger, which Vivi’s never seen before, would shock her into coming to her senses. Alas, ‘twas not to be. She holds on very tightly to her

shadowed fear. She will not see it and, therefore, unfortunately, she is now forced to face it in its most potent form – fully manifest in her physical reality. Such is the Process working through her. You will see me foster anger again before we're through, Niniane, so do not be surprised.”

“You do not have emotions because you do not have an ego.”

She voiced the realisation even as it came to her so that, rather than framing it in the form of a question, it came out as a flat, emotionless statement.

This time Merlin did remove his pipe. “Very good,” he complimented her. “I am whole as I am, so what need have I for that language gifted to the incarnate to bring them back to the truth and freedom of their soul?”

Instead of answering the question, which she knew to be rhetorical anyway, she looked over again at the water, allowing herself to be lulled by the hypnotic interplay of sunlight and moving water.

“You know, Merlin,” she said without removing her eyes from the water, “the more we go on, you and I – the more I learn, or remember, and the more my own consciousness is transformed – the more do I come to believe that the two pillars upon which rests true transformational change are focus and perspective.” She took her eyes from the water and looked at Merlin again. “Knowledge, Wisdom, and understanding are *transforming*, yes,” she said, “but ‘tis the twin pillars of focus and perspective that are *transformed*.”

Merlin narrowed his eyes at her through the familiar haze of smoke that surrounded him. She wondered at his thoughts, for his expression was one she'd not seen before. He caught the thought, of course.

“It has been,” he said by way of explanation, “a surreal thing, even for me who has witnessed so very much, to watch you be a stranger to yourself, Niniane. For you see, you've never been a stranger to me. I know you more intimately than your human mind can possibly imagine. But with every conversation we have, the two of us, and with every revelation that sizzles through you, I watch you draw closer and closer to your true Self. I watch you *become* who you really are. And I watch you leave behind who you are not. Do you realise how much You spoke through you just now?”

“As to your twin pillars, my dear, the pre-dynastic ancient Egyptians – those ancient peoples who possessed such knowledge as to be unparalleled in this, our modern age of existence – would agree with you, methinks.”

~

Higher-Dimensional Being

*I am a higher-dimensional being,
Wearing the clothes of third dimensionality.
But the clothes of the third dimension
Are ill-fitting and uncomfortable.
They scratch at my skin.
They constrict, chafe, and choke.
They are heavy and burdensome.
They are loose where they should be tight,
And they are tight where they should be loose.
When first I came to this reality,
Like everyone else here,
I believed the clothes I wore defined me –
Made me who I was.
So I got caught up in the constructs and dictates
Of this dimension
Because I knew nothing else.
I remembered not my higher dimensionality.
But 'tis just as well I carry not
The clothes of third dimensionality well,
For this allowed me to know something was very, very wrong.
Something vital was missing,
And it caused me great pain.
If we do not remember the Truth of ourselves,
All that remains,
All that is left,
Is the illusion.
And everything that makes us beautiful
Lies dormant and unexpressed within us
So that we are little more than cut-outs,
Made of flesh rather than cardboard.
Now I know I am not from here,
And I do not belong here,
Here, in this separated, disconnected third dimension.*

A Conflict of Scripts

(**Note:** *A Conflict of Scripts* is a continuation – a direct follow-on, like a part two – of the story presented in the sixth theme of *Pieces of Me: Like the Stopper in the Vial*. This story, however, can be read by itself without having to read *Like the Stopper in the Vial*.)

“You’ve encountered him again, haven’t you?”

“Yes. Did you know I would?”

“I suspected so but wasn’t certain. You have unfinished business with each other, and your strong memories of that life point to the fact that in this life you will have to finish it. Or, maybe a better way to put that would be you must allow what is between you to resolve into what it should be. How do you know it’s him?”

“Because he has clear memories of that life, too. And our memories are a perfect match . . . but from different perspectives, of course.”

The woman sitting on the other end of the sofa laughed softly. “But of course he has memories, too,” she said, smiling. “Tis the nature of you two, I think. And?” she prompted. “How are you with him?”

Rachel hesitated even knowing, as she did, that she would be asked the question. She had first met this unique and oh-so-wise woman because of a lifelong pain in her gut that the medical profession had investigated with no success. She’d known her doctors thought she was making it up, but when the pain brought her out of sleep at night and caused her to sleep propped up on two pillows, she knew very well that it was real and that it signalled something was wrong. Ironically, though, it wasn’t so much *that* pain that had, finally, forced her to make contact with this woman. It was pain of an entirely different kind that finally forced Rachel’s hand.

She swallowed, suddenly nervous. This was, she knew, her moment of truth. She desperately wanted to shrug her shoulders and answer the woman’s question by saying, “I don’t know.” But not only would that have insulted them both, it was also untrue. She knew how she was with Marcus, and she knew that, while the pain in her gut had all but gone thanks to this woman’s incredible sight . . . or should that be *insight*? . . . the *other* pain was still very much there.

“We’ve talked a lot about what happened in those lives we lived over two thousand years ago,” she began, answering the woman’s question. “And we’ve talked a lot about how those lives have affected us in this life. I think we’re still sorting through it all, so we’re probably living more in the past at the moment than we are in the present, at least for now.”

“That’s entirely understandable,” the woman interjected softly, “and healthy, too, I would say . . . so long as you don’t get stuck there.”

Rachel smiled tremulously. “I hope . . .” she said and then her smile disappeared. “There is something I need to tell you. I’ve come to realise that it wasn’t so much the act of Viola taking her own life in self-condemnation, pre-empting the punishment she was always going to suffer, that hurt *him* the most, even though that one act hurt *me* the most. It was her rejection, right at the end, of the experience of love they shared together that hurt him the most because it was tantamount to a rejection of him. It is *that* hurt I wish to make amends for in this life. But . . . um . . .”

“But what, Rachel?” the woman prompted gently.

Rachel closed her eyes as her shoulders slumped. Why was this so difficult? All right, so in a previous life she had become lover to a man when that love was strictly forbidden. And rather than suffer the punishment normally meted out to ones such as her, she had taken her own life by drinking a vial of poison – the cause, as it turned out, of the pain in her gut. But there was more to it, of course, because Viola – the priestess of Rachel’s previous incarnation – had made a vow never to love again, and Rachel was as bound by that vow every bit as much as Viola would have been had she lived. This wise woman, when Rachel finally contacted her for help, had seen the vow even though Rachel was unable to. And she’d asked Rachel the simple but vitally important question: do you want to release it? Rachel had said at the time she *did* want to release it, but now . . .

And then he, Viola’s lover, had made a dramatic appearance in Rachel’s life when her best friend had introduced her to Marcus. Both she and Marcus knew they had an opportunity to put right the wrongs of those lives they lived so long ago – lives that had deeply hurt and damaged them both – but somehow, beyond the commonality of shared memories, they were failing to connect. In some way

Rachel was failing to understand, the wrongs of those lives were somehow being compounded by what was happening between them now. Marcus had started seeing a woman he was working with, and Rachel, feeling partly hurt and partly relieved by this, knew a vital opportunity was slipping through their fingers. It was this that had prompted her to contact the wise woman again.

“Can you see the vow, Rachel?” the woman asked, gently cutting across Rachel’s thought processes. “Can you see the vow Viola made? Or does your vision of her final moments stop before she makes it?”

Rachel allowed those final moments of Viola’s life – that oh-so-familiar scene – to play out in her mind’s eye. “No,” she said, shaking her head and opening her eyes. “I see her terror and her agony and her heartbreak, so I understand why she made it. But I don’t see the vow.”

The woman nodded slowly so that her earrings gently swung back and forth like pendulums. “Did you really think that in making a vow never to love again, that was all there was to it?”

Rachel’s heart began to pound a painful beat in her chest. Butterflies gathered in her stomach, her mouth had gone dry, and she began to feel slightly queasy. “I should know by now that the psychology of me will never be simple,” she said cynically. “It’s deep and complex. But even so, yes, I honestly thought it was that simple.”

The woman leaned back against the arm of the lounge and folded her arms as she scrutinised Rachel with slightly narrowed eyes. Rachel responded unconsciously, shifting her own position on the sofa so that she faced the woman more directly, tucking one foot behind the opposite knee. The woman shook her head ever so slightly.

“You are like a lantern with its shutters closed, Rachel. There you sit on your pedestal, as if in the centre of a vast and very great room. You are, you see, no ordinary lantern. You are supposed to give light to that vast room, like the star at the centre of our solar system that has the power to illuminate the half of the earth that faces it. Such is your power. Such is your Light. Yet you sit, unfortunately for you, painfully aware, in the darkness, mourning the Light – the Light that *you* keep hidden and shut off.”

She unfolded her arms and leaned forward.

“There is a well-known phenomenon that any person with a missing limb will attest to. It is the phantom effect of an itchy foot where there is no foot because that foot has been amputated. The itch is real, too, in a sense, but it is an itch that cannot be scratched, for obvious reasons. The pain you feel, Rachel, every second of every minute of every hour of every day is like this. The trouble is, you don’t know what’s missing because all your limbs seem to be intact. Am I right?”

Rachel nodded, unable to speak through the lump in her throat. And then she whispered, “That’s a good description actually.”

The woman smiled and, as she had when first she’d met this woman, Rachel felt the waves of compassion radiating from that smile. It was this, more so than the woman’s next words that finally caused the threads of control to slip, breaking open Rachel’s defences and her guard. The tears first welled and then spilled over, leaving little trails of moisture behind them as they slid down her cheeks and dropped off her chin.

“Destiny calls to you, Rachel. Destiny urges you to move beyond all that you’ve known. It urges you to be all you can be. But for it to be so,” she said, reaching behind her for the box of tissues, “you must open yourself up to the fullness of who and what you are. You must let your Light shine.”

Rachel took the tissue poking out of the top of the box, wiped her eyes and her nose, thinking, fleetingly, how glad she was that she hadn’t worn mascara.

“Did you ever read about Dr Dolittle¹ when you were younger?” the woman asked as she watched Rachel try to restore some semblance of order to her tear-stained face.

Rachel nodded. “A *lot* younger,” she said.

“So you remember the pushmi-pullyu?”

Rachel nodded again and this time, as she pictured the strange creature and its antics, she smiled.

“The pushmi-pullyu was half gazelle, half unicorn, if I remember correctly,” she said. “But it had a slight problem, as I recall. Its gazelle head was at one end of its body and its unicorn head was at the other, with one set of legs facing the way of one head and the other set of legs facing the way of the other head. So every time it

moved, or tried to move, it pulled itself in two different directions and ended up not moving at all.”

The woman returned Rachel’s smile as she, too, pictured the pushmi-pullyu trying to move. “Two heads,” she confirmed, “one at either end. And two sets of legs facing the way of the two heads. It is a perfect analogy for the plight of the human experience, Rachel. Two wills. Two wants, or, rather, ego want and heart’s desire. Two directions. Two opposite perspectives. Two conflicting intents. *Such* is the conflict of egoic want and soul desire – the script of the puppet tugging and pulling against that of the puppet master. Such a conflict of scripts it is that the internal tug of war brings to bear enormous pressure on the human psyche. The highly dangerous ‘D-emotions’, like depression, despair, disillusionment, despondency, and disappointment are the result. As the script of the soul pulls us away from what it is our ego wants, these emotions are aroused within us, and for some, they can be very dangerous indeed.

“But also, more often than not, individuals experience virtually no movement at all, like our poor pushmi-pullyu. For him to move, one head had to surrender to and trust the other, and be prepared to walk backwards, which never happened, of course. Needless to say, the pushmi-pullyu never really got very far, as you said. Such is the human condition. The trouble with we humans, though, is that we’re not even aware there *are* two heads. We know only of one. So we are caught up in one script, wholly unaware that another pulls at us.

“*That* script – the script most people know nothing about – is the script of Destiny, the direction our soul urges us towards. The other is the script of our shadow, the direction our egoic wants and needs pull us towards. Unfortunately, it is the nature of shadow that it hijacks our thoughts, our perceptions, our choices, our beliefs, our actions, and, most important of all, our focus far, far more than we can even begin to realise. And that is why the second script – the script of egoic want and need – is all we’re aware of.

“Until and unless we learn to dance with our shadows, we will never become aware of the other script, the script of the puppet’s *master*, because the script of our shadow will always trap our focus. But you, Rachel, are the exception to the rule because you have always been aware of the other script deep, deep within you.

It's actually highly unusual. Rare, in fact. So the two scripts tussle within you. They do battle, like two teams of people playing tug of war with a thick rope. You are caught in the middle, and therein lies the cause of this *other* pain."

Rachel thought about this, testing out the truth of the words for herself. But she wasn't sure she understood what, exactly, the woman was referring to. And there was something the woman had said that caught at her attention. "Dance with our shadows?" she questioned, liking the term.

The woman laughed. "It's a phrase I've coined. Did you ever see the movie *Legend*?"

Rachel nodded.

"Do you remember when Princess Lilly is taken by the Lord of Darkness and held captive in his hall? He wants her for himself because he wants her innocence and purity, and so he tries to seduce her with things she wants, like jewels . . . a perfect analogy for the battle between the Light and darkness over human collective and individual consciousness. Anyway, as Lilly fingers the gold and jewels, a shadowed mannequin dances around her in a waltz, and then it grabs her, and they dance together around and around, between the columns in the hall. Eventually, Lilly *becomes* the shadowed mannequin and continues the dance by herself. She has become black – black gown, black lips, black eyes, and her lover must choose to believe the blackness of her appearance does not reflect the blackness of her heart. Do you remember?"

"I remember," Rachel said, riveted, picturing the scene in her mind's eye.

"Well, the Process of dancing with our shadows is the reverse of this scene. First, we dance by ourselves *as* the shadow, completely unaware of its existence within us. But then the Process creates the circumstances around us to bring the shadow up and out, and we are given an opportunity to see it. As we become aware of its presence within us, it separates out from us, and we must dance with it, as if in a waltz, while we see and acknowledge and own it, and as we identify behaviours that are generated by it. Then, as we dissolve and disempower it, it goes spinning off away from us, and we dance again by ourselves, free of the shadow, and with our innocence and purity returned."

"That's beautiful," Rachel said. "I love that."

“So must you dance with your shadow, Rachel, because the shadow within you is keeping you locked in the wrong script, and it’s causing you great pain.”

Rachel absorbed this in silence at first. And then she asked in a whisper, “What shadow? What is my shadow?”

“What is his name, this man who has come into your life from the past?”

“Marcus.”

“Marcus. Well, apart from talking about the past, how are you and Marcus getting on?”

Rachel swallowed nervously, and anxiety once again coiled in the pit of her gut.

“We’re not,” she answered truthfully. “The past aside, in this life, I’m not really his type. He’s started seeing someone else so . . .” She trailed off, unwilling to say the words out loud.

The woman on the other end of the sofa said nothing for a long, drawn out moment. But not once did she break eye contact with Rachel. Rachel would have squirmed with discomfort, but she felt, curiously, as if she had nothing to lose by allowing this woman to see into the depths of her psyche. In fact, she had everything to gain because what *could* be lost was lost already, and it wasn’t Marcus she was thinking about, it was the missing part of herself.

“Why will you not allow him to see you?”

The question sent a jolt of shock through Rachel. “I’m sorry?”

“You asked me what your shadow is, Rachel. Let me first of all tell you this. You have become like a hand reaching up out of that shadow, and with the tightest of grips you are keeping yourself pinned to a third-dimensional existence, trapped in a third-dimensional identity, entombed in third dimensionality. Do you know what I mean by that?”

Rachel shook her head. “No.”

“You have worked hard all your life to force yourself into normality – a normal existence as defined by this, our third-dimensional reality. And so you have built yourself *into* an identity that agrees with and fits modern society – an identity that is acceptable and approved of. But you pay an enormously high price to be this identity, to exist in and as it, to perpetuate and protect it. Actually, it is the ultimate price you pay, hence the pain.

“At first, not knowing any better, you simply followed the crowd, so to speak. And why wouldn’t you? For who around us knows about these things and can teach us a different way? Who around us is there to point out the folly of human existence?”

“But as you grew older, you took control. You forged a path within that you wanted to walk, and have rigidly held fast to that inner path. Now, whenever a crossroads of opportunity presents itself to you; that is, the opportunity to go the way of Destiny or to go the way of the script of shadow, you choose the path of the script of shadow. You choose the path *you’ve* laid out for yourself so that the image you’ve formed and now hold of yourself remains intact. Often, at such junctures in your life, your heart has urged you in one direction, but you have compromised that and taken the other because it better fitted and benefited the image you hold of yourself and the path you walk within. Do you understand what I’m saying?”

Rachel, trying to adjust to the twists and turns in the direction of the conversation and struggling to keep up, took a moment to even realise a question had been asked of her. “I’m not sure,” she answered hesitantly.

“You create *for* yourself and *around* yourself everything you need to keep you wrapped up and enclosed in this third-dimensional identity. You have clothed yourself in third-dimensional clothes. You have shut yourself up in a house of third-dimensional cards. And the worst part about it is that you have done so not in terms of the way the rest of the world sees you, but in terms of *how you see yourself*, how you *are* to yourself, how you *project* yourself, and what you *believe* about yourself.

“To quote *The Matrix*³, it is your own ‘residual self image’ that you control, so the image you project into the world is one of third-dimensional ‘normality’ – a typical third-dimensional identity. And *that’s* what everyone around you sees because that’s what *you force yourself* to see. And *that’s* what Marcus sees.

“If the truth of you bubbles up through the cracks in your armour, you act quickly to push it back down, to hide and suppress it so that your armour remains intact – the armour of the third-dimensional identity. And guess what, Rachel. Never has the preservation of your armour been as threatened as it is now with

Marcus in your life because he is one who is *able to see*, and this you know deep down inside yourself. He is, in fact, as rare a soul as are you.”

Rachel sat still, as if turned to stone. Only the rise and fall of her chest as she took in ever-deepening breaths conveyed the depth of feeling the woman’s words stirred in her.

“You rigidly and ruthlessly keep yourself hidden behind the mask of the third dimension and, of course, as a third-dimensional being, yes, you are not Marcus’s type. What does he prefer? Sophisticated blondes?”

She paused and raised her eyebrows.

“It would seem so,” Rachel answered after realising a response was required.

“Right,” the woman said, nodding. “That’s perfectly understandable. It’s a distorted, egoic misinterpretation of what he really yearns for . . . your Wisdom and your Light, Rachel.”

Rachel said nothing. Why would Marcus want her wisdom? No one else did. And he inhabited the world of finance and big business – a world that cared not one whit for inner wisdom. Ordinary people scorned it, so why wouldn’t he?

“You look at the world and at the worldly influences you have unconsciously allowed to govern and underpin your script – the script of your making and your choosing – and you think you cannot give it up.” The woman on the other end of the sofa searched Rachel’s eyes with her own. “After all, what else is there? Yet your soul urges you to see the emptiness and the meaninglessness and the purposelessness of the life that you have built on this, your script, Rachel. It stirs you beyond, to let go of the control, to set yourself free, and allow yourself to be seen. Then, you will begin to see yourself for who and what you really are.”

Rachel knew now. She knew what the woman was talking about. A part of her had, she realised, always been conscious of the battle she fought within every single day. Again, the tears welled.

“Now,” the woman continued gently, softly, “I need to right a misconception. You said earlier that it was Viola’s rejection, right at the end, of the experience of love she and her lover shared together that hurt him the most because it was tantamount to a rejection of him. Rachel,” she said and leaned forward to take one of Rachel’s hands in her own, “it was not *him* she rejected, it was *her*. That’s why

the vow hurt her, and you, so very, very much. It was *her* she repudiated and condemned, and in doing so she didn't *just* shut down and close off the very essence of her own soul, she condemned you to a life of entombment.

"Doesn't the irony of it strike you?" she asked suddenly and laughed with the realisation. "Viola avoided being buried alive by taking poison, and yet *you* are living entombed in your third-dimensional identity because of her actions . . . because of her vow – a living entombment."

Rachel simply stared at her, frozen into utter stillness. And yet those words felt like hot water running through her frozen veins, bringing her slowly but very surely back to reluctant life. Viola rejected *herself* . . . but of course . . . of course she did.

The woman smiled as she dropped Rachel's hand and leaned back again.

"What is your shadow, Rachel? You greatly fear your Light, and so you control and create everything in and around you so that you are not confronted with it or by it; so that you are kept from the truth of it. Marcus is a pure reflection of that Light, but you are keeping him at bay for fear that he will *see* you, and in seeing you will cause you to *see* yourself. Because, of course, in *seeing*, you will *know*, and in *knowing*, you will *be*."

A look of absolute pain crossed Rachel's face. "It's coming from me?" she whispered.

"I'm afraid so."

"How do I fix this?"

"You must dance with your shadow, and you must allow yourself to trust where the Process is taking you. You must allow the Process to release old mindsets. And when I say you must dance with your shadow, you must dance with every aspect of it – every behaviour that arises from it, every choice that is determined by it, every belief, every thought."

She leaned forward intently then, a slight frown of concentration furrowing her brow.

"Rachel, this you must realise. As with everything in reality, there are two opposite perspectives of what it was, exactly, Viola experienced. Did she meet a man handsome enough to tempt her to dishonour her vows as a priestess? Or did she, in him, come face to face with the truth of her own inner beauty? Did she

experience shallow sexual attraction? Or did she experience that profound truth that very few people ever experience in an incarnation? Because this you must know about Viola and her lover. When two strings on two different instruments are plucked in such a way as to produce the same note, two strings there may be, but *there is only one note*. Viola and her lover saw Truth in each other, and they knew. Why else do you think they were so powerless against the pull of what was between them even though they risked death when they gave in to it?

“This is the same Truth you are now hiding from with Marcus. But now you must choose which perspective will drive you from this moment on. Have you, in Marcus, met a man handsome enough to tempt you to surrender your heart? Or have you, in him, an opportunity to come face to face with the reflection of the truth of your inner beauty and your Light?

“At the moment, you are living by the first perspective because you are hiding in third dimensionality, hiding your Light, desperately forcing yourself into third-dimensional being, just like everyone else. So you and Marcus are like discordant notes, when your truth is exactly the opposite. You are one note. But there is no reflection between you and him at the moment, so there is no purpose in you being together. Nor will there be a reflection between you whilst ever you identify with your third-dimensional character-identity; whilst ever you identify with the puppet rather than the puppet’s master.”

Rachel’s mind had ceased to function. It felt, in fact, as if it had become stuffed with cotton wool. But this was probably a good thing because the truth of this woman’s words resonated within and through Rachel without help from her conscious mind. She could feel it coursing through her veins, sizzling along her nerves, and pulsing through her muscles.

“How do I shift what I identify with when the puppet is all I’ve ever known?”

“Actually,” the woman replied, “the first step is easy. You simply form the conscious intent to do so. Intent is far more powerful than we realise. This is why prayer is so powerful. Prayer is, more often than not, a statement of intent, if people would but realise it. Ironically, people pray to ‘God’ and think He is not listening when there seems to be no response. But ‘God’ answers and says, ‘As you *intend* it, so shall it be’, which is, of course, often not the answer people seek.

“The second step is the hard part. You must dance with your shadows. Now,” she said, “I told you before, allow yourself to release old mindsets and trust where the Process is taking you, remember?”

Rachel nodded.

“Then why not turn this into a statement of intent: *I will release old mindsets and trust where the Process is taking me.*”

“I will release old mindsets,” Rachel repeated, “and trust where the Process is taking me.”

“The Process will take you into whole new territory, Rachel, and that *will* translate in the physical landscape of your reality. And do not be concerned about whether or not Marcus will come with you where you are going because you are bonded in ways you cannot yet perceive.”

“Even at the risk of leaving behind his high-powered job?” Rachel asked without thinking, not really believing it.

“Even so,” the woman said firmly. “He would have gone anywhere with you back then, two thousand years ago. He would have given up everything for you. Do you not yet realise it will be the same in this life? Do you not yet realise, Rachel, that you are each a gateway for the other into the higher realm? I cannot, cannot even begin to tell you how sacred and holy such a relationship is. I can tell you, though, that it is rare and precious beyond imagining.

“Let go the control. Open yourself up to him, and let him see you. And find within the courage to come face to face with your own beauty and Light in the Process and at the same time. Then, when you see and know the truth, Rachel, you cannot *be* the illusion, and your pain will be a thing of the past.”



Rachel drove home in a state of numbed shock. Her mind absolutely and obstinately refused to work properly, so it was as well she did not have far to drive. When she'd driven the car into the garage, she made a conscious effort to turn everything off and lock the car properly. If she didn't pay attention, she knew she would probably walk off and leave the car running.

She ascended the stairs to her unit like a robot, dropped her keys and her bag on the kitchen bench, and stood for a long, long time beside the bench. She wasn't thinking. She wasn't feeling. She was just standing. After a while, though, the heaviness of her body and its accompanying fatigue penetrated. She felt inordinately tired. Without making a conscious decision, she walked into her bedroom, drew the curtains shut, walked to her bed, stripped off her clothes, and slid between the sheets. Just an hour, she thought, as she rolled onto her side and closed her eyes. Just an hour. She had things to do. It was a Saturday, after all, and Saturdays were days of cleaning, shopping, walking, washing . . .

Such was the last thought that drifted through her mind like a cloud drifting across the sky, pushed by an unseen breeze. Within a matter of seconds she had fallen into a deep, deep sleep.



Marcus hesitated at the front door. What was he doing here?

He and Rachel hadn't spoken for over a month, not since that fateful night he'd invited her to join him and a group of work colleagues for drinks. He'd paid too much attention to one of the women he worked with, and had virtually ignored Rachel in the process. Even now he was at a loss to explain his behaviour that night. Had he wanted to punish her? Had he been venting his frustration? Possibly . . . very possibly. He knew, sensed, there was so much more of her bubbling underneath the surface façade she presented to the world, but she wouldn't allow him beyond the façade.

It had annoyed and irritated him that she'd left early without saying goodbye that fateful Friday night. He'd felt the sting of rebuke in her actions and so hadn't contacted her since, nor she him. And now a yawning gulf had opened up between them that he did not know how to close. He'd tried to convince himself there was no future for him and Rachel, so he'd begun a relationship with the same woman he'd flirted with that Friday night. But the relationship, if relationship was what it was, had been incredibly dissatisfying, had gone stale very quickly, and even now left a bitter aftertaste in his mouth.

This morning, though, without knowing or understanding why, he'd awoken with a need to see Rachel. He'd tried to ignore it. But like an itch that wouldn't go until scratched, the need had gained intensity, and he now felt it as a matter of urgency.

He pressed the buzzer and waited for a response. When none was forthcoming, he pressed the buzzer again and held it down longer, impatiently, not caring that it might be considered rude. When there was still no response, he walked around the back to see if her car was in the garage. It was. She was home. He turned then and looked up. The curtains in her bedroom were closed. He frowned as he looked at his watch. Nearly midday. Surely she wasn't still asleep.

He took his mobile out of his pocket and tried to phone her, but hers was turned off. Frustrated, he walked back to the front door and pressed the buzzer again. When he still failed to get a response, he phoned her again and left a message asking her to call him. Once he rang off, he stood at her door uncertainly, reluctant to leave now that he was here. But there was nothing he could do if she wouldn't answer either her door or her phone.

As he turned to go, the thought occurred to him that if she wouldn't let him back into her life he would bloody well bash her door down and force his way in.



Rachel rolled over and opened her eyes. In the darkness of her room, the numbers on her clock glared at her like beacons. She sat up in a panic, staring uncomprehendingly at the numbers. 7:36. How could that be? She was so disorientated she couldn't think. What time had she gone to bed? Surely she hadn't slept the whole day . . . surely not.

But the darkening sky that filled the glass windows of her balcony told her it was, indeed, evening and that she had, indeed, slept the day away. She sat on her lounge and threaded her fingers through her hair as she rested her head on her hands. God, she felt awful. Her body was still heavy, and she felt exhausted despite the more-than-seven hours of sleep she'd just had.

Maybe food would help. She hadn't eaten at all since she'd not bothered with breakfast before going out that morning. Maybe that was why she had no energy and felt as heavy as lead.

While she was heating soup and making toast, she turned her phone back on and listened to Marcus's message.

"I know we haven't spoken much over the last month, Rachel, but I need to speak to you now. Please call me when you get this message."

Her heart began to pound uncomfortably in her chest while she stood deciding whether or not to call him. Eventually, in light of the revelations she'd been given that morning, she decided she couldn't *not* call him.

"Hi," she said when he answered his phone. "It's Rachel. You wanted me to call you. What's up?"

"What's up," he repeated flatly. "You're asking me what's up. I called round to see you at midday and you wouldn't answer your door, your phone was turned off, and the curtains in your bedroom were closed. I was concerned. I wanted to make sure you were all right."

Rachel was surprised. She couldn't think of anything to say so she just said simply, "Oh."

"Are you all right?" Marcus pressed.

"I . . . don't know," she answered quietly. "I don't know if I'm all right. I think maybe not."

"Rachel. Let me call you back. I'm driving. I need to pull over. I'll call you straight back."

"I wish I could just say I'm fine and be done with it," she told him when he called back. "But you asked out of genuine concern, so I have to tell you the truth. But there's nothing anyone else can do to help me. I just have to process this by myself. Once I do, I will be fine. I came home to do just that, but I couldn't keep awake. Where are you going?"

"A dinner party. Don't change the subject. You slept all day?"

Rachel bit her bottom lip. "Yep, and now I feel like shit." She laughed softly. "Think I need to go for a long walk to clear my head. Honestly, Marcus, don't worry about me. I'll be fine. I promise. Go and enjoy your dinner party."



Rachel had eaten soup and toast, cleaned and scrubbed her bathroom, soaked for a long time in her bath tub, and was sitting cross-legged on her lounge staring unseeing at the painting on the opposite wall when the buzzer at the front door went. She glanced at the clock on the kitchen wall. 9:20. Who would be calling at this time of night? The buzzer went again before she got to the intercom.

“Who is it?”

“It’s Marcus.”

She pressed the button to release the front door, and then, not possessing the energy to stand and wait for him, went to sit back on the lounge.

He shrugged out of his jacket when he reached the top of the stairs and put it over the back of one of the dining chairs before coming to sit on her coffee table directly in front of her.

“Your dinner party?” she asked him.

“I was only half there and they all noticed. So when they asked me if I was okay, I told them I was worried about a friend who was ill. They told me to go, so here I am. What am I doing here, Rachel?”

She desperately wanted to push him away by being irritated and saying, “how should I know?” But she refused to give in to that shadowed urge, so, instead, she looked down at his hands. They were clasped and she noted, as she always did when she looked at his hands, that his fingers were long. He had beautiful hands she thought.

“What happened today?” he asked her.

She looked back up at him. “I was confronted with some home truths.”

“What truths?” he asked intently, narrowing his eyes at her.

She took a moment to answer and in that moment she let go of her defences. She didn’t consciously choose to but she felt them drop, felt them go, like a heavy weight falling from her shoulders. Then, stripped of her defences, she felt as if she was sitting naked before him so that she had absolutely nothing to offer him except the truth. And that she would give to him wholeheartedly.

“The truth that there was far more to Viola’s vow than simply choosing not to love. The truth that there was far more to the experience they . . . we had than just two people falling in love and being attracted to each other. The truth that Viola rejected the very best part of herself back there, and the truth that I have continued and perpetuated that rejection in this life. The truth that I have wrapped myself in an identity, like wearing a mask, that keeps me from being seen for who and what I really am. The truth that I have pushed you away because I’m afraid of what you will see in me and of what I will then see in you. You threaten the image of myself I’ve cultivated and controlled all these years because you threaten to bring the very best of me – that part of me Viola rejected so long ago – up and out, and you do all of that just by being. So I’ve kind of metaphorically turned my back on you . . . hidden from you, protected myself.”

He didn’t say anything, so they looked at each other in silence.

“And that’s just for starters, really,” she said into the silence, feeling uncomfortable.

“God you’re beautiful,” he said without moving. “That’s the irony of it, Rachel. Behind the mask, you’re absolutely beautiful . . . breathtaking even.”

“I am? You can see that?”

“God yes,” he breathed. “I can see that.”

He moved off the table to kneel in front of her so he could put his hands either side of her face. For a moment he looked at her, and then he leaned towards her and kissed her. She kissed him back, and as she did so, desire flared into potent, passionate, powerful life within and between them both. Now, at last, she understood why Viola had been so powerless against the force of it. And just as Viola had surrendered to it two thousand years ago so, too, did Rachel surrender to it now. Only this time, there would be no punishment, no condemnation. This time, Rachel would embrace it and honour it and celebrate it because she knew what it was. She knew what it reflected and what its deeper meaning was.

This time, she knew, without a shadow of doubt, she would allow it to be what it truly was.



Rachel stirred in Marcus's arms and slowly moved away from him, careful not to disturb him. She couldn't sleep, partly because she'd slept too much that day and partly because her mind had kicked into gear and was, once again, functioning as normal.

She lay for a moment looking at him in the light of her bedside lamp, listening to the deep, rhythmical breathing that accompanies a peaceful sleep. A hint of a smile played with her eyes and the corners of her mouth as she noted the finest details about him – the rise and fall of his chest with each inhaled and exhaled breath, the dark fan of his eyelashes against his cheeks, the tumble of brown hair, tousled with sleep and love-making, and the curl of his long fingers, relaxed in sleep. It had, she thought as she watched him, been a long, long time since she last had a man in her bed. But seeing him there felt right, as natural and as normal, and even as necessary, as breathing. There was no adjustment to be made.

She sat up carefully, slipped out of bed, and walked on silent feet out of the bedroom, grabbing her robe from the floor and belting it as she walked through to the lounge room. The curtains in front of the glass doors of her balcony were still open, and the scenery she could see beyond the glass was beautiful. The moon was full and its light illuminated the water of the bay. She opened the door slightly, slipped through the opening and leaned against the balcony, breathing in the perfect stillness and silence of the night.

Snippets of the morning's conversation had been coming back to her, like replaying bits of a tape without any particular order. And the snippets of conversation were coming back in such a way that the whole revelation of the woman's message was opening up and crystallising. And with this crystallisation, the meaning, the depth, and the significance were becoming more and more clear.

“What is your shadow, Rachel? You greatly fear your Light, and so you control and create everything in and around you so that you are not confronted with it or by it.”

As she leaned on the balcony, ostensibly watching the play of moonlight on the water, a picture formed in Rachel's mind of a big, deep, darkly-black puddle of thick, oily water, and out of that oily water little hands and big hands, covered in the thick, black oil, were reaching up to hold her back, to stop her moving forward,

and to draw her back into the shadowed pool. It was as if hundreds of these hands were holding on to her, and these hands represented behaviours, some significant and some seemingly trivial, but all shadowed. Whether big or small, all the hands were performing the same service for the puddle of shadowed water. All the hands were keeping her from her truth, ensuring the mask of third dimensionality remained intact, so that she saw herself, and believed herself to be, that which the hands wanted her to see and believe.

The significant behaviours . . . or perhaps a better word for it would be ‘dynamics’, she thought – the big, powerful hands – reached up from the darkest depths of the shadow within her and, therefore, from the depths of her own psyche. As such, they were beyond emotion, beyond awareness and, thus, beyond her conscious control.

One such powerful hand – perhaps the most significant of them all – related to the culture and environment, including the relationships, that she surrounded herself with. She could see now that she had, all her life, surrounded herself with people who could not and would not see her for who and what she really was. If any one person had ‘seen’ her truth, she knew it would have triggered a massive shift in the way she saw herself, and the shadow within her and the hands reaching up out of it had fiercely prevented this. What a bitter irony it was, then, that seeing herself was the very thing she yearned for in the depth of her soul, hence the pain of amputation when nothing seemed to have been removed.

“You have clothed yourself in third-dimensional clothes. You have shut yourself up in a house of third-dimensional cards.”

Friendships, professional relationships, acquaintances, even familial relationships – there was no exception. Every relationship in her life before Marcus was a non-reflection. So friends like Stacey, the best friend who’d introduced her to Marcus, were not interested in the spiritual wisdom she pursued so passionately. Stacey referred to it as Rachel’s ‘spiritual shit’ and wouldn’t talk about it beyond that. Yet that ‘spiritual shit’ formed the very fabric of Rachel’s heart and soul and was, at times, the only thing that kept her going. If Stacey didn’t want to know and wouldn’t talk about something that important to Rachel, how true a friend could she possibly be? And who always ended up compromising?

And her job . . . another of the biggest hands reaching up out of the shadow. So much was her job the *opposite* of who and what she really was that she knew, standing there in the moonlight, she could no longer allow it to be a part of her life. Why had she chosen a profession that involved number crunching, formulas, and analysis when her gifts and talents lay in working with the magic of words? Why was she hiding behind formulas, recipes, and systematic, standardised approaches to data when she yearned to create something unique of her own, something entirely new? Why was she spending long hours writing in-depth, detailed reports about things she had no interest in when she should have been spending long hours contemplating the truly important things?

“ . . . *when you see and know the truth, Rachel, you cannot then **be** the illusion . . .*”

The words of the wise woman echoed in Rachel’s mind over and over again so that they became a mantra of truth that Rachel could no longer ignore or deny. She thought of *The Matrix*³, one of her favourite movies. Once you were freed of the Matrix, you couldn’t go back.

Now, the suit of the executive that she had worn so well and so comfortably for so long, suddenly felt colourless, lifeless, suffocating, too tight, restricting movement, controlling thought. It dictated who she was, how she looked, how she projected herself, how she behaved, what she thought, what she concentrated on. How much of her time did she devote to that job, and not just during office hours – time that was not, then, hers; time that belonged to someone else? How much energy did she expend focussing on meaningless and purposeless roles and responsibilities in that job – tasks that contributed not one whit to her own spiritual growth, tasks that did not in any way make a positive contribution to the human experience, tasks that ultimately made someone else very rich?

“ . . . *you must allow yourself to release old mindsets . . .*”

Again, Rachel thought of *The Matrix*. Breaking free of the Matrix physically was one thing, but the entire first movie in the trilogy was devoted to Neo’s process of releasing the mindsets dictated and determined by the Matrix – a metaphor for third-dimensional reality. When Morpheus, in trying to free Neo’s mind, showed him how to jump from one building to another, Neo doomed himself to failure as

soon as he walked to the edge of the building and looked down, allowing, in the process, his mindset to be determined by what his physical eyes were seeing. That one action was born out of the doubt and disbelief Morpheus was trying to free him from, and it confirmed both. Though no longer in the Matrix physically, Neo was as bound by its rules and constructs as ever. He was still allowing the constructs of the Matrix to dictate his belief and, therefore, his perspective, and both then determined the outcome of his attempt to jump from one building to the next . . . he failed.

Rachel saw the scene clearly in her mind's eye. God, she thought, what a brilliant analogy. How would she answer the 'what do you do' question if she left her job – the tall building off which *she* must now jump? And what would she do if she left the security of a regular income and a highly-paid job? For isn't it one of the fundamental, foundational constructs of third-dimensional reality that you must earn a living to exist? What, in the landscape of her reality, currently demanded a high-paying salary? And didn't that then determine she had to work in the city where salaries were high? And didn't that, in turn, dictate that she live near the CBD, which in turn meant that the mortgage she had on her unit was as high as the cost of real estate so close to the city?

The landscape of her life was, then, like a series of inter-locking pieces of a larger puzzle – each dependent on the others to form the overall picture, and all of it locking her in place. Such was the way she had constructed her life. But really, all she had to do was drop all the pieces at her feet, let them go, let them fall to the floor like a pack of cards – shifting sands, shifting *priorities* – and then she had but to bend over, pick up the ones she truly wanted and leave the rest on the ground. She laughed with the simplicity of it all . . . and the sheer, unadulterated freedom of it.

“If the truth of you bubbles up through the cracks in your armour, you act quickly to push it back down, to hide and suppress it, so that your armour remains intact – the armour of the third-dimensional identity.”

Who amongst her closest friends knew she wrote in her own time? Which of her closest friends or her acquaintances or her work colleagues had ever read her stories? How many people in her life knew of her website? Apart from her family,

no one knew. And why was that? Why did she keep it hidden? Because she was afraid of what people would think if they read it. That's why. And the key issue here was not so much *that* she hid the website, but that she surrounded herself with people from whom she felt she *had* to hide it.

She was on a roll. What other little hands of shadowed control could she identify – hands that reached up out of this shadow and forced the mask of third dimensionality on her, keeping her from her own higher-dimensional truth?

It was all there, and it wasn't so hard once you kick started the process: needing to fit in with her social set of friends, and to modify or adapt her own behaviours to do so; the need for theirs and others' approval that more often than not dictated going *with* the flow rather than *against* it, which she so often wanted to do; needing to perform to others' satisfaction at work; needing to keep her opinions to herself if they contradicted the accepted 'norm'; needing to be responsible, hard working, not lazy – to *contribute* to society rather than take from it – a legacy she had inherited from her father and one she now realised had caused her to be responsible as per *his* definition, thus compromising herself and blocking her ability to be responsible *to* herself in the process; needing to hide many facets of her own life because they were considered weird by normal standards, like the fact that she lived by an entirely different year from everyone else.

She celebrated the New Year on April 19 – the true beginning of nature's year when the sun rose in the House of Aries – instead of January 1, but who knew that? No one knew because she hid it. But she still attended New Year's Eve parties as if she *did* celebrate the New Year then. She knew the yearly cycle of the zodiacal influences had moved by a month, courtesy of a phenomena known as the Precession of the Equinoxes, and a fact of nature reflected in the seasons, but she said nothing. And, she knew there were thirteen, not twelve, constellations of the zodiac, but she kept the knowledge to herself. She'd learnt the hard way, people didn't want to know.

Imagine what her friends or her managers and colleagues at work would say if they knew she read tarot cards almost every weekend because they linked with her inner sight and her insight into the current processes running through her life! The gods forbid. Imagine them knowing she possessed the sight of the third eye and

had visions, epiphanies, and revelations! Or that she had clear, strong memories of other lives she'd lived! Christ!

But how much of herself was she forced to keep hidden from mainstream society? So much did she keep herself hidden from view that, she now realised, mainstream society saw only the very tip of the iceberg that was her. Hidden, hidden, hidden! The need to hide – her own deep, dark shadow – defined her. It dictated who she was, who she mixed with, how she projected herself into the world.

“ . . . and so you have built yourself into an identity that agrees with and fits modern society – an identity that is acceptable and approved of . . . ”

Yes, that's how it was put to her, and she saw now the absolute and powerful truth of those words. But it was an illusion, that identity. It wasn't real. It wasn't her. It wasn't even remotely *like* her. Yet she had surrounded herself with an environment and in a context – the entire landscape of her reality in fact – that facilitated, perpetuated, *demand*ed that she be that identity. Such compromise. Such Self-negation and Self-dishonour.

“Oh God!” she groaned out loud as the full impact began to hit her.

And . . . God, the realisations were coming thick and fast . . . needing to keep her inner knowledge and what she could 'see' strictly out of the public domain – another big hand of shadow, and a very big part of herself she was forced to conceal. No one wanted to know, for example, that she knew the attacks of September 11 had nothing at all to do with terrorism and everything to do with a 'war on terror' that served the deeper, darker agenda of a power-hungry group of people. No one was interested in knowing how much the media controlled what *was* news and what was not so that the stream of information people were constantly fed was strictly manipulated and controlled. And who controlled the media? Whoever it was, they controlled a hell of a lot more than just information. They controlled perspective, thought, and even belief. And quite often they also controlled emotion. Dangerous control . . . it wasn't that same power-hungry group of people who'd orchestrated the attacks of September 11, was it? Rachel thought so. But that was just the beginning.

No one wanted to confront the constant, manipulatively hypnotic bombardment of advertising and the insidiously toxic effect it had on modern society. Everyone seemed quite happy to acknowledge the harmful and damaging effects of that same advertising on women and the pressure of trying to measure up to impossibly unrealistic, doctored images and under-nourished models. But no one, it seemed, was willing to do anything about it. Rachel had long ago boycotted those magazines that made such massive profits off that advertising, but if she suggested to her friends they do the same, she was severely put in her place. Think it by all means, just don't say it out loud. That was the rule she'd learnt to live by. But what was the silence costing her?

“ . . . you pay an enormously high price to be this identity, to exist in and as it, to perpetuate and protect it. Actually, it is the ultimate price you pay, hence the pain.”

God, she thought, as her thought processes raced almost beyond her ability to keep up with them.

Some of the shadowed hands of control generated by the dictates of society she realised she'd confronted without knowing it. The escapism of alcohol – one she had personally conquered long ago courtesy of illness but that she saw spiralling out of control in those around her; the mind-deadening, focus-capturing effect of reality TV and celebrity gossip that she found repugnant and intolerable; the dangerously hypnotic escapism of computer games, especially where children were concerned; her gut reactions, physically that is, to gluten, dairy, meat, and fast food – her body's way of going mad at her for putting 'fuel' into it that was not good for it . . .

A pair of masculine arms encircled her waist, effectively slicing through her thought processes like a hot knife through butter.

“What are you doing out here?”

Rachel leaned back against him, savouring his warmth, and put her hand over one of his. “Thinking . . . of course.”

“Of course,” he echoed as she turned in his arms.

“I'm . . . going to . . . resign . . .”

His lips teasing hers and his hands opening the belt of her robe made it difficult to get the words out, so she abandoned the effort and kissed him properly, thoroughly, able to offer not even a shred or a hint of resistance to the desire that his hands moving over her body and his lips on hers aroused within her.

“You’re going to resign on Monday,” he said against her neck. And then he pulled back, breathing slightly harder and faster than normal, and asked her, “What will you do?”

She pressed her body against his, wanting more of him, wanting the feel of him against and within her. As he complied, she answered him, her own breathing punctuating her words.

“I’m going to spend time with me. I’m going to take time *for* me. I’m going to throw out the garbage in my life, anything that does not serve me or that stops me from being, and I’m going to get to know me properly, the way I *am*, not the way I should be . . .”

“Sounds good,” he murmured. “Just make sure you don’t throw me out with the garbage.”

“Are you kidding?” she breathed. “You’re about the only thing I’m keeping.”
And then she kissed him again.



1. “The Story of Doctor Dolittle”, by Hugh Lofting, Random House Children’s Publishers, UK, 2001.
2. *Legend*, 1985, Legend Production Company.
3. *The Matrix*, 1999, Village Roadshow Pictures/Warner Bros.

The Current of Process

*Like the water in a fast-flowing stream
Am I constantly on the move now,
No sooner settled in one place
Before it is time to move on to the next.
'Tis the current of destiny
That sweeps me on.
So fast does the Process take me onward now
There is not the time
To pack that which I have brought with me thus far.
And so must I go,
Leaving all behind.
No matter,
For there is not the room for baggage anyway.
Thus does the current of Process sweep it all away:
Old, unhelpful, harmful beliefs,
Ingrained habits,
Deeply entrenched shadow-fears,
The internal demands
Of familial and cultural dictates, traditions, and behaviours,
The paths we make ourselves walk,
The stories we weave,
The need to adhere
To the recipe of human existence –
To build into the landscape of life
Those constructs and yardsticks
By which we measure our acceptability in society,
And perhaps most significant of all,
My ideas about who I thought I was,
And who I'm supposed to be.
Anything, anything at all
That pins and traps me
In the third dimension,
Or third-dimensional physical reality,
Left behind.
All of it gone.
For a long time,
I thought I was here
To change the human experience
By changing humans themselves.
Now I see this is not possible,
Not desired,
Nor required.
And so this thought is naught but a distorted focus.*

*So what is my mandate then?
Well . . . yes, what indeed?
My idea of what I will do here
Has morphed beyond all recognition . . .
As have I.
Now I know
I'm here to ascend,
Just to ascend.
Nothing more,
And certainly nothing less.*

Cornerstones, Constructs, Yardsticks, and the Mask of Conventionality

Katherine shifted her weight from one foot to the other and crossed her arms in silent, slightly resentful resistance. Why did she have to be here? Because her mother and sister had driven down to London and wanted to catch up? Because her opinion was valued and wanted? To lend moral support? Or because she lived in London so was able to meet them to have a sneak peak at the dress?

No, she thought, these were not the reasons. The real reason for her presence today, she knew, was that of her mother wanting to present a perfect family image, one of solidarity and togetherness, to the world . . . or, more importantly, to her mother's friends. So her mother had 'persuaded' her to come, which meant, Katherine thought sourly, her mother had applied a *lot* of pressure – pressure that was heavy with the threat of silent and subtle punishment if she'd dared say no. Her mother's punishments were legendary and tended to last for a very long time. It simply wasn't worth the hassle to say no, despite the fact that this was the last place she wanted to be on her day off.

As for Jocelyn – the supposed incentive for this little get-together this morning – she was barely aware of Katherine's presence. She hadn't bothered to acknowledge Katherine as yet, so it obviously wasn't for *her* that Katherine's presence had been required . . . or, rather, demanded.

Looking over at Jocelyn now, standing like a queen bee on a podium while a handful of worker bees fussed around her pinning, altering, and adding bits and pieces to the dress she wore, Katherine shifted her weight again. She was mildly surprised by Jocelyn's choice of wedding dress. Gone were the normally sleek lines and sophisticated clothes Jocelyn usually wore. In their place was a huge skirt, a tight bodice, and big sleeves, all of which were covered in frills, flounces, and far too much lace. If Jocelyn was planning on wearing a veil, she would be in grave

danger of disappearing completely. The dress and the veil would be all you saw of her coming at you down the aisle of the church.

Shifting her weight yet again, Katherine thought of her sister's behaviour over the last months, at a loss to explain it. The announcement of her engagement eight months before had changed Jocelyn, as if she'd been given a license to become . . . well, arrogant. Yes, that was the word: arrogant. Jocelyn's behaviour and attitude towards Katherine especially had suddenly, virtually overnight in fact, become arrogant.

Katherine acknowledged the fact that she and her sister did not have the best of relationships anyway. They'd never really been close. They were too different, as if on two completely different and disconnected wavelengths. But Jocelyn had never before been arrogant or unkind. There were times, over the eight months of her engagement, when Jocelyn's arrogant behaviour had been downright rude and hurtful. At first, Katherine had tried to ignore it, thinking it a phase that would pass as her sister got used to the idea of being affianced. But the snide comments and remarks, the digs, the jibes, and the derision had become a little difficult to ignore, as had the constant reminders that Jocelyn was getting married first despite being two and a half years younger.

Katherine had spent long hours puzzling over this new phenomenon, this new element in her relationship with her sister. She'd come to refer to it, at least in the secret recesses of her own mind, as Jocelyn's 'Jekyll and Hyde mentality'. She and Jocelyn had ceased confiding in each other years ago if, indeed, they ever really had, but still, Katherine had never realised marriage was so important to Jocelyn, nor had she ever picked up on the fact that there was some kind of race between them to see who could get to the altar first. If she'd known, Katherine would've saved Jocelyn the stress and worry by making it clear she had no intention of surrendering her independence by getting married. Ever.

So bad had the Jekyll and Hyde mentality become that Katherine held back initially whenever she saw Jocelyn to assess who her sister was at that particular moment. Not that it made a whole lot of difference because Jocelyn switched from being the old, nice Jocelyn to this new arrogant one in the time it took to draw breath, so quickly could she change. Katherine was, now, permanently on guard

around her sister. In the instant the arrogant Jocelyn made an appearance, Katherine got as far away from that person as possible.

One of the worker bees disrupted Katherine's train of thought by producing, with a flourish, a wide satin sash. Katherine watched as the woman placed it around Jocelyn's waist and tied it into a bow at the back of the dress. Dear God, Katherine thought, mildly shocked, glancing at her mother to see if her mother shared her opinion. But her mother was nodding her approval with one of those benevolent smiles on her face that ultimately revealed very little at all. That's it, Katherine thought, reaching the end of her tolerance. This was getting ridiculous.

She leaned down to her mother and whispered, "I really need to get going, mum."

Her mother escorted her to the front door of the bridal shop. "Thank you for coming, Kat. It really means a lot to your sister."

"No it doesn't," Katherine said as she bent to kiss her mother on the cheek. "It means a lot to you."

"She does look gorgeous, doesn't she?" her mother asked wistfully, either ignoring or failing to hear Katherine's comment.

"Mum," Katherine sighed, "she looks like a wedding cake. Tell her to take away some of the frills so we can see more of *her* and less of the dress."

Stepping down onto the cobbled stones of the small alleyway outside the bridal shop, Katherine knew full well her mother had not heard her. They were as caught up in the details of this impending wedding as each other, her mother and Jocelyn. Both of them couldn't, at the moment, talk about anything else. Katherine wondered what Phil, Jocelyn's fiancé, thought of it all. Was he, too, caught up in all the minute details or was he as sick of it as Katherine was? He gave nothing away, so she couldn't tell what he was thinking, despite her numerous attempts to gauge his opinion and his attitude.

Shaking her head, both mentally and physically, as she began to navigate the cobblestones, not an easy thing in heels, she sent a silent heartfelt thank you to the gods. Jocelyn was so determined to be the centre of attention on her 'big day' that she had point blank refused to have bridesmaids. Her mother, deeply upset by this, on Katherine's behalf she'd declared, had brought to bear the full force of the

pressure she was so masterful at applying. But Jocelyn had been adamant, and utterly immovable. Far from minding, Katherine felt enormously relieved, although no one believed her when she said so.

Emerging from the top of the alleyway, she hesitated. Her tube stop was to the left, but the dome of the vastly impressive edifice of St Paul's Cathedral caught her attention, pulling her in the opposite direction. Suddenly and inexplicably, she didn't want to go home. Seriously, she thought, all this wedding stuff had been amusing at first, but she was finding it deeply disturbing now. There were things to do at home, but the quiet, reverent atmosphere of St Paul's beckoned. At home she would be busy and occupied. In the cathedral she could sit in the quiet for as long as she wanted and think about everything. And maybe, just maybe, unearth some answers in the process.

Her mind made up, she turned towards the cathedral.



As she handed over her money to gain entry into the cathedral, she thought how ironically perverted it was that you could get into the galleries and museums for free here in London, but had to pay to set foot inside the cathedrals. There was, she thought, something very wrong with that. Art and historical artefacts were there for the taking, and the pleasure of enjoying them, freely given, but religion had to be paid for. That kind of summed up what each was truly about, she thought.

Moving deeper into the nave of the cathedral, she walked slowly towards the great dome, looking up at the beauty of its stonework. It was, she knew, a marvel of architecture and engineering. Weighing an estimated sixty-five million kilos, it should by rights have been even heavier, but the ingenious nesting of the three domes that comprised the whole meant that its weight was cleverly supported without it being so heavy it cracked and/or sank. Knowing a little about Christopher Wren, too, Katherine knew there was far more to the geometric design and the alignment of the cathedral than met the eye or that satisfied the requirements of a Christian church. Maybe that's why the energy of this particular cathedral had always felt so subtly but strongly powerful to Katherine.

There had been a time, when she'd first moved to London and worked nearby, during which she'd spent a lot of hours here, soaking up the cathedral's energy and ambience. But somehow, the fast-paced life of London had intruded and then Katherine had become consumed by her work and so had visited the cathedral less and less often, and then, eventually, stopped going at all.

That was, she realised now that she was here again, something she would have to rectify.

Ignoring the tourists, who collectively possessed the unfortunate habit of sucking the life and soul out of a place, especially when, like today, there were a lot of them, Katherine found a seat that gave her a perfect view of the interior of the dome. At first she just sat, soaking up the peace, the quiet, the reverence, not thinking at all. But the longer she sat, the more the feeling of deep disquiet penetrated her calm. What was disturbing her exactly? Surely, a feeling like this wouldn't come just from her sister's antics and attitude? Surely, there had to be a deeper cause?

"Do you mind if I join you?"

Katherine turned in her seat and looked up. Her initial impression of the owner of the voice was that of an old man – a priest if his long priestly robe was anything to go by. But closer inspection yielded some curious anomalies and contradictions. His long white hair and beard gave him the appearance of being a mighty age, but the smooth skin on his face and hands, and particularly around his eyes, belied it. The sparkle in his blue eyes spoke of irrepressible humour and mischief, but, at the same time, his eyes communicated intelligence . . . no, Katherine thought, not so much intelligence as wisdom, deep and all knowing. His priestly robe, long and collared like a normal priest, was pure white, like his hair, and on his feet he wore leather sandals of the type you would've expected to see on a Roman emperor. Around his neck, hanging on a long silver chain, was a cross, but whilst seemingly an icon of Christianity, the cross was equal sided, subtly but importantly, Katherine knew, different from the Christian cross. In the centre of the cross was a beautifully cut, square emerald, and the silver of the cross itself was beautifully and elaborately worked.

Aware that she was being rude, Katherine made herself smile and indicated the chair beside her. “Please,” she said. “I don’t mind if you join me” . . . which, she thought curiously, happened to be very true, despite her desire for solitude.

Tiny frissons of . . . what . . . awareness? Yes, she thought, that was it, awareness, were running from the base of her spine to the crown of her head. As she watched him make himself comfortable in the seat next to hers, she felt, or sensed, that he was somehow familiar to her. But she was absolutely certain she’d never met him before. She would’ve remembered him. He had a unique and unforgettable appearance.

Frowning ever so slightly, she asked him curiously, “Are you a priest here?”

“A priest, yes,” he answered her. “But here, no.” He looked amused, as if she’d just asked a question for which she already knew the answer.

Her frown deepened. “We haven’t met before, have we?”

He raised his eyebrows as if seriously surprised. “Have we not?”

“I would’ve remembered you if we’d met . . .”

“You are thinking only in terms of third-dimensional reality, so, yes, it *is* strange that we’ve not met and yet you know me anyway.”

“Jesus!”

She covered her mouth with both hands, aware of the very Christian belief that using that name as an expletive was considered to be a violation, highly offensive, and in this very Christian context, too. “Sorry,” she apologised to her companion.

“For what?”

“For . . . oh, never mind,” she said, suddenly knowing in the depths of herself he was not at all offended because he knew the truth as she did. The iconic Christian Jesus didn’t exist, and never had. He was simply a fabrication, designed by clever men for the sole purpose of control, nothing more . . . nor less for that matter. As such, the iconic Jesus was the perfect symbol of entrapment, and Katherine felt not the slightest bit of reverence or respect either for the symbol or for the name.

Her companion smiled into her eyes as if aware of, and amused by, her thoughts, and then he turned and pointed upward at the great dome. “What think you of this magnificent dome, Katherine?”

She didn't follow his gesture. She didn't look up. She didn't, in fact, take her eyes from his, and she certainly didn't miss his use of her name. "You already know I love the dome, so why ask?"

He turned towards her once again. "Why ask me if I am a priest here when you know perfectly well I am not?"

She laughed at that, not entirely sure she knew what it was that amused her. Maybe she wasn't amused at all so much as joyful. Yes, that was it. Gone was the deep disquiet. In its place was a feeling of such profound, intense, and sparkingly-beautiful joy that it was almost . . . *almost* difficult to bear. "That's not fair," she chided him. "I didn't know I knew you when you first sat down."

"Yes, you did," he corrected her. "You knew who I was. You just didn't trust the knowledge. You ignored it, choosing, instead, to look upon me with third-dimensional eyes. In fact and in truth," he continued, "we have conversed many times over the years of your incarnation, often long into the night."

"Jesus!" she said again. "You're one of the voices in my mind."

His smile twinkled at her. "Indeed I am," he confirmed. "Did you really think we would not hear you nor pay you any heed when you asked to see and to know who it was you were working with? And did we not tell you in reply to watch for the answer, for it would come to you in your reality?"

Katherine went cold all over so that her body became an absolute mass of goose bumps. Never once, in all these years, had she breathed a word to anyone of the conversations she had in her mind. She distinctly remembered the first time her inner voices had spoken to her clearly enough for her to recognise and acknowledge they were different from her normal thoughts. Twelve years old, she'd then been at the age of beginning to think about the possibilities of what she could and would one day do for a living. A voice had spoken to her seemingly out of nowhere, sounding like a loud thought in her mind . . . if it was possible to measure thoughts in terms of loudness. She'd been told she would never have to worry about not having a job because the right job would always present itself at exactly the right time. Over the decades since that first experience, her inner voices had not just been proved right over and over again, they had told her many, many, many more things.

The most curious aspect of the existence of her inner voices, though, was that not once had she ever been afraid of them. Perfectly well aware of the fact that hearing voices was normally associated with mental illness, particularly schizophrenia, she had never thought of the voices as an illness. Recently, she'd read an article about channelling, and realised, if anything, the relationship between her and her voices was more along the lines of that. For her, the voices, of which his predominated, had simply become part of life, part of *her*.

He was watching her, amused, and she knew full well that he was privy to the thoughts that were flowing, whirlwind-like, through her mind. Really, it should've felt strange conversing with him *outside* of her mind, but in fact, it felt as natural and as normal as breathing; as natural, really, as conversing with him *inside* her mind.

"Why now?" was all she asked, knowing there was not the necessity to elaborate.

"We need to talk, you and I," he answered her. "And I need you to be very clear about whether it is *my* voice or *your* voice you are hearing. I need *you* to be very sure *you* are not polluting the conversation with your own thoughts, beliefs, and opinions."

She nodded, knowing he was referring to those regular and familiar thoughts she had of the possibility of interfering with and even fabricating what she was hearing in her mind. Sometimes, it was hard to tell if she was hearing what *she* wanted to hear or if she was hearing what *they* wanted to tell her.

That was the problem with channelling, too, of course. There was always a mix of consciousnesses involved because the person doing the channelling didn't go somewhere else. So, to trust the channelled message, you really needed to be very sure you could trust the person doing the channelling. If there was ego involved, even if only a little, it would *always* interfere. Actually, she thought, 'pollution' was a very good way to think of it.

Never surrender the necessity for *discernment* – that process of recognising *for yourself* whether something resonates, leaves you unmoved, or feels discordant. Only you can know if something sits well with you or if something rubs you the wrong way. Either way, pay attention and pay heed. Trust yourself. Never assume another person is right or speaking truth just because they're in touch with a

‘higher’ entity. And never surrender your power by deferring to another, no matter how ‘spiritual’ that other appears to be.

Katherine had, she knew, avoided, completely, those two pitfalls of *egoic transference* and *self-pedestalisation*, as she called them, by recognising that the knowledge ‘channelled’ through the voices that spoke to her was for her alone. And in learning to communicate with them, she had gone through a lengthy process of learning to trust both herself and them. They *never* told her what to do, and they *never* told her what to believe. They simply communicated information and knowledge, often in the form of dialogue and discussion so that, more often than not, they were guided by her questions. As her trust had solidified, becoming the foundation upon which she listened and interacted with them, her confidence had grown and developed. Now, if they spoke, she heard, she heeded, she believed, and, invariably, she was changed.

“If we need to talk outside of me,” she said quietly, “then it must be important.”

He nodded solemnly. “Indeed, it is.” He raised a hand to caress her cheek. “Oh how alone you find yourself, dear one. And though you were warned long ago that the path you chose back then would lead to such aloneness, still you mourn the lack of connection and companionship as much as you relish the solitude. Yet, despite our communication over these many long years, still you do not realise how completely un-alone you are, for you do not fully appreciate the fact of us being with you every moment of every day.”

He leaned forward, his hand still on her cheek, and kissed her forehead. “Now at last I can tell you, Katherine, I am thy companion of old, dear one. Long and hard have we journeyed through the aeons of this, the human experiment. Deliberately did we choose not to incarnate together during this one of your lives so that our connection and communion would not be hampered nor hindered by the veil of forgetfulness descending on both sides. Do you understand now?”

“I understand,” she whispered. “The veil of forgetfulness has descended on my side, and I have failed to realise how much I miss you even though I don’t need to miss you.”

He dropped his hand and smiled gently. “Just so,” he confirmed. “Just so. Now, with that sorted, let us deal with the questions you threw up into the dome

just before I joined you. The answer is simple. Your sister has triggered within you an awakening awareness of an all-pervasive and harmful dynamic that currently dictates, imprisons, and enslaves human focus, human thought, human perspective, human behaviour, and, therefore, human experience.”

“Ah,” she sighed. “I knew it had to be deeper than just a reaction to Jocelyn’s behaviour of the last months.”

“Her behaviour puzzles you greatly, Katherine, and yet the underlying dynamic is really very simple. The one single event of her impending wedding – an important step in the recipe of human existence – has, in Jocelyn’s mind, at last catapulted her into adequacy and equality in relation and in comparison to *you*.”

The revelation of these words struck Katherine like a dull thud in her gut. She struggled to understand all the implications. “You mean the fact that she’s getting married makes her feel . . . um . . .”

“That she has something you do not or, rather, that she has achieved something important that you have not. And so, for the first time in her eyes, she finds herself standing in the limelight, so to speak, no longer in your shadow. For the first time, she feels important . . . or should I say adequate?”

As was his wont, whether he spoke to her *in* her mind or outside of it, his words gently steered her thought processes, and she turned away from him slightly to give them their due, to focus, concentrate, and contemplate. Hers and Jocelyn’s shared past opened up within her, and she was able to view a myriad of different incidents, events, and circumstances from an entirely different perspective.

“Dear God,” she whispered, feeling cold again. Why had she never seen it before? How could she have been so blind?

“’Tis a mighty shadow you have cast, Katherine, at least in her eyes. But had you seen this dynamic prior to this moment, what could you have done to change it?”

She turned towards him again. “Nothing,” she answered him. “There’s nothing I could’ve done except diminish myself to make *allowances* for her.”

He nodded. “And that is exactly the reason you’ve not been shown this before, for to have you diminish yourself to cater for another’s inner shadow is entirely unacceptable, not to mention forbidden. Such is your nature, Katherine, that you

would have protected her, but you would have been protecting her from herself, and that cannot be. You are the *opportunity* she has to see her shadow – her fears and the harmful beliefs that arise from them – but, alas, seen them she has not. Instead, she has found a way to mask them, and in masking them she has squandered the opportunity. Thus must the opportunity come around again, either in this life or another.”

“I make her feel inadequate?”

“Oh no, dear one, never that,” he replied solemnly. “Never that, Katherine, so put such thoughts from your mind. She *believes* she is inadequate, for *that* is her fear. She *believes* she is not worthy, for *that* is her fear. She *believes* that in and of herself, she does not measure up, for *that* is her fear. She *believes* that she is not, within herself, acceptable as she is, for *that* is her fear. But how is she to know these fears lurk in the depths of her psyche if not for you – the one who casts for her the reflection of her fears? Thus are you, dear one, a very great gift if she would but see the truth of that. Now, I’m afraid, she will not see the truth, for she grasps and clings to this new role of wife, so that it shields her from her fear and masks her inadequacy. She has suddenly become adequate *to herself*. So aptly does she demonstrate the very dynamic we need to speak of today, you and I, that *she* has become a very great gift to *us*.”

They exchanged smiles, each appreciating the turn of phrase and the specific applications of it.



“I’ve no real need to remind you, Katherine,” he said, “but remind you I will. Arrogance is *not* confidence. Confidence and arrogance are *opposites* – opposite points of the same continuum, in fact, as are Love and fear. In truth and in fact, arrogance is inadequacy masked or, put another way, arrogance is inadequacy in a different guise.

“Confidence as a characteristic of Love *is*; that is, it radiates, so it feels not the need to prove itself, nor to draw attention to itself. Nor does it feel the need to do anything outside of itself to measure up, to become acceptable to itself. What it *thinks* of itself, and what it *is* to itself are driven *not* by any external factors because

it sources its power from within. Arrogance, as the opposite, has as its source the shadow of fear, and so it knows only the necessity to feed itself from *without*, not within. Thus does arrogance feel the need, the compulsion in fact, to draw attention to itself.

“You see, in being raised up *artificially*, arrogance has no substance of its own, nor does it have the power to remain elevated. Thus must it draw substance in the form of constant confirmation and affirmation *externally*, usually from other people in the form of acknowledgement and recognition of its greatness. It very much feels the need to know it is better than others, and, like a vampire drawing blood from its victims, needs to feed often to sustain itself.”

“And,” Katherine added, thinking of the times *she’d* been arrogant, “it is always dependent on that external thing or things that raise it up such that if those external things are taken away, it crumbles back into the nothingness it believes itself to be.”

“Beautifully said, as usual,” he complimented her.

“Thank you,” she responded, and smiled at him. “Do you remember when, as a teenager, I had my first experience of dating after watching everyone else go out with boys? I used to wonder if there was something wrong with me because no one asked me out, except boys I didn’t want to go out with. When a boy I liked finally asked me out, I became painfully and unattractively arrogant. I thought I was so good. He didn’t last long, of course, and when he’d gone, I reverted to thinking there was something wrong with me again. And do you remember when Amanda, that friend of mine whose sole aim in life was that of becoming a mother, changed so dramatically when she fell pregnant that I couldn’t penetrate or tolerate the barrier of arrogance that was erected between us?”

“Of course I remember. I also remember that Amanda told everyone *you’d* gone weird.”

“Well, I was pulling away . . . oh.”

“From the mainstream?” he suggested, finishing the sentence for her.

“Yes,” she answered, “from the mainstream.”

“And now you see, do you not, dear one, you have a vast and extensive knowledge of it, this dynamic. You are very familiar with it, for you have studied it

extensively across many lifetimes, and you have observed, long and hard, the toxic effects of it on the human psyche and, therefore, on the human experience at every level.”

“I’ve studied it?”

“Over many different lifetimes, and in many different contexts. You are, in truth, an expert, and you hold a deep and abiding interest in it, so you know that never in the recent history of the human experiment has this dynamic been more potent in its hold, more powerful in its enslavement, more toxic in its effects, or more widespread and prevalent. I would,” he added thoughtfully, “even go so far as to say that if one is incarnate in this reality now, one will almost certainly be caught in its web, such is its hold and its prevalence. Sadly, humans know no different now, so much does it define their existence.”

“Hence the disturbance I feel at the deepest level of myself.”

“Hence the disturbance you feel in the very depth and fibre of your inner-most being.”

“So, can you name it for me, this dynamic?”

“But you have already named it, dear one. Shall I remind you?”

Katherine nodded.

“Allow me to quote,” he said. “Humans have learned to take, as their frame of reference, the physical dimension of their reality such that they have become wholly defined by the *constructs* of that reality, and make no allowances for anything else. Thus, their identity is wholly tied up in these constructs, and they use them as *yardsticks* against which they measure themselves.’”

Katherine frowned, feeling the familiarity of his words wash through her, knowing she knew them well, but not knowing how or from where. “. . . and finding themselves either wanting or not,” she added.

“But in taking one’s physical reality as one’s frame of reference,” he continued, “one imbues the constructs of third-dimensional reality with an importance, and a power, that is not real, and is, in fact, harmful because these constructs *trap the focus* and *dictate perspective*.”

“Humans,” he said, “are caught in the mind trap of believing the only way to feel better about who they are, or who they are not, is to meet or exceed the

expectations of current human existence as determined by the *constructs* of third-dimensional reality. They have learned to judge themselves and those around them by how well these expectations are met, not met, or exceeded. And, therefore, the constructs of current reality – those yardsticks against which everyone is judged – consume human focus entirely. Humans *see* nothing else, and, therefore, they *know* nothing else, therefore, they *are* nothing else.”

Katherine sat absolutely still and silent, almost holding her breath, as she absorbed this. And with absorption came the first tenuous opening of a door, long closed, in her mind. She could almost hear it creaking on its hinges.

“So,” she whispered, concentrating on the revelation, “humans combine these constructs into a mask of adequacy, a mask of *identity*, the Mask of Conventionality, behind which they hide. So much do they become defined by it that they *become* the mask, fully.”

“Become? Yes, Katherine, that is exactly what they do.”

“It is as though we don a mask of conventionality’,” Katherine quoted, “or a mask of third dimensionality, and we take refuge in and behind the mask. We hide behind it such that it becomes all of who we are, and we no longer know who we are without it. And the nature of our own particular mask is dependent upon the society in which we find ourselves, or which we aspire to be a part of.”¹

“Ah,” he sighed, a sound of deep satisfaction. “You remember, dear one. At last, you remember.”



“. . . the Matrix cannot tell you who you are²,” Katherine whispered, still thinking the revelation through, barely aware she was speaking the words aloud. “Oh, but it does. It very much does in this reality.”

“Unless one frees oneself from it. But, yes, so much does the matrix of third-dimensional existence and its constructs dictate who humans are that they have become Clones. The Clone is, in fact, one of the twelve collective human archetypes. I know you have been pondering the idea of this, and you are right. Monty Python brilliantly depicts the unfortunate truth of the Clone expression in their movie *Life of Brian*³. Do you remember the scene?”

Katherine laughed softly as the scene he referred to came to mind.

“Brian awakens,” she said, “gets up and opens the shutters of his house to find a sea of people in the courtyard below. The scene that greets him disturbs him somewhat, especially given his naked state, so he tries to set them right, the sea of people who have decided to attach themselves to him. ‘You are all individuals,’ he tells them. ‘Yes,’ they repeat, parrot-fashion, as one, even nodding their heads in perfect unison, ‘we are all individuals.’ And then one tiny little individual voice pipes up and says, ‘I’m not’.” She laughed because it was almost impossible to discuss a Monty Python scene, especially one as cleverly constructed as this was, without laughing. “You’re right,” she said. “Brilliant.”

“Brilliant, yes. One of the points Monty Python was making, because they made many in that movie, was about humans in the context of religion – of how they follow like sheep and surrender their ability to think for themselves. That they hit a raw nerve, too, was obvious in the outraged and very emotional reactions of the clergy of the different religions at the time the movie was first released. Unfortunately, the tendency of humans to follow like sheep is anything *but* limited to religion. Unfortunately, the Mask of Conventionality and the underlying dynamic that spawns it does not *just* cause humans to surrender their ability to think for themselves, it also causes them to forfeit, utterly, their ability to *be*. You know how and why this is so, Katherine.”

“Yes,” she nodded. “We said it before. We become the mask, fully, making no allowances, or room, for anything else.

“Being,” she continued, “cannot be *defined*. It just is. It is beyond definition, and if we try to define it, we succeed only in containing it, thus negating it completely. It can be *described*, but it cannot be *defined*. The trouble is, the Mask of Conventionality, behind which and within which we hide, is made up of a whole bunch of definitions and labels. Our addiction to the Mask, in fact, spawns the obsessive compulsion to define ourselves with labels based on the constructs of current reality. Unfortunately, those labels then dictate who we are, how we behave, how we interact with each other, so that, effectively, we force ourselves into conveniently labelled compartments. It can be overt, but most of the time it’s insidiously subtle. And because we hang so many different labels on ourselves, we

are consumed, or maybe *subsumed* would be a better word, as we try to live up to, and conform to, what we know of them. In labelling, you see, we think we know a thing, and so we think no further about that thing. The *being*, then, that must flow freely from the centre of us, is forcibly redirected. Only it cannot *be* redirected so is, instead, ignored, negated, and dishonoured, and, as I said, contained in the process.”

“Just so, dear one. *Being* cannot be re-routed and forced into easily defined roles or conveniently labelled compartments as you say. It simply cannot. So it goes underground, so to speak, only appearing above ground when an opportunity presents itself. And when it does make an above-ground appearance, it usually triggers internal conflict, particularly when its appearance forces individuals to let go of their hold on the constructs. But when one stops trying to *define* oneself and seeks, instead, to *describe what is of one’s own nature*, one begins to set oneself free because description comes from *observation*, and observation *does not interfere*.”

“Ah,” Katherine said, “but here’s the catch, is it not? One can only begin to observe one’s truest nature when one begins to free oneself of the constructs. For this is the very nature of the constructs, they mask our truest nature, hence the *Mask of Conventionality*.”

“’Tis a vicious cycle, indeed, dear one. Of course, releasing the constructs also then releases those twin pillars of true transformational change: *focus* and *perspective*. Remember, ‘tis the shadow of fear that hijacks and traps these two, and what is the Mask of Conventionality if not a direct response to the *fear of inadequacy and nothingness*?”



Without answering verbally, Katherine thought this through, the door in her mind creaking again on its massive hinges as it opened wider still. Allowing the silence she needed, and the time to assimilate and absorb all that had been said thus far, he raised his eyes and cast his vision over the intricate details of the cathedral’s great dome and, beyond it, the elaborately decorated ceiling above the choir stalls. Then, lowering his eyes, he cast his vision over the chequered floor,

turning in his seat to follow it around and behind them. Then he cast his vision upward again, following the great internal arches, noting the shafts of light, seen through the arches, coming through the cathedral's glass windows.

So intense was his scrutiny that Katherine, distracted, watched him closely.

"It is a magnificent edifice," he commented, turning in his seat to face her again. "One that truly honours the science of architecture, wouldn't you say, Katherine?"

"Indeed," she answered him uncertainly, wondering at his thoughts. "So it is."

"This cathedral, as beautiful as it is, like many churches and cathedrals of the modern era, is built on top of a very ancient and important site. The ancient peoples who lived in Britain many millennia ago knew of the power and importance of these ancient sites. They built temples, opened to the stars, the planets, and the heavens, at these strategic points to honour the sacredness and the nature of the energy of the site. This cathedral is conveniently and deliberately built on such a site, thereby forever concealing any evidence that the ancient temple ever existed. This is unfortunate indeed because the ancient temple over which this great edifice sits would reveal, if rediscovered, the true nature of the energy of this site. Now, instead of connecting the people with the true energy of this place, as the ancient temple once did, the cathedral *disconnects* the people from it and keeps them that way."

Katherine blinked in surprise. "Why did I not think of that? I always thought the power I could feel in this place was due to Wren's geometrical proportions and the alignment of the design."

"The geometrical proportions, as you put it, are designed to trap and contain, a little like a coffin. Energy is like moving water, Katherine. It needs to ebb and flow, so to contain it, deliberately and consciously, as does this edifice, causes great harm. 'Tis not the energy of the cathedral you sense when you come here, so do not be fooled into thinking so. This cathedral is a talismanic device, designed to trigger and manipulate specific thought processes by reminding the people of their very small place in the overall scheme of things. In the instant one sets foot inside this cathedral, one is supposed to feel small and insignificant, and one is supposed to remember one is here only by the will and grace of an all-powerful, all-encompassing God. Nothing could be further from the truth, so do not be seduced

by elaborate decoration and dazzling design, for these are in place to trap your focus whilst the cathedral weaves and works its malevolent, darkly magical power. You, Katherine, are free from such constraints and limitations, so the cathedral has no effect on you. Thus are you free to sense the true energy of the site.”

Suddenly, without warning, the door in Katherine’s mind crashed open. “Oh Jesus,” she whispered somewhat breathlessly. “You brought me here for this, did you not? The cathedral is a metaphor for the Mask of Conventionality and its constructs and yardsticks. The Mask of Identity, or Conventionality, ultimately constructed by external forces to which we surrender our power, sits over the top of our own powerful and beautiful ancient truth, and, like the cathedral, contains and traps our energy like a coffin.”

He refrained from responding verbally, allowing time for the revelation to settle in her conscious mind. Like a master potter at the potter’s wheel coaxing the lump of clay into its rightful shape with talented, capable fingers, would he shape and encourage the revelation within her, for they all, she and those she worked with, needed her to remember all she knew. The time had come. *Her* time was nearly upon them, so close those who worked with her could reach out and touch it.

He waited patiently, and only when he felt the realisation solidify within her and take form did he begin.

“Make yourself comfortable, dear one,” he commanded gently. “Close your eyes. Block out the distraction of the physical sights around you, for we are going to undertake a journey of the mind, you and I, so we need your inner sight to be clear. Beginning with the very foundations, we will travel up through the metaphorical layers of this cathedral, one layer at a time. And remember as we travel, the cathedral, the metaphor for our Mask of Conventionality, has been deliberately designed, constructed, and fabricated with the sole purpose of *making the Clone-like masses forget the truth.*”

Katherine complied, turning in her seat to face forward, uncrossing her legs and letting her arms rest in her lap as she closed her eyes. He waited until he heard her breath become deep and regular, and felt her relax. Slowly, he felt the tension, which she held almost constantly in her body of late, begin to dissipate and lose its potency.

“Let us name each layer, dear one, to connect the metaphor of the cathedral with the Mask of Conventionality and, thus, the understanding of whence its potency and power does spring. So we must, of course, begin with the very earth, the bedrock, upon which rests the entire structure and into which are sunk the foundations, deeply for a building of this size. What is the bedrock upon which the entire structure rests?”

Katherine, now in a heightened state of awareness, had become highly attuned to energies well beyond the atmosphere of the cathedral. They weaved their magic, those energies, working on an already-receptive consciousness, so that pictures and images formed easily in her mind, and the knowledge that resided deep, deep within her was easily accessed and brought to the surface.

“Ignorance,” she answered him, “is the infertile, rigid, dry, arid earth that perpetuates and supports the whole. In fact and in truth, the whole cannot exist without it. Begin to fertilise the earth with Knowledge, and the soil upon which rests the entire structure will crack open and cause a shift, so that the structure, the Mask, will begin to crumble in direct proportion to the amount of Knowledge absorbed.”

“Beautiful,” he said simply. “Now to the foundations, driven straight and deeply into the bedrock of this ignorance. What of these?”

“Shadow,” she answered without pause. “The shadow of fear and its offshoots: addiction, need, and insatiable, all-consuming want. For it is from these that arise the focus-capturing distortion of misguided belief and perspective.”

“Good,” he said softly. “Thus is the individual and collective experience in this reality shaped, defined, and underpinned by ignorance and fear.

“Next,” he continued, “the four Cornerstones at the four corners of our cathedral. These are the foundation stones, the first stones laid, upon which the structure begins to take shape and form. Thus do the Cornerstones form core motivations, goals, aims, and ambitions – the drivers and shapers, the movers and shakers – of the puppet-character’s own script – that which tugs and pulls at, ignores and negates the script of the puppet master. These are devices of entombment. What, dear one, of the four Cornerstones?”

Katherine allowed the question to permeate the deeper recesses of her subconscious mind so that she didn't just access the answer, it flowed up from the depths, in, through, and around her.

“The first is *money*.

“Our belief in the power of money causes us to lust for it and to gain it at all costs, hence the greed and exploitation, the abuse of individuals, including animals, and the rape of the environment that currently defines our existence. We believe *money is power*, and because we believe it, so it has become. Thus do we surrender, entirely, our inner and personal power, placing it, instead, outside of us. We believe we *are* nothing without money, and we believe we can *do* nothing without money.

“We suspend our dreams. We compromise ourselves. We change our minds. We go against what we know is right in the deepest sense. We turn the other way and walk down the darkest of paths, all because of surrendered power and the pursuit of money. Money has thus become like a heavy, wet blanket, smothering and masking our alchemical ability to *create*. Money plays the central role in the theatre of our lives, either enabling and facilitating, or dis-enabling and blocking. The accrual of money not only drives and motivates at every level of our existence, from the big conglomerates down to the individual, it locks and traps us in stories not really of our design. We have become enslaved to and by the need for money. As I said, it has almost complete power over us when it should be exactly the opposite. Thus has money sucked the soul out of human existence.”

“Good. And the second Cornerstone?” he prompted.

“The second is *God*.

“We are driven at the most basic level by our need to believe in an external god, and this need has, over the aeons, been deliberately fostered. God is, in fact, a tragic projection of our need to self-punish – an aspect of the human psyche that reflects our tendency towards self-destruction. As an egoic projection, we each hold our own idea of what this God is and of what He demands of us. Thus do we compartmentalise ourselves into different religions that set us one against another, even though those different religions are supposed to believe in the same God.

“Even if we do not believe, on an individual basis, in an all-powerful, external God, we still form our most basic concepts of right and wrong, good and evil, like black and white, based on the commandments, dogmas, and doctrines of this God. Many of these commandments form the basis of the laws that govern our society, those written into our constitutions and criminal codes, and those not. Thus has this man-made, external God become an impenetrable boundary beyond which humans fear to tread. Thus has this man-made God greatly restricted and limited human thought and belief and, therefore, as a consequence, human experience. If He would not or does not approve, we dare not do or say or think or be or believe.”

“Good. The third?”

“The third Cornerstone is *Power*.

“Either we lust for power, again, as with money, to be obtained at any and all cost, or we are locked into a belief of powerlessness. We exist in a society that is becoming more and more polarized into those *with* power and those *without*. Worse, though, is the surrender of personal power at an individual level, and the devices, like advertising, television, reality TV, celebrity, and gossip magazines, designed with the sole intention of making us do just that, for these dictate everything from the latest thing we must own to the way we must look and the attitudes and opinions we must hold. Also, tragically, we become locked in power plays, like the game of tug of war, that manifest at the lowest level as familial and neighbourly disputes and, at the highest, as war.”

“Good. And the fourth?”

Katherine sat in silence as she contemplated the fourth Cornerstone. “The fourth Cornerstone is Love,” she said finally. “Or rather, the *lack of Love*. In our ignorant misunderstanding and misconceptions of what Love actually is, we seek a distorted, perverted version of it in all the wrong places, with all the wrong people, in all the wrong ways. And all we succeed in doing, ultimately, is confirming and reaffirming our lack of it. The obvious example, one that springs to mind ever-so-quickly, is the abuse and misuse of sexuality.

“I’m almost tempted to say *addiction* is the fourth Cornerstone, but addiction is, in truth, ultimately based on the lack of Love and the inherent belief in our un-Loveableness, for want of a better word. So in addiction, we seek to escape our un-

Loveableness and the cold, dark place we exist in as a consequence. You said before, Love and fear are opposite points on the same continuum. Well, so pervasive is fear that Love has virtually no expression at all. Such is this, our existence. And, tragically, the dynamic of the Mask of Conventionality – the very device we use to hide from our lack of Love – perpetuates it; keeps us *from* Love, in other words.”

She opened her eyes and turned to look at him. “What say *you* on the matter of the four Cornerstones?”

He smiled. “Money, God, power, lack of Love: I would say your observations serve you well. Thus has the human experience become Clone-like, with only a few variations on an overall identical theme.”

Satisfied, she nodded once and turned frontward once again, closing her eyes. “Now, the next layer,” she said quietly. “Constructs and yardsticks.”

He smiled to himself, and the smile was pure sparkle in his blue eyes, although, with her eyes closed, she failed to see it. Unconsciously, in his company, his energy merging with hers, moulding, shaping, influencing, affecting, she was returning to form, shedding the elements of personality, the use of language, even the thought patterns of the third-dimensional identity she had, long ago, in the first years of this life, become identified with and, therefore, attached to.

So many years, following the initial choice that changed everything for her – that pivotal point – had been devoted to *unbecoming* – years fraught with the unimaginable pain of confused, bewildered ignorance, like wandering lost in a desolate landscape. But the tide had begun to turn many years ago now. He knew, exactly, the point at which the see-saw of her psyche had tipped in favour of *becoming*, rather than *unbecoming*, and the pain had begun to recede, although there were, at times, still echoes of it, hence the disquiet that had drawn her to this place today.

“Constructs,” he said, watching her as he spoke, “are the stones of our cathedral, each placed side by side, one on top of another, so that, together, they form the shell of the building, the overall look of the Mask. Remember, Katherine, constructs are not just physical. Together, both the tangible and the intangible constructs give the building its definition; that is, they define its function and its

functionality, its mandate, and most important of all, its appearance, its image. Constructs are devices of entrapment, those things built into or added to the landscape of one's life, like the crosses, the baptismal font, the pulpit, and the depictions of religious scenes and icons added to this cathedral so that one knows, when one sets foot within it, exactly what the cathedral is, why it's here, who and what it serves, what its purpose is, and how you must behave whilst inside it. Constructs are those things by which humans are *defined*; by which humans define themselves and each other. What, then, of the constructs, dear one?"

Katherine was silent as she again allowed the question to permeate the depths of her conscious and unconscious mind.

"Constructs, in this context, are any of those things we use to build an acceptable identity for ourselves," she began. "And to identify them, we have but to begin with the roles behind which we hide, the strongest, or most powerful of which can be identified in the questions we ask or want answered when meeting someone for the first time. After all, if we label ourselves, does it not follow that we will label others the same way?"

"Some constructs," she continued without awaiting a response, "form crucial and critical steps in the overall recipe of existence that each of us must adhere to if we are to appear functional and normal in society. Some are crucial in masking our inadequacy, others merely optional extras. Marriage and/or partnership is one of those crucial constructs. For many, having children is another.

"Constructs, as you say, are anything that *defines* us, and this is, of course, different for everyone. Thus, what forms constructs – those crucial pieces of our own Mask – is an individual thing and must be determined on that basis. What forms a construct for one person will not, or may not, form a construct for another. But, if *we are* defined by a construct, we then turn that construct into a yardstick by which we measure *others*.

"So, for example, if an individual defines himself by his own personal wealth, he will also then define and respond to others according to *their* personal wealth, or lack thereof. Or if another individual defines herself by how slim and fit she is, she will also then judge others by the same yardstick. Not everyone is addicted to the same constructs, as I said. There is a vast difference, for example, between an

individual who attends church and one who *defines* him- or herself as a church-going person, or persona. The church-going persona then becomes an image that individual subconsciously fosters and maintains. There is, as another example, a vast difference between exercising, going to the gym, and *defining* oneself this way, so that fitness then becomes a construct, a piece of that particular Mask.

“We may know if we are addicted to a particular construct by whether or not we can easily let go of it, and by asking ourselves who we are without it. Of course, the mistake we make if attached to a particular construct, or if that construct forms a crucial part of our Mask, is that our identity is, then, reliant on and dependent upon that construct. What, for example, of the man who is attached to his personal wealth? That is, what if his wealth forms a construct to which he is attached, or addicted. What happens to him if he loses it?”

“Well, then, he can no longer think of himself as a ‘wealthy’ man, and he will be forced to redefine himself. Most likely he will become desperate in his need to re-amass another personal fortune.”

Katherine smiled, not expecting him to answer.

“Indeed. So the constructs,” she continued, “of third-dimensional reality are used to *define* the character-identity, and this must not be confused, as we said before, with *description*. The way humans *describe* themselves is *conscious*; that is, they consciously choose words that describe their physical appearance, their character, their personality, their attitudes and beliefs. The way humans *define* themselves is *unconscious*.

“And, depending upon the society in which they find themselves, they use the constructs of what is and what is not acceptable to that society to shape and mould their own identity, so that it becomes a perfect fit in that society. ‘Tis why some cultures, the ‘Hollywood’ culture, for example, have such toxic effects on individuals. Regardless of the cultural or societal influences, though, the identity, then, becomes an addiction in and of itself – something that must be held on to at all costs. Worse, the identity becomes dependent on the dictates of that society. The gravest danger, though, is that the constructs of any society can either become yardsticks of *acceptability* or yardsticks of *inadequacy* that we, then, use to beat up on ourselves, so to speak.

“As to what the constructs are specifically, there are so many: what we do for a living; what our level of education is; race and cultural heritage; how many friends we have and who those friend are; sexuality and sexual preference; religion (or not); how wealthy we are; what assets we own; where we live; whether we own our own home or not, and how big it is; fame (or infamy); physical appearance, specifically beauty or the lack of it, and how slim or overweight we are; age; who we’re married to, in a relationship with or dating; whether or not we have children; the car we drive; health behaviours; addictions; illnesses and disabilities; obsessions and passions; prejudices, like being ‘racist’. The list is endless really, and as I said, will be different for each individual.”

She opened her eyes and turned to him once again. “I once worked with a guy who made sure everyone, without fail and within five minutes of meeting them, knew he was gay. Thus did his gayness define him to the extent that he could not interact with anyone until and unless this construct was established. Being gay was just about all of who he was.”

“I remember him,” he said. “He aptly demonstrates a fundamental truth – that of an individual needing to draw attention to the construct he or she is defined by. Why else do people insist on wearing wedding rings? It is a symbol of a powerful construct, and the presence or absence of the ring, the symbol, alters the way people view each other, and often dictates the way people interact with and approach each other. The need to draw attention to a construct is a valuable way to begin to identify its hold. Another way is judgement. If one needs to draw attention to a characteristic of one’s person or life, and if one then judges others by that same characteristic, one can be sure that particular characteristic forms a construct that has become a piece of one’s own Mask.”

Katherine nodded. “Circumstances and incidents can trigger a sudden and often inexplicable change in constructs, too. How does a pretty, feminine, married woman suddenly become gay, crop her hair, and wear khaki singlets and cargo boots?”

“She switches constructs and changes her character-identity.”

“Right. After she switched, this girl I’m thinking of, all her friends were gay, and, like a new convert to a religion, she thought being gay was the answer to everything. She even tried to ‘convert’ me, and what’s more, she became arrogant.”

“Ah yes,” he replied. “I remember her, too. So dramatic was her identity shift that she took on a different personality, a very unstable and dangerous way to be.”

“Yes,” Katherine agreed. “You know, if we extend the metaphor, we could argue that humans interact with each other in such a way that if the *outside* of the building is impressive, people automatically assume and believe the *inside* is as well.”

“Or,” he added, “if the *outside* of the building is impressive enough, it matters not what the interior is like.”

“Yes,” Katherine agreed, nodding, “that’s probably more accurate.”



“Also by extension,” she said, the movement of her thoughts flowing now like the strong current of a river, “before we can unearth, uncover, and rediscover the truth of ourselves, we must first take ourselves apart, stone by stone. We must allow ourselves to unravel, or to be demolished.”

“Indeed,” he agreed quietly. “This we call the Process of Unbecoming. It is a Process you know well, dear one.”

She sat quietly, remembering the early years of her initiation, her own Process of Unbecoming.

Many years ago, she’d fulfilled a lifelong dream by going to Egypt to see all the ancient Egyptian archaeological structures and artefacts she’d spent a lifetime reading about and researching. It just so happened that she went at the end of the same year the planes flew into the twin towers of the World Trade Centre in New York. So tourists the world over stayed put, and Egypt was blessedly, miraculously empty of tourists.

The Great Pyramid had been closed when their small tour group had arrived at Giza, but, by some miracle, it was opened especially for them, all eight of them. Though claustrophobic, Katherine had gritted her teeth and forced herself to go inside, completely unwilling to squander the opportunity. Standing in the so-called

King's Chamber, she was so proud of the fact that she'd battled the claustrophobia and won, she couldn't think of anything else. So she'd had no sense of a different energy; no vibe, no visions . . . nothing except the awe one cannot help but feel at the sheer perfection of the structure with its own awe-inspiring, very unique statistics and the incredibly precise placement of 2.3 million blocks of limestone and granite. So precise are the placements of each stone that not one has moved even a fraction of a millimetre in over twelve thousand years of the pyramid's existence. A tomb? Anything but. Exactly the opposite in fact, for the pyramid, though no longer functional, still has the power to cause a major shift in consciousness. Surely it is only an ignorant fool who believes the tomb theory now?

Three months after she entered the Great Pyramid, Katherine walked, without warning, and without any prior knowledge whatsoever, straight into that pivotal point that turned her life upside down and inside out. Looking back now, so many years later, she knew that going into the pyramid had been highly significant, and that it either triggered the whole initiation process or had been crucially symbolic of the fact that her initiation was about to be triggered.

"Cannot the two be one and the same, dear one?"

She smiled, unsurprised that he was following her thoughts. "Yes, they can." Her smile disappeared. "It wasn't for many years following that pivotal point that I even knew I was *being* initiated," she said to him even though aware of the fact that he already knew this. "Looking back, though, I think the pain of those early years of initiation was almost solely due to the Process of Unbecoming. Such a painful Process it is, being demolished, being dismantled, and I didn't know what was happening." She turned to look at him directly. "I would spare others the confusion and bewilderment of not understanding what is happening to *them*. The pain of withdrawal from the Mask and its constructs is more than enough to contend with."

"I know, dear one, I know. And your confusion was made worse by the fact that we, those of us who Work with you, remained silent. Is that not so?"

"That is definitely so," she said. "But I see now why it had to be so. Whatever you could have told me, I probably would not have understood, such was my

hopelessly trapped focus and perspective in those early years. Also, I see now that I am fully capable of finding my way through the labyrinth of my own shadowed psyche, of demolishing myself, and removing each stone, but the only way I was ever going to know that was to experience it.

“I remember, too, exactly the moment I realised the Mask of Conventionality existed, and that I had long been battling myself to remove it, bit by bit, piece by piece, stone by stone, layer by layer. Like a light turned on in a dark room, it was a revelation indeed, but even so, it was many more years before I could say I was free of the Mask. Even now, bits of it still cling to me like mud.”

“Not everyone is called to become aware of and to remove the Mask of Conventionality and its constructs, Katherine. This you know. Each and every soul is here for its own unique and different purpose, and often that purpose does not require an individual to be anything other than the character-identity he or she is in a lifetime. Thus, it is not a requirement for these individuals to remember who they are and to undertake the Process of Unbecoming. But as you well know, there *are* many souls, like you, who are here now to transcend the Mask and, therefore, third dimensionality itself – to set free the soul, to release the being, and to ascend into their own higher dimensionality.

“For these souls, the Process of Unbecoming is something they *must* walk through. This is a Process of being stripped of one’s addiction and attachment to the constructs of third-dimensional reality, a Process of demolition, as you put it. As with any withdrawal from any addiction, the Process is usually very painful.”

“Tis rather like psychological surgery,” she agreed, “only without the benefit of anaesthetic.”

He chuckled appreciatively.

“Sometimes I marvel at the fact that I survived it, you know. The withdrawal symptoms from this particular addiction manifest as depression and despair, often before the Process puts its finger on the construct from which it requires us to withdraw next. So the depression and despair come first – two of the most dangerous of the ‘D-emotions’. Anyway, survive it I did, and all without medication.”

“Ah, yes,” he said. “But then you knew deep within that something of the utmost importance was occurring within you. Remember? Just as you knew who I was when first I appeared today, so, too, did you know in the depths of you what was unfolding within. ‘Tis for the same reason you never took anti-depressants. You knew you simply had to find the courage and strength within to walk it, no matter how long it took, and what would be demanded of you in the Process. What was it you always used to say in the dark of night to reaffirm your determination to finish the Process?”

“No stone unturned, no layer unpeeled.”

“So, you see, the Process took you at your word.”

“Do you remember what I was given when first the Process took hold and began its work? I hadn’t yet surrendered the constructs of my old identity, but I felt the warning that comes in the form of the restlessness and frustration of entrapment, and the knowledge that I wanted to be free.”

“How can I forget?” he asked her dryly. “I worked damned hard to direct you to it. You’ve never forgotten, have you? You memorised it, as I recall.”

She nodded and then quoted:

*“Courage is not the absence of fear
But rather the [decision] that something else is more important than fear.
The brave may not live forever,
But the cautious do not live at all.
From now on, you will be travelling the road
Between who you think you are
And who you can be.
The key is to allow yourself to make the journey.”⁴*

“Beautiful,” he said. “And very helpful, was it not?”

“Yes, and very right.

“In the beginning,” she said, lost in memories of the past, remembering when she’d first heard the message she’d just quoted, “I wanted only to be free of the old identity – one I had painstakingly constructed for myself from constructs that form a vital part, I think, of the recipe of existence. It, that old identity and its constructs, suddenly felt like an ill-fitting suit, so tight I couldn’t breathe. But I failed to realise, at that point in time, the power, breadth, and extent of my identity-addiction. So I wasted a lot of time trying desperately to construct another

one – one that felt more comfortable and was more impressive than the one I had been. I have names for them, as well you know, those identities I then tried to become, really just a different version of the Mask.

“But the Process, in its infinite wisdom and compassion, withheld them all, knowing it wasn’t switching identities and constructs – changing the look and feel of the Mask – that was the underlying Purpose. It was releasing the Mask in its entirety – becoming *unmasked* – that the Process was set on accomplishing.

“There is a wonderful depiction of the Process of being unmasked in the movie *Stage Beauty*⁵. Ned Kynaston is a supposedly-gay, cross-dressing actor who plays women in stage plays until King Charles (II) decrees that *women* may now play women in stage plays. The ground shifts under Ned’s feet. The kaleidoscope of his Process turns, changing the landscape of his life, and he finds there is no longer a place for him in the theatres of London.

“Ned must discover himself anew, and the Process is, for him, as it was for me, extraordinarily painful. But he discovers a different person behind the old mask. He discovers he’s not gay at all, and he uncovers an incredible talent within himself – one the old mask was utterly concealing. He takes acting in the theatres of London to a whole new level.

“Anyway,” she continued, returning to her own Process, “everything I wanted during my own Process of Unbecoming stemmed directly from my identity-addiction and its twin, context-addiction. But everything I wanted was withheld, forbidden actually. Those around me were highly critical, perhaps as bewildered by my behaviour as I was. But their condemnation was naught but a reflection of the condemnation that was within *me*. For no one was more condemning of me than I was. My egoic voice used to scream at me: Why can’t you just be like everyone else? Why can’t you just *behave* yourself? And I punished myself, too, did I not?”

“That you did,” he agreed dryly. “But what truth did you ultimately face in all of this, dear one?” he asked her. “What is the primary motivating factor that keeps humanity addicted to the Mask of Conventionality and its constructs – one that must be grasped if the extent of this damaging dynamic is to be fully understood?”

“That it is, ultimately, to *oneself* that one must be acceptably defined, for what are those around us if not reflections of what is within? That it is, ultimately,

ourselves we are hiding from. But this, in turn, reflects a deeper and far more dangerous idea: that of the belief that *one is nothing without the Mask of Conventionality*, the Mask of Identity.”

“And when you walk through this fear, what, pray tell, do you find on the other side?”

“You find . . . really, you find spectacular beauty, inner knowledge, hidden talents, incredible intelligence, an ability to Love as Love truly is. It was only that powerful epiphany of last year that allowed me to finally release the addiction and see to the other side of the fear. Do you remember it?”

He smiled gently. “Of course I remember it,” he said. “You realised you had been working *towards* something, like walking towards the horizon to see over the edge of it, and thus never reaching your endpoint. But just as one stops and realises the beauty of the scene all around one, *right where one stands*, so that one has no need to see any further, you realised the truth was there all along. You do not have to do anything to *be*, for you already are, just as you are. You are what you are, and have been all along. You had only to stop, realise it, and *let your Self be*.”

“Just so,” she said, smiling, copying him.

“So who are you now, Katherine?”

She turned to look at him again. “To answer that question I first of all had to discover what I am not, which was everything I was.” She smiled at the tangle of words. “But in the Process, I began to *observe* without *interfering*, and I discovered some amazing things. I am Wisdom. I am Care and Compassion. I am Knowledge and Truth. I am Beauty and Radiance. I am Loyalty and Dedication, Faith, Commitment and Perseverance. I am Courage and Bravery. I am incredible Intelligence. I am Light. I am the Power of that Light. I am Love. And I am free.”

“You certainly are, dear one. You certainly are.”

She felt his Love, carried in his words like a soft whisper on the wind, and smiled.



1. *Lady of the Lake*, Chapter 10 (Part VII): ‘Lady of Heaven’: www.thelady.com.au.
2. *The Matrix*, 1999, Village Roadshow Pictures/Warner Bros.
3. *Life of Brian*, 1979, HandMade Films, Monty (Python) Pictures.
4. *The Princess Diaries*, 2001, Walt Disney Pictures.
5. *Stage Beauty*, 2004, Lions Gate Films, Qwerty Films.

Higher-Dimensional Eyes

*How I have longed to see the road ahead.
Instead, long have I bemoaned the fact
That I could not see but two feet in front of me,
And at times have not been able to see
The path under my feet at all.
Thus have I always thought the road I walked
An unpredictable one,
Full of unexpected twists,
And undesirable turns.
Now, though, I stand at a point
At this moment in time
And I see the path laid out before me.
'Tis the Road of Ascension I walk now,
And the Process of Being that unfolds within me
With each step taken.
I look back at my ignorance
And realise I saw not the path I walked
Because I looked ahead only with third-dimensional eyes.
I peered and squinted through the mists of my ignorance
Hoping for a sign, just one small sign,
That my path was leading me where I wanted to go.
But signs I saw not.
And the absence of anything I wanted
Was my only experience.
For, you see, I was looking for third-dimensional stepping stones
Or, rather, stepping stones defined according to third-dimensional constructs.
I would be a person who sees Purpose
As Purpose truly is;
And I would be a person who walks in the Light.
Thus do I see now
My path was there all along,
Not hidden at all.
And had I looked upon it with higher-dimensional eyes;
Had I looked within and not without,
As clear as though illuminated
By bright daylight would my path have been.
Then I would have known
The road I walked was leading me
Right back to Me.*

The Atlantean Priestess

(**Note:** the fit of this dialogue into the chronology of *Lady of the Lake*, for those following the characters and story line, falls in Chapter Nine between Parts III and IV, before Merlin arrives back at Luguwallium, and occurs approximately two weeks prior to the events of *Vision* – the fifth story in the *Gawain and Niniane* series.)

“All right, break it up you two,” Galahad said unceremoniously as he pushed his way between Gawain and Niniane, forcing them to break hand contact. He put his arms around their shoulders. “You’re so deliriously happy. It’s a mite disheartening for the rest of us poor, deprived souls. You need a tragedy to bring you back to the harsh reality the rest of us live in, methinks.”

“The gods forbid,” Niniane said. “Do not even say such a thing in jest, Galahad. We’ve had our fair share of tragedy, *methinks*. I’ll settle for a more mundane life this time around – one without the drama of tragedy.”

The three of them had stopped walking to face each other. Galahad took on a more serious demeanour as he replied solemnly, “The mundane life is not for you, my Lady. If ever I was sure of anything, Niniane, it would be that. But fear not, pretty lady,” he said, his playfulness returning as he bowed low over Niniane’s hand, “you create colour and uniqueness wherever you walk, so ‘tis those that surround you, not tragedy.”

Niniane gave him a wry smile as he straightened. “Good to know,” she said.

He grinned at her.

“What are you doing here, Galahad?” Gawain asked, his tone and his crossed arms expressive of his mild annoyance. “It has long been my understanding you thought the market naught but a seething mass of mediocrity – something to be avoided at all costs.”

“Ah,” Galahad said quickly, “only if one wants to avoid mediocrity itself. But there are times, my friend, when mediocrity is exactly what one needs”

“He is between bed mates, methinks,” Niniane said to Gawain. “He grows bored and restless, and so seeks amusement. Or,” she added, throwing Galahad a sheepish look, “should that be stimulation? And what better place to seek out potential new playthings than at the market?”

Gawain laughed, but Galahad, not at all amused, looked suspicious.

“Do I detect a hint of criticism in thy tone, my Lady?”

“Criticism?” Niniane echoed. “Not at all. Everyone has their addictions, Galahad. And you are in no hurry to resolve yours. Like Tristan, though, your turn will come, and you will have no choice . . .”

“Well, until that day comes,” Galahad interrupted, “I will continue to enjoy the pleasures of a woman’s charms. And you, my Lady,” he said somewhat tartly, “would do well to remember that you lie in your lover’s arms each and every night. Not all of us are thus blessed, Niniane. Now, if you will excuse me, I have business to attend to.”

“Ouch,” Gawain said, looking at Niniane, amusement sparkling in his eyes. “Unless I’m mistaken, I think you just aroused his ire.”

“Indeed,” she agreed, crossing her arms as she watched Galahad snake his way through the crowded market. “I think I just impaled myself on the prickly defences of an ego protecting its addiction. Never a pleasant thing,” she commented, and then added, “How conveniently he forgets that I lay alone every night of my life until but a handful of months ago.”

Gawain turned to watch Galahad as Niniane was. Both were silent as they tried to identify which of the pretty ladies wandering the market Galahad had his eye on. Finding it impossible to predict, they watched as he apparently reached his target, bringing to bear all the tools of seduction in his arsenal and, therefore, at his disposal: the irresistible smile; the raising of the hand; the kiss, bending over the hand like a gallant knight to press his lips against the back of it; and, though Gawain and Niniane could not hear them, the endlessly impressive array of compliments that poured from his lips like sweet wine. The girl returned his dazzling smile with a shy one of her own.

“She’s hooked,” Niniane observed.

“Smitten,” Gawain agreed. “She had no chance really. It is a rare hen indeed who can remain impervious to the cockerel’s charms.”

Niniane laughed, loving the two-fold analogy: Galahad as a cockerel and her as a rare hen. As far as they all knew – and there had been many a discussion on just

this topic – Niniane was the only woman whom Galahad had utterly failed to seduce – a dubious honour she was actually happy to own.

“Don’t you ever feel tempted to warn them?” Gawain asked seriously, not nearly as appreciative of his own wit as Niniane.

“His prey? No, never. I think I know too much about how this all works,” and she spread her hands to include the whole market and beyond. “They attract him, these pretty girls, in more ways than the obvious one. So there is an experience of learning for them in him. I doubt they’d listen if I warned them anyway, but if I did, I would only be protecting them from themselves, and I would not do that. I think I would be *more* tempted to pick up the pieces once he’s finished with them, but I fear it would become a full-time occupation.”

Gawain laughed softly as he turned towards her, abandoning his scrutiny of Galahad. He wrapped her in his arms and pulled her against him, exceedingly grateful he did not have to play those silly games of seduction anymore. Fully intending to kiss her, then and there, in the middle of the busy forum, his eye was caught by someone at the edge of the forum so that he looked, instead, over Niniane’s shoulder. “Is that your goddess?”

Niniane turned, following his line of vision. “Where?” she asked, casting her eyes over the people nearest them.

“On the steps, by the column.”

She looked beyond the people, toward the covered walkway at the forum’s periphery. The tall woman, Her elegance and grace easily setting Her apart, standing beside one of the columns with Her arm around it, was unmistakably Mae.

Niniane’s heart skipped a beat of unadulterated pleasure, but then her demeanour altered, her initial pleasure losing its shine. Something was not right. Even from halfway across the open courtyard of the forum she could feel Mae’s heavy sadness. It radiated outward like the spokes of a wheel where, normally, Light radiated.

“What is She doing here in so public a place?” Niniane asked the question more of herself than of Gawain. “She’s said ‘tis not the greatest idea to appear to people

in the third dimension because Her energy can potentially harm the untrained and unprepared human mind.”

Gawain, still with his arms around Niniane, looked at the crowd of people in the forum, all going about their own business, blissfully unaware of Mae’s presence.

“No one has noticed Her, Niniane, so I doubt they are in any great danger of being harmed by Her energy. They don’t know She’s here.”

Niniane ignored the crowd. Mae had not moved. If She knew Niniane was there, She gave no sign of it. Goose bumps spread over Niniane’s skin, from scalp to foot, and she turned slowly to face Gawain. “Something is not right,” she said slowly.

“Like what?”

She shrugged her shoulders. “I do not know.”

Trying to comfort, he pulled her against him again and pressed his lips against the skin of her neck. “You don’t know that, Niniane. How could anything be wrong with Mae? She is infallible, is She not?”

“I’ve always thought so.”

“Then go,” he commanded her, pulling away and turning her towards the edge of the forum. “Even if just to reassure yourself that everything is all right.”

She looked back at him. “Will you come?”

“No, not this time. ‘Tis to be a conversation just for the girls today, methinks. You can tell me about it later. Go, Niniane,” he said again when she stood unmoving, uncertain, hesitant.

He watched her walk slowly through the throng of people, holding her skirts in her hands, more out of the need to clutch something than out of a need to hold them clear of the ground. It was so unlike her to show such reluctance where Mae was concerned that he hesitated. He had things to do, and lingering in the forum on market day was not one of them. But he watched Niniane until she reached Mae, and when she did, he shifted his attention to the goddess. Mae had not moved. Still hesitating, Gawain put his hands on his hips and narrowed his eyes in concentration. Something was definitely not right. Shaking his head, he turned away. He was allowing himself to be affected by Niniane’s forebodings. He had things to do. Whatever was wrong, the two of them would sort it out.



Niniane moved quietly under the shade of the colonnade to stand beside Mae. Not even by an altered breath did Mae acknowledge her. Niniane followed Mae's line of vision, looking out from under the covered walkway to the bustling, busy market, trying to ascertain what was holding Mae so captivated. But as far as Niniane could tell, there was nothing amiss with the scene in the market, nor was there anything unusual enough to warrant such rapt attention.

"Mae, what fascinates you so?"

Mae did not move but She answered, almost absently, as if She hadn't yet realised it was Niniane standing beside Her.

"Humans go about their business so unaware of the powerful and, in many ways, calamitous events that shape the human experience."

Niniane felt a chill pass through her, as if a ghostly apparition had just walked straight into her and out the other side. She found herself playing a role she thought never to play in the context of her relationship with Mae – that of comforter. She took Mae's hand in her own, finding it solid and real but cold . . . very cold. "What calamitous events?"

At last Mae turned and gave Niniane Her full attention. "You are a child no longer, my beloved," She said to Niniane, clutching Niniane's hand in both of Hers. "And now it is time for you to move beyond again. It is time for you to know who I am, Niniane, for I, like you, am incarnate. That is why I look and sound human. 'Tis because I am."

Niniane was initially more surprised at her own reaction than she was at Mae's revelation. For the briefest of moments, it was as if those words brought to light that which Niniane already knew, and had long known, so there was no surprise at all. But then, long- and deeply-held mindsets took over from innate knowing so that she felt the shock of the revelation like a punch in the gut.

"But you said when last we saw you that you had to be careful about appearing amongst third-dimensional beings . . ." Niniane trailed off, unable to get her mind around the adjustment necessary to absorb and assimilate the knowledge.

“So I do, beloved,” Mae replied. “So I do. How careful I must be, though, depends not on me, of course, but on the individuals I appear to. In this reality, the depth and nature of the ignorance that pervades your world actually protects people from the harm that can be done to an untrained mind when confronted by a higher-dimensional consciousness. And I *am* a higher-dimensional consciousness, Niniane, even though, like you, I am human. Like you, I am a higher-dimensional consciousness wearing third-dimensional clothes. As soon you will be, beloved, for that is the only difference between us. I know my higher dimensionality whilst you are still remembering yours.”

Niniane could not think of a single thing to say in response, so she simply stared at Mae.

“Come,” Mae said, “let us sit.”

Gently, as gently as She could, She guided Niniane to one of the stone benches in the shadows of the colonnaded walkway. They sat facing each other, on an angle, so that their knees touched and they held each other’s hands. For reasons Niniane could not fathom, her heart was pounding such a painful beat she felt it might pound right out of her chest. She couldn’t look at Mae either, so she focussed on the braid that decorated the front of Mae’s gown.

Mae extricated one of her hands and put her fingers under Niniane’s chin, lifting it so that Niniane was forced to make eye contact. “Beloved,” Mae began, “I know you are afraid to hear what I must tell you, but we have not the luxury of time, so hear it you must. Concentrate on what I am saying, Niniane. Do not allow your mind to shut down. You *can* keep it open, but it will require effort on your part.”

Niniane nodded. “I will try.”

Mae dropped her hand but held Niniane’s eyes with Her own. “I, too, am a High Priestess, but where as you are without official role or title or context, the landscape of my life is quite different. I hold an official title as a priestess, and I am surrounded by the priestly context of a temple. I perform the roles, rites, and rituals of a High Priestess as sanctioned by the temple with which I am affiliated. So I am perceived and acknowledged and recognised as such by the people with whom I am incarnate. You hold the memory of this, Niniane. It has long been one

of your struggles – wanting the acknowledgement and recognition of the roles, titles, and responsibilities you once held. ‘Tis an easy thing to know oneself as a priestess when one is in the right context, surrounded by others of like mind and like heart. You have not the luxury of any of these, for you must learn and experience for yourself that the third dimension does not define you. Nor does it dictate how you *perceive* yourself, nor how you *feel* about yourself. Thus have the third-dimensional constructs of title, role, responsibility, and context been withheld from you.”

Niniane nodded slowly as Mae’s words first penetrated and then made such perfect sense it was as if they clicked into place inside her in such a way that she suddenly made more sense to herself.

“And,” she added, Mae’s words acting like a key turned in a lock to release the revelation, “as a priestess of old, it was an important function to act as a bridge between the gods – higher-dimensional consciousness – and the people. But in this life I am not here for third-dimensional people . . . at all. Nor am I here for the third dimension itself. Thus would the old role become an unwelcome and unwanted distraction – a misguided and distorted focus. If I fell into the trap of being a priestess in role and responsibility – of defining myself that way in other words – I would become entangled in and by them. If I take on *any* of the constructs of the third dimension, I will succeed only in anchoring myself to it.”

“Beautifully said, beloved. And yes, the constructs of third dimensionality would act, for you, like the thick ropes used to hold a hot air balloon to the ground when it is designed to soar above the clouds and fly free. So the Process – Destiny’s Process – has severed within you, like a strong man wielding a great axe, those constructs you were attached to, and it has withheld yet others you have wanted to be defined by. Now, almost nothing holds you to the ground, Niniane.”

Niniane frowned. “A hot air balloon?”

Mae smiled briefly . . . too briefly. “‘Tis a vessel designed to take humans to flight. Hot air balloons are beautiful. They hang in the air, silently, like giant rain drops or colourful tear drops.”

Niniane nodded, completely failing to understand the concept. Mae smiled again, this time with more genuine amusement. “Where I come from,” She said,

“flying is a very normal part of our existence, Niniane. And there are many different types of vessels we can fly in. It takes us very little time to travel great distances, for some of those vessels can travel very fast.”

“Where you come from?”

“Yes, beloved, where I come from. I am incarnate in a culture far older than yours, Niniane. So old is this culture, my culture, that it has been stripped from the pages of the story of your history and from your collective conscious memory. Deliberately so, I might add.”

So many questions presented themselves that Niniane struggled to focus on one in particular. “Deliberately?” she echoed involuntarily.

“Aye, beloved. The power of darkness that thinks itself in control of this existence does not want humans to remember their own history. It has a vested interest in humans *not* remembering, for it wishes to take humans there again. Merlin spoke to you about this. Do you remember? The black-robos and their church – your culture’s dark priesthood – have very effectively seen to it that humanity has no record of its true history, and they have taken it upon themselves to write one of their own.”

“I remember,” Niniane said. “But . . . when are you . . . ?” she stumbled. “And how can it be that you are here with me now?”

“I live in a time many millennia before your time . . . over eleven millennia before your time in fact. As to how I can be here, our culture is very different from this one. We have knowledge and skills lost long ago to the human experience, Niniane. We understand, fully, the illusory nature of time, so time itself poses no barrier to us if we wish to cross it, no matter the distance in years between one point in time and another. This and many such similar abilities possessed by the people of my time died with our culture.”

Niniane’s heart skipped a painful beat. She felt as if she’d been punched in the chest, and unconsciously brought a hand up to rub it. “Dear Lady,” she breathed, her mouth as dry as dust. “Please,” she begged, “please tell me you are not speaking of Atlantis.”

“Oh but I am, beloved. That is exactly what I speak of.”

Niniane felt ill and fought the urge to throw up the knowledge that was, now, forever a part of her. She battled herself, the question she knew she had to ask choking her, clogging her throat. “You are one of my incarnations?”

“I am, beloved. Have you not always known that? No,” Mae said softly, answering her own question, “for you have absolutely and implacably resisted knowing you were ever in Atlantis.”

“I am *Murian*,” Niniane declared hotly, emotionally.

Mae touched Niniane’s cheek lovingly, holding her hand against Niniane’s hot skin. “Yes, Niniane, you are Murian. But you are also Atlantean and Greek and Mayan and Egyptian. You are a Khemite and now you are also a Briton. In every incarnation you have lived you’ve taken a little piece of the culture you were incarnate in with you so that it added to the whole. *You*,” Mae said, emphasising the word, “are the sum total of the influences of all the cultures you have ever been incarnate in, as am I. Every culture we have been a part of adds its own unique colour to the fabric of our overall existence.

“And,” She added, dropping her hand, “do you not know by now that when the fabric of reality was torn asunder, you came into the Atlantean Reality and have been a part of the human experience ever since? Through time immemorial have we, you and I, traversed the long road of human existence, incarnating again and again and again and again, down through the aeons. We are not alone in this. Many souls have stayed the long journey of human consciousness, seeing it through the peaks and troughs, the highs and lows, the joys and sorrows . . . and there have been so many of those.”

Both women were silent as each considered their own knowledge and experience of some of those sorrows.

“Merlin”

“Dear Lady!” Niniane exclaimed. “No wonder he knows you. Is he there with you, in Atlantis?”

“But of course . . . as are others who are here with you now. Merlin told you,” Mae said quickly so that Niniane could not steer the conversation off course with another question, for as relevant as her questions might be, Mae did not have the

luxury of time to indulge them, “some of your lives you remember and some you do not. Do you remember what else he told you?”

Niniane nodded in automatic response to a question, her mind now sorting through all the people she knew in her life to try to ascertain which of them she had known in the Atlantean incarnation.

“Niniane,” Mae demanded, trying to force Niniane’s mind to focus where it needed to be focussed. “What else did Merlin tell you?”

Niniane was struggling. Somehow she sensed the absolute importance of what Mae was here to tell her, of what must be exchanged, but her mind was sluggish, resistant – a mechanism of self-protection – for she also sensed the pain Mae’s revelations would bring. More pain. Was there ever an end to it?

“He . . .” She stopped, trying to remember the conversation with Merlin; trying to bring the picture of the frescoed room where the conversation took place into sharper focus. She saw, in her mind’s eye, Merlin sitting cross-legged on the bed opposite the one she sat upon. “He told me that my memories were limited because I saw many of my lives not as they *were* but as I am now. And he told me I allow through only those memories that reveal nothing to me of my Truest Nature. ‘Tis the fear working within me from the depths of my psyche – the same fear that causes me to hide.”

Mae nodded. “‘Tis so. Yes, beloved, ‘tis so. For what do you hide from if not your Self, your Truth, your Light?”

Niniane was confused. “How do you know about that conversation with Merlin? As a goddess I can understand that you see all and you know all, but as an incarnation . . . ?”

“Niniane,” Mae said, frowning, “you know better than to ask such a question. I *do* see all, and I know everything that happens to you. Now, you tell me, how is that possible?”

Niniane bowed her head and closed her eyes briefly. The pain was already beginning, starting in her chest and spreading outward. To feel the pain before one even has a chance to understand its origins. “Because,” she said quietly, “you *are* a God-Consciousness – one that knows its own Divinity.”

“That’s right,” Mae said. “And so I am connected to all the lives we have ever lived, you and I.” She looked away, seemingly toward the busy, bustling forum, but Her expression was wistful, and Niniane knew She looked not at what was around them but, rather, at something within that Niniane could not see and, therefore, could not share. “But ‘tis *your* life that stands out from the others,” Mae said softly, in a virtual whisper. “Tis *your* life that takes centre stage in the theatre of all our different lives, for yours is the convergence point.”

There it was again, that same heavy sadness Niniane had sensed when first she’d seen Mae. It descended on Mae like a thick, wet cloak, and Niniane found it utterly impossible to resist, remaining unaffected by it, so did not bother trying. “Mae?” she whispered. “Please tell me what is going on.”

Mae’s eyes – those eyes that had sparkled as though with a thousand burning lights – held and reflected such profound sadness that Niniane was forced to look down so she would not see it. Again, as She had before, Mae extricated a hand, put her fingers under Niniane’s chin, and forced her to look up, making eye contact again.

“I cannot hide it from you, beloved, for you must see and you must know. I came here, this time, to force you to remember me as I am – your last Atlantean incarnation, for you’ve had quite a few. It is of such vital importance . . .”

“Why must I remember? Why can I not continue to think of you as the Lady?”

“Because to do so no longer serves you, Niniane. You think me perfect, do you not?”

“I know it.”

Mae nodded once, briefly. “I know. But I have made a fatal mistake, and I cannot, now, right the wrong of it. That burden, my beloved, must fall to you. ‘Tis the karmic link between us, one of the many links between us. I am sorry this must be so, for you’ve had many burdens to bear on your oh-so-young shoulders, Niniane. But bear it you must, for the wrong *must* be made right.”



Niniane could not speak so she sat in heavy silence. The source of her pain, she knew now, was whatever was causing Mae’s profound sadness. She did not want to

hear. She did not want to know. But Mae was determined, implacably determined. And She had not come all this way for nothing.

Mae knew how Niniane felt, but there was, of course, for Niniane, not the luxury of choice. Choice, for her, was a thing of the past.

“I know you do not want to hear this, my beloved,” Mae said gently. “You are aware of the fact that in the new paradigm of existence there will no longer be egoic choice, but you are still not completely aware of the extent to which you are already living the new paradigm.” Mae smiled gently. “You are one of its pioneers, my beautiful girl.”

And then She lost her smile.

“Niniane,” She said, steering the conversation, “before we talk about the wrong I have done, I must first explain to you what Atlantis has become, for only then can you begin to understand the mistake I have made and the circumstances that led me to it.”

She looked down at their entwined hands, to hide Her pain, Niniane wondered, watching Her closely, or to fortify Herself against it.

“I’m listening, Mae,” Niniane said quietly.

Mae looked up again, smiling briefly her acknowledgement of Niniane’s courage. “I know, beloved,” she said, raising a hand and placing it against Niniane’s cheek once again. “You have such courage, Niniane. I wonder if you realise how much courage you actually have.”

“Surely I have as much as you.”

Mae smiled again, and for a moment Niniane saw the old, familiar beauty sparkle in Her eyes. “More, I think.”

She dropped her hand and looked away from Niniane, toward the bustling forum. “I have seen things I could never have imagined, Niniane, not even if I deliberately and consciously tried to think of the most horrific things I could. I have seen humans do things to each other I would never have believed possible had I not seen their deeds with my own eyes. And all for the lust of power and control. ‘Tis like the blood-lust of the vampire.” She looked at Niniane again. “A vampire can drain the blood from its victim until the heart has nothing left to pump around the body. As the vampire sucks the lifeblood, the life, out of an individual, it does

so with *no* thought other than to slake its own very great thirst. And when there is nothing left to drain, it discards the body of its victim in the same way people throw away the scraps from their last meal.”

Niniane swallowed nervously. “Do such beings really exist? I thought they were naught but myth.”

“Oh, they exist,” Mae said. “But this you must realise. The vampiric energy takes many different forms, and appears in many different guises. Egoic consciousness is vampiric by nature. Do you know what I mean by that?”

“By what?” Niniane asked. “Egoic consciousness? Yes. The ego consciousness is the consciousness that is fully controlled by the empowered ego. So empowered has the ego become that it has grown big enough to cast the biggest and blackest of shadows. So much is the ego consciousness controlled by the ego that the heart beats silent if, indeed, it beats at all.”

“An apt description,” Mae commented wryly. “You remember far more than you realise, beloved.”

“And it is *brutal*,” Niniane finished, emphasising the last word.

“As brutal and as compassionate-less as a vampire with its blood-lust – the extreme addict. The ego consciousness is the Devil referred to by many of humanity’s religions, for what is the Devil if not the opposite of Divinity?” Mae paused. “Long, long have we tussled with this devil down through the aeons of human existence.”

Niniane silently absorbed this, knowing, at last, the role the ego consciousness had played in the germination and gestation of the fear within her that ruthlessly forced her into hiding.

“So,” she asked Mae reluctantly, “what of the vampiric ego consciousness in Atlantis?”

Mae hesitated only briefly. “Do you remember Merlin told you about the forces of darkness that usurped this creation?”

Niniane nodded.

“Well, as Merlin told you, those forces of darkness know how to create and foster the perfect environment the ego consciousness needs to survive and thrive. ‘Tis not difficult. First, you must create a culture of absolute, chronic ignorance, for

as you already know, fear needs ignorance to thrive. What you do not know, or maybe you do, is how utterly immobilising fear is. Once a culture and an environment of ignorance and fear is established, then it is simply a matter of creating and fostering the demand for material ‘things’, particularly wealth, fame, power, and control. But these, of course, are merely the tip of the iceberg.

“So, create the demand and then feed it. Give the ego what it wants. Just the tiniest amount of sated want is all it takes, like a droplet of water from the vastness of this planet’s great oceans. That’s all it takes, Niniane – a droplet of fed, satiated want, and the ego will want more, and the darkness is already on its way to owning that soul.

“As the ego is fed more and more of what it wants, its hunger grows and grows until its wants are all it sees, and all it knows, like the blood-thirst of the vampire. Such an over-fed ego is capable of such brutality and such distorted, almost insane behaviour, because it no longer allows the conscious awareness any connection with all that is beautiful within the individual. And as you so aptly put it, the beat and rhythm of the heart is, then, unheard, unnoticed, ignored, dishonoured.

“One egoic consciousness is bad enough,” Mae said. “One egoic consciousness can do such damage, and cause great harm, especially if that particular consciousness gains control over others, as has happened many times throughout human history. So what, then, of a culture that is controlled and dominated by many an ego consciousness? What, then, of the culture that has, in fact, become a *collective egoic consciousness*?”

Each was silent as they looked at each other.

Niniane swallowed nervously. “Well, I would not . . .”

“Niniane,” Mae interrupted, “history is repeating itself, for the darkness is in control once again, now, in your time. The dark priests of Atlantis – those who serve the forces of darkness – exist again in the guise of the black-robed priests of the Roman church. And they are laying the foundations necessary for building the same ignorant and fearful culture that the Atlantean culture has become. They are paving the way into an existence of darkness. Listen carefully,” Mae said, lifting a hand and shaking her head to forestall Niniane’s question. “The dark priests of Atlantis have mastered the technique of mind control. And not *just* mind control,

Niniane, but also *mood* control. They have the power to incite the people to anger if it suits the dark agenda, or to incite them to violent action. And they have immobilised the people with the utter powerlessness of inertia and despair.”

Mae bowed her head, and her hands tightened on Niniane’s.

“Under the guise of spiritual worship,” She whispered, “the dark priests use their mind-control techniques . . . such a violation of the sacred that brings with it the most dire of karmic consequences, and, yet, they have no fear of those consequences, for they see only what they want and need.”

Niniane waited in silence for Mae to continue.

“With the foundations laid,” Mae said, looking up again, “not so long into the future from now, your time, the technologies introduced and available to humanity will compound the control of the darkness over human consciousness. In Atlantis, those of the darkness have developed devices that beam pictures and images into every home. But the images are full of subliminal messages of mind control. The images, moving pictures, keep the people transfixed while their minds are filled with unconscious programming – manipulative controls that dictate how they must live and be and believe and think. There exists now, for example, an absolute erosion of morals and ethics.

“The predominant use of this mind-control technology is that of keeping the people in a constant state of apathetic numbness, as if the people are being fed anaesthetic . . .”

“Anaesthetic?”

“A drug that puts people to sleep and keeps them that way. You see, Niniane, when apathy like that descends on the people, they are unable to put up a fight or to offer any resistance to anything that is done to or around them. Also, those of the darkness have become masterful at using want to great effect. The pictures and messages constantly beamed through the image devices feed the people’s need to consume, to have things, to fill their lives with trinkets and junk. Thus, the people of Atlantis have become slaves to their wants, blinded to all but their need to consume, to have. You know of what it is I speak, Niniane.”

Niniane nodded. “Trapped focus.”

“Yes.” Mae bowed her head again. “From a very young age does the mind control begin. The innocence of children is used against them. Their imagination is suppressed and silenced even before their young consciousness has properly developed. Thus are they stunted in their natural growth, their psychological development, and in the development of cognition – their ability to perceive, and to think, to process, and to learn. I have seen them myself. For hours and hours on end, the children sit, unmoving, playing the mindless games on the image devices. Of course, the games are designed to foster addiction, so the children become violent if you try to stop them playing. And all the while, as they play these games, they are being subtly and subliminally programmed.”

She looked up again.

“But by far the worst of all, Niniane, is the technology they have developed to harness the power of sound. With their weapons of sound, they can shatter a block of stone in an instant as easily as they can shatter a glass or crack a human psyche. Their sound machines can kill many people from a great distance, or render people insane, or remove memories, or reduce the power of cognitive thinking, or even remove the personality, whatever they want.”

Mae closed her eyes as the familiar pain washed through Her. “And now, either they do not see or they do not care that their sound machines are interfering with and altering the vibrational imprint of this beautiful planet. Soon,” Mae whispered breathlessly, opening her eyes and bringing her hand to her throat, “soon Gaia, our planet, will fight back. Soon,” She whispered as if having immense trouble forcing the words out, “they will go too far, and their machines will trigger a catastrophe of cataclysmic proportions as Gaia is forced to protect Herself. We, the priests of the Light, have foreseen it. Such utter destruction will it bring that Gaia’s face will be irrevocably altered, and Atlantis will sink beneath the waters of Gaia’s great oceans.”

Niniane closed her eyes. She had seen these images before, in Isadore’s visions. Only, Isadore had shown her the future whereas Mae was describing the past. Dear Lady! Niniane brought her hand to her mouth as the realisation hit. No wonder the darkness did not want humans to remember the past. The dark powers were taking humans to exactly the same place. Humanity was heading straight back into

the past. Or, rather, towards a point where past and future would collide. But in the past, humanity had all but wiped itself out. What, then, of the future?

She opened her eyes. “Why do the Elohim not intervene to stop it?”

“Oh, Niniane,” Mae said sadly, bowing her head and closing her eyes. “If only I had asked that very same question. But, alas, I did not. And now ‘tis too late.” She looked up at Niniane, and her eyes held such incredible pain. “You know the answer to that question, just as I do, for you said as much to Gawain not one hour ago.”

Niniane stared at Mae as her words to Gawain earlier whirled through her mind. “. . . *I know too much about how this all works . . . there is an experience of learning for them in him . . . I doubt they’d listen if I warned them anyway . . . I would only be protecting them from themselves, and I would not do that . . .*”

Niniane put her hand over her mouth as she gagged. Mae put her arms around Niniane, holding Niniane tightly against Her and putting Her cheek against the top of Niniane’s head.

“The Elohim will not interfere because they will not protect humans from themselves, beloved. The annihilation and destruction of Atlantis is a lesson, and a consequence, that humanity must have. Many millions of souls will perish in the coming devastation, but many more will survive. Those who survive will carry the lesson within them. And they will hand that lesson down to the generations who follow.”

“But the lesson is lost,” Niniane said, raising her head. “In my time, the lesson is lost, and we are heading straight back to that same place. We have not learnt anything. I have seen it. Isadore showed me the future, and I have seen, in her visions, many of the things you just described. We are not evolving, we are *devolving*, going back instead of forward, down instead of up.”

Mae nodded and put her hands either side of Niniane’s face. “Yes, beloved, that is so. The question is, Niniane, what will you do about it?”

~

Niniane did not understand the question. Or, rather, she failed to understand what, exactly, Mae was asking of her.

Mae dropped her hands but retained her intense hold on Niniane's eyes with her own.

"The Christians have, in their Bible," She said, "a story that so beautifully illustrates a powerful truth of this reality – one of the most destructive pitfalls of third-dimensional existence. 'Tis a story that beautifully illustrates how easily humans become distracted by the circumstances of their reality, of how they become entangled with and caught up in those circumstances; and of how they, then, so easily lose their way, as I have done."

"What story?"

"'Tis the story of Peter, a fisherman who is learning the ways of initiation and transcendence from a great teacher. One day, he is fishing at sea with a group of fishermen when he sees his teacher on the shore of the sea. He waves to his teacher and directs the fisherman to take their boat back into shore. But before they have a chance to move, Peter watches as his teacher steps *on to* the water and begins to walk towards Peter and his friends. One can only imagine his surprise, for walking on water is a physical impossibility, is it not? As the teacher draws closer, he holds out his hand and beckons Peter to come to him. Peter shows incredible faith and great trust by getting out of the boat, and because of his faith and trust, he, too, does the impossible. He walks towards his teacher on the water.

"But storm clouds gather around him, and strong winds begin to stir up the water upon which he walks. He becomes afraid. His teacher tries to tell him there is nothing to fear, only fear to face. But Peter takes his eyes off his teacher. He looks in panic at the storm around him and at the choppy waters under his feet. The storm and the choppy waters trap and consume his focus and, then, of course, dictate his perspective and his belief. In other words, he believes he is going to drown. With his focus thus consumed, he no longer even sees his teacher, and he sinks into the water as his belief becomes manifest. Very soon, he struggles even to keep his head above the waves and is only saved from drowning by his fellow fishermen who pull him out of the stormy, choppy waters and into their boat."

Tears welled in Niniane's eyes as she looked at Mae. "That's a beautiful story," she said.

Mae smiled the smallest of smiles. “Told by a master Storyteller. When we perceive our physical circumstances with our physical eyes only,” She said quickly, forestalling comment and returning to the salient point of the story, “we fail to see and to understand what the Process – the Process of Love that works in and through every incarnated life – is doing and of where it is taking us. The Process is a force and a flow that is an absolute fact of Nature – an unavoidable and fundamental Truth of Life itself. And it works with every piece of our reality, often working different events, incidents, and relationships towards a breathtaking convergence that provides wondrous opportunities for learning and healing. So when we become consumed by the circumstances that we find ourselves in, we pull against Love’s Process and take ourselves down all sorts of unnecessary paths – paths that often contradict the Purpose of our Process. Peter did not have to sink, but he did so because he chose to shift his focus, and in shifting his focus, his perspective and his belief became hopelessly entangled . . .”

“You fought them,” Niniane said flatly.

The interruption stopped Mae in her tracks, the shock of Niniane’s words temporarily rendering Her speechless. And Her eyes, as She looked at Niniane, mirrored Niniane’s pain.

Eventually, Mae recovered enough to say, “I, who should know better, allowed the circumstances of human reality in my time to consume my focus, and I became entangled in the tragedy of it all. I am not the only one. ‘Twas the future we saw – the destruction and devastation that soon . . . very soon will swallow our land and destroy our culture – that caused us to take our eyes from the teacher, so to speak, and place them, instead, on the evil that pervades our world and controls our people. I mistakenly believed, then, that I was there to stop that evil and to prevent the destruction. But that belief, Niniane, was naught but a misguided one, based on trapped focus and distorted perspective.

“Look at how easily Peter lost his faith and trust just because he looked only at the storm around him. So, too, have I done, Niniane. Like walking into the web of a spider, I became entangled and then, of course, I found it hard to see anything else – to see the deeper Truth and Purpose for what must be. I, who should know better, failed to remember the Process has all in hand. I forgot to look beyond the

web, to see *why* we have collectively created the circumstances now facing the Atlantean culture, for that is, after all, the only way to truly free oneself *from* the web.”

Niniane absorbed this in silence. And then she asked, “And do you see the Purpose now, Mae?”

Mae nodded so very slightly, almost imperceptibly. But it was enough.

“One may be tempted to believe the Process has lost its power to direct the human experience when one sees what humans are capable of doing to each other and to their Great Mother, Gaia, with the most dire of consequences,” She said softly. “But this you must know, my beloved. Collective human consciousness is, in truth, very young. It has much to learn, and some of those lessons must needs be harsh, as the lesson of Atlantis will be.

“The great waves, the deluge, caused by the sinking of our land will be catastrophic; so much so, those waves will wipe many animal species from the face of the earth and, as I said, many millions of humans will perish, and not just those living in the Atlantean lands, for the catastrophe will be far more widespread. But those very waves will wash this world clean, Niniane. Gaia will be cleansed. But so, too, will human consciousness be cleansed. Merlin has already told you that the Light will, once again, prevail. It will, again, gain the ascendancy over darkness. In a sense, humanity will be given the opportunity to start again, but this time, with the knowledge gained from the direct experience of the devastating consequences of egoic choices.”

Niniane sat in silence, but when Mae, too, fell silent, she said, “Now I understand why you asked me what I would do about where humanity is headed, back to that very dark and destructive place. My answer is, I will do nothing. I will allow it to be. Whatever consequences humans must re-face, I will do nothing to interfere. I will see and acknowledge how bad it is, but I will also accept that it is not my place, nor my destiny, to change the ills I see around me, unless the Process directly hands me the opportunity to do so. Until then, I will remain focussed on *my* Process, *my* Work, *my* path, and I will trust that the Process has the human experience in hand.

“I will follow my heart, for the heart knows when to step in and help, and when to stay aloof. I will allow the Process to work in and through me by surrendering to its flow and heeding its silent urgings. And I will trust it as Peter did. Only, I will not allow my faith and trust to waiver even for the briefest of moments, no matter the intensity or the urgency or the tragedy of the circumstances that surround me at any given time.”

“Then,” Mae said, lifting Niniane’s hand and bringing it to Her lips, “you have already made right the wrong I have done. You carry the lesson within you, Niniane, and now you have awakened it.”

Niniane did something then that she’d never done before. She placed her hand on Mae’s cheek, just as Mae had done to her so many, many times before, and she smiled. “I carry the lesson within me,” she said, “because it is your legacy, Mae, your gift. *You* learnt the lesson, and now I have but to implement it in my own life.”

Mae responded by simply placing her hand over Niniane’s and smiling the same smile.



“This I have learned and learned well,” Mae said after a moment. “Unless and until one becomes aligned with higher Will and Purpose, one cannot and does not know what the Process is doing, nor where it is going, for only in Perfect Alignment can one truly see. Only in Perfect Alignment is one’s vision truly clear. You, my beloved, are so very nearly Perfectly Aligned. Only one thing prevents it.”

Niniane nodded her understanding. “My fear,” she said.

Mae nodded. “But this you must know,” She said. “The Process has allowed that fear to remain intact within your psyche, Niniane. The Process has refrained from putting its finger on that fear, thereby dissolving it. Do you know why?”

Niniane nodded slowly. “Because it has anchored me to third-dimensional existence and to a third-dimensional identity. And because this, in turn, has kept me identified with humanity, walking amongst them as one of them. It has grounded me in this existence. And thus grounded have I had the opportunity to

see and to know, to observe and to experience all the different aspects of this existence.”

“Aye,” Mae breathed. “That it has. And, of course, being grounded as you have been in this existence, you – a Healer – have found your way through it. But the time has now come to dissolve that fear, my beloved. Perfect Alignment, Niniane – that is the way forward for you now. Thus must the baton of our destiny be passed from me to you – the mantle of our higher-dimensional Purpose.”

Words of Merlin’s suddenly echoed within Niniane as if he was standing beside her whispering urgently.

“The priests of Atlantis, dangerous and destructive as they were, combined the knowledge of the Murians with the malicious intent of the darkness they served . . . Eventually, of course, the priests of Atlantis even destroyed Atlantis itself.”

“Mae,” she asked, suddenly nervous again, “what becomes of you in the destruction?”

“I do not die in the destruction of Atlantis,” Mae said softly.

Niniane looked at Her, sick with relief.

“I die before it,” Mae said as softly and as gently as She could.

Niniane’s face registered her profound shock.

“’Tis an age-old theme of ours, beloved,” Mae said. “I have fought the darkness, with some degree of success, but in so doing I have brought myself to their attention. When the ego consciousness perceives a threat, how does it respond?”

“It must snuff out that threat as if it is but a flame on a candle.”

“Yes, beloved, *that* is the egoic response to Light, and there is *never* any variation on that theme.”

“Then,” Niniane said, quietly but fiercely, gripping Mae’s hands tightly with her own, “do not go back. Stay here with me.”

“Nay, beloved, nay. I would not run from my fate, even if I could. What will be *must* be, Niniane. As I said, the mantle of our destiny, yours and mine, must be worn by you now. This is *your* time, my beloved, your time. My time is passed. Why else do you think I gave you the necklace?”

The sobs were building within Niniane, burning her throat as she desperately tried to contain them. Breathing had become difficult, and every muscle was clenched with the effort of containment and control . . . and panic. “I . . .” She stopped, struggling desperately, but tried again. “I . . . will never . . . see you again?”

“Not in this form. But to see me, Niniane, you have only to look in a mirror, for this you *must* remember. *I live on in you.*”



The sweet words of seduction died on Galahad’s lips and he stopped speaking so that his latest string of compliments were left hanging in the air like a symphony that’s been worked up to a crescendo and then left unfinished.

The girl who was his latest prey looked at him expectantly at first and then, as she realised she had lost his attention, with a crestfallen expression. Galahad neither noticed nor cared. He looked across the forum, over the crowd of people, to the covered walkway. He felt Niniane’s distress like a sharp, stabbing pain in his chest and a burning in his throat, and he knew the pain was hers. The power of it pulled at him.

He turned to peer through the shadows of the colonnade, trying to see her. She was seated on a stone bench with another woman, and the woman was leaning towards her, trying to comfort. But Niniane was sobbing uncontrollably. Even as he watched, the other woman put her arms around Niniane, and Niniane clung to her. Without conscious thought, Galahad was galvanised into action. He’d never seen Niniane thus, and he found the sight unbearable.

“Please, excuse me,” he said absently, throwing the words over his shoulder, barely aware he spoke them out loud. He began to walk towards the colonnade, and then he ran, pushing people out of the way, sometimes roughly, barely noticing in his desperate need to get to Niniane.



Mae held Niniane to Her, needing the comfort Herself as much as She needed to comfort. She had taken a long time to decide whether or not it was right to come to

this time in Her future and make contact with Niniane. She had spent long hours weighing all the possible consequences. But the experience as a whole had been incredibly rewarding, and every one of Her individual visits and conversations with Niniane had brought Her nothing but the deepest, most profound satisfaction.

How She would miss their talks. But it was time for Niniane to go on without Her. Niniane may not yet know it but she was more than capable of fulfilling the towering destiny that awaited her. Mae took great comfort in the knowledge.

She knew Galahad was coming and that, too, felt incredibly right and satisfying. And comforting.

“It was Galahad I was referring to earlier, my beloved,” She said against Niniane’s hair. “I know you will obsess over that, so I will save you the trouble. He is with me in Atlantis. He is a priest, and we have fought the darkness together. He knows you, Niniane. He does not know how or why, but he knows you. His loyalty to you will be eclipsed only by Gawain’s. Trust the connection between you.”

Niniane raised her head to look at Mae. “Mae,” she part pleaded, “I have so many questions . . .”

Mae smiled, the Light once again sparkling in her eyes, and She put Her hands either side of Niniane’s face and wiped the tears away with Her thumbs. “What have we always said, you and I, about the one place the answers to our questions can truly be found?”

Niniane sniffed. “Within?”

“Within,” Mae repeated. “In time, you will awaken to the memories of my life, my beautiful girl, and then your questions will be answered. Take her, Galahad,” She commanded as Galahad reached them and fell to his knees beside Niniane. “Take her, and make sure she does not look back.”

Niniane cringed and pulled back. “No,” she said desperately. “No, Mae. I would stay with you.”

Mae exchanged a knowing look with Galahad, and together they gently lifted Niniane to her feet. Galahad put an arm around her waist and another on her arm, gently exerting the pressure necessary to propel her forward, away from Mae.

As She let Niniane go, Mae smiled a dazzling smile and said, “Niniane, remember what I said. I live on in you. You have given me the greatest gift this

day, my beloved, for I know now that the lesson I have learned has found its fulfilment in you. You have taken away my sadness and given me peace in its place. Look at me, Niniane, and remember my radiance, for it is your radiance also.”



Niniane stirred and moaned. She was lying on the thick rug in front of the small grate in Arthur’s room. Galahad had lit a small fire after he laid Niniane on the rug. And then he’d disappeared, leaving her alone. She did not mind. She understood.

She sat up slowly. Movement was difficult because she felt utterly drained of all her reserves of energy, and her head felt as if it had become too big for her body. Her face felt hot and swollen, but, thank the gods, she had exhausted all of her tears. And now a merciful numbness had settled over her. She felt strangely calm.

The click of the door drew her attention, and she watched as Galahad backed into the room carrying a tray. He turned and walked over to the small fire, knelt, placed the tray on the floor between them and then sat. Niniane saw a bowl of water with a cloth in it, two goblets, and a decanter. She continued to watch in silence as Galahad wrung out the cloth.

“Here,” he said, handing the cold, wet cloth to her, “cover your face with this. You will feel better for it.”

She took the cloth and covered her hot face, feeling the soothing effects of the cold water almost immediately. When she handed the cloth back to Galahad, he handed her, in return, one of the goblets.

“I know you do not drink, but think of this as medicinal,” he instructed her.

Again, she did as he instructed and took first one and then a couple more sips of the amber liquid in the goblet. Almost immediately, she felt the fiery liquid hit her gut and spread to her limbs. The feeling was not unpleasant.

“You are not afraid of a woman’s tears?” she asked him as she watched him wring out the cloth again.

He smiled. “Not yours. Normally, I hate a woman’s tears and will do anything to avoid them . . . something I believe they become aware of very quickly and use to great effect.” He became serious. “I did not mean it, you know. When I said you needed a tragedy to bring you back to reality. I did not mean it.”

“I know. But I *did* mean it when I said I have had my share of tragedy, not in this life, but in others.”

“Is that how you know her, the woman you were talking to?”

Niniane nodded. “She has been visiting me for many years now. She comes to me from the past . . . from a long, long time ago.” She turned her head to look at the flames of Galahad’s small fire, breathed deeply, and let the air out on a sigh. “But She cannot come anymore.” She looked at him again. “She is going back to Her time to die.”

Galahad raised a cynical eyebrow. “I do not get it,” he said. “Why does she not stay here and live?”

“Because She is energetically attuned to that time and place,” she replied and then paused. How did she know that? “Because if She were to stay, She would feel discordant, uncomfortable, as if She did not really belong. And when they traverse the barrier of time – the people from Her time – not all of them comes to the future. There is a part of them left behind. She would not be whole if She stayed.” She stopped again, frowned, and asked out loud, “How do I know that?”

Galahad grinned sheepishly. “How do you know half the things you know?”

She smiled in response to that comment. “And,” she said, still answering his former question, “She cannot stay because the mantle of our destiny, Hers and mine, has passed to me now.”

Galahad sobered and inclined his head, interested. “She is you?” he asked. “She is you in another time? But that makes perfect sense,” he commented without waiting for Niniane’s response. “That’s why she seemed so goddamned familiar.”

Niniane looked at him in silence. How she loved his wonderful, accepting, exploring, and open mind. She told him so.

He grinned at her again. “Ah,” he responded, “if I have an exploring mind ‘tis because you make it so. You fill it with such fascinatingly different concepts and ways of looking at things.”

She smiled again at the compliment, happy to accept it, and then, remembering Mae’s words looked at him quizzically. “You were a priest,” she said.

He raised his eyebrows at her. “Does the idea of me being a priest really seem so ludicrous?”

“No,” she answered him, shaking her head, “’tis the fact that it is *not* a ludicrous idea that seems so ludicrous . . . if that makes sense.” And then she remembered the interchange between them before she’d seen Mae. “I have spoilt your best laid plans of seduction, Galahad. I am sorry. You must now sleep alone tonight.”

He made a sound of dismissal. “Nah,” he said and waved his hand at her. “Truth be told, Niniane, it’s all beginning to wear a little thin.”

She narrowed her eyes at him. “Meaning?”

“Meaning it’s a whole lot of effort for not a lot of reward.”

She looked at him silently, and then began to nod slowly, understanding, and more than a little pleased.

“Besides,” he added, “I am *not* alone. I share a house with a group of people I love being with.” Like Gawain, he had abandoned the soldier’s barracks, moving into Niniane’s old room. They were all trying to persuade Tristan to do the same.

Niniane smiled at him. “You need to find a woman who is your match – one with the same wonderfully open, explorative mind as yours.”

“But I have found such a woman,” he said seriously.

They looked at each other in silence as his meaning penetrated. And then she smiled again. “Then I am truly blessed,” she said quietly.



She stirred as she awakened and opened her eyes. Gawain lay beside her on the floor where Galahad had lain earlier, and he was watching her.

Her eyes filled with tears as she remembered. “She is not coming back.”

“I know,” he said gently.

“She has gone back to . . .”

He put his fingers over her lips. “It does not matter what befalls Her in that life because She is alive in you. I have seen you both together, remember. Did I not tell you, you are the same? You are as one. She lives on in you, Niniane.”

She looked at him silently as her tears spilled over. “How you have changed,” she whispered. “That is what She said.”

He moved his hand to caress her neck and her cheek. “I should have been there,” he said. “I am sorry, Niniane. I should have stayed. I felt it, too, Her

sadness. I knew something was wrong, but I thought you would both work it out. I should have paid attention to the feeling and stayed.”

She shook her head. “Galahad was there. ‘Twas meant to be. He needed to see Her, too. He was there for me.”

“So he was,” Gawain said softly. “So he was.”

And suddenly he knew.

How strangely comforting it was to know that if anything ever happened to him, she would be in the best of hands . . . other than his, of course.



An Unmarried Man

“I know what they whisper about me. I am not blind, nor am I stupid. They whisper to each other that I might secretly be a lover of men. For why else would I still be unmarried at my age when I can have whomever I choose?”

“And when ‘tis your duty to produce an heir.”

“Indeed.”

“You are not a lover of men. ‘Tis that you cannot be with just anyone. They who whisper do not understand this. You await the extraordinary, not quite believing the extraordinary actually exists because you see only the ordinary around you.”

“And does it exist, the extraordinary?”

“Oh yes. Indeed it does. But of course, the key to finding it lies not without but within. You see, the extraordinary can only be unearthed and discovered by first of all discovering it within yourself. If you seek it outside of yourself without first discovering it within, you will never find it . . . never.”

Silence.

“Of course, ‘tis a matter of focus.”

“Focus?”

“Yes, focus. What makes a woman extraordinary – enough to turn your head, ignite your passion, capture your heart, and restore your faith and belief?”

Silence.

“Are you to be bedazzled by her physical beauty? Or perhaps you would be beguiled by her silky wit and her smooth tongue? Or maybe seduced by her wanton, uninhibited hands. Or lured with artifice and manipulation”

“The gods forbid I should ever allow myself to be thus manipulated.”

“So what, then, makes a woman extraordinary?”

Silence.

A frown.

“You really do not know?”

“I really do not know.”

“What is physical beauty without the benefit of intelligent and interesting conversation to fill the empty silences that are bound to fall between you? What are wit and a silver tongue without compassion and care and the temperance of wisdom? What is wantonness without the gentle, caressing touch of affection and tenderness? What of a woman who cares only for what she wants . . . those things your wealth and title can provide her? Should not a woman, a lover, reflect the very best of you back to you, and you her? Should not a woman, a lover, take you, just with the essence of who she truly is, to that place where the heart rules the head?”

Silence.

A smile.

“No wonder you are an unmarried man.”

*“Dreams of hiding,
Dreams of pain
Lure me back
Again and again.
Dreams abiding,
Dreams of gain
To fill the void
While e’er they reign.
But the yearning persists,
The emptiness remains,
And dreams of hiding
Are become my bane.”*

The Right of Exclusion

Mikhaiel leaned his forearms on the balustrade and looked out over the city. In that magical hour between day and night, when day is loosening its hold and the night is beginning to stake its claim, the city was quietening and settling. Lights were beginning to punctuate the dusk and, just as the darkness was beginning to take hold so, too, was the silence of the night.

The sun was leaving behind it trails of blazing colour as it disappeared. The clouds scattered across the sky caught the light and intensified it, heightening the colour, and the sky, fast fading from bright to pale blue, provided a beautifully-contrasting backdrop. Such was the canvas of nature. Soon, very soon, the sky would change from blue to light grey, and the blazing colour of the clouds would fade. Then, gradually, the sky would darken further still until the darkness covered the city like a shroud of black velvet.

Never before had Mikhaiel been so aware of the passing of the day. For the first time in his life, or that he could remember anyway, he dreaded the passage of time . . . dreaded it greatly. He wished he could jump from the balcony, leap onto his horse and ride like the wind to hold the sun still, right where it was at this moment.

Yes, he thought, he would hold it in place, forever if necessary, so that time stood still – a single moment stretched into eternity.

“Ah,” a familiar voice said behind him, “at last you are realising the privilege of being your father’s son comes with great responsibility, too.”

Mikhaiel did not take his eyes from the setting sun as he answered simply, “Yes.”

“But what is the *nature* of that responsibility?”

Mikhaiel did not reply.

“And,” the voice continued relentlessly when Mikhaiel was silent, “those who surround you have shown you their true mettle by proving themselves less than worthy as confidants, companions, and counsellors. Would that be right, Mikhaiel?”

“Yes,” Mikhaiel answered again, still without taking his eyes from the horizon. “Their advice has been shallow and trivial, no help at all. They have failed, completely, to understand the burden of duty I carry. They wish only to have me make my decision so that I can come back to play.”

“I see,” the voice responded unemotionally, although, at the same time, not without empathy. “And so, my young prince, you find yourself bearing the weight of this burdensome decision alone.”

“Yes.”

“And how, pray tell, are you handling that?”

Mikhaiel was not immune to the hint of amusement in the question. He turned his back on the spectacular sky so that he faced the owner of the voice. “Does my plight amuse you, Arramis?”

Although the question was not asked out of malice, there was a slight hint of annoyance underpinning Mikhaiel’s tone.

Arramis, not at all affected by the underlying tone of the prince’s question, allowed his amusement to sparkle in his eyes for a moment. “I can assure you, I am not without sympathy, Mikhaiel,” he said. “But I have watched you these last weeks. You have sought your answer everywhere but where it *should* be sought – the one place our answers can truly be sourced,” and he shrugged his shoulders as he added a qualification, “when we ask the right questions, that is.

“Now, though,” he continued, “your failure to find your answer has led you to a place of despair and resentment. No one has stepped forward to make your decision for you, nor even to provide you with advice you feel you might take. Worse still, as this night closes in, you are beginning to panic, and in your panic your thoughts have become chaotic, and your heartbeat is increasing its tempo.”

Mikhaiel took a deep breath and looked away, his lips pinched, but he did not respond. There was not really the need for a response since they both knew Arramis was right.

“Why did you not come to me for advice?”

The question drew the prince’s gaze so that he looked at the High Priest, his father’s most valued, most trusted friend, counsellor, and adviser. In truth, Arramis’s question was, in its simplicity, startlingly revealing, and Mikhaiel found

he had no answer. Why *had* he not come to the old man for advice? Why had he, instead, sought the advice and counsel of just about everyone *but* the old man? After all, as Mikhaiel well knew, Arramis's wisdom was unparalleled. No man or woman was his equal.

Arramis returned the prince's gaze, awaiting the answer to his question patiently.

Finally, after a long silence, the prince broke eye contact and bowed his head.

"Yes, you see," the High Priest said, "now your own behaviour puzzles you greatly, does it not?"

Still with head bowed, the prince nodded.

"Methinks the time has come, Mikhaiel, for a not-so-gentle reminder as to the value of properly weighed, balanced, and measured priorities. Of late, you have become distracted by the pleasures of privilege and by the agendas of those who would use your privileges for the purpose of self-seeking pleasure, or self-aggrandisement."

Arramis paused to allow the prince time for digestion, and then he continued, "You are an Initiate, Mikhaiel. Moreover, you were . . . *are*," he corrected himself, "an exceptionally gifted one. Do not squander those gifts with misguided focus. Like many, many others, you have become caught up in and trapped by those things you think you want from and in your reality. And the supposed friends who surround you have taught you that your rank and privilege afford you your wants with the greatest of ease – the click of your fingers, in fact. Thus have you resented this decision placed upon your shoulders, for you do not want the burden of it to pull you back into an awareness of the truth. You have enjoyed the privilege of rank whilst, at the same time, steadfastly ignoring its responsibilities. And in so doing, you have forgotten who you are."

As intended, the prince felt the impact of Arramis's words, though gently spoken, like a cracked whip. Such was the force and nature of Arramis's power. Most people feared him greatly, for they failed to understand that with the power of the High Initiate comes great compassion. Both Mikhaiel and his father knew the people's fear of Arramis came not from any personal experience or contact with the High Priest, but, rather, from a lack of it. The king found great uses for that fear

when it suited him. Arramis's power had a way of pulling the wayward into line. But for those who knew him best, as did Mikhaiel, Arramis was not to be feared, but, rather, kept close and consulted often, for his wisdom was of inestimable value – a truth Mikhaiel had somehow allowed himself to forget.

The High Priest joined Mikhaiel at the balustrade, and Mikhaiel turned so that they both contemplated the city and the now-darkening sky side by side. Arramis allowed the silence to first descend between them and, then, to persist, knowing, as he did, that his words had triggered a healthier flow and direction in Mikhaiel's thought processes. But there was one more piece of invaluable advice to be offered.

"Mikhaiel," Arramis said, drawing the prince's attention. With the prince's gaze thus drawn away from the view, Arramis deliberately looked over, away from the city and from Mikhaiel, toward the white walls of the temple complex. In the fading light, the domed roof of the Round Temple was just visible over the top of the temple wall. Despite the fading light, its white domed roof was beginning to gleam. As he was meant to, the prince followed Arramis's line of vision.

"You have forgotten its power," was all the High Priest said.

Mikhaiel responded like one who has just been told the greatest of treasures awaits him. He clamped a hand on the old man's shoulder, said, "I thank you," and, his stride full of purpose, turned and walked into the bright interior of the palace.

Arramis turned to watch Mikhaiel walk away, already questioning his own motives, and surprised by his own actions. In the days to come, those questions would intensify, and he would ask himself if he had known, in this moment, that she would be there in the Round Temple?

But of course he'd known. The moon was full this night, so of course she would be there, as she always was when the moon's light shone in its fullness. So, with that established, did he then bring them together on purpose this night simply because he knew she would be able to help Mikhaiel? Or was there a deeper, hidden purpose underlying his actions this night? More so than any other, he knew the importance of her Work. Had he not sanctioned her invocation of the Right of Exclusion and lobbied hard to make sure every other council member sanctioned it too? So why, why bring them together when the consequence could only be

disturbance, disruption, and interruption? He was normally fiercely protective of her and her Work. Yet in one single move he had exposed her to . . . what?

Was there more to her Destiny, and Mikhaiel's for that matter, than he was seeing? So, then, should the question not be why was he not seeing it all? Why was the path of Destiny hidden from his sight at this point in time? He who saw all. Destiny, he knew, was always best left to run its own course, and so he was not one to ever interfere.

Or is that precisely what he'd just done?



The noise of his father's court became muted with distance, but Mikhaiel's boots resounded loudly in the silence and the semi-darkness of the palace halls. His stride was full of purpose now, and his footsteps echoed with it. Not many people knew of the Round Temple's purpose or its power. Most were too distracted by the Great Library beside which the Round Temple stood and by which it was dwarfed – dwarfed in size, that is, but not in beauty. Most people did not even see the Round Temple as they walked toward the Library.

But those who knew of its true purpose and power knew it was unrivalled for both. Mikhaiel berated himself as he walked through his father's palace and then through the underground corridor that connected the palace to the temple complex. Why had he not remembered it? Why had it not occurred to him to pay the Temple a visit? The Gods damn it, he chastised himself as he turned the handle to open the Temple's door. He *had* forgotten who he was. Arramis was right. Arramis was *always* right.

Closing the door quietly behind him, Mikhaiel walked to stand under the crystal opening at the top of the dome so that the moon's light washed over him, illuminating him. He closed his eyes, savouring the soothing effect of the moon's luminous light. And so, standing as he was with closed eyes and his back to the door, he did not see her when first she opened it. He heard the handle turn, though, and then felt her hesitation, and her dismay at seeing someone already in the Temple's interior. And then he heard her turn to leave. Without turning

around to face her and not knowing who was there, at the Temple's door, he asked her not to go.

"I feel I must," she replied.

"Please," he said, reiterating his request, "I would not have you leave on my account. There is no reason why we both cannot seek our answers now that we are here."

She surprised him then. "You seek answers?"

"You do not?"

"Nay," she replied, "I do not. I seek . . . communion."

He turned then to look at her, but her face was in shadow and he could not properly see her. "Then," he requested of her, "perhaps you will be so kind as to allow me to share that."

Still she hesitated, but the Gods, it seemed, were on his side that night, for she smiled, said, "As you wish," and moved to sit in the centre of the temple. As she walked into the moon's light, she appeared to him as a goddess: ethereal, luminous, glowing, and radiant. Such beauty as hers rooted him to the spot and robbed him of breath for the briefest of moments. But then he moved to sit opposite her, removing the hood of his cloak as he did so. There they sat, in the centre of the Round Temple, bathed in light; two strangers, intimately bound by the sanctity and silence of their surrounds.

"Will you tell me about the answers you seek?" she asked him. "Or, rather, will you tell me about the questions you hold within you? 'Tis not my wish to pry, but if the Temple has brought us here together then it just may be I can help you find those answers."

"Actually, 'tis only one answer I seek," he replied. "And tomorrow I must give that answer to my father's council. Yea or nay. That is all. So simple does it sound and yet the one word – whichever I choose – will set the course and direction of my life."

She did not understand, and the silence around them held her confusion. Just talking about his choice had set his heart racing with anxiety. He ran a hand through his hair.

“My father is negotiating a treaty of peace with our neighbours,” he explained to her, “– neighbours, I might add, with an impressive and mighty army. He, my father, wishes to seal the treaty with a marriage – his son, me, and King Collan’s daughter – a son of our people united with a daughter of theirs. And he is right, is my father. The marriage would ensure our two peoples a peace well into the future.”

“I see. And you do not know her, this princess?”

“I do not,” he replied. “I know nothing about her.”

“Well,” she said, surprising him again, sounding utterly unsympathetic, “if I was in your shoes, the way would be clear to me, and my choice made easy by what I know and by what I believe. But I feel not the pull of duty and responsibility as you obviously do.”

Her words annoyed him. Could she not see the responsibility for the future of their people that he bore? “But do you not see that the future of our people rests on my shoulders?” he asked her, sounding tense.

“Does it?” she asked. “Nay, I do not see that.”

His annoyance deepened, and he shifted restlessly. Nor did she help matters by asking him more questions, probing, prodding, delving*. She asked him about his father so that his anxiety deepened in equal proportion to his annoyance. And then she asked him what he feared more: failing his father or earning the condemnation of the people. Although he answered calmly enough, he was beginning to wonder if he’d done the right thing in asking her to stay. She was, either unwittingly or, the Gods forbid, deliberately, making him feel worse.

But then she asked him one more question, and this one made him sit up and take notice. Even before she finished asking it, all feeling within him was suspended. His annoyance evaporated and his anxiety vanished without leaving either a hint or an echo of their former existence.

“Are you a prince first and a man second, or are you a man first and a prince second? For whichever you are so, too, will you be as a king.”

“Surely in my position I do not have the luxury of that choice, for must not the two be one and the same?” he answered her. “And more so when I am king.”

“The roles and titles of prince and king are like that cloak you wear,” she told him. “The cloak cannot walk around by itself, for it needs a shoulder to hang upon. It serves a valuable purpose and holds a great responsibility, for without it you would suffer the cold. But cloak it is. And when you wear it, perhaps you do not realise how much you give it its height and shape. You do not wear it all the time, though. In the privacy of your own bedchamber, for example, it will not be needed.”

Her words penetrated to the depths of him, piercing him like a spear. By the Gods, but she was right. There *was* so much more to him than this role he had been born into. Underneath the cloak of a princely title, he was a man, born into a life for a higher Will and Purpose of his own. He had forgotten that, too.

She leaned towards him, driving the spear of her words even further into the depths of him. “So what will it be for you, my lord? Will the kind of man you are determine what kind of king you will be? Or will the kind of king you are determine what kind of man you will be?”

The Gods be damned, he thought, bowing his head. He had fallen into that old, familiar mind-trap of *defining* himself rather than allowing himself to be. And in defining himself as a prince, he had fallen into the trap of becoming the title, playing the role – a role he had been trying to avoid courtesy of his pleasure-seeking companions – a role that was suffocating him. The question as to which choice he should present to the council tomorrow suddenly split into two. What would a *prince* do? And what would he, as a *man*, do? If the answers to these two questions were the same, there would be no problem because there would be no conflict, and his choice would be easy. But, of course, there *was* conflict, for the answers to the two questions were exactly the opposite.

She began talking again, but, lost in his own realisations as he was, he took a moment to register her words. “. . . as a man your first duty is to yourself. Honour thine heart. Your heart says no to this marriage, for how can one enter the sanctity of marriage with a stranger and for such physical reasons, honourable though those reasons be. But your head urges you a different way. It whispers to you of duty – the duty of a prince to his people and of a son to his father. For why else would you be here if not for the inner conflict that arises when heart and head are at odds?”

The answer was there all along, waiting, in plain sight, to be discovered. He had but to find the courage, now, to do what he knew in his heart to be right and true. How had he become so lost?

She interrupted his thoughts by rising to her feet. He felt a moment of panic, not wanting to let her go.

“What is your name?” he asked.

She smiled as she looked down at him. “You do not need to know my name.”

He looked up at her. “Then how do I see you again?”

She laughed softly. “When full the moon is, you can always find me here.”

“But that is a month away . . .”

She laughed softly again as she turned and walked to the door. But as she opened it, she paused and looked back at him. “I would wish you the luck of the Gods for tomorrow,” she said softly. “But I can see you do not need it.”

And then she was gone.



Leaning, once again, on the balustrade overlooking the city, Mikhaiel felt Arramis’s presence beside him without having to turn and look. The old man moved as silently as a whisper, but his presence was a tangible thing, always alerting you to the fact that he was there, like someone brushing against you as they stood beside you. This time, the prince turned as soon as he knew Arramis was there, intending to give voice to the question that had burned inside him all night and all day. But the old man pre-empted him.

Clamping a proud hand on Mikhaiel’s shoulder, Arramis said, “You have made your father proud this day, Mikhaiel*. You see, the answer was there all along, was it not? You just needed to seek it in the right place. Though, in truth, ‘twas not the answer to a question you sought, but, rather, the realisation of who you would be or of how you would be defined. Would that be a fair assessment of your experiences of late?”

“It would, yes,” Mikhaiel replied. “You were right, Arramis. I had forgotten many things in my quest to forget my responsibilities. In seeking the pleasures of privilege, as you put it, I was avoiding the role and the title and, indeed, the identity

because I felt suffocated by them. And, of course, I was forgetting to be who I was. I was unaware of how lost I had become. I thank you for bringing me to my senses.”

“Ah,” Arramis replied, “’twas my pleasure, my young friend. You have learned a valuable lesson, and you have learned it well, Mikhaiel. ‘Tis far easier to know about these principles and concepts in theory, far harder to put them into practice in one’s own life. Now you have the contrast, and that, in turn, facilitates the knowledge of what truly is of value.”

“Yes,” Mikhaiel agreed. “Yes, I see that.” He hesitated briefly, not allowing himself time to think or, more precisely, to rethink. “Arramis, did you send me to the Round Temple or did you send me to her?”

Arramis dropped his hand. “Ah,” he sighed, turning away from Mikhaiel to look out over the city. “I have been asking myself the same question. I think the answer must be both.”

“She brought me back to what really matters – doing what I know in my heart to be right and true,” Mikhaiel said. “Such a simple thing, and yet, with all the distractions of the physical world, the heart so easily gets overlooked and forgotten. But she *was* heart, Arramis. With her I felt my heart easily. I felt connected to it. With her I felt my heart was all that mattered. How do I see her again? What is her name? She would not tell me.”

Arramis was absolutely silent as he looked out over the city, and the longer he remained silent, the faster Mikhaiel’s heart pounded. He had to see her again. He simply *had* to see her again, for more reasons than one. Being with her had felt like breathing pure, fresh air, and had brought him to the realisation that he had been breathing stale air without knowing it. The trouble was, now that he was aware of the stale air around him, he felt as if he could not breathe properly.

Arramis had brought them together once. He could do so again.

“Arramis?” Mikhaiel prompted. “How do I see her again, and what is her name?”

The old man finally removed his eyes from the view and turned to look at Mikhaiel. “I cannot reveal her name to you, Mikhaiel, so do not ask me again. Only she can do that. As to the question of seeing her again, that, I’m afraid, is in the

hands of the Gods. Although she is a High Initiate and, as such, should be counted among your father's closest and most valued advisers, she has invoked the Right of Exclusion. As such, neither you nor your father has the right or the power to call upon her counsel. In fact, you have no right of access to her whatsoever."

Mikhael's heart skipped a panicked beat. His mouth went dry, and a heavy dread settled in the base of his gut. "The Right of Exclusion," he repeated involuntarily. "I've never heard of it."

"No," Arramis said, "well, you would not. It is an ancient Right, as old as the temple itself I would say, but it has not been invoked for aeons. I cannot remember the last time. Most *priests* do not know of it, let alone anyone else. Of course, one cannot invoke the Right just because one does not wish to advise the king. The reasons for doing so are profound – deeply, or highly, significant. The invocation must be put before the temple's council, and even then can only be sanctioned by the complete agreement of every member. Needless to say, the council will only sanction such a claim for reasons of the highest import." He paused and then added unnecessarily, "And her invocation was sanctioned."

"Why?"

"We felt her Work was far too important to be interrupted and disrupted by the demands of royal service and by the necessity of having to remain cognisant of, and in touch with, internal and external politics."

The prince, in his agitation, walked the length of the balcony, away from Arramis, before turning and walking back again. He ran an agitated hand through his hair and asked angrily, "What *work* could be so important you would sanction the exclusion of a High Initiate, as rare and as valuable as they are, from my father's counsel?"

Arramis hardened his voice, deliberately. "You are in no frame of mind to hear the answer to that question. You may have an answer when, and only when, you are a little more willing to see that the world does not start and end with you."

~

Arramis was aware of the prince's presence long before he acknowledged it. In the meantime, he finished what he was writing. Only when he'd recorded every last scrap of thought did he put his pen down and look up.

Mikhaiel re-asked the question in a much softer tone of voice. "What work could be so important you would sanction the exclusion of a High Initiate from my father's and my counsel?"

Arramis struggled to keep the smile out of his eyes. Nigh on a full week. That's how long it had taken Mikhaiel to cool down. Arramis admitted to being a little surprised at the prince's self-control, for he knew Mikhaiel was burning to know everything he could about her. Perhaps his desperation had finally become tempered with acceptance of the inevitable. Or was it resignation? Either way, Arramis admired Mikhaiel's discipline. And, of course, Arramis was not without empathy. Most people fell over themselves in their efforts to get Mikhaiel's attention. This, Arramis knew, Mikhaiel had come to expect in his dealings with people. So to encounter one who shunned that attention when it was freely given was not an easy thing to contend with or come to terms with.

"Come," Arramis said. "Let us walk."

He led Mikhaiel through the central courtyard of the main temple complex and into the apple orchard beyond.

"You are an Initiate, Mikhaiel," he said as they sat on one of the stone benches that formed a periphery border, like a frame, around the path that surrounded the orchard, "so you understand the cycles of ascent and descent through which humanity must pass and to which humanity is subject. The Work she is doing is not just for this time but also for a time many, many thousands of years into the future – a time when the great cosmic cycle turns once again.

"The Work she is doing will show others – those willing and able – how to release the shackles of third dimensionality, thus to restore that which was torn asunder so long ago. The Work she is doing will pave the way through transformation, transcendence, and thence to ascension. The Work she is doing will open the portals within to higher dimensionality for any who choose to pay it heed and put it into practice. She is, in short, paving the Road of Ascension, making it easier for those who will choose to walk it, both now and at that time in

the future when many cycles – cycles within cycles within cycles – come to a natural end and, therefore, a natural new beginning.”

“By the Gods,” Mikhaiel whispered. “The Way of Ascension? No wonder . . .”

Arramis smiled, for he knew what the prince was about to say. “The constructs of third-dimensional existence – that with which you recently became entangled – are her particular area of expertise, Mikhaiel. Really, there was none more qualified to untangle you than her.”

Mikhaiel contemplated Arramis’s words in silence. Finally, he asked quietly, “And that is why you sent me to her?”

Arramis took a long moment to answer the question. “No,” he said at last. “No. There are threads of Destiny at work here that I cannot see and, therefore, do not understand. A rare thing it is indeed, but I find myself unable to see either the threads or the picture they are forming.”

“Why would that be?”

“I wish I knew, my young prince, I wish I knew. But fathom it I cannot. There are forces at work that I suspect span the vast bridge of time. In such a case, without the knowledge of what is to come, one can only watch the Process at work. What must be *will* be, Mikhaiel. It would be best for us both to remember that.”



The moon was full this night, and so its luminous light lit the ground at her feet as she walked through the courtyard towards the Round Temple. She needed no lantern, as well she knew, for she had navigated this path many, many times under the light of the full moon.

The Great Library loomed in the darkness as a darker mass against the dark of night. But the Round Temple was lit by the moon’s light and shone like a pearl against black velvet. She paid the Library no heed as she walked towards the little Temple. For her, the peace and tranquillity, and the silent communion of the Temple’s ambience far surpassed in value that which the Library was able to offer. The Temple’s power was a soothing balm even when one did not know one’s soul was troubled. But when one did know . . . well, there was no greater comfort that could be found or offered, for the Temple’s silent communication did not bother

the ear but, instead, wrapped itself around the heart and communed directly with the soul.

This time she felt no surprise when she opened the Temple's door and saw him standing under the moon's luminous light. He was facing her this time, obviously anticipating her presence.

"I am not known for my patience," he said as she walked in. "And a month of breathing stale air is enough to make a man ill."

She was puzzled by that. "Stale air?"

He laughed briefly, dismissively. "Never mind," he said as they both sat in the circle of the moon's light. It bathed them both so that they were able to see each other clearly. "You are inaccessible to my father and to me because you invoked an ancient Right that no one really knew existed. How did you know about it?"

She smiled, remembering. "I stumbled upon it one day when I was researching something else. The Right of Exclusion gives me the freedom to Work without interruption or disruption – the disruption that would surely come on a regular basis were I to be at your beck and call . . ." She smiled again, mischievously this time, and was rewarded by the expression of annoyance that flickered across his face. "But," she continued, sobering, "for me that was entirely secondary to the validation, recognition, and acknowledgement accorded me and my Work when the council unanimously sanctioned my claim. That, I have to say, was deeply thrilling." And then she added, "And satisfying. And rewarding. Their decision made all the sacrifices absolutely worthwhile."

"What sacrifices?" he asked softly.

She looked down, away from him, at the circle of light upon which and within which they sat. "I have worked hard to be here," she said without looking up. "Indeed," she added, laughing softly, "I have worked hard to *be*, here." She looked at him again then. "'Tis an arduous journey I have chosen in this life . . . in many lives, I suspect, because my Work far, far transcends this one lifetime, though it does, I think, in this life form the foundation for ones to come. Like many a heroic tale, I have wrestled monsters, and vanquished demons, faced unimaginable hardships, and fought countless battles, all within, of course. 'Tis as well I am a

Warrior. I have needed the Warrior energy to fight the darkness that so easily wraps itself around the heart here, in this third-dimensional existence.

“Most people do not dream,” she continued. “Either they do not know how or they forget to or they do not bother. They simply follow the crowd.

“At first, when I was younger, I followed the crowd because it did not occur to me not to. But an existence dictated by convention, by recipe, and by the mundanity of normality caused me to move through my life as though dead, or so utterly numb and devoid of emotion it was tantamount to death. So I gave up such an existence and all of those things that are a fundamental part of such an existence: marrying and being a wife; having a family of my own; living in my own house, surrounded by those things everyone believes they must own. But, as it turned out, those sacrifices were the easy ones, and I missed them not at all.”

“So then,” he asked her, “what of the hard ones?”

“When I surrendered the conventional existence, I rediscovered my dreams, or what I thought were my dreams. But I had to learn the hard way that my dreams had been usurped, like a thief in the night who steals your valuable jewels and replaces them with fakes, so that you do not realise they have been stolen.”

“Usurped by who?”

“Not who,” she corrected. “By what. You have to understand, the conventional existence is like a solid path under our feet. It provides us with a security we take for granted. It enables us to see the path on which we tread, to easily define that path, and to see way, way ahead. And it gives us a sense of identity that allows us to easily interact with those around us, in the society in which we find ourselves.

“When I sacrificed it, unbeknownst to me, I sacrificed the security of a clearly-defined path and a sense of identity – all of those things by which we are defined in our society. And so, also unbeknownst to me, my dreams then became dreams of want and need – the want of a new and acceptable identity, and the need to build or to form, again, a solid path that would take me into my future. So I dreamed dreams of third dimensionality – dreams based solely on third-dimensional success, and on third-dimensional constructs, on third-dimensional outcomes, and on third-dimensional definitions . . .”

“Like what?” he interrupted.

She bit her lip in hesitation. He was asking her to reveal her innermost self, a part of herself she was not proud of, even though, really, it no longer existed.

“Like being a wise counsellor; like being a renown healer; like being a trusted and valued advisor to the king; like rising to the top of the temple hierarchy; like forging a name for myself outside the temple based on my Work and making money from it. All of these dreams would have justified my surrender of the conventional existence by providing me with a new and acceptable identity, and a solid pathway. But all, each and every one, was withheld, forbidden. Always was I thwarted in my attempts to orchestrate these dreams in my reality; to make them happen.

“And, at the same time, I found my Work taking me in directions I did not understand and could not fathom, including the discovery of the Right of Exclusion. The trouble was, though, that my dreams of hiding – hiding within and behind third-dimensional success and a third-dimensional identity – caused me unbearable pain, and I did not understand why at the time. I understand now, though, that my dreams of hiding were in direct conflict with those of my heart, and, as such, imprisoned me in misguided mindsets and a misguided focus.”

She laughed without mirth.

“Tis the ultimate irony really, for you see, my Work, as it turns out, is all about transcending and then ascending third-dimensional existence – leaving it well behind, and that *must* involve letting it go completely. Yet, here I was, desperately holding on to it. In trying to get from my Work any sort of third-dimensional success, I only ever succeeded in distorting, limiting, restricting, undermining, and compromising it; in dishonouring it, in fact. Actually, I only ever succeeded in misunderstanding it. But I have fought hard to free my Work from my own fears, from my old mindsets, and to allow it to be what it is. And in the process, I am becoming what I am.”

He'd narrowed his eyes in concentration as she talked. She was speaking at a depth he'd never before encountered. Indeed, she *existed* at a depth he'd never before encountered. He felt a frisson of excitement pass through him. Was it possible to join her there? Could she show him the way?

“What do you dream of now?” he asked her.

“Actually,” she replied, smiling, “once my dreams of hiding were dissolved, I realised I’ve been living my dreams all along. My Work is my dream. And I would see how far and how deeply the Process takes me.” She tilted her head as she looked at him. “So, my lord, what do you dream of?”

He laughed briefly, wryly. “Please call me Mikhaiel. Here, in this Temple, I am a man, just a man.”

She smiled her acknowledgement.

“For one such as me,” he said, “dreams are a luxury I cannot afford, even though, as Arramis pointed out, I have but to click my fingers and I get what I want. I guess . . .” He frowned, thinking, and then he shook his head. “I guess I *want* to be as good a king as my father, and to be as respected.”

“And what makes a king a good king?”

“In his eyes or in the eyes of those around him?”

She smiled in lieu of a verbal response.

“If you taught me to exist where you exist,” he said, “I believe I would be a great king.”

She looked at him in surprise. “You would change your point of existence?”

“I would.”

“You would put in the hard work necessary to shift your focus and alter your perspective to that extent?”

“I will.”

She tilted her head. “With no other agenda?”

“I cannot promise that. I want to exist where you exist, but I also have to confess I want to see you again, and not just once a month.”

“Well,” she said, sounding uncertain herself, “I guess honesty is as good a place as any to start.”

He nodded briefly. “And will you tell me your name?”

She hesitated. “Mikhaiel, though I know your name, you do not need to know mine.”

~

Mikhaiel fully intended to escape the discontent, the restlessness, and the frustration that had settled on him like a blanket he could not, try as he might, shake off, with a long gallop on Thyron, the only companion he could tolerate when the desire for solitude was upon him – something that was occurring with concerning regularity of late. The discontent had become a kind of pain that had taken up residence in his life. Although he relished the freedom of the ride, still he could not outrun it, the discontent. It always returned with a vengeance once the ride was over. And so it had become his constant companion.

There were small, very small, periods of time when the discontent vanished completely, but these were, of course, the times he spent with her. When he was not with her, even if he was just walking away from her, the discontent returned to settle in his gut like a heavy stone.

Thank the Gods, she had consented to meet with him more regularly than just once a month. Sometimes they met a few times in a week. True to her word, she was working with him, showing him her Work and teaching him how to implement it in his own life. He knew he was changing, and never more apparent was that change than in his choice of confidants and companions. Gone were the old ‘friends’. Gone, too, was the pleasure-seeking, womanising prince. He worked every day with his father now, learning, absorbing, and assimilating. He knew what his father’s priorities were in ruling the land and its people, and in knowing his father’s priorities, Mikhaiel was beginning to identify his own.

But although he was making progress, he was distracted and he knew it as, he suspected, so did she. He wanted more from her, more *of* her than her mind, and the more time he spent with her, the stronger grew his desire. He wanted to touch her. He wanted to hold her, to feel her body against his own, but she was masterfully keeping him at arms length. He was loath to push her for fear of pushing her away and causing her to make herself inaccessible to him again. If she chose to, he knew she could disappear within the confines of the temple complex and, thus, disappear from his life completely. So he hinted . . . and hinted . . . and hinted.

“Which is the better option?” was her response when his hints began to lose their subtlety. “Having your wants satiated? Or transcending them so that you are free of them entirely?”

He had not hesitated in his reply. “That depends on what it is you want.”

“Does it?”

“Yes, it does. There are some wants you do not want to be free of.”

She’d considered that, obviously testing out the statement for herself.

“Do you really no longer want anything?” he asked her.

“I am human,” she sighed. “I will always want something. ‘Tis in our nature to want, I think.”

“So what do you do about it?”

“Nothing. I certainly do not pursue it . . . or them. I work hard to maintain my focus and remain in Perfect Alignment. Then, if the want persists and I recognise the windows of opportunity when they come, I know the want serves the Will and Purpose of Destiny and, as such, it will come to fruition in the landscape of my life when it is meant to.”

He had recognised the message in her words and knew she was right. The Gods damn it! He had warned her he was not known for his patience, but he doubted even the Gods themselves would have the patience he was required to exercise at the moment.

She was not without empathy, though.

“Hey,” she’d called to him the day before as he’d walked towards the door of the Round Temple. He’d turned to look at her. “It really is a matter of single-minded focus,” she said. “And not just for you, but for me also.”

He understood. But still, the state of affairs had become, for him, like the two sides of a scale, with both sides fighting for ascendancy – the Work he was doing with her on the one hand, and his desire for her on the other. That the scale of Work and desire was out of balance was evident in the discontent that plagued him and that was, now, just beginning to turn into despair.

And, after all the time they’d spent together, still she would not tell him her name.

The shrill tones of a youthful voice, distant at first, but growing rapidly louder as the boy approached at a run, pulled Mikhaiel from his thoughts and stopped him before he reached the stables.

“My lord, my lord,” the boy panted, completely out of breath, “you must come at once. They sent me ‘cause I can run fast, my lord. It’s the king. He’s fallen ill. You must come at once.”

The chill of dread crept slowly and insidiously up Mikhaiel’s spine.

He ran towards the palace as if his own life depended on it.



“Father,” Mikhaiel said softly but firmly, taking his father’s limp hand in his own. “You cannot leave me. I am not ready to take on the mantle of king. I am not ready. The Gods must know that, so they will help you fight. Heed their guidance. Come back to us.”

His father did not hear him. Mikhaiel did not know how he knew that, but know it he did. Though the king’s chest rose and fell with every inhaled breath, he was in a place beyond reach, beyond hearing, beyond connection, beyond . . .

This could not be happening.

“Please,” Mikhaiel begged the Gods, “let him live. He is not an old man. He is strong and vigorous. He has many, many years left in him yet. It is not an impossible task I ask of you.”

But the Gods did not answer. Not by a single sign did they respond. Not by the stir of a breeze or the whisper of a movement or the flicker of something sensed within did the Gods break the flat, empty silence and stillness in the air around Mikhaiel and his father.

When first he’d arrived, breathless with the effort of running as if his life depended on what he would encounter, Mikhaiel had found the room, his father’s suite, full of people. In anger and frustration he’d swept them all out, as if he was a broom and they naught but dust, and firmly closed the door behind them all. Once alone, he’d approached his father’s massive bed and looked down on the man who had filled and dominated his life – his father for whom he held so much respect and admiration – his father who had always been larger than life itself – his father

who was always going to be here, now but an ashen-grey shadow of what he once was. So still and unresponsive was his father, it was as if he had already gone. But where there was breath, there was life; and where there was life, there was hope.

“Please, father,” Mikhaiel tried again, desperation threading its way through his words. “There is still much you have to show me . . . to teach me. I have so many questions I would ask of you . . .”

“I thought you knew, now, where to find the answers to your questions.”

Mikhaiel stilled in shock, holding his breath. Her voice alone sent chills across his skin and down his spine, and his heart began to pound. But as she spoke again, anger flared into hot, burning, turbulent life within him.

“You must let him go, Mikhaiel. It is *your* time to rule now. It is time for you to step into the fullness of who you are.”

He rounded on her in fury, dropping his father’s hand and standing to face her, unleashing all the pent up frustration and discontent he’d felt of late in the words he threw at her.

“You appear here uninvited, as if materialised out of the air itself, and tell me it is my time to rule now. What, in the name of the Gods, do you know about anything? And what gives you the right to come here now?”

She was unmoved by his tirade. “You are angry because you are afraid.”

Her words did not just hold the truth, they held her complete imperviousness to and deflection of his anger, and they deflated him. He wilted like a flower greatly in need of water, sinking to the floor with his head in his hands, his back against his father’s massive bed.

“I am no king,” he said. “I cannot do this. I am not ready.”

His panic was beginning to overwhelm him. He wanted to shake his father and tell him to wake up. He wanted to shake her until her teeth rattled in her head and she understood what she was putting him through. He wanted to walk over to the doors, fling them open, and scream and shout at all the people congregated there. But, suddenly, he had not the energy to even stand up.

She came to sit beside him on the floor, so close she was almost touching him, leaning her shoulder against the bed and curling her legs up underneath her so she could face him.

“What did I say to you when first we met?”

He shook his head in reply.

“What a magnificent king you will be if you honour the urging of your own heart. Our people will be in the very best of hands. That is what I said. Do you remember?”

Mikhaiel didn't reply.

“You do not have to be a great king, Mikhaiel. You just have to take each day as you find it. You just have to take each moment within each day as you find it. You just have to be who you are in this moment. That is all.”

He closed his eyes, his head still in his hands.

“Say that again,” he whispered.

She complied. “You do not have to be a great king, Mikhaiel. You do not even have to be as good a king as your father. You just have to take each day as you find it. You just have to take each *moment* within each day as you find it. And in each of those moments, you just have to be who you are, no more and no less. That is all.”

Her words were like soothing balm. He felt the burden and weight of responsibility ease. He felt his heart lose its frenetic pounding. And he felt his panic recede like water pulled away from the shore by the waning tide. Calm took root within him and spread through his limbs, relaxing his muscles, loosening the knot in his gut, easing its churning, and slowing his heartbeat even further.

“And besides,” she continued softly, “you are not alone, Mikhaiel. You are surrounded by the very best of minds . . . and hearts, for that matter. Arramis is the staff upon which your father leaned for the entirety of his reign. So, too, will he be for you, my lord.”

“And you?” Mikhaiel asked her, raising his head and turning to look at her. “Are you to come like a thief in the night when I least expect it, making me want you, and then slipping through my fingers, leaving me with nothing?”

“I am here, am I not?”

He shook his head. “That's not enough.”

They looked at each other for a long moment. And then she looked down at the floor between them.

“The first time we met,” she told him, “I had no say in the matter.” She looked at him again. “I know, now, the part Arramis played in bringing us together, but from my perspective we collided, you and I, like two ships, each unaware of the other’s existence, sailing towards the same destination from opposite directions. Since that time, there has been no collision, only awareness. Since that time, I have met with you of my own volition. I am a part of your life, Mikhaiel.” She stopped, took a deep breath and let the air out on a sigh. “I have kept you at a distance because I have feared the distraction. But still I have followed your movements, sometimes deliberately and consciously, sometimes not. I have tried not to love you because the last thing I want is to become entangled in the rigours of kingship. But, like a splinter in my mind that I cannot extricate, you plague and haunt my thoughts, my dreams, my visions. So, if you are with me in my dreams, why not make it so in my reality?”

“Why not indeed?” he echoed, taking her hand in his and bringing it to his lips. “I will hold you close,” he warned her. “You should know that.”

She nodded. “I know.”

“And what of your Work?”

“My Work is a part of me. I cannot separate myself from it.” She shrugged. “Tis not possible. But there is a unique kind of freedom in that, for it means I will Work no matter where I am or with whom. Besides, I think you have become an intrinsic and vital part of my Work. And I am part of yours.”

“You are part of *me*,” he said.

She smiled the smallest of smiles in acknowledgement of that truth and then she stood, still holding his hand, urging him to do the same. She led him to the edge of his father’s bed so that they could both look down on the body of the king.

As gently as she could, she said, “He lingers here because you are holding on to him, Mikhaiel. His time here is over. Mourn him, yes, but know this. He has carried the burden of grief for your mother for many long years, and he is tired.” She turned to Mikhaiel and in response, he turned to face her. “As for you,” she said, “it is time for you to become all of who you are, and the only way that can happen is for you to experience you. Let go your father, and with courage and strength, step into your own future.”

Mikhaiel touched her cheek with his fingers as if to make sure she was really standing there beside him in the flesh. Then he leaned his forehead against hers and closed his eyes, as did she. “Father, I release you,” he whispered. “Fly to the stars, there to take your place among them. You have served your people well, so go now and be at rest. Find your peace.”

He raised his head to look down upon his father one last time. And then he turned to her and again touched her cheek. “Will you tell me your name?”

She smiled. “My name is Asrielle.”

“Asrielle,” he whispered, tasting and testing the feel of her name on his tongue. “Your name holds your power,” he said, knowing it was true.

They walked, hand in hand, to the doors of his father’s suite, and Mikhaiel opened them one-handed. Almost immediately, people poured into the room like water released from a dam. Mikhaiel held her behind him, protecting her, shielding her, and when the in-pouring of people finally turned to a trickle, he walked out of his father’s room, still holding on to her tightly.

Only a few people remained lingering in the hall outside the king’s rooms, but neither Mikhaiel nor Asrielle saw them, for both had eyes only for Arramis. He stood, tall, strong, and solid, as if he’d grown in height and stature whilst they’d been in the king’s room. The closer they walked to him, the stronger did the force of gravity capture, hold, and pull them, like the force exerted on a comet that passes close to a planet.

Together, in the centre of the hall outside the king’s suite, like three points of an equilateral triangle they stood.

“Ah,” Arramis breathed, closing his eyes and raising his hands, palms up, “and there it is. At last, Destiny reveals Herself. I look upon Her mighty face, and I know now. Can you not feel it click into place? ‘Tis like the conjunction of three planets, a triangulation that reveals the whole . . . that *becomes* the whole.”

“I feel it,” Mikhaiel said. “Though I understand it not. Would you care to enlighten us, Arramis?”

Arramis opened his eyes and grinned at them both. His eyes sparkled with anticipation. Clamping one hand on Mikhaiel’s shoulder and one hand on Asrielle’s, he said, “We have Work to do, we three. Joyous Work. Work we love.”



Nicholas wiped the sweat from his brow with the back of his forearm. Ye gods but this country is hot, he thought as he leaned over the map that covered the table beside which he stood. Even under the shade of the tent, the heat was relentless, oppressive, like a weight pressing down and pushing in on you. So dense and humid was the air that at times it was hard to breathe.

He leaned his hands against the table's edge and narrowed his eyes as he perused the map, as if the map itself could reveal the secrets he knew were buried in the sand here in this desert land. He had not told a single soul, nor given away even a hint of the truth, but he had pulled together the whole dig based on a hunch. Worse, the hunch itself was based on a dream he'd had – a recurring dream admittedly, but, still, a dream was not a good basis for a venture of the nature and size they were undertaking.

Trying to raise the funding for the expedition had been interesting, if not a little stressful given the lack of any evidence or proof that there was anything at all buried under the sand out here. Even the museum had turned him down despite his reputation and his long and successful association with the museum itself. In the end, it was an anonymous sponsor who had funded the exhibition – someone who had steadfastly resisted all Nicholas's attempts to make contact. The sponsor had, so far at least, put no pressure on them even though the team had been digging for a month with nothing at all to show for it. Nicholas knew, though, the funding would not last forever, especially if they continued in their failure to find anything at all. He knew they were running out of time . . .

Shouts behind him, coming from the direction of the site, took a moment to penetrate his concentration and his thoughts, and when the sounds did finally intrude, he thought one of the men must have been injured. So, although he walked quickly towards the site, he did so without any real purpose, or any real hope, for that matter. When he reached it, though, he had only to look at the faces of his team of archaeologists, all three of them, to know they'd found something of significance.

“What is it?” he asked them as they walked over to meet him.

“It’s a dome . . .”

Nicholas ran.

Standing at the edge of the site, he looked down into the giant well they’d created in the sand. Tons and tons of sand had been removed. The dome, the top of its outline just visible under the dirt, was buried deeply beneath the sands. No wonder they’d had trouble locating it.

“There’s some sort of window at the top of it,” Ben, one of the members of the team, informed Nicholas. “But it’s not made of glass and we can’t break it. We’ll have to cut around it, Nick. And then we’ll have to test the oxygen levels before any of us can go in . . .”

“Fuck the oxygen levels,” Nick said vehemently. “I’ll wear a goddamned tank.”

Ben laughed. “Why did I know you’d say that?”

They waited four more hours while the team cleared away more dirt and sand, completely exposing the curved top of the dome, and then carefully cut into the stone around the dome’s circular window. To Nicholas, of course, the four hours felt like four days or even four weeks. He wasn’t known for his patience, but he doubted even the gods themselves would have the patience to endure this waiting and watching.

Finally, after an age it seemed, Nicholas watched as a team of twenty or so men stood around the circle they’d cut and began to carefully lift the circle of stone from the dome’s top. They all knew the importance of keeping it intact and unbroken. Like a lid, it would be replaced, the dome resealed once they’d thoroughly investigated, studied, documented, and catalogued its interior.

When the circle of stone was removed, they strapped a tank to Nicholas’s back and winched him down through the newly opened top of the dome. His feet touched the marble floor, still remarkably clean despite its long concealment and its vast age. The members of the team shouted down at him through the opening in the dome, but he was unable to respond. Despite the oxygen entering his lungs through the mask, he struggled to breathe, and the lump of raw and pure emotion in his throat burned like all hell. Unable to get his mind around what he was seeing, all he could do was turn circle after circle after circle, sweeping the room’s

contents with his torch. Eventually, the other members of his team lost patience and joined him themselves.

“Holy Christ!!” Ben breathed, having whipped off his mask almost as soon as his feet hit the floor, and the room’s contents became visible.

The others followed suit.

At first, the team stood with Nicholas in the centre of the room, taking it all in, trying to make the mental adjustment necessary to absorb what they were seeing. The find exceeded even the greatest of their expectations. Slowly, though, the ramifications of the find began to penetrate, and they started to move around the room, impatient to explore the contents. Nicholas didn’t join them. He remained standing in the middle of the room, only vaguely registering the comments of the team members as they lifted lids on the coffers and uncovered countless numbers of books, maps, scrolls, and parchments.

“These symbols are not hieroglyphs . . .”

“I’ve never seen this script before . . .”

“Yes but look guys, they’ve given us a cipher . . .”

“This is pre-dynastic, it has to be . . .”

“Let’s not jump to any conclusions until we get the results of the carbon tests . . .”

“Bollocks to that, Jack. Nothing, *nothing* in any of the tombs of *any* of the dynasties even comes close to matching this . . .”

“Ben’s right,” Nicholas said. “This *is* pre-dynastic. In fact, it predates the Early Kingdom by at least five thousand years. You don’t have to believe me. Carbon dating will prove me right.”

The three members of his team stared at him.

“How do you know that, Nick?” Ben asked him.

Nicholas smiled wryly and shook his head. “Trust me, you don’t want to know.”

He squatted and ran his fingers lovingly over the white marble floor of the temple. He knew it *was* a temple, a special one. The round room felt as familiar to him as his own bedroom back home. And now that he was here, the memories were assailing him – images and impressions from a life lived many millennia ago. He was helpless to stop them, the images. They poured through his mind like an

unleashed torrent of water. And he couldn't help but wonder. If he was here, instrumental in bringing this wisdom back to humanity, as was always the intent, then didn't it follow that *they* would be here, too?

So where was the High Priest?

And where was she?

* *Please note:* more of the dialogues between the two main characters and Mikhael's answer as presented to the King's Council are provided on my website: <https://thelady.com.au/verses> (in *A Dialogue* and *The Round Temple*). Please also know that this story and the dialogues on my website are not entirely fictional. They are, in fact, based on memories of a life I lived in Ancient Egypt. Some of you, those knowledgeable about such things, may even recognise which of the Pharaohs Mikhael is . . . or was.

~

*He is coming,
And he brings with him . . . Me.
He is one who is able to see,
For his perspective is bound not
By the constructs of third-dimensional reality.
His vision, like mine, is not lowered,
Pulled downwards
By the dense heaviness of material existence.
And he struggles not to see beyond
The patterns of the physical realm
To the deeper truth underlying them.
He does not become entangled
By the web of circumstances
That surround us at any given moment in time.
And he, like me, knows the source of the third dimension
Is the fifth, or higher, dimension.
And there is no exception to this Truth.
Thus it is with each and every one of us.
When the reality of the third dimension is affected or altered
By the Light of the higher dimensions
The rules of third-dimensional existence tend to be violated
Or broken,
And what is thought possible and what not
Is turned on its head,
Hence the word 'miracle'.
In our chronic ignorance
We refer to the Light Effect as 'supernatural',
Which would be amusing
If it were not so tragic.
For this you must know,
The Light Effect is as natural to the soul
As breathing is to the body.
'Tis only our distorted, misguided, uninformed beliefs,
Locking us into our rigid, immovable perspectives,
That block the Light Effect.
I have dissolved almost all of my shadows now –
Those fears that reside deep in my psyche
From where they distort my perspective
And dictate my beliefs.
A burst of Light – my Light – will cause the final shift
And bring me, once and for all,
Into Perfect Alignment.
The experience of this with him will come.*

Lady of Light

Kate turned her music on, relaxed into her seat, and tuned out the other passengers.

One day down, two to go.

She only worked three days a week – that was more than enough – but she still counted them down. Two days to the weekend, and then her time, her mind, her thoughts, her focus would belong to her again.

Distracted from her thoughts, she watched a small group of stragglers running to board the train, their fear of missing it etched on their faces, and glanced at her watch.

Time to depart.

Vaguely, through her music, she heard the whistle blow, and within seconds, the train began to move, slowly at first and then with ever-increasing momentum. As it left the platform, she looked across the rows and rows of tracks for the Seymour service. It left at the same time as hers, and racing it was part of her afternoon ritual. Invariably, her train beat the Seymour train out of Southern Cross and into North Melbourne, but every now and then it was the other way around. With satisfaction, she watched as her train passed the Seymour train. Good. There would be no delays now.

Closing her eyes against the bright glare of the low, early-evening sun, she released the last remnants of the tension that had accumulated in her muscles throughout the day. Was it her imagination or was the sun brighter than it used to be? No one else had noticed, or if they had they hadn't commented on it, so it must be her imagination. She dismissed the notion. Thoughts of what she would do at work tomorrow floated into her mind like unwanted intruders, and she ruthlessly banished them. Tomorrow would take care of itself. In an effort to empty her mind, she concentrated on her music, allowing it to fill her mind, and didn't bother opening her eyes as the train made the first and then the second of two initial stops before leaving the city.

Only when she knew the bright light of the sun had moved, courtesy of the train altering its direction, did she open her eyes. She watched, then, as the scenery changed – another facet of the afternoon routine. The sky scrapers and tall buildings of the city had long gone. In their place were factories, warehouses, garden centres, industrial estates. After a while, those then gave way to suburbia with its shops and its rows and rows of near-identical houses.

She leaned her elbow on the window sill, curling her fingers against her chin and resting on them. The reflection in the window copied her movements exactly, and she looked at it. She was bathed in a golden light and glowed luminously in the reflection. She liked it. She liked the way she looked in the sun's light. She thought she looked ethereal, even angelic – not quite of this world.

She smiled at her own thoughts, ignoring the reflection that smiled with her, and laid her arm along the sill of the window, watching as the train deviated from the road beside it, leaving the afternoon traffic to get home by itself. The scenery was so familiar she was able to silently predict what she would see next. Nothing was ever out of place. Nothing was ever different. So when first she caught sight of it – the object that was to irrevocably alter the lives of every passenger in the first carriage of the train – she did so out of the very corner of her eye and dismissed it, thinking it naught but a trick of the ever-changing ambient light.

But the brightness of colour, out of place in that context, persisted, and she realised it wasn't a trick of light.

The realisation snapped her to attention, breaking through her thoughts and honing her awareness, bringing her attention sharply and fully into the moment. At first, with distance, she had enormous trouble focussing on it, the object. She would try to bring it into focus and she would lose it. She would give up and she would see it. But the more she came to accept and thence to realise it was actually there, the easier it was to see. And as the train closed in on it, fast, its shape became more and more clear until, suddenly, its form crystallised and she saw it perfectly.

Jesus! It can't be . . . it simply cannot be.

She stared at it, open-mouthed in astonishment, goose bumps covering her body as chills travelled from the base of her spine to her scalp, tingling the back of her

head. She turned her music off to concentrate on the sight of it. One by one, ear by ear, she removed the speaker plugs from her ears and dropped both her iPod and the earphones into her bag, all without taking her eyes off the sight of what was, now, looming, growing larger and larger in the window. She straightened in her seat and leaned against the glass, straining to get a better look. The train was closing in fast, and the driver was making no attempt to stop, none at all.

Realisation hit.

Dear God! He hasn't seen it . . . he can't see it . . .

She looked around at the other passengers, turning in the seat to look behind her. No one took any notice, and no one showed even the smallest sign of having noticed anything out of the ordinary. She looked around the compartment in disbelief.

Christ alive! No one's seen it. No one else can see it, even though she could see it now out of the windows of both sides of the carriage because it was sitting right across the track.

She turned again and looked at it through her own window. My God, she thought, it's so beautiful, so spectacularly beautiful.

And we're going to hit it.

At full speed.

There was no time to be afraid, no time at all. Instinctively, she braced for impact the way the safety movies show you how to do at the beginning of a flight. She leaned forward, folded her arms against the seat in front and put her forehead on them, vaguely aware no one else had moved. Why did she warn no one? Because she *knew* they would not believe her. She *knew* they would only believe, and act out of, the evidence of their own physical eyes – eyes that could not see – and so her warning would be futile.

Only one more thought flitted briefly through her mind before thought became impossible. This is going to be bad.

What happened next would, forever after, become a hazy blur in her memory with the exception of a few very specific, very clear images – images of such sharp clarity they would always stand out, as if they were in the foreground of the whole experience, everything else receding and becoming part of the background. She

wasn't to know at the time, although she would be told later . . . much later, that the front of the first carriage – her carriage – was crushed on impact and concertinaed like the bellows of an accordion, while the momentum of the second and third carriages caused the second carriage to slam into the back of the first so that both the front of the second and the back of the first crumpled against each other like silver tissue paper. The force and pressure of both impacts, and the consequent coming together of the two ends of the first carriage caused the carriage to buckle inward on one side, bulging and tearing open on the opposite side. The carriage was torn in half the way a baker breaks open a soft, freshly baked loaf of bread.

At the first impact, Kate was thrown against the seat in front of her so violently both her shoulders were wrenched from their sockets and her arms did little to stop her slamming into the seat. The air in her lungs made a loud whoosh as it was forcibly exhaled, and pain shot through her upper chest. The window beside her shattered into a thousand pieces, raining a stinging shower of glass over her, and the unbearable sound of grinding, screeching, screaming, tearing metal filled her ears, hurting, piercing.

Completely at the mercy of forces way beyond her control, she was wholly unable to raise her hands to cover her ears. The grinding and tearing of metal was deafening, drowning out the screams of the passengers. Or perhaps there weren't any screams . . . She was slammed forcibly against the side of the carriage. Pain exploded down the right side of her body. And then the force of this new momentum took her through a tearing opening in the metal. She bounced over the tracks that carried the trains in the opposite direction, and then she was rolling over and over like a windmill across the hard, unyielding ground, finally coming to an abrupt stop. She lay dazed for a moment before the pain intruded and took control. The pain directed her awareness to her right leg, and she realised it was lying under her body awkwardly, grotesquely, as if she was a doll thrown haphazardly into a cupboard whose limbs had twisted unnaturally.

She tried to move to ease the searing pain but couldn't. She had become implanted in the ground.

Behind her the wreckage settled and silence descended. So eerie and unnatural was the silence that it vied with the pain in her body for her awareness. This

silence-laden moment – the moment just before he came – was the one she would remember with the greatest clarity of all. This moment, under its shroud of heavy, uncanny silence, was the final moment of her existence as she'd always known it to be. So powerful and potent were the moments that followed, *this* moment would become, for her, a marker for the very great, very profound change that would follow.

And then, of course, he came.

He knelt over her, a nimbus of white light surrounding him, and gently turned her over. Touching the centre of her forehead with the fingers of one hand, he gently straightened her arms and her leg with his other hand. There was no pain with the movement. There was no feeling at all.

And then he leaned over her again.

“Lady of Light,” he said, “you will survive this.”

He touched her again on her stomach, just below her breast bone, and she felt a twinge of movement as something shifted internally, although, again, there was no pain.

Her mind had ceased to function, almost, but not quite, completely shutting down – the mind's natural response to trauma. Still, of all the questions she could have asked him or, more importantly, *should* have asked him, there was only one thing she desperately, desperately wanted to know.

“Will I see you again?” she whispered to him.

He leaned over her and his smile was as radiant as the early-evening sun. He laid his hand flat over her forehead in an age-old gesture of affection and comfort.

“Oh yes,” he said, “you will see me again, Lady of Light.”

And then he touched the centre of her forehead with his fingertips and gave her the gift of blessed unconsciousness.



Nathaniel was exhausted, and, now that it was over, felt his exhaustion in full measure. He peeled off the surgical gloves one at a time and dropped them into a bin. Rubbing a tired hand around the back of his neck, stretching his neck sideways, first one way and then the other, trying to work the stiffness out of it, his

thoughts were disjointed, like a trickle of water turned on and then off, on and off – a consequence of utter mental exhaustion.

He glanced at the clock. Now, finally, he could allow himself the luxury of knowing the time. 2:05am. He did a quick calculation as he removed the cap and pulled the surgical mask over his head, dropping both into the clothes bin. And then he looked at the clock again to make sure he'd read the time correctly. He had.

Just over eight hours.

Jesus! No wonder he ached. That might just be the longest he'd spent in surgery at any one time. He'd have to check.

He pulled the bloodied surgeon's gown over his head without bothering with the ties, rolled it into a ball and threw it into the bin after the cap and mask. Then, bending over the sink, he washed and scrubbed his hands and wrists thoroughly and rinsed them clean before splashing his face and neck with water.

Eight hours.

He wiped his hands and face on a towel, and then threw the towel around his neck, holding the ends with his hands, and stood unmoving for a long moment, barely aware of the activity around him as the other members of the surgical team de-robed and cleaned up. No one spoke. They'd already congratulated each other on the success of the surgery and were now too tired for further conversation.

By the time Nathaniel roused himself, forcing himself to move, they'd wheeled her out of the theatre. He would've walked straight out without even a backward glance, but something, it was impossible to say what, caused him to deviate. He walked over to the bed and stood looking down at her. She was, he knew, deeply unconscious, still under the influence of the anaesthetic, and would be for a while yet.

He worked the inside of his lip with his teeth as he looked at her. He knew the team had done everything in its power to give her a fighting chance. But whether or not she would regain full, or even partial, functionality of her leg remained to be seen. He doubted it, although he would never verbalise that doubt out loud. As he looked at her, he found himself wondering if she was a fighter. She'll need to be, he

thought. Determination, fortitude, strength, courage. These were characteristics she would need in spades. He hoped, for her sake, she possessed them.

Shrugging inwardly, mentally dismissing both her and the surgery, he began to turn away but glanced at her one more time, stopped and turned back. She was struggling to open her eyes. Partially succeeding, he thought she was, then, trying to focus on him. He was mildly surprised. The anaesthetic must be starting to release its hold. One could never predict for how long the anaesthetic would continue to have a stranglehold. Everyone reacted to it differently.

The mask over her mouth fogged up. She was trying to speak. Leaning over her, he stretched the elastic holding it in place, pulling the mask away from her mouth.

“Does this mean I’ve walked through the door?”

The question came out in a hoarse whisper, the words blurred but distinguishable, and, strangely, heartfelt.

He hesitated, knowing she couldn’t possibly be aware of where or even of who she was at the moment. She certainly would not know who he was. So what was she seeing? What fragment of her traumatised mind was trying to express itself?

He decided to indulge her. “What door?” he asked her, softly but clearly.

She was losing consciousness again. He could see it pulling at her, and although she tried to resist, it was a battle she had no hope of winning. But she heard him and she registered his words because she tried to answer. She mouthed a single word. Only the faintest whisper came from her lips, but it was enough. He heard it.

“Portal.”

He looked at her, faintly bemused. “Portal? What portal?”

But she had dropped, again, into the abyss of anaesthetised unconsciousness.

He replaced the mask, wondering briefly if she thought she was dead.

“Nathaniel.” One of the surgical nurses touched his arm. He straightened and turned to look down at her. “I know you’re tired,” she said quietly, as if she didn’t want the woman lying unconscious on the bed to hear her, “but her family’s here. They’ve been here for hours apparently. Do you feel up to talking to them?”

And alleviating their worries? This part of the question hovered in the air between them, unspoken. They both knew what she meant.

“Yeah,” he answered her, running tired hands over his face and through his hair. “Of course. Of course.” And then he brought his hands down quickly and focussed on her. “How do you know they’re her family? We don’t know who she is. She hasn’t been identified.”

“They knew she was on the train, and they’ve given a detailed description of her. It fits, perfectly.” She turned to go but stopped, hesitated, as if deciding something, and then turned back to look first at the woman lying unconscious on the bed and then at him. “So we *do* know who she is. Her name is Kate.”



Kate stirred and tried to open her eyes, but they were welded shut it seemed, for they refused to respond. She tried again and then again, finally abandoning the effort. Instead, she lay listening as she became aware of the sounds around her. Voices were murmuring softly somewhere close by and more loudly further away. A phone rang some distance away and was answered. A constant stream of footsteps grew louder and then softer as people walked past. And then the faint blip . . . blip . . . blip of a machine intruded. She focussed on it to the exclusion of all else. Blip . . . blip . . . blip, like a heartbeat.

Something was covering her nose and mouth, and she felt cocooned by it, as if it was separating her from the world of sounds around her. She felt disconnected from the sounds, isolated. The sensation was not unpleasant. It was, to her, as if the sounds were in a different reality. She tried again to open her eyes and this time managed to force them open a fraction. Before they became too heavy and dropped shut again like an overly-heavy gate, she was given a blazing impression of white. Everything was white.

Was this heaven?

Then why did the light hurt her eyes?

The thought wafted through her mind like a lone leaf caught on a breeze. She tried to catch it so she could hold it and contemplate the answer, but the effort was too great. She couldn’t stay awake. The abyss closed in on her again . . .



Someone forced her eye open and shone a bright light into it. She didn't like it but didn't have the strength to resist. It hurt. She tried, desperately, to protest when strong, brutal fingers forced open the other eye and shone the light into it, but her efforts were futile. Then it was over, the hands and the light gone. Her eyelids clamped back into place and sleep claimed her again.



She awoke again, this time to darkness. She could see the darkness even through her closed eyes so didn't bother wasting energy trying to open them. Instead, she lay passively in the silence. There were no voices, no footsteps, no phone ringing. Only the faint blip . . . blip . . . blip of the machine broke the silence. She lay still, listening to the blip for a long time, feeling strangely comforted by it, as if it was her only companion . . . as if it understood. And then she drifted, once again, back into the abyss.



She had company when she awoke again. Someone was sitting beside her, silently. She could feel their presence the way one feels the warmth from a small heater. It was comforting, and she guessed it was her mum, but wasn't sure.

This time, she didn't bother fighting her eyes, forcing them open, but lay, instead, listening to the conversation between the two male voices at the end of the bed. She couldn't make out their words so she listened to the cadence of two interweaving male timbres, like a melody, up and down, in and out. One would speak, the other would reply. So absorbed was she in the melody of their conversation that she failed, at first, to realise she couldn't hear the blip . . . blip . . . blip. When she did realise, she listened intently, trying to hear it. It was gone. And so was the mask that had covered her nose and mouth. She opened her eyes in surprise, equally surprised by how easily they responded.

The room she lay in was full of light. No wonder she'd had such a strong impression of white. The walls and ceiling were pure white and so was the curtain

pulled half way around the bed. She moved her head on the pillow, trying to focus on the two figures at the end of the bed, squinting through the forest of wires and pulleys between her and them, recognising the green pyjamas and white coats of surgeons. But she couldn't bring either the forest of wires or the two men into sharper focus. They remained blurry, but she could see that one of the men had his hands in the pockets of his surgical pyjamas and the other was holding something, a clipboard. Both were focussed on it. The one holding the clipboard was heavysset with heavier facial features. He appeared older than the other. It was he who noticed she was awake.

"Ah, awake at last," he said, looking at her over the clipboard. "How do you feel?"

The question washed over her at first. But then the words slowly penetrated and registered. How did she feel? A frisson of annoyance shot through her. Although undoubtedly well-meant, the question was patronising. Really, how did he think she felt?

She allowed her eyes to drop shut, briefly, relishing the bliss of having them closed again. And then she answered him, slowly, enunciating every word carefully so she wouldn't slur any of them. She was his patient. It was a label she couldn't avoid given current circumstances, but she wanted him to know she still had a mind of her own and was, therefore, also a real person. She decided to borrow a line from one of her own dialogues.

"I feel as if one of Rome's mighty legions has marched over the top of me."

In the silence that followed, she opened her eyes and tried to focus on them again. They were both looking at her blankly, blandly, especially the older, both seemingly unimpressed with her answer.

"Right," the older said flatly. "Sense of humour intact." And he wrote something on the clipboard. Was he writing that? Really?

She relaxed against the pillow, looked up at the ceiling and whispered, "I didn't realise I was in danger of losing that?"

Actually, now that she thought about it or, more to the point, now that she concentrated on her body, she realised she hadn't exactly told them the truth. She felt as if someone had packed her in cotton wool . . . or, more to the point, packed

her body *with* cotton wool. She began to test different parts of her body, trying to move her fingers and then her arms. When she tried to wiggle the toes of her left leg, they responded beautifully. But when she tried the toes of her right foot, she found it impossible to determine if she'd succeeded or not. She moved her head on the pillow again, trying to focus on her right foot, and realised with a shock that the wires were holding her right leg suspended off the bed.

And then she remembered.

My God. Her leg was still there.

The younger of the two surgeons took his hands from his pockets and walked towards her.

"It's probably best if you don't try and move at the moment," he said when he was but an arm length from her.

She looked up at him, finding it easier to focus on him now that he was closer. She squinted in the light, puzzled. His eyes . . . His eyes were familiar. She'd seen them before. But that was impossible, wasn't it?

"You saved my leg?" she asked him with difficulty. So overwhelmed with emotion was she that her throat had constricted and she was forced to speak the words in a heavy, choked whisper.

A quizzical expression flickered across his face. "Why do you ask that?"

"Because . . . I thought I'd lost it."

He inclined his head, interested. "You remember what happened to you?"

Remember? Now that she was awake, images were pouring through her mind like an unstopped dam, one after another after another until she came to that final image. Again, the wave of intense emotion was overwhelming. He came . . . he came . . . he came . . .

"I think I remember everything," she whispered through her burning throat.

"You were conscious?"

"Yes."

"Through it all?"

"Yes."

Silence.

Both men were looking at her, but their expressions and their body language gave nothing away. She couldn't read what they were thinking, and sleep was beginning to pull at her again. She couldn't fight sleep *and* try to make out their thoughts. It was one or the other.

And then the doctor beside her bestirred himself. "To answer your question, we put the pieces of your leg back together, so, yes, we saved it. But how well it heals now is no longer in our hands unfortunately. It's up to you."

God-dammit. Like a man caught in quicksand, the sleep was pulling her down, and the more she fought it, the harder it pulled. Just before the sleep closed in around her again, she managed to whisper, "I'll see what I can do."



The room was full of darkening shadows when she awakened from the latest light doze. She'd slept on and off all day, sometimes dozing lightly and intermittently, sometimes sleeping more heavily. At one point, they'd helped her to sit up in the bed, rearranging the pillows behind her. Such a painful experience it turned out to be, it'd taken her a long time to fight the resulting nausea. For a good twenty minutes or so she'd desperately fought the urge to throw up, knowing the pain of doing so would be unbearable. She'd won that battle, thank the gods. Now, though, she wanted to lie down again, but was too afraid to ask. She knew she wouldn't sleep properly, or comfortably, sitting up. But she also knew she wasn't ready to feel that kind of pain again. Such was the choice she was confronted with: unbearable pain and a comfortable sleep or an uncomfortable sleep but no pain.

She was still pondering her predicament, weighing up the pros and cons of her two options, when he walked in, the younger surgeon with the familiar brown eyes. Neither he nor she spoke, and she watched, welcoming the distraction, as he picked up the clipboard hanging over the end of the bed and studied it closely. When he looked up and saw her watching him, a flicker of surprise crossed his face. Obviously he wasn't expecting her to be awake.

He walked around the bed, put the clipboard on the portable table half way up the bed, and folded his arms on it.

“How do you feel?” he asked. “And the question is a valid one,” he added defensively. “I need to know if you’re feeling any pain.”

“Not at the moment.”

He nodded, satisfied, but didn’t bother making a note of that on the clipboard.

Maybe it was because there was nothing else to do or maybe because her other senses had become dulled with under-use, or maybe just because of the enforced stillness, she had noticed within herself throughout the day a heightened ability to read people’s thoughts. She felt and sensed and *knew* what people were thinking. So she’d felt the question in him almost as soon as he came close and folded his arms on the clipboard. But now, in the silence that had fallen between them, she could feel it building, gaining momentum, as if he was dying to ask her. But she could also feel his hesitation and wasn’t sure why.

Unable to help herself, she cocked her head and brought her eyebrows together, questioning, silently urging and encouraging him to express what was on his mind.

He smiled faintly. “Do you remember asking me a question while you were still under the influence of the anaesthetic, after the surgery?”

Even knowing her question could not be anything other than a product of anaesthetised delirium, a delusional rambling, he still burned with curiosity. She’d seemed so earnest when she asked it, so lucid.

“What did I ask?”

“Your exact words were ‘Does this mean I’ve walked through the door?’.”

That surprised her. Her mind had been functioning even through the anaesthetic.

“That’s not what you want to know,” she said to him, softly, quietly. “You want to know what I meant. And no, I don’t remember asking it. But I *do* know what I meant, and I also know why I asked it.”

He waited, but when she made no further comment and didn’t seem inclined to, he pressed her. “And?”

She dropped her head back on the pillow and contemplated the ceiling. Jesus! Even though he *felt* familiar, and she recognised his eyes, she didn’t know him. Was it worth taking the risk and sharing her very soul with this stranger – a

stranger she needed at the moment, given current circumstances, and, therefore, a stranger she could not afford to alienate? But this was no *ordinary* stranger.

“Within each and every one of us,” she began, slowly, deciding to take the risk but keeping her eyes on the ceiling for now, “there is a door, a portal, to the higher dimensions. Indeed, each and every one of us *is* a portal to a higher dimension, and there are no exceptions, or no reason I can think of why anyone would be exempt from that truth.”

She looked at him to gauge his reaction. There was no obvious one, but he was listening intently.

“Unfortunately, or should I say, tragically, as humans our ignorance is so complete, so chronic, so endemic, we know nothing about the portal, nothing at all. We have no idea of its existence within us, let alone how to access it. So we have no notion, then, of what we really are, nor of what we’re truly capable of. And, so consumed with what we want and need from our physical reality are we that we are turned in the wrong direction. So busy are we, trying to tweak our reality to turn it into what we want it to be, we are facing the wrong way. While ever this is so, we will never know about the portal, and we will never see it.”

She hesitated, again trying to gauge his reaction. There was none, or none she could perceive anyway.

“Such is our experience now,” she said, continuing her answer, “that when we walk through the door, the portal within us, into our own higher dimensionality, ‘tis because we have died. Such is the state of the human experience. We have to die to walk through the door within. It doesn’t *have* to be that way. But it *is* that way. Such a rare and precious thing it is, therefore, to walk through the door whilst still incarnate . . . whilst still alive, I mean.”

Even though she was quite pleased with the way she’d articulated her answer, during the silence that followed she watched him like a hawk, all her senses and all her awareness honed in on him. Over the years, she had become super-sensitive to rejection and negative reactions. She had become an expert at sensing them. In the same instant she detected even a hint of a negative response, she withdrew, implacably and irretrievably. Now, she looked for the smallest sign, the faintest hint that he thought what she’d said was weird or ridiculous or silly or bizarre –

just some of the responses she'd elicited over the years. Like an animal sensing danger, poised for flight, she waited, tense and alert.

But he showed neither resistance nor receptivity, neither agreement nor disagreement. He looked at her with little or no expression on his face. Only his slightly narrowed eyes indicated to her that he was thinking, weighing and balancing what she'd told him. This was a new response, an unexpected one. An expression of surprise flickered across her face, and he caught it.

"And you've walked through the door?" he asked her seriously, again surprising her because his question held no hint of sarcasm, ridicule, cynicism or judgement.

"Walking," she corrected, emphasising the second half of the word, and not bothering to hide her surprise. "I'm walking through the door."

"And yet," he commented mildly, "here you are, trussed up in a hospital bed, unable to do much at all."

"But it's because of the door that I'm here like this." The words came out before she could stop them. Damn, she thought, wanting to kick herself, now he'll want to know why. She wasn't ready to tell him everything. Not yet. "And there is much I *can* do, even like this," she said quickly to forestall comment and to steer the conversation in a slightly different direction. "I can contemplate and realise and remember. And I can visualise. Thus am I able to do everything I need to do to keep walking. In fact, this," she motioned with her bandaged hands, indicating her own situation, "is an advantage in some ways because it facilitates single-minded focus. When there are not the distractions of everyday life, there is much to be gleaned from and within one's own imagination, especially once you learn its language."

His expression changed subtly, and she knew she'd lost him. He had about him, now, the look of a man who had become suspicious of the fact that he was being made fun of.

She sighed inwardly, silently. So be it, she thought.

"I'm not making fun of you," she told him quietly. "I'm very serious. You cannot, cannot go beyond the door without your imagination. Indeed, the realm of imagination is what's beyond the door."

"I see," he said, and from his tone she knew he clearly did *not* see. At all.

“At least you listened,” she said to him. “Most people would’ve shut me down after the first sentence. Anyway,” she sighed, “that’s what I meant when I asked you that question after the surgery.”



“Right, lovey, pop this under your tongue.”

Kate sat with the long, cold piece of glass under her tongue and watched as Rosalie followed the second hand of her watch. They became, the two of them, suspended in a minute of time, neither of them moving nor speaking, and neither taking their eyes from Rosalie’s watch.

“All right,” Rosalie said, releasing them both from the moment, “let’s have a look.”

She pulled the thermometer from Kate’s mouth and studied it. Kate allowed her only the time needed to read the thermometer before asking, “What is it?”

Rosalie pursed her lips quickly and then relaxed them. “37.7.”

She popped the thermometer back into its sheath and walked to the end of the bed.

“It’s not too bad,” she commented reassuringly as she recorded the figure on the clipboard. “I’d prefer to see it come down, though.”

She walked back to the edge of the bed and absently, almost unconsciously, tidied the blankets and tucked them under the mattress – a force of habit, Kate thought.

“Listen, lovey,” she said as she worked, “there are two men outside who want to talk to you. They’re investigating the crash. They’ve been bugging us for days, but we’ve had the perfect excuse to send them packing because you’ve been unconscious. Now you’re awake, we no longer have that excuse. Do you feel up to seeing them? You don’t have to. If you don’t feel up to it, I can send them away again.”

Kate let her head fall back against the pillow and closed her eyes, suddenly nervous. This was inevitable, unavoidable.

“No,” she said quietly. “I might as well get it over and done with now. Let them come in.”

Rosalie reached up behind Kate and pulled something down and forward across the bed. Kate felt something cold pressed into her bandaged hand and looked down. Rosalie positioned Kate's thumb over the bright red button.

"Just in case."

They exchanged smiles of conspiracy.

Kate watched the men as they walked into the room, assessing them, trying to glean anything from their appearance and demeanour that could be helpful. They looked business-like, both wearing suits, white shirts, and patterned ties. One was much older than the other. He carried a briefcase. The other carried nothing at all. They arranged chairs for themselves, and Kate watched while the older of the two put his briefcase across his knee, snapped the catches, opened it, and drew out a wad of notes.

Full of his own importance, she thought, waiting for him to speak, knowing he would do the talking. She wasn't sure whether this insight into his character would work for or against her.

He cleared his throat, looked up at her from his chair, and introduced both him and the other, younger man. He expressed his sympathy, sounding decidedly unsympathetic, and then explained to her they were part of a team convened post-accident with the sole purpose of investigating the cause. Then he asked her if she wouldn't mind answering a couple of questions. She told him she didn't mind.

He pulled a laminated diagram from among the wad of notes and leaned forward, holding it up for her.

"Can you tell me where you were sitting?"

She looked at the diagram of the carriage closely, locating her seat quickly because she always sat in the same one, and pointed to it with her bandaged hand.

He nodded brusquely and wrote something on the wad of pages in front of him. Before he had a chance to ask another question, she asked him one of her own.

"How many people died in the accident?"

He didn't hesitate. "Thirty-three in total, all of whom were sitting in the first carriage. You were one of a few survivors, so you can understand why we would be keen to speak to you? The families of the injured and dead want answers, naturally."

“Naturally,” she echoed, taking an absolute and distinct dislike to the man.

“Did you see or hear anything unusual before the accident – on the station or when you were boarding the train, for example?”

Kate hesitated, taking a moment to adjust to the question. That wasn’t what she thought they would ask. Wouldn’t it make much more sense to ask her to describe the whole experience as she remembered it?

“No,” she answered him. “There was nothing out of the ordinary, either on the station or in the train. Nothing at all.”

“What about in the moments before the accident?”

Kate tried to keep her expression neutral, but couldn’t stop herself from swallowing nervously. “No, nothing,” she lied. “Nothing at all.”

“No suspicious persons or packages, anything like that?”

Again she hesitated, and in her hesitation she felt the faint stirrings of irritation. “What on earth does a ‘suspicious’ person look like?” she asked him, unable to keep the irritation out of her voice. “You’re asking me to pass judgement on someone because of the way they look?”

Careful, she silently warned herself. Careful. Her heart was pounding, and she wanted to end the interview. She toyed, fleetingly, with the idea of pressing the red button, but there *was* something she needed to tell them. She just wasn’t sure how to word it without revealing that she knew more than she was telling them.

In a more neutral tone of voice she asked, “Do you think the crash was the result of an explosion?”

Neither of the men responded. They sat on their chairs in silence and looked at her.

She laughed without mirth. “What a god-damned cliché! You only have to look at the wreckage to know *we hit something*.” In her agitation her voice rose a few decibels.

The older man continued to look at her, but his lips were pinched and white. Disapproving lips, she thought. The younger, though, looked down at his shoes and ever-so-slightly shook his head. She saw it, and then she knew. Ah, she thought, now it makes sense. The scenario was so typical it was often used, to great effect, in movie scripts. An older man who thought his wealth of experience

justified *his* theory of what happened – a theory he no doubt formed within minutes of hearing about the accident. And the younger, ignored because of his youth and inexperience, recognising the evidence was screaming its contradiction of the theory, but unable to make himself heard.

“Our findings are confidential at this point . . .” the older man started to say.

“Confidential?” Kate echoed disbelievingly. “I was there, remember. I know more about this god-damned accident than you do, and I can tell you it was *not* an explosion that caused it.” She turned her head away from him and closed her eyes, feeling distraught. “I have nothing more to say. I’ve never liked talking to people whose minds are not open. You can go now.”

She heard the disapproving intake of his breath, and then listened to the jerky movements of someone who’d taken offence. He gathered his notes, flicked open his briefcase, put his notes inside it, and stood.

“No doubt we’ll be speaking to you again at some point,” he said, his words clipped. “You’re not going anywhere, and we know where to find you.”

She turned her head on the pillow and watched them leave. When they got to the door of the room, she saw the younger man touch the suit sleeve of the older and say something quickly, briefly. The older man nodded curtly and disappeared through the door, but the younger returned to stand beside Kate’s bed.

“I won’t waste time on apologies,” he said quickly. “He doesn’t speak for the team, and he certainly doesn’t speak for me. Please, tell me what you know.”

Kate took a deep breath to steady her nerves, but it didn’t help. “We hit something,” she said. “Believe me, I know. The impact was . . . well it was something I want never to experience again.” She searched his eyes, a little desperately, with her own, wanting to trust him, wanting him to be trustworthy. “Look at the wreckage,” she said. “You will see, we hit something.”

He nodded seriously. “I already have. And don’t worry. The crash analysts will squash any theory of explosions. It’s obvious the train was hit from the outside not the inside.” He shrugged in apology. “They just don’t want to be culpable, if you get my meaning.”

“I do . . . get your meaning, that is. But truth is truth, no matter what comes of it. Speaking of culpability, though, there is something you need to know. Whatever we hit, the driver did not see it.”

Now she had his full, undivided, undistracted attention. “How do you know that?”

“What do you do when you’re driving a car and something appears suddenly on the road in front of you? You act on instinct and reflex. You either try to stop the car or you swerve to avoid whatever it is in front of you. We couldn’t swerve for obvious reasons, but neither did he make any attempt to stop. He made no attempt to slow the train at all. There was no deceleration. And there was no screeching of breaks before we hit. We just drove into something at full speed.”

“How could he not see something that was right in front of him – something big enough to cause that much damage?”

How indeed?

“I don’t know.”

He turned and glanced nervously towards the door, obviously expecting a summons. “Did you see anything?”

“No,” she lied again. “I’m sorry. I saw nothing.”

“There’s no evidence of another vehicle at the crash site,” he told her. “No flecks of paint, no scraps or pieces of metal. Everything we’ve uncovered belongs to your train. So whatever you hit, it’s gone, leaving no trace whatsoever.” He hesitated and glanced at the door again. “There is something we can’t explain, though. The overhead wires around the crash site and just after it have disappeared. Your train didn’t use them. It wasn’t an electric train. So we can’t tell if the wires were already down or if they came down as a result of the accident.” He glanced at the door again and then back at her. “But if they’d come down as a result of the accident, they’d be on the ground around the site. As it is, they’ve just disappeared, without a trace, and we don’t know why.”

Kate didn’t know what to say. She tried different responses, but discarded them all. She knew why the wires weren’t there. They’d disintegrated, vaporised, but she couldn’t tell him that without giving herself away.

“So,” he said, “the train hit something no one saw – something that left not a shred of evidence. Have I got that right?”

“There is evidence,” she corrected him. “In the wreckage itself.”

“Okay then, let me re-phrase. The train hit something invisible that has, now, disappeared without leaving a trace of itself.”

No, she screamed silently, inwardly. It wasn’t invisible. I saw it as clearly as I see you now. Outwardly, she nodded slowly, silently.

“All right,” he said when she remained verbally silent, “if you think of anything, anything at all, no matter how trivial you think it might be,” and he opened his suit jacket as he spoke, took a card out of the interior pocket, and put it on the table in front of her, “please, give me a call.”

She nodded. “I will.”

He smiled at her briefly. “Ask for Josh,” he said, and then turned and walked out.



Rosalie looked at the thermometer and tried not to let her disappointment, and concern, show on her face.

“What is it?” Kate asked.

“38.2,” Rosalie replied.

Both women were quiet then. Kate knew they were monitoring her temperature because they were afraid of infection. “Not good?” she ventured.

Rosalie popped the thermometer back in its sheath, and, as per her hourly ritual, walked to the end of the bed and recorded the reading on the clipboard. “It’ll be fine, lovey,” she said, although her whole demeanour belied her words. “All you need is a good night’s rest. You’ve had a big day, and this is only your second day awake. You need to rest now.”

Standing at the nurse’s station a moment later, tapping her fingers on the desk, Rosalie bit her lower lip, undecided. He’d left instructions to call him if her temperature went above 39°, but every instinct was screaming at her to call him now. She was not an alarmist, but doctors were an unpredictable bunch. He would either be annoyed at the interruption or appreciative.

Oh, what the hell, she thought, angry with herself. What did it matter what he thought. It wasn't *him* that mattered, it was *her*.

Her mind made up, she took a quick, deep, decisive breath and lifted the receiver of the phone.

"Dr Hirsch, please," she said brusquely when the phone was answered. And then, when he came on the line at the other end, "I know you told us to call you when her temperature went above 39°, but I just thought I should give you a heads-up. It's 38.2 and climbing."

She listened briefly. "Okay. Thanks," she said, and hung up.



Kate was lying with her eyes closed, not asleep and not dozing, just lying. The light in the room was just beginning to change. The onset of twilight. Another day nearly over.

She didn't hear anyone come into the room, so when she felt a hand on her forehead, laid flat across it, her eyes flew open and she jumped with fright.

"You're hot," Nathaniel said as he removed his hand.

"You make that sound like an accusation. I can assure you, I'm not doing it deliberately."

"Doing what?"

"Making my temperature go up."

He smiled briefly, faintly. "Are you in pain?"

She shook her head on the pillow, not bothering to raise it. In truth, she felt very tired. Her body felt heavy, and she wasn't sure she had the energy to lift her head off the pillow.

Nathaniel perched on the edge of the bed, holding himself in place with one implanted leg. "Rosalie told me those men upset you today. Would that be right?"

At the mention of the conversation with the investigators earlier in the day, the now-familiar upset and distress settled over Kate like a blanket. She felt very conflicted about not telling them the truth, even though she knew she couldn't.

"Yes, they did," she answered Nathaniel's question, "but it wasn't their fault." And then, recalling some of the details of the conversation, added, "Well, mostly

anyway. One of them was an idiot.” She shrugged. “But the other was nice enough.”

“So why did they upset you then? Or how? Did they make you remember things you’d rather forget?”

“As long as I live I will never forget. No, it wasn’t that.”

“What was it then?”

God, he was persistent.

And then, suddenly, inexplicably, she *needed* to tell him, desperately. So strong was the urge, she turned her head away from him so he wouldn’t see her need, her naked longing.

“Kate?” he prompted.

She turned her head towards him again, and what he saw in her eyes made him sit up straighter.

“You’re worried about infection,” she said. “That’s why you’re taking my temperature every hour. It makes it very hard to rest, you know.” Although a weak attempt to lighten the moment, neither he nor she smiled. “But you don’t realise. I burn because I know something, and I’m burning to tell someone. But I have to be so careful. I can’t tell just anyone. I have to know I can trust whomever I tell.”

He inclined his head. “Trust?” he echoed. “In what way?”

She swallowed nervously.

“Whatever you tell me, Kate,” he said, “I will tell no one else . . . and I mean no one.”

She shook her head quickly, slightly, dismissively. “It’s not that. That’s not what I mean when I say I have to be able to trust.”

He raised an eyebrow and opened his mouth to comment, but she beat him to it.

“It’s what you will *do* with what I tell you that matters . . . I mean, what your reaction will be.”

“I see.”

She looked at him, knowing he did not understand at all, and then realisation hit, like the impact that crumpled the train. Why did it matter what he did with what she had to say? Why? Because once she told him, it would be out in the open, and she would be unable to take it back. At the moment, it was safe, the experience

. . . *she* was safe because it was all contained in that place within. At the moment, she was free to know and believe without the reflection of doubt. But if she told him, that would change.

If she was to go any further, though, those doubts had to be faced and conquered because they wreaked havoc with her inner knowing and her belief, like the havoc of the aftermath of the crash. The doubts she harboured caused her to falter in her progress and her Process, like the derailment of a train, because they caused her to take her eyes off where she was going. Was that why he was here – to be the reflection, to draw those doubts up and out?

She took a deep, calming breath to steady her racing pulse, but it failed to slow her heartbeat. Suddenly, she knew. It wasn't him she was afraid of, it was her Self. It wasn't him she was facing, it was her Self.

"I lied to those men," she told him, making her choice. "I told them I didn't see what it was we hit. But I did see it. I saw it as clearly as I see you now. No one else saw it, not even the driver. But I did. If you want proof that I saw it, you only have to look at the wreckage of my body to know I braced for impact."

Nathaniel frowned, surprised. "How do you know the driver didn't see it?"

"Because he did nothing at all to stop or to slow the train. Nothing. He just drove straight into it at full speed."

Nathaniel nodded. That made sense. The death toll alone was a testament to the truth of that. He changed position on the bed, shifting his leg to make his position less precarious, more stable, more permanent. "What did the train hit?"

She looked away from him, turning to look up at the ceiling, deliberately summoning the image as she'd seen it just before the accident.

"Imagine a perfect sphere of, say, polished white marble, a little like the white ball on a snooker table. Only this sphere is the size of a large building." She shrugged. "Perhaps nine or ten stories high, maybe higher. Then, you place one hand on top of the sphere and another below it, and you bring your hands together so that the sphere is flattened into a bulging disk." She looked at him. "That is what I saw."

He didn't react or respond at all. Whatever he'd expected her to say, that was not it.

“Although the flattened sphere was white,” she continued with her description, “it was surrounded by a hazy but bright blue nimbus, like an aura, and the blue aura emanated from it maybe two to three metres.”

She stopped, trying to gauge his reaction. There was none, at all.

“That is what we hit,” she said again unnecessarily, trying to fill the uncomfortably-heavy silence.

He continued to look at her without moving, without responding, without reacting.

“It was very big,” she said nervously, “and it sat right over the track, so we couldn’t have avoided it. The best we could’ve hoped for was to stop before we reached it.” She shrugged, almost apologetically. “But that was never going to happen while ever the driver couldn’t see it.”

Again, when he neither moved nor spoke, she felt it necessary to cover the awkward silence. She knew she was beginning to babble, but she also knew she couldn’t stop now. There was no taking any of it back.

“There isn’t and won’t be any evidence of a collision with *it* because we didn’t touch it . . . as such. We didn’t even scratch the surface of it. It was the energy field around it – the blue nimbus – we collided with.”

Finally, Nathaniel found his voice. “You’re saying . . .” He lifted a hand and ran it through his hair, frowning heavily. Jesus! What was she saying?

“You’re saying . . .” he tried again.

“I’m saying we hit a vessel not of this world,” she said, helping him out. “I’m saying we hit a vessel that utilised a technology far more advanced than anything I’ve ever heard of. I’m saying we hit something better suited to the context of a science-fiction movie than the context of ordinary, everyday reality.”

“Right, that’s what I thought . . .”

“And please,” she said, “do not use the word ‘alien’. In truth, there should be no such word. They are *not* alien any more than we are. They live in this galaxy just as we do. And, contrary to popular and ignorant human opinion, this earth is *not* the exclusive domain of humans.”

“Jesus!” Nathaniel breathed. “You saw them?”

She relaxed back against the pillow, only then realising she'd tensed to the point of raising her head off it. "I saw *him*."

Nathaniel frowned again, heavily. "Him?"

"After the accident, he came. He looked human except that some of his features were exaggerated. He was tall, very tall, with long, long limbs and long fingers. His skin was as pale as moonlight, and his hair as white as snow. His eyes were large, much larger than human eyes, and of a colour I've not seen in eyes before – a blue like the colour of the blue energy that surrounded the vessel. He turned me over and made me comfortable. He straightened my arms and my leg, and I felt no pain. He touched me here." She indicated the point just below her breastbone where she'd felt something shift. "I felt movement, as if he changed something within me. And he spoke to me."

"What did he say?"

"He said, 'Lady of Light, you will survive this'. And of all the things I could've asked him, like who he was and where he was from, I just wanted to know one thing."

"And that was?"

"I wanted to know if I would see him again. He smiled at me and told me I would."

Nathaniel didn't say anything. What could he say? He couldn't convince her she hadn't really seen this being and his vessel. And he wasn't entirely sure he wanted to. He'd thought it strange when she'd said, when she first awakened, that she'd been conscious through the whole accident. Now he realised she hadn't been conscious at all. And if this . . . dream was her way of explaining it, then who was he to disillusion her or to take it from her? He was a surgeon not a psychologist. He wasn't trained to handle trauma of the mind, only that of the body.

"Why do you think I saw their vessel when no one else did?" Kate asked him. "Or could, for that matter?"

Nathaniel shook his head. He couldn't help it. His mind was beginning to scream its resistance, almost like the screeching of breaks that were supposedly absent just before the crash according to her story. With every detail she added, he

could feel his irritation building. And what he struggled with most was that she actually believed it. He'd thought her more intelligent than she apparently was.

She could feel his resistance. "You don't believe me," she said flatly. "Then you will believe me even less when I give you the answer to the question I just asked you. Now that I've begun, I must tell you everything. Both *him* and his vessel were not beyond my frame of reference because I've seen them before, in my imagination."

Nathaniel shifted uncomfortably on the bed. He should stop her. This was not healthy. He should not encourage her . . .

"Have you ever heard the story of the Aztec people and their response to the fleet of ships when the Spanish first sailed to their shores?" she asked him. "They could not see the ships because the ships were beyond their frame of reference – beyond their current experience and knowledge and, therefore, their level of understanding. They knew something was there, coming towards them, because they could see the wake – the disturbance in the water – but they could not see what was causing the disturbance. It was only when their shaman came – one who possessed the sight to see what was truly there – that the people began to see the ships."

"I've heard that story," Nathaniel muttered. "I've always thought it was a bit silly. If something is there, we see it. If not, we don't."

"No," Kate said adamantly, shaking her head. "We humans do *not* have that kind of mastery over the physical sense of our sight. We do not. The people on the train with me are proof of that. We see only what we expect to see. We see only what we're *used* to seeing. We see only what we *want* to see. And we *perceive* even less, for we perceive only the shallow surface of our physical reality – merely the tip of the iceberg. So we do not see what is there at all."

Although he tried to stop himself, Nathaniel pursed in lips in resistance. "And," he asked her slowly, "it's not possible no one else saw this thing because *you* saw something that wasn't actually there?"

"That's far easier to believe, isn't it?"

"Yes," he replied, "as a matter of fact, it is. Kate . . ." he paused, recognising the need to choose his words with care. "The mind is capable of incredible things.

When you experience a trauma like the one you've experienced, the mind has its own way of coping. It's not a bad thing. In actual fact, it's a good thing because the mind's coping mechanisms cushion and protect you from the trauma. But you have to be careful you don't mix up, or confuse, what's real and what's not real."

"I agree," she said. "We have to get it right. We have to know what's real and what's not real."

He frowned again, knowing, somehow, she'd turned his words inside-out. "In cases such as yours," he continued, deciding to ignore the innuendo implicit in her words, "it's all too easy to cross a line that takes you into territory that's no longer helpful. In fact, it can become unhelpful. And if it's not addressed, or dealt with, the lines of reality and imagination can become blurred, and it can be hard to come back to the real world, the world everyone else exists in."

"You're talking about psychological illness," she said quietly, suddenly feeling very, very tired. She looked away from him, towards the darkening window and, beyond it, to the darkening, changing sky. And then, like the slow dawning of a sunrise, she began to *know*. He had just articulated her own fear, reflecting it back to her. *She* was the one who was afraid of blurring the lines between reality and imagination. *She* was the one who was afraid of losing her grip on, and her sense of, what was really real. She closed her eyes as the realisation robbed her of breath.

"How sad," she whispered, more to herself than to him, "how tragic it is that we humans label something so beautiful as illness. No wonder our lives lack imagination. No wonder we all live the same clone-like lives. We're labelled as ill or defective or dangerously different if we try to live any other way. I mean," she said bitterly, "God help us all if we begin to pay heed to our fantasies and our dreams and our visions, if we should *dare* give them credence . . ."

Nathaniel cleared his throat. "Kate, we have a trauma counsellor here at the hospital. Would you speak to her, for me? I think you'd find it helpful. I know she can help you. She's very good. She has a very good track record."

His words hurt her intensely at first. She felt them like a stabbing pain, and was hopelessly unable to stop it showing on her face. Hurt is fear confirmed, she thought. But then, even before it passed, she realised, with a sudden and

unexpected jolt of elation, that she didn't need him to believe her. She didn't need *his* belief to validate *her* experience.

She laughed softly as she turned towards him again. "Just so you know," she told him, "if you send your trauma counsellor to see me, I will refuse to speak to her. Not a single word will pass my lips. Not a single word will I utter in her presence. Just so you know."

Nathaniel stood, put his hands in his pockets and looked down at her, his disapproval etched on his face. And then he shrugged. "It's your call. I can't make you talk to her."

"It would be so utterly pointless," she said. "She and I would have such vastly different perspectives, it would be impossible for us to connect in any way that would be helpful."

"Yeah," he replied, "and that's exactly what worries me."

He turned then and left her before she could say anything else. In his irritation, he completely forgot why he'd come down to see her in the first place.

"There is proof, you know," she told him as he walked away. He didn't stop walking, so she found it necessary to raise her voice as the distance between them increased. "It's in the imprint, the way we leave an imprint in the soft earth when we step on it." She mustered all the energy she possessed, lifted her head off the pillow, and threw one more piece of information at his retreating back. "The vessel left an imprint in the grass around the train track. Even the wreckage of the train settled around the outline of it and forms part of the imprint . . ."

Exhausted, she fell back against the pillow and closed her eyes. She had no idea if he'd heard her.



Nathaniel stared at the computer screen without seeing it. He had the distinct and unnerving feeling he was being pulled against his will, as if being dragged along on the current of a strong river. The pull of it had begun right from that first interaction with her, just after the surgery, but he hadn't noticed it at first. With every contact since, though, with every conversation, the force and power of it had intensified so that it had become more and more difficult to ignore.

God damn! There was something about her. He couldn't put his finger on it, but whatever it was, it was reaching out and weaving its way into the depths of him, like a virus, and it was sending ripples of disturbance through his calm, ordered life. He knew who he was, and he knew where he was going. But somehow, in some way he couldn't explain, she was challenging that. He liked his life. He liked what he did, and he liked who he was when he did it. He had no intention of allowing anything or anyone to change that . . . no intention at all.

Yep, he thought, snapping to attention, and banging his hands on the edge of the desk in affirmation. It was time to put an end to it, this strange sensation that was disturbing his oh-so-likeable life. He would hand her over to another surgeon. It was that easy. He would sever all contact with her. Once he did, his life, he knew, would settle back into its normal rhythm, and he could breathe easy again.



Standing in the middle of the foyer like a lone island in a moving, steady stream of people, Nathaniel was rooted to the spot, statue-like, wholly unaware of the people moving past him. Although early evening, the hospital corridors were full of visitors, patients, staff, and they parted around him, moving past him like flowing water, he a rock in the middle of the stream.

Knowing he couldn't attack the pile of folders on his desk without a strong coffee, he'd abandoned the paperwork and walked through the busy corridors to the café near the front entrance of the hospital. The coffee was good there, worth the walk. But he'd never made it to the café. So abruptly had he stopped that a person walking behind him careened straight into the back of him. He barely noticed. Nor did he hear the expletives and the angry, derogatory comments that followed.

Like a sleepwalker or one in the grip of a hypnotic trance, he walked the few steps needed to take him to the small news stand, never taking his eyes from the newspaper on top of the pile. When close enough, he rummaged in his pocket for the five dollar note he'd brought to buy the coffee, pulled it out, put it on the counter, picked up a copy of the paper, and walked away without bothering to wait for the change.

Dear God!

As he wandered, slowly, automatically, through the corridors, never once lifting his eyes from the front page of the paper and the colour photo that took up most of it, he wondered if anyone else had seen what he could see so obviously, so clearly. An imprint she'd called it. That's exactly what it was. Or maybe 'outline' would be a better word. And, yes, just as she'd said, the wreckage formed part of that outline.

He stopped in the middle of the corridor. If only there was more to the photo. But the photographer had been interested only in the crash site, not in what was around or in front of it. He wondered if there *was* any more of the photo. They often cropped these pictures to show only what they wanted to show . . . or, more to the point, what they needed to show.

He looked up, still holding the paper in front of him, looking ahead, but seeing nothing in front of him at all.

How the hell had she known?

~

Her room was dark when he walked in, and she was asleep. He could tell she was in a deep sleep as soon as he saw her. Disappointed, he put the paper on the table, and toyed with the idea of waking her up. He was sure she wouldn't mind, but the doctor in him stayed his hand. She needed the sleep.

"Hello, Nathaniel."

The tall, dark shape that Nathaniel had thought part of the landscape outside the window disengaged itself, moving away from the window, towards the bed.

Nathaniel's automatic reaction was to switch on the night light above the bed.

The tall shape took form.

Nathaniel stared.

Both looked at each other in silence, neither moving. And then the tall shape indicated Kate with a sweep of a hand – an elegant, supremely graceful gesture – and smiled. "She has a way with words, does she not, Nathaniel? I know she described me to you, so I know you know who I am."

Nathaniel continued to stare. Indeed, he thought, silently answering the tall man's question, she'd described him perfectly: "*He looked human except that some of his features were exaggerated. He was tall, very tall, with long, long limbs and long fingers. His skin was as pale as moonlight, and his hair as white as snow. His eyes were large, much larger than human eyes, and of a colour I've not seen in eyes before – a blue like the colour of the blue energy that surrounded the vessel . . .*"

"Do you still think me the delusion . . . or *illusion* . . . of a traumatised mind?"

Nathaniel wondered fleetingly, if, in his fatigue, he had allowed himself to be affected by her delusions. But he could hardly refute the evidence of his own eyes.

"No."

"Good. Because *I* am real, perhaps more real than anything you've yet seen in this, your third-dimensional reality."

There were a thousand questions Nathaniel could've asked him, this tall being from God-knows-where. But all Nathaniel's questions would present themselves much later. For now, there were two things he needed to know.

"Did you heal her?" He pointed to his own chest, just below the breastbone. "Here?"

The tall man nodded. "Indeed. She had no need of that injury, no need at all, so I took it from her."

Nathaniel nodded his acceptance of this. The team who'd put her back together had commented, during the surgery, on the miracle of her not sustaining more severe internal injuries. Now he knew why.

"She told me her story," Nathaniel said, "as you obviously know. And she told me there was only one thing she wanted to know. Well I, too, have one burning question. Why did you allow the train to crash into you?"

The tall man did not answer Nathaniel's question immediately. In the silence between question and answer, the two looked at each other, one measuring, assessing, slightly accusatory, the other knowing, absorbing. When finally he, the tall being, answered, it was with one single, simple word.

"Change."

Nathaniel shook his head, unconsciously shaking off the answer. He re-phrased the question, his extreme annoyance underpinning it, “Why didn’t you allow the train through? Why did you stay there when you knew what the outcome would be . . . the carnage . . . ?”

Again, the tall man took a moment to reply. Again, he absorbed Nathaniel’s accusatory energy, making sure it was not returned. He moved closer to the bed and touched it with the tips of his fingers, letting them rest there. And then he inclined his head. “Is life really more important than death, Nathaniel?”

The question jolted Nathaniel, as if he’d just been given an electric shock.

“If I didn’t think so,” he replied slowly, “I wouldn’t be doing what I’m doing.”

“There are many reasons for your surgical procedures, Nathaniel, life and death being merely one of them. And despite what you *think* you know, you do not possess the kind of power necessary to control the life and death outcome.”

Nathaniel desperately wanted to deny the truth of this. He tried at first, but the flow of images in his mind’s eye prevented it. How many times had he wondered, after a surgery, why a particular patient had lived when he or she should have died, or why a patient died when he or she should have lived? They had accumulated, these experiences, beyond his ability to keep track of them.

“Look back over human history, Nathaniel,” the tall man said, gently breaking into and through Nathaniel’s thought processes. “For those who have the eyes to see, as do you, it is very clear in the events of the past that the Universal Consciousness holds a very different view of death than does humanity. As you well know, because it is your current experience, humanity will do anything to avoid, prevent or even circumvent physical death. And why? Because death is seen as an end, and as a separation.”

He laughed softly as he looked down at Kate. The expression on his almost-human facial features struck Nathaniel like a physical punch in the gut. Was it really possible to love another that much?

“Ah the irony,” the tall man whispered. “She will tell you, will the Lady of Light, the Truth is always illusion’s direct opposite.” He raised his face to look at Nathaniel across the bed. His face and his smile were radiant, beautiful. “And the

truth is, Nathaniel, physical death is *never* an end, but physical existence is, in its current form, *always* a separation.”

Nathaniel had no response. Indeed, he was suddenly finding it difficult to breathe.

The tall man indicated Kate again with the same sweeping, elegant hand gesture he'd used when first Nathaniel had seen him.

“She has not yet told you, the Lady of Light, because she is still discovering this Truth for herself, that what is on the other side of the portal is the *opposite* of what is on this side. Everything that *is* on this side of the portal, Nathaniel, is *not* on the other side, and everything that is *not* on this side of the portal *is* on the other side. Do you understand?”

Nathaniel nodded and looked down at Kate. Had she not already told him this?

“*I agree,*” she'd said. “*We have to get it right. We have to know what's real and what's not real.*”

Again, the same question that had driven him here to her room presented itself, and he frowned. How the hell did she know?

The tall man moved, drawing Nathaniel's attention. His fingertips trailed the bed, lightly touching it, as he glided around the bed and came to stand beside Nathaniel. Putting his hand on Nathaniel's shoulder he said, “Perhaps you should ask yourself, my old friend, why you can see the imprint of our vessel so easily,” and he indicated the paper lying on the table with a movement of his head, “when those who are picking through the wreckage, investigating the crash, have not, cannot, and will not see it. The cause of the crash, for them, will continue to be a very great mystery.”

Nathaniel said nothing.

The tall being removed his hand from Nathaniel's shoulder and turned to go. But he'd taken not three steps when he turned to face Nathaniel again. He smiled the same smile of radiance Nathaniel was fast becoming familiar with.

“It is so very, very good to see you again, old friend,” he said quietly.

And then he was gone.

Left alone, Nathaniel felt strangely bereft.



“It’s a metaphor for change – very great, very profound change.”

Nathaniel turned and looked down at Kate. “You’re awake.”

“You woke me when you turned the light on.”

Nathaniel digested this and its deeper ramifications, and then asked, “What’s a metaphor for change?”

“The whole thing. The crash, the carnage . . . all of it.” She smiled at him, and, for the first time, he began to see the same radiance in her smile he’d seen in that of the tall man. “You see,” she continued softly, “symbolism and metaphor are the language of the imagination – that which is beyond the portal, or on the other side of it. The train, on its pre-laid, pre-determined track, represents the path we humans are currently walking.

“But a higher-dimensional truth stops us in our tracks, pulling us up suddenly and irrevocably, obliterating the path of third-dimensionality we believe ourselves to be walking. The resulting death and carnage is itself symbolic of the great and profound change that follows. Like the butterfly in its chrysalis, parts of us die, other parts of us are altered beyond recognition, and yet other parts we thought trivial and non-significant suddenly become of vital importance. Even the eight hours of surgery is symbolic. The surgery represents, for me, the eighth stage of initiation – the stage that takes the initiate beyond the physical. The first seven stages deal with the physicality of our incarnation by working with the seven chakras, the energy centres of incarnation. But the eighth takes us beyond incarnation. The thirty-three deaths are also significant. These are the rungs on the ladder of inner and upward transformation.”

Nathaniel moved, almost without thinking. He grabbed a chair, spun it round on one leg in a deft and practised movement, straddled it, and folded his arms over the back of it. “And your leg?” he asked her.

“The human mind has enormous trouble allowing the transformation and making the transition needed to go beyond the portal, particularly if that mind has been here for any length of time. Have you ever noticed how natural it is for children to have imaginary friends, or to talk with those who have supposedly

ceased to exist after dying, or to perceive out of their intuition, so that they just ‘know things’? They labour not under the burden of decades of programmed beliefs and mindsets. Their innocence is still intact and unpolluted . . . or perhaps uncorrupted would be a better word. Once we reach adulthood, our minds have enormous trouble letting go of our preconceptions, our misconceptions, and our misguided beliefs formed through years and years of consciousness-shaping experiences. The body doesn’t just *reflect* what, or where, the mind is. The body *is* whatever the mind is. When my mind adjusts and makes the transition, as it is in the process of doing, I will walk again. You will see.”

“I believe you,” Nathaniel said softly, and she knew he was speaking his truth. She smiled at him again, and, unable to help himself, he smiled back.

“We humans attach so many connotations to words,” she told him, “so that words become labels – strict and limited definitions within themselves that allow for no movement of thought whatsoever. Thus do some words keep us *from* truth rather than leading us *to* truth. ‘Alien’ is one such word. It calls to mind images of little green men with three fingers, over-enlarged eyes, and no genitals.”

Nathaniel laughed at the accuracy of her brief description.

“But as you’ve now seen for yourself,” she continued, “the truth is vastly different. The word ‘alien’ should be expunged from our dictionaries, as should the word ‘angel’, for both have so much connotation attached to them, they are no longer helpful. ‘Imagine’ is another of those words of connotation. We think if we ‘imagine’ something, it’s automatically made-up so that it cannot be real and does not, therefore, exist in reality. So what, then, of a thing we ‘imagine’ that appears or manifests in our reality? If it’s in our reality, it’s not made-up. Or is it? We have made it real. So perhaps it was real in our imagination in the first place.”

Nathaniel said nothing, but as he rested his chin on his arms, she knew he was thinking, absorbing, assimilating, processing. His mind, she knew, was like hers. Just as a sponge absorbs water, so, too, did their similar minds absorb Truth.

“If,” she said, “we are to go beyond the portal, we must excise this ‘made-up’ connotation from our mindset in relation to our imagination. Yet, we act quickly to suppress a child’s imagination. We teach our children that ‘imagination’ can all too easily lead us into ‘unhealthy’ territory. Isn’t that the way you put it?”

Nathaniel raised his head, a contrite expression on his face. He opened his mouth to comment, but she didn't allow him the pause necessary to interject.

"A child accused of having an 'over-active' imagination soon learns to control and suppress it. I know," she told him. "I was one of those children. We are taught to fear the dreams we form in our imaginations because we learn to believe they can never come true. We learn to fear disappointment, and so it becomes easier not to dream. And we learn to fear being controlled or overwhelmed by what is in our imagination, as if we will be swept away, forever lost in a fog of insanity. '*Control your dreams or they will control you*.'" She laughed softly. "I can't even begin to tell you how disappointing life has turned out to be for me. Unfortunately, I learned from a young age to put my dreams in a box labelled 'must be contained', and I controlled them. So I've lived a dream-less existence – an existence where there are no happy endings because there are no unique dream-stories. That's beginning to change, though."

"Because of the portal?"

"Because of the portal."

Nathaniel smiled again, properly, not briefly the way she'd come to expect of him. And then his smile disappeared.

"I . . ." he stopped and bit his lip, finding himself in uncertain territory. "I was patronising . . ."

"You were," she agreed. "But you were experiencing the emotions of the mind's resistance – irritation and annoyance. I understand that. You, too, are being affected by change, are you not? We are connected, we two. And when no longer hampered by the Perpetual Separation of an egoic existence, when the veil of separation begins to come down, 'tis the nature of us that what happens to one, happens to the other, I think." She smiled a self-deprecating smile. "Do you know how I know that?"

He raised an eyebrow. "I dread to think."

Her smile deepened. "I have seen you, too, in my imagination many, many times. I have written about you. I think that's why I asked the question of you after the surgery. My conscious mind was still sound asleep, but my subconscious mind was very, very active, and it recognised you."

He nodded silently, his eyes slightly narrowed as he thought that through. “So,” he said, “there’s a lot goes on in there,” and he nodded, indicating her forehead, or what was behind it.

She laughed again. “You don’t know the half of it.”

“Well,” he said, suddenly serious, “I would like to know . . . all of it, if you will allow me access.”

She looked at him for a moment before replying. “It would be my pleasure.”

They looked at each other then without moving, without smiling, without talking. In the past, the discomfort of holding eye contact so intimately with a man like him would have caused her to look away, breaking eye contact. But she felt neither the urge nor the inclination.

And then a thought flashed through her mind like a brief flash of lightning, and she knew there was something she needed to establish now, before their relationship morphed beyond that of patient-doctor into whatever it was meant to be.

“There’s something you need to know before we go any further,” she told him. “I know what it’s like to have the Process prise your fingers away from whatever it is you’re holding on to. Believe me, I’ve held on to so many things, I know well what it feels like when the Process urges you to let go. That’s why it’s important I tell you, it’s not *me* prising your fingers away from the death-grip you have on your life as it is, and your image, or perception, of yourself. It’s *you*. You’re doing it. *You’re doing it.*” The last she spoke in a whisper. “You are changing you.”

“Well,” he said slowly, “I guess it’s that part of me I’m about to get to know.”

Her answering smile sparkled in her eyes. He understood. And with understanding, as it always does, his resistance evaporated.

“Indeed,” she agreed, still smiling, “so you are.”



Love.

Isn't that what it's ultimately all about?

I mean, really,

What is it all for

*If not for **Love**?*

*But do we really know what **Love** is?*

Do you not think human reality tells us,

Or reflects back to us,

The tragic truth

*That we are strangers to **Love**?*

The Law of Love

“Nick.”

The bland, blank tone of Ben’s voice first penetrated and then shattered Nicholas’s concentration, jerking his head up in surprise.

“What’s up?”

“There’s something you need to see.”

“Now?”

“Right now.”

Nicholas nodded and put down the magnifying glass he was holding. Only a few times before had he seen Ben like this – a kind of strange outward calm combined with an inner intensity and sense of urgency that was, in many ways, alien to his nature. Ben skipped through the rigours of life better than most because things didn’t affect him or get him down the way they did other people. Most of the time, Ben was content to let life take shape around him, quite happy just to go with the flow. This wasn’t something he tried to accomplish. It came naturally.

But every now and then, something caught his attention and aroused within him a kind of passionate intensity, a religious fervour that rendered him incapable, temporarily, of thinking about anything else. At these times, Ben became obsessed and obsessive. Most of the time, when something aroused this passionate intensity, it was because of a cause or the plight of a person or animal. Jess, Ben’s partner, once told Nicholas she believed these two conflicting aspects of Ben’s personality – genuinely easy going most of the time, but passionately intense when something caught his interest – were the result of being born a Gemini. Nick wasn’t sure about that. He had as much interest in star signs as he did in watching paint dry – that is to say, none at all. What he *did* know was that when caught in the grip of something that aroused the other, intense, passionate aspect of his psyche, like being caught in a strong rip, Ben could not let go or move on, and he could, in fact, move mountains if necessary.

Only twice, though, had his passionate interest been aroused by something that directly related to their work, and both times, the resulting series of events had taken them to places neither could have predicated or, for that matter, imagined.

Nicholas didn't bother removing his gloves as he stood and followed Ben. He sensed he would need them. Both were wearing the cap, gown, and mask of a surgeon, although, at the moment, Ben's mask was sitting under his chin, against his throat. Nicholas pulled his from his mouth and let it sit in the same position.

The protective clothing was probably not entirely necessary, but none of them were willing to take the risk. The find was too important. And so, the similarities of the work they were undertaking with that of the surgical profession were not limited to the garb they wore. Like caring for a patient, the team constantly monitored the ambient temperature of the room, and they obsessively and meticulously checked and double checked at all hours of the day and night the moisture levels of the room. As if they could transfer an infectious disease, they all wore masks, caps, gowns, and gloves whenever they were present so as not to introduce anything that could potentially harm, infect or damage any of the contents of the chests that were scattered throughout the room. And, whenever they removed any of the items contained within the chests, they did so with as much care, perhaps more so, as a surgeon would take when handling an internal organ of the human body.

They were all still trying to get their heads around the significance of the find, not to mention the sheer volume and condition of it. Nothing like this – the age of the chests and their contents, the number of documents, the condition the documents were in, the context of the find, even the subject matter of many of the scrolls – had ever been found before. Given the significance of their discovery, it seemed inconceivable to Nicholas that Ben could have discovered something even more significant than the find itself. But Ben *had* found something that eclipsed the find. Nicholas knew it with every fibre of his being. The tone of Ben's voice and his demeanour communicated the fact more effectively than words.

They were the only two occupants left in the room, apart from over two dozen ancient chests, of course. The hour was late, very late, so everyone else had gone home. For Nicholas and, he suspected, for Ben, too, the hardest part of every day

was leaving the work, leaving the chests and their contents. Nicholas was privately amused by the fact that being in love, both times, had never elicited this kind of devotion and commitment from him, nor, for that matter, given him such sheer, unadulterated pleasure. And so, he was, he had to admit, more than a little anxious and not at all excited about what Ben could possibly have found. It was, he forced himself to admit, all too easy to believe the find itself was too good to be true. If anything jeopardised that . . .

“Did you deliberately wait for the others to go before showing me this?” he asked Ben’s back.

“Yep.”

Nicholas’s heartbeat increased its pace. This was serious.

Ben led Nicholas to the part of the bench he’d been working at. “You need to know at this point that what I’m going to show you came directly from that chest.”

For emphasis, he pointed to the chest at the base of the stool he’d been sitting on. The chest was sitting with its back against the leg of the bench, and its lid was closed, but it looked no different from any of the others.

Nicholas glanced at the chest and lifted an eyebrow as he wondered what all the dramatics were leading to. Ben was no drama queen, or not normally anyway.

“I can personally guarantee that,” Ben continued. “And I can show you the photographs I took as I removed each layer of scrolls from the chest. This scroll,” he said, pointing briefly at the scroll on the bench, “was sitting almost in the exact centre of the chest, in the middle layer of scrolls. I can show you if you don’t believe me.”

“I believe you,” Nicholas said reassuringly. “Why wouldn’t I?”

Ben made a strange noise in response, a little like a grunt that Nicholas found impossible to interpret. “I’ve checked and double checked all the other scrolls in that chest, Nick. All the scrolls I’ve removed from this chest are written in that same strange script as all the others.”

“Okay,” Nicholas said slowly, hesitantly, uncertainly. “So . . .?”

“Except this one. Take a look.”

Nicholas looked at the scroll lying only partially unrolled on Ben’s section of the bench. Like all the others, this scroll was not made of papyrus. The team were yet

to fully identify what the material actually was, although they knew it was, at least partially, organic. The closest any modern material came to this new material was plastic, but the scrolls were *not* plastic. The fact that the books and scrolls and parchments had survived for so long was a testament to the material's durability, and reliability, for that matter. One could only guess at the technology that had fabricated it.

Still, anything curled up into itself for as long as these scrolls had been would necessitate careful, patient, and painstakingly slow work to unroll, and the scrolls were no different, despite their durability . . . or maybe that should be *endurability*, Nicholas thought fleetingly. Ben had begun the process of uncurling this scroll, but had obviously become distracted by the script, and so had not got very far. The scroll was, largely, still curled like a rolled parchment, with only about a foot of the top of it visible, held in place to stop it rolling back into itself.

Nicholas looked at the first lines of script visible on the top part of the scroll. And then he blinked as if clearing his vision, raised his mask over his mouth, and bent over the scroll for a closer look. After a long moment of protracted, heavy silence he looked back up at Ben.

"Is this a joke?"

"Do you see me laughing?"

"Someone's tampered with the chest, Ben. It must have been on site. We need to . . ."

"Nick," Ben interrupted harshly, "I'm not stupid. Don't you think I've already thought of that?" He took a deep breath, trying to steady his racing pulse, removed a glove, and ran a trembling hand through his hair. It was, he knew, very possible this scroll could derail the whole operation. It could, in actual fact, call the whole find into question. "I've carbon dated both the scroll itself and the ink used to write on it, not once but twice, just to be sure. Both times, the scroll and the ink dated to approximately ten thousand years ago, give or take. There's no difference in the age of this scroll compared to any of the others we've looked at."

Nick took a remarkably long moment to digest this information. Finally, he shook his head, closed his eyes, bowed his head, and pinched the bridge of his nose

with his thumb and forefinger. His pulse was racing every bit as fast as was Ben's. "You think the scroll is authentic? That's not possible," he whispered.

"Nick," Ben said softly, watching him, "think about it. To forge a scroll like this would be impossible, and you know it. We haven't even fully identified what this material is, or what it's made of. There's nothing like it in use today, nothing. And the ink . . . for want of a better word. These chests were buried under tons and tons of sand in a remote place. No one could've known about the find before we discovered it. And we were there night and day until we brought the chests here. Plus, the site was heavily guarded. Besides, the chest was locked. I had to damage it to get access to its contents. I don't see how this can be a forgery."

Nick still didn't say anything, but he lowered his hand and then leaned on the edge of the bench, looking at the scroll but not really seeing it. "Who else knows about this?"

Ben shook his head. "No one. Just you and I. Why else do you think I waited for the others to go before showing it to you?"

Nicholas nodded. "Let's keep it that way for now."

Ben put a hand on his friend's shoulder. "It'll be all right, Nick. If we have to keep this one a secret, so be it. It'll be easy to hide it. I'm the only person who's looked at the chest. We can repack it and rephotograph every layer. No one need ever know this scroll was part of the original cache."

"But it *is* part of the original cache. All right," Nicholas said, straightening, "I acknowledge we might have to do what you suggest. Far better that than try and explain it. No one'll believe us. Let's finish unrolling it. I want to see what it says."

Only once they had carefully and meticulously uncurled the scroll did they both sit side by side, perched on separate stools, to read it.

"Jesus Christ!" Nicholas whispered, abandoning the scroll and leaning back on the stool.

"What?"

Nicholas shook his head. "You don't want to know, mate, trust me."

"Look," Ben said, straightening on his own stool and removing his mask, "we all know there are things about this dig you haven't told us. How the hell you knew it was there, I'll never know . . . unless you tell me . . ."

“But still you trusted me.”

“I’d follow you to the goddamn end of the earth if you told me there was something there worth investigating. We all would. We all did. Maybe it escaped your attention, but none of us baled, even when it looked for all intents and purposes like we were going to find nothing buried in the desert. We risked everything, our reputations most of all, because you told us something was there.”

Nicholas snorted softly with amusement. “I noticed. All right. You deserve to know the truth.” He hesitated for a moment, and then, without looking at Ben, asked, “What would you say if I told you I *know* the scroll is authentic, not because of the carbon dating, but because I recognise the voice? I know who wrote it.”

Ben looked at Nicholas blankly, uncomprehending. “Ah . . .”

“It was a woman who wrote this, a priestess . . . actually, a queen. She lived in Egypt ten thousand years ago, before Egypt was called Egypt. I know because I lived there, too, at that time, and I knew her.”

“You remember? You remember a previous life?”

Nicholas nodded.

“Just one?” Ben asked.

Nicholas shook his head. “A few, maybe more.”

“So that’s how you knew where to find the round room . . .”

“The round temple. It was a temple, Ben. A highly sacred one, known only to a select few.”

“You were a priest, too?”

Nicholas grimaced. “Sort of.”

“Sort of . . . ? Wait a minute. Was she a queen in her own right, this woman? Or was she a queen because she was married to a king?”

Nicholas grimaced again. “The latter.”

“Oh Jesus,” Ben said, running a hand through his hair again. “You want to tell me how you knew this woman?”

“Do I need to?”

“Probably best not.”

“I agree,” Nicholas said, “probably best if I didn’t. The thing is”

“What,” Ben urged when Nicholas paused, “what’s the thing?”

Nicholas looked his friend and professional partner in the eye so as to preclude any misunderstandings. “If she did write this, and I’m as certain as I can be that she did, then it *should* be made public. It’s a gift given, and we have no right to withhold it.”

“Even if it jeopardises the whole dig?”

Nicholas breathed deeply, a pained expression on his face as he let the air out again.

“Maybe gifting it to the public, to quote you, doesn’t have to jeopardise the whole dig,” Ben said slowly.

Nicholas looked at him. “Meaning?”

“We could remove it from the collection, as I said, and publish it separately . . . say we found it somewhere else.”

Nicholas lifted an eyebrow and didn’t bother dignifying the suggestion with a verbal response.

“All right, maybe not. Anyway,” Ben said, “neither of us have asked the most important question here, have we? How the hell is this even possible? It’s not just the language of the scroll. She’s referring to events that’ve happened in *our* time, or around it. She’s talking about people who existed millennia after she did. How is that in any way possible?”

Nicholas breathed deeply again and rubbed a hand around his neck to ease the pain in muscles stiff with tension. He would, he knew, have to tell all now that he’d started. He owed Ben that.

“She had an ability to see other lives she’d . . .” He stopped. “Holy shit!”

Ben waited for further explanation, but Nicholas just sat as if in a stupor, with his mouth agape.

“Jesus, man,” Ben exclaimed in frustration, “for god’s sake, what? Don’t just sit there in silence. Tell me.”

Nicholas barely heard him. As an idea first germinated and then sprouted with growing rapidity in his mind, he spoke his thought process out loud. “What if she didn’t so much write this, or create it anew back then as she did see what she *would* write in a future life and copy it?”

Ben looked utterly baffled. “Want to run that by me again?”

Nicholas grabbed his friend by the upper arm. “It makes sense, Ben. She had an ability to see other lives she’d lived, or would live, particularly if those lives were female. What if she’s written this in our time, and back there she saw it and recorded it, faithfully, not translated?”

“Would she be able to comprehend our language back then?”

“She would if she had a direct link to the consciousness she is now, or was when she wrote this. Sometimes, with some lives, she had a kind of . . . I don’t know, like a clear line of sight. What if, back there, she had a clear line of sight to the life she’s living now, and it was clear enough so that it created the possibility of her writing in a whole language she hadn’t yet learnt and didn’t speak?”

“Like channelling, you mean?”

“Channelling? No . . . well, kind of . . . maybe. I don’t know. Can you channel your own consciousness? Do you need to?”

Ben looked uncertain. “Nick, are you sure this isn’t just like wishful thinking. I mean . . .”

“No,” Nicholas admitted, “I’m not sure, not at all sure. I admit that. But it fits, and it makes sense. How else could a scroll written over ten thousand years ago be written in perfect English?”

“Yeah, well,” Ben said, “that’s a good point. I doubt, even with time to think about it, I’d come up with a better explanation.”



Nicholas sat at the end of the bar, nursing a glass of straight scotch, no ice, trying not to feel the heavy weight on the right side of his jacket.

A part of him, the professional part, couldn’t believe he’d done it. To remove even the smallest and most insignificant item from a collection such as the one they were working with went entirely against the grain, and the scroll was anything but insignificant. But remove it he had, with Ben’s knowledge and approval, and, in so doing, he’d violated all his personal and professional principles and ethics.

What gnawed at him, though, what twisted his gut, wasn’t so much the fact that they’d violated all sorts of honour codes, both personal and professional, in removing the scroll from the collection, it was the fact that he wasn’t at all certain

what his motives were. He wished he could say he'd done it to protect and preserve the integrity of the collection, but he strongly suspected that had very little to do with it

“So why *did* you go scrabbling about in the desert sands of Egypt, Nicholas? And such a desolate part of the desert, too. No one, before you, so much as entertained even the idea there was anything of interest buried under the sands in that particular part of the desert. So why did you go looking there?”

Nicholas looked up from his drink and turned his head towards the person who'd just spoken. An older gentleman, perhaps in his early- to mid-sixties, sat on the stool two down from Nicholas's. The man nursed a similar amber-filled glass to the one Nicholas held. His appearance was neat and tailored, even sophisticated – expensive, tailored navy coat, expensive woollen scarf, an expensive-looking hat and a pair of leather gloves lying on the bar beside him. Without meaning to, Nicholas studied the man's hands. They were elegant, the fingernails clean and manicured. Nicholas shifted his focus to the man's face. His hair was white, neatly cut short, and his white beard was perfectly trimmed. When he turned his face towards Nicholas, obviously awaiting an answer to his questions, his eyes were clear and unusually light blue – compelling eyes, Nicholas thought, the kind of eyes you find it impossible to look away from – the kind of eyes that see far more deeply than most.

“What were you looking for, Nicholas?” the man asked again, quietly, when Nicholas remained silent. “Were you looking for the knowledge and wisdom of a higher culture? Or were you looking for her?”

Nicholas narrowed his eyes at the man, his mouth pinched in reaction, as white-hot anger flooded his veins and coursed through every limb in his body, heating both every bit as much as did the amber liquid in his glass. How the hell did this man, a stranger, know about the dig? And how the hell did he think it was his right to ask the exact questions Nicholas had been asking himself since he'd first sat at the bar? It was downright unnerving, not to mention disturbing, to have a complete stranger read your mind. But then, how did he know about her?

Knowing he had Nicholas's full attention, the man looked away as he raised his glass to take a sip of the amber liquid within. Before the glass got to his lips,

though, he added, “You always were just a little desperate where she was concerned.” He took a sip, lowered the glass, and shrugged. “I guess now you’ve found her,” and he looked back at Nicholas as he added, “again.”

“Not quite,” Nicholas said as shock exploded through his body, replacing the anger he’d felt moments before. The sensation in his gut, in response, was frighteningly similar to the way it would respond to a punch. He swivelled on the bar stool to face the man fully. “Did you fund the expedition?”

The man nodded once. “Every penny. Every pound. I’ve had my eye on you for years. I knew you’d be requiring my financial assistance sooner or later.”

Nicholas stared at the man. “But you didn’t come yourself.”

“You didn’t need me.” He glanced at Nicholas. “And I’m not a fan of that kind of heat and dirt and dust. I prefer my creature comforts. I believe I’ve earned them.”

Nicholas stared at the man. “There’s only one way you could know about her. I should’ve known you were you. No one else would touch us, with good reason. Only you. Stupid.” Nicholas laughed without real amusement. “I even remember your name. Arramis.”

The man laughed softly. “I’m impressed. In this life, I am called Max, but you can call me Arramis if you would like.”

Nicholas smiled. “Max will be fine.” And then he sobered. He’d asked the question of this man once before, aeons ago, in a different time and place and space. Now he asked it again. “Do you know where she is?”

The man smiled again as if he’d been fully expecting the question. “Did you just answer my question?” And then, without pausing to wait for a response, he answered Nicholas’s question. “No, to answer yours. But I know she’s here, and I know she remembers.”

“How do you know?”

“We’ll get to that. Do you have the scroll?”

Nicholas nodded and, without hesitation, drew the canister from the inside of his jacket and put it on the bar between them.

“Shall we move to a more private location?” Max asked, nodding towards the cubicle in the corner of the room as he stood and picked up the canister.

Once seated, he opened the cylinder and slid the scroll from its interior. Gently, carefully, he unrolled it. “Ah, yes,” he said, his smile full of affection and pride as he looked at the script. “I remember this. I remember when she wrote it.” He looked over at Nicholas. “You’ve read it?”

“Only part of it. I was more focussed on what we were going to do with it.”

“And what *are* you going to do with it?”

Nicholas shrugged and shook his head. “Don’t know.”

“Well,” Max said, “I think you should read it before you decide.” He passed the scroll to Nicholas across the table.

“Now?”

“Now.”

Nicholas swallowed nervously and his heart began to pound. He wasn’t exactly sure why he was nervous, but he knew that a part of him didn’t want to read the scroll. Despite his inner reluctance, though, he did as Max asked. He began to read.

~

The Law of Love

What is Love?

Is Love a feeling?

But, then, Love would never rely or depend on something as fickle or as transient as a feeling, would it? Not real Love.

Is Love an action? Or a verb, in other words, rather than a noun?

Is Love commitment? Or discipline? Devotion perhaps? Or loyalty? Is it touch and affection? Is it care and compassion? Or is it all of these and more?

Is Love something we do consciously or unconsciously?

Is Love a choice? Or is it something we just do irrespective of choice?

Our religions tell us God is Love. But what does that mean exactly? How is God Love? What does he do that makes us say he is Love? Look after us? Watch over and guide us? Many would dispute God's ability to look after us. So, do they say God is Love because he supposedly magnanimously created us, gave us life? But, then, did he really create us, the God of our religions? Or did we create him? So what do we really mean when we say God is Love?

We all know Love, do we not? We are not strangers to it. Of course we know Love. We were all Loved by our parents, were we not? We were all taught by our parents, or our guardians, our grandparents, our teachers, and all those who went before us, to Love, particularly to Love ourselves, because they Loved themselves, did they not?

And, of course, are we not conceived in Love? Is not the act of sex itself an act of Love? And, thus, do we not owe our very existence to Love?

And then, when a mother first holds her baby in her arms, she Loves that child unequivocally and unconditionally, does she not? And doesn't that Love then remain absolutely constant across that child's life? Is this not the case for each and every one of us?

Why, then, do so many of us behave as if this is not so? Why, then, do so many of us behave as if we are starved of Love? Why do so many of us seem to seek it as if it is something we do not have?

Do we recognise and acknowledge that we yearn for Love?

Do we find Love in the arms of our lovers, as our movies, our art, and our literature portray it? Or is this an image that leads us more to disillusionment and disappointment, even hurt, than it does to joy?

If you pause for a moment to think about it, and I mean really think about it, what does it mean to Love, not as a trite religious cliché, but as a deep, philosophical truth?

~

Love is a state of being, and it is a state of being that is beyond emotion. Love is a place one reaches within oneself. But, of course, to reach this place within, we have to journey beyond the outer shell of our conscious existence, and even of our conscious awareness. Needless to say, such a journey is not for the faint-hearted.

Our myths and legends have names for this place: Heaven, Nirvana, Shambhala, Avalon, just to name a few. In this place, this place we reach after much spiritual searching and journeying, we become Love, because the truth is Love is a state of being such that one is Love – such that one is as Love is, and one does as Love does.

But does this help to answer the question of what Love really is?

Love honours the soul, the higher-dimensional Self, in all things. And often, in honouring the soul, Love must work in ways opposite to those we would expect of it.

Does this make Love unpredictable? Or should Love behave according to a set of rules and standards and guidelines, as our religions would have us believe? Then we would be able to judge if Love was part of any given situation, would we not?

Love, in essence, is not that complicated. What is complicated is setting Love free within us so that it naturally and effortlessly radiates. When it is set free, Love flows without conscious effort, and once Love flows, it affects and influences everything it comes into contact with, for that is

the nature of Love. But for Love to flow, we must be free of judgement. We must learn to allow Love to flow the way it would flow, free of the hindrance of judgement.

These simple truths about Love comprise just some of the Principles underpinning the Law of Love, because Love has its own Law, and a beautiful Law it is, too. Did you know that?

The Law of Love is, in truth, the only natural Law governing this Universe. The Law of Love is, in truth, the Law from which all other Universal Laws are sourced. Some may know of these other Laws, like the Law of Karma and the Law of Attraction, for example.

Regardless of where we are, and regardless of who we are, the fact that we are all, without exception, bound by the Law of Love is an inescapable truth. The Law of Love reflects and, in fact, is the very nature of the Divine Source of all that is, and, as such, forms the very fabric of the Universe.

And because the Law of Love is the very fabric of the Universe, or the Cosmos, it is also the fabric of our own truest natures. Once we know what it is to Love, we then become Love, because that is the truth of who we are.

Understanding Love's Law helps us understand Love itself. In fact, I think if we are to really understand the truth of Love, we must first understand the Principles underlying its Law. Of course, in failing to understand Love's Law – the way it operates and the way it governs – humans fail to Love truly, and they fail to Love deeply – a fact our world is now, tragically, reflecting back to us.

Once the Principles underpinning the Law of Love are grasped and understood, we can then begin to realise them within and for ourselves so that Love is expressed and experienced within, through, and around us.

But don't take my word for it. Read, for yourself, the Principles of Love's Law – those same Principles that govern our very existence whether we know it or not, and whether we acknowledge it or not. Read them for yourself, and then decide for yourself what you think Love really is.

The Principles Underpinning the Law of Love

Everything and everyone is subject to the Law of Love:

Since all other Universal Laws ultimately come under the umbrella of the Law of Love, this Law is the only natural Law governing our Universe, and, as such, everything in this Universe is subject to it.

This can be hard to believe at times, especially in light of what we are constantly bombarded with every day on our news programs. Regardless of how dark and seemingly soulless a thing or a person may appear to be, however, and no matter how seemingly 'good' or seemingly 'bad' an individual may appear, everyone is subject to the Law of Love, and there are no exceptions. None can escape it, and no one stands outside of or beyond it.

This is because nothing, no matter how separated it may appear, is not a part of the Cosmos. Illusion is just that, after all, an illusion. So, everything and everyone is part of the Universal whole, whether they acknowledge it or not, and, as such, everything is subject to its Law which is, in truth, its nature. Put another way, the Divine Process – Love's very great Process – governs everyone and everything that occurs. And nothing is exempt from this unavoidable truth.

If you find yourself struggling with this Principle of Love's Law, just remember one thing: human reality, and the human experience, is structured, or designed, to allow for choice. Humans can and do choose to operate and act in complete separation from Divine Will.

This does not, in any way, exclude them from this Principle of Love's Law. Far from it. Love knows how to work with choice and its consequences, and there are always consequences for every choice made. Put another way, while the choice may be made in separation, Love's Process will and does work with both the choice itself and its consequences because, in truth, we are not separate from the Universal whole.

Everything ultimately serves Love:

The Law of Love dictates and determines that everything, without exception, serves the Greater Good.

As such, everything that is, everything that occurs – every circumstance, every relationship, every event, every incident, and everything in both our individual and collective realities – serves the individual and collective greater, or higher, good. We struggle to comprehend this because we do not see the events in our reality from the perspective of higher dimensionality or higher truth (that is, we do not see our realities with and through the eyes of the Divine). So we define some things as 'bad' or 'evil', and we believe these to be outside the Law of Love. This is not so, for nothing is outside the Law of Love.

We exist in a state of Perpetual Separation from the Divine in our current reality, so we are not connected to and,

therefore, cognisant of the Divine Plan. Thus, we do not see Purpose in all things. It is a sad and tragic truth in the current human experience that we sometimes need 'bad' things to happen to us in order to force something good, or to pull us up short and force us to face the truth of what we have become, or to cause us to re-prioritise, to shift our focus – a point of correction, in other words, like making a small or large adjustment to our inner trajectory, keeping us on target – Love's target.

There are times when Love needs to step in and forcibly stop us walking down a harmful path, or at least give us the opportunity to choose to turn around. And, as already stated, humans can and do make choices in separation from Divine Will. Love honours all choices, often by simply allowing us to experience the consequence of those choices. We are here, after all, to experience, and Love would never hinder or prevent that Process.

And, please, do not misunderstand what I am saying here, so let me be clear: Love does not sanctify, condone, or in any way participate in 'evil' acts (that is, acts made in separation from Divine Will).

This is the whole point of Perpetual Separation. Acts of evil are actions arising from the choices made in the state of Perpetual Separation that characterises our existence. This is a state of being separated from Love. What I am saying here, and what this Principle states, is that Love has a way of working such that in every bad thing there is opportunity for good. Love would have us see the folly of our ways, and Love would see us return to the fold, like the Prodigal Son returning to the open arms of his loving father.

So, what, then, of the sad and tragic circumstance of a group of innocent children shot and killed in their school room, seemingly for no reason at all? How can Love turn such a heinous act of separation into something that can work for the Greater Good?

Well, what if those children, as souls, chose to martyr themselves for the Greater Good such that the harmful gun laws in the United States of America are re-scrutinised and changed? These laws do not serve the Greater Good, and so must the Law of Love bring about necessary change. We then have a choice. Do we honour the sacrifice made by these souls, or not? This is a battle of wills – Divine Will on the one hand, and egoic will on the other. How many more must die before the gun laws in that country are changed? Because changed they will be.

And what, then, of the atrocities committed by a man like Adolf Hitler – one who committed genocide against not one but many groups of people, many cultures, killing millions in horrific, horrible ways? And how dare I say that these acts can be used by the Law of Love in service to the Greater Good?

Again, Love never condones choices and acts made in Perpetual Separation – separation from Love itself. But neither does Love ever stop flowing and, therefore, working. Love does not fold its arms in a huff and say, 'If you ignore me, I will ignore you.' So what, then, if I suggest to you that the millions of souls who were slaughtered under this regime volunteered to come here and be so in order to show the human race what it has become, to form a collective message, in other words?

Did we heed that message? Did we even receive it? What message?

The message that we have become so hopelessly separated from Love itself that our society is capable of producing a man like that in the first place. The message that an ego like that can live, exist, survive, thrive, and commit such brutal acts in our reality, our world, because that is what our society has become. For is it not a raw and brutal truth that Adolf Hitler is anything but the only individual in human history and in the modern era to commit such atrocities? We keep seeing it, and yet we do not look at ourselves and ask why. Why does this keep happening?

Furthermore, under this Principle, the Law of Karma ('cosmic consequence') often governs the 'bad' or traumatic things that happen to us. The dynamic of this Law operating within and through us is such that when we commit an act of brutality, for example, against another soul, we must experience this same act in one form or another ourselves, more often than not as victims, in order to understand exactly what it is we did.

When we hurt others, we are, in truth, hurting ourselves. The Law of Karma, though, is sourced from the Law of Love, for Love would have us face the consequences of our own choices and actions, if not in this lifetime, then in ones to come.

We are not aware of the other pages of the book of our existence because we see only this page and think we understand what our lives are all about. Karma governs the whole story of our existence, of which this single life is but a small part. We might be 'good' people in this lifetime,

incapable of physically hurting other people, but have we been so in the other pages of the book of our existence?

Love is beyond our limited definition of it:

Love is.

Love cannot be changed or altered or bent to our will. Love does not obey rules or adhere to social norms and dictates. Love does not answer to us for its actions. And above all, Love is not limited to or by our small, ignorant, strict, rigid definitions of it. Nor is Love contained or restricted by our limited perception of it.

Love's eyes see deeply. Love's eyes see far, much deeper and further than our physical, egoic eyes. Love's eyes see colours, shapes, and textures that our physical eyes are incapable of perceiving. Love sees the cause of all things. Love knows the consequences of every choice and every action. Love is aware of the ripple effect of our choices and actions – a ripple effect that affects time in every direction, past, present and future, and transcends separate and different lives.

Love sees far back into the past and far ahead into the future. Love far surpasses understanding because Love is an intellect we are incapable of comprehending. Love possesses knowledge we do not. Love knows all things. And so, Love never allows itself to be reduced or lowered to or by our ignorant, limited vision.

Something we would define as 'evil' (and may be so in terms of its seeming separation from the Divine) still serves the Greater Good, as stated already. Love gives the 'evil' permission to be because Love would not shield us, both individually and collectively, from the consequences of our

choices and actions. Love does not restrict itself only to 'good' acts. Love knows how to make 'evil' work for the Greater Good. And the Greater Good is the good of the whole, to which all individuals, whether incarnate as humans or not, are subject because all individuals are a part of the whole. Even fear ultimately serves Love. Evil ultimately serves Love, even though it believes it only serves itself.

Love simply is:

Love radiates like light emitted from a radiating star. So Love never forces itself on others or pushes its way in. Love never forces others to bend to its will, and does not need to control or dominate.

Love does not feel the need to prove itself, explain itself, or justify its actions. Love does not rail against its lot, but, rather, surrenders and accepts its circumstances.

Love never takes revenge. Love never judges. And because it does not judge, Love also never condemns or punishes. Love is and, therefore, Love does. Thus, Love expresses itself without conscious effort, and it never tries to be anything it is not. Love does not attempt, and Love does not fail or succeed, for Love simply is.

Love does whatever is needed, and Love does whatever is best:

But because Love honours the soul and not the ego, what is best is not necessarily what is wanted.

Love does not pander to the whims of ego. And neither does Love allow itself to be reduced or lowered by the ego's limited definition of it, as already stated. In fact, Love pays

no heed to the ego whatsoever. If Love must be harsh, Love will be harsh (a little like being cruel to be kind). If Love must be compassionate in a particular situation, Love will be compassionate. If Love must sever a relationship, Love will sever a relationship. If Love must create a relationship, Love will create a relationship. If Love must reach out and offer a helping hand, Love will reach out and offer a helping hand. If Love must turn its back and walk away, Love will turn its back and walk away.

Love does whatever is needed, however it is needed, where it is needed, when it is needed, without reference to the ego's wants and needs, and without reference to the ego's opinions, attitudes, prejudices, and perspectives.

Love does not require understanding or approval or acceptance, for it is as it is, and it does as it does, and it cannot be or do anything other than what it is.

But this we must remember. Love is compassion, and Love is care. So compassion and care underpin Love's Processes, for, you see, Love would have us move on from, and heal of, our wounded shadows. Love would have us resolve and dissolve our fears. Love would have us shed our misguided mindsets and perspectives so that we begin to see through Love's own eyes. Love's compassionate Process would see us set free of everything that binds us.

When Love is expressed, its energy ripples out through the Universe:

Like a stone dropped into a still pond, Love can never be confined, but, rather, ripples out to affect others, sending its energy out through the Universe in all directions.

The ripple effect of a Love-based choice, for example, can often be seen like a domino effect, affecting many more people than just the individual who made the choice and acted out of Love. The ripple effect of Love reaches far and wide, accomplishes unimaginable things, and cannot be contained. The ripple effect of Love is wondrous to behold, for those of us who have the eyes to see it.

Love changes and heals:

Comparing the power of Love's healing to the ability of the so-called healers of the medical profession and the type of healing we experience physically in our realities is like comparing the winds of a powerful storm to the breath of a sneeze.

In other words, the power of Love's healing is so great we are hopelessly ill-equipped to comprehend the full extent of it. Nothing brings Light to a place, or a circumstance, or another person like Love because Love banishes and overrides darkness. Nothing brings warmth to cold places like Love.

Love heals the wounds of the soul and, therefore, of the mind, of the heart, and of one's reality. A choice and/or an action made out of Love has an indescribable and far-reaching effect and influence way beyond the ability of humans to comprehend it, as already stated. Sometimes, though, in order to bring a wound of the soul to the surface where it can be healed, Love must create the circumstances that bring that wound to the surface and provide us an opportunity to see it. Then, we are given a choice to make the most of that opportunity or to squander it.

Nothing dissolves shadow like Love, and nothing resolves hurt like Love. Nothing, in fact, rivals the power of Love when it comes to healing because the healing power of Love's Process is so deep and profound it heals at the deepest levels of our consciousness. Thus, Love's Process can be wholly trusted.

Love never rests on its laurels, but is constantly on the move:

Like the energy of the Universe itself, Love flows like the current of a river, and the current, like that in any river, never stops flowing, although it can move at different speeds at different times. The current of Love sweeps everything up in its flow such that none can resist. We cannot control it, but we can hinder it with our choices and actions.

Love's flow cannot and does not change its course or direction. It flows one way, achieving much as it does so. Love never rests, and it never dies. Nor does Love ever give up. Love is always working for us, and Love is always working within us.

Before we can Love anyone else, we must first learn to Love ourselves:

This is no trite cliché. We've all heard this, not just once, but many times. Most of us, however, do not know or appreciate the deeper meaning of this one simple and unavoidable truth. This is a most vital and important Principle underpinning the Law of Love.

To Love, we must first learn what it is to Love ourselves. We must first learn what it means to Love ourselves, and how to go about doing so actively and consciously.

So vital is this Principle of Love's Law that we can, in fact, only Love others as much as we Love ourselves. Thus, if we are unable to Love ourselves, we are also completely unable to Love anyone else. This is an inescapable truth, no matter how much we try to convince ourselves otherwise.

Passengers on commercial flights today are instructed, in the case of oxygen masks falling from above them, to fit their own mask before fitting one to anyone else, including a child – such a wonderful metaphor for this fundamental Principle of Love's Law. The reason we must fit our own mask before fitting someone else's is simple: we need the supply of oxygen first before we can help anyone else.

If we do not follow this basic principle, we will be in danger of passing out before we can help so that the child or person who requires our assistance will also pass out. We cannot give what we do not have. No one can.

And although this point is the final point or Principle discussed, so vital is this Principle that it forms the fundamental key foundation of the Law of Love. As such, to Love, the Lover must come to terms with this Principle. To Love, the Lover must learn to live, breathe, express, and experience this Principle as a constant, uninterrupted, and undeniable fact of his or her existence. Anything less will inevitably and unavoidably result in a failure to Love.

~

What say you now of Love and its Law? Do you know Love? Or are you a stranger to it?

Do you now see the ebb and flow of Love's Process running through your life – Love's guiding hand? Or do you still believe there are such things as bad and good luck, chance, and coincidence?

I pity you if so.

~

When Nicholas finished reading, he looked up at Max and, as if awaiting the cue, Max slid a book across the table towards him. “You asked me how I know she’s here,” he said. “This is how I know. Look at the table of contents.”

Nicholas took the book and did as he was bid. Even across the table, Max felt his shock. Nicholas turned the book’s front pages back to check the publication date and, when he saw the year of publication was the current year, flicked through to the end of the book and started reading what he’d just read on the scroll, every word identical, not a single word even slightly different or out of place.

He looked up at Max, and Max, in response, shrugged. “I guess I was right. You have found her, after all.”

~

The Battle of Third Dimensionality

*Please, I beg you,
Lift my vision up and out
Of the quagmire of the third dimension,
With its small, set-in-stone closed mindedness.
This is my Work.
This is my battle,
And well do I know it.
The quagmire of third dimensionality
Has reduced and restricted,
Lowered and limited my vision.
Look beyond must I now,
Thence to go beyond.
But 'tis not an easy thing,
For third-dimensional programming has wrapped itself around me,
Choking my Light,
Insidiously permeating my beliefs, my mindsets, my attitudes and opinions,
And, of course, my perspective.
So must I be freed of it.
So must I free myself of it.
But as I come away from it,
And it comes away from me,
Despondency is the cloak I wear.
Even though I know, now, the Truth,
Still the two war within me,
Such is the hold of lower perspective.
Do not give me what I want –
Justification of my third-dimensionally-weird choices,
Validation of my third-dimensionally-wayward actions,
For to do so will empower my entrapment.
Just let me withdraw like an addict fighting his addiction,
Because what awaits me on the other side
Is freedom like no other.
Oh . . . and joy, of course,
My heaven,
Not just the full experience of being,
But also the full expression of my being.*

Release the being.
Set free the being
And you will see
That you are,
Regardless of who you're with,
Or of what you're doing,
Or of what surrounds you
At any given moment in time.
For you see,
True spirituality is not about becoming someone
different.
True spirituality is not about trying to be a 'better'
person.
True spirituality
Is about the realisation
That you already are.

*Release my vision
From its third-dimensional prison.
Bring me to my Light.*

To Dream Dreams *in* Perfect Alignment

She wandered home slowly, not in any great hurry. The walk back from town took about half an hour if one walked at a steady pace. She didn't particularly enjoy this walk, although she did enjoy walking in general. She was fussy about the scenery through which she walked, and this walk mostly followed the cement path that was the constant companion of the roads that joined the outer suburbs to the centre of town. So she only walked this path when a visit to town had become an absolute necessity.

The walk did have one redeeming feature, though. There was one section that temporarily left the roads behind it and took the walker along the shores of a small, artificial lake. Artificial it may be, but a lake was still a lake. The birds certainly thought so. The local colony of white cockatoos often held their community meetings in the trees that surrounded the lake. And ibises usually covered the small, artificial island in the lake's centre, looking like blobs of snow joined together to form a blanket of white. The honking of the ibises and the loud chatter of the cockatoos precluded the silence and tranquillity that should've surrounded and covered the lake like a shroud, or so she thought. She didn't resent their noisy chatter, though. In fact, she loved to watch them, and always stopped beside the lake for just that purpose, in both directions of the walk.

But one had to be careful about lingering on the shores of the lake. If one stood for too long, one would invariably find oneself surrounded by the ducks, geese, and swans that also inhabited the lake. Then, the noise increased ten-fold.

It wasn't being surrounded by them that she didn't like. It was the fact that she rarely brought with her the bread they thought was their due, and she felt guilty. She felt as if she was meting out massive disappointment, and the feeling was not something she relished. So, this time, she stood but briefly, watching the ibises,

before turning away and walking towards the stone railway bridge under which ran the ugly cement path she would reconnect with.

But she never made it to the stone bridge or the ugly cement path that ran underneath it.

One step.

One step was all it took. One single, simple step, and the scenery of the lake and its surrounds disappeared, usurped by an ancient forest. She stopped short in shocked, bewildered surprise, afraid to step further into the forest, away from the familiarity of the lake. She turned to look behind her, to see if it was possible to take the single step back to the lake. But the lake and its artificial island had completely disappeared.

From where she stood at the edge of the ancient forest, she could see and hear a busy, noisy little stream rushing, in a great hurry, over moss covered blue-grey rocks of different sizes. Beyond the stream, she saw fields of tall, yellow grass that swayed this way and that with an unseen breeze, and beyond that, a range of snow-capped mountains. The beauty of the scene was breathtaking, but, still, how the hell did she get here?

And where, exactly, *was* here?

She frowned heavily, and her heart began to pound a beat of fear and uncertainty in her chest. How was this possible? She had done nothing, said nothing, even thought nothing to trigger such a sudden and unexpected change in the territory through which she walked. Or had she?

And, she thought, her suspicions aroused as she turned back towards the heart of the forest, how did she know the forest was ancient . . . ?

The thought was cut off even as it blossomed, and she had no time to contemplate it further. She stopped short as she turned, failing even to finish drawing the breath she took. Standing mute and frozen, she held her breath as she looked down the shaft of a long arrow – an arrow that was pointed directly at the spot in the middle of her forehead, just above her eyes. The arrow was nocked against a bow of very great beauty, as if it should've been a piece of art, hanging on a wall or in a museum, rather than a weapon. Four other arrows were also aimed at different parts of her body.

Slowly, she began to breathe again, wondering, fleetingly, if she'd fallen asleep beside the lake and was now dreaming. If she was dreaming, then this wasn't really happening. Even though she knew in the depths of herself that she would never have stopped beside the lake long enough to fall asleep, she still allowed herself to be persuaded so that the thought imbued her with courage. Thus fortified, she openly studied the owners of the bows and arrows that were drawn against her.

They were all male, but they were not human men. They were taller and more slender than most human men, with long limbs and pale skin. Their long fingers were easily and steadily holding the arrows at the ready.

She was momentarily distracted by the thought. Why did she always notice people's hands and fingers? Why were hands so important to her?

Well, whatever the reason, the hands that held the arrows against her were beautiful and elegant. As was their general appearance. Their hair was long and as straight as the arrows they held, half plaited to keep it back, off their faces and out of their eyes. Their hair differed in colour, though – one, the colour of honey, another, the colour of the brown bark of the trees, two, the colour of pale moonlight, and one, the colour of a raven's feathers. Their facial features were perfectly proportioned, their skin smooth and creamy, and their eyes were large and luminous, as if lit by an internal light, some the blue of the sky on a cloudless day, some the same brown of the leaves that covered the forest floor like a carpet, and one as green as the leaves that covered the forest in a thick and rich canopy the sunlight was struggling to penetrate.

Thinking of the forest thus in the silence of her own thoughts triggered the realisation that this was the forest she'd written about, many times. It was familiar to her. Whenever she pictured it in her mind's eye, the clarity of the image robbed her of the vision captured by her physical eyes, and aroused in her such longing that she usually forced it from her mind. Now, here she was, standing at the edge of that very same forest, with these strange beings holding their arrows raised against her as if she was an enemy capable of causing them great harm.

But she was not their enemy. She knew that.

The one holding the arrow to her forehead spoke to her in a strange tongue.

She looked him in the eye and shook her head slightly. “I wish I did,” she said to him, “but I do not speak your tongue.”

“Then,” he replied, surprising her, “it is fortunate for us both that I speak yours.”

“Indeed,” she responded, the one word, softly spoken, holding and expressing the depth of her surprise. “I am not the first human to come here?” she asked him as the thought occurred to her.

He inclined his head, although he did not lower the arrow. “Nor will you be the last.”

He spoke again to the others beside him in his own tongue, and they stepped back, obviously in compliance to a request or a command, although they held their arrows nocked and raised, ready to strike. The one who spoke lowered his bow and arrow, holding both in one hand while he motioned to her with his other. “Come,” he said. “You have entered the forest and now must be put to the test, as all who come here must be tested.”

“A test?” she repeated, feeling her heart quicken its pace again as she obediently began to walk, falling into step behind him. “And if I fail this test?”

“You will die,” he answered her without turning around. And then he seemed to hesitate, thinking better of his quick response. Half turning to glance at her, he said more gently, “You will not survive it.”

“Oh,” she said involuntarily, not all that unhappy about the prospect of death. She understood death, so she did not fear it. To her, death would be a return to a place she longed for, consciously.

Resigning herself to the inevitable, knowing she couldn't go back to the familiarity of that from which she had come, and recognising she probably didn't want to anyway, she tucked her thumbs into the shoulder straps of her satchel, and studied the forest as she walked. The trees were tall, their bark rough and dark brown, and their trunks straight. High, high above her, their trunks separated into numerous branches, reaching out and intermingling with those of the other trees so that the leaves really did form a thick, protective canopy that stretched over the roof of the forest. Fallen leaves covered the forest floor in a carpet of brown that crackled and crunched with each one of her steps, although she noted the beings

who were her escort made no sound as their booted feet touched the leaves. No wonder she had not heard them sneak up on her.

Her attention now drawn to her escort, she studied the one who walked in front of her. His hair was raven black, and straight. The plait that held half of it back off his face and the rest of his hair not restrained by the plait reached well below his shoulder blades. He wore a long tunic of purple, belted at the waist, over loose brown trousers, and his trousers were tucked into brown boots that looked as if they were made of soft suede. She doubted they *were* suede. Elves. The word floated in her mind like a leaf caught on a soft breeze. That's what they were, these beings of the forest. In our mythology, she thought, silently assessing her situation, we refer to them as elves. And elves, she knew, would never harm another living being just for the sake of a pair of boots.

She looked down at her white runners and her black and red tracksuit, suddenly feeling completely out of place. Sticking out like a sore thumb, she thought. Wasn't that the expression? But she knew, now, they would not hurt her, not unless she genuinely threatened them. And that she would never do. Although her heart still pounded a beat of fear in her chest, she had an inkling of where she was now, and possibly even of why.

But the inkling was transformed into deeply-rooted conviction by the events of the next few moments.

A flash of white, glimpsed briefly in the distance through the trees, caught her attention and silenced the clamour of her thoughts. She concentrated her focus on it, the white, and then, unconsciously, involuntarily, and despite the elves in front of and behind her who wanted her to keep walking, she stopped.

Dear god! She *knew* where she was.

Watching as the unicorn galloped towards her, weaving in and out amongst the ancient, tall trees, her heart now pounded heavily in her chest for an entirely different reason. This could not be. It simply could not be. Who had brought her here? Or had she brought herself here?

The white of the unicorn's mane moved across and down its neck like a white wave, and as she watched it, she could feel the unadulterated purity of its joy. *Her*, she corrected herself sharply. *Her* joy. The unicorn was female. She who watched

knew because she had written about the unicorn, too, just as she had written about the forest. Tears filled her eyes as the unicorn's joy became her joy and filled her to overflowing. She unhooked her thumbs and took a couple of unconscious steps to close the distance between them, reaching out her hands towards the unicorn, completely unaware that the elves around her had stopped to watch, their arrows finally lowered, and their mouths agape with surprise.

"Hello, Isadore," she said as she wrapped her arms around the unicorn's neck and laid her cheek against the velvety smoothness of the unicorn's white coat. Lifting her head, she ran her hands down the unicorn's neck while the unicorn nuzzled her neck and cheek in affectionate greeting. "I am come home at last," she whispered, her whisper conveying the depth of her awe, and her disbelief.

She had thought she would not ever make it back to this place. Not ever.



The elves did a curious thing then, at least to her. They went down on bended knee, as if paying homage.

And so, there she was, standing in the depths of an ancient forest she had written about, in her white runners and black and red tracksuit, with her hand on the white neck of Isadore, the unicorn she had, until this moment, seen only in her visions and dreams. The moment was so surreal, her mind resisted it as being real, and she wondered, again, if she was dreaming. She looked down at the elves, their bows on the ground beside them, and their heads bowed reverentially.

"I'm sorry to be asking," she said in confusion, "but to whom are you paying homage? Me or Isadore?"

The one who could speak her language raised his eyes to hers. "Both, Lady," he said solemnly, "for are not the two of you one and the same, each a part of the other?"

She smiled. "Yes, that we are."

He rose then, holding his bow in his hand, and the other four followed his lead. "She has not been seen in the forest for an age," he said, indicating Isadore with an inclination of his head. "We have missed her presence here. But then, we have missed yours, too. In fact, we have mourned your loss."

She looked at him steadily for a moment, and then she nodded, subtly and silently, completely at a loss as to how to respond to the revelation. She felt an almost irresistible urge to apologise, but something, she couldn't say what, stayed her hand and kept her silent.

And then Isadore drew their attention and took control of the moment by going down on her front legs. Laughing in absolute delight, she who wore the clothes of the Atlantean Reality swung her leg over Isadore's back and held on tightly with her knees as Isadore got back to her feet. Needing no prompting, Isadore then turned and began to walk, the elves, unquestioning, falling into step on both sides of her.

"Do the others not speak my tongue?" she from the Atlantean Reality asked the one whom she knew spoke her language.

"Nay, Lady, they do not," he replied. "Your language is fast becoming the common tongue spoken in the realm of humans. We have long acknowledged the wisdom of learning the languages of men – the more common ones, that is – so it was natural some of us would learn to speak the tongue of the English men. But only a handful of us have learned those languages – those of us thus inclined."

She nodded her acceptance of this.

"The words of their languages," he commented as he walked beside her, "are as limiting as they are expansive. They are as ugly as they are beautiful, and they are as cumbersome as they are expressive. Humans use the words of their languages to conceal, as much, if not more so, as they use them to reveal. And, they use the words of their languages to hinder and interfere with thought every bit as much as they use them to enhance it."

"Yes," she said quietly, having long ago formed the same conclusions where human languages were concerned, "that is so, I'm afraid. That is why I learnt to speak a different language."

"What language is it that you speak, then?"

"One of myth, allegory, metaphor and symbolism."

"Ah, yes," he said, smiling, "and a beautiful language it is, indeed."

"Your language is different, then, from human languages?" she asked him, knowing the question to be an ignorant one. "I mean," she felt the need to explain, "I know it is. Can you tell me how?"

“We communicate, or commune would be a better choice of word, with thought and image, so our spoken language supports and facilitates that. We use our language to guide and steer the process of our thoughts, not to block, hinder, manipulate, or interfere with them. And we use our language to engender within the mind images of beauty, not images of ugliness and brutality. Our language is alive, Lady – a living, breathing thing. And our words hold great power, so we use them with care, and with great thought, for we know well the potential effect of those words on the mind of whomever it is we are speaking to, and, thus, on his or her reality.”

“Then I will learn it,” she said.

He looked up at her with a quizzical expression on his face. “I think you will find you already know it, Lady,” he told her. “You have forgotten, but you will remember, and quickly, methinks.”

She smiled her acknowledgement of the truth of his words.

“What is your name?” she asked him.

“Rygiel, my Lady,” he answered her. And then, indicating each of the other elves, the one behind him and the three on the other side of Isadore, he said, “Callan, Pellios, Aemon, and Garrad.”

She inclined her head at each as his name was given, and repeated the name as if in greeting. Each one, in turn, inclined his head back at her in acknowledgement of her greeting.

“What name was given you in the realm of men, Lady?” Rygiel asked her.

“Jennifer,” she replied. “What name do you know me as?”

“We do not know you by name, Lady. We always refer to you as *Ushara* which, in your tongue, means Lady of Light. We have long kept the legends and stories of you alive, for we have long held on to the hope that you would return to walk again among your people, among us.”

She looked at him curiously. “How do you know you have the right person?”

He looked surprised for the briefest of moments, but then he smiled broadly. “Unicorns do not lie,” he informed her, the glint of amusement still lighting his eyes. “Nor do they ever mistake their own. They have but one master, or mistress in your case. As with the dolphins and frogs, those species that are, now, leaving

the third dimension, unicorns left this realm long ago. We knew, when first they began to leave, that there was shadow and darkness, and it was gaining power, taking control of the third dimension, forcing the separation of the two realms – ours and theirs. Your unicorn is, now, the only one of her kind. She stayed for you, and she knows exactly who you are. Thus, so, too, do we.”



As they walked further and deeper into the forest, the distance between the trees lessened, not because there were more of them, but because their trunks were becoming thicker and thicker. So thick were the trunks of the trees in this part of the forest that an arch could have been carved into them large enough for a small car to drive through. Such trees, she knew, would be so ancient they would have witnessed the rise and fall of many empires in the human realm, had they grown there.

The bark of these trees was the colour of grey slate, and smoother, less rough than that of the trees growing closer to the edge of the forest. So absorbed was she in these new trees that she failed to see, at first, the dwellings that were built high up in their branches. Only when she espied a staircase spiralling around and up into one of the trees did she follow it with her eyes and notice the dwelling to which it led.

Made of wood and thatch and stone and the trees themselves, their windows and entrances adorned with soft white cloth, often comprising many levels, the dwellings were beautiful, and blended naturally with the trees themselves – a perfect synergy of co-existence. Connecting each dwelling to those around it, like the vascular system of the human body that connects each of the body’s organs, was an elevated series of bridges made, like the dwellings, of wood and stone. One could walk in this place from tree to tree and from dwelling to dwelling without ever having to set foot on the ground.

Craning her neck to look up, absorbing it all in riveted fascination, she knew this place was old, far older than the contemporary cities of the realm of humans. And, of course, far more beautiful.

“*Nah théil huim*, Isadore,” she whispered in awe.

“Will you look,” Rygiel repeated, laughing softly. “You see, Lady, our words come back to you already.”

“Oh,” she said, looking utterly perplexed, “so they do.” Where had that come from? She didn’t speak any other language, apart from the one she had told Rygiel of earlier, that is.

As they walked through this place that was the home of the elves, its inhabitants emerged from the dwellings high up in the trees and, closer, from between the trees on the ground to watch their progress. None spoke. So she and Isadore and the elves who formed her escort walked in silence. Sitting astride Isadore, looking at the colourful, flowing robes of the elves and, especially, at the gowns worn by the females, she began to feel ugly in her third dimensional clothes. And with the feeling of ugliness also came a sense of discomfort. She wanted to hide, but she also held within her an innate understanding of whence the urge to hide came, and so she acknowledged the feeling and allowed it to be, but did nothing to act on it. She had never before, in this life, faced her reflection, and these people *were* her reflection. These were *her* people.

Isadore stopped walking at the base of a wide set of steps, the ancient grey stone worn smooth by the countless number of feet that had trodden them before her – she who wore the clothes of the Atlantean Reality. She understood. She was to walk on her own feet from here.

She slid from Isadore’s back, glancing only briefly at the crowd of elves who had gathered around them, and who silently watched her every move. Slowly and deliberately, swallowing nervously, she trod each one of the dozen steps that took her higher above the forest floor, and higher, therefore, above the crowd watching her every move. She was grateful for Rygiel’s presence beside her. He hovered protectively, almost, but not quite, touching her. When they reached the top of the steps, she heard the clop of Isadore’s hooves on the stone steps, and knew Isadore was following her. The knowledge comforted her. She paused to allow the unicorn to walk beside her, and laid her hand on Isadore’s white coat to reassure herself.

But then her attention was caught, and she froze, unable to help herself.

“Dear god,” she said in a breathy whisper, “but it is beautiful.”

The sheer unadulterated beauty of what lay before her caused tears of awe to fill her eyes and cloud her vision. She blinked them away and swallowed the lump in her throat. Ahead of her, two long rows of trees formed a wide aisle . . . well, a hall really, like the interior of a grand cathedral – one that would dwarf the tallest and largest of men. These trees were unlike any she had seen before, either here in the forest or in the realm of men. Side by side they grew, their trunks and branches forming the columns, buttresses, and arches of the cathedral. Even their bark, smooth and white, resembled the polished marble used by human men to build their cathedrals. There were no leaves on these trees, but there were flowers of red and pink and white and pearl, some of whose petals had fallen, like confetti, onto the slate-grey stone of the floor.

“Come,” Rygiel said, urging her forward gently with a hand at her elbow.

She allowed herself to be thus compelled, walking under the first of the pair of trees that, together, formed the cathedral’s entrance. As they moved deeper into the natural cathedral, the crowd of elves came with them so that she and Rygiel and Isadore became the head of a silent procession.

“It’s like a marriage,” she whispered to Rygiel nervously, “with you as the groom, me as the bride, and Isadore as my attendant. Only,” she looked down again at the clothes she wore, “I do not look like a bride.”

“Maybe not,” he agreed, smiling at her, “but I would marry you nonetheless.”

She laughed softly, grateful for his encouragement. “You are too kind.”

At the end of the aisle, a semi-circle of white trees joined the two lines, forming a wall and a natural frame around a large stone dais that arose out of the floor of stone in another series of steps. The branches of the semi-circle of trees intermingled so that they formed a thick canopy of white bark and colourful petals over the dais. And upon the dais of raised stone, two chairs, elaborately and exquisitely carved of a dark and ancient wood, stood side by side.

So beautiful were they, standing alone and empty on the dais, their backs high and regal, their arms obviously meant to comfortably support the arms of any who sat upon them, they had to be thrones. Standing next to one of the thrones with his hand on its back, a tall elf stood calmly watching the approach of the silent procession. His hair, swept back from his forehead, and his long, thick beard were

as white as the driven snow, and his blue eyes twinkled at her. She who wore the clothes of the Atlantean Reality studied him, not at all surprised to find no other sign of old age. The skin of his hands and face and around his eyes was as smooth and creamy as Rygiel's. He stood tall and straight and proud, not stooped or bent with age. And his eyes were clear and bright.

At the base of the steps of the dais, they stopped, her and Rygiel and Isadore. Now, at last, seeing him standing upon the dais awaiting her approach, knowing he had been expecting her, she knew who it was who had brought her here, and she knew how. She should've known before seeing him, for he had told her many times that neither he nor anyone else could ever force her to be anywhere she did not wish to be, nor would he even if he could.

But the two of them, he and she, had spoken only days before, not in her sleeping dreams, but in her waking ones, and she had known the conversation was so important, so pivotal, that she had recorded every word of it in her journal. She wasn't to know at the time, though, that the conversation would trigger a shift of such magnitude it would cause her to step from one dimension into another. So, the two of them together, he and she, had brought her here. Such was their power when they worked together, as one.

"I have given you many names," she told him.

He nodded once, slowly, the movement exaggerated. "Indeed," he said, "so you have. And which is your favourite?"

"Elijah."

"Ah, yes," he said, "a good name, a biblical name. It suits me well. Here, though, in this place and in this moment, I am called Mithräel."

She formed a silent "oh" with her mouth and nodded. "It suits you well, too."

She indicated the throne upon which his hand rested. "You're not going to tell me I should sit on one of those thrones, are you?"

A glint of amusement lit his eyes. "As you are so fond of saying, *mitha*, why ask a question for which you already know the answer?"

She did not share his amusement as she looked at the empty throne he was standing beside. Again, her heart pounded an uncomfortable beat in her chest, and

she swallowed nervously. Looking back at him, she said, “I cannot.” And then she swept her hands over the clothes she wore. “Certainly not in these clothes.”

“That,” he said, pausing after speaking the word and raising an eyebrow at her, “is easily fixed. I can assure you, *mitha*, my dear, the clothes of the third dimension are, for you now, easily shed, should you choose to shed them.”

An expression of pure mischief flickered across her face and gave light to her eyes. “I have the power to make that choice, then, do I?”

He laughed openly at that. “Touché, *mitha*, touché.” And he bowed slightly, removing his hand from the chair to sweep it across his waist in an exaggeratedly flamboyant gesture. “You may have that round. I concede, for you know full well free will is an illusion that leads only to darkness and death.”



“Am I safe to assume, then, that any dream, or dream-vision, of mine – you know, my waking dreams – I set in, or put in the context of, this third-dimensional reality *will* be a dream of want and, thus, a dream of entrapment?”

“Tis not that simple, mitha. You know this. Or, I should say, ‘tis not so black and white. There are, of course, many shades of grey in between. Do not forget, the language of dreams, whether waking or sleeping, is one of symbolism and metaphor. When you try to force the images of your dream to be actual rather than symbolic, that is when you run into a little trouble. Remember, dreams are always symbolic and only rarely actual.”

“True, yes, true. That is one of my pitfalls, I know. But this reality is, now, constructed as per someone else’s imagination, or, rather, lack thereof, thus making it a reality of darkness and colourlessness. So surely any dream I set here will thus be based, or will have its roots in this imaginative void. A dream set here will certainly not have the beauty and pizzazz of *my* imagination weaved into the very fabric of it, surely. Won’t any dream set here in this third-dimensional physical reality, by its very nature, be underpinned by constructs of someone else’s design?”

“Ah, not necessarily. Whether or not this is so is up to you, is it not? ‘Tis you, not anyone else, who weaves the want and need of any construct into your

dreams. Or, rather, who bases your dreams on the want of a construct or not. For some, the dreams they dream are dreams of destiny. You have to remember, you dream consciously, and you are conscious of both the nature of your dreams and of the potential power they hold, your reason for asking the question in the first place. Most people are not aware of this.

“And, yes, mitha, you are right. Physical reality is now underpinned by the pursuit of constructs that are dictated by others’ designs and, for that matter, agendas. These beings have a vested interest in humans pursuing the constructs of this reality, for to do so keeps them entrapped, or, I should say, enslaved. And, yes, you are right, too, about physical reality lacking imagination, as well you know. But are you not there to change that?”

“Yes. I am.”

“Well, then.”

“But surely, any dream I set here will automatically be contrary to my own imaginative expression for the reasons I’ve stated?”

“Will it? Can you not imagine what you could do with this reality to shape it differently? Can a painter not reuse an already used canvas? Is the canvas upon which is painted an ugly picture to be discarded as useless?”

“A painter can reuse a canvas. And, no, such a canvas need not be discarded.”

“So what must be done to make such a canvas reusable?”

“The ugly picture must be cleaned away so that the canvas again becomes blank.”

“That is so. Clear away the dross of the ugly picture so that it does not interfere with the new painting, or alter it in any way, or tarnish it, or even influence it.

“Do not forget, mitha, physical reality provides the infrastructure, or the framework, with which, and within which, you must operate. Surely it is natural to set some of your dreams in the context of it. It is still a part of you, and you are still a part of it. ‘Tis the nature of incarnation, is it not? And, is not the idea of this incarnation to see and experience your imagination weaved into the landscape of your physical reality? To repaint a picture of very great beauty – one of your design – on the newly-blank canvas, in other words.”

“Ah! Yes, you are right. I’ve become afraid of dreaming dreams of want – dreams that will perpetuate my entrapment – so I figure if I dream purely symbolically, I will be safe. The trouble is, though, that in dreaming purely symbolically, I’ve wanted to escape this reality with its horrible picture, and to be in the symbolic place I can see in my mind’s eye. I guess I must be careful about not throwing out the baby with the bath water, so to speak. In wanting to escape this place, I have rejected both the picture *and* the canvas. But as you once told me, one does not achieve very much by escaping. In fact and in truth, we cannot escape, for we always take ourselves with us. We must transcend.”

“Aye, mitha, you must transcend. And so you are. You are incarnate there, which means you have chosen to work with the medium of the canvas, so to speak, in the first place, and we both know why. You cannot escape it, as you just said, except through the death experience. But then your Work would remain unfinished, like an unfinished symphony, and all your hard Work would have been for naught, for you must finish what you have begun. You must see your Work come to its fullest fruition.

“You have Worked so hard to get this far, and you have never once lacked courage, dear one, never. Nor have you ever allowed a lack of courage to guide your steps and dictate your actions. And this is merely the next stage, is it not? Or the newest territory?

“You love the analogy of Rumpelstiltskin, do you not? Well, you have spun the straw of many of your third-dimensional perceptions into the gold of higher-dimensional ones, particularly in relation to the way you view yourself. Your perception of your physical reality was always going to be next, was it not?”

“Yes . . . oh, dear me. I see now. I have been confusing, or lumping together, two quite distinct, related but separate concepts: physical reality itself – the canvas, so to speak – and the picture we form upon it – the colour, shape, and texture of the story and landscape of our lives. I have mistakenly believed the two are one. So I really *was* throwing the baby out with the bathwater. I have, indeed, wanted to throw away the canvas just because of the horrible picture painted upon it. I have wanted not to be here at all. But that is akin to wanting to throw away myself, is it not?”

“Indeed, in a very real sense, so it is, mitha. Though, I must say, I cannot blame you for not wanting to be in the third-dimensional reality. ‘Tis a place of darkness, not Light.”

“Aye, that it is. And, tragically, the picture painted upon the canvas of our reality has been painted for us, in a sense, courtesy of the devices of manipulation that are so intrinsic to life in this, our modern era – devices like advertising, television, gossip magazines, and religion, all of which we’ve spoken about before. We are programmed by these devices and others so that what is and is not acceptable is determined for us, and we are programmed to pursue this in order to *be* acceptable.

“But acceptable according to whose dictate? We force ourselves into sameness and normality – the recipe of life – with only a few variations on a central theme so that we all tend to form the same basic or general picture on the canvas of our reality. Worse, though, when our picture begins to take on different colours and textures and contents as we begin to transform, we foolishly and mistakenly believe *we* are abnormal as we become different from the clone-like masses. We believe there is something wrong with *us*. Jesus! When you know the truth, though, it is the current *picture* that is abnormal and very ugly, as we’ve already said.

“As for the recipe of life, by its very nature and because of the fact that it is contrary to what is in our imaginations – or what *would* be in our imaginations were our imaginations not stunted and dictated to by modern society and its emphasis on the pursuit of constructs – renders it, the recipe of life, and our imaginations mutually exclusive. Where there is one, the other cannot be.”

“Aye, mitha. ‘Tis rather like your puppet whose strings are being pulled by an unseen, unknown master, wouldn’t you say? Most people do not even consider the possibility that they might be able to paint an original picture – one of their own design – on the canvas of their reality.”

“No, most people would not and do not even consider this possibility. But then, most people do not know how to paint at all, let alone paint an original picture. I mean, my personal observation is that most people have no idea what the true nature of reality actually is, let alone their relationship to it and with it. But then, a

devastatingly-large proportion of people do not know how to think for themselves. Is that just a little unjust or undeserved?”

“Unfortunately, I think not.”

“Existence in the recipe of life . . . or as the recipe of life is like being caught in a web – a web that, ironically and tragically, traps *being* itself, thereby negating the possibility of painting something truly unique and original.”

“Ah, yes, being. You are right, of course. And this is why you must be careful about setting your dreams in the context of third-dimensional reality. How much does the recipe of life, as you call it, hold you in its sway and dictate your dreams? Becoming trapped in a web is one thing, but when you are not even aware of being trapped ‘tis a dangerous thing indeed. The devouring spider will be upon you before you’re even aware of what is happening. And then, of course, there is a point at which it is too late . . .

“To dream is a wonderful thing, mitha, vital actually. But if dreaming empowers entrapment – if it is a dream of want, in other words – it may very well be harmful. In your case, it will be harmful since you are here to ascend third dimensionality, and that is why it has always been forbidden. You will not create such a dream. You will never be allowed to create such a dream.”

“Yes, I can see what occurs, and I can see why it is so detrimental. We turn the constructs we think we want into endpoints, or outcomes, and they consume our focus, as we’ve said before. But two things happen as a result. First, purpose becomes split, separated from Purpose, hence the misalignment that governs society, and we go spinning off in the wrong direction. And, second, in turning our wants into desired outcomes, we dream of the outcome-endpoint in our imagination and don’t, as a result, take the dream any further, beyond the outcome, like turning off a tap. To us, it is as if we have reached our goal in our dreams. ‘Tis a little like encountering a comma in a sentence and mistaking it for a full stop, so that we don’t read the rest of the sentence, and we miss, even misconstrue, the message of the sentence.”

“Aye, mitha, ‘tis so. And while ever you view anything, anything at all, from the perspective of, or under the influence of, third dimensionality, you will remain unascended. Remember, though, ‘tis not so much the dream that is of concern,

nor is it a concern that you believe you can create that dream in your reality. This is a simple fact of your nature. No, 'tis not these that are of concern . . ."

"It is the intent I hold within me – the intent that generates or spawns the dream in the first place – and the focus that determines that intent."

"Yes, mitha, that is so. Intent is a powerful thing, far more powerful than humans can even begin to realise. Unfortunately, they remain largely unaware of the intent they hold within them – the intent that informs their choices and dictates their actions. You, though, can see the intent you've held in the past, can you not?"

"Yes, I can. And I can see how third-dimensional entrapment causes us to spin stories the way our spider spins its web to trap unwary insects. In that sense, we become trapped in our own web. Then we become attached or addicted to these stories – caught in the web – so that we think we walk the path of the story, whilst our Process is, in truth, walking us along a different path entirely. This is the conflict of scripts, and it is the harmful nature of illusion, or the illusory reality. These web-stories dictate our intent, hijack it, distort it, so that we are kept separated from the deepest and truest intent of our heart's desires – the purpose for our incarnation in the first place."

"Separated Perpetually, wouldn't you say?"

"Yes, I would say. I have said. Fractured would be another word for it – dangerously fractured – forces pulling against each other within us from directly opposite directions, working against each other.

"A classic example of this was a friend I used to know who desperately needed to form around her the perfect 'recipe of life' picture, but whose husband robbed her of that when he walked away and left her with a young son. The Process was urging her to new depths within herself but all she wanted was to recreate that perfect picture, and so she was utterly resistant.

"We've already spoken about the tragic fact of this spawning those highly dangerous 'D' emotions: depression, despair, despondency, disillusionment, and disappointment. She was certainly heading that way, and it had become *her* sole mission in life – as opposed to that of her Process – to find another husband so that she was missing all sorts of opportunities along the way.

“Tis a marvellous thing to behold, though, when an individual walks their path through life in alignment with Higher Will and Purpose, even if they do not know it. Miracles happen around them, and they create their desires with sheer effortless grace. Windows of opportunity spring up in front of them with effortless ease as they are divinely guided to each and every step of their path”

“Why the sigh at the end of that rhetoric, mitha?”

“Because, as you well know, I am yet to experience this fully, courtesy of still being trapped in my own web-stories. I know, I’ve had glimpses, but . . .

“All right, I’m just thinking, maybe it would have been better had I put this a different way. Let me try again. ‘Constructs’ was the wrong word to use, particularly since I have worked hard to resolve and dissolve my need (and want) of them. So, allow me to rephrase my original question. Surely, any dream I set here in this third-dimensional reality will be bound by certain *parameters* – those rules that guide existence and that are dictated to us by reality itself”

“Ah, that is, indeed, sounding better already, except that I would say ‘parameters that are dictated by one’s beliefs about reality itself.’”

“Beliefs . . . yes, beliefs. And, just as Morpheus in *The Matrix*¹ explains, some parameters can be bent, others can be broken, and yet others, like gravity, for example, will naturally be adhered to.

“Another of those parameters we *believe* we are bound by is that every soul born here must die, or must experience death the way we’ve come to know it. Yet another is that with time, we age, and we age in very specific ways. And then, ageing brings with it a whole new set of parameters. Women, for example, can no longer have children.

“Even our life expectancy is a parameter in and of itself. We believe anyone who lives past a hundred has lived a long life. And yet, many millennia ago, humans lived five, six or seven times that, more even. Another parameter we *believe* we are bound by is that of all being separate, disconnected individuals, unable to perceive or read or know each other’s thoughts. Telepathy is for weirdos or those with peculiar talents. Yet, we are all part of the same whole, like cells in the same body, all ultimately bound by the same thought – the thought that created the Universe.

“I guess, then, it is simply a matter of exploring and pushing the boundaries and limitations we place upon ourselves, or, really, that we allow to be placed upon us. The belief about money, for example. Money is a construct that we pursue relentlessly, yes, but we have also turned it into a parameter by foolishly and mistakenly believing we need money to do this or do that, or be this or be that. Thus does money, as a construct, consume our focus, dictate our choices and actions, and, as a parameter, bind and limit us.”

“Well, well, mitha. Now, finally, you have grasped the subtle nuances that colour human existence. Or maybe I should say that cause human existence to be colourless.

“The parameters of existence of which you speak, like the pursuit of constructs that underpins the recipe of life, have also been determined by others – by those who have only their own malevolent agendas in mind. And, yes, humanity’s belief about money is, now, frighteningly harmful, not just because the pursuit and accrual of it consumes the focus, as you say, and dictates choice and action, but because human belief about money masks a beautiful and fundamental truth about human nature.”

“Our ability to create.”

“Just so.”

“This is what *The Matrix* illustrates so well, does it not? Even though free of the Matrix physically, Neo was still trapped by its parameters so that, before he could do anything else, he had to change his mindsets. This is what the scene on top of the building demonstrates so well. When he sees Morpheus jump from one building to another, Neo’s mind rejects it because it is still bound by the parameters of the Matrix. His beliefs are still dictated by those parameters in terms of what is and is not possible, and so he believes, all too easily, what his physical eyes tell him. Because, after all, many of the parameters that bind, restrict, and contain us in this reality exist in the mind, do they not?”

*“That is exactly where they exist. Even your belief about gravity is a mindset that can be altered if you put your mind to it, so to speak – a fact *The Matrix* also illustrated.”*

“Right. We must, then, learn to redefine what is possible. We must retrain and reprogram our minds. And we must shift our beliefs.”

“Aye, mitha. You must retrain your minds by shifting your beliefs. And, of course, you must reverse your belief and, thus, your perception of reality. This is the territory in which you now find yourself.”

Silence.

“Wait a minute . . .”

More silence.

“It’s been more than a minute, mitha.”

“Dear god. I’m facing the wrong god-damn way . . . still. I’ve long thought that what I’ve been working towards, or walking towards, was that point where you create your dream, or dreams, in the landscape of your reality.”

“That has always been our goal, yours and mine. This is, in truth, what we have long worked to achieve. But, ‘tis a matter of exactly how you do this – the secret of conscious creation. You have been right about the fact of you getting to that point of conscious creation. But you have been wrong in your idea of how you will go about doing this and of what its expression is, or, rather, of what the experience of it actually is.”

Silence.

“Yes, you are right, of course. And that is exactly how I’m still facing the wrong way. I mean, that is what I mean when I say I’m facing the wrong way. I’ve held within me a belief that we throw what is within us onto the canvas of our reality so that we can see it, like a painter throwing paint onto his canvas. Trouble is, whilst ever there are shadows within us, these are what we see on that canvas, and I’ve wondered what happens, then, when we stop throwing our inner shadows onto the canvas of our reality, and we start throwing . . . ?

“What, mitha? What do you throw onto the canvas of your reality when you no longer need throw your shadows onto it?”

“Well, I can only speculate, of course, having had no experience of my own . . .”

“Uh-uh. Not so, mitha.”

“Having had *limited* experience of my own.”

“Better.”

“To continue with my answer, we paint our dreams instead of our nightmares. We paint pictures of Love, not fear. We create light and colour and vibrancy and sparkle in everything that surrounds us instead of darkness and shadow, dullness and blandness and ordinariness. We experience creation instead of self-destruction and self-punishment; and miracles instead of sameness and normalcy. Am I, then, at the point of creating my dreams rather than my nightmares?”

“Well, that’s one way to put it, I guess. I could think of a few better ways to phrase it.”

“Yes, I bet you can. And the burning pain in my gut gives me a hint as to what you’re going to say. That place I fear most. That place from which I hide, which is precisely the reason I’m still facing the wrong way. I hold on to third dimensionality, my character-identity, with the grip of death, and now the Process has begun to prize my fingers away, one by one.”

“Aye, mitha, ‘tis so. Release the being. Isn’t that the expression you coined? ‘Tis a good way to describe it, this process that is your life, this path you traverse. So many shadowed aspects of your egoic psyche have you confronted, all of which have already been mentioned so I won’t bother repeating them. Dissolve them, you have, thereby disempowering their hold on you, and setting free your vision, thereby releasing the being that is truly you.

“But the key to conscious creation . . .”

“Lies in no longer being separated within, courtesy of ignorance, misguided belief, fear dynamics, and inner shadows. That is where and how I have been going wrong. I have been separated from my true Purpose by these shadows in my psyche that have caused me to see, or to want, a different purpose in my life and, hence, in my reality. So the key to conscious creation is not creating what you *want* but rather in becoming aligned with your true Purpose, and surrendering to the flow of Process that is creating that true Purpose.”

“Yes, indeed. So, now, allow me to ask you a most vital question. What would you do with the being if you were Divine Process?”

“That’s a dangerous question to ask one who still wants.”

“Yes, I am well aware of the dangers. But still, I ask it of you now. What would you do with your being if you were Divine Process – and I mean your being, not anyone else’s? You know, now, the uniqueness of your being, mitha.”

“It’s a beautiful irony, don’t you think? What would I do with the being? Doing and being are opposites, are they not? We make the mistake of thinking that what we do is who we are.”

“Yes, humans exist in that misguided mindset. They are programmed to do so. But doing and being are not necessarily opposites, nor are they in any way mutually exclusive, unless they are. As usual, ‘tis a matter of focus.

“Doing and being have been opposites for you because you have been distracted by the doing, or maybe I should say addicted to it. You’ve been asking yourself, what will I do when this journey is complete? What will I do with what I have learned? What will I do when I am transformed? What will I become?

“Doing, of course, is all about wanting to be defined, whilst being just is. Now you are realising you will not do anything except be. Does a radiating lantern have to do anything to fulfil its purpose, or achieve its goals? No, for it simply is, and in being what it is, it gives light to dark places. As for becoming, are you not discovering that you already are? A lantern does not become, for it already is. ‘Tis created that way.

“Once rediscovered . . . and uncovered, for that matter, the being is, regardless of what one is doing, regardless of who one is with, and regardless of what is around one. As I’ve already said, being is, and once being is, it cannot be anything else, nor can it be interfered with, stopped, hindered or turned off. Not even death can stop being.

“So, once more will I ask you the question, mitha. What would you do with your being if you were Divine Process?”

A pause.

A prolonged silence.

“Once my being is released to be what it is, you mean?”

“I know what you are asking, mitha, and, yes, once you are no longer susceptible to third-dimensional entrapment. That is what I mean. So why do I ask this question of you now?”

Another pause.

“Are you saying I’m no longer susceptible or vulnerable to third-dimensional entrapment?”

“You are less susceptible to entrapment than ever, and you are becoming stronger in relation to this Work with every passing day. Perhaps more importantly, though, you are becoming a true Master. That is, one who has truly mastered the third-dimensional identity and third-dimensional existence. This is your Work, after all, the reason for which you incarnated.”

“Ah, I see what you are doing in asking the question of me. This is the wrong being made right. This is the end of separation in all its forms – the separation of oneself from one’s reality, and the separation of oneself from one’s Self – the separation of purpose from Purpose, and want-driven focus from Process. You are reconnecting me with the true Purpose of my Process, because this is what happens when one releases the being. One need no longer be *guided* and steered by the Process because one *becomes* the Process.”

“Just so, dear one, just so. The secret to conscious creation. Now answer the question.”

Silence.

“I don’t know what I would do. I don’t know. I don’t trust myself to answer the question.”

“Mitha, you do know. You know very well. Now answer the goddamned question.”

“All right. Don’t get stroppy. I would bring it, the being, face to face with its truest, clearest reflection so that it could SEE its truth and gaze upon its own beauty”

“Does a jewel, perfectly cut to show off its incredible beauty, able to reflect and refract Light itself, need to gaze upon its own beauty in order to know its own beauty?”

A prolonged silence.

“No.”

“And why not?”

“Because it just is, and it knows itself as such. It is, and it will never be anything else, so being beauty or not does not really concern it.”

“And yet, it is beautiful. So what is to be done with such a jewel?”

“I would place it in a setting that shows off its beauty to perfection.”

“Is that all? Is it, then, to remain hidden away in a jewellery box?”

“No. Definitely not.”

“Well, then?”

“It should be put on display, or made accessible. The question is where and how?”

“Well, it could be worn to a costume party where it would probably be mistaken for a cheap bauble. Or it could be put in a museum where everyone and anyone could see it, but where those who laid eyes upon it would probably think it naught but a relic of a bygone age. Or it could be worn to a dinner party, where its true value would be recognised, there to be admired and appreciated only by a select and privileged few.”

Silence.

“You are speaking of context. I don’t understand what you want to hear from me.”

“I want to hear you speak your Truth and your Wisdom, my precious jewel. You have reached a most vital point in your journey of transcendence – a point of such profound significance as to be the pinnacle of what you have come here to rediscover and remember. Do you know what that point is?”

“A minute ago I would have said actively and consciously participating in the act and, therefore, the experience of creation itself – the creation in my reality of what it is my heart dreams of and yearns for. Now, though, my answer to that question is different. I must go beyond what I have always thought my dreams were. ‘Tis the Point of Pure Merger you speak of – the merging of the conscious awareness with the higher consciousness that created it – the character truly becoming one with the actor, or the puppet truly becoming perfectly surrendered to the puppet master. ‘Tis the point where the two truly become one, or should I say *the One*?”

“The One? Yes, I love that.”

“So this is not about my reflection, then? I always thought it was my reflection I was Working back to, the point where I came face to face, once again, with the purity of my own reflection. You remember? That glimpse of myself I ran from in abject terror.”

“Remember? How could I forget? It was your trigger – the glimpse of you that cracked you open and set you on this path of transcendent change.”

“Yes, such was its power – a power I run from in utter panic.”

“You mean ran from. Past tense. What were you back then?”

“I was virtually a zombie, crippled with ignorance and shadow, entrapped. I was a third dimensional.”

“And have you not already realised that darkness cannot abide its own Light reflection? You have said so many times. Were you not full of darkness and shadow back then? Thus, was it not the darkness and shadow in you that ran in terror, mitha, not the Light?”

“So, returning to what it is I want to hear from you, and see, for that matter, I want to hear your Truth pour out of you in an unleashed torrent, and I want to see the Light radiating from you in the same way. Now, again I ask you, what would you do with your being if you were Divine Process?”

Silence.

“You have had a foot in both camps, so to speak, as you can now see – one foot in third dimensionality, and one foot in your own higher dimensionality, with the consequence of facing neither directly, and with the consequence of being neither completely. This is a painful place to be in, as well you know. We could say you have been neither here nor there. Does that help?”

“No. But thanks anyway. You mentioned costume and dinner parties, which are both metaphors for third dimensional form and context, the very things I’ve realised I must turn away from. Why are you now turning me back to them? Do I have the right to dream of form and context? Are these not the domain of the Process?”

“You can dream of whatever you desire once you connect with your true Purpose, anything at all. Remember, mitha, there is context, and then there is Context; there is purpose, and then there is Purpose. Where is your vision?”

“Lowered. Have we not already established that?”

“The jewel you speak of, it may be beautiful, but what is its true Purpose in being? If it is simply to *be* beautiful, then maybe the museum context is not such a bad one.”

“A valid point. To answer your question, allow me to ask you another. What of that place within, that place at the very centre of the labyrinth of your psyche, that place you have spoken about many times?”

“Am I still a stranger to it? Or rather, am I still estranged from it, that place?”

“You are aware of it.”

“But not connected to it?”

“No, I would not say that. You are very much connected to it. It has been your guide, has it not?”

“But?”

“But you do not exist there. And you are meant to. For it is, in truth, where you are, and it is, in truth, who you are.”

Silence.

A heavy sigh.

“I see . . . I see what I have been doing. A foot in both camps, you said, that caused me to be neither here nor there. How many times have I said it? And how many times do I have to have an even deeper revelation of it? The concept of throwing one’s dreams onto the canvas of one’s reality, this is my trap. This is my entrapment. This is the very thing that has prevented and precluded me from existing in that place within? ‘Tis why I keep rejecting my reality, or at least bemoaning it. I must master this dynamic. I must let go.”

“Why? Why, or in what way, is this dynamic your entrapment, mitha?”

“Because I am facing and focusing on my reality by wanting from it, still, after all I have learned. Throwing my dreams onto the canvas of my reality has, for me, been about facing and focusing on that canvas. And this has trapped my vision because, in doing so, I have still mistakenly believed my reality is separate from me, and that I can change it with physical effort.

“This is where the analogy of the painter and his canvas begins to fail, is it not? We labour under the misguided mindset that our reality is separate from us, the

way the canvas is separate from the painter, and that we control what appears on our canvas, our reality, the way the painter can and does. But our reality is not separate from us at all, is it? Our reality *is* us. And we *are* our reality.

“Furthermore, we do not paint consciously, although we think we do. In that sense, we are not the painter at all. All right, so we paint those tiny little things in our reality with our day to day choices – what we wear to work, and what we will have for dinner tonight, or whether or not we’ll go on that date. These are the things we *do* have control over. But these are just choices within the infrastructure of our overall reality. No one, for example, would ever choose to get cancer, would they?

Perhaps a better analogy here would be that of the movie projector. We, as body, mind, and personality are the projector. But the projector is merely the conduit for the movie itself – the script of our soul, our higher consciousness. The projector cannot ultimately influence the movie. It can only project it. And, until we clear them, resolve them, the shadows of our own psyches are cast onto the movie screen, and we must live them in our realities. But the movie is, also, about Destiny – our own unique contribution to the overall collective human reality. And *that* is what you are asking me about – the movie of my Destiny, my Purpose for being.”

“Ah, how we love the language of symbolism and metaphor, do we not? ‘Tis a good analogy, mitha.”

“Why, thank you. Have I not always said our reality spirals out of the centre of us like a galaxy? So much do I believe this, that I believe what we are seeing when we look at a galaxy *is* the reality of some kind of super being.

“But still, I have struggled to grasp the deeper meaning of that. This is the *key* to actively and consciously creating our reality, is it not? It’s not about changing our reality by trying to alter the movie as it hits the movie screen. And it’s definitely *not* about creating our own movie. It’s about becoming the *source* of the movie rather than the *projector* – the identity shift. That is, connecting to and with the very Purpose of the movie – its deeper meaning, its message, its very *raison d’être*.

“To experience the act of creation consciously, we must shift our consciousness. We must shift our point of existence. But to do that, we’ve got to stop focussing on reality itself, the movie screen, and turn our focus to the movie, or its source, the flow of Purpose and Process.

“The beauty of the jewel has nothing to do with the way it looks. The beauty of the jewel comes from within it, the reflection and refraction of the Light you mentioned. The look of the jewel – the way it is cut – is only about releasing that Light to be what it is. So whether it is worn to a costume party or put in a museum or worn to a dinner party is irrelevant. It is, and it will be in all and every context in which you place it.”

“Just so, dear one, just so.”

“As for its Purpose, the Light is its Purpose.”

“Indeed, it is. So what would you do with it, then, to return to an earlier question?”

“Well, in one sense, you could do anything with it, take it anywhere, bring it into contact with anyone . . .”

“Yes, but what would you do with it?”

“Jesus Christ! Do you not give up?”

“Really, you should know me better than to ask such a question. I await your answer, mitha?”

“I would use its Light to set the whole goddamn world on fire . . .”

“Ah, at last. At long, long last. Allow me to clarify. Do you mean to say you would reveal the Light of the jewel to the world, so that it shines like a beacon lighting the Way – the Way of Ascension, that is, causing the darkness to tremble in fear and trepidation as it does so?”

Silence.

“We, here in the higher dimensions, refer to the Way of Ascension as the new Ark. But then, one could equally refer to it as the new Exodus.”

“To illuminate the world? To be revealed? Yes, that’s it, isn’t it? The Light of the jewel must first of all be revealed in all its truth and glory. Then, like a large key turned in a massive lock, its Light will begin to recreate heaven on this earth by setting free the soul, individual by individual. Humans will be Slaves no longer. All

they need do is follow the jewel's Light into freedom, live and *be* the new paradigm of existence. The new Exodus. The new Noah's Ark. I love that."

"Ah, yes, to recreate the human experience such that the parameters of third-dimensional existence simply no longer exist. "Twould be a place where individuals could paint their own unique creations on the canvases of their realities, would it not?"

"It would. So . . . so, it is not *reflection* I have been Working towards, it is *revelation*?"

"The Point of Revelation? Yes, mitha. This is the true reference point of your existence, the place of your true Purpose and Destiny. So, as per your original question, dream away, for any dream of yours, regardless of context and setting, will always contain valuable information if you honour your imagination. Give it credence. Pay attention to it. Let it inform you and change you. And, allow your perspective of it to change, even reverse. Give it permission to run wild. Allow it to take flight, and give it the wings to fly where it will. Loose the boundaries and limitations you have placed upon it. Your imagination will, then, be both paint and paintbrush on the newly cleansed canvas of your physical reality. But it will be your hand that brings the picture to wonderful, breathtaking, glorious, unique life."

Silence.

"God, that's beautiful."

"Remember, mitha, if you are to lead anyone out of the third dimension, then out of the third dimension you must go. And you really are ever so close, for are you not realising that to go out of the third dimension, you must simply go within? You must simply be within."

~

They crossed a small bridge onto a platform, and she realised she was walking on the smooth, polished wood that remained after the removal of a sliced off branch of the tree, although the platform was bigger than most third-dimensional lounge rooms. A white cloth, resembling the roof of a marquis, covered the platform, giving the platform shelter, protecting it from the virtually non-existent

elements, and a large, round table of polished wood stood in the platform's centre. When she realised where she was, or what, exactly, she was walking on, she looked at him in surprise.

"You have lopped off the branch of this tree?"

"Ah," he said, correctly interpreting the underlying meaning implicit in the question, "but the tree did not cease to exist, did it? In fact, it gave us permission to do so. This tree is the sacred heart of this forest, *mitha*. We would never do anything to harm it, nor would we ever touch it without its express permission. The wood yielded us by that one single branch has, in no small way, contributed to the building of this place. Thus has this tree been weaved into the very heart of our community, in more ways than one."

"I should've known," she murmured, wandering away from him to the platform's edge and the wooden railing that circled it, marvelling at the fact of the platform being one single branch of one single tree. She turned then to run her fingers lightly over the polished wood of the round table. "King Arthur would be proud to sit at this table," she observed.

He laughed. "You ought to know." And then, he added, "This, too, is the table at which our council sits." He held out a hand indicating one of the chairs. She sat, as did he, the two sitting alone on the large platform, on one side of the large table.

"I know I state the absolute obvious," she said, "but still I have to say it. This place is spectacularly beautiful."

He smiled his acknowledgement of the truth of her statement. "You think it beautiful now, wait until you see it by night, all of it alight, and bathed in the light of the full moon. 'Tis glorious."

"How do you light it? I know you do not have electricity here."

He shuddered. "Electricity! The gods forbid! No, we would never use electricity. We have devices that harness the limitless, abundant energy found naturally in the Universe itself. These devices convert that energy into light and, where needed, heat."

"So you have no fire here?"

"We do not. We do not burn anything."

She raised her eyebrows. "Earth, air, and water. But no fire?"

He smiled. “Instead of fire, we have Light.”

Her smile matched his then. “As you said earlier, touché, Mithräel.”

He leaned forward in his chair and clasped his hands on the table in front of him.

“We do nothing here that compromises the expression of the soul, and, of course, that must involve doing nothing to compromise Nature Herself. We are beings of Light, *mitha*, dear one, so we do not live in a state of Perpetual Separation. Vision, imagination, intuition, insight, instinct, community, communion, fellowship, the heart’s desires, contemplation, Destiny, the awareness of Purpose and Process – all of these are naturally weaved into the fabric of our everyday existence. Do you think you can live like that?”

She gazed at him, absorbing his words, knowing a response was not necessary since he already knew he’d just described her version of heaven. Rather than answering his question, she rose from the table, turned her back on him, and walked to the edge of the platform, resting her hands on the wooden railing that circled its perimeter and prevented those standing on the platform from falling off it onto the ground below.

But she did not look out over this place that was the home of the elves. Instead, she studied the lace of the sleeves that covered her arms from shoulder to below the wrist. The gown she wore, a gown of higher dimensionality, was made of white lace. Its sleeves were long and fitted, and it hugged the curves and contours of her body comfortably from shoulder to midway down her thighs from where it gently flared into a long skirt, the material trailing behind her on the floor as she walked. She had never, in her entire life, felt as feminine as she did now, even when dressed as a bride for that marriage that had been the product of her need to be ‘normal’ as defined by those of the third dimension. She had never felt as beautiful as she did in this moment.

Mithräel joined her, coming to stand quietly beside her.

“To dream dreams of Perfect Alignment,” she said, “– the perfect and pure alignment between the will of the mind and the desires of our heart – we must first face, conquer, disempower, resolve and dissolve, pare away, and strip ourselves bare of every shadow, every internal cobweb, every fear dynamic that causes us to

be out of alignment, and, thus, to twist and distort our dreams into dreams of want – dreams of entrapment.

“And it pays us to put in the effort required to achieve this because dreams of Perfect Alignment, when they become manifest in the landscape of our reality, are our own unique version of heaven. But even if we are only a tiny bit out of alignment, precluding the state of Perfect Alignment, we cannot and will not create our truest dreams in our physical reality.”

He gently slid his hand under one of hers and raised it, laying his other hand over hers, and turning her to face him by doing so.

“*Mitha*, allow me to make one tiny adjustment to what you just said. They are not dreams *of* Perfect Alignment, but, rather, dreams *in* Perfect Alignment.”

Her eyes widened on his in momentary shock, and then she laughed. “Well I’ll be damned. I have been waiting for my dreams to change, haven’t I? I’ve held on to the belief that when I reach that place within, I will be given the ‘right’ dreams. ‘Tis as if I am a lowly foot soldier awaiting my commands. But I have never, in truth and in fact, been separated from my heart, so why should my dreams change? ‘Tis my *intent* that has changed, as have the endpoints, or outcomes, I have formed from that intent, and now I need to trust myself and my dreams.”

He smiled but refrained from responding verbally. A companionable silence fell between them as she turned, once again, to look out over the community.

“Must I go back?” she asked softly without looking at him.

“I do not know. Must you?”

Silence, full of her fear and uncertainty, settled over them both.

“For what reason, or reasons, would you go back?” he asked her.

“I incarnated there. Do I not belong there, therefore?”

“You will never belong in the third dimension, *mitha*. Never!” he said harshly. “And did you not incarnate there for the sole purpose of walking right out of it, leaving it well and truly behind you?”

“Yes, I believe I did.”

“Well, then,” he said, as if that settled the matter. “One thing must you know, though, before settling once and for all upon your decision. Should you stay, you must take your rightful place among these beings. You must sit, once again, upon

your empty throne. And, you must take your seat at this council. You know what that means?”

“Yes. It means I must stand shoulder to shoulder with these people. It means I must work hard to clear from my vision the dregs of third dimensionality that stick to me like mud.”

He snorted appreciatively. “Nicely stated, as usual.” And then the amusement vanished from his eyes. “So, will you stay?”

She covered his hand, the one that lay over hers, with her free one, but she did not smile. Instead, she said solemnly, “I will. I will stay.”



1. *The Matrix*, 1999, Village Roadshow Pictures/Warner Bros.

The Still, Quiet Centre

*Please,
Lead me to that still, quiet pond
At the centre of my being,
So that I may gaze upon the perfection
Of my own reflection.
I acknowledge my resistance,
And I am aware of my reluctance,
Both of which are born of my fear.
For when I do gaze upon my centre
All things will be remembered,
And all things will be known –
Tragedies experienced,
Traumas suffered,
Wrongs committed,
Grief, loss, and pain.
But there is joy in those other lives, too, surely.
Really, it matters not what is written
On the other pages
Of this, the book of my existence.
Once I reach my centre,
I will know what is,
And I will know what is not,
Because it is at my centre
That I truly exist.
My centre is who I am.
My centre is where I am.
I think, maybe, it is this, my Truth,
That I fear most,
But it is also what I yearn for,
With a yearning so great,
It is almost too much to bear.
So, please,
Lead me to the still, quiet pond
At the centre of my being.*

I am
The Way,
The Truth,
And the Life.
If you want to live,
Follow me.
Do not worship me,
Or put me on a pedestal,
As you have done with the One who preceded me.
Do not.
Follow in my wake,
My footsteps.
And I will meet you there,
In Heaven.

The Ripple Effect

She sat in the café, working on the manuscript in front of her, reading through it, again and again, making notes, editing, making changes. An empty plate and cup sat beside her on the table, the muffin and coffee she'd ordered, long ago eaten. She liked working on her writing in places like the café. She felt a connection with people without having to make verbal contact – a connection without interaction. And, she liked the feeling of being surrounded by people as the steady stream of customers came and went around her, the murmur of their conversations swirling around her while she sat, among them, in isolation and in silence. To her, sitting in the café was like being in and amidst the movement of life without participating in it, like a lone rock in the midst of a rushing stream.

The staff at the café were excellent in that regard, warm and friendly, but, at the same time, knowing instinctively, and respectful of the fact, that she liked to be left alone and undisturbed. She had spoken to them about spending so much time here. It was, she knew from experience, always better to have things out in the open so that everyone knew where they stood. She'd come to an agreement with them: as long as the café was not full, they were happy for her to spend as much time as she wanted, sitting at one of the tables, working on her manuscripts. Sometimes, she came for morning tea and stayed long enough to have lunch as well. Those were her favourite times because she always went home with much accomplished, and with many changes to make on the electronic copy of the manuscript.

Today, though, she was struggling with her level of concentration, and the cause of her struggle was sitting on one of the café's lounges, in the corner of the room.

She kept feeling his eyes on her, as if he was watching her, but whenever she looked over at him, he was always engrossed in his newspaper. She knew it was him generating the sensation because it had persisted, the sensation, all morning, in spite of the comings and goings of many groups of customers.

And besides, she could feel the pull of awareness. It tugged at her focus, like a gravitational pull. Whether she was looking at him or not, she could *feel* him. It was, she had to admit, a strange sensation, and it was making her feel uncomfortable. Her awareness of him was certainly playing havoc with her ability to focus on her manuscript, and so, today, she was not at all satisfied with the work she'd done.

When next she felt his eyes on her, she looked up and over at him, not at all surprised to find him engrossed in the paper he held, paying her no attention whatsoever. This time, though, she did not lower her eyes again to her manuscript. Instead, she studied him with slightly narrowed, suspicious eyes.

For all intents and purposes, he did, indeed, seem to be genuinely reading the paper because he was slowly moving through it. He was, now, almost at the end. He'd come into the café not long after she had. But where she had chosen to sit at her favourite table, facing the room, he had chosen to sit on one of the lounges on the other side of the café. She tried to recall if she had seen him in the café before, or even in the village, but concluded she either hadn't seen him or hadn't noticed him.

No, she thought, she would have noticed him if she *had* seen him. There was something about him . . . an *energy*, for want of a better descriptor.

Her eyes dropped to the coffee table in front of him. He'd been in the café almost as long as had she – many hours – and she vaguely remembered him ordering something. On the table, though, the teapot and empty cup had not been touched. She was sure of it. He'd ordered but had not consumed whatever it was he'd ordered.

She frowned. Was it her active imagination – she had long ago forced herself to stop referring to her imagination as over-active because she had discovered there was too much valuable information therein to be disparaging of it – or was there a strange nimbus surrounding him? Or was it just that he was bathed in the light coming in through the café's large front window?

He was hidden behind the large pages of the paper, so it was hard to make out his facial features. But she could see his other physical features. He sat in the lounge with one ankle resting on the opposite knee – a masculine pose – a relaxed

pose. He looked comfortable, and so must he be, she thought, because he only moved when he needed to turn the pages of the paper. His legs were long. She could see that, despite the fact that he was sitting. And so, too, were his fingers, which she could see curled around the edges of the pages. He wore a pair of dark-coloured jeans and a long-sleeved, light-blue shirt, the sleeves rolled up to his elbows. His hair, where she could see it, was jet black and cut short. He wasn't old, and nor was he young. She could see that about him.

Again, she dropped her eyes to the manuscript in front of her, frowning slightly with bemused puzzlement. Either he was watching her, but pretending not to, or he was genuinely absorbed by what he was reading, and she was imagining things. Maybe it was coming from her, not him. The longer they'd both sat on either side of the café, one at a table, one on the lounge, the more she had felt the pull of him on her awareness, and the stronger the sensation had become until it was, now, impossible to ignore. Well, she thought, silently admitting defeat and beginning to pack up, it was obvious she would get no more valuable work done, so she might as well leave.

Outside the café, she hesitated while she rummaged through her bag, looking for her sun glasses.

“Why are you sad?”

She looked up in surprise and turned towards the voice. He had followed her out of the café. Standing beside him, now, those of his features that had been hidden by the pages of the newspaper were revealed. He was taller than she was with pale skin that contrasted beautifully with his jet-black hair. And, now that he was close, she could see his eyes clearly. They were vividly blue, darker than the sky on a cloudless day, closer to royal blue than pale blue but somewhere in between both. She'd not ever seen eyes that colour. They were beautiful. They were compelling, his eyes – the kind of eyes one did not easily look away from when caught in their stare or glare. Or, she thought silently, should that be snare? And, she'd been right in her assessment of his long legs because they were, indeed, long.

He was looking at her, his paper folded under one arm, his hands wedged into the pockets of his jeans. He appeared as though casually relaxed, but a look of

intense curiosity on his face belied the fact. People normally did not ask complete strangers such personal questions, but he seemed genuinely concerned, not to mention interested, so she decided there would be no harm in telling him the truth. He had asked, after all, so he wanted to know. Plus, she knew enough about human psychology and spirituality by now to know the importance, the value, and the meaning and purpose inherent in the asking of questions. Asking questions was, in truth, a far more significant exercise than most people realised.

“Because,” she answered him, “I was labouring under a misguided mindset, and the Universe had to set me right. A point of correction, I call it. But it felt brutal.” She shrugged. “I know it had to *be* brutal for me to get the message, but still . . .”

His expression barely changed, but he inclined his head slightly. “A point of correction? You speak the language of the *Shahimbwa*.”

“Shahimbwa . . . ?” she repeated involuntarily, frowning at the strangeness of the word and at the strangeness of his accent. His English was perfect, his pronunciation perfect, but she had never before heard an accent like his.

“The priests and priestesses of my people,” he replied in answer to her largely unspoken question.

She thought about that. There was much information implicit in that one simple statement. “If you know their language,” she asked him, “does that mean you are one of them, a priest of your people?”

The light of genuine amusement sparkled in his eyes and subtly altered the contours of his mouth. The beauty of his smile was dazzling, and it robbed her of breath temporarily. “You ask me that before you ask me who my people are,” he observed.

She didn’t return his smile. “Who are your people?”

He ignored the question and chose, instead, to answer her previous one. “Yes, I am *Shahimbwa* – a priest of my people.”

In response to this revelation, she frowned again. Her own curiosity was gaining momentum, for here was a man unique among men. “Where are your people?”

He smiled again, his eyes at first holding hers, and then breaking eye contact as he looked around him at the people walking around them, each person who passed them intent on his or her own business. “They are not here.”

“Yeah,” she said quickly, “I gathered that.”

A small silence fell between them then as she understood he would reveal nothing more about himself. She turned as if to go, but he stopped her.

“May I walk with you?”

She frowned again, this time in confusion. Normally, she was fiercely protective of her solitude, so much so that she rarely, if ever these days, made contact with strangers. She certainly did not ever entertain the possibility of a new acquaintance. She had become quite skilful at gently and subtly nipping the idea of a new relationship in the bud before it had a chance to bloom, and this regardless of the type of relationship people thought they might want from her.

“Yes, of course,” she heard herself say in response to his question, surprising herself.

They began to walk towards the cluster of buildings that housed the village’s collection of local shops. He had, she noted, not bothered to ask her where she was headed. He seemed content just to accompany her wherever she was going.

“Do your people know you are a shaman?” he asked her.

She stopped walking so abruptly that he walked away from her for a couple of paces before stopping and turning back to face her.

“No,” she said, not moving, “they don’t.”

“Do you?”

“Well . . . yes, but I have never used that word to describe what I am . . . or,” she looked away from him in confusion, “what I can do.”

“Why?”

She shook her head, frowning heavily as she looked back at him. “Because it has too many connotations attached to it – connotations I’ve not ever really considered in the context of . . . myself.”

He nodded. “I see,” he said quietly.

He said nothing more and neither did she, but neither did either of them move. So they stood, in the middle of the footpath, looking at each other. And then, he

broke the spell of strangeness that had settled over them both by taking a step towards her. “You do see, though, that you have one foot in the spirit world and one foot in the physical world?”

Unable to speak, she nodded silently.

He smiled again and took another step towards her so that they stood very close without touching. “If you will allow me to,” he said, “and if you will trust me, I have an antidote for your sadness.”



“What do you think a shaman is?”

“A priest or priestess of certain Asian and American cultures – a kind of spiritual healer-guide who, with the help of psychedelic drugs . . . natural ones, usually, has contact with the spirit world.”

He absorbed her explanation for a brief moment, teasing out the facts from the misnomers in her statement.

“A shaman,” he told her, “has the ability to be in the spirit world, to commune and communicate with it, and to then draw knowledge and wisdom out of it to affect and influence the world of the physical. A shaman is able, then, to connect this separated physical world *to* the realm of spirit. In that sense, he or she becomes a bridge between two realms. Is that not what you do?”

She was silent as she thought through what he'd just told her.

“Where does your writing come from, if not the spiritual realm?” he asked her, helping to nudge her thought processes in the direction they needed to go. “You've even consciously recognised the fact that *Lady of the Lake* was brought out of what you refer to as the *ethereal* realm, have you not?”

“How do you know about that?” she asked quickly, no longer thinking about shamans and shamanistic talents.

He ignored the question. “Humans see those shamanistic cultures as primitive, and yet the people of those cultures recognise the value of being guided by higher Wisdom and Knowledge. Is that primitive?”

“No,” she replied, smiling. “No,” she repeated. “It is the western cultures of the human experience that are primitive, and this in spite of their technological

advances. Their ignorance precludes them being anything else, and their focus precludes them being anything but ignorant.”

“So, is it really such a struggle to think you might be a shaman? Many humans are, you know, without being aware of it, whether they are 'spiritual' or not, and regardless of the culture into which they are born.”

“That does not surprise me. And no,” she said again, “it is not a struggle, not really. I've been told before that I am a shaman. I just rejected it because I wasn't ready to accept it.”

“And now you are?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

She looked at him with raised eyebrows. “Do you really not know? Or do you just want me to say it?”

He smiled his dazzling smile. “I want to hear you say it to me, out loud.”

“All right,” she complied, facing him directly. “I can accept what you say about being a shaman because I am beginning to know what I am.”

“What, not who,” he commented. “That is interesting, indeed.”

She ignored the interruption. “I am beginning to know that I have a foot in the higher dimension, as you said before. And I am beginning to recognise that my Work here involves bringing both feet to stand together in that higher dimension, and to leave this physical realm behind . . . whilst still being in it. Or,” she added, speaking to herself, not to him, “should that be whilst *being* in it?”

In lieu of a verbal response, he simply looked at her for a long moment, and then he smiled at her and nodded silently. She didn't need his approval, nor did she seek it, so his response left her unmoved. In fact, she thought, looking away from him and casting her eyes over the beauty of the landscape to which he had brought her, at this moment in time, she didn't need much of anything at all. He had led her to a junction of heather-covered hills a good thirty minutes of brisk but silent walking from the centre of the village. He had led, and she had followed, content to walk in silence. Being with him was decidedly and remarkably easy.

As she looked around her now, she was partially distracted by the sense of calm that filled her – a calm utterly devoid of any emotion whatsoever. She frowned

slightly as she acknowledged the lack of emotion within her, not understanding it.

He allowed her the time and the silence necessary to go within and connect with her calm inner centre. The place he had brought her to, he knew, untouched as it was by human hands and, therefore, by human energy, facilitated such a connection. The sheer breathtaking beauty of the landscape was, in truth, powerful in its own way. This place was sacred. As such, it had been protected.

Not knowing anything about its history, or its significance, she looked at the scenery around her and wondered why more people didn't know about it. The experience of being here involved almost all the physical senses – hearing the sound of the water rushing over the river bed as it wound its way between the hills, hearing the contented chatter of the birds, feeling the clear, crisp, cool air on one's skin, smelling the earthy scents of the landscape, and seeing the spectacular beauty of the wild heather, all abloom, covering the hills in a natural carpet of vibrant colour.

But it was with the inner senses that one truly connected with the beauty and serenity of this place.

“You see,” he said, reading her mind, “it is impossible to be sad here, is it not?”

“It is,” she agreed. “Sadness has no place here. Sadness does not belong in a place like this.”

“Will you tell me about the point of correction you have just experienced?”

The question was unexpected, despite the conversation they had started outside the café. She felt ambushed by it, and the feeling caused her to drag her eyes from the beauty of the scenery and turn quickly to face him. He showed no remorse at bombarding her with the question. Instead, he looked at her steadily, holding her eyes intensely with his own so that it was she who looked away. And then she moved away from him to sit on the rocky shore of the small river, bringing her legs up protectively against her chest, and wrapping her arms around them. He joined her, sitting beside her without saying a word.

“Aeons ago,” she said, unsure about where best to begin the story and deciding the best place to start was at the *very* beginning, “and I mean many thousands of years ago, I lived a life that I know is significant in its connection to this life I'm living now. It's not just that I've always known of it and can see parts of it clearly,

it's also that I have a strong sense that the Work I did back then has somehow equipped me for what I must do in this life.

“I have many memories from other lives I've lived, but none more clear to me than the memories of that life. So,” she said, glancing at him briefly, “it was easy for me, or it *has* been easy,” she shrugged, “to weave my memories into my writing, and I wrote two dialogues from two conversations I know I had in that life with the same person.” She looked at him again to make sure he got her meaning. “A man,” she said.

He, who sat beside her, nodded. “I understand,” he said. “Go on.”

“Well,” she said, shrugging again, partly from discomfort and unease, “I see him clearly. He was a prince of the people at that time, and then he became king. I know we were lovers, and I know we were married, despite the fact that, as a priestess, I had made sure the king had no access to me. In those times . . .”

He nodded again, interrupting her. “I know,” he said. “The high initiates in the temples of ancient times automatically became advisers to the kings and queens in the ancient world. And rightly so. Go on,” he encouraged her. “Am I right to assume you've seen him again?”

She looked at the river and, beyond it, to the hill covered in wild heather that dominated the view from where she sat. She nodded in response to his question without looking at him.

“In that life, one of the important projects a whole group of us worked on together was the preservation of the beautiful, ancient Wisdom that was always meant to be a part of the human experience before humans rejected it and then forgot about it. We hid scrolls and documents and books in a place we knew they would not be found.”

She turned then to look at him directly. “And in this life, in this time, recently, as a matter of fact, he found them again, as was always the intent.” She looked away again. “There was one particular scroll in the collection that stood out among all the others because it was written in our language. I wrote it, back then, knowing what the gist of the message was but not fully understanding the words I was writing specifically because I could see myself writing them in this life, and the language was unfamiliar to me.” Again, she looked at him, this time, questioningly.

“Does that make sense?”

He nodded briefly, willing her to continue. “It does,” he confirmed.

“Well, the scroll led him to me in this lifetime, because I published what was on it in one of my books, without knowing he and his team had found the scrolls from the past. He contacted me, and I came half way around the world to meet him.” She laughed a small, self-deprecating laugh. “Why wouldn't I? I thought he was . . .”

“You thought he was what?”

She bit her lip, holding it between her teeth, reluctant to say the words aloud.

“I thought he was . . .” she tried again and, again, she faltered. “I thought he was the one who is my truest reflection, and this despite the fact that I *know* it is forbidden for me to be with a third-dimensional man in this life. But I thought he wasn't third dimensional. I thought he couldn't have been, not if he was who I thought he was.”

He who sat beside her absorbed this for a moment and then asked, “And the point of correction?”

She breathed deeply and exhaled the air again on a sigh. “At first, he was attentive when we met. And then, the more we saw of each other, the more defensive he became. You know, kind of dismissive. And then, even that changed, so that he began to be . . . well, hostile. It was very hurtful, but even through the hurt I recognised the blocked door for what it was.”

“Blocked door?”

“It's a theory I have. Well, actually, no it's not. It's more a principle of existence. I call it '*Blocked Doors and Open Windows*'. When we walk in alignment with the Process, the Process creates open windows of opportunity, quite often in the form of miracles that facilitate the Process itself and take us easily along the path of our Destiny. But when we walk in misalignment with Higher Will and Purpose, either working against it or just not understanding where we're supposed to be going, we encounter blocked doors that stop us in our tracks, so to speak.

“In our ignorance, we keep trying these doors over and over again, despairing as we find our way blocked over and over again. I learned long ago to recognise a

blocked door when I encountered one, and to recognise that the Process was telling me I was on a wrong path, trying to head in a wrong direction. Anyway,” she said, returning to the original subject, “this man who I knew in another life . . . who I was *married* to in another life, in this life, yelled at me in front of his team of archaeologists, and told me I was nothing like her, his wife of the past. He told me I did not look like her, and I did not speak with words of Wisdom as she did. And this, despite evidence to the contrary, because even he recognised the voice of the scroll was *her* voice when he originally read it. That small fact,” she said, unable to keep the bitterness out of her voice, “he seemed not to be able to retain in his need for denial.

“I don't know what he was expecting. I don't know what he thinks he wants. I just know, now, I'm not it.”

“Do you despise him for that?”

“A little,” she confessed, “even though I know, now, it's meant to be, or not meant to be, depending on your point of view. As I said when first we met, you and I, the Process had to be harsh with me on this because I needed to get the message that he is not what I thought he was. I recognise that, and I acknowledge that truth. Anything less harsh and I probably would've kept trying the blocked door, to my detriment. The partnership, or pairing, of him and me was for that life only, not this one. It served Purpose in that time and in that place, but *only* in that time and place.”

“I see. And why is it forbidden for you to be with a third-dimensional man?”

She threw him a quizzical look, as if she was surprised that he felt he had to ask the question.

“Because,” she said, the quizzical look reflected in the tone of her voice, “I am not a third dimensional. To be with a third-dimensional man would have perpetuated my entrapment in the third dimension and as a third-dimensional identity. A third-dimensional man can only ever, at best, for me, be a reflection of what I am not – a non-reflection. Such a man would never, and could never, allow me to be what I truly am.

“Always, right across my whole life, it has been prevented, one way or another, except once when I got married because I desperately needed to convince myself I

was normal, just like everyone else. But that, as it turned out, was allowed because he was easy to leave. And that is no reflection on him, but rather on who and where I was at the time I married him, and then at the time I left him. When I knew there was more for me to step into and become, I easily walked away from him, from that whole lifestyle, actually. Really, it was what he symbolised that I walked away from. Of course,” she sighed a long, heartfelt sigh, “it took me a whole decade to work out what was actually going on with me after that. Better late than never, though, I guess . . .”

She glanced at him again, a genuinely-amused, self-deprecating smile transforming her features, but as she looked in his direction, out of the very corner of her eye, she caught sight of a bridge.

And then, suddenly and with startling clarity, the bridge came into sharper focus, and she looked at it fully, properly. She stopped talking, the memories of the past vanishing in an instant, to concentrate on the bridge. Even from this distance, she could see it was very old – old but incredibly beautiful. The handrails of the bridge were carved and crafted in an ancient wood, and steps led up one side from one bank of the river and down the other onto the river's opposite bank. The bridge blended perfectly with the beauty of the landscape, almost as if it was the landscape itself that had crafted it, or at least given its express permission for the bridge to be there.

She got to her feet quickly, wondering why she'd not seen the bridge when first they'd come upon the site. Hesitating for a fraction of a second only, she started to walk towards it, but she took only a couple of steps. He was faster than her, and, having got to his own feet in response to what he knew she was seeing, he held her rooted to the spot with a vice-like grip on her upper arm.

“No,” he said urgently, “you must not. You must not.”

Rather than try and fight him, she stopped obediently and looked at him with an expression of profound shock on her face. Suddenly, and with a similar clarity to that which had accompanied the bridge coming into focus, she knew the bridge served a far greater, far grander purpose than simply providing the means of getting from one side of the river to the other.

“So,” she said breathlessly, “that is where your people are . . . and who, for that

matter?”

He was still holding her firmly, but he did not reply to her question.

“How is it you can be here?” she asked him.

“I do not eat of the food when I am here, nor do I taste the water. I minimise my contact with people, and I stay not a single moment more than is necessary.”

The untouched teapot and empty cup on the coffee table in front of the lounge in the café came to mind. She'd been right. He had not touched the tea he'd ordered.

“You come here regularly?” she asked him.

“Yes.”

“For what purpose?”

“To keep an eye on what is occurring here in this dimension.”

She said nothing. He was still holding her arm, so she gently but firmly detached herself from his grip, and took a step backwards, away from him. Just as he had done earlier, she shoved the ends of her fingers into the pockets of her jeans – a defensive, self-protective gesture of self-containment.

He waited, calmly, as he watched her reaction. She narrowed her eyes and inclined her head slightly.

“I don't quite believe you,” she said. “You are looking for something – something very definite and specific.”

He nodded once, briefly. “Yes.”

“What?”

“We are looking for the Ripple Effect.”

She looked bemused. “The Ripple Effect?”

When he didn't respond immediately, another question arose out of the depths of her, and she felt compelled to ask it.

“Did you have to learn to speak our language?”

“No. I spoke it already.”

“Already . . . ? Oh! The ways of humans are not unfamiliar to you, are they? You've been here as one of them, incarnate.”

“Many times.”

She absorbed that, quiet for a moment, and then she asked him, “What is the

Ripple Effect you are looking for? And what will be its cause, or its source?”

“The Ripple Effect will tell us two vital and significant things,” he explained. “First, it will tell us about the existence of the cause, and, second, it will tell us that humans are ready.”

“Ready? Ready for what?”

“You do not know? Really?”

A frown flickered across her face, and she swallowed nervously.

“Shall we sit, again?” he asked her gently.

She nodded her acquiescence and followed suit as he sat, again, on the rocks that covered the bank of the river.

“Aeons and aeons ago,” he said, “humans rejected the governance and guidance of the Higher Wisdom and Knowledge that was their birthright – their rightful heritage. That rejection, as implacable as it was, caused them to live in a state of Perpetual Separation. That is . . .”

“Yes,” she interrupted, “I know. Perpetual Separation is a separation from the Truth of who they are, of what they are, and of what they are here to do. It is a separation from the Universe, in a very real sense, from Divine Consciousness, so it is a separation from Purpose, from Destiny, from Light, from True Perspective (Truth), and from all that gives them nourishment, of the soul, I mean. It is a separation from the Knowledge of *what* truly is, of *how* it is, and of *why* it is as it is.”

“Indeed,” he confirmed, laughing softly. “You describe it well. The original and continued rejection of the Wisdom that first caused and since perpetuates the Separation has caused humans to have to traverse the long, long road of consequence. But it is time, now, for humans to reconnect with the ancient Wisdom and, thus, with the Truth of who they are. One could say the long, long road of consequence has come to an end.”

And then it hit her, the revelation of what he was looking for, like a bolt of lightning exploding within. The realisation increased her heart beat, significantly, and she felt slightly breathless.

“You are looking for the reappearance of the ancient Wisdom, and you are looking for humanity’s recognition of and absorption of that Wisdom. Or,” she

said, as she thought further, “you are looking for humanity’s *reaction* to it. The analogy of a large rock and a still pond comes to mind, the reappearance of the Wisdom being the rock dropped into the still pond, sending ripples of reaction through the human experience – the Ripple Effect.”

“That is so,” he confirmed. “That is what we are looking for. There have been signs that indicate to us human consciousness is awakening to the yearning, smaller ripples, one might say. But they are merely precursors, not the real thing.”

She absorbed and assimilated the realisation and his further revelation in silence, turning completely inward so that she subconsciously and temporarily tuned out the scenery and his presence. And then, as the realisation deepened, broadened, and expanded within her, filling her consciousness, she focussed on him once again.

“The first pieces are in place,” she told him, not even considering the possibility he might not know to what she was referring.

He nodded. “And the other pieces?”

“Another is virtually finished, and one other is in the process of being birthed. Now we just await the spark that will set the whole on fire. There is enough there now to catch and hold the flames, to send them high, I think.”

“And are you ready for that?”

She thought, and she went within again to gauge her response to the question. “Honestly,” she replied, “I don’t know. I know I am strong enough to live through whatever may come, but whether or not I am ready,” she shook her head, “I don’t know. I think maybe not.”

He considered that. “Sometimes, the very thing we need to show us our readiness is the very thing we think we are not ready for.”

She smiled at the truth of his words. “The sink or swim principle. We experience our ability to swim by being thrown in at the deep end.”

“Yes. ‘Tis the Process that knows whether or not we *can* swim. We stand on the edge of the deep end of the pool, afraid to jump, afraid we will sink. And so,” he said, taking a deep breath and releasing it as he spoke, so that the words sounded like a sigh, “the Process, knowing it cannot wait on us, pushes us in.”

“Great,” she said sarcastically. “I have this to look forward to, then, do I?”

He laughed softly. "From where I stand," and he looked down at the rocks they were sitting on, "or sit, as is the case at the moment, it certainly appears that way."

"Well," she said, "I think I might stay here, then."

He smiled, knowing the comment, although spoken in jest, held an element of serious intent. "May I remind you, you are not a coward?"

"No, you may not."

He laughed as he rose to his feet and stood looking down at her. "I must go. Shall we meet here again at midday in three days? Will that suit you?"

She nodded. "Yes, that will suit me."



He watched from the door as the High Priest, a seemingly older man, at least in appearance, took an enormous book off the shelf and brought it to a desk as if it weighed nothing at all. When the older man placed the book on the desk, it made a soft thud, the sound of which echoed in the silence of the great library, and a tiny cloud of fine dust jumped off the book. The older man then opened the cover of the book, turned a couple of pages, and then leant over the book to run a finger across the lines of script, furrows of concentration lining his brow. He who watched smiled at the familiarity of the sight. He was almost sorry to be interrupting the old man's peace and serenity . . . almost.

"She made it," he said quietly.

In the silence of the great library, the words carried clearly across the distance between the two men, and echoed with a vibration of their own.

The effect of the words on the old man, a High Priest of the *Shahimbwa*, was instantaneous. He straightened, looked over at the younger man, and then, with a hand on his chest, turned to look behind him, seeking the comfort and support of his chair. Finding it, he sat heavily.

"Oh my!" he whispered. "That calls to mind a human expression I've not heard for aeons. Weak with relief, I believe it was."

"So," he who had watched said as he walked towards the old man, "you *were* afraid."

The old man waved a hand in the air dismissively. "Of course. Of course. I just

could not admit it to you. I could not be the one to cause hope to diminish within you. How do you know she is the One?”

He, the younger man, leaned on the desk and folded his arms across his chest. “We were both sitting in the same room, and I could not keep my eyes off her. She radiated Light like I’ve never before seen in a human. But her Light was dimmed by sadness. I asked her why she was sad, and we have been talking since. She knows what she is incarnate to do, and she told me the first pieces are in place, awaiting the spark that will set the whole on fire.”

The older man pursed his lips in a silent whistle. “Did she indeed? She has done it, then?”

“So it would seem, although the Ripple Effect has not yet materialised.” He inclined his head. “That is not how I know it is her, though.”

“No, I would imagine not.” The older man smiled, not *at* the younger, but to himself. And then he looked up at the younger man once again. “You did not bring her across the bridge, then?”

“No.”

“And why not?”

“Because she is not ready. There is still one thing left for her to do.”

The old man nodded, understanding. “And we both know very well what that is.”

“Indeed,” the younger man said softly.

Left alone in the silence of the great library, the older man closed his eyes and gave silent thanks to the gods. Through the vastness of his incredible, magnificent mind, one thought played over and over again, like a needle stuck in the groove of an old record. So powerful was the thought in its utter simplicity, he allowed it to infuse him, to wash through him, relishing the feel of it within. Unconsciously, he whispered the thought aloud.

“She made it. She made it. She made it.”

~

She left the house she was staying in, careful to lock up and place the keys where she knew Max would find them, and then walked the distance from the house to the

edge of the river. She walked slowly, meandered really, with her hands shoved into the deep pockets of her jacket. She was in no hurry. She had allowed plenty of time, so she was early.

When she reached the river, she turned and followed it upstream, knowing the river would take her to the sacred place he'd brought her to three days before. She wasn't surprised when she saw him there, waiting. He was standing as still as a statue, facing the river, but he wore a sapphire-blue cloak that covered him from head to toe so that she could not see any part of him. He wore the hood of the cloak pulled up, covering his hair and hiding his face. She wasn't even sure it *was* him until she walked close enough for him to hear her footsteps. When he heard her coming, he turned towards her, lifting his hands to pull down the hood of the cloak as he did so.

"You are early," he said by way of greeting her.

"So are you."

He smiled at her, the way he had days before, and, as it had days before, the beauty of his smile robbed her of breath.

She waited for him to speak, but he had no intention of speaking first. He needed to know where she was after three days of processing not just their conversation and all that had been revealed, but the fact of his existence and his contact with her.

When it became obvious he would not speak first, she smiled, genuinely and deeply amused.

"So," she said, "the question is, do I still have to be here?"

He answered her question by inclining his head and asking her a question of his own. "How do you see yourself?"

"You are asking me about the conflict of perspectives within me, aren't you? The two perspectives," she continued, not giving him a chance to reply, "are at war, one lower, one higher, and only one can win that war. I have shifted my identification from the lower to the higher perspective within me in relation to many, many things. But when it comes to the way I see myself, the lower perspective is still slightly dominant, I would say."

He smiled at her. "Not yet a goddess, then?"

“Not yet a higher-dimensional being,” she paraphrased. “One’s view of some things, like friendship, marriage, and ownership of possessions, are easy to spin from the straw of lower-dimensional perspective into the gold of higher-dimensional perspective. The spinning of other things, like one’s mindset in relation to money, food, and material success, are sheer hard work. Those ones have taken me many years to transform. The hardest Work, though, is that of spinning one’s perspective of oneself. I have no physical addictions, and never really have had. The addictions I have battled have been psychological, particularly my addiction to physical identity. It has stopped me from seeing the truth of myself. When it comes to oneself . . .” she said, finishing the sentence on a sigh, “tough.”

“I asked you once if you knew what it was that perpetuated the veil of forgetfulness within you. Do you remember?”

She looked at him in surprise, rendered speechless for a moment. “That *was* you?”

He smiled again. “Of course.”

“You wore a different cloak then. You wore a cloak of brown, not blue. I wrote the experience of you into the last story of my first book, *Pieces of Me*.”

“Yes, I know. Was that not always the intent? And *you* determined the colour of that cloak, not me. Or, rather, it was your perspective at the time that determined the colour of the cloak. So, the question of what perpetuated the veil of forgetfulness,” he reminded her, “what was your answer to the question? Do you remember?”

“I remember. The answer was and is perspective.”

“And what underpins that perspective?”

“Belief.”

“So,” he said softly, and hesitated briefly to allow her thought processes to become synchronised with his own, “what do you believe you are?”

She was silent. There was no immediate answer to the question within her, but there was, also, a reluctance to go within and contemplate it. She frowned, knowing exactly what the source of the resistance was. As the silence lengthened, she turned away from him to look at the river as it rushed over the rocks and stones

that lined the riverbed. God, she thought, easily distracted, but this place is beautiful.

And then an idea occurred to her. She looked at him again. “What are *you*?”

He threw his head back and laughed. “Ah,” he said, his laughter sparkling in his eyes as he looked at her again, “but that is cheating. I am not inclined to let you off the hook so easily.”

She smiled. His laughter was infectious. “I can come up with a dozen different things to describe what I am,” she told him, “but most of them will be naught but clichés at the moment. The truth is, I’m not sure what I am.”

Her response sobered him, and he watched her, restraining himself with sheer effort of will. He longed to help her out. Indeed, he *yearned* to do so, but he knew the importance of allowing her to peel back each layer of lower-dimensional perspective for herself. Indeed, anything he would or could say to her would only meet the resistance of those very layers anyway, and, as such, would have only limited value. Far better to hold his tongue and allow her to come to any new revelations on her own.

She knew he would not help her and so didn’t expect it. She looked away from him again, but barely did she glance at the landscape when the revelation hit her, impacting her to such an extent that she rocked slightly on her feet.

He felt it.

“I am a voice of Heaven,” she said, not looking at him.

The joy that coursed through his entire being, generated by her words, brought tears to his eyes. He shook his head and raised his hands, placing them either side of her face, forcing her to look at him.

“You are so nearly there, but still you do not fully see. Still,” he said vehemently, “you allow lower perspective to cloud your vision, and it undermines, restricts, lowers, limits, and reduces you. You are *the* Voice of Heaven. Do you not yet know that? Heaven has only One Voice. Others may speak with this Voice, too, but *you* have come from Heaven to show these people the Way of Ascension, as did the One who preceded you. They will learn soon enough that the Way of Ascension is the only way to survive what is to come. You have come from Heaven to show them how to *live*. You have come from Heaven, and you speak with Heaven’s Voice to

show these people how to *be* in a higher dimension. Or, I should say, how to *be* a higher-dimensional existence.”

She absorbed the truth in his words, but one word caught her focus above all the others. “The One,” she repeated involuntarily. “You are referring to yourself. You are the One who preceded me.”

“Yes.”

“You told me I was the *thirteenth*,” she whispered. “But so, too, are you . . . or were you.”

“So, too, I *am*,” he said. “I am the very same higher dimensional being that you are becoming as your perspective of yourself is transformed.”

“It is you, then. *You* are the perfect mirror reflection of my soul, my higher Truth.”

“I am. Now, as to the question of whether or not you still have to be here, there is one thing you must yet do.”

He was still holding her face in his hands, but she nodded, subtly, slightly, given his hold on her. “The Point of Pure Revelation,” she said, understanding what it was he was alluding to. “And that is not a revelation of my Truth to others, but, rather, to myself.”

“Yes, ‘tis so. We refer to it by another name, as well as the one you have identified. We call it the Point of Pure Merger. It is the point in the Process of Ascension that you come to when every layer of lower perspective has been pared away, resolved, and removed. What remains is the purity of your own Light. Thus do you see yourself, finally, in the Light of your own Truth.”

He removed his hands from her face and took hold of both of hers, holding her hands in his.

“You have already realised that you may only look upon the reflection of your higher Truth when you *are* that Truth. And you can only *be* that Truth when you see it and know it for yourself. This you already know. But tell me, what is the Purpose of looking upon that reflection? Put another way, why would you create the reality of such a reflection in the landscape of the physical that surrounds you? In other words, why am I here now, with you, and why will I not leave you?”

Her eyes widened a little as the realisation hit her, and then she smiled, and her

smile sparkled with inner joy – a new experience – so that he could not help but return it.

“Because,” she said, answering his question, “nothing, nothing facilitates the seeing and the knowing more beautifully nor more wonderfully than the purity of one’s own reflection – the reflection of who you *are*, in Truth. Surely, ‘tis pleasure beyond anything else I could imagine.”

“Surely,” he said, still smiling. He slid his hands up her arms, into the sleeves of her jacket. “As you undertake this stage of the Process – the Point of Pure Merger, or the Point of Revelation – know that you are no longer alone. I am here. And we are One.”

He held her inner forearms so that she was forced to do the same to him. She wrapped her fingers around his arms. Thus connected, she smiled at him as she said, “All right. Then I am ready.”



Creating the Current

The chaos of our modern world is expressing itself in a multitude of ways, from war, conflict and polarisations to chaotic weather events and natural disasters. Many of us are afraid, and we wonder what kind of future we're walking into. As *The Messiah Perspective* asks, can we change, and, if we can, then how do we do so? How *do* we create a brighter, hope-filled future?

Where do we go from here?

To address these questions, I have created *The Monograph Series*. Comprising four series of ten monographs each, the series hones in on and focusses more specifically on the different themes in my work and my writing. The monographs expand on and explore the concepts and principles I've introduced in *The Messiah Perspective*.

If the stories of this book are like stepping stones of transformation then the monographs are rungs on an internal ladder to heaven. I *can* promise you this, because I have walked them myself.

The Monograph Series and each of the monographs that comprise the whole are my gift to humanity. As such, they are available on my website:

<https://www.thelady.com.au/the-monograph-series/>

So, please, feel free to download them or simply read them for yourself directly via my website.

The road to heaven is not an easy one to walk, but it is within reach, within each one of us, should we choose to walk it. And, if enough of us are prepared to do so, then we can and will create the current that will take us into a better, hopeful, brighter, lighter, transcended future.

Jennifer