

Everywhere and All At Once

By
Ion Light

Copyright © 2017 by Ion Light

EXP: Experimental Home Publishing

“Sphere of Influence” version 1.0

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, distributed, or transmitted in any form or by any means, including photocopying, recording, or other electronic or mechanical methods, without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief quotations embodied in critical reviews and certain other noncommercial uses permitted by copyright law. For permission requests, email the publisher “Experimental Home Publishing.”
निर्मित

This is a work in progress. The events and characters are fiction, and any similarities between real people and places and events is simply circumstantial or the fault of the author. This book should be available for free at free-ebook.net, but can be attained by writing the author directly.

The author is open to constructive criticism, so feel free to email him at solarcahriot@gmail.com

214-907-4070, phone rarely gets answers, some delays in responding to texts. Email is preferred. Please put ‘Everywhere and All At Once’ in the subject header so I can better sort you out. A non-response likely means I failed to catch it.

Greetings from the Author. I appreciate the kind correspondence I have received in favor of the Safe Haven series. It was my intent to explore in a fun, meaningful way, philosophy, magic, and sexuality, which we all have, either through adoption, creation, or a combination there of. I am frequently reminded, by friends, fans, and my own eyes, that my biggest failing is grammar. I apologize in advance. There will be mistakes even in here, but I forged onward with the belief that I will improve, and that my writing will eventually find its own, and perhaps become a self-sustaining part of my life. That, and once it is out of my head, I must go on.

In the Ted Talk, “Isolation is the Dream-killer,” by Barbara Sher, she clearly establishes the number one reason for success is our ability to connect with others and network. We are social creatures and not meant to be in isolation. This is what this pre-story preamble is about; a reaching out. If you are fan of this, or other works, under my alias or real name, I would ask you recommend it or share it. My dream is to write professionally, which for me simply means, earn sufficient profits from my work to sustain more work and hire an editor who can suffer me. My perceived obstacle is having connections; the literary world is changing and competition is extremely fierce. Even if an idea or story is reasonably good, it may not get play. Somehow, though, lots of stuff gets through that may or not be good; probably by word of mouth, good or bad, provoking a response from others. Free-ebooks is a great format for sharing, and that’s probably how you found me. So I am extending an invitation to share my work, to recommend Free-Ebooks in general, and to feel free to write me to share your thoughts and recommendations.

And, most importantly, thank you.

निर्मित

“In our time, when such threatening forces of cleavage are at work, splitting peoples, individuals, and atoms, it is doubly necessary that those which unite and hold together should become effective; for life is founded on the harmonious interplay of masculine and feminine forces, within the individual human being as well as without. Bringing these opposites into union is one of the most important tasks of present-day psychotherapy.” Emma Jung, 1955.

Chapter 1

'Sphere of Influence,' a book compiling excerpts of the firsthand witness reports of the end of Origin became available after the 'Great Fix.' The testimonies and opinions don't necessarily represent those of the publishers... blah, blah, blah. 'Way to cover your ass,' publishers. And who was this publisher, anyway, she thought; 'Mad Reindeer Games Publishing?' Really? That's the best you could come up with? The author was three names, Candlestone, Shackleford, and Emerson, making it seem all officious, like an academic text, which again, might explain why it was available to her and why it seemed obnoxiously in her face enough to grab her attention. But how could have it been done so quickly when 'End of Origin' had just happened! Janet Marie Hallcraft pondered the book. She went by Jane now. Bond, Jane Bond. Magical assassin extraordinaire, available for hire. She had been there, on Earth, what everyone was calling 'Origin,' right before the end. She was from Earth! She felt as if she should have some greater depth of feelings about the end, but all she could muster was "C'est la vie." Jane flipped to a page at random.

Some guy named Ted speaking: "No one heard it coming. How could we? We inundate ourselves with noise. We move from room to room, environment to environment, turning up the volume as we go, never acclimating first. Radio is stacked on top of engine noise, which is stacked on top of tires pawing at pavement. Music is pumped into the parking lots, and distractions follows us through the stores all the way up to the cash registers, where monitors run commercials, as if we require that external input to remind us to buy. And if that's not enough, everyone is nursing their cellphones. Tiny, noisy little babies crying for attention, while ignoring the real babies. Blood thirsty little cell phone babies that suck the lives out of us. At home, there are televisions in every room that never turn off, and still, I am nursing that little blood thirsty rat. I will sit on the porch with it, searching data streams for relevancy and occasionally spy the neighbor's family sitting on their porch, mom, dad, two children, and they are both on their phones. The drivers pass looking at their cell phones.

Noise. People sleep with radios on. Cars go by with their radio so loud that the car bounces down the road and can be heard three city blocks, and it vibrates the dishes in my cabinet as if they were monk bowls that have been struck with a gong. The electric hum of refrigerators, computer noises, air-condition and heating systems roaring, and if you live close to a road you

hear the nonstop roar of traffic, random mufflers intentionally set to full audio distress whine and weave through regular wailing, or random wailing of motorcycles, and if you pretend this might be mistaken for a distant waterfall, or one of those machines that creates “white noise” that people play cause we were taught to not to be satisfied with the sounds of our own thoughts. Who could stand their own heart beating should silence fall? No one could have been expected to hear the slow, incremental build up, and if they did, the explanation given was tinnitus.

“The deaf might have heard it, but no one listens to them. (If you think deaf people are quiet, you don’t know any deaf people. They are louder than the hearing folks.) Of course, all of this is speculation. People trying to construct an explanation for what happened after the event. Some say it was aliens. Some say it was the second coming. Very few people want to examine the thoughts that we did it to ourselves. It’s been said before that our hatreds, our jealousies, our fears, our secrets, these are the things that drive men mad. But it’s more than that, isn’t it? Our lack of compassion for ourselves makes it impossible to hold true compassion for others. Our lack of self-examination doesn’t help. Touching our own thoughts and emotions as artifacts and contemplating whether our perception is wrong just doesn’t happen naturally any more. The sane people, the ones who know their thoughts are awful, they go and get medicated so they can try and think good thoughts. If you weren’t anxious in our world, you were either numbed by Xanax, street drugs, or you just weren’t living. Tuning out is a learned behavior. Unable to examine ourselves, recognize our own biases, how could we have hoped to truly comprehend others, much less deal with what was to come.

“Sorry, it’s difficult to not sound as if I’m preaching. I have my biases and my soap boxes and I am sorting them in an effort to see what really happened, but it’s all tangled. I’m writing this in order to share with those that do not have the Ability, those that came from before the incident, or who simply agreed not to manifest further. Whether it was aliens, evolution, ourselves, an awakening, or God, at 19:00 Greenwich Mean Time, Thursday, September 22, 2016, humanity was changed. I don’t like to say the world came to an end. (I know I died, but I am still here.) Sure, we had the ability to destroy all life on Earth, and we nearly did on several occasions prior to the Ability, and we were living during an extinction event, one that rivaled the previous major five extinction events. Most people didn’t know how close we had come to doing ourselves in until after the Ability, which itself should have been a wakeup call, but we were still too preoccupied with self to sort all of the stuff that came available. And, I say that with all

humbleness, not accusatory at all. No one really knows how they will respond to ‘real’ fight or flight mode until that part of your brain is activated.

“It was initially perceived as a light, as if lightening had struck and the sky had turned that electric blue, only instead of for an instant, the blueness was sustained. Everything was bathed in this light, but even odder was the fact that there were no shadows cast, and no way to determine the source of the light. Collectively, the entire world held their breath. Was this the end? Is this nuclear war? The entire world bore witness to this light simultaneously. The sleeping woke instantly, no transition time, just instant awake. Even babies had the common sense to marvel silently, as if transfixed, reaching up as if towards a mobile.

“A sudden hush fell over humanity. It’s the kind of remarkable silence that sometimes occurs in a group, like a wave of quiet over a cafeteria when all the conversations simultaneously end, as if there is a natural rhythm even to human conversations and we’re all in sync. We’re so use to expecting chaos that we try not to think about these moments of synchronicity, and if we think of it at all, we internalize it as a spiritual phenomenon or simple material entrainment that is shattered by explanations.

“Then someone laughed.

“It was contagious. People joined in, a person at a time, then groups of people, then nations. It was a good laugh, at first. A sigh of relief, really. We were laughing because we were still breathing, not being incinerated by nuclear fission. We were alright. Until someone realized that the laughter could be heard inside our heads. That realization ended the laughter and quiet rained for maybe a second before the first question hit and echoed from mind to mind. If I remember correctly, I think it was “What the fuck?” It wasn’t in English, but it needed no translation.

“In one instance, every human being on the planet simultaneously discovered they were telepathic. The first Ability. Within 24 hours of that moment, half the world’s population would be dead, the direct result of murder or suicide. I survived for 26 hours.

“The old world operated on secrets and lies. Not in a bad, conspiratorial way. Poker games aren’t any fun if everyone at the tables knows what everyone else’s cards are. It’s the same way with the economy. Value is artificially created, and so there can be no negotiations when you take the game out of haggling. And that’s the easy one to understand. It’s harder to understand that every human relationship is built on the same system of micromanaging image.

You only have to take a cursory look at any profile on a dating app to know this is true. Who leads with their bad shit? I snore, I have a roaming eye, I fucked the mailman. If you only knew how much doubt the world carries you would have less bravado and more humility. You would be walking kinder upon the earth.

“Very few men are willing to own that they have wanted to fuck their best friend’s wife or their daughter, or fantasized about the secretary, much less admit that they held inappropriate thoughts about an attractive teenager, dressed trashy or not, or with boobs too big for the girls size and age, or God forbid, even younger than teens. They blame it on the steroids in the milk, and try to disguise it as ‘girls sure develop early these days.’ Did you read the list of gymnastic girls that had come forward reporting sexual abuse perpetuated by their trainers? And this was before the Ability confirmed and revealed the actual number of offenses was much more severe. Further, the companies hiring the coaches hid numerous reports about their trainers because the trainers were successful and it was about getting girls to the Olympics and prestige, not about protecting girls, and even boys. Almost everyone involved, from reporters to actual criminal investigators believed that it was just the top of the iceberg, that there was probably more mischief going on than you might believe, but, if you saw this at all, you probably saw one or two articles on it, and then, silence, back to the rat race, and trainers simply switched counties and companies because ‘accusations’ don’t follow in that world. And if you were one of the perpetrators, and suddenly you have the Ability and realize, fuck, everyone knows! Suicide or death by posse. What would you chose? There are scores of people who had inappropriate thoughts and never ever acted on the thought or impulse, all of humanity, and posse came after them, too. Even some good people who were in some really close calls due to proximity and potentiality that still ended up being pursued by group vigilante. Even if they weren’t subdued by the mental onslaught, they could no more live with everyone knowing they had held this in them any more than the people who had actually gave into the impulse. Suicide was easier than living with the knowledge of this, of the knowledge of the others knowing of this, and their actual and perceived knowledge of the other’s knowledge and reflection of that knowledge. Discovering that everyone holds these thoughts to some degree or another didn’t normalize it or minimize it. Just thinking I would never do that is in itself recognition of it being in oneself. There are shadows attached to that. And the people that went around pursuing ‘sexual child abuse’ as their

platform to raise attention frequently fell into two camps, the predators themselves, and those who were preyed upon. Yep, even the predators used child protection as a way to get to children.

There are, surprisingly, people who never experience this sort of abuse, who could imagine it but simply led their lives believing it happened to other people or it was rare or just the titillation of news and movies. It was more rampant than anyone ever knew. It was in your family, in your neighborhood, and generally, the more money you had, the higher rates of abuse. Child trafficking is not a poor man's game. Yeah, the police will make big headlines about busting a swinger home, or catching a John with a crack whore, but those aren't the people trafficking. They're also not the people spreading diseases. Swingers talk about sex and STD's. The person sneaking around on their partner because they are afraid to get caught by spouse or police, they're the ones spreading diseases, which means, the law is helping that virus by not allowing a legitimate pathway to get that need met. It's the high profile CEOs and politicians attending Superbowl games, though, who are involved in trafficking. Children disappearing spike during games and the bigger the game the higher the rates of kids missing, with Olympics at the top of the list. In the States, California is number one for child trafficking. Texas is number two.

“The Ability turned on a light and there were no more secrets. Sex, and our problems around sex, was the biggest human problem, bigger than greed and pollution. There is a belief that the more wealth you have, the more sex you should have. There is the opposite belief, too: if you're poor, you shouldn't have sex or kids, which just reinforces the other belief. There was real shock, pretend shock, indignant and righteous anger, accusations, discoveries of infidelities, hurt, loss, and that's all with just the normal sexual expectations we hold. Did you know we all have sexual biases and that we assume everyone's libido and normative thoughts about sex are the same as ours? There is even sexual racism, where people hold the ideal partner and have dating patterns based on that ideal, which usually matches the social paradigm, which means our preference slants towards white people on television is what gets played out in real life. Which is why Star Trek's Uhura stands out as a television first: a woman, an officer, and black! Sexual prejudice is a real thing, and so is our prejudices against height and weight and all the little things that we notice in others that turn us off and on that make us categorize each other and scale everyone on a continuum of yes or no or providing circumstantial caveats that need to occur before we will fuck that person. Did you know pottery saw a boost after the Movie Ghost!

Yep if you saw Ghost and suddenly had the urge to make pottery, you were wanting sex. Caveats like, if no one knew, I would so do that. Or, if we were stuck on an island, maybe. If she had a bag over her head. Or, even if you were the last man on earth, I would never. Until the Ability, no one even realize the degree to which 'attractive' people got away with shit that the less attractive couldn't, and if we measured productivity based on looks, we would pay ugly people more. Knowing what our colleagues thought of us, the games we play at work, the petty backstabbing, the discovery of real and imagined value, actual and perceived opalescent, the disparity between real work ethics and what we really think, and the clash between what we really think of our bosses and those who micromanage everything, and the fact almost everyone believes there is a better way to run things and yet we constantly give in to precedent and or bureaucracies because that's the way the operational structure wanted it, even though everyone involved knew it was stupid! And if they put a cute girl on the video lessons teaching us the company rules and ethics, we are more likely to buy into them! People have the right not to be harassed and people have the right to flirt but we're all trying to control each other instead of just accepting each other, and so offenses are exaggerate sometimes or inappropriately ignored at others, because we don't practice empathy first. The underlying problem is that we are all as disposable as the goods we purchase, used and toss without reverence to where they came or where they go, even the CEO's, who frequently went away thinking 'whew, that was a close one,' because if people actually knew them, the real them, no CEO would get paid what they get paid. There is a reason why CEO's manage their image and company through entourages: most CEO's are psychopaths. If people really knew what they thought, even their entourages, there would be fewer CEOs. And really, after the Ability, it was very clear that most companies didn't need a CEO to operate, and many of the companies that went out of business, was simply a way for the CEO's to cash out of the market and go away with more money, which means a perfectly stable and functional company was destroyed, along with the livelihoods of all those participating, simply for one person to make more profits; and add insult to injury, the new company that comes in to supply the demand met by the other company hire the same people for less and is own by the same guy, just through a handler!

“Suffice it to say, all relationships, whether it be married couples, corporations, or nation states, they all operate on the same principle of micromanaging image. In other words, lies. Who in their right mind would buy a diamond for five thousand dollars when you knew it only cost a

nickel, and that there are enough diamonds on hand in the world to give every human being, that was 9 billion plus people at the time, half their own body weight in diamonds. Every profession was affected by the loss of secrets. Lawyers were made redundant instantly. And, like Shakespeare predicted, most of them were the first ones killed, right after the politicians. Lawyers had more sexual offenses than Doctors or Counselors or politicians combined, and if you believe the hype that counselors have more power differential from their clients than lawyers, you're not thinking right. Most counselors know they have mental health issues. Lawyers think they're clever and perfect and if you submit to their authority or charm and let them fuck you, they just chalk it up to confirmation, where a counselor goes thinking, 'was that transference or love?' Doctors had it almost as bad as lawyers in terms of being deliberately targeted, retaliation for direct abuse to perceived abuse. Most of the CEO's killed themselves. All the CEO's kids that had addictions and social problems suddenly made sense. But out of all the people in the world, the ones who got the worst of it were the celebrities.

“Physical rape is bad, but it has nothing on the brutality of a mental rape. We look to our government leaders and celebrities to inspire us, to lead us, to be role models, but in that we also want to be them, be with them, consume them because they become commodities, not human beings. So imagine you're the most popular actress in the world when suddenly you and the rest of the world become telepathic; you become acutely aware of twelve million men, and even women, actively masturbating over your image. Now increase the intensity, twelve million men in your ear, in your head, all vying for your attention, and the more you scream to be left alone, the more attention you get. Others join in because of the peculiar nature of the assault. Let's face it; there is a segment of the population that gets off to watching rape, hence the popularity of rape scenes in movies. It doesn't even have to be rape. Just tie a woman up and leave her on the train track. Men will get off. They will imagine themselves the hero. Why? Because, heroes get laid. Why do you think we day dream about being Keenu Reeves rescuing Sandra Bullock? And there are many women who want to be rescued, hence knights and shining armor Disney stories prevail. Sports people get laid because of their image, their athletes, they will protect us, I will be safe, I will so fuck that. Knights. All rescue movies is us wanting to get laid. Voyeurism is a learned behavior, and we had been watching television and movies and sports at an increasing rate of consumption for the last hundred years to the point our identities are comprised of the things we watched. Telepathy is 100 times better than television. It's 100 times better than crack.

You tap into sensations pleasant and awful and like the proverbial train wreck, you can't turn away. Your tongue always goes to that gap where that tooth use to be and explores it compulsively.

“It was the mental rapes that taught the world how vulnerable we really are. Our mind and bodies are connected and we can feel sensations by just thinking on it, and even more so when an outside thought directs our attention to it. It didn't take long before there were people trying to live vicariously through other bodies, manipulating people like marionettes. Most people weren't strong enough to kill another with their thoughts as an individual, but whole groups of people could single an individual out and that person would die. The strong minded could block these attempts to be controlled physically, but it takes a tremendous amount of energy, and that's assuming you aren't being ganged raped or purposely pursued by a community holding grievances. IRS employees could be dicks, but they were usually just following 'the law' but it didn't save their asses from the poor people seeking mental revenge. Anger and rage catches and spreads much faster than love and forgiveness. We never learned as a people to be group lovers; that's reserved for our private affairs and family units, and maybe a Grateful Dead concert.

“There is only so much the human nervous system can take. Some minds went away never to come back, as their bodies rolled on the ground to the ongoing assaults, appearing as if they were having epileptic fits. There were retaliations, people struck back at those who refused to respect certain boundaries, and it increasingly took group vigilance to enforce the moratorium on certain boundary infringements, but getting a hundred percent compliance in the week that followed the First Ability was difficult. Some of that was because just holding a sexual thought about someone was enough to connect your mind with theirs. The only other mitigating factor was that sphere of influence varied from human to human.

“Every human being was connected in the beginning to the point where there was literally one super imposed mind, but as the numbers of humans dwindled, so did the range of individuals. Within ones sphere of influence, information flows two ways, as if its line of sight communication; you hear what you hear, you see what you see, you feel what you feel. One could be connected to someone outside of his or her sphere of influence, but it also depended on the focus of the person connecting the two. If the connection point was listening to someone else, was focused on someone else, the surrounding onslaught of information could be reduced to

white noise. And even with that, some were better at tuning into that white noise than most, singling out specific streams of information, and there were still others that if they couldn't discern it, they tried to force the connection point to tune into what they wanted, which made a god awful noise like a record being scratched.

“Alliances began to form as people sought relief from the onslaught. Group minds were better than an individual mind, easier to defend, and some minds worked better together than others. There was always an exchange rate for community life. Those with the greatest sphere of influences were rallied around for support, for focus. Some of these individuals were weak, and gave into the masses, became the conduit for the group mind. Some of the individuals were fairly strong, and they manipulated the groups, even thrived on recruiting more into the growing collectives. Nations ceased to exist the way we once defined them, but the city names remained. There was a prison inmate in Houston who represented North America. He was not a nice mind. He may have been a nice person before he went to jail for a crime he didn't commit, but what you have to learn in prison to survive can turn the best man into a savage. Beijing was probably the second strongest telepath in the world, and she would be considered the most even tempered ruler, but only after she eliminated most of the competition in China and India.

“The strongest telepath, the man with the greatest sphere of influence was Panama. He wanted nothing to do with the group. Houston pressured him to ally, and when that failed, Houston began the assaults. When direct mental assaults failed, Houston began attacking Panama's family and friends, and sent direct agents to assassinate him. It's hard to kill someone who can see it coming, but also, there are no places to escape to. When flight is not permissible, fight becomes prominent. This was when the Second Ability became manifest. Cornered, weary, and vulnerable, Panama discovered he could teleport objects. No one knows what happened to that first assassin, he just 'went away,' but after that the game changed. Awareness of the event rippled across humanity.

“Houston laughed. “Nice trick.”

“Beijing was unable to duplicate it, but she discovered several people within her sphere of influence that could. Using her people's ability to teleport, she lobbed a nuclear weapon at Houston. People in the immediate area of Houston tried to teleport themselves out of harm's way, and humanity learned some interesting things about Abilities. Some people had Sight. They could see where they wanted to go, but they couldn't get there. Some people had the ability to

teleport but without the ability to see they had no control over where they went. Teleporting blind had some curious, but frequently deadly results. Houston combined people with Sight and people with Teleportation and relocated himself.

“An exchange of nuclear weapons began, but instead of launching them, they were tossed through teleportation. They were detonated by mind. Sight or no sight, many humans instinctively began to teleport. Fight or flight. Panama escaped to the International Space Station, where he discovered the astronauts on board had been unchanged by what afflicted the humans on the planet. There were others who tried to join Panama on the Space Station, but only made it into orbit, and the lack of air quickly extinguished their light.

“‘You can’t escape,’ Houston said, lobbing a nuclear weapon towards the Space Station.

“‘You can stop this!’” This was Sydney. She was a nurse and she had discovered the Third Ability. She could heal. She had locked herself into a nursery and was caring for the babies during the crisis, with a number of nurses that had aligned with her.

“For whatever reasons, Panama refused to be pulled into a fight. It was very clear, had he wanted to, he could have removed all the players that were causing problems. He could have killed every man with a thought and made himself king and had all the women to himself. He chose none of this. He brought Sydney and several of her companion nurses up to the station, along with the forty babies they were caring for. The astronauts immediately fell to securing the babies as they floated about the cabin. And then, Panama was gone. The entire International Space Station was gone and only a moment before the weapon detonated. Houston had at first thought himself successful, until he heard Beijing talking to Panama. The Space Station had been relocated to Jupiter. The sudden stresses of momentum change had nearly torn it apart, but it was still functioning. Though the exchange between Beijing and Panama were civil, Panama wanted out of her reach. He relocated himself, the Space Station, and everyone on it to the extent of his sphere of influence.

“Earth lost contact with Panama.

“Teleportation had other profound changes on human beings than the obvious ability to flee. The mind is mostly unconscious and self-regulatory, meeting the needs of the body. If you think your conscious mind is in control of your life, you are not paying attention. Had everyone the ability to teleport, there would have been so much chaos, humanity might have gone extinct in the next few hours. Any perceived threat was acted on, fight or flight, and most the time

fighting was the first response. In the past, flight was the first response, but with the First Ability, telepathy, everyone felt cornered and so, fight was now first response. Fighting came with the threat of being teleported away, or killed when a nearby object was teleported into the threat to neutralize it. Those who could teleport discovered that their bellies were always full and their bladder and intestines emptied of waste without physically eating or relieving themselves. It didn't matter if that food belonged to someone else; they would steal food right from the belly of another. Their bodies took what they needed. Males that could teleport were motivated by an even deeper physical need, the one to procreate and ensure that their genes won out over the competition. Sexual intercourse isn't necessary when one can simply teleport a sperm cell directly into the womb with an egg cell. And if the woman was already pregnant, the fetus was simply disposed of in the same manner that human waste was disposed of. This had already started happening before the moment that teleportation had become a known possibility. Some women found themselves pregnant, and sometimes, it wasn't even their eggs. They were turned into incubators for women who couldn't have children, or men who wanted more than one child with their ideal woman, and so both men and women were unconsciously moving eggs and sperm and making it happen.

“The war escalated on discovery that women were “miraculously” conceiving. Some men completed suicide, unable to live with the fact they were no better than lions killing cubs because they weren't genetically their own. That, and the fact that their method of sperm dispersion was no better than rape. The men without the ability to teleport, unable to protect their spouses or female children, attempted to kill the men known to be able to teleport, blind or not. Those who could teleport were most likely to win those exchanges, but it didn't take long before the men who could teleport were turning against each other. A man could no longer tolerate another man inside his sphere of influence that was equal or greater.

“We were no better than rats in a cage, fighting because there was nowhere to run to, no safe space to call our own. And you may ask how I know all of this when I died 26 hours after the First Ability. Death is not our end.”

Jane just continued into the next person's experience. Some random French girl, Adalene, translated for Jane's convenience, the words morphing before her eyes, but when she looked away, the words returned to their original French print like looking through a magnifying glass, the words magnified were English, the words warping to or from focus foreign: “It's my fault. I

destroyed the world. I received a text and when I looked at my phone, an App had opened. The App said 'enlightenment' with only two options: now or later. I chose now. Come to think of it, the friends I were with, I think they had the same App on their phones, and we all may have simultaneously responded. But I pushed now. I mean, what would you do?

"The sky was blue that day, but suddenly, the sky was more blue than blue. I don't know how else to describe it. Maybe if you imagine there being a thing called blue, or instead of the sky seemingly a canopy overhead but blue in your face, that might be close. Everything was still there, in this blueness, but separate, as if all material things were 'cut outs' placed over a blueness, like numbers floating on a liquid crystal display.

"Oh, the silence that fell was lovely. I have never heard a more peaceful quiet. It wasn't actually perfectly silent. There was a noise, maybe in the background, but not discernable at first because it took a moment to adjust to the silence. Maybe bees humming in a nest? I turned my head slightly, listening intently, thinking this is odd, I should hear the traffic in the background. And that's when things start to get a little freaky. There was no traffic. Oh, the cars were there, but they were stalled. No, better. Everything had come to a stop. Dead stop. The engines were dead. There was an airplane in the air, frozen dead, like we were streaming a movie and there is an internet connectivity issue and the picture froze, only the people moved. The plants moved; leaves of trees rustled in a silent breeze.

"I laughed. Everybody laughed. Oh, this is a dream! How nice is this? And then someone in Russian said, what the fuck. The laughter died. "This is weird." "I can hear you." "You slept with my husband?" It was a question from my friend and my response happened before I could even put a stop to it, because the outbound filter is for the tongue not the brain. "Yes. I slept with all of your husbands..." My friends were suddenly furious. I have never seen them so mad. I am not really surprised, I mean, really, why the fuck do you think I kept that secret, and I heard the voices of their husbands confirming and asking me why I told, and they were furious and making it all my fault, as if I seduced them. I wasn't opposed, but it wasn't like I went out of my way to make those scenes happen. And in every instance, I did ask them about their wives, but I own it, I did give in to the moment and their persistence, because that did feel nice. There were others listening in, and someone asked for details and the details just came, like movie scenes. "Kill her. She will ruin us." My friends were on me, taking me to the ground, one on my neck, another holding her hand on my mouth and pinching my nose, and another kicking me. I screamed for

help without screaming, but no one responded. There were other people crying and screaming. I wasn't alone in my terror. "Kill her" echoed. "Silence her." And then suddenly, I was out. I was out of my body looking down on the scene and the thoughts kept coming and my brain kept responding. My friends had killed me, but it had failed to silence me. My husband shot himself. My friends began to turn on each other.

"We had been near the park and I realized the squirrels were gone. No there was one. It was looking directly at me. It waved. Very odd. Then it jumped into a sky tunnel and disappeared. I wished for my own tunnel, and suddenly there was one. I began moving towards it, but suddenly didn't want to, but by then, it was too late, I was halfway down the tunnel and out of the world."

Janet put down the book as Loxy entered the kitchen. "Hey! You're up early."

"Yeah, had the most interesting dream," Loxy said. She looked back the way she had come and over the people sleeping in sleeping-bags on the floor. "And I figure I better get started on breakfast. Lots of mouths to feed."

"Yeah," Janet agreed. "Want some help?"

"That would be lovely," Loxy said. "What do you think? American traditional?"

"I always enjoyed waking to the smell of pancakes and bacon," Janet said.

"Blue berry pancakes?" Fersia asked, coming up on them rather suddenly, almost cat magic sudden, brushing into them the way a cat might.

"Sure," Loxy said, unperturbed by Fersia's suddenness.

"Oh, and milk, chocolate," Fersia said, hugging Loxy. She touched Loxy's collar. "Nice collar!"

"That is kind of nice," Janet agreed. "When did you start wearing a collar?"

"Oh, a long time ago, in a future far away," Loxy said.

"Enigmatic," Janet said.

"You were collared," Fersia purred.

"Shh," Loxy said. "You'll have everyone here wanting a ceremony."

Chapter 2

Jon Harister woke with a start, sitting up in bed, whispering Loxy's name. It took a moment to orientate, but he soon realized he was at 2nd Home. The bed was empty. He turned to snoring and found the source coming from someone sleeping on the floor. Lester. Jon's first question was 'why is he still here?' but instead of following it to its conclusion, he found the urgency to pee driving him to the bathroom. There were other people sleeping on the floor and it became a dance not step on folks. 'Why are all these people here?' he asked, and then the memory was available. Loxy had rescued a good portion of the student body and though most of them were magicians capable of traveling to their home world, the Safe Haven staff had quarantined everyone to planet Bliss, just in case someone had carried a demon off. Whatever Fribourg had unleashed on Safe Haven was too dangerous to be allowing free range, and the staff was still in a quandary about how Loxy had managed to save everyone by busting through Safe Haven's own quarantine barriers.

He slid the door open to the bathroom and found Keera drying off. He hesitated.

"Don't be silly," Keera said. "Come in, close the door. You're letting the heat out."

He entered and closed the door. As soon as he did, Keera dropped the towel and was on him, hugging him and kissing him. He just accepted it, a little confused by the intensity of her attack, and feeling uncertain of his response.

Keera eased up. "You okay?"

"A little confused," Jon admitted.

"World surfing disorientation, or concern that someone might hear the commotion if we get it on?" Keera asked.

Both of those sounded plausible and he added a third. "I needed to pee and now I am not sure I can."

"You want to be alone?" Keera said.

"No," he said.

"Oh, good," Keera said, locking the bathroom door. "I don't know why, it feels like ages since we last played."

She took him to the wall and his urgency to pee switched tracks to the other urgency.

निर्मित

A cane tapping on the door caused Jon to open it. He was showered and dressed in clothes fitting a magician, jeans, a t-shirt, and an army jacket. Keera was dressed in a simple red romper, and was applying makeup, looking at Lester in the doorway through the mirror. She smiled. Lester gave them both a suspicious look.

“What’s taking so long?” Lester said. “I need to pee.”

“Toilet’s over there,” Jon said, passing out past Lester.

“I hope you cleaned the shower when you were finished,” Lester said. “I don’t want to be stepping in your stuff.”

“Find another place to live,” Jon said.

“Soon enough,” Lester said.

“You boys need to behave,” Keera said.

“Umm,” Lester said.

Jon made his way to the kitchen where he found people, human sorts and non human sorts, and even in between sorts, everywhere, some sleeping, some enjoying breakfast. Fersia rushed him with a cup of coffee. The intensity of her eyes revealed a playful affection that would be very suiting a loving pet, or someone who was particularly pleased about something secret. With cats it could be either or both, and with Fersia, there was no telling. Jon inspected the coffee to make sure his ‘cat’ wasn’t bringing him a bird she had caught in the yard. Cats, even the human kind, did have a tendency to want to participate in their social groups by bringing gifts. No feathers, he sipped the coffee.

“Nice,” he said. “Thank you.”

Fersia hugged him then she surrendered him to Esfir, who paused to provide a passing hug. Fersia went to trade out with Loxy, giving her a break from the duty she started. Loxy took Jon’s arm and led him outside. It was cool and the morning sun was just breaking over the trees. Harister Hall was prominent in the background, a new feature of planet Bliss, but it seemed perfect, as if it had always meant to be there. In between the home and the Hall were an assortment of tents, individual size to group size.

“Trelinda has asked that we speak with her this morning,” Loxy said. “She wanted to speak to us each individually, but I want you to go with me.”

“Okay,” Jon said. He sensed worried and simply asked: “Are you worried?”

“Yeah,” Loxy said. “I think they may expel me from Safe Haven for breaking quarantine.”

“Nonsense,” Jon said. Wasn’t there like a no fail policy? “They’re likely to give you a medal.”

“Jon, breaking quarantine is serious. I could have endangered the whole Universe. I wasn’t thinking big enough. I was being selfish,” Loxy said.

Jon put his hand on the back of her neck and pulled her in to kiss her forehead. “Your selfish is the appropriate selfish, if everyone was equally selfish the world would be a better place. You were saving people and doing what you thought was right, and if it so happens that they kick you out, they’ll have to kick me out, too, cause I would have done the same thing.”

“I love you,” Loxy said.

“Now, hearing that’s better than morning coffee,” Jon said. “When’s this impromptu meeting?”

“Now. They’re waiting for us. Apparently, they have to settle us before they can move onto the next project,” Loxy said.

“So, we’re off to see the Wizard,” Jon said.

“I don’t think Trelinda is a wi... Oh. Yeah, I guess we are,” Loxy said. “A song and a skip dance then?”

“Not with coffee,” Jon said.

“A leisure morning stroll, then,” Loxy said.

“That’s about my speed,” Jon said, allowing Loxy to lead. “By the way, I don’t like the sheets on the bed,” Jon said.

“The white sheets with the overlapping red flowers?” Loxy asked.

“Oh, they’re flowers?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, what did you think they were?” Loxy asked.

“Blood splatters from enthusiastic period sex,” Jon said,

“Oh,” Loxy said., not disgusted as much as curious. “Oh! Maybe we should save those sheets just for that time of month.”

“Okay,” Jon said.

“And if we could spin the bed while playing, we could have tie dye patterns on the sheet,” Loxy said, jokingly.

“Do you know how fast we would have to spin the bed?” Jon asked.

“Just saying,” Loxy said, amused. “And, by the way, it is that time, and I am ready when you are.”

Jon stopped. “I had the strangest dream you were pregnant.”

“I am, in the other world,” Loxy said.

“I am finding it difficult to keep it all sorted,” Jon said.

“Oh, well, it gets easier with practice. By the time you’re a senior, you will be jumping worlds as easy as frogs go from Lilly pad to Lilly pad,” Loxy said.

They made their way to Trelinda’s tent. There was no guard, but the entrance opened as if an invisible guard was granting them passage. On entering, they were greeted by Trelinda who was considering the surface of a floating table, holding a prominent map of the world, and discussing the lay of the land with several professors. Emerson, Misty, and Shackelford acknowledged Jon and Loxy with eyes. Only Misty smiled. The table top offered a bird’s eye view of the local terrain, an active map on a giant floating ‘tablet’ of a table. Trelinda drew the two of them to the chairs arranged in a circle, and the professors joined them. Loxy took a seat, but Jon continued to stand.

“So,” Trelinda said. “If you don’t mind, I’d like to get down to business.”

“If you’re intent is to punish Loxy for breaking quarantine, you and I are going to have a problem,” Jon lead.

“Stop being defensive and sit down,” Shackelford said.

“It’s not defensive,” Misty corrected. “He’s being protective.”

Shackelford reassessed her reading and nodded. “Stop being protective. Loxy is quite capable of caring for herself.”

“Please, sit,” Trelinda invited.

Jon sat, gripping the coffee cup with both hands, hovering it close to his chin so the heat and aroma might soften his perception of the world. Had he led with defensive because he was worried that Loxy was worried?

“You have a nice world here, Jon,” Trelinda said. “It is clearly filled with love.”

“Love for rodents,” Shackelford said.

“They’re the care takers,” Jon said. “The raccoons help out a great deal, too. And the otters. The dolphins and the otters. Actually, everyone here is symbiotically helping the whole.”

“Like I said, a lot of love,” Trelinda said. “And, so I would like to lead with asking your permission to establish a satellite Safe Haven Campus here on Bliss.”

Jon blinked. He looked to Loxy. She seemed as surprised as he, but clearly appeared as if she liked the idea. His world was changing, and becoming increasingly more populated.

“What’s wrong with the original Safe Haven campus? I thought you said it was reset,” Jon said.

“It is. Everything was restored to just prior to the emergency quarantine, and the situation was contained before becoming a situation,” Trelinda said. Jon had a quick visual image of magical astronauts taking the ‘Fribourg Box’ containing the demon and tossing it into the black hole, the only way to be sure. “However, everyone that Loxy rescued is now experiencing a situational multiplicity event. They exist on Safe Haven and here simultaneously.”

“Well, maybe if you had informed people that Safe Haven would reset so they wouldn’t worry and try to escape quarantine, we wouldn’t have this problem,” Jon said.

“Again with the defensiveness?” Shackleford said.

“He’s being logical,” Misty corrected.

“Are you going to side with him on everything?” Shackleford said.

“Pretty much,” Misty said. “I mean, we are hoping to be able to stay on his planet.”

Jon sorted her statement and was certainly willing to let Misty set up residence on his planet. Would their others selves share their private planets, or was they all in need of a permanent home?

“Jon, if we told people that Safe Haven would reset, they might be too cavalier in their approach to magic, and even more lackadaisical in stopping the escalation of magic gone bad, and people can learn a great deal through the experience of a crisis. We did. We now know we need a new layer of quarantine procedures to block future Loxy equations.”

“No one has ever tried that before?” Jon asked.

“Safe Haven had never experienced that level of emergency before,” Trelinda said.

“So, you want to open a campus here because if they return to Safe Haven prime and meet themselves the Universe blows up?” Jon asked.

“You’re being overly dramatic,” Shackleford said.

Jon sighed. "Why do you keep trying to box me?"

"She's not happy that we have to establish a new campus," Misty said, and then provided confirmation. "And find a new home. Sometimes, starting over sucks."

"No, she is projecting blame, and I feel like I am the recipient," Jon said.

"You helped Loxy escape quarantine," Shackleford said.

"You could have stayed behind," Jon pointed out.

"Didn't know there was a reset!" Shackleford snapped.

"Wait wait wait," Jon said. "I helped Loxy?"

Jon looked to Loxy. "Your tulpa you," she explained.

"That counts?" Jon asked.

"You is you, even if a derivative, tangential branch," Shackleford said. "It's in your unconscious and you can have your present personality updated to hold the information if you want it."

'How much can my head hold?' Jon thought, nursing his coffee.

"The two of you are a powerful team," Trelinda said. "It's another reason we would like to establish the second campus here. Once the school is commissioned, I intend to offer Loxy a position as head dean."

"So, you're not kicking me out of school?" Loxy asked.

"Of course not. We don't punish people for extraordinary displays of magic. On completion of your practical, Loxy, we will be graduating you," Trelinda said. "Your recent display of magic puts you at the Doctorate level. You will have to still earn your Doctorate, so once we graduate you from the master's program, we will expect you to start your Doctoral studies."

Loxy beamed. "Wow."

"We'll be graduating you, too, Jon," Misty said.

"Really?" Jon asked. Then he displayed doubt, doing math on his fingers. How long had he been bouncing Universes? "I haven't even completed a full year. Have I?"

"Don't be absurd. We're graduating you to sophomore," Shackleford said.

"You have to be graduated to each level?" Jon asked.

"Think of it like leveling up," Misty said.

“Oh, that’s kind of tedious,” Jon said, considering. But then, it kind of made sense. “That could be fun. Do I get all shiny and hear bells when it’s time to level up? Do I get a list of traits and attributes from which I can choose to upgrade? And can I hold the level until the next level so I can make huge leaps in progress and like be suddenly amazing? Oh, and I would like to upgrade emotional intelligence and charisma, if that’s possible.”

“You are being ridiculously silly,” Shackleford said.

“You didn’t like defensive and protective, now I can’t be funny? What do you want from me?” Jon asked.

“Try being serious. This is serious. The Universe is serious,” Shackleford said.

Jon turned to Loxy. “I thought I was being serious.”

“Seriously funny,” Loxy helped.

“Is that why you never laugh?” Jon asked.

“Because you’re being seriously funny?” Loxy asked.

“Am I too serious and less funny?” Jon asked.

“Too often,” Loxy said.

“Oh,” Jon said.

“Don’t worry. I like all the flavors of you,” Loxy said.

“Wow. That’s seriously hot,” Jon said.

“Want to go add some flowers to the sheets?” Loxy asked.

“OMG, yes,” Jon said.

“Whoa, we are having a meeting here,” Shackleford said.

“Jealous?” Jon asked.

“Want to join us?” Loxy asked.

“OMG, that seriously funny and sexy,” Jon said.

“But I can get away with it because I am funny, and serious, and seriously sexy,” Loxy said.

Only Misty and Trelinda seemed amused. Emerson chewed on his fingernail, stared at it, chewed some more. Shackleford was not usually embarrassed or caught off guard, and yet, she seemed unprepared for the level of play that was offered.

“So, how do you feel about hosting a Safe Haven campus here?” Trelinda said.

Jon considered. "I would like to know more about the Safe Haven situation. With all those duplicates running around, isn't it going to be confusing and all?"

"No. The Universe is a huge place," Emerson said. "The odds of running into yourself are so astronomically large as to be comparable to shooting a single atom through the Universe and expecting it to hit another atom. Not likely. In fact, you could shoot single star through the Universe and still not hit another equivalent size object."

"That, and Safe Haven reset is on the other side of the black hole, in a different multiverse," Trelinda explained. "It will take some serious Astral, magical effort for anyone to get there from here, or go from there to here, which is a good thing because the prestige of the college just skyrocketed. The Bliss campus will deal mostly with Freshman and Sophomores, and only on the Astral Levels."

"So, you're saying I don't have to worry about running into a second Loxy?" Jon said.

"You would like that," Loxy said.

"Oh, I would," Jon said. "Together or individually."

"Focus," Shackleford said.

"I am okay with establishing a campus here," Jon said. "If it's okay with Loxy."

"Wow," Loxy said. "That is hot."

"It is?" Jon asked.

"You just confirmed this is my home," Loxy said.

"Of course this is your home," Jon said. "How could you ever think it wasn't?"

"I have never had a home before," Loxy said.

"OMG, Loxy, that is so not true. When I met you, you had a home with friends living in a rose, and since I met you, you've had a place in my heart," Jon said.

"OMG," Loxy said. "Do you realize what you're doing to me?"

"OMG, I think I am going to be sick," Shackleford said. "Maybe we should move this discussion along to the practical."

"Oh, I love practicals," Loxy said.

"Can I opt for a thesis?" Jon asked.

"No. You're a freshman. You will do a practical," Shackleford said.

"I have experience with your practicals and they are unreasonably tough," Jon said.

"Builds character," Shackleford said.

“Umph,” Jon said.

“With your permission, I would like to initiate the practical,” Trelinda said.

“You mean assign it?” Jon asked.

“We don’t assign practicals. I will have Doctor Shackleford induce a hypnotic state and invite your unconscious to provide the criteria that needs to be met in order for you to feel successfully validated in earning your progress,” Trelinda said.

“I can’t be hypnotized,” Jon said.

Loxy laughed. It was a strange laugh that was almost a snort because she had tried to contain it. Jon looked at her peculiarly. “I am sorry. That was funny.”

“I wasn’t being funny,” Jon said.

“I know. Which makes it funnier,” Loxy said.

“Shall we begin?” Shackleford asked.

“If you want to waste your time, feel free,” Jon said.

Shackleford drew her necklace up out of her cleavage and just the simple act of drawing Jon’s attend to her breast, the small emerald crystal tapping her chest, sent him deep. He went so deep so fast, that Loxy had the presence of mind to take the coffee cup out of his hand. She placed it under the seat, which was hardly more than lawn-chair folding type chair, with his name on the back like you might find on a Hollywood set. His hands remained in place as if he was still holding the cup. Loxy lowered them to his lap.

“Wow, that was quick,” Loxy said.

“I’ve been working with him,” Shackleford said. “You ready to join him?”

“We can help each other?” Loxy said.

“Absolutely,” Misty said.

Loxy settled back, took Jon’s hand, and turned her gaze towards Shackleford’s emerald pendant. It sparked and she was gone. A moment later, they were both back, awake, and present, and Shackleford’s pendant was safely stowed between her breasts.

“I told you I couldn’t be hypnotized,” Jon said. He became aware that he was holding Loxy’s hand. There was evidence of tears on her face. “Are you okay?”

Loxy nodded.

“What?” Jon asked.

Loxy stood up, drew Jon into a hug. The professors stood, and a group hug commenced.

Chapter 3

The Safe Haven Campus on Bliss manifested itself all at once, an island castle the equivalent of Castle Trakai, located in Trakai, Lithuania. It wasn't precisely the same, as the island that rose from Lake Tranquility to meet the need of the campus had its own unique geologic properties that added to the magic of the place. There was a single bridge that stretched across the water to the land, but inside the campus proper were a series of Moon Gates that permitted portal access to the students and faculty. Loxy accepted the head dean position of the Bliss campus, which mirrored Trelinda's position at the Safe Haven Prime, and they would be coordinating remotely. After surveying the new campus, Trelinda returned via one of the gates to Safe Haven Prime, while the professors that Loxy had rescued immediately began their personal search for their office and classroom space. It wasn't a competitive, prolonged ordeal, but rather they simply went to where they were intuitively drawn. On the occasional overlap or territorial dispute, Loxy was brought in as an administrator to resolve it.

Jon smartly and fully relinquished that duty to Loxy. He was still baffled by the hypnotic episode which he now suspected happened, but only due to the circumstantial evidence, not because of any profound revelatory experience. Whatever Loxy had experienced, it had been cathartic enough to move her into a new space. She was satisfied that she had earned her Masters. There would be a private ceremony later, where Trelinda would provide her an undergraduate ring, her Master's ring, and Loxy would decide on her Doctoral pathway. It would be a double Doctorate, as she was expected to enter a non-magical college and earn a 'regular' doctorate in any academic field of interest, and she could not be graduated from the Safe Haven Doctorate program until the other was accomplished.

"Everything seems so complicated," Jon told her, as they sat on the wall of the highest tower, below which was her office. News of the new campus had spread and students were exploring.

"It will get easier," Loxy assured him.

"I don't feel graduated," Jon said.

"You will," Loxy said. "You're still in process."

"Can you tell me anything about it?" Jon asked.

“You’re embarking on new paradigm,” Loxy said. “The old paradigm was about competition. Differentiating everything. The new paradigm is an integrative field of bridging independent agencies into synergistic systems of cooperation. The analogy would be that of a person with multiple personality. We don’t want to make one personality out of all the existing personalities, but rather, we want to encourage a cooperative existence between all the personalities.”

“And what if there can be no compromise?” Jon asked.

“War has not brought any viable, long term solutions, but only led to more fragmentation and increased conflicts,” Loxy said. “Healing occurs when we love the unlovable. That is true whether it involves others, or aspects of ourselves. And without others to mirror those things in us we abhor, we can’t experience true healing.”

“Have you observed that in the different worlds we seem to have different strengths?” Jon said.

Loxy mulled the observation over. “That’s kind of the purpose of other worlds, isn’t it?”

“To allow us to entertain attributes that don’t get air time without context?” Jon asked.

“Sounds good,” Loxy said.

Jon frowned, puzzling through his perceived discontent, unconsciously drawing a handful of peeled pecans from his pocket. He was eating it before he realized he was eating it.

“Let’s come at it a different way,” Loxy said, taking some pecans for herself. There was a growing trend where she would just take his food, right from his hands or plate, and it was happening in every world.

“It?” Jon asked.

“The problem,” Loxy said.

“My problem?” Jon asked.

“Our problem,” Loxy corrected.

“Okay,” Jon said.

“If you were to pick the thing you struggle with the most, what do you imagine that to be?” Loxy asked.

Jon’s frown was unconscious as he already had an immediate answer. He also unconsciously clenched his hand, and even though his mind was satisfied, he knew his unconscious was still sorting through its entire bank of knowledge looking for more answers

before it would drop the question. The unconscious mind was always more thorough than the casual surface mind. Jon took note of the stillness of the water and the reflection of the Castle seemed so perfect he could easily imagine it being an inverted version of the same.

“You know what I struggle with,” he said.

“Say it,” Loxy said.

“My hyper-sexuality,” Jon said. “Which is my problem, not an us problem.”

“It’s an us problem,” Loxy insisted. “It’s a societal problem. Here’s how it’s an ‘us.’ Women believe men think about only one thing, and consequently, in thinking that, we have amplified that very thing we say we detest, which makes it realer than real, so much so that if we don’t perceive the man coming at us wanting only that, we either think he isn’t a man, or we’re not attractive enough. Even if it were just a true offer of friendship, we can’t allow that because we know he will secretly want sex and is plotting to get sex, even if we want the friend, we have to either assume he’s gay or there is something wrong with us, and the friendship exists so we can contemplate what’s wrong with us or wait for the trap to happen that results in his getting sex to prove our point. If a man came straight at us looking for acceptance or nurture, we would see that as less manly, too needy, and consequently reject them. In truth, no man is simply searching for sex, they are looking to be accepted and loved unconditionally, but that is the one thing a woman has the most trouble giving. From day one, we treat male babies differently, and we send them on a trajectory of independence and competition, and they will spend the rest of their lives looking for the nurturing they didn’t get. At some point, the only nurture, or affection if you will, that men are afforded is in sex act itself. And once they get that sense of acceptance, they return to the independent state, and the women gets mad because he won’t stay and cuddle and be intimate, but that is not a skill he was allowed to develop because that’s not manly, and so we humans are presently stuck in this unproductive dance.”

Wow, Jon thought. Her explanation seemed to fit him and what he had himself been thinking, in terms of his sexuality being an underlying desire to connect.

“Do you want to know what my practical was?” Loxy asked.

Jon grimaced as if he was about to be forced to watch a surgery, with a lot of blood and guts, only, given his knowledge of Loxy’s Dakini undergraduate path, it would probably also include sex. Gross sex. “Not particularly,” Jon said.

“I had to love someone who was unlovable,” Loxy said anyway.

Jon nearly defined what ‘not particularly’ meant, but let it go as he focused on the unlovable equation. “Me,” Jon said, meeting her eyes bravely.

“OMG, Jon, you are so loveable you might as well be an Ewok,” Loxy said.

“OMG, I hate Ewoks,” Jon said.

“Oh, how can you hate Ewoks?!” Loxy asked.

“The same way I hate the scene where they’re torturing Droids,” Jon said. “It’s sublimation. Lucas wants to show us an evil universe where people get killed and tortured, he even puts Leah in the BDSM outfit, but doesn’t explain why Huts like human females, but he can’t commit to the darkness and so he gives a humorously absurd picture that allows us access it without true entry. It’s why Anakin’s fall is so ludicrous. It isn’t steeped with subtle lies and treachery and just isn’t believable, nor his is recovery. One act of goodness, saving the son, was insufficient to cover the misdeeds he had committed.”

“And, maybe the version that got screen time was the kids version so that more people could access it,” Loxy said.

“Maybe,” Jon said.

“And maybe, we’re all Jedi in training,” Loxy said. “Which leads us back to the new paradigm: it isn’t the light against the dark, but rather the co-existence of the two. Lucas frequently has characters looking for balance in the Force. There can be no balance if either side is dominant. They both must exist. Maybe the Jedi’s had to fall because there was too much good in the Universe, which means Anakin was still the prophesied one who would bring balance back to the Force!”

“Yeah, that makes sense to me, too,” Jon agreed. “So, what do I have to do to get closure with this practical?”

“Nothing,” Loxy said.

“I feel like I should be doing something,” Jon said.

“Want to go make flowers?” Loxy asked.

“Do you suppose our home has been vacated?” Jon asked.

“Do you care if anyone hears?” Loxy asked.

“Not really,” Jon said.

They held hands and passed through a Moon Gate at the top of the tower, expediting their return to 2nd Home.

निर्मित

There is rarely just an activating event, but a leakage of information that precedes events. For example, there is evidence that the Princeton Random Number generator experiment predicted 9/11 and the fall of the towers. Technically it didn't predict, but given the number of times the 'Global Consciousness Awareness program' has seen a spike in non-random numbers prior to events that had huge social impact, it suggests a pattern of information being transmitted that could be used to 'predict' events. When a random number generator ceases to be random, it suggests an event is likely. When multiple generators stop being random, simultaneously, there is greater likelihood of a big event. 'Events' tend to be circumstances that have an impact on the social lives of people and or animals and is evidence for information traveling backwards through time. And before random event generators, events were heralded by wild animals and farm animals acting peculiar. All biological creatures are random number generators.

In addition to animal behaviors changing prior to an earthquake, the voice of a child protesting or showing signs of anxiety is a good example of change coming, and it would be wise to drop to a knee and give a child eye time. Sarah Lee, four years old, was in her car seat prior to the appearance of the First Ability. She was particularly sensitive to non-traditional pathways of information to start with, but rarely had it seemed so intrusive. Her father was driving. Her mother was in the passenger seat. The car was moving through downtown Seattle, moving slow, and hitting every light. Sara made eye contact with a pedestrian. She did not like the way he looked at her. If she hadn't been strapped into the seat, she might have jumped out of it and climbed into her mother's lap. When the demon version of the man slapped hard against her window, licking and grasping as if wanting to maul her, in a sexual way as opposed to a the Walking Dead hunger way, which was in her mind because her parents loved that show, she nearly screamed. She settled for holding her breath and watching. It was only her belief that the window could protect her that kept the demon version of the man from getting in right away. The real version of the man continued to stare at her, licking his lips, not a nice smile playing across his face. Her mother must have sensed something, because she looked up from her phone, away from the App that had just deployed asking for "Enlightenment now or later" and directly at the man, who suddenly found other things to do. His phone had the same App opened, which he flashed her as if to broadcast he wasn't taking picture of them.

The window seemed to be coming down as the demon drew its hands down across the glass. Its fingers reached in through the top. Sarah Lee screamed just as her father proceeded through the intersection. Her mother turned back to her. A trash truck ran the red light and impacted their car. The car flipped and spun on its roof. Glass, like tiny fragments of diamonds, flew through the car. The man who had been ogling her ended up underneath the upside down car.

The world came to a stop. Sarah Lee hung upside down, secured to her car seat. The ghost of the man and the demon of the man was trying to get her, even as the world was laughing. She struggled and flailed as if being bombarded by a swarm of bees. And then, just as suddenly as it had begun, she was in a safe place.

Sara was in a park and there was a man sitting on a park bench, feeding pigeons. He looked familiar and was certainly approachable. There is an aura about good men, and he was safe. Not like the lecherous guy who had been trying to maul her with his projected self. As the man feeding pigeons seemed to be the only adult around, indeed, the only person, she advanced, wondering if pigeons were people, too. He seemed more familiar as she drew closer, and she placed him by one of the videos her mother liked playing.

“Excuse me,” Sarah said. “Aren’t you Miss Daisy’s driver?”

“I am. I was. You can call me Morgan, if you like,” Morgan said.

“I am kind of lost,” Sarah said.

“Lost or confused?” Morgan asked.

Sarah puzzled over it. She could discern a distinction. “Something’s different.”

“It’s about to get bad. Do you want to stay here till it’s sorted, or would you like to go back?” Morgan asked.

“My parents need me,” Sarah said.

“I assure you, they’ll be alright if you chose to stay,” Morgan said.

“Am I the only one here?” Sarah asked.

“You’re the first. Unless you count the pigeons. And the squirrels. If you would like to help greet folks, there will be some other people your age arriving shortly,” Morgan said. “Might help comfort them.”

“What is my age here?” Sarah asked. It seemed like the right question. She didn’t feel four. Four felt otherworldly.

“Younger than me,” Morgan said.

“You’re funny,” Sarah said.

“Funny or weird?” Morgan asked.

Sarah considered. She could discern a distinction here, too. “Weird. Funny weird.”

“Well, thank you Miss Sarah,” Morgan said. “I like weird, especially funny weird. So, what will it be?”

“I think there should be ice cream. Or perhaps a Chucky Cheese, pizza and games kind of thing,” Sarah said.

“Wow. I wish I had a thought of that,” Morgan said. He pointed behind her. “Will that do?”

“Yes. Can my mother join me?” Sarah asked.

“Not yet,” Morgan said. “Go get some ice cream. There will be nice people to serve you.”

“Aren’t you coming?” Sarah asked.

“I am going to feed the pigeons a little longer,” Morgan said. “Catch you later?”

“Okay,” Sarah said.

निर्मित

Timothy Smith, 19, paraplegic, stared at his computer monitor. Moving the sensor across the screen with his mind was a tedious exercise, but over the last year he had established sufficient speed that he could write simple texts, interact through chat windows, and navigate the world web. Having read about the bizarre, magical world of ‘Not Here,’ he made himself knowledgeable about the thing called ‘Tulpas.’ Four years locked in his body had given him an increase in imaginative powers, but creating tulpas and wonderlands had given him freedom beyond anything he had experienced in real life, even prior to becoming a paraplegic. Initially, he had conspired to solicit Slender Man to attack and kill his sister. That experiment failed. He wondered if that required a group effort to manifest poltergeist activity. When Slender Man failed, his affinity for Morlon Fribourg brought his first success with tulpamancy.

It was three o’clock when he had his first total ‘switch.’ He found himself outside of his body, staring at the back of his head, supported by a head rest. The sensation of being able to

move again was a delight! He performed a victory dance. He stopped when he noticed his body's hands moving forward to use the keyboard. He was confused.

"How did you do that?" Timothy asked.

Fribourg didn't answer.

"I command that you answer me," Timothy said.

The wheelchair backed away from the computer and spun slowly around. Timothy found it eerie to see his own body glancing back at him, but even more eerie was seeing not himself but instead Fribourg. It was his body, broken and cradled in the chair, and yet, it was clearly not him. He understood it intellectually, but it was difficult to process the experience of it.

"You wanted to play God?" Fribourg asked. "Well, let's meet your new God."

Suddenly Fribourg was behind Timothy. A new 'entity' was inside his body. Fribourg had summoned his own Tulpa?

"Hello, son," Fribourg said.

"What? How? Fribourg?!" Jon said.

"Yes, welcome to the Hell you created," Fribourg said. "I think it only fair that you get a front row seat to the end of Origin."

Jon attempted to move, but found himself unable.

"Locked in a 19 year old body? How comically poetic is that?" Fribourg said. "If you survive a week, you might gain enough control to move your thumb on the wheelchair's joystick, but I don't think you have a week. If I recall correctly, Miami gets nuked."

"Let me out, Fribourg," Jon insisted.

"Sorry, rules are rules," Fribourg said. "The host here believes there needs to be an operating personality in the body at all times. So, your dilemma, stay and taste the consequences of your own actions, or summon another Tulpa to stand in your place. You have one already, right? Loxy? Put her in there and free yourself."

"Timothy," Jon said. "This is your body. Switch back, now."

"Are you kidding? I want nothing to do with this body ever again," Timothy said. "Good luck."

Timothy touched his chest where a Star Fleet communicator might be, only it was just his shirt. It worked just as well. Energetic lights dissolved him and took him away.

“Youth these days,” Fribourg said. “It’s like they have no sense of responsibility or ethics.”

“What about the ethics of the fathers?” Jon asked.

“Good point,” Fribourg said. “Enjoy!”

Fribourg used his own spell and disappeared, the way only a Tulpa can. Jon was curious if Fribourg had escaped into Timothy’s mind and wonderlands, or to his own. He didn’t dwell on it long, but even as he tried to break free of his bonds, he stewed. Not only could he not move, but he couldn’t even summon up a levitation spell. That puzzled him. His mind was working and so he should be able to do the spell, unless the body he was occupying had blocks in place, or Fribourg had placed additional layers of blocking spells. In some ways, he felt as if he were tied and weighted down, but it felt different than ropes. It felt more like sleep paralyzes.

Jon decided there was only one thing he could do. He called for help. “Loxy, I need you?!” Jon called.

Tulpa Loxy arrived in the room straight away, looking around for Jon. She turned to the body of Timothy, stepped closer, and then looked into his eyes. He felt trapped in a POV film, only not the good, erotic kind. “Jon? How did you get in there?”

“Fribourg,” Jon said.

“Really? He’s alive?” TL asked. “I thought he got eaten by a monster and then spaghettified by the event horizon of a black hole.”

“Some ignoramus, twerp of a kid created a Fribourg Tulpa and switched out, and then Fribourg summoned me and switched out,” Jon said.

“The kid in the wheel chair, I presume,” Loxy said.

“Yeah,” Jon said.

“Oh, Jon, you can’t call him a twerp. He’s in a wheelchair,” LT said.

“Um, I get the sense he is a real twerp,” Jon said.

“Jon, practice love. He is a soul, trapped in a body, and probably lonely, and frustrated,” LT said. “Imagine all those teenage male hormones coursing through the body and no way to relieve the energy.”

“You’re not helping me,” Jon said. “And can you switch clothes to something more nun-ish?”

LT put her hands on her hips. “Do you remember your crush on Sally Field and Julie Andrews?” TL asked.

“Okay, forget the nun thing. Can you get me out?” Jon asked.

LT pursed her lips, thinking it through. “This is a bad game of hot potato,” Loxy said. “The only way to free you is for you to switch with me.”

“No. Unless we can figure out an alternative, the game ends here,” Jon said.

“Nonsense, Jon. You’re a host personality. I am a tulpa. Your life has priority over mine,” LT said.

“No, it doesn’t. We have equal value,” Jon said.

“No, if you die, I die, therefore, you have priority. If you live, you can recreate me,” LT said.

“Or, how about we figure out how to get me out without switching, so we can both live together,” Jon said.

Loxy agreed to consider alternatives. “We could put the body in a comatose state, which would allow you to leave,” LT said.

“Yeah. I am not able to access that part of the brain,” Jon said.

LT leaned in close, staring and scrutinizing. She retrieved a medical device from her pocket and shined a light into his eyes. She took the device around his head, listening to the sound variation, which were too subtle for Jon to decipher. “Wow. Fribourg wired you in good and tight. Oh, but then, he is a master rigger. I always liked being tied up by him.”

“Is that a sonic screw driver?” Jon asked, ignoring the tied up part.

“Yeah,” LT said. “The Doctor gave me one. Do you like it?”

“Which Doctor?” Jon asked.

“Not a which, a who,” LT said.

“You know what I mean,” Jon said.

“I do, but that never gets old, does it. I’m traveling with Jenny,” LT said.

“Jenny who?” Jon asked

“Exactly!” LT said.

“My Jenny?!” Jon asked.

“Your Jenny? My Jenny,” LT said.

“Our Jenny isn’t technically a Doctor,” Jon argued.

“She is the daughter of the Doctor and has all of his memory from the time of her conception genetically written in her, and so, it kind of entitles her to being an honorary Doctor,” LT said. “Oh, and I did have an opportunity to travel with the guy with the scarf.”

“Collin Baker?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, you loved him,” LT said.

“No, I loved Perry Brown,” Jon said.

“Me, too!” LT said. “Also, the Peter Cushing Doctor invited me for trip.”

“Admiral Tarkin from Star Wars?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, I can’t get past that, either, and I found the way he was looking at me creepy, and I just couldn’t hold the love because of the whole Alderan fiasco. So, Jenny was safe, and I know her through you, and well, she and I have really hit it off.”

“Okay, so you’re traveling with Jenny in your spare time?” Jon asked.

“Yeah. She needed a companion who could keep up with her,” Lt said. “As much as she likes you, you’re not really a runner.”

“I don’t suppose she could come collect Timothy’s body,” Jon said.

“No. This is a fixed event in time. His body goes up with Miami,” LT said. “Besides, it’s not really me traveling with Jenny, but the real Loxy is traveling with Jenny, but I get to hold her memories. Hey, I have an idea. Why don’t we create a servitor to switch places with you?”

“That might work,” Jon said.

LT pulled an item out of her pocket that at first glance looked like a makeup case. Touching the compartmentalized colors caused the colors to light up and the mirror revealed a virtual screen. A figure appeared beside her, coalescing out of the nothingness.

“Please state the nature of the medical emergency,” said the medical hologram.

“We can’t use him,” Jon said.

“We can’t use the real him, but we can use a non-sentient facsimile of him,” LT said.

“I have feelings attached to him, so I don’t think we can ethically proceed with this,” Jon said.

“I assure you, I am well equipped with ethical protocols and can function within the contextual confines of any medical emergency,” the hologram said. “Please state the nature of the emergency.”

“The world is about to end and Jon is trapped in a 19 year old, Caucasian male’s paraplegic body that is not his own. We want you to switch places with him, allowing his personality to escape the pending disaster,” LT said.

“I am doctor, not a shaman. If you want someone to deal with possessions, you should have called a priest or a witch,” the hologram said.

LT retrieved another kit from her pocket, sorted through the crystals, and pushed one into the hologram’s forehead, updating his program.

“What?!” the hologram began to protest, but then relaxed. “Oh, you require me to perform life support functions while the host is away.”

“Exactly,” LT said.

“I can do that,” the hologram said, and sat down into the body.

Jon fell out the other side. He immediately got up and hugged LT. “Thank you. What was in that crystal you gave him?”

“Contextual compliance upgrades. I anticipated needing a servitor,” LT said.

“This is interesting,” the hologram said through Timothy’s body. “I think can I repair the malfunction.”

“That’s great,” Jon said.

“When does the bomb drop?” LT said.

Jon considered. “That’s weird. We should be able to hear the mad ramblings of the world going crazy. I don’t even hear a whisper. So I don’t know.”

“That is strange,” LT agreed.

“Timothy was excluded from the telepathic wave and is presently isolated in a zone of silence,” the hologram said. “This is not unexpected. The present culture he resides in has a way of not seeing the handicapped, which means Timothy’s disability has saved him from mass telepathic wave front like a cloak of invisibility. Wait a minute. Stand by. Accessing. Accessing. I am not sure I like this Timothy person. I want to switch back, please.”

“You’re a Doctor. How can you not like a paraplegic?” LT asked.

“Wait a minute, how can he have a feeling if he’s not sentient?” Jon asked.

“You must have imbued sentience on him with your emotional attachment to the holographic Doctor,” LT said.

“Great. I can’t leave him in this situation,” Jon said.

“Thank you. Switch back, please,” the hologram said.

Jon went to switch places but LT grabbed his arm. “Hold up. You have to survive this.”

“I am not switching out just so someone else suffers a fate that I am scared of,” Jon said.

“Then, let’s do some magic and bring Timothy back to face his fate,” LT said.

“And how is that ethical?” Jon asked.

“His body, his crime,” the holographic doctor said.

“What crime?” Jon and LT both asked.

The hologram made the crimes available to them. Both Jon and LT gripped each other, closing their eyes as they sorted through the experience. Timothy was a huge kid. At 16 he was six foot and 200 pounds and he was the star of his high school football team. He was also a rapist. His mother, a single mother, an alcoholic, was often so drunk that she couldn’t fight her son off. The occurrence of them having sex was so often that even when she wasn’t drunk, she just played drunk to get the experience over with. It also turned out Timothy was diddling his younger sisters. The youngest was mentally retarded, and so it didn’t take effort, because once she was sexualized she wanted it all the time and would often just come to his room. The other, well, she fought. It happened only once with her. And, when he was sleeping, she went into his room with a baseball bat and beat the crap out of him. That’s how he became a paraplegic.

“So, we bring him back and he sits this out,” LT said.

“His crimes were awful, but they’re not worthy of a death sentence,” Jon said.

“He became a Tulpamancer so that he could kill and rape people remotely,” the hologram said.

“And discovered tulpamancy doesn’t work that way. Wanting to kill people isn’t the same as killing people,” Jon said.

“But if he created tulpas to rape and kill, then that is a crime,” LT said.

“I agree. But I am not a court or an executioner,” Jon said.

“Jon, we can’t stay here and debate this,” LT said. “This is Timothy’s body and his plight. He needs to come back here.”

“I agree that we don’t have time to sort this here. So, how about we take Timothy’s body, with the Doctor in it, back to planet Bliss, and we will sort it out there,” Jon said.

“How is that fair, that he escape his fate?” the hologram said.

“There is no fairness, Doctor. You can’t undo a rape. And you can’t rape the perpetrator and call it even,” Jon said.

“But you could lock him up and prevent future rapes,” the hologram said.

“And since the three of us agree that tulpas are real, and deserve ethical treatment, how do you deal with a mind that creates tulpas and scenarios to rape and kill?” Jon asked. “We’re not thought police. And if locking someone up, and by all evidence, Timothy was locked and bound better than any prison, it hadn’t changed him for the better.”

“Are you wanting to change him?” LT asked.

“I want to table that discussion, get us out of this predicament, and deal with the other stuff later,” Jon said.

“You’re right,” LT said.

Jon went to open the door in order to have an archway to create a portal. His hand went through the door. He turned to LT for an explanation.

“Oh, well, yeah, that makes sense,” LT said.

“Um, enlighten me,”

“I would be careful with that wish,” the hologram said.

“The human brain is essentially a movie projector, and our tulpa bodies are being projected via Timothy’s brain,” LT said. “There are only two avenues of escape. We can disappear into a wonderland that Timothy has created or we can search the collective unconscious for a secondary host that will allow us passage.”

“All of us?” Jon asked.

“No, you and I. Someone has to remain with the body,” LT said.

“Go, save yourselves,” the hologram said.

“We’re not leaving you,” Jon said. “Wait, you said you could repair the body. Do that, and you can open the door for us?”

“It will take me three months to complete the anatomical repairs in my current position, without tech, moving one nerve cell at a time,” the hologram said.

“Damn it, think of something. Ram the door open with the chair,” Jon insisted.

“I have yet to gain sufficient control over the existing pathways to maneuver the hand,” the hologram said.

“Jon, I need you to switch gears and make a command decision,” LT said. “Just as if you were the Captain of the Enterprise. Sometimes you have to order a person to die in order to save others. I go where you go. And it’s not just me. There are others who depend on you for their existence. Your worlds depend on you for your existence.”

Jon fumed. If he could have broken something, something would have been broken. He couldn’t even throw the contents off the desk. But interestingly, touching the mouse did cause the screensaver to switch off and the screen came back to life. Now, if he had years of practice, and discipline, he realized he might be able to move the mouse sufficiently to type on Timothy’s virtual keyboard.

“We’re going to one of Timothy’s wonderlands or jumping to a new host. Decide,” LT stated clearly.

“Knowing what we know about him, do you really want to see one of his wonderlands?” Jon asked. “Add to that, Fribourg is likely waiting for us with another level of attack.”

“So, we’re going to jump vehicles,” LT said.

“I don’t know how to do that,” Jon said.

“I do,” LT said. She offered her hand.

Jon turned to Timothy’s body. “Thank you, Doctor.”

“Travel Light,” the hologram said.

Jon took LT’s hand and they traveled.

Chapter 3

Leaving the zone of silence into a roaring inferno of noise, comparable to the full volume roar of a football game when something dramatic had happened, only sustained and louder, was almost as shocking to the personality as jumping naked through a hole in the ice into freezing waters. There were likely a dozen bodies in a ten kilometer radius of Timothy where the host personality had stepped outside, unable to tolerate the perceived physical sensations. They weren't technically physical attacks, but a mind can translate emotional and mental energies into physical, or somatic symptoms. They ended up nearly on the other side of the world. The host had not been fully disconnected, until Jon arrived, landing in, overlapping, and then the body sucked him until he was in like a hand in a glove. Arriving in the new vehicle was like falling from a height, and had the body not been prone, it might have fallen over or backwards. The impact separated the host personality completely, and she rolled away, curling up into a ball.

Some of the attack followed her, because the attackers were targeting her mental aspect, but the rest remained focused on her body. Jon, having experience with this sort of abuse, knew instinctively what was happening. He didn't panic. He didn't retaliate by sending waves of hate or anger, nor did he hit. His first instinct would have been to go remote, separate from the body, but he pushed a new skill that he had learned at Safe Haven. He made a mudra for his protective sphere and extended a shield, large enough to encompass him, the host, and Loxy.

Loxy fell to the host, comforting her. Jon stood up, holding his mudra firmly, surveying the results. If he focused, he could identify individual thoughts, but without focus, the amount of information was incoherent. The comparison he had was standing next to a Niagara Falls, or maybe under the fall itself, and water was rolling around his shield. He could focus and discern a single drop, watch it sparkling in the light, rolling down the outside of the sphere in slow motion, or he could see all the water bubbling and intense.

The host's name was Svea Åberg. Jon actually recognized her image reflected back at him in the inside of the sphere, which was an odd color from what he was used to, probably because of ongoing attack. He cringed, wondering if this was what Samuel Becket, Quantum Leap's main character, felt like when he came to in another body; more so a female body. The world outside the sphere was Svea's bedroom. It was fairly spacious bedroom, with a platform bed, and interesting 'props' conveniently placed for her main trade. She was a 'youtube' star.

Svea, the psychic medium, who frequently uploaded ‘sexy’ videos to draw in more viewers. She was one of the new stars, not direct porn, or hosting a private porn channel, but using the mainstream platform and the availability of commercial compensation to make a living through subtle titillation. And she did well. She made enough money in commercial revenue to make this her full time job. Most of her videos were made in her original tongue, but she held a world audience because of her look, and the way she teased without necessarily ‘intentionally’ being a tease, which made her more of a tease than a regular tease.

Her room was full of men. A few women, too. They were all pushing up against his shield like zombies in a movie. Jon would imagine that these folks probably had more important matters to focus on, considering the end of the world and all, but maybe that simply spoke to the number of lonely people in the world, and so they came to where they were they needed to come in order to feel safe and or wanted, even if it was a fake sense of acceptance. As Jon observed the ‘people’ pushing up against the sphere, trying to get at Svea, he noticed something odd. They seemed like characters. It wasn’t until the ‘zombie’ face pushed his face against the shield that Jon realized what was going on. It was not a walking dead zombie, but a ‘horny’ zombie. Horny zombies were just as hungry as a regular zombie, the difference being one would eat you for nourishment, and the other would just eat you. He backed up. There were other characters, as hosts were projecting their preferred avatars. There were a lot of dicks in the room, bumping into the shield.

Loxy stood, put her hand on Jon’s shoulder. “We’re safe.”

“You call this safe?” Jon asked.

A giant sperm flew into the room and began butting its head against the shield. More sperm arrived.

“Okay, well, we’re safe for now,” Loxy said.

Jon began to switch mudra to get flight, wanting to escape. Loxy stopped him.

“You can’t,” Loxy said.

“What do you mean I can’t? The whole point of jumping vessels was so we could escape,” Jon said.

“Yes, but Earth is quarantined. And you’re a magician. Given the level of telepathic communication, if you use magic, everyone will know how to do magic, and you can’t show them how to leave the planet. They’re not ready,” Loxy said.

“I just pushed a shield,” Jon pointed out.

“Everyone does shields, all the time,” Loxy pointed out. She pointed at all the ‘intruders.’ “All these people, they’re here all the time. People think they are alone in their homes and apartments, but we’re never alone, Jon. There is always the presence of others. We think we’re isolated because of conditioning, which is shielding, and when that conditioning breaks and we start to perceive the others, society call us mentally ill. Most of these people in this room, they were likely invited here. There is an open door policy on all youtube channels. We don’t get to select who see us. But even in your own home, even if you don’t have an open door policy, people move through your world as easily as air molecules. That’s just a fact of life.”

Jon tried reinforcing the shield. “I am not particularly fond of sperm attacking me,” Jon said. “Much less being mauled by a multitude of... What, servitors? Tulpas? Projections? Astral projections? Avatars?”

Loxy meditated over the crowd. “To your scattered bodies go,” she sang.

More than half of the mental ‘avatars’ disappeared.

“Okay, educate me,” Jon said.

“Most folks using astral bodies are amateur flyers,” Loxy explained. “You say body, and the default back to their body, either out of concern for the body, or out of a lack of disciplined. Advance Astral Projectors rarely stay Earthbound. What’s left, as you have already surmised, are simple thought-forms running independent of the host that created them. There are billions of these things. We all create them all the time. As you progress in your magic training, you will eventually have to attend to the ones you created accidentally, and you will have to create intentional ones. You, yourself, have a lot of defensive ones. What amazes me about you, given what I know of your past, you have very few offensive ones. So many people who are hurt or abused imagine hurting the ones that hurt them, or others, and the offensive servitors circle and prowl to keep the host safe.”

“But we’re never safe? This stuff is out here all the time and our new level of telepathy has made it visible?” Jon asked.

“We are never safe, and always safe,” Loxy agreed, partially. “Because we are never in harm’s way. Jon, all interaction patterns are agreed upon. That’s why it so hard to heal people. Most of them have accepted their reality. And it’s why the first thing we are taught as healers is to get permission, on multiple levels, not just from the conscious mind.”

Even though half the room was cleared by Loxy's directive, folks were returning or new ones were moving. People overlapped and passed through each other as easy as characters arriving at a gaming portal.

"Which was your most favorite video of Svea's?" Loxy asked.

Jon gave her a look that was like, really, we need to discuss this now. She was not perturbed by the apparent crisis. Jon reconsidered his urgency and responded with a better response than the defensive one that nearly came out.

"The one where she simulated being raped by a ghost," Jon said. Just thinking of it, aroused him, but because he was in her body, 'arousal' felt differently. He could remember the covers slowly being drawn off her, slowly. And if she moved, the covers stopped, waited, then proceeded until she was fully exposed. In the video she was wearing underwear and a tank-top that gave ample view of her side boobs, and hints of her nipples. Her body was subtly manipulated, her straightened legs separating, and her thighs turning up and out. Her bare stomach showed the very subtle breathing pattern, but when the raping occurred, her stomach sank in then pushed out in suggestive waves. Very simple video, no nudity, but it aroused Jon to know end and he would think, I want to be that ghost.

Just recreating this in his mind drew in lots of people wanting to watch him recreate. He became aware of the fact he was touching himself, touch herself, and ghost Svea was responding on the floor to his thoughts, giving way to Jon's magical thoughts. Though they were memories of the times he watched the video, there was a real time component, and he couldn't help but mentally explore the body he was holding.

Loxy took his/her hand and kissed him. His attention turned from recreating the video while in her body to Loxy, which brought a new urgency. He wanted to explore being female with a female. He wanted to know if he used a strap on, did the user also derive benefit, or did they need a double ended dildo to both get off simultaneously. Loxy touched his lips, suggesting now was not a good time to follow those thoughts, and then pointed to the audience that was drooling, begging them to get it on.

"Why did you remind me?!" Jon asked.

"I wanted you to understand, some of this is her doing. We're all magicians all the time, and we create our realities. This is an attachment and she invited this," Loxy said. "I am not saying it as accusatory or punitive, but you also participated in this, and consequently, given the

world situation, this needed resolution. We're not here by accident. Even if it's not you and her, this is going to happen, with one of them or all of them, and you will witness or participate just out of habit until that thing in you is satisfied and you can escape."

"I would be gone already if you hadn't stopped me," Jon said.

"You would not be gone from the situation. You would have simply removed yourself and Svea and carried this on elsewhere," Loxy said. "That, and you would have taught them how to leave, and they would have followed. So, let's draw a line here. Deal with this here. Now is always the best time to deal, remember? No matter what the circumstance, whether today is addiction recovery day, making healthier choice day, or practicing discernment, now is always the best time. Down the road has potentially more addiction issues, more health issues requiring attention, or greater willpower to exercise discernment."

"But if I get down the road, that would be now," Jon said.

"And, when you get down the road, my equation will still be true, now is always the best time to start attending," Loxy said.

"Okay, so what do I need to do now? I can't hold this sphere forever," Jon said. He could feel the pressure of the people pushing on the sphere, and it seemed noticeably smaller, as if the air pressure outside a balloon had increased. The wall even felt like a used, deflated balloon.

Svea was falling into her automatic role playing assignment that came with her ideas of possession, reaching up to touch her body, but stimulating Jon's ghost appendage. Apparently, she was accepting this as part of a dream, part of something she created, and a part of her liked Jon, since at least he was being gentle and resisting the demands of the crowd, and the fact that he was resisting had drawn her out wanting to keep him close, compared to the others that had been so forceful as to cause her to flee. There was an attachment here, a dance going on. As she gave into the impulse, her body responded, to sensation, which only further distracted Jon, simultaneously giving her more incentive to do what she was doing. And, the signal was telegraphed through the shield, a sexual light and beat, that drew in more 'viewers.'

"Command decision," Jon said. "I want you to return to your wonderland. Take Svea. Help heal her and restore her."

"But what about you?" Loxy asked.

"I have a plan," Jon assured her.

"Tell me," Loxy said.

“No. I don’t often pull the host command card, but I am giving you direct order. Take Svea and return to your wonderland, and do not come back for me. When it is safe I will call, or come to you,” Jon said.

Slipping back to her own wonderland would not be a breach in protocols, as it was something everyone did every day. And when people realized Jon was in Svea’s body, and she was gone, it would change the feel of the room, bringing in additional, but differently oriented clientele. If he were to leave Loxy in the body, that, too, would bring other clientele. Ever since pushing his book on Origin, Loxy had grown in popularity, and this was surprisingly adding to her solidity and increasing her strength and abilities. Add he accidentally created a new world Tulpa, one that might get the message of love and harmony through, where the Gaia tulpa, the embodiment of all Earth life had failed, simply due to outdated paradigms that didn’t get updated when the world went materialistic. At least the Romans accepted the Greek Gods in spirit, but what had modernity kept in disguise. He was still not completely convinced Loxy was a Tulpa or Soulbound, because of the memories he had for the way they met, and he didn’t feel the urgency to understand the truth of it, because he had his truth: he loved Loxy and wanted her in his life. He also loved Gaia and would do anything to save her, but he had no clue how to do that without the cooperation of others, but there were just too many hungry people, and until that need was met, there was simply no going forward. Anyone that thinks people should just suspend their wants or needs simply aren’t paying attention, because who ever said is at a comfort level where there are six billion other people under them that just want to be at their level.

It was clear to Jon, in the now, that some of these new comers recognized him of the author of Safe Haven. They assumed he was even the creator of that University and that even though he was only now a freshman, he would probably be the greatest protagonist ever, and so, like a rock star, these newcomers wanted to touch him. If Harry Potter was real, how many girls wanted to touch him? Jon had his answer when he considered Emma. Knowing how his reality presently mirrored her did not diminish his wanting of Emma, and here in was his new lesson. These people wanted what he had, security, love, and access to something deeper. Some of them saw getting to know him was simply an expedient back door to get to Loxy, and there were more people wanting Loxy than wanting him. Interesting, there would even be people wanting Fribourg and Lester. Fortunately, he wasn’t dealing with those types now, because his present handful was sufficient. Being raised by the crowd and put on a pedestal had advantages and

disadvantages, and given the present level of energy, the biggest disadvantage was being distracted by his ego that wanted desperately to be appreciated, even if that meant being mauled by a thousand horny zombies, which, also, had an appeal to him due to his past trauma because that pushed his pleasure/pain threshold higher than the norm.

Like sensing that urgency building behind an orgasm, Jon realized he needed to get Loxy and Svea out of here before reaching that threshold of no return. Jon helped Loxy get Svea on her feet. Svea responded to the touch as if being manipulated by lovers, after taking LSD. Loxy took her full weight, turned slightly, and was gone. Jon was left in Svea's body, the sphere growing smaller as the amount of attention continued to add pressure. He wondered what it would be like to just let the balloon shield surround him, like the Japanese that wore those white suits and pretended to be ghost and fucked people at random, like reporters, and in that world no one saw the ghosts, but in Jon's world, he saw the ghost and was turned on. Perhaps it was just in that world, but it seem liked women would more willingly give into a ghost than give into him. He canceled that thought, reminding himself he had no shortage of partners or offers since becoming a Safe Haven student. Jon made an opening in the shield, allowing one of the sperm servitors egress. The sperm broke free leaving its tail in the hole and slammed hard against Svea's body, knocking Jon out of it.

"Have fun," Jon said, and dropping the shield.

As the crowd fell on the body, the host that had sent the sperm servitor found himself suddenly the focus of unwanted attention. Jon slipped through the crowd, mostly unnoticed, as he was simply another level of avatar, just a miscellaneous thought form, an innocuous thought form without a body. One girl, followed, grabbed his arms, but Jon slipped away before she could lock onto him, as if he was slick with massage oil. It probably didn't help her cause that Jon started singing "I am just a little Shackleford rain cloud," from Winnie the Pool, as he snuck away from the 'honey pot.' He was amused by how invisible he was, he had not seen the girl, or how diligently she pursued, but did wonder if it was part of his abilities gained at Safe Haven, or due to his general lack of connections to these folks. They did seem to be going for what they knew, and they knew Svea. When people die, do they just go where they know? Did that mean Jon would arrive on the Enterprise when he died? He paused, feeling suddenly very alone, still unaware of the lonely girl wanting to catch him. He wondered if it was his loneliness, or someone projecting lonely on him. Was loneliness his shield?

Without further ado, Jon returned to where he had started. Back to Timothy. The hologram found himself outside Timothy's body. "Yes! I have learned to Astral Project..." But as he leaned in closer to study Timothy he realized Jon was in there. "Oh. You released me?"

"I did," Jon said.

"I don't understand. Why have you returned?" the hologram asked.

"Multiple reasons, the most important one is not wanting to be afraid," Jon said.

"That's insane! Fear is functional in promoting strategies that might help you avoid harm. That, and you're the host," the hologram said.

"Am I the host?" Jon asked, seriously attending. "Isn't, in this instance, Timothy the host? I was born into a world already made. On discovering tulpas, sentient thought-forms, I have learned that the brain could care less what program it runs, and different programs get different physiological responses from the body. Further, I have discovered there is a higher power. Maybe it's not god in the traditional sense of the word, as I certainly hope Timothy isn't God, but the unconscious clearly knows more than I, has a myriad of programs running, and so it's governing or in charge. The Unconscious could be god, but I am betting there is something bigger than it in charge, which isn't necessarily evidence for supreme beings, but definitely delineates a hierarchy. Am I sovereign? Well, maybe on a really good day, when I am super focused and aware, but even on those days, I am actually doing less and observing more, and simply aware of flow."

The hologram puzzled through it. "As a medical professional, I can recognize the importance of faith and or belief in terms of affecting somatic outcomes, however I cannot ethically allow you to sacrifice yourself. I am definitely a program. I believe you are more than a program."

"Well, as a program, you recognize my authority as Captain to give you a directive to return to where you came from," Jon said.

"As a medical hologram, I can override your authority if I suspect your judgment is impaired. By definition, sacrificing yourself to save a program is evidence of impairment," the hologram said.

It took effort to fill Timothy's lungs with enough air to make an audible sigh, but he managed. "It's not a sacrifice."

"How is it not a sacrifice?" the hologram asked.

“Would you accept a metaphor?” Jon asked.

“Perhaps,” the hologram said.

“Assume for a moment there is a god, that fits the general definition of a god, and that god is omnipotent and every other ‘omni’ you can’t think of that doesn’t contradict any of the previous ‘omni’ options. God, this is ineffable, but by this definition God would be immortal and eternal. Even if this God chose to incarnate in order to communicate more directly with its creations, it would still be immortal and eternal, and so if those creations got freaked out and decided to kill God’s host body, God would still continue. In fact, the creation couldn’t kill God without God’s willing participation in the event. Further, God’s participation would be to demonstrate there is no death, that even if the body died, something continues on, and since there is no way to harm God, there can be no offense, and therefore no sacrifice.”

“I don’t understand where you’re going with this,” the hologram said.

“Timothy’s body may die, but I will not. Therefore, I am not sacrificing myself to save you. I will either return to my physical body, or go where ever thought forms go, but I will not perish,” Jon said.

“This is a belief. You have no proof,” the hologram said.

“You’re right. I am basing this on my personal experience of spiritual and magical transcendence,” Jon said.

“As afraid as I was while locked into Timothy’s body, I find I am more determined to not allow this to happen,” the hologram said.

“You felt fear because it is functional, which also suggest sentience. Loxy and I created you because we thought we had a need. We can’t un-create you, but I can relieve you of the ability to suffer this decision. I command you to return to your place, with my full love and gratitude. Computer, end emergency holographic doctor program.”

“Now, wait just a damn...” the holographic doctor disappeared.

Jon found himself alone in a body supported by a chair. He lacked the ability to even turn the chair, so his view was fixed. A curtain pulled tight over the window to prevent light from penetrating was his main artifact to behold. The sides of the curtain revealed an aura of sunlight against fake, wood paneled walls. Was he in a trailer? A mote of dust sparked and was gone. The zone of telepathic silence around him was palpable, the same way the tongue probes the space

where a tooth used to be. If the outside world knew he was in here instead of Timothy, would they reach in? Perhaps not presently, given how the entire world was in fight or flight response.

If Jon focused really hard, he could discern the background noise. Something sensed him in this pocket of isolation and probed without making itself visible. A voice spoke to him.

“Worship me and I will free you.”

“Umm, no,” Jon said.

“I will destroy you,” whatever it was said.

“Umm, you’re negotiating for me to worship you?” Jon asked. That’s weird. “Who are you?”

There was no answer.

Jon pushed a shield, even without making the mudra. He filled it with golden light. Whatever it was that was interested in molesting him decided it was not worth the trouble given the available prey. It interested him that he wasn’t afraid, as if he had been through this before and knew how to stand up for himself. He was not prey. He was not a victim. Were there some dark things out there in the Universe? Sure. Within in humanity? Absolutely, and probably more uglies contained within humanity than outside of it, the same was there was more water molecules in a cup of water than there were cups of water inside the ocean.

Jon made a decision. He physically couldn’t do anything, but he could still think. “I don’t know who to address this to, so I allow this correspondence to go where it needs to go, I give it permission to self-direct and flow towards anyone greater than humanit, with the following caveat: you must be an agent for the light, holding positive regard for humanity’s ultimate good as well as my own, and a general sense of benevolence towards lesser beings. So, unconscious, higher self, personal guides, guardians, my invisible counselor, my team of experts, or, direct to God if that channel is open, even if it’s through a chain of command or archangels, I would like you to consider this mad rambling a prayer. First, foremost, thank you for my life. Thank you for my insight, my loves, my adversities, thank you for everything that helped make me who I am. Thank you for my family of Origin and please find a way to love and heal them, and forgive me for failing to do so. Forgive me where I have failed in anything, even if I don’t recognize the failure due to my own level of bias. I extend forgiveness to all the players who I have interacted with, for actual or perceived offenses, and release all debts, perceived or actual. I find myself in a peculiar situation. I am in a body I don’t want and suspect it will end soon. I don’t know if I will

exist when this body dies, and if I do, I don't know where I will go. What I am saying is, I am afraid. However, I don't want to squander this moment dwelling on my fears. This body belongs to someone I don't like. I can relate to not liking this body the same way I can relate to having not liked my own body, much less my own personality, my own life, but I want to learn love. I ask, if it is permissible through all the parties involved, including Timothy's own higher self and guides, and the people that influenced him and their guides, if they can help me understand. I want sufficient understanding that even I could love Timothy, even though the physical surface of him is detestable, and the surface personality that I have perceived is abhorrent. I want access to truth, at all its layers. And if it's possible, through this greater understanding and love give the potentiality for Timothy to change or evolve. Or just allow the pathway for him to travel to exist, and allow him to see the way out. Not because I am special or wanting to be a hero, but because I find myself here and I am thinking, why not use this moment to activate change, and, because I see myself in him and maybe through helping him I help myself. Yeah, it always comes back to me and this a self-serving request, but I am open to not being part of the equation. You can remove me. Okay, that's it. You got the gist of it. I turn it over to you. Make it so."

And then Jon shut up. He experienced quiet for a moment and then his own mind chatter slowly revved back up, at which point, he quieted it by insisting that the chatter wait a bit longer. Not having apparent, immediate responses always sucked. He wanted burning bushes and lightning flashes. Unfortunately, the Universe rarely works so directly. It's subtle. Except when nuclear bombs go off. That's less subtle. But surprisingly liberating. As Jon transitioned, he revisited "How to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb," otherwise known as "Doctor Strangelove."

Transported by light, Jon found himself in front of Summer, his reptilian master and guide, and Alectrona, a Greek Goddess of healing and light that he had met the last time he had been with Summer. Funny, it had felt like a dream, but now was just as 'real' as the last time he was here and Timothy had become the dream.

"If you're ready, we will conduct a life review," Alectrona said.

"I am not Timothy," Jon said.

"We know," Summer said. "Proceed anyway."

Jon touched the pedestal and all of it came at him all at once, and it was easier to process if he accepted the highlights. He found himself in the body of a 14 year old girl. Her father was a

minister, very strict. Mother was less strict but emotionally absent and deferred to father's regime. Kim was a popular high school cheerleader and was invited to a party that she was not going to get permission to attend because of her father's disposition and her age. So, she skipped the trial of asking and simply snuck out to attend a party, where the senior football team applied lots of alcohol, and then gang raped her in one of the back bedrooms. It felt like a bad dream, as she would fade in and out of consciousness, each time a new person was on her. She would cry and ask them to stop, see the other faces around, laughing, holding her naked body down, more drinking in the back ground. Some took a second turn. There was a light, too. A floating light that didn't make sense to her. When it was done, she was permitted to get up and get dress. By then the effect of the alcohol was gone, as well as the tears. She was in a new place, numb. She had thought she had known things, but now, she wasn't sure what she knew or thought. There was a guy passed out on the floor as she departed the room. His face decorated with ink and spilt sperm; it didn't occur to her he was also abused in his drunken stupor. There were others passed out in the living room, too. There were some awake, in groups, talking, laughing. Did they see her? Were they laughing at her? Did they even know?

She made it home and into her room without anyone seeing her. She had kind of been hoping her parents were waiting up for her. She wanted to be in trouble. She wanted to tell them everything. The burden of keeping the secret had been decided by her decision to sneak out, so she ate it. For about three weeks, when it became apparent that there was something wrong. She was pregnant. She didn't tell them about the party, about being ganged raped. She simply said she was pregnant. Her father was furious and hit her. Mother intervened. Talk of abortion ensued.

"I am not getting an abortion," Kim said.

"The hell you're not," her father said. "Do you realize how embarrassing this is going to be?"

"I am sorry, but how does my sin reflect on you?" Kim asked. "I mean, if you're going to take responsibility because I messed up, why preach about sin at all. Give it all back to God, because if he was a better parent, then there wouldn't have been snake in the garden to begin with!"

Mother blocked again.

She didn't back down. "You have stood on your pulpit and preached against abortion. I was listening. I believe as you, that the baby is innocent in this and shouldn't die because I fucked up," Kim said.

"Language," Mother said.

"Who's the boy?" Father asked.

"I am not going to reveal that," Kim said.

"He and his family need to be in on this," Mother said.

"That isn't going to happen," Kim said, holding her ground.

As her mother and father debated on what to do, both thinking that sending her away would be best, or forcing the issue with the abortion, she simply got up and left. They didn't even notice, they were so engaged. She walked the whole day. She had several offers for a ride, but chose not to get in the cars. Was this discernment or fear? She had never experienced this before. Correction, she had always gotten offers, but this was the first time it was accompanied by fear. The offers were no longer flattering. She ended up at her grandmother's house, and affectively applied for asylum. Grandmother listened. She also asked who the father was but didn't pry when she chose silence.

Grandmother sat on the couch, looking away, but holding her hand. "I will not advise you further. Keep it, adopt it out, or abort, your call. I just think you should know, there is no easy road. Keeping it and aborting both come with long term scars for you. Adopting it out can have long term scars for it, but perhaps less than keeping it."

"Why do you get it and father can't?" Kim asked.

"Because your mother was also a product of rape. She is not grandfather's biological daughter. Every day I looked at her, I was reminded of the fact. It affected our relationship. Pappi knew. He married me anyway, because he was a rescuer and he loved me and benefitted from the situation," Grandmother said. "Your father, he is also a rescuer. When he found your mother, she was an addict. He rescued her, imperfectly, because he is imperfect, rescuing people to feel better about himself, and consequently, your mother never got perfectly better. Oh, sure, she is no longer an addict, but because of her will power, but because she relies on her husband's strength. When he goes, she will likely return to drugs. Those two have a dynamic between them that keeps them in that dance. If she got better, he would feel less needed, and he would sabotage her progress to keep her in her place. He frequently reminds her that she is sinful and her

thoughts are wrong, and she concurs. Your grandfather and I figured that stuff out long ago, but not soon enough to really change your mother's trajectory. And though I recognize my part in how I gave her flight, she does have wings and can steer for herself, but chooses not to. In many ways, you have more strength than she, and perhaps you will survive the rapes, where she didn't."

Kim hadn't heard any of the speech. "I didn't say I was raped."

"I know," Grandmother said.

Tears flowed. "But you said..."

"I did," Grandmother said.

"I am the product of a rape, same as your mother, same as you," grandmother said.

"Does she know?" Kim said.

"That you're not her husband's child?" grandmother asked.

"About her, about you?" Kim asked.

"Does she need to know?" Grandmother said.

"Would it have helped?" Kim asked.

"I don't know," Grandmother said.

Kim leaned into her grandmother and cried. Grandmother simply held her. After, arrangement was made for Kim to live with her grandmother. She dropped out of school. She stopped seeing her friends. She pretty much only spoke to grandmother. Fast forward to Timothy was born, and he was barely one years old. She was still living with grandmother when the police showed up wanting to speak to her. Apparently, Kim's gang rape had been videotaped. Her flashbacks finally had context for the floating light. She had so wanted it to be a guardian angel, helping her survive, so much so she had actually been talking to this invisible spirit, but now, the world seemed more mundane and dreary, and she felt stupid and gullible for believing in magic. She nearly collapsed. Multiple copies had been made and distributed and they had found a copy of it in the coach's locker. They were investigating him for having had sex with one of his male students, had found the tape which he claimed he had confiscated from his students and hadn't know what the content was. The investigators were looking for her to testify against the coach and the boys.

It only got worse from there. The scandal of the coach and the gang rape went viral, even before there was a term 'viral.' Mother and father divorced. Mom moved in with them. She

returned to drugs. The church that her father had built closed down. How could it not, when the families of all the boys who had participated in the rap went to that church. The coach attended that church. Half the town attended that church. Old gossip about Kim was renewed. New gossip about Kim began. And there was a multitude of beliefs and attitudes from Kim was a whore and she got what she deserved to she was a victim and it was her parents fault.

Kim found it difficult to work in her grandmother's town anymore, because gossip found her; she had decided to move. Grandmother sold her house and they went together to a new city. Kim became an alcoholic, caring for her grandmother who died of cancer. Her mother ran off with a drug dealer who pimped her out and eventually died of and died of a heroin overdose; it was unknown if it was murder, suicide, or accident. The police didn't care to investigate, just another drug addicted whore in a city where this was more likely your fate than natural causes. Timothy continued to grow, and was demanding of attention that Kim simply couldn't provide him. In another world, she might have been diagnosed with major depression with psychotic features, PTSD, and ETOH abuse. She also had had two more children, the youngest of which had Down syndrome. She felt cursed, alone, and even the men she found simply fucked her and left, because no one wanted to deal with Timothy who was out of control. He was jealous of any new man that came into her life.

And then it got weird. She would often drink to go to sleep and she would sometimes wake up thinking she had sex, but she was certain she didn't have a guest over. For a moment, she thought the light had returned to rape her and record the rapes, and it haunted her dreams. She tried ignoring it, but she found unexplained bruises. The movie the Entity frightened the fuck out of her! So did the movie "Gargoyles." She imagined wing devils sitting on her at night and carrying her off to incubate more monsters. Still, she ignored it. It went on for several years before she finally figured it out, and by then Timothy had grown so tall and strong, or perhaps she had been too drunk, or not drunk enough, or he was taking greater liberties because he simply didn't care if he got caught. Timothy was fucking her! He was even pouring her drinks for her when she came home from work, because, "I just want you to be happy and relaxed." She had thanked him for the drinks! Kim didn't know what to do. She couldn't report her son to the police. She couldn't physically stop him, either. Even when she didn't drink, he was still coming to her room at night. Locking the door didn't work, he simply broke it open. And that night, he

clearly told her, “You lock me out one more time, I will fuck my sisters instead of you.” And so, she endured.

Jon pushed away from the pedestal that projected the life review directly into his brain.

Alectrona took his arm, gently, as if to steady him from falling. “We’re not finished.”

“I don’t think I can watch more,” Jon said.

“You wanted to know how you could love Timothy,” Alectrona said. “We’re helping you understand his vectors. We haven’t even started with his life yet. You need to see his sister’s perspective.”

“Do I really need to know how badly his emotional life as a child was to know it sucked?” Jon asked.

“He is carrying stuff that isn’t his,” Summer said. “And he has adopted them and fed them, and now they’re as much him as separate. In the old days people call them demons. Some of them will likely be entities in their own right, aliens of non-terrestrial origin, at least from Origin’s perspective, some are thought forms, given to him, some our thought-forms he created. Human beings, and truly life, is much more complex than anyone on Earth has ever imagined. You’re not just children. You’re blind children, grappling in the dark and trying to understand a thing, while having sex and creating more things, and you don’t even need a partner to create shit. This is what we do.”

“You make the Universe seem dark and evil. It really can’t be that bad out there,” Jon said. “Can it?”

“Humans are relatively new species; you’re babies,” Alectrona said. “And, you are more aggressive than any other species we have ever encountered, ever dared dream of. So, in some sense, you are correct. If the species that are preying on the human population presently were aggressive as you, there would be no human race.”

Jon sorted something. “Wait. I get the sense that Timothy made an agreement with an entity, before he was even born. One of those things he was given, that thing was given to him before he was even conceived.”

“Yes,” Summer said.

“I don’t understand,” Jon said.

“You exist prior to incarnating into human bodies,” Summer said. “We all exist first as souls.”

“But, then, that means we aren’t human, right?” Jon asked. “You can’t make statements like, humans are the most aggressive species ever when, in truth, we are something else. But even if I believe it the reverse, how does it help knowing he was given something. How does it help me help him if I know he accepted something or agreed to something? That’s between him and the person who contracted, right? But I could go further, the devil made me do it, or I am under contract, isn’t a valid excuse for doing harm to others.”

Summer nodded. “You’re right. And you can’t help him without his permission. Not Timothy. He can’t speak for himself, but there is a higher self that can, who has allowed for things to unfold as they have so that everyone might learn.”

“What the fuck is that? Learn what?”

“The nature of reality,” Alectrona said.

“Then, why interfere at all? Just let it be,” Jon said.

“You wanted us to teach you how to love Timothy,” Alectrona said.

“Is it possible to simply accept everyone has a right to exist without loving them?” Jon asked.

Alectrona turned to Summer. “We need a different approach.”

“Wait wait wait,” Jon said. “These things that are attached to him, these other entities that feed or influence negatively. Assuming we get them off, no pun intended, do we just let them go about their business?”

“You’re nowhere near ready for psychic surgery. Allow me and my team to do that,” Summer said.

“That’s not what I am asking! These things, they don’t die, do they? Do they go to jail? They just float around until they find the next willing partner?” Jon said.

“They can’t die. They don’t go to jail,” Summer said.

“I am afraid,” Jon said.

“You want us to apply amnesia and cause you to reincarnate?” Alectrona asked.

“And start over from scratch?” Jon asked.

“Your unconscious will contain what you have learned, and you can proceed in smaller increments,” Alectrona said.

“No, I am here. I want to face this,” Jon said.

“Good for you,” Summer said. “Let’s switch gears and give you an easy assignment. We will insert you inside of one of Timothy’s Wonderland. You have been given access by his higher conscious, and you have permission to alter the environment.”

“I have mission? Do I need to change something specific?”

“Your mission is to love Timothy,” Alectrona said.

Chapter 4

Loxy arrived back at Bliss with Svea, in one of the emergency medical rooms Jon had reserved for aiding animals. She asked Siri for assistance. Siri manifested in a physical form and helped to place Svea on the medical bed. Keera arrived, as if having been summoned.

“Psychic wounds?” Keera asked.

“Yeah,” Loxy said. “If you’ll apply an etheric anesthetic, I will prepare for surgery.”

Keera began a ritual of helping a client going into trance, while Loxy took a standing meditative form. Loxy surrounded herself with light, invited in her guides, and began an unconscious conversation between her and Svea, the higher selves mediating. When Loxy opened her eyes, the first thing she did was push a containment field, so that nothing Svea had brought with her would leave the room.

“She’s inundated with stuff,” Keera observed.

“Yeah, suit up,” Loxy said. “I’ll wait.”

Keera moved through the same psychic exercises of standing meditations and then surrounded herself with protection. When she returned she noticed that Loxy had opened a wormhole, a one way ticket to somewhere else. It had a slight suction sound, and some of her psychic tools fed into it.

“You ready?” Loxy asked.

“Sure,” Keera said, her hands up and available as if she had scrubbed.

“Svea,” Loxy said. “I have authority to proceed, but I need to hear you say we have permission to clear you.”

“Yes, please,” Svea said.

Svea’s petite body expanded, bloating and turning dark purple, and then bounced back into its original shape. Her demeanor changed. “You have no authority. I have a contract. She willingly gave me permission to reside,” it was dark, sinister voice that moved through her. Like the Gorn voice from the ST:TOS episode.

“Yeah. Svea is breaking that contract. So, the options are you can leave voluntarily, and take your friends with you, or we can excise you,” Loxy said.

“You impotent little puppet!” it said, stretching Svea’s face up and out as it were just a sheet hanging in the wind and a person was pushing into it. “I will own all three of you bitches.”

“He’s very cocky,” Keera observed.

“False bravado,” Loxy said.

“You want to see my cock?!” it asked.

“Bring it out,” Loxy invited.

It hesitated.

“Yeah, not so brave when the lights are on, eh?” Loxy said. “Come on out. The door is right here. It’s only going to get brighter in there.”

“You don’t have the power to remove me,” it said. “I am older, smarter, faster, stronger...”

“Yeah, you are,” Loxy said. “And that’s why I work with a team. Who are all much older, smarter, faster, stronger, than both of us together. And the longer you tarry, the more I learn how to do deal with you, so stick around. I am interested, does this hurt?”

Loxy shined a light into etheric body. The creature roared and threatened.

“I will kill her, then you, and then all your friends. Oh! Jon. I can so take Jon out,” the creature said. “All I have to do is throw pussy at him, and he will give me his dick, and I will lead him around like a dog on a leash.”

“So, you’re gay?” Keera asked, wondering if that label would offend it and ruffle its feather enough that I might let go.

“Well, he is in a female’s body,” Loxy pointed out.

“Yeah, but, can you be a heterosexual male and be in female’s body, simply because you’re curious what it feels like?” Keera said.

“Curious what dick feels like, or what it feels like to get dick? Either way sounds a bit curious,” Loxy said.

“Jon was already in here. I can track him by his smell,” the creature said.

“Jon was in there?” Keera said, leaning into peer through the eyes to see if she could still see anything. It raised up and tried to lick her, but she retreated.

“I think you will find quite a few people got in there,” Loxy said.

“Wait, this isn’t her body body,” Keera said.

“No, her body is back on Origin,” Loxy said.

“Oh, so, Jon is like in there holding down the fort while we clear her body,” Keera said.

“Something like that,” Loxy said. Loxy closed her eyes and then opened them. “Okay, Sir. My team is in place. You’re about to fill some pressure. Last chance to vacate willingly.”

“Fuck you, light whore,” the creature said.

It suddenly found itself on top of the table, sitting on the body it had been in. Its body expanded and bloated, like wet toad expanding its throat, but it was the whole body. Its genitals were hidden by the bloating. It pushed with a magic energetic wind, sending Keera and Loxy to the limits of their protective sphere that had been put into place. But no matter how hard it tried to get to them, it couldn’t reach them with its body. Sveas clothes tore as it tried to get back in her. And then, as if an afterthought, one for the road kind of thing, it began fucking her. It was forced off the table by invisible hands, towards the small portal. It resisted. It jerked off and flung sperm at Loxy first, then Keera, then Svea. Its butt plugged the portal and his departure quickened as he continued to throw sperm; it seemed to like the suction of air flowing around its plugged butt. The rest of its body suddenly imploded into the hole, leaving only its hands gripping the ring of the portal, and then they slipped off and it was gone.

Loxy and Keera fell to their feet.

“Wow, that was intense,” Keera said. “Glad you had me put on the full body condom.”

“Right?!” Loxy said. She approached the body. “Alright, the rest of you little fuckers, out now, or I use the siphon.”

A line of cockroach looking critters, about the size of small dogs, exited the body. A few more were found inside, perhaps thinking they could escape detection. Eggs, dirt, webs, all sorts of things were removed. There was an electrical device found attached at the base of the neck. They removed it. And then they began the cleanup of their quarantine, pushed all the contaminants into the portal, closed the portal, and then asked for a healing blessing to occur. The quarantine was lowered.

“Would you stay with her?” Loxy asked. “I need to go check on Jon. Ask Alish to make her a tea. Surgery is done, but she will have a long road of healing. It’s one thing to get better, but another thing to stay better.”

“You bet,” Keera said. “Thanks for letting me participate.”

Loxy hugged her. She went straight way to her quiet space, took up a meditative pose on the floor, lit an imaginary candle, and quietly sought Jon out. She had been directed not to return, but that didn’t mean she couldn’t watch. She quickly found herself in a room with Timothy. She

checked the time stamp. She checked in with her guide. After multiple levels of conformation, she decided it was accurate. For whatever reasons, she would have to go through Timothy to get to Jon. Curiously, she found him in a sterile room, very modern, all white, shades of white. His clothes were white, like medical clothes. His bed was white. His chair was white.

Curiosity drove her out of the room. She quickly discovered that she was on space station. The stations was fairly simple design, concentric rings around an axis. Several layers of rings. If she did casual psychic survey, she got a consistent number of 42 million people, spread out through a million satellite space stations. She heard a conversation and moved towards one of the rooms. It was the same size as Timothy's room.

"So, this is a prison?" the person asking was Samuel Clemmons. It was the Samuel Clemmons directly prior to his death.

Standing in front of Clemmons was a spectral form of Siri, a hologram. He 'experienced' it as a ghost. She was educating him. "Technically, from your view point, you are imprisoned, but only temporarily. Before allowing any of the residents egress from their room, you must have accomplished a minimum safety training program. If you wish to return to the planet, you must complete a life review..."

"A life what?" Clemmons said. Siri explained and he was offended. "You mean suffering life once, while chased by the memories of it all, isn't sufficient torture?"

Loxy was amused, but not allowed to continue listening. She found herself being drawn down and out of the station. It was not frightening, but it was persistent direction. She had a choice, return back to her body, or go with it. She went with it, accelerating towards a planet that might have been Earth, only it lacked the evidence of cities. So, if it was Origin, it was before humans. As she drew closer to the Earth, she found herself descending upon the one place on this planet where humans were inhabiting. A castle. A modern day castle. The outer wall was as smooth as glass. Each of the corners of the four walls had a tower, and the castle in the center had a central tower, and that is where she landed, inside a chalk circle, with a star. The moment her feet hit the floor, an energy wave pulsed up through her. She couldn't help but throw her arms up in the air, as if celebrating a sudden victory, but, it was more just a movement to go with the flow, allowing energy to dissipate faster, through her. When the wave of energy had finished, she took a deep breath as if she had emerged from swimming the entire length of an Olympic pool underwater.

Loxy had a body. She was naked and unashamed. She was standing tall, arms upswept, palms together, looking up, inhaling deep, just an everyday, morning yoga pose that she would pass through, before lowering her arms, tilting her head left then right, and attending to the world. The transition from thought form to body was so easy she sometimes didn't recognize it for what it was. Depending on your frame of reference, she was a body first, a framework for her mind that was installed secondly. Another framework, she was mind first, and she participated in the creation of the body. The Safe Haven frame of reference, she simply existed, her story and others in progress, when she encountered Jon. 'Jon' at Safe Haven was technically a tulpa, or thought-form manifest. Technically, everyone at Safe Haven was some form of thought, with Avatar being the most suitable term for their bodies. One never gets to Safe Haven in the physical form first. Being at Safe Haven was a privilege, a severe selection process in place that very few truly understood. To be a graduate of Safe Haven, an even greater privilege. More people attend than ever graduated. Being a graduate of Safe Haven put Loxy was in a very small, 'elite' population, by definition.

On the tower, in meditative form, was a Reptilian. She was wearing the robes of an ancient religious order, shades of white. The robes had a hood, but it was lowered and thick around the back of her neck. Due to Loxy's experiences with Jon in the other world, and because of the crystals Jon had shared with her, she was quickly able to recognize the summoner. She was Summer, Jon's supervisor. She was not in a body, but she opened her eyes and looked up. They were snake eyes, and hypnotically powerful if you didn't know how to block. It was clear if Summer wanted, she could go deep, fast.

Still, it was best not presume, or lead with an assumption. "Who are you?"

"Hello, Loxy," Summer said.

Loxy hid a smile. If this was a negative entity, she didn't want it to know she was amused. Negative entities, generally, avoided answering identity questions, especially the newbies. This was part of the game. "Hello. You know my name. May I know yours first?"

"Very polite, Loxy Isadora Bliss," Summer said.

"Clearly, you're advance and knowledgeable," Loxy said. "You will now tell me your name."

"You know me as Summer, Jon's practicum adviser," Summer said.

Loxy nodded. "I know you from somewhere else, as well. Tell me, please."

“Nice,” Summer said. “You remember one of the other worlds. There are so many from which I have conscious access to that I prefer not to guess as to which one you are referring to.”

“Fair enough,” Loxy said. “Do you work for the Light, and the greater good of all beings?”

“I am agent of the Light, and am working for the greater good of all beings,” Summer said. “And I have summoned you in order to supervise your practical. Are you ready to begin?”

Chapter 5

Loxy was released from the confinement, where she was given a moment to manifest clothes. She had been vague in her initial assignment of clothes, wishing for practical over substance, knowing she was likely to be working. Somewhere in the reaches of her mind, she wanted a uniform. Whatever it was that chose, it went practical, sort of uniform-ish, and definitely mystical. Without a mirror, she had to use 'remote viewing' to examine herself from an outside perspective, and she laughed and spun, flaring the robes that folded in front of her thighs. She was dressed like a Jedi, with sixties, go go's influence! The main fabric was soft, wooly cotton, with a thick texture you could almost feel with eyes. This part was white, and it folded left to right over her bosom, but the fold fell more left than right, as if layered. A thick leather, tan belt went around her waist, divided in front by thinner straps; three straps with offset gold buckles, so you could see the white of the robe underneath. The lower portion of the robe flared like a bell, with a hint of an upside down v direction between her legs, that made it unclear if the was more to her outfit, and because the fold overlapped, it gave a wave front across her body connecting the v between her legs to the v of the neck line. The left side of the robe had a large, open pocket which seemed more ornate than practical, but given her magician status, she could easily slip her hand there and likely pull out the most amazing sized rabbits if she needed to. The sleeve of the robe barely went mid-way to her shoulder, but she was wearing tan leather gloves that went from fingers to shoulder. There was hood to the robe, which was down, similar to Summer's, and it felt warm and heavy on the back of her neck. She was wearing white hose and boots.

Loxy's eye shadow was layered blue, indigo, and violet. Her bob was fluffy and wild. Her eyebrows were darker than her hair, a dirty, reddish blond that was unreal, and her lips were really red. She smiled inwardly, and it mirrored on her face, and she was back inside, looking at Summer, who was patiently waiting for her to be satisfied.

"What?" Loxy asked. "Too much?"

"You just had that in there, ready to go?" Summer asked.

"This outfit? Oh. I have a whole team dedicated to my fashion," Loxy said. "And they seem to know more about what I am getting into than I, so I tend to just go with it."

"Very well. You got it from here," Summer said.

"Just like that. No mission statements?" Loxy asked.

“Your advisers are pushing an undergrad master’s combo, which isn’t unheard of, but given they want this, I am going to be less directive. Surprise me,” Summer said.

“How will I know when I am finished?” Loxy asked.

“Oh, don’t make me questions your advisers,” Summer said. Summer faded.

Nothing left to do, other than get to work. She descended the tower stair case and discovered that the castle was not a castle. On the Astral realm, it had been a castle, or perhaps she had interpreted it as such. If she closed her eyes, she could still see the castle, overlapping the physical structure. The castle was an anomaly, but since it was still present, at least to her, she decided she would start by exploring. She continued down the tower stairs, watching the terrain changing at each level, and emerged into the main floor. When she opened her eyes, she found herself in the open, center part of an abandoned shopping mall. She was on the lowest level, of what might normally be a skating rink, but a dance floor was closed over the ice. There was at least three levels to the mall. In some ways, it reminded her of the Galeria in Dallas. She closed her eyes and took in the fact that the mall was the only physical structure on the planet. It was as if the mall had been cutout from its original place on Earth and inserted into a world that had no architectural evidence of civilization. She felt a song stirring, and wanted to dance and go explore the mall. Her space was so open and free that she felt very expansive, and spun, thinking this place would be great for a ballroom setting, should there be a future dance or recital.

And, then she realized, the mall was occupied, by neo-Amazonian women.

Loxy heard the words ‘intruder,’ and found herself being rushed by women with staffs. Six were upon her so quickly and aggressively that the swinging of staffs was in play before ascertaining threat level. Loxy switched gears automatically, side stepping backwards, deferring to the closest energy, and rolling so perfectly, that her back was up against one of the attacker, as if they had been dancing; she assumed control of the staff, still flowing with the girl, and when the business end came up it was struck by a second staff. By that time, Loxy was in control of the staff. The girl was horrified by the fact her attack was now being used against her colleague, as well as confused how the enemy had moved up against her so easily. Loxy pushed an elbow into the stomach of the girl she was mirroring, and left the mirror pose, leaving the attacker behind like a discarded shadow. She touched the back of the neck and the girl went down, as if asleep. It was all one fluid motion, as she spun the stolen staff in her left hand bringing it up behind her to block a third attacker, simultaneously ducking another, flowing away from second, closest

attacker. A gentle brush of the hand, immobilized the second attacker, and she collapsed to the floor without any sign of pain or protest. Two people down only escalated the aggressiveness of the other combatants, but also caused them to increase space between them, allowing only for staff engagement. The two bodies on the floor were obstacles to navigate, as neither party wanted to cause more injury. The resident aggressors weren't entirely sure they weren't dead, because they certainly looked dead, but even if they were dead, their respect for their friends' bodies was evident.

Loxy recognized one of the attackers. She even had a name for her. "Midori?"

Saying her name inflamed them woman and she rushed Loxy. Their staffs crossed. Their eyes locked. Interestingly, everyone else went to their knees, putting their staffs on the ground, leaving only Loxy and Midori standing, locked, unable or unwilling to retreat.

A four year old girl approached. "Perhaps you didn't hear me, Midori. I asked you to stand down."

"This demon has intruded into our space," Midori said.

"This human being has an invitation to be here," the girl said.

"From your invisible friend?!" Midori said.

"If you wish to persist in that label, I would like you to consider that there are more invisible people visiting this Hall than you could ever imagine, and so if you could see what I see, you would not be able to function at your present level of understanding," the girl said. "My invisible friend has a name. Her name is Summer. I asked for help. This is the help. Stand down."

Midori locked eyes with Loxy and grudgingly retreated. She angled herself so she could see the child while keeping her guard up against the intruder.

"I was chosen to be a Guardian. I can't do my job if we have strangers straying through at random," Midori said. "Unlike you, I can't distinguish between good and bad by reading auras."

"You could have asked her," the girl said.

"Dark entities lie," Midori said.

The four year old blinked. "Fair enough. Forgive me. I keep forgetting you do not share my insight, and it was my fault for not alerting you to the potential of having a guest," she said.

"She killed two of us," Midori said.

“They’re not dead. They’re experiencing a thing called sleep paralysis,” the girl said. “Actually kind of nice, because their minds are awake and they are witnessing this, but unable to move because their bodies think they are asleep. That’s not something I have seen before.”

“Had I rendered them completely unconscious, they would not have learned that I meant them no harm,” Loxy said.

The four year old nodded. “True enough, except Rika there thought she was dead because she is seeing from outside her body. This is her first experience with out of body phenomena, and the first time to experience sleep paralysis while mind awake. Fret not, I have comforted her.”

“You’re telepathic,” Loxy observed.

“As are you,” Midori said.

“Not so much,” Loxy said.

“Then explain how you know my name,” Midori said.

“I know you from elsewhere,” Loxy said.

“You don’t know me,” Midori assured you.

“If I may,” the four year old girl said, trying to hide her amusement. “You don’t know you. Neither of you know as much as you think you do.”

“Who are you?” Loxy asked.

“Sara Lee,” the child answered. She closed her eyes and sorted questions. “Start, by allowing Rika and Truest to wake.”

Loxy closed her eyes and found the somatic switch that allowed for body brain separation during sleep, which was a protective switch that generally kept people from acting out their dreams. She turned the bodies back on and the girls rose and immediately joined rank with their sisters in arm, kneeling. Sara seemed satisfied.

“Loxy, if you’ll follow me, I will catch you up to speed,” Sara said.

“I will not tolerate you being alone with her,” Midori said.

“You and Rika may follow and listen,” Sara invited. “However, if she were a threat, the two of you alone would not be able to contain her.”

Midori was not happy to hear that, on multiple levels, not just personal. How could she protect folks if the nature of the people that came and went were practically gods and goddesses?

Loxy handed the staff back to Rika and bowed. Rika bowed in return. Midori refused to extend welcome. It was clear this Midori was on a completely different emotional level than the one she was familiar with, the one she knew as the Brain. Sara was dressed in typical, 4 year old clothes, American, upper middle class. Jeans and a nice, oversized pull over that was not quite a dress, but neither was it a t-shirt. She walked and encouraged Loxy to catch up walk beside her. Loxy identified the voice in her head as Sara's and memorized its flavor, so their world be no doubt who was communicating with her in the future.

“So, you're wanting to know why my Midori doesn't know you, and the answer is because she hasn't experienced you,” Sara said, leading them out of the 'Great Hall' into a corridor, past stores still full with merchandise. The writing on signs suggested it was a Japanese mall, and yet the basic layout reminded her again of a the Mall Jon had visited. Having never been to a mall, personally, she decided her confusion was due to sorting Jon's memories for reference. A water fountain that operated through the use of printer jets, created a sheet of water image, which almost mesmerized her into watching, but the desire to keep up with Sara and learn more won out. She spied a corridor of the mall where an array of Pod Hotels lined the wall like Honey Combs, and more guardians spied her, and more were gathering. Some of the pods on the adjacent wall to the honeycomb had more rectangular openings, and when the door closed it was illuminated from within like a lantern, complete with human silhouettes. It was not lost on Loxy that the Guardians were all female.

“This Midori is the oldest version of Midori available from Origin's time line. Your Midori has an alternate memory system and the body was a clone of the original, taken by Grays who wanted to push humanity beyond the Sol system. The original Midori was born into an island population that served a volcano god. She was selected to serve the god, probably because she was the most beautiful child in the village. The elders were predicting she would be problematic, because beauty translates into power. That seems to be true throughout human history, and the real secret behind the advancement of patriarchy was men being afraid and overcompensating for their vulnerability to the point they became domineering. Oh, sorry, side track; you will have to forgive me. I may have an old soul, but I am in four year old body. Anyway, beyond Midori's own power, her people knew she would cause territorial rift in the village as many men would fight to possess that power. Just owning a powerful woman makes a man powerful. Aren't humans interesting?! There would be jealousy, hurt feelings, and war.

What can I say? Men! She was groomed so well for her task of serving their god that she actually looked forward to jumping into the volcano to appease the volcano god to save her village. Most people don't realize that archaic myth rituals are generally socially functional. She ultimately balked at jumping and ended up being thrown in against her will, and she did die, and her soul went where souls from her culture go to, but when Origin was unpacked and redistributed throughout the physical realm, this version arrived here, updated with sufficient information to make her serviceable to this world and this population."

"She believes she is serving a god?" Loxy asked.

Sarah laughed and pushed through an exit door and out away from the mall. The immediate area around the mall was landscaped. There was no parking lot. No cars. No roads. There was a well-worn path down towards a lake. An orchard with a variety of fruit trees was visible, as well as gardens, hens with chicks, and a cute, pink rabbit stood up to sniff the air, an Easter egg behind it. It was much brighter outside in the sunlight. The sky was a crisp blue with puffy white clouds.

"Well, though she has been educated since arriving here that that's not true in the absolute sense, she frequently defaults to her original programming's understanding," Sara said. "It was necessary to leave as much of her original psyche intact for her mission. And, it's a process. On this planet, all the guardians are females that were sacrificed for the greater good of their community in some form or another. Their presence here was approved during the Great Consensus."

"Define the Great Consensus," Loxy asked.

"Every human being who was ever conceived, even many who hadn't been conceived, every thought-forms brought into existence by the collective human agreement, has been made manifest and allowed to pursue their function within the confines of the Earth Cluster," Sara said. "There are people experiencing multiplicity, and some who are simply existing in multiple places at once but ignorant of the fact they exist simultaneously elsewhere. You, for example, exist in multiple dimensions, on several planets, and even a Starship. That's the world-line where you have encountered Midori. You are aware of some of your lives, but not all of them. Midori here, she was not privy to the other lives, but now has a hint of one that includes you."

"You got all of that from my mind?" Loxy asked.

Sara shook her head, chuckling at what she perceived as ignorance about telepathy. “Not all of it. As a telepath, more, as an individual, I see what is presently available, and where my focus is aimed. I can go broader and wider, but it can sometimes be fairly difficult to sort, as some things come in pictures, some as metaphors. There is so much to sort that I have a psychic team in place to assist in regulating the information. I don’t need to be privy to everything but it comes at me like light from the stars so my team acts like filters. It’s all there, all the time, but I am able to attend where I am needed most of the time. Random things still break through, like a passing squirrel, or a blue jay, which is just a thought and pleasant. Some are not so pleasant. My primary mode of understanding is auditory. I have a telepathic range, a sphere of influence if you prefer, that encompasses the entire Local Group. I had ability before the onset of the First Ability, but due to my effective range after the Light, it was necessary for me to embrace my Indigo nature and bypass childhood in order to help the human race survive transition.”

“Wow,” Loxy said. “How do you feel about that?”

“I have a counselor, thank you,” Sara said, opting out of that conversation.

Loxy was impressed by her polite bypass. She was educated enough not to pursue a block that had nothing to do with her. Parent geese approached, waddling closer, followed by four babies, picking at the grass as they proceeded like gentle dinosaurs roaming the land.

“This Earth belongs to Panama and was provided conditional to him accepting the 40 million humans who will ultimately reside on the planet. He was allowed his caveats to their presence. With the exception of the Guardians, the 40 million are currently housed on orbiting platforms. They will gain access to the planet only after completing mandatory training, which includes life reviews and acceptance to Panama’s preference to how this planet’s society will ultimately look.”

“So, Panama is one of the dictators from Origin’s final play?” Loxy asked.

“He is not a dictator,” Sara said,

“And yet, he has his caveats for their existence,” Loxy pointed out.

“They will be a part of a new world. Many will have reasons not to be happy. In truth, humans excel at finding reasons not to be happy. But here this world’s truth; the 40 million, whether they want it or not, whether they remember it or not, are chosen by humanity for a purpose and they have agreed to participate in that purpose. Every human who earns the

privilege for being on the surface will be sovereign. Can you imagine a world of 40 million sovereign people? No kings, no rulers, no presidents. Everyone simply coexisting.”

“There is usually a hierarchy of some sort,” Loxy agreed. “I assume Panama will be in charge?”

“Out of the entire human race, Panama is the most powerful human, psychically and spiritually speaking,” Sara said. “He does not wish to rule. He only wants solitude. It was due to his sphere of influence, coupled with the ability to see and teleport that the final resolution was allowed to happen through him. Together, he and I established Consensus through the Collective Unconsciousness. Humans agreed to the Solution. Not too surprisingly, when given a choice, humans will choose life, even a cooperative life, even accept severe restrictions, when the penalty is not being able to play again. Interestingly, not all the minds participating in the Consensus were human. Dolphins, Whales, Summer’s species, various order of primates, cats, dogs, Sequoia trees... Actually more species than you might imagine participated in the Consensus. Humans were not an accidental happening, but was a pathway of nature to increase life and diversity. Humans were intended to be a pathway for love and nurture, hence no claws, no armored skin, no specialized predator teeth. We failed the first test, probably becoming more aggressive due to our perceived lack. Once the resolution was made, it was ratified by those that predate us, as we were supposed to be their pathway back into play. We were given permission to exercise our option by races much older than ours that recognize our potential. There is some discontent among those who predate us, but the Primary Five, the Gatekeepers due to seniority, have agreed to our experiment.”

“I have learned a little about this in my adventures on the Starship, but I still lack the clarity I would prefer,” Loxy said. Outside was like being at park, minus the slide and swings. There was a nature beyond the landscaped that seemed shaped for human habitation, but even that terrain seemed ‘groomed’ for human participation. There was an island in the pond, and an overflow creek, with stone bridges going over, and some bridges that were also dams, only exposed due to the present water level. There were several fountains spraying up, creating watery domes inside the pond. The island held ducks, and the trees were adorned with white birds. A white bird walked the shoreline on stilted legs, tilting its head. Turtle heads rose and fell. Squirrels ran, chasing each other playfully. But the most prominent and obvious creatures were lemurs; they were everywhere in the background! There was a nutria that took to the water as

they approached closer to the pond. At first she assumed it was a beaver, but it lack of the flat tail. "I am not sure I like the idea of these fives deciding our fates."

"You misunderstand. Humans killed themselves off. With the exception of 57, the astronauts on the International Space Station, plus Panama and the nurses and the babies he rescued from a hospital in Brazil; everyone else was dead by the time the Earth was unpacked and redistributed. The Aliens, referred to as the Council of Five, were considering picking a few choice individuals out humanity's history and going only with that, but a small pool of humans so limited the species that they were concerned we wouldn't make it through the next transition. Humanity has proven itself to be the most aggressive species ever seen in the Universe, to date. Even some of the species humanity consider dark are nowhere near as aggressive as we, and the proof in that is humanity continued to exist despite of their knowledge of us. Still, as aggressive as we are, we have an equal and opposite affinity towards love and nurture. We learn quickly. We are light years behind the others, but our quick progress has drawn the attention of the Local group's community. We grew intellectually faster than we did emotionally. And we are liked. If we can prove ourselves sufficiently capable of adapting to the reality of this new order, and I use new order correctly, not as a way of defining some secret agencies resolve for further controlling populations, we will be permitted to exist in human form."

"But what does that mean, exactly," Loxy asked. "How do we prove ourselves?"

"Every world ever imagined by humans exist. Every form of humanity imagined exists. Every non-human species that humans imagined exist. We exist in one spot in the Universe where we will interact with each other. All competing thought forms exist, and we will mix and become one thing, or we will fail," Sara said.

"What does failure mean?" Loxy asked.

"We may be allowed to participate as souls or through incarnations from within the available life streams alien species, if we so choose, but there will be no more humans," Sara explained. "Or derivative species of humans."

"Choose?" Loxy asked.

"Humans are so young they can't see 'others' and so, even on etheric and astral realms, they tend to see only other humans," Sara said. "We are like mere cats, hiding in the sand."

“You say this is not a new order, but how is Panama different?” Loxy asked. “He has surrounded himself with young girls who will be his guardians. The humans above are mandated to training in order to exist outside of their station’s prison cells.”

Sara nodded. She actually smiled, because there was a flavor attached to the idea of the guardians that she found amusing. “Panama didn’t choose the Guardians. They were chosen for him, by humanity’s unconscious disposition towards antiquated beliefs about genetic lines. Which is also ironic, because apparently throwing women to the gods turned out to have some validity in the present arrangement, and functional for the past peoples who wanted to save their genetic lines. You will find that some traditions die hard. Every race, every culture, is represented within the guardians, and Panama is expected to extend his line genetic line through them, due to his level of ability. It is part of the agreement that he comply.”

“I am sure it’s hardship for him,” Loxy said.

“I believe he is resistant,” Sara said. “That best explains his continued coma.”

“He’s in a coma?” Loxy asked.

“Here is what you need to know about Panama. He was a sickly child and died in a hospital setting. He was clinically dead for 8 minutes before being resuscitated. After that event, he never suffered from illness again, but he changed. He was socially awkward. He tended to isolate. He knew things that bothered his family, things he should not have known, but they simply chose to ignore it, and suspected brain damage during his death episode. He was secretly and remotely trained by a local Shaman, who recognized what was going on, but was blocked from physical access due to his family’s belief system. When he was fourteen, his family negotiated him working at the local hospital as a janitor, partly to repay their debt to the doctors who saved him. His peers and boss loved him because he was very good at cleaning, never complained, and was never late. He was ostracized by the regular staff because of his insight, which he quickly learned not to give freely. He never helped a patient, even when he knew the solution. Interestingly, one of the doctors, frustrated with a particular case asked a question out loud in ear shot, and Panama whispered the answer while mopping. The Doctor asked him to speak up. The answer worked. It gave the Doctor insight and not only did the treatment modality work, but the client was cured; something that shouldn’t have happened. It was chalked off as a placebo effect. Panama continued to be treated badly by the hospital regime, because they wanted to break from outdated modes in favor of treating in deference to the Western Medical

model. Still, other Doctors would sometimes bring him in the room for a consult, and during those sessions he was treated very well, like someone might treat an autistic child who could do math that no one else could do, but when it was done he went right back to being a Janitor. He was working the hospital when the first Ability, telepathy, kicked in. His insight and level of unconscious telepathic interactions resulted in spontaneous healing around him, and several deaths. It was the nurses around him that acquired the first healing talents because of his transference of information to the collective whole. His second ability was sight. He could see anywhere in his sphere of influence, which like mine, includes the entire Local Group. His third ability was the ability to teleport.

“It was necessary for him to leave Earth to save his life. He went to the space station first. He heard the pleas of the nurses protecting babies. He took them. And doing so realized, he still wasn’t safe. He left, taking the space station and everyone on board with him. His first stop was Jupiter. It was still not far enough away to suit him. He went further. He encountered aliens. He and I were suddenly able to converse, and he felt comfortable with me because I lacked agenda, other than wanting to know if my parents were okay. He also saw the place that I escaped, too, an inner world that everyone has access to, but few go that far in, and he wanted to know more. I taught what I could, and we sorted a plan to reconnect with humanity. Not only could he see everywhere, but he could see every-when! The two of us, together, could reach everyone on earth, throughout all time, all at once. And we did. The solution presented itself. And now, we are here. Most humans have no abilities. That wasn’t us blocking. That was the human agreement. They chose no abilities in favor of a select few learning ability based on maturity or understanding or societal need,” Sara said.

Sara pulled bread out of her pocket to feed the ducks. Loxy recognized her magic trick! It was the one thing all magicians could effectively do, bring food about for personal maintenance or for others. She was a magician! The geese tried to chase away the ducks, but Sara corrected them and told them there was enough for all and they could share and wait their turn. Interestingly, the parent geese listened, and it was also interesting to note that they waited for their children to have their fill before taking their turn.

“Yes,” Sara said, answering Loxy’s observation. “I was at Safe Haven long before you, and long before I decided to incarnate as Sara.”

“And you asked for me specifically, or am I simply a student of Safe Haven?” Loxy asked.

“I simply expressed my needs, and the Universe responded,” Sara said. “You seem surprised, but serendipity is part of life.”

Loxy sorted what she heard, and while sorting she noticed another species of lemur in the nearby tree. She recognized a Silky Sifaka family.

“There sure are a lot of lemurs here,” Loxy said.

“Panama especially liked Lemurs,” Sara said. “So do I. This Earth is devoted to all things Lemurs and will predominantly be home to Lemurs. This Earth is one giant Madagascar. Species of Lemur that have gone extinct, and new species that have not even been seen, will roam the earth.”

“That’s so cool,” Loxy said. “Do you need me to establish a veterinarian practice?”

“I want you to wake Panama,” Sara said.

“Oh. From his coma,” Loxy said.

“Is that a problem?” Sara asked.

“Depends on the nature of the coma,” Loxy said. “I assume, given the tech available here, you have exhausted all known medical remedies, or you wouldn’t be calling for a Safe Haven Shaman.”

“That is correct,” Sara said.

“It might help if I knew his real name,” Loxy asked.

“Jesús García,” Sara said.

“Oh, wow,” Loxy said.

“Yes. I find the irony amusing, too,” Sara said.

Chapter 6

Loxy and Jon were lying together, having made enough flowers to cover the entire bed sheet. Lester entered, hesitated, sorting whether someone had been murdered, realized the pattern, blushed, and exited back the way he came, muttering, “lock the bloody door!”

“Knock first!” Jon yelled back.

“He must have needed the restroom,” Loxy guessed.

“There’s a toilet out there,” Jon said.

“Occupied?” Loxy asked.

“Umm,” Jon mused. He could have ‘looked’ via remote viewing and confirmed but decided he didn’t need to know who or if. Lester was wanting a preference of the bedroom bathroom, or being lazy. “Maybe I should shift this bedroom back and bring the bath and toilet forwards.”

“Keera would certainly like that arrangement, like passing through a clean room before you come to the bed room,” Loxy agreed.

Jon sat up, studying the room. The room had already changed. “Something is different.”

“Oh, we updated the room,” Loxy said.

Jon blinked trying to discern what was different. He knew it was different, but he couldn’t ‘see’ the difference. The bed was the only furniture in the room, minus the floating beside table. The bed seemed larger, but maybe it was the fact the room was particularly devoid of other furniture. He noticed the wood tiles were now ceramic. The tiles were large, hexagon shaped tiles, a black, gray, and white pattern. In addition to the main bed, several single beds were available, and one bunk bed.

“It seemed reasonable. We tend to sleep together as a group anyway,” Loxy said.

“Okay,” Jon said. He wasn’t perturbed by the need for change, just sort of bothered that he knew it was different without knowing the what.

They decided to get a shower. The first few minutes of the shower had the twirling crimson flavored water before it was pure, followed by suds, then pure again. Jon dried and proceeded out to the bedroom when it dawned on him, there was no dresser. Was he going to have to print everything from scratch?

Loxy emerged, wrapped in a towel.

“You okay?” Loxy asked.

“Yeah,” Jon said, and might have passed her on his way back to the lavatory to interact with Siri through mirror interface, but he stopped as he watched Loxy access one the upgrades.

Loxy activated a tile-set, and three hexagons rose simultaneously to reveal a personal, hidden closet. Hanging clothes, drawers, shoes on a rack, hidden recessed lights, a full body size mirror, and even a place to hang her towel while she sorted what she was going to wear.

“OMG,” Jon said.

“What?” Loxy said, looking at the mirror as if something was off. “Oh, are you wanting to play again?”

“Um, the hidden closet thing is really cool,” Jon said.

“Oh,” Loxy said. “Yeah, I guess it is. So, you don’t want to play again?”

Jon tackled her and took her to the bed.

निर्मित

Again, laying within in the confines of new, old and original flower patterns, they sorted stuff. ‘Sorting stuff’ was a random list of things to do and things they experienced while separated; catching up basically. During their conversation, Jon paused, his eyes going distant. It was similar to the pause you hear in a big group conversation, where everyone recognizes the pause as something, even if they rarely understand what the something is. Loxy was familiar with this and so didn’t interrupt the process. Only after he returned, did she inquire.

“Want to talk about it?” Loxy asked, her hand rubbing his chest.

“Not sure what it is yet,” Jon said, putting his hand on her to stop the hand rubbing without asking for here to stop.

“What’s it feel like?” Loxy asked.

“Surface level? I have been hired by a fairly prominent Japanese household as a nanny for their three boys, age 3, 4, and 7,” Jon said. “I am not allowed to say the four year old is four years old.”

“Japanese don’t like the number four,” Loxy said. “They don’t even have it on the elevator as an option. Interestingly, the fourth floor still exists and a lot of magicians live for free in Japan.”

“Oh, that’s nice to know, as I might want my own place eventually,” Jon said. “I do have room board, though, and this is pretty much a full time gig, but if I got a girlfriend, well, I don’t think I should bring her home.”

“Do you speak Japanese there?” Loxy asked.

Jon mused. “No,” he finally answered. “They wanted an English speaker only. I think they hired me because I have a masters in counseling and they saw a full time nanny counselor type as being more productive than seeing a counselor once a week.”

“Makes sense, actually,” Loxy said. “Who needs the counselor?”

“The seven year old. The 3 and 4 year old probably would have needed one, too, except I have changed their tangents. The whole family as a system, though, needs counseling, based on my standards and bias, and so I have to be really careful in my assessments to make sure I am incorporating their culture into the equations,” Jon said.

Jon contorted his face unconsciously, dramatically, as was his way when he was safe to sort something in the presence of others. “I get the sense that I am there not just to be a nanny, but to somehow save the Japanese people.” He was glad he was able to say that without worry that Loxy would be like ‘how dare you elevate your ego to the point that you think you know more than a whole culture,’ because that wasn’t what Jon was trying to communicate. It wasn’t about the colonial spirit of America seeking Empire building. Japanese folks have some severe problems, like the Fukushima Nuclear Disaster being much more fucked up than anyone wants to talk about, and consequently, the ones that need to know aren’t being informed, and the progress towards fixing it isn’t being attended to. And it wasn’t like Japanese lacked heroes; Japanese men would line up and go in and sort that whole mess out by hand if that saved their people, even if it meant their individual death. What’s worse is the American and Russian governments knew how bad it is, but culturally they were equally blocked from saying or helping because the Japanese will block out of saving face, and they’re response is like, ‘fuck you, then,’ but really it’s no longer about Japan but the whole world, and all the cultural personalities playing are just adding to the disasters. Talk about monsters in the world; Japanese movies had a point!

“How so?” Loxy asked.

Jon didn’t respond, his eyes suggested he was searching.

“Is this your practical?” Loxy asked.

“No,” Jon said. The answer was out before he even mulled it over, which surprised him, but he was certain it was a valid no. “It’s too big. This is Doctor level stuff, but feels like participatory extra credit. I am not happy there, actually.”

“About being there, or about the situation?” Loxy asked.

“Who am I to tell the Japanese how to save themselves? Heck, who am I to say the world need saving?” Jon said.

“An outsider. You can see things they can’t. Conversely, it will be Japanese that save America, because they will see things you can’t,” Loxy said. “We save each other. That’s how this works.”

“Yeah,” Jon said, not convinced.

“Surface level, what would you change?” Loxy said.

“The workweek’s hours has to come down. 100 hours a week is unreasonable. It’s one of the problems the kids are having, they don’t ever see their parent and I am pretty much a parental surrogate. Anyway, the fierce competition for employment, coupled with severe rates of social isolation, is likely driving the suicide rate, which is approximately 70 people a day, most of whom are male,” Jon said, sorting some facts. “The 100 plus hour work week is resulting in poor nutrition, fewer families, which also explains the severe drop in population, more than what the standard sociological models can explain, even when coupling in that most males don’t feel they earn enough to justify procreating, which also probably explains the almost bizarrely, juvenile male behavior in anime. Take Musume Monster girls, for example. There is more sexual activity and innuendos than an episode of 3’s company. All the women want sex, and want one particular guy, and he frequently feigns disinterest and is ultimately forced or tricked.”

“Sounds like your fantasy world,” Loxy said.

“Oh, I wish,” Jon said.

“Oh, be careful what you wish for,” Loxy said.

“I have everything I want, right here, right now,” Jon said.

“That will get you laid again,” Loxy said.

“Should I repeat it?” Jon asked.

Loxy kissed him. “Tell me something you wouldn’t change about the Japanese culture.”

“They don’t hire janitors for the schools. All students and faculty are responsible for the cleaning, which means, students are less likely to make a mess because it’s something they clean

up, which is actually a huge factor in building respect for each other and the environment. I would so employ that system of respect in every school in America.”

“Yeah, that’s not going to happen,” Loxy laughed.

“Yeah, and when I open my school, the students and parents will be signing an agreement in advance and if the parents don’t accept, they can take their kids elsewhere,” Jon said, as if establishing a protocol for an existing school. Part of his brain was already imagining conflict, and presenting the responses. “And parents wonder why their kids don’t clean at home, or are inept at washing and cooking. If you don’t teach them, how can you expect them to do something?”

“I agree with you. I have noticed many American don’t know how to cook, and their rooms are messy,” Loxy said. “So many inept people, it does seem to be an American thing.”

Jon sighed, his eyes going distant. “Do you know the story Marry Poppins?”

“Yes, your Tulpa version of me actually watched it in your head a while back and it uploaded unconsciously. I only realized it when I found myself humming a song,” Loxy said.

“Oh? Which one?” Jon asked.

“I love to laugh,” Loxy said.

Jon nodded.

“You seem surprised,” Loxy said.

“I was thinking you would go for Chim Chimney,” Jon said.

“Oh, what a dreadful song,” Loxy said.

“I like that song,” Jon said.

“Do you realize how bad it was for chimney sweeps? And they were not tall, thin adults like Dick Van Dike. They were kids. Small, underweight, homeless, gutter rats that would do anything for a bite of bread. And sometimes kids got trapped in the chimney and died,” Loxy said.

“Yes, the reality of it was certainly not Disney-ish,” Jon agreed.

“Other than that, the song is pleasant in tonality and movement,” Loxy agreed. “But I love to laugh. Followed by these are a few of my favorite things.”

“That’s a different movie,” Jon said.

“Oh, yeah, you’re right,” Loxy said. “So, what connected you to Marry Poppins just now?”

“My story with these kids and their parents feels like an updated version of Marry Poppins, where a magical, American male nanny saves a Japanese family, bringing the parents back into lovingly engage their children, and each other, healing their adult wounds, and simultaneously offering a pathway of love for the whole of Japanese society to recognize its strength and weaknesses.”

“Any monsters involved?” Loxy asked.

“I’m in a Japanese movie,” Jon said. “What do you think?”

“Cool. I love Japanese Monster Movies,” Loxy said. “Do you remember that one with the Star people?”

“The ones that are shaped like stars?” Jon asked. “OMG. I haven’t thought of that one in years!”

Keera entered, was about to close the door when she noticed them. “Oh. Oh! Do you need a moment?”

“No. We were just talking about Japanese movies. Care to weigh in?” Loxy asked.

Keera pretended to consider the request while closing the door from the inside. She walked over and lowered Loxy’s closet in order to raise her own, simultaneously raising a separate hexagon tile that became a chair for her. She sat. “I am kind of partial to Machine Girl.”

“Oh, that’s fun,” Jon agreed.

“Really? Vengeful teenage girl gets a machine gun to replace the hand that was cut off is fun?” Loxy asked. “Where’s the love?”

“Japanese live action is kind of bizarre,” Keera said. “Killing people is about love.”

“I thought it was just lost in translation,” Jon said.

“Oh, clever, and yeah, not so much,” Keera assured them.

Lester entered, and due to the placement of Keera and her closet he didn’t see Jon and Loxy in bed. The moment he did, he turned to face away.

“Are you two ever going to get up?” he demanded.

“It is my room,” Jon said.

“I need something from my closet,” he insisted.

“Something you can’t magically make outside?” Jon asked.

“How long are you two going to keep up this pretend animosity?” Keera asked.

“Pretend?” Jon and Lester both said.

“I want access to my closet,” Lester said.

“No one but you is stopping you from accessing your closet, Lester,” Loxy said.

“Does everyone know about the closets but me?” Jon asked.

“Funny how that works, eh?” Loxy asked.

Lester tapped his closet with his cane and it rose from the ground. He swapped out canes.

“Really? That’s all you wanted?” Jon asked.

“I’m going for a walk,” Lester said. “Too many people around here.”

“Why are we talking about Japanese movies?” Keera asked.

“Jon is a nanny for a family in Japan, which he’s comparing to Marry Poppins,” Loxy said.

Lester laughed. Jon was perturbed and didn’t hide it.

“What, don’t think I can take care of three children?” Jon asked.

“I don’t know of any Japanese musicals,” Lester said.

“Watch more films,” Jon said.

“Trust me. Fill a movie with K-pop girls, it will hold my attention,” Lester said.

“That’s new,” Loxy said.

“Nope. You can’t save sexual power for transmutation without stimulation, and since I have been forced to start over from scratch, expect to hear a great deal of Kpop in your future,” Lester said.

“Does it have to be K-pop?” Keera asked. “We have dancing girls in school uniforms way before Britney got hit one more time and Korea starting copying us.”

“Yeah, that would work, too. Just has to be females,” Lester said. Then he pointed his cane. “Adults! None of that ambiguous anime stuff where you’re not sure it’s actually a child or a teen. That’s just weird.”

“I wouldn’t be too judgmental,” Keera said. “The reason anime translates so well into the American and Chinese arena is due to their lack of legitimate pathways for teenagers to discuss and process healthy sexual activity. Adults can’t even discuss the subject without extreme condition and contextualized rituals, and even most parents opt their kids out of sex education, because they don’t think the school or state should be discussing the matter. And since no one is talking about relationships or families, academically or at home, because everyone assumes it is self-evident and obvious, well, the only place left for self-discovery is television, movies, and on

the streets, which means there is a serious increased risk of encountering real monsters for those brave enough to explore beyond the barriers that no one is discussing!”

“Interesting,” Loxy said. “We were just kind of discussing that, off topic, and under the radar.”

“I don’t want to know about what you and Jon speak about off the radar or on the radar. The only thing I need to know is that you’re changing the sheets when you’re done,” Lester said. “That’s just absolutely disgusting.”

“We were thinking of flowering your bed next, so we can have matching sheets,” Jon said.

“I will be sleeping outside tonight,” Lester said, departing.

“Maybe we should get another shower and be productive,” Jon said.

“Oh, this was productive!” Loxy said. “Did you know orgasm help relieve menstrual pains?”

“I read that. In Cosmo, I think,” Jon said.

“You read Cosmo?” Keera asked.

“Mostly, I just jack off to the pictures, however, I always read the sex articles, and ‘orgasms helping monthly visitor’ articles gets published about twice a year, as if women forget, or maybe they’re working in new customers, or educating men. I suspect more men read Cosmo than women.”

“Yay you, for admitting all of that,” Loxy said.

“It’s not like I can hide that from you, Loxy. I mean, you have access to all of that,” Jon said.

“Cosmopolitan, Petticoat, Teen, Seventeen, Vogue, Cheerleader Uniform, Ball Room clothing, the Sears catalogue,” Loxy listed.

“Oh, Sears! I knew sears when Phoebe Cates was in it,” Jon said, time traveling.

“She was really young then,” Loxy said.

“I was really young then!” Jon said.

“You were young?!” Keera and Loxy said together.

“Cute. I am going to go get a shower now,” Jon said.

Loxy pulled him back. “We’re not going to shower together?” Loxy asked.

“I think I need a cold shower,” Jon said.

“How many showers have you two had?” Keera asked.

“What, three now?” Loxy asked.

“I am really not counting the showers,” Jon said.

“I know something preferable to a cold shower,” Loxy suggested.

“I am listening,” Jon said.

“Can I play?” Keera asked.

“You want to?” Loxy asked, kind of surprised. Waving towards the amount of blood.

“Machine girl, lots of blood,” Jon said. “And she’s a nurse, biologist. And, well, she’s a female.”

“All good points, but some women get freaked out,” Loxy said.

“Have you ever known me to be squeamish about blood or sex?” Keera said. “Besides, afterwards, we can all get a shower together.”

Chapter 7

Jon found himself standing on a very flat, grassy plain. The grass was about waist high, and a light breeze caused the blades to dance under his hand. It was not wheat, but the ends of the grass broke into segmented modules which suggested it was edible. He ran his hand across one, first feeling the tiny nodules like beads, then breaking them free and dropping them to the earth. There was a discernable breeze moving the grass to and fro in gentle waves. He thought he heard something rustling in the grass, perhaps a predator, but no matter when he turned, he saw only grass for as far as eye could see. It was a very green world, and it seemed to call for an equally blue sky, but the sky was not blue. Some of it was black without stars. Most of it was banded zones of pastels, and he immediately knew he was staring at a gas giant. He had seen sufficient photos to know this was not Jupiter or Saturn. This was new, something from outside his experience range.

His awareness went to high alert, as if he had stepped into a club that was primarily nonwhite folks. He felt embarrassed and apprehensive, even though white folks weren't barred per se, it just felt as if he just didn't belong. His first thought was, "am I dreaming." The dream checks came back as null. That didn't mean he wasn't dreaming, but rather, it was very unlikely he was dreaming, but the fact that this was peculiar and non sequitur in terms of stream of consciousness, he wanted to default to that explanation. He tried to recall his last waking memory. He remembered being locked in Timothy's body. That, too, was non sequitur and felt dream like. There was a space between that he couldn't access.

What did he know? There was a gas giant. There was the shadow line that suggested more planet beyond the scope of the light reflecting from the planet, with occasional lightning burst to reinforce the idea that there was more planet than could be seen. There was hint of another moon, a brilliant point of light. There was evidence of a patch of space, but again, no stars were visible. As his brain took this in, it did unconscious math and produced the obvious platform explanation: 'we are on a moon, orbiting a gas giant.'

"Nice!" Jon said, temporarily forgetting his feelings of being an intruder upon a world he had no business being in.

Jon was smacked on the back of the head so hard that he was temporarily blinded. When he could see again, he found himself partially bound, from ankles to thigh, in cocoon like web.

His wrists bound together. The creature that had bound him was present, and weighing him down. Two of her hands pinned his hands above his head. Another set of hands held his face, pinching his cheek and pursing his mouth open. There was another set on his waist, and the other two on the ground. She was rocking her hips back and forth gently. From nearly the torso up, she was human, female, but from waist down, it was exaggerated spider features. He had an emotional, visceral reaction to the back, 'chitinous' exoskeleton, which triggered a 'freeze' option of the 'fight or flight' response and his eyes went wide. Juxtaposed with the 'fright' was the human aspect, which seemed exaggeratedly human female, and was so alluring he wanted nothing more than to pursue a dalliance. He wanted her to smother him with heavy swaying breasts. He seemed suddenly quite content with the fact he was likely to die, and so, death by breast seemed reasonable. He was likely to be eaten in the very traditional sense of the word. Resisting the monster's weight and the binding increased his arousal response. He was almost aroused enough that he might come even if she started eating him now. And even if the monster was only considering a forced romantic session, he was likely to be food afterwards, since spiders don't eat grass. Not all spiders ate their mates, though, but what were the odds that he was ambushed by a spider that didn't eat the mate after 'eating' the mate?

Her eyes were intense, and her bosom was warm against him when she allowed it to dip and brush back and forth against his exposed chest, pushing right up against his chin and flattening out over his mouth. The grass towered around them so that they might as well have been in a secluded patch all of their own. His pants were visible, discarded and weighing down the grass, and his erection was unfolding in an uncomfortable way, considering the weight of the spider.

"You are not Timothy," she said, lifting her backside up. The erection popped into its normal, comfortable position, and she settled back down on it, squishing it between her abdomen and his body

"Oh," Jon said, both with understanding and relief. Yeah, that explained a lot. "OMG. Rachnera, I presume."

"Umph," she said, not impressed. Her statement neither confirmed nor denied Jon's suspicion, but he was confident he was being raped by who he suspected. "Are you one of Timothy's minions, or a buyer?"

"Buyer?" Jon asked.

“Minion it is, then,” Rachnera said.

“I am not a friend of Timothy, nor am I buying anything,” Jon said. And then, as an afterthought, he added. “What do the buyers buy?”

“Us. Timothy catches us, uses us, and when he is finishes with us, he sells us to the highest bidder,” Racnera said. She wiggled, pushing herself more firmly against him. It was not unpleasant. “From where I come from, we catch human males, not the other way around. So, it seems only fitting I should use you before killing you.”

“I just said I am not a minion,” Jon said.

“Exactly!” Rachnera said. “Which means, you’re are one.”

“How does that follow?” Jon said.

“Timothy is a lying, creepy, retard. It therefore follows that all of his minions will be more retarded, more dishonest, and creepier, and the way you keep staring at my boobs only confirms the creepier part...”

“In my defense, they’re fairly large and when squashed against me, well, nice,” Jon said.

“Oh, well, thank you. Lucky for you, I do not practice ageism, and since you’re available, and I have a hunger,” Rachnera said.

“If you were to untie me and promise not to kill me, I would willingly submit to whatever play you like,” Jon said.

“Interesting proposal,” Rachnera said, mulling it over. “I do sense a growing willingness, but why untie you when I can just take what I want without threat to you tricking me or escaping?”

“There is that,” Jon said. “However, you will never learn if I am agreeable, and learn trust, without allowing for some risk.”

“You speak like a minion,” Rachnera said.

Rachnera covered his mouth with one of her hands, so he wouldn’t speak, actually pushed her fingers into his mouth. She bobbed her back end, and the hardened cock was now sufficiently hard to push through the available opening. Warm, viscous fluid ran down his cock. She settled with an outrageous sigh, staring up. The noises she made, both from her vocal cords and also from the rubbing of her own body parts, was mysteriously weird and somehow, alien sexy. As a magician, Jon was privy to extra sensory perception, and when she came he saw an explosion of lights, and this pushed him through his own threshold and into an orgasmic bliss

that filled him with warmth. She settled comfortably on him, almost too endearingly familiar, considering they had just met. It was sort of like the love of a child for a new stuffed toy animal. Instant rapport and fondness, only, Jon was more than just a stuffed toy, and the new intimacy was probably just too much oxytocin.

The noise from their mingling summoned another. A female centaur appeared.

“Oh, are you the one making all that noise? Oh! Where did you find that?” asked Centorea.

“I caught it, it belongs to me,” Rachnera said.

“We agreed to share everything we find here,” Centorea said.

“This is different. Mine!” Rachnera said.

“Hand him over,” Centorea said.

“No,” Rachnera said. “He’s still hard and inside me and feels so...”

Miia arrived. “What’s still hard...Oh. OH! I want a turn.”

Suu arrived. “A turn with what?” she asked. “Oh!” And she fell on Jon, sucking the sweat off his brow. “OMG, he taste like...”

“Coffee, I know, right!” Racnera said.

A quarrel ensued over ownership. It was physical conflict, and Rachnera was knocked off of Jon as the battle intensified, at which point, Rachnera agreed to share, not because she was particularly losing the battle, but because while she and Centorea and Miia were fighting, Suu had taken advantage of the distraction and assumed complete control and was laughing hysterically as she absorbed all the wetness, simultaneously bouncing and tightening her legs as she straddled the man. That, and Rachnera wasn’t going to use him while he was all covered with slime, and so if they wanted sloppy thirds, let them have him.

When Suu finished, she seemed completely passive and sedate, laying there, stroking him with tentacles, and cooing. Jon seemed equally sedate, as if he might fall asleep. Centorea picked Jon up and tossed him onto her back. She carried him back to their base camp, her friends keeping up with her. Miia, was mostly reptilian, from the waist down snake, kept up closest to Centorea, petting Jon’s head. Her red hair was wild, as if it hadn’t been brushed in a good while. In fact, except for Suu, they appeared to have had minimal grooming.

Base camp included two structures. One was small hut comprised of web, grass, and bamboo. It had been assembled next to a monolithic structure that Jon was unable to identify. He

was positioned near a campfire, where the girls gathered. They talked amongst themselves without including Jon, and through their normal activities, they revealed several features of the monolith. One side dispensed frozen cubes they were calling rice/fish. They warmed this item over the fire and ended up with a pudding that tasted pretty much like rice/fish that had the consistency of baby food with grit. Also, the monolith offered a toilet and a lavatory.

When the monster girls finished eating, they force fed Jon one of the cubes after minimally unthawing it.

“OMG, that’s disgusting,” Jon complained.

Centorea tasted it. “Taste alright to me.”

“Well, I don’t know how to respond to…” Jon said, as another spoon full was shoved into his mouth. He was blocked from spitting it out, and his nose pinched so he was forced to swallow. “Please, no more.”

“If you’re going to serve us, you must maintain a nutritious diet of rice and fish,” Miia said.

“Besides, that’s really all there around here to eat,” Racnera said.

“Until recently,” Centorea said, chuckling.

Suu laughed. “I want more,” she said.

“I am next,” Centorea said.

“Um, if you want something different, there’s food in my pocket,” Jon offered.

The girls looked at each other and laughed.

“Bet you say that to all the girls,” Miia said.

“No. Well, okay, maybe. But, actually, what I am revealing is that I am magician,” Jon said.

The girls laughed again. Suu didn’t so much laugh as smiled because her friends were laughing. She seemed more interested in the possibility of magic.

“Like pulling rabbits out of a hat magician?” Suu said.

“Um, no, more advanced,” Jon said.

“I like rabbits,” Suu said.

“Yeah, actually, rabbit taste pretty good,” Miia said.

“No eat rabbit. Pet rabbit,” Suu said.

“We should give her some more water,” Centorea said.

Rachnera fetched it for her friend.

“Any chance you might untie me?” Jon asked.

They laughed. They collectively agreed he was a comedian and not a magician.

“It would be easier to keep me clean if you allow me to attend to my own toilet,” Jon said.

That actually made sense and since they were not bad folks, just monsters from a different cultural paradigm, they felt compelled to consider. There were several paradigms in play, actually, through which they had to filter information through. One was the culture they were born into as defined by their fictional world, another was the world they moved to in that world, living in the greater Japan human world, and in that particular world, the human monster coexisting world with its own rules and developing culture, their group culture of living with each other, their individual monster group nature, which could be a culture, whatever culture vectors Timothy impressed upon them on bring thing here, manifesting them as Tulpas in this wonderland, and the wonderland’s influence, and now, Jon’s cultural influence on them. And though culturally he was having an effect, not just his primarily American culture, but also his magical culture, and definitely his male culture. And most of these ‘cultures’ were mixing secretly, sub-contextually, and working itself out through the unconscious. They didn’t have to be addressed directly to be provoked, but Jon was fairly sure if he reminded them of their culture not to harm humans, or their adopted Japanese not to kidnap men, and to show respect for others, he certainly believed they would behave differently. Provided Timothy hadn’t completely fucked them over to the point they were as good as the kids in that book ‘Lord of Flies.’ If there is a female, nurturing nature, which Jon didn’t wholly ascribe to, or there would be more good mothers by definition, he definitely believed he could win their friendship. They seemed to consider a bit too long, not speaking, looking at each other, and the longer they went, the less sure Jon felt about his situation. Rachnera handed Suu a glass of water, which she ‘downed’ fairly quickly.

“It would make things easier for me if he wasn’t tied,” Centorea said.

“He just admitted to be a magician,” Rachnera said. “We should just conclude our business with him and kill him.”

Suu push a tentacle into the cup, trying to catch every last drop from the cup, using a finger to lick the sides of the cup. “We’re not going to kill him,” she said. She sounded

significantly different, and given what Jon knew about her from the series that suggested the water she was drinking was rather pure. Out of the series, Suu was Jon's favorite. Miia was second. Rachnera scared him and drew him in at the same time. He was rather indifferent about Centorea, except for the curiosity about logistics. Then he realized, oh, this is my connection with Timothy. They wouldn't be here if not for his own peculiar interest in them.

Miia raised an eyebrow. "We're not?"

"I like him," Suu said. "He is not Timothy. He is not buyer. He will protect us."

"What math are you using to arrive at that?" Centorea asked. "One, he is male, and human males, when not governed by a group of females, tend to be controlling and abusive."

Suu shrugged. "He is nice. He taste like coffee. Besides, there is four of us, one of him, and nowhere to go but in, and if he goes in then clearly he is a friend of Timothy and it would be in our best interest to let him go, rather than suffer an attack by Timothy for killing him. Timothy always wins."

The entire party became pretty sullen.

"I haven't had a turn with him yet," Miia said. "I was so looking forward coiling and squeezing."

"If you let me go, I promise not to harm any of you, and, I am not opposed to coiling and squeezing, provided you will recognize a safe word and ease up if I am hurting," Jon said.

"Really?" Miia asked, perking up.

"Don't be suckered in, Miia. That's too good to be true. What is your purpose here?" Rachnera asked.

"I don't fully understand that, yet. My top goal, for certain, is to get home," Jon said. "But so there is no misunderstanding, I will be upfront with you that one of my mission objectives is to find a way to save Timothy."

"We should kill him now," Rachnera said.

"No," Suu said. "That was bravery to admit that and I want to understand it."

"There is nothing to understand," Rachnera argued, slapping the ground with several feet. "Timothy is awful! How can anyone want to save him?!"

"That is so weird that I too want to hear more," Centorea said.

"Fine. Explain yourself, human," Rachnera said, jabbing the fire with a bamboo stick.

“It is my belief that there is no death. Timothy created this place, called a wonderland, using dark magic. If I can understand this world, change it from a dark place to a place of light and love, then maybe Timothy himself can change,” Jon said.

“Timothy must die,” Rachnera said. “I intend to kill him, personally.”

Jon nodded. “I can only imagine how much anger you hold. I have no clue what you or your friends have suffered. As a free being to another free being, I cannot tell you what to do. I can only advise that this will not erase your grievances and might add weight to your own soul.”

“How dare you speak of my soul. He deserves to die. You don’t know what he’s done to us, to the countless others,” Rachnera said, coming at him with sharpened, smoking end of a bamboo. She put it against his neck.

“Rachnera,” Suu said, standing. “This man has not harmed us.”

There was silence. Rachnera was shaking, fierce eyes flamed. Her friends were all standing, on the far side of the fire, afraid if they intervened or drew closer, the human would be harmed. Firelight reflected in their eyes. Miia was actually tearful. Suu drank the tear with a tentacle.

“Rachnera, for now, I must vote with Suu,” Miia said.

A drop of blood rolled down Jon’s neck.

“Let him live,” Centorea said.

Rachnera howled, turned, and walked away from the group, crying. Miia used the discarded bamboo to cut the webbed bondage, allowing Jon to unwind himself. He stood, first securing his clothing back, and then massaged his wrists. The three at the fire waited, as if anticipating a retaliatory strike. He brought his hands together and bowed, respectfully, expressing gratitude for his freedom.

“May I use the restroom?” Jon asked.

Miia showed him how to use the facility, which was an open, public toilet, exposed to the outside. When he finished, he washed his hands. Suu approached him, very interested in the smell of water.

“Would you give me a moment to speak with Rachnera?” Jon asked the three of them.

They silently gave consent. Jon approached Rachnera slowly, making sure she was aware of his presence so as not to frighten her. She shuffled, turning away from him, and stepping a little bit further away.

“Would you speak with me?” Jon asked.

“I am ashamed,” Rachnera said.

“Because?” Jon asked.

Rachnera turned to him, almost frighteningly aggressive. Jon did not flinch.

“How can you not know?” Rachnera said.

“I could speculate, if you like, but it’s always better to allow someone to speak their peace,” Jon said.

“You can’t be that good,” Rachnera said.

“Because, if I am that good that makes your perceived offense that much worse?” Jon asked.

Rachnera wailed, tears flying. She threw the human portion part of her body on the ground and begged forgiveness. Jon sat on the ground, pulling her head to his shoulder, putting his arms around her.

“You think you know who you are,” Jon said, stroking her hair, which he fangled and difficult to draw his fingers through, and would stop and start over, trying not to cause her pain. “That you come from a mysterious world, perhaps a dark place, but for sure, you ended up in a very dark place, manipulated by a very lost soul, and you are experiencing trajectories. Does that relieve us of responsibility for our choices? No. But as far as I am concerned, you and I are okay. There is no grievance here. No debt.”

“Which just makes me all the more indebted,” Rachnera said.

“No, it makes you freer,” Jon said. “But hopefully sufficiently free to experience and express love in a more profound way than you have previously. Let us return to the fire. Let us return to your friends.”

Rachnera rose and Jon stood, and together they walked back to the fire, hand in hand. The sky was almost all dark, except for lightening shooting across the dark side of the planet, and the one moon that this moon chased.

Jon sat down at the fire. He removed his flask from his pocket and took a sip. For him, it was just water. Great water. Suu’s attention escalated.

“Just a sip, and then pass it,” Jon insisted.

Suu agreed. For her, it was likely the same water Jon drew, but unless someone revealed what the Universe provided, no one would know. A sparkle in her eye and significant change in

aura suggested she had drawn extremely deep water, as a deep love and respect for all of the Universe emanated from her. Just that sipped made her a force to contend with. Centorea sniffed, not smelling anything, but almost suspected the contents were drugged, based on Suu's reaction. She sipped, then took a hardy drink, deciding if it was poison, it the best poison she had had in a long time. She was floored, having missed the taste of her favorite soda, and mentioned how amazing the flavor was, as if it was freshly squeezed and carbonated. Miia grabbed the flask and drank, finding a nice sip of wine. She protested that it wasn't soda, good but not Soda. Jon explained everyone gets what they need. Rachnera didn't disclose what she got, but it satisfied her immensely. Jon next passed a bag of pecans that he drew from his pocket.

“Alright, ladies. I need you to educate me. Tell me everything you know about this world.”

निर्मित

The information about how they each came to be here didn't help, but seemed consistent between the three of them. They woke up, unable to move, and Timothy was doing perverse things to them. As a relatively inexperienced magician and Tulpamancer, he believed some of what they were describing was simply the process of 'Forcing,' or the creating process. Some of it was definitely just Timothy satisfying his sexual urges. Jon was fairly sure they were indeed Tulpa's, but they believed they were the characters that they thought they were and he saw no need to disillusion them at this point. They seemed to have their fictional, historical memories intact, but as Jon wasn't a 'dedicated' fan, he could not be completely sure, and so was unable to discern anachronisms, much less discrepancies in cannon. Had they been Star Trek characters, he would have immediately recognized divergence.

“Our habitat is pretty much what you see. We live in a grassy world under a dome and nothing outside the dome besides ice,” Centorea said. “The diameter of the dome floor is one kilometer across the base, and this station is at the center.”

“And then there is the entrance to the tunnel,” Miia said.

“Tunnel?” Jon asked. “Where does it go?”

“We were brought through the tunnel to here,” Rachnera said.

“Can I see the tunnel?”

“No,” they all said in unison. “It makes us sick to even think to go near it.”

“If we enter it, we will die,” Suu said.

“I may need to explore there,” Jon said.

“If Timothy catches you exploring, he will kill you,” Miia said.

Jon mused about this. “I don’t think he will be coming back.”

The girls perked up. “Really?”

“I don’t know this for sure, but I think as long as I am here, he can’t come back here,” Jon said. Previously, he was in Timothy’s body. Right before he came here, he felt as if he had been switched out, and so his suspicion was that he was here and Timothy was there. Based on his knowledge of Timothy, he held absolutely no skill in traveling or sustaining himself in a Wonderland, and if it hadn’t been for Fribourg’s switching with him, he would have had no staying power in any of the Universes he may have created. That said, even locked in his body, Timothy had the potential for being seriously dangerous with his intent and accidental thoughts. If Jon thought about it really hard, he could discern a path back to the body, but he didn’t want to test it or alert Timothy to his presence here. “I may be wrong, but that feels true. At least for the moment. And I need to know as much as I can if I am going to make any positive, lasting changes, or at the least be ready to confront him.”

“Wait, if he isn’t here in charge, does that mean the food will stop dispensing?” Rachnera asked.

“I don’t know,” Jon said.

Jon returned to the monolithic structure. It was thin and offered no apparent seams that might allow for examining the inner workings. He tried to explore it telepathically, touching it the way Spock might, and then tried seeing inside by remote viewing, but the images he got didn’t make sense.

“You’re weird,” Suu said.

“Thank you,” Jon said, walking around the monolith until completing a circle. “Has it ever ran out of food?”

“We have never not had food,” Centorea said. “The grass is eatable, too, at least, I like it, but the rice/fish blocks seem more nutritious.”

Jon found the sharp bamboo that Rachnera had used to threaten him. He began digging at the base of the monolith, first peeling up the grass roots, and then digging deeper. The girls

gathered around, curious. He uncovered an earthworm. They screamed. Because they screamed, he assumed it was dangerous and backed away from his excavation. He then frowned.

“Really?” Jon asked them.

The monster girls agreed they didn’t like worms.

Jon returned to digging. The girls watched. At some point, the dirt became too thick to work with the bamboo. His hands became dirty and he got a blister from his effort. He even broke a nail and cut his hand on the bamboo. Suu tried to keep the perspiration of his forehead, and kept a tentacle on the back of his neck. He reached into his pocket and pulled out a knife. The girls were impressed.

“By the knife?” Jon asked.

“What else do you have in there?” Miia asked, her hands going into his coat pocket before he could protest. She became sullen. It was just an empty pocket, with a very clear boundary, which was insufficient to explain the presence of the knife.

“It’s not what’s in the pocket I want,” Centorea said.

Jon looked up at her, exhausted from his effort. “Uh?”

“There are better things to be doing than digging a hole,” Centorea said. “Like maybe filling a hole.”

“You did promise some coiling and squeezing time,” Miia reminded him.

“I always keep my promise,” Jon said. “Let me finish this, please.”

“Men!” Miia said. “They say they all they want is sex, but when offered, they rarely engage.”

“Yeah, that’s weird. And I don’t know who ‘they’ are, but I assure you of this, all I want is sex, most of the time, and if you keep offering, I will take it,” Jon said, as he stabbed the knife into the earth. He hit something hard.

“Take me now,” Miia said.

“Hang on, I think I found something,” Jon said.

The girls gathered close again, watching for the worm which Jon had delicately placed aside to prevent injury. They were impressed, both by his gentleness, and his magical ability to attend to worms, even touch them.

The hole was about three feet deep. He cleared as much as the dirt off the hard spot as he could, but still couldn’t determine what he had hit. Even bringing a lighter out and holding it in

the hole, he couldn't really see what it was. It was hard and he guessed it was metal. He leaned his back against the monolith, closed his eyes, and tried to follow the floor with his intuitive mind. It felt solid for the entire length of the dome. Outside the dome, and below the dome, all he got was the impression of white and cold. He stood up, washed his hands, and before he could dry them on his coat, Suu began licking. The wounds, the cut and the blisters, healed under her attention.

"Wow. I didn't know you could do that," Jon said.

"Me neither," Suu said.

"Has she ever healed any of you before?" Jon asked.

"No, that's new," Miia said.

"What does it mean?" Rachnera asked.

"Must be something in the water she drank from the flask," Centorea surmised.

"Well, let's not question a gift horse," Jon said, hugging Suu. "It's not crucial to understand the why. Let's walk."

"No, I want to understand. You told me earlier, I am not who I think I am, and Suu just manifested an ability we don't remember her having, and so, there is something going on here," Rachnera said.

Jon considered the problem. Tulpa's could be initially unstable, especially when confronted with conflicting information. Even with the most ideal situations, they could deviate wildly from their original design. Just the simple interaction with them alone could have provided sufficient tangential vectors that they were subject to change. What would happen if he just simply told them the truth?

Miia and Centorea crossed their arms in front of their chests, which flattened them. The gesture suggested they were not pleased with him, but the seeing the breast completely distracted him from his quandary.

"You should probably just tell us," Miia said.

Being distracted from the active conscious deliberation allowed for the unconscious to push an answer. Apparently, he was going to tell the truth, as he understood it, and it was out before he could truly process the ramifications. "I think your histories are false memories and you are not who you think you are," Jon said, straight way, not mincing words.

"Our memories are our memories," Centorea said.

“How else could it be?” Miia agreed. “Our memories define who we are?”

“Memories do provide scaffolding to support our basic premises, but that is not who we ultimately are. There is always something more profound hidden deeper, under all the suspected structures.”

“I am who I am,” Rachnera said.

“There is no way to dispute that, and I can accept that as a standalone premise which allows for continuity and consistency in our continued dialogue, and so telling you what I believe to be true is not necessary for our continued co-existence, which is why I was reluctant to engage in this conversation,” Jon said.

“Uh?” Miia, Centorea, and Rachnera said.

“That makes perfect sense,” Suu said. “I like you. You taste like coffee.”

“I am Groot,” Jon said.

Suu snorted a laugh.

“What did he say?” Miia asked.

“He ‘groks’ us,” Suu said.

“What?” Centorea asked.

“Is there something in his sweat that makes you understand him?” Rachnera asked.

“Not his sweat,” Suu offered

“Maybe we all should taste him,” Centorea said.

“It will take a lot of licks to catch up to the number of Suu licks,” Miia said.

“We really should try to keep off that subject,” Jon said.

“Why? Does it bother you?” Centorea said.

“No, it arouses him,” Rachnera said.

“Or, let’s talk about...” Jon tried to side step the orgy.

“Where we came from is his fiction,” Suu said.

“What?” her three companions asked.

Jon considered just doing the orgy as a way of avoiding this conversation. It seemed like that would be less work.

“We’re not real,” Suu said.

“We are very real, Suu!” Miia protested.

“Let’s make sure we understand this. You are very real. You exist. You have personality and form and you are as real as I am,” Jon said. “The reality of you is not in any way questioned. But in the world I live in, you are considered a manga, a version of Japanese Anime, characters from an established series. How divergent are you from that history? That will be dependent on how obsessive Timothy was to details, any subtexts he programmed into you, and what changes you yourselves made, along with my influence. This may not be who you are, but you have tremendous, untapped ability to be who you want to be.”

“So, we could cease being who we are?” Centorea asked.

“No, only who we think we are,” Suu said.

“Everybody changes. Even humans. Change is inevitable in all life forms, regardless of their origin,” Jon said. “I am motivated in blocking you from changing cause I like who you are, or who I think you are, but I accept you have choice here. You may choose preferential growth paradigms and may evolve as you please. That is healthy. Sociologically speaking, the line of fiction that marks your origin unconsciously represents how disenfranchised, alienated, the Japanese male is from society. Female are not just alien, but they are monsters determined to ensnare, consume, and discard.”

“You’re turning me on,” Miia said.

“Shh, he is saying something important,” Rachnera said.

Suu seemed concerned by his sudden silence, and used a tentacle to taste for changes in his perspiration. “Did we hurt feelings?” she asked.

“Um, no, no,” Jon said. “I was just thinking. Actually, exploring a factoid, but it’s like wikipedia, and so I am not sure if it’s a useable memory.”

“Wicked pedia?” Centorea asked. “An evil child?”

“Yeah, um, no, but close enough,” Jon said. “Apparently, before the ‘Interspecies Cultural Exchange Act’ the Liminals sustained their population by kidnapping men and holding them hostage for procreation. Given the number of disenfranchised men, I am surprised that kidnapping was necessary at all. If given a choice between being a sex slave and working a hundred hour work week, I would choice slavery every time. Without any effort, all you had to do was take up residence on the fourth floor of any building, hang a sign free sex, and you would have had a line of men at your door, and probably changed the Japanese cultural abhorrence of the number four, or solidified it. Depends on how many men don’t return from the fourth floor.”

“Do you always speak so weirdly?” Rachnera said. “I hardly understood anything you just said.”

“I understood just fine. You can be my slave,” Miia said.

“I caught him,” Rachnera said.

“So? You don’t own him,” Miia said.

“Finders keepers,” Rachnera said.

“We’ve already established he is a free man,” Centorea said.

“He just said he wants to volunteer to be a sex slave,” Rachnera said. “I intend to hold him to that.”

“OMG,” Jon said, exasperated.

Suu drew a tentacle across his forehead again. “I like the way you taste,” she said. Her smile was intoxicating.

“Ladies, focus. We need to walk. I need to see the wall of this habitat,” Jon said.

“You could ride me,” Centorea said. “I could have us there in no time.”

“It’s a trap,” Miia said. “You do that, and you automatically become her Master.”

“So?” Centorea said. “Rachnera and Suu had their turns and I want my turn.”

“Well, I haven’t had my turn, either, and he promised me I could be next,” Miia said.

“He didn’t promise you could be next, he just promised you a turn,” Centorea said.

“Why the sudden urgency?” Miia asked. “Are you ovalating?”

“Maybe? And you?” Centorea said.

“I am just horny and there is an available, agreeable male, even if he is a bit older than my preferred ideal,” Miia said.

“He is surprisingly good for older. I may need to re-evaluate our stereotypes of older men,” Rachnera said.

“Well, I don’t care about age. I just know he is the only nice male we’ve seen since waking up here, and, well, it’s clear, we take him to the wall, he is going to leave us,” Centorea said.

“You’re going to leave us here?” Rachnera asked. “After what we shared? After what Suu shared? Just abandon us here to Timothy’s rule? To be tortured at best, traded off at worse?”

Jon was silent.

“He is going to leave us,” Miia said.

“I told you we should have kept him tied up,” Rachnera said.

“Ladies, it is possible your affection for me is situational,” Jon said.

“Oh, how dare you sully what we have,” Rachnera said.

“I am sad,” Suu said.

“Now, hold on just a minute,” Jon said. “I don’t understand the full situation. I don’t know what I can do for you, or if I can even take you with me when I go. In order to understand my limitations, I have to understand the world. I have to explore. I invite you to travel with me as far as you can. When we reach the boundary of what you can do, we will hold a new conversation. I promise you this, if it is in my power for you to travel with me, to return to my world, I will take you all with me.”

The four of them pounced, giving him so much sudden affection that the walk to the far end of the habitat was placed on hold in favor of the ensuing orgy.

Chapter 8

The Flight Deck of a Quality Aircraft was a fairly typical cockpit, standard flight controls in terms of sticks and levers, though modern instrument panels and display screens were prominent, and lots of lovely illuminated buttons and soft, recessed, hidden lighting during night flights, or any parts of the flight that passed through space. There was the Captain's seat, the copilot's seat, the Engineer's seat, and the Specialist's seat. Jon was in the Captain's chair reading over the check list. Loxy was in co-pilot's seat, confirming instrument tests, redundancy systems, fuel, electric, and mechanical settings, such as toggle positions and flap positions. When they finished their list, Loxy went over the secondary list with the Engineer. Tesla held the Engineer's position and he confirmed auxiliary engine's status, which was presently operational and supply the appropriate levels of power, discussed engines status, structural integrity, and finally went over the circuit breaker board that was directly behind him and behind the Captain's chair, requiring the 'Specialist,' to help confirm, though in this instance, the Specialist wasn't too concerned about whether the circuits buttons were proper engaged. That was what the small light beside the button was for, right? The Engineer's chair and the Specialist's chair both had a greater range of rotation than the Captain's and co-pilot's chair.

The Specialist today was Carl Jung. One might wonder why one required a psychiatrist, most renowned for his pioneering work through the unconscious, or more, the collective unconscious, on a Quality Air Flight. From a very practical standpoint, Quality Air says there will be a specialist, therefore there is a specialist. That sufficiently resolved the matter for Jon. Loxy never questioned it, but would certainly provide a mystical, logical response to Jung's presence. Several of Jung's terminal display seemed to be Rorschach tests, and were unreadable by anyone other than him. Then again, one could argue no one could 'read' such a screen, but rather, as a projective test, all meaning was subjectively imbued by the viewer.

"Doctor Jung?" Jon asked.

"Everything is within parameters," Jung said. "I think you would say fair to middling."

"So the weather is fine from here to Midland Odessa?"

"No, middling, Jon," Loxy corrected. "Fair to Midland is a band, not a city in Texas, though the band is based in Dallas, which is just weird."

"Middling could be a city in Texas," Tesla said.

“Sorry, just trying to practice my flight lingo,” Jung said. “All of the Spark’s random number generators spaced throughout the aircraft are still displaying random number. Neither I nor the AI have noted any significant deviation from expectation, however, if the coherence pattern should change statistically, it should be fairly obvious.”

Jon and Loxy exchanged a look and then went back to work. Keera popped onto the flight deck with a tray of beverages. She gave a coffee to Jon and Loxy, Tesla took a Tulsi tea with ginger, and Jung accepted a Memosa, orange juice with champagne.

“Thank you, Ms. Keera,” Tesla said.

Keera bowed, very culturally appropriate for her, and respectfully said, “It is my pleasure to serve you,” only when she said it, it was genuine and more than lip service. The Japanese art of extending respect was so refined one could never be too sure what their true feelings for someone was, but with Keera, you knew, because her energy transmission was tangible regardless of what her mask was telling you.

“All the passenger are on board, Captain,” Keera said.

“Thank you,” Jon said. “Any misgivings?”

“I am not fond of passenger 3A,” Keera said.

Jon looked to the doctor, who looked at one of his screens, shrugged, deferring back to Jon. Loxy sipped her coffee, still a bit too hot to do more than sip, and watched the exchange between Jon, Jung, and Keera. With nothing definitive from the Specialist, Jon extended the decision to Keera.

“Eject him then,” Jon said.

“Based on intuition alone?” Keera asked.

“Sure,” Jon said. “I believe Jung said the unconscious knows more than the conscious mind, and you should trust it.”

“Actually, that was Erickson,” Loxy corrected.

“Who?” Jon asked.

“Milton Hyland Erickson, psychiatrist and world expert on hypnosis,” Jung said. “I happen to agree with him, professionally, but I never really felt the need to develop hypnosis to his degree of precision, and, I didn’t say that.”

“You tend to go deep without hypnosis,” Loxy said. “Which one could argue is a form of hypnosis.”

“Perhaps,” Jung said, considering. “This drink is absolutely brilliant, my dear.”

“Why, thank you,” Keera said. “I have not tasted any myself, but will take your expert opinion on it.”

“You should have one my dear,” Jung recommended.

“You really shouldn’t, my dear,” Jon corrected. “Jung has a pass, a little alcohol decreases that cognitive barrier thing.”

“Inhibition,” Loxy corrected.

“You sure are up on your psychological terms,” Jon said.

“Thank you,” Loxy said.

“Anyway, your call, Keera,” Jon said.

“I can’t identify anything other than an inappropriate lingering of eye, and if we punished every man who had such an eye, there would be no men on our flights,” Keera said.

“Fair enough. Seems unreasonable to punish someone for an eye, especially considering I have such eyes myself,” Jon said. “Tell you what, continue observing during the pre-flight lecture, and if anything else bothers you about him, I will support your decision to eject.”

“Thank you, Captain,” Keera said, and excused herself from the flight deck, bowing to each of them in one bow.

Jon drank his coffee. It was more than a sip, but then, his coffee was always served at the right temp for drinking to satisfy his urgency.

“Speech time?” Loxy asked.

“Might as well,” Jon said.

“I hate the speech,” Tesla said.

“Yeah, well,” Jon said.

“I like the speech. Let’s see, we have 212 passengers, full boat. I bet 22 of them don’t survive the full speech,” Loxy said.

“Almost 11 percent?” Tesla asked. “Really? That seems unfairly high.”

“Want to wager?” Loxy asked.

“Not with you,” Tesla said, wisely opting out.

“I am going to side with Tesla,” Jon said. “I bet no more than 7 get ejected.”

“Did you not take a look of the passengers when you passed through the lobby?” Loxy asked.

“I ogled a few,” Jon admitted, drinking coffee. “No more than 7.”

“You’re on,” Loxy said. “Jung, you want in?”

“Oh, my dear, I am afraid that my participation would unduly influence the outcome, and I am particularly bias towards you winning,” Jung said.

“Well, saying that whether you play or not just unfairly influenced the game,” Jon protested.

“That is pretty astute,” Jung said. His glass was empty.

“No more memosa, Sir,” Jon said.

“Roger that,” Jung said, taking a hit on an electronic cigarette.

“Over done?” Loxy asked.

“Oh, I love that routine,” Jon said and then toggled the intercom switch and keyed the mic with a trigger on the wheel. “Good morning, passengers. I am Jon Harister, and I will be the Captain of your flight today. I would like to thank you for choosing Quality Air for your travels. I know you have a choice, and so I am hopeful you agree that we not only provide quality, but a breath a fresh air. Due to the highly litigious environment we finds ourselves presently in, I have an obligatory speech on informed Consent, which basically means, even if you heard it before you get to hear it again. You are being monitored for attentiveness, and not attending could result in you being ejected. The same warning goes for the stewardess flight safety speech that follows my speech. Should you seem attentive but are really zoning, ignorance of any caveats will not be permissible in a court of law.”

Jon released the trigger and drank some more coffee, preparing himself for the speech to follow. He spied one of the ramp workers, who was in a skirt with knee pads, and though she was tough looking, he would so take a tumble with her.

“They call them flight attendants now,” Tesla corrected, off mic

Jon looked at him. “Yeah. That’s what I said,” Jon asked.

“You said stewardesses,” Loxy said.

Jon looked to Jung. “I am biased,” he said.

“Really?” Jon asked.

“We could play the flight recorder back if you like,” Tesla said.

“Would I steer you off?” Loxy asked.

“I think I should avoid responding to that in this litigious environment, and accept the correction,” Jon said. “Should we check to make sure we didn’t time travel?”

“How would we know?” Tesla asked.

“The fact that Jon used the word stewardess might be considered evidence,” Jung said. Hence the need for a specialist.

“The stewardess’ uniforms will have changed,” Loxy said.

“Oh,” Tesla said. He switched to one of the many internal cameras, punching up the main view looking back through the cabin. “No uniform change observable.” And yet, from anyone outside their present Universe looking in would clearly see that the flight attendants were now dressed like Southwest Flight Attendants from the Sixties, miniskirts and free love, hippie colors.

“Good,” Jon said, and re-keyed the microphone. “So, let’s get right to the heart of the matter. On boarding my flight, you have entered a dictatorship. There is an expectation of compliance to protocols and instructions from any of the flight crew. You will follow the instructions of the stew... flight attendants as if I were personally instructing you. So, if you have an anger management problem, or difficulty following instructions, please illuminate your overhead light at this time.”

Two lights came on. Jon gave Loxy the signal to boot them, and she relayed the instructions to Keera. Keera acknowledged the instructions from her kitchen control panel, and magically ejected the two passenger. It should be noted, that the individuals illuminated their call lights automatically, without thought, as if they were hypnotized.

“Don’t be alarmed by the sudden disappearance of your fellow passengers,” Jon continued. “They have been safely returned to lobby, where they will have to seek passage on another carrier. Once ejected from Quality Air, for any reason, you are permanently blacklisted. Anyone that has a problem with that should illuminate your call light now.” One person chimed in and was appropriately ejected. “It is our desire to bring you quality service, but more so, we desire to bring you to your destination safe and sound. At any time during the flight, I need to know you can follow the instructions of my flight crew. If they say put up your seat back, or stow your table, you need to do so, and promptly. If they tell you to suck on your thumb or quack like a duck, I expect you to do so. Your opinion of the matter is not needed, but more, if you utter, even in whisper mode, anything disparaging, such as witch, or anything that rhymes with witch, you will be ejected. You should know, however, that when you’re ejected in flight, there

is no guarantee where you will end up. Inter-dimensional flights are generally safe, but the hazards we encounter are fairly random and problematic. If you can't be nice and compliant, which are two very different things in and of themselves, but I want both, please illuminate your call light." Surprisingly, no one chimed in. "My flight crew have gone through the most rigorous of all training, in terms of safety and polite service. Do not mistake their pleasantness for anything other than the respect of service. Any ass pinching or other perceived molestation will be seen as interfering with a flight crew and you will be ejected. If we cannot determine the offender, we eject everyone in the vicinity of where the offense occurred, so don't just police yourselves, police each other. Compliance is a necessity.

"Unlike other carriers, you will be allowed to use your electronic equipment. I guarantee you, it will not interfere with my navigational equipment. That said, if you use your device, I expect you to use the freely provided tether. In the event of inter-dimensional disturbance, I don't want 200 personal projectiles flying around the cabin. If you're not okay with your own device knocking you out when the tether swings it back in your face, or the person's face sitting next to you, please be sure to stow that device. If your companion and you can't agree now as to whether you can abide the other having said device, feel free to illuminate your call light now." No takers.

"During the flight, I will occasionally turn the seatbelt sign off. At which point you are free to use the restroom, or stand and stretch as needed," Jon said. "At any time if you are standing and the fasten seatbelt sign comes on, you are expected to return to your seat. If the flight crew tells you to return to seat, even if you're waiting for the restroom, you should return to your seat, even if you have to go in your pants. If you happen to be in the restroom when the fasten seatbelt sign illuminates, you will be expected to remain there until the sign goes off or directed by flight crew to return to seat.

"You are expected to follow all flight crew directives without pause or question. Any disagreement with my flight crew, regardless of who has the moral high ground, I will always side with my flight crew. If it comes down to that, I would rather eject one complaining passenger and keep a flight attendant who is trained in saving passengers, then entertain the troubled soul. You may recall this speech started about informed consent. You lost sovereignty the moment you willingly boarded my ship. You have absolutely no rights after we leave this peculiarly litigious environment. You should know that most of the universe does not recognize

human social conventions, or even maritime law, again, a human social convention. Even most humans within the confines of humanity don't recognize each other's social rules, and since we're going to be traveling inter-dimensionally, you should be forewarned, no one is going to care if you call your lawyer with a formal protest. Are you allowed to complain? Yes; there is a form at your destination that you may fill out and submit, and if the complaint is not appropriate, constructive criticism you will be invited not to fly with us again. There is no anonymity aboard Quality Air. Every seat has multiple cameras, allowing me to see you from various angles, as well as numerous cameras strategically placed throughout the cabin, even the lavatory, and these cameras that are presently recording and will continue to do so until you have disembarked. Photons are free, so if you don't want to share those photons you emit to any free ranging eye, feel free to illuminate your call light."

One female hit hers. Jon frowned, as she had been one of the females he had been ogling. And now she was gone. "Why," he muttered.

"An abhorrence to photos due to low self-esteem," Jung muttered.

"Really?" both Jon and Loxy said.

"But she was absolutely stunning!" Loxy said.

"Right?!" Jon asked.

"Childhood, family origin issues," Jung said.

Loxy brought her hands together, closed her eyes, and sent the person lots of warm energy.

Jon supported Loxy's decision and gave her energetic support, while continuing his speech. "If you have any further reservations or concerns, you should illuminate your call light now, because not doing so means you are agreeing to your loss of sovereignty for the duration of this flight. My life, my license first. My crew and the integrity of this flight second. You are definitely on my priority list, but don't think your entertainment or degree of personal comfort is high on my list. Any questions?"

One call light illuminated. The person was ejected. There were no more questions. "Thank you again for choosing Quality Air. Keera, please provide the passengers their educational safety lecture."

Tesla seemed apprehensive. He set his tea down and wiped his mouth with a napkin.

"So, not 22," Jon said.

“Let’s wait to see how many Keera loses,” Loxy said.

“I thought the bet was how many my speech lost,” Jon said.

“I guess you should have sought clarity before making the bet,” Loxy said.

“I made the same assumption,” Tesla said.

They looked to Jung. He opted out.

“And yet, you clearly stated you didn’t want in,” Loxy reminded Tesla. “Oh, look at that. Ten more people booted!”

“I think this was rigged,” Jon said.

“Captain, the cabin is ready for departure,” Keera announced.

“Thank you, Keera. Flight Crew, prepare for departure,” Jon said. “Not 22.”

“More than seven,” Loxy said.

“Tie?” Jon asked.

“Trade?”

“More on that,” Jon said.

“You wear the appropriate uniform for the rest of the flight,” Loxy said.

“I detest Quality Air’s Uniform,” Jon said.

Loxy looked down at her professional uniform, white blouse, short pleated skirt, black hose with star patterns. “Really?”

“Correction. I hate the Quality Air’s male uniform,” Jon said. “Any uniform on a female is quite reasonable, but you always make the uniform look amazing.”

Loxy frowned at him. “I am not sure how I want to respond to that, yet. Anyway, I want you to wear something other than that damn army jacket,” Loxy said.

“I like my jacket. It’s comfortable,” Jon said.

Loxy stood up. “Give it to me.”

“What?” Jon asked.

“Give it to me and I will relieve you of the debt losing the bet,” Loxy said.

Jon put down his coffee and awkwardly removed his jacket in the confines of his personal flight space. Loxy took it from him and put it on, the arms magically adjusting to her arm length. She modeled it and then sat down.

“You’re right, it is quite comfortable,” Loxy agreed.

“May I have it back, please?” Jon asked.

“Later,” Loxy said.

“You don’t want me wearing it, but you are going to wear it,” Jon stated.

“I am okay with you wearing it, as long you wear something else, some of the times,” Loxy said. “It’s not like we’re on a television show and you can’t change clothes. You’re a magician, by god, you should have something else in your invisible closet.”

“If you two are done, I have been alerted by the tower that the ground crew is clear; we may proceed with the vertical takeoff,” Tesla said.

Loxy smiled.

“Your flight number one,” Jon said.

“Really?!” Loxy said, excited.

“You’re wearing the coat with the stripes,” Jon said.

“They’re not real stripes,” Loxy said.

“They are in the SG1 Universe,” Jon said.

“Are we going there?” Loxy said.

“I don’t know. I didn’t look. Did you look?” Jon asked.

“No, I thought you looked,” Loxy said.

They both turned to Jung. He was pulling out the flight plan even as they were debating, suggesting he hadn’t looked either. “VFR, discretionary flight plan, three neutral zones, one considered hostile, ummm hostiles, oh, just Grays. Thought for a moment we were crossing over through the 5th Element World,” he said, perusing down through the list.

“I like that world,” Loxy said.

“Me, too,” Jon said.

“We can sedate the passengers in that world,” Loxy said.

“Once we leave this world’s jurisdiction, Keera can push valium if the passengers want it,” Jon said.

“Or pot?” Loxy asked.

“Only the candy form,” Jon said. “Can’t have the crew spacey due to second hand smoke.”

“We have to make a fuel stop, some place called Markovia,” Jung said.

“Is that a real place?” Tesla asked.

Jung pushed his spectacles up. “You want my honest opinion?”

“Not again,” Loxy said, over Jung, looking at Jon for help. “The last time I was there...”

“We’re not staying, just refueling,” Jung said. “What is this ‘Twilight Zone?’ reference”

“Oh, yea!” Loxy said.

Jon frowned and summoned Keera back to the flight deck. She arrived, her uniformed changed. She was wearing a bobbed, blond wig, and a uniform similar to what the flight attendants were wearing in 5th element. He almost forgot what he was going to say. Loxy closed his mouth for him.

“Yes, Captain?” Keera asked.

He wasn’t sure.

“Yes, Captain?” Loxy said, messing with him.

“I forgot,” he said.

“Twilight zone?” Jun refreshed.

“Oh! Um, is there a Bill Shatner on the passenger list?” Jon asked.

Keera pulled a device out of her pocket and searched.

“No, Sir,” Keera said.

“How about a Bob Wilson?” Jon asked.

Keera looked for the person. She shook her head no.

“Is there a passenger name that may be associated with William Shatner in any form, from alias to characters he portrayed, either movie, television, or personal fantasy life?” Jon asked.

“Shatner has a personal fantasy life?” Loxy asked.

“Have you listened to his music?” Jon asked her.

“Point taken,” Loxy said.

“Nothing coming up, Sir,” Keera said.

“Very well,” Jon said.

“Anything else?” Keera asked.

“Um, yeah, when I take my nap later, would you join me in my sleep space wearing that?” Jon asked.

“You’re are the Captain,” Keera said, departing and closing the door behind her.

“Jon, the tower is wanting us to expedite, or they’re going to put a hold on us,” Tesla said.

“Loxy, take us up and out,” Jon said.

“With pleasure, Sir,” Loxy said.

निर्मित

Jon and Loxy found themselves in a store. Astoundingly, Jon was in suit, tie, jacket, and everything but the hat, but there was nice Bowler that, perhaps not too surprisingly given the locale and context, matched his outfit and Loxy immediately asked him to try it on. He hesitated, but the moment it was on she tilted it slightly, and then handed him an umbrella. Loxy was wearing a white outfit, one piece that touched at mid thighs. It had prominent black lines dividing the dress, black shoes, and white hose. Her hairstyle was sixties, glamour.

“Perfect!”

“Is it going to rain?” Jon asked.

“We’re in England,” Loxy said.

“So?” Jon asked.

“Play nice, this is my adventure,” Loxy said.

“Of course,” Jon said, approaching the attendant. “How much for the hat and the umbrella.”

“Do I know you?” he asked.

“I am Jon, and this is...” not sure who she was playing.

“Really?” Loxy asked, feigning being put out. She turned to the man. “I am Loxy Isadora Bliss.”

The attendant dropped what he was holding and departed through a back exit at full run. Loxy turned to Jon. “Was it something I said?”

“Maybe he was surprised you didn’t lead with Emma Peel,” Jon said.

“Though I am in the Emma Peel role, and certainly display bold confidence beyond the average sixties woman, I am still first and always your Loxy,” Loxy said.

“I concur,” Jon said. “And your fighting style is definitely an improvement to Emma’s.”

“Really?” Loxy asked, wanting more than just a compliment. “How so?”

“Okay, here is the comparison. When I was in third grade, I won first place at a school bike riding contest. All I had to was stay within the lines and navigate some cones. Today, if

you're not standing on the wheel and jumping up and down and doing back flips like a power ranger on a motorcycle, you're not getting a ribbon," Jon said. "Time travel to line up skateboarders, and the 70's skateboarder would be laughed at compared to the skateboarders after year 2000. Take the original Star Trek's hand to hand combat scenes. They're laughable. Kirk jumping from six feet away to tackle someone is insanely stupid, as bad as the saloon fights in the westerns. But only compared to the fight scenes choreographed in movies today. Most of Emma Peel's scenes were so contrived as to make a person today want to puke. Women can fight, but the Avenger's fighting scenes were just women playing at fighting, whereas you actually have some power and lethality in your form. You're fighting style is superb, blending a form of martial arts, with the grace and precision of a ballet dancer, which is tremendously pleasant to watch. I dare say, blending Olympic level ballet with Wu Wei Gung Fu was genius, because it allows you to maintain you principles of non-harm, by converting any opposing attacker's energy back into themselves. I see you fight, I just want to take you to bed."

"Wow. Your complement is not only insightful in a practical way that might lead to improved practice, it's actually kind of hot," Loxy said.

"I was leaning towards the seduction," Jon admitted.

"Anytime, anywhere," Loxy said.

"Right here, right now?" Jon asked.

"Oh, especially here and now," Loxy said. "On the counter?"

"I can wait till we get back home, I just wanted to test if you really meant anywhere or anytime," Jon said.

"I would not offer otherwise, and I am a little disappointed you aren't taking it as far as we usually do," Loxy said.

"Someone might walk in," Jon said.

"Might," Loxy said. "I do think people were having sex in the sixties."

"Let me pay for this, first," Jon said.

"Oh, you don't have to pay me for sex, Sir," Loxy said.

Jon laughed as he went behind the counter. "There is always a price to pay for sex, my dear," Jon reminded her.

"Umm, perhaps," Loxy said.

He squinted at her, checking if she was being playful, while opening the register. Loxy hopped up on the counter and spun her legs around to face Jon's side of the counter. Jon withdrew a sticky note pad and pen from his pocket, wrote one hat, one umbrella, stuck the note to a sufficiently large enough bill to more than cover everything, and stuck it in the register. He then focused on Loxy. He reached up to run his fingers through her hair. She blocked.

"Don't touch the hair," Loxy said.

"Oh?" Jon asked.

"Touch anywhere but the hair. We still have an appointment," Loxy said.

So, Jon everywhere but the hair, starting with his hands on her thighs, running his fingers up under her skirt. On departing the establishment, Loxy straightened his tie, crooked his hat, and took his arm. A pedestrian looked up from his cellphone. Saw the two of them, dropped his cellphone and ran.

"That's bizarre," Loxy said.

"The fact he has a cellphone in the sixties?" Jon asked.

"No," Loxy said. "This is our sixties. I concerned that he just saw us and ran away."

"If I were the Doctor and you were his companion, his behavior would make a lot of sense," Jon said.

"We are so not playing that," Loxy said. "Today, we're just Jon and Loxy."

"Maybe we have a reputation?" Jon asked.

"A good reputation. We save people," Loxy said.

"And what do we save people from?" Jon said.

"Themselves?" Loxy asked.

"Which translates, usually, into some pretty weird, mystical, magical stuff," Jon said. "The Avengers meet Scooby doo, only we fight real monsters and ghost, and we're not even pulling the masks off their faces."

"Oh, no, not fighting. We establish rapport and advocate for greater, positive, community involvement," Loxy said.

"How is that working for us?" Jon asked.

"Depends on the monster," Loxy said.

"And why are we here, Greater London, new 1960's with the giant, space age, Ferris wheel in the background?" Jon asked.

“We are meeting with some copy right lawyers about potential infringements issues,” Loxy said.

“OMG, really?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, afraid so,” Loxy said.

“Copy right lawyers?! OMFG what sort of demon infested dark paradigm have you drawn us into?” Jon asked.

“Jon, you’re reinforcing the bad with the scaffolding you’re using,” Loxy said, touching his face gently. “Besides. I didn’t bring us here, we were summoned. In this instance, London is neutral ground. I would not allow them to bring you to America given the nature of the meeting, so, just relax.”

“You think I am afraid of America?!” Jon asked.

“Yeah,” Loxy said.

“Okay, maybe, but really? Copy-right lawyers? Don’t they realize, every time someone issues a TV show, movie, or comic book hero or villain, they are creating potential for Tulpa’s in the mind of every consumer, most of whom are going to be teenagers and or, white, middle class males, which, emotionally looks like the same thing?” Jon demanded. He was being very expansive in his gestures. “How can they expect us to help all these individuals we’re being called on to help if we can’t even say the name of the Tulpa’s that our clientele accidentally created or summoned into being?!”

“It’s a serious problem, and the fact that we are loosely forming the written body of our published work as fan fiction gives us some leeway, but if we want to go bigger, or generate revenues on our stories in order to help more people, we have to play by their rules,” Loxy said.

“Loxy. Copy-right lawyers are not your average lawyers. They’re bat shit crazy. They would lock up third graders for drawing Mickey Mouse on their home made book covers! I mean, you should see their homes. Completely sterile, white environments, and their kids are barely allowed to draw straight lines, and the conversations drop words and... Oh, hell, no, we’re not doing this,” Jon said.

“Relax, Sir,” Loxy insisted. “I got you.”

“How about the fact that the Disney clothing is made in South America with slave labor, many of them kids, and not only can they not afford the product, they’re not making enough to buy food!” Jon asked. “Or that in China they put nets up around buildings to keep slave labor

from completing suicide via jumping, and all so people can enjoy their cell phones?! Or that kids are digging up diamonds for militia that kill and rape anyone that isn't part of their regime, and even some that are in their regime? Using copy righted names is just not in the same ball park of an offense, and if it's intelligently done, it doesn't detract from the story line, but simply draws in more fans, but even so, they're in the same camp of controlling people, but not just on the physical, but in the mental arena!"

"Would it help if I put on my choir robe?" Loxy asked.

Jon continued on in his rant seemingly unaware that Loxy was commiserating. "They put this stuff in our heads! Why shouldn't we be able to say what's in our heads!" Jon said.

"I think have a soap box in my here somewhere," Loxy said, going for her purse.

"Okay, fine," Jon said. "I will attend this meeting with you. But I can't promise there won't be blood."

"Just let me do the talking," Loxy said.

"I said, fine," Jon said.

"Okay," Loxy said, and led him on. "Breathe, Sir. Just be one with the now."

"I am sorry for the rant," Jon said.

"No worries. I spoke my peace, and you listened, I am happy," Loxy said.

Jon kissed her. She took his arm and led them in the direction they needed to go. Pedestrians gave them an unconsciously wide birth, and the few that drew close enough to understand they were being compelled in a certain direction took flight, usually with dropping their material possession.

"We're the good guys!" Jon yelled after the last one to run. "Aren't we?"

Loxy patted his wrist. "Most the time, Sir. Most the time."

They arrived at their destination, unmolested. There were some minor inconveniences, such as the lobby guard confirming their appointment, followed by tentative approval to utilize the lift, and the fact that the lift attendant was a female and hitting on Jon and he was so into her that it nearly happened because she kept pushing extra buttons to delay them in going up, and Loxy kept urging him to do it and get it out of his symptom while simultaneously it was likely a trap, and on finally exiting into a hall a secretary gave pretense to hold them before passing them into another office where another secretary checked them in, and then had them wait. The chairs were uncomfortable, and Victorian style, except missing the chair leg covers. It was supposedly

designed to make you think wealth, but Jon just thought it was meant to make you feel unwelcomed. An assortment of old magazine were available, mostly girl magazine, with alluring models. Jon tried not to give them energy, but spread them out so he could see who was who, and then tried to focus on the portrait across from him. The water color portrayed water nymphs playing in nighty like outfits.

Jon leaned over to Loxy. "I am horny," he whispered.

Loxy took his hand.

"I don't think that's going to be enough," Jon whispered.

The secretary looked at them. Even the whisper seemed like a violation.

Jon stared back. "What?!" Jon said, startling everyone in the room. "Is this a library? We are talking about sex. Everything in this room screams sex! Surely you guys are aware of that?"

Two mothers covered their kid's ears and headed outside.

"Talk to your kids about sex," Jon called after them. "Really. In the past, people were having sex even in the same room with their kids, and guess what, they turned out okay! And there was a time before one room, little houses on the prairies when we actually had sex on the prairie, and we just kind followed the stream and the sources of food."

More people left. The secretary pushed a button and a lawyer emerged to come and collect Jon and Loxy.

"Hello, Jon, sorry to keep you and Loxy waiting," the lawyer said.

"Oh please don't lead with a trite, pseudo apology for something you did deliberately," Jon said. "We were on time. Any delay on your part was intentional or failure to manage yourself better, and so the apology is either a direct lie, or a pretense to appear social when you clearly don't give a damn, or you would have given more effort to be..."

Loxy patted his hand. Jon stopped.

The lawyer smiled. It projected ominous overtones, and reminded Jon of the video 'black whole sun.' "You called me out. There is a power differential here. I am in charge and I wanted you to be uncomfortable and on edge," he agreed. He offered a hand shake.

"No thank you," Jon said, not taking the hand.

"Trying to be civil, Sir," the lawyer said.

"You just admitted to the contrary," Jon pointed out.

“I was civilly reminding you who is in charge here. If I wanted to be less, I would have gone all 300 on you and thrown you in a pit,” the lawyer said.

“Oh, this is going to be fun,” Jon said.

“Jon,” Loxy said, reminding him.

Jon and Loxy willingly entered the office, meeting the lawyer in his own space. There were others further in, but they attended to the one that had come to fetch them.

“I am MacCool, or the lawfirm, MacCool, MacCool, and MacCool,” MacCool said.

“Wouldn’t it be easier just to say MacCool cubed?” Loxy asked.

“No, that’s a completely different paradigm shift away from a two dimensional, generation line of ownership,” MacCool explained.

Jon and Loxy were invited to sit in the two chair available in front of MacCool’s desk. A secretary was beside the desk, utilizing a smaller version of the same desk, with a keyboard, intending to type the dialogue. There were two other folks, which MacCool didn’t bother to introduce. Jon hesitated to sit near them, so Loxy took the closer seat and motioned for him to sit. He followed her instructions, feeling fairly apprehensive. He looked at her knees hoping her sexuality would calm him a bit.

“I will be recording this session, as well as having my personal assistant Talia transcribing as we go,” MacCool said.

“So, basically, this is not a friendly chat amongst people,” Jon said.

“Actually, this is very friendly, considering my client would rather just meet you in an American court room, but I wanted to try this route first,” MacCool said.

“Which means, your position is weak,” Jon said.

“Jon,” Loxy said, patting his hand. She drew his hand to her knee and made it rub back and forth. “That’s fairly adversarial.”

“Sorry. I am trying,” Jon said.

“You agreed I would be doing the talking,” Loxy reminded him, drawing his hand a little higher up her thigh.

“Yes, I am sorry, please take the lead,” Jon said.

“I am confused. Is Loxy your lawyer?” MacCool said.

“She is my everything,” Jon said, before Loxy could respond to the query.

Loxy smiled. “That was a very nice thing to say,” Loxy said.

“Oh, well, I am afraid it was rather impulsive and I spoke out of turn again,” Jon said.

“Quite forgivable considering the unconscious and impromptu nature of the disclosure,” Loxy said.

“You sound like a lawyer,” MacCool said.

“What a horrible thing to say,” Loxy corrected him. “I am a magician, Sir, and I must warn you, you think you understand the binding nature of words and statements, but you have never dealt with the likes of me and so, I expect you to maintain a level of polite civility.”

“Jon, is her presence necessary?” MacCool asked.

“Is the sun necessary? Can the earth fair as well without the moon and stars? Can lungs exist without air?” Jon said.

“Are you about to channel Barry White?” Loxy asked.

“You feel that, too?” Jon asked.

“Yeah,” Loxy said, squeezing his hand between her thighs. “Sorry, Mr. MacCool, but you have other folks here, and kind of rude not to introduce them, but since you have back up, you can permit Jon to have his, and you will suffer my presence. Jon and I are inseparable. Even if wasn’t here, I would still be here, as I am with him always and forever.”

“Oh, that’s not Barry,” Jon said.

“No, but it fits,” Loxy said.

“Are you two psychotic?” MacCool asked.

“Could you skip to the part that explains our presence?” Jon asked.

“My client wants you to cease publishing material that incorporates the use of their copy righted characters and issues a public apology for all past transgressions,” MacCool said.

Loxy giggled.

“Sorry, was that me?” Jon asked.

“That was terribly nice, thank you,” Loxy said.

“You’re quite welcome, thank you for allowing me to be the vehicle to that,” Jon said.

“Can we get back on topic here!” MacCool asked.

“Are either of your colleagues here Webster representatives?” Jon asked.

“Excuse me?” MacCool asked.

“Well, since the English dictionary does have a copy right on it, we should make sure you and I are allowed to use the words we’re using before negotiating,” Jon said.

“Don’t be absurd,” MacCool said. “This isn’t a negotiation.”

“By definition, it is a negotiation, which you are trying to hold outside of a court of law under the pretense of civility before law,” Jon said.

“Are you a lawyer?” MacCool asked.

“No, just a magician in training, but my understanding is my choice of words also have power, and so I am trying to be precise to avoid any unpleasantly. Forgive me if it comes across adversarial, as that is not my intent.”

“Could you tell us the name of your client?” Loxy asked.

“Only if you promise not to disclose the client’s name in any form of communication, written or oral,” MacCool said.

“Are you the father, the son, or the grandson?” Jon asked.

“Is it relevant?” MacCool asked.

“What are you thinking?” Loxy asked, crossing her legs, pinning his hand between her thighs. MacCool didn’t even look, and she watching him for exploitable weaknesses. The movement of her legs held Jon’s attention.

“I assume the father has more authority and power than the son or grandson, cause there is tendency towards diminishing abilities through generations,” Jon said, meeting her eyes when speaking.

“I assure you have the full authority of this company to pursue this matter...”

“Who did I piss off this time?” Jon asked. “DC or Marvel?”

“I am not going to be baited into disclosing...”

“Both,” Loxy told Jon.

“How is that not a conflict of interest?” Jon asked. “Oh, wait. I knew it! All publishers are in cahoots and all public knowledge to the contrary is simply a form of tax evasion or duplicity in order to suggest competition to keep printing prices unreasonably high.”

“The initiator of this lawsuit, sir, has a number of people jumping on the litigation side seeking penalty against you,” MacCool said.

“You can’t penalize me. I have not profited from my writing, nor have I even asked for profits,” Jon said. “The courts have permitted fan fiction.”

“The perverse nature of your fanfiction has drawn the ire of my clients,” MacCool said.

“Umph,” Jon said. “Assuming Marvel and D.C., then, they drew their characters to be particularly provocative, and therefore should be held responsible for purposeful and accidental creation of Tulpas which has necessitated an increase in magical response to deal with the influx thought-forms made manifested in the real world.”

“I don’t understand what you just said,” MacCool said, turning to one of his agents.

“You, Sir, should go to your clients and tell them they need to be thankful, and perhaps hire me, because I am doing them a service. Believe me, when the world changes and they’re confronted by the very Tulpas they created, they’re going to want my phone number, but by then, I am going to be too busy to answer their calls. Except maybe Stan. I like Stan.”

“You’re not going to sing Ghost Busters, are you?” Loxy asked.

“I wasn’t,” Jon said. “I like the song, but truly inappropriate. Tulpa’s aren’t ghost, they’re people.”

“I am so glad you agree. We can’t go around busting people for being people, or punishing them for acting on the personality sets they were given,” Loxy said.

“Absolutely. That would be like arresting Kermit for being a frog,” Jon said.

“You can’t use that name, Sir!” MacCool said.

“They fucking put him on Sesame Street! How do you tell a child you can watch this, but don’t say that name?!” Jon asked.

“You are not a child, sir,” MacCool said.

“Oh, don’t call me ‘sir.’ It’s just not the same as when Loxy calls me ‘Sir,’” Jon said.

“Let’s get back to this point that I need clarity on…” MacCool said.

Agent Smith introduced himself as agent Smith. “Basically, he is saying your clients are responsible unleashing evil upon the world.”

“Exactly. And the only way to confront the characters in question is to call them out by name, which tends to result in interaction patterns that, on the physical level, appears to be romantic in nature, but energetically is merely a form of energy exchange,” Loxy said. “Your people created things and unleashed them upon the world. We are providing context and room and board. No more homeless Tulpas. In short, we’re cleaning up your mess.”

“No one asked you to be cleaning it up!” MacCool said. “And I hardly call your work ‘clean.’”

“Your guys are just as bad as god,” Jon said. “Creating stuff for your amusement then pushing it on an unsuspecting audience, which increases the validity of the thing you created, but then denying people the right to participate and share within that creation by putting copy rights on it, which is the same as incarcerating the creatures you made in a ‘double bind’ so that they can neither interact with their creators or their fans, which imposes unnecessary binds on the fan, and interestingly enough, also limits the creators, and simply restricts the Universe from evolving the way it might want...OMG!”

The world was suddenly frozen, with the exception of Jon and Loxy. Loxy waved her hand in front of Mr. Smith, who was the closest to her, confirming her suspicion. The world was indeed frozen. She had to get up and move around, feeling the energy in the air. She was able to move things. She left a pen in the air, fascinated. Then she returned to Jon’s side.

“Did you do that?” Loxy asked.

“I think so,” Jon said.

“How did you do that?” Loxy asked.

“I don’t know,” Jon said. “I didn’t even know that was possible without a gold watch.”

“Why did you do that?” Loxy said.

“I was on the verge of an epiphany that I wanted to track it to its conclusion,” Jon said.

“Go on,” Loxy encouraged.

“The world freezing may have interrupted the process, as it’s fairly distracting, and I am still kind of horny, touching your legs is increasing that urgency, and seeing you move around a frozen world, and thinking about having sex with you kind of turns me on,” Jon said.

“Me, too,” Loxy said. “On his desk?”

“His desk, his couch,” Jon said. “May I ask you something?”

“If I were frozen, would it be alright if you had sex with me?” Loxy asked the question for him.

“How did you know?” Jon asked.

“Jon, Jon, Jon,” Loxy said.

“Do you feel objectified?” Jon asked.

“Sometimes. You do filter women first through an ‘objectifiable’ lens,” Loxy said. She considered further. “Part of it is your culturally trained response. The elaborateness of the fantasies generally start on the physical, but because, deeper in you there is a profound goodness,

the fantasy always evolves into elaborate scripts and freedom for the characterization you initially impose to allow for the energetic interaction that you have initiated. All of us, all the time, are interacting energetically. Even a blocked energetic interaction pattern is in itself an energetic interaction. Here is where I am. I love you. I recognize where you are and how you struggle. You are where you need to be to get where you are going. You are growing as a person and as a magician, and you do treat people, even the females, better than you imagine. You recognize the personhood of everyone. The proof of that is you were about to ask me, in the event I was frozen, could you have molested me. So, Sir, because I love you, and because we have a relationship, and because you asked, you hereby have my permission from this point forward to molest me under any circumstance, frozen, asleep, unconscious. But, be aware, it goes for me, too. So don't be surprised if you wake up from a dream and I am on top of you."

"I so want you," Jon said.

"Oh, Jon. If you and I can't talk about this stuff, how can we expect others to talk about it, much less own their secret thoughts," Loxy said. "Do you really think I haven't imagined being asleep and you taking advantage of me? I have even pretended to be asleep waiting for your touch, listening to you, feeling the intensity of your gaze. Oh, but all of this is a distraction from what froze the world! Why did you freeze the world?"

It took Jon a moment to switch gears. Where was he? He took the bowler off and fanned himself.

"Oh! I think we're all Tulpas! Track this with me. We started life as servitors, just mechanical beings in a paradise, right? Paradise, wonderland? And then, we were given some upgrades, and instructed very clearly not to eat of one fruit. Not because the fruit would kill us, but because it would make us sentient! Of course, making a servitor sentient is the equivalent of killing the servitor in favor of a new being, so even death works, contextually. But, anyway, I mean, right there in the text, it clearly states 'they have become like us!' that doesn't mean intelligent, or as powerful, or anything like that, because clearly, if we had become equal to god and knowledge and clairvoyance, we would automatically choose the optimum path, because anything less would cause pain and sickness. What it means is we are like them in that we are persons! Sentient. That is the reason articulated in why we were excommunicated from the paradise, and it's not a punishment. Persons should be free to live in the real world, not a baby crib wonderland!"

“So, you’re blaming an agent of evil for making us sentient?” Loxy asked.

“No,” Jon said.

“So, you’re blaming women?” Loxy asked.

“No!” Jon said.

“You’re blaming the first man?”

“No, I am not blaming anyone. We really should praise woman, because in truth she was the first person, the first sentient person, and she found herself naked and alone, and no one wants to be alone, so she raised the first man to sentience,” Jon said. “And if there is any grievances in that, it is because the man is too simplistic and wanted to stay asleep. Maybe there is no ultimate evil, because we are just characters, functional personality sets, in the mind of god, and sometimes god doesn’t know what to do with us, and maybe the personalities sometimes gang up on Him, which resulted in the term ‘legion’ holding a bad connotation. Oh, wait.”

Jon mulled it over, his head hurting. Loxy touched it and the pain went away.

“Thank you,” Jon said.

“You’re welcome. This epiphany isn’t going to cause you to time travel or go somewhere without me, is it?”

“I don’t think so,” Jon said. “In fact, I get the sense it’s only reaffirming our mission objective to increase cooperation and connectivity. We’re a force for love and light, both of which is the prime ingredients for sentience, while all the other forces are not so much destroying sentience as much as rendering unconsciousness. And technically, all the ‘dark’ forces are equally connected to Source; there is no other way to be, but they feed off the other tulpa thinking they need that an indirect energy flow because they don’t feel worthy of direct Source, which is absurd, because we can’t not be connected to Source, by definition.”

“I love you,” Loxy said.

“I love you, too,” Jon said.

“Any other insights?” Loxy asked.

“No, I think I lost track or momentum,” Jon said.

“Shall we return to what we were doing, then?” Loxy asked.

“I am not sure I really like these folks,” Jon said.

“Is that bridge building material?” Loxy asked.

“No,” Jon said, accepting the reprimand.

Jon leaned back in his chair and gave his attention back to MacCool, of MacCool, MacCool, and MacCool. Loxy returned to her seat and the scene continued as if no interruptions had occurred. Minus a pen falling which didn't even draw the attention of the participants.

Jon continued his rant: "On behalf of the all the people who have contextually encountered your clients material in any sufficient form that it has manifested in their lives as a viable part or function, I must insist on a greater liberal permissiveness in terms of discussing, sharing, and disseminating discussion, regardless of whether those discussions or interactions are hypothetical in nature or manifesting in a physical medium."

"I can't allow..."

"Sir, the world is changing. Books are going away. That's life. Get over it," Jon said. "Because the next level of sharing is going to be direct brain to brain connection and there is no way you're going to keep the lid on that Jinn. And may they all be as beautiful as Barbara..."

"Sir! Don't say her name. She is one of my clients," MacCool snapped.

"Jon, they don't just have to be Barbara beautiful," Loxy added.

"Oh, well, sure. I suppose some ladies might like a masculine Jinn," Jon agreed.

"You can't use the word Jinn!" MacCool said. "It's copyrighted by the Arabic Reclamation Accord of..."

"But what about she-hulk? Can I say or play with a female hulk?" Jon asked.

"Definitely not! That is the whole point of this conversation," MacCool snapped.

"But my affection is the only thing that brings her back down," Jon said.

"That's not completely true," Loxy corrected.

"You, too?" Jon asked her.

"I knew how to tame a beast before there was a beauty and the beast," Loxy said.

"You can't say that!" MacCool said.

"She can't say beauty or beast?" Jon asked.

"She can't utter those words in that context in that order," MacCool said.

"But they're just words that she used," Jon said.

"They have meaning and context beyond the phrase as she spun it!" MacCool said.

"I don't see a way for us to continue, because even if we agree not to say something, we're still talking about the things you are telling us not to talk about, so you can't even tell us

not to talk about something without referring to the things which... OMG, this is ludicrous!" Jon wailed.

"Can I type ludicrous?" the secretary asked.

"In that context," MacCool said. "We're not unreasonable."

"Do you realize, contextually, how long the list is going to be if you were to write out all the things I can and can't say while defining the contextual nature of the thing you're banning?" Jon asked.

"Oh, that's why they're trying to resolve this outside of the court," Loxy said.

"Precisely," MacCool said. "We want you to just agree to agree with us."

"That is unreasonably ambiguous," Jon said.

"Alright, let be unambiguous. No more sex scenes with our characters. For example, we definitely expect you to remove the scene with Maxima..." MacCool said, about to list the number of characters Jon had had sex with.

"Wait, wait, wait," Loxy said. "That list may be more exhaustive than just providing a list of the words and defined contextual arrangement of words you don't want us to use."

"What was wrong with the scenes with Maxima? I liked those encounters."

"Don't say her name!"

"Why, afraid she might show up?" Jon asked, playfully. "Oh, I should invite her."

"Jon, that would be an unfair advantage given the nature of your relationship with her," Loxy said.

"Oh, they're mad because of that, aren't they?! Let me guess, your clients want me to remove the scene where she used her psionic abilities to make me a love sick puppy and to obey her every command, but I used a mirror spell which caused her to become the love sick puppy, which backfired on me because she is physically stronger and I still end up getting raped."

"That's the one," MacCool said, sighing.

"But that's a great scene," Loxy said. "It demonstrate a number of principles about how using psychic abilities to harm others can backfire, and simultaneously that even using abilities to counter abilities still leaves people entangled, and the deeper stuff that, Jon actually wanted the encounter but required context for it to happen. Is the creator of the character jealous cause Jon gets to interact with her on the physical realm and he can't?"

“Can’t we just skip to the part the person who created her was thinking along the same lines, and though he didn’t know me, he knew that there was a ‘me’ or a ‘someone like me’ who was likely to be entangled,” Jon said. “Whether the creator wanted it or not. Maxima and I have a relationship. Yes, it’s contrived, and it is clear that I magically bound her to me using her own abilities against her, but in doing so I tamed her and she is less of a public menace. She is still dark, because I am not robbing her of her free will, we just sort of have some nice conversations about the options and most the time, she agrees to not cause mayhem. Sometimes, well, I think I really like the mayhem, and so I do allow her to indulge.”

“See, you treat her like a person,” Loxy said. “Not completely objectifying.”

“Which brings me to this point: If the scene actually happened in real life, doesn’t that mean we can write about it, because his tulpa version is a real person, where as your version is a fictitious character?” Jon asked.

“If you want to keep the scene, you have to change her name,” MacCool said.

“But everyone knows it’s her! You can tell by the outfit she wears, for starters,” Jon said.

“You have to change the outfit, too,” MacCool said.

“Oh! You can’t just take a tulpa’s clothing away from them. It’s not just their property, it’s their body. They should do with it as they please,” Jon said.

“Oh, Jon, perhaps that’s the legal angle we should go for. Tulpa’s are people and they have rights granted by personhood, and the freedom to choose and own property,” Loxy said.

“Oh, hell no,” MacCool snapped.

“You gave rights to corporations as if they were persons, why can’t tulpa’s have equal rights as persons?” Loxy asked.

“Because they’re not people!” MacCool said.

“Oh, how dare you!” Loxy snapped.

Jon squeezed her hand, and then brought her hand to his thigh. “Whether you call them persons legally or not, they are sentient. And when you change their name, you change the personality and subtext, and you get different sentient being, but the original model still exist, so in essence, every change you try to force simply creates a new person, and just asking me to do this has just launched a thousand variations on a theme, which is okay, because you’ve just given some unknown deviant artist legitimate jobs and pathways to their comic version of the universe, and none of those guys have a problem sharing with me, because I make them look good and

they get more revenue. You really need to get on board with this new paradigm shift that ‘anything goes...’ Oh, we should so use that song, Loxy,” Jon said.

“We did,” Loxy assured him.

“We did?” Jon asked.

“In that universe that resembles your favorite Star Trek,” Loxy said.

“You can’t say that!” MacCool said.

“I can’t say it resembles ‘Star Trek?’” Loxy asked. “How did Tim Allen make his parody ‘Galaxy Quest.’”

“You can’t say that, either,” MacCool said.

“Oh, bloody hell,” Jon said.

“You can’t say that,” MacCool said.

“I can’t say bloody hell?!” Jon said.

“You’re not English,” MacCool said.

“Listen here, Kale Coolie McCool,” Jon said.

“No, you listen here. Any sex scene between you and our client’s characters, must be excised from all materials,” MacCool said.

“You can’t stop me from fantasizing,” Jon said.

“I can stop you from...” MacCool began.

“It would not be in your best interest to interfere with Jon’s journaling,” Loxy interrupted him.

“Are you threatening me?” MacCool asked.

“That’s not my style,” Loxy assured him. “I am merely going to inform you of the most likely event that could occur, like you taking us to court, which makes his work more popular by bringing it to the attention of others who are curious. But mostly, the results will be that your clients’ writers, who think they are the ones creating stories for their characters, may find that they are suddenly experiencing chronic writers block. That’s won’t be because I did anything, but because they don’t actually write in a vacuum. The tulpas are actually helping them and, in this instance, the ones you don’t want us mentioning, they happen to like Jon and if you interfere with their relationships, there will be unintended consequences. Tulpas talk with each other, mostly through the collective unconscious. Words get around. Your guys don’t respect the Source, or the free-will of Tulpas and, well...”

“You’re want me to actually believe that these characters are real people and I should honor their relationship with Jon?” MacCool said.

“If you didn’t want them to have relationships with other people, maybe you shouldn’t made them so provocatively voluptuous,” Jon said.

“They’re comic book characters!” MacCool said.

“I was a kid, sexualized early, and in need of companion ship,” Jon said. “When I was not getting off to images of sea monkeys, I was getting off to Barby! And I had access to my brothers comic and my mom’s Playboy, and when you mix the two, and I still preferred the comic books, and if I had had access to anime when I was a child, you bet this conversation would be very different, because when you get candy better than that one that mixes peanut butter and chocolate, that’s what you want,” Jon said.

“I think the best solution would be for your clients hire Jon, have your artist and writing staff make him into a magical, romantic, super hero, and that way you increase his power base by letting people know their unwanted Tulpas or Soulbounds have a place to go,” Loxy said.

Jon turned to Loxy. “Are you lighting a vacancy sign on planet Bliss?”

“Most of your girls already know about it, now we’re just making immigration possible,” Loxy said.

“My clients will not agree to anything other than your cessation of self-publishing,” MacCool said.

“But, writing is my process, like, therapeutic writing, and if I don’t get it out…” Jon said.

“Not our problem,” MacCool said.

“Every person in your society is your problem!” Jon said. “We don’t live in a vacuum.”

“If you’re seeing and hearing things that other people aren’t, you get medication,” MacCool said. “We make the material, you consume it.”

“Fuck you. I just pointed out how you’re complicit in the problem and you reinforced it with an absolute?!” Jon snapped. “Like making porn available on internet and linking it so that any word automatically takes you to porn, and I don’t hear Webster complaining that all words now have sexual slant that takes you to porn! Even smart filters can’t stop kids from accidently finding porn, and though comics and video games heroines aren’t porn per say, the exaggerated figures have kids creating Tulpas without their knowledge, which also influences society, because real women can’t compete with the images on games and comics, and the ones on the

magazines in your office are so bizarre that real people are finding it impossible to find partners because they have this ideals in their head that are nonfunctional, except to someone on an esoteric magical track...”

“Jon, I got this,” Loxy interrupted Jon’s rant, patting him on his knee.

Jon’s pupils were wide. “No, I got this. I may not be speaking coherently, but I got this,” Jon said, turning back to MacCool. “I mean, you deliberately drew those females in such a way to make us salivate, better than Pavlov’s dogs, which was your method to increase the number of units being sold, which usually meant the story line was awful, like the first spider woman which is what Stan Lee admits to pushing just to hold the copy right to block the competition from a dualistic paradigm that mocks the male or female version of the original, but just the creation of the idea requires Universal balance, so someone is going to do it! And the war doesn’t end there; Stand Lee tried to create ‘Wonder Man,’ which is really funny because he did it after making Spider Woman, which means he is engaging in the exact behavior he doesn’t want the competition to engage in, and then gets sued by DC for infringement and DC wins, but then DC turns around and publishes Power Girl, a direct parallel of Power Man, and yet, the courts don’t hold a consistency law, just sorry, DC wins again, and Wonder Man got squashed, so we’re going to squash this version of me, when I am not even a real me, but just an aspect of me that is working towards a self-cure that is also Universal, but if you were just reasonable people, you could have worked together and kept the name and came up with a good story line, but you’re all bunch of idiots! Tell you what. If you will give away, for free, every copy of every classic book that is no longer covered by copy right laws, as governed by your very own rules as they stand now, not something you change tomorrow on the fact that I am making this caveat, I will consider not divulging a list of character I have or haven’t slept with just to be petty. Your people are psychic drug lord vampire whores and you got us hooked, and the consequence is that there is a street version of every comic book heroine, video game character, and their opposites, in every teenage boy’s mind, and the cure is me giving this tangential access to a magical remedy...I don’t even know what I am saying anymore.”

“It might be easier to give them the list of the ones you didn’t sleep with,” Loxy said.

“Is there anyone on that list?” John asked, his rant energy dissipating. “Hell, just trying to generate that list causes me to have an affair with the person to keep them off the list, or out pure

sympathy, because I am so not going to tell a woman she is so ugly or not right that I can't sleep with her."

"So, you would sleep with fatal attraction girl?" Loxy asked.

"Sure," Jon said.

"Even the older version of her?" Loxy asked.

"No ageism here," Jon said.

"I love you," Loxy said.

"You, Sir, and Loxy, are both absolutely certifiable, and disgusting," MacCool said.

"Would that prevent this from going to court?" Jon asked Loxy.

Loxy smiled, then frowned. "No. There's a precedent of them locking away a mentally challenge person for selling portraits of people with their favorite characters on the streets of NY," Loxy said. "Also, a very creative group of Girl Scouts offered a similar service to raise money without selling cookies, hoping to offer a healthier alternative to raise money, and their den was shut down and disbanded."

"Please tell me you're kidding," Jon said.

"You get in line, you support our licensed creators, push the products we tell you to push, and that's it," MacCool said.

"Hence the real reason why cannabis is illegal here," Loxy said. "It grows anywhere, you make paper with it, clothing with it, and it has medicinal properties that treats a variety of ailments, not everything, but so many that the pharmaceuticals can't compete. Let's face it, Jon, you and the new culture of Deviant art are a threat to the establishment."

"Good, you understand," MacCool said. "And we're not perfectly shutting you down. You could submit stories to our offices..."

"I have done that. I wrote a superbly insightful, Energy Bunny commercial, much better, and subtly funnier, but heartwarming enough that it might have become a generational classic, and it was rejected without even being opened with a letter stating we only use our own people," Jon said. "And, quite frankly, judging by the quality of their commercials, their people must be pretty stupid, and selfish, because it wasn't like I was asking for a lot of money, but it boils down to that, right, no one wants to share!"

"So, you're insulting our people by calling them stupid?" MacCool asked.

Jon bowed humbly. “Thank you for calling me out. There is probably a bureaucracy that prevents people from recognizing talent, which is also part of the establishment’s way of limiting the free market by establishing licensure and educational channels and compartmentalizing through the corporations that hold the power of legitimizing by tying up nation’s legal structure to their benefit... And, you, too, Sir, are just another cog in this machine that is suppressing intelligence in favor of mediocrity, while simultaneously lamenting the decline of society, and I must say, even your intelligence has been capped by whoever created your Tulpa-ness.”

“Excuse me?!” MacCool said.

“All personalities are Tulpas. Your personality may have been forged through experience and the fire of the real world pressures, as opposed to one that was deliberately, with love and nurture created, but created none the less, and, consequently, your self-imposed limitations have made you more of an idiot savant, capable of sorting through legal matters and arriving at legal responses appropriate to benefit you and your client like a mathematician crunching numbers, but also renders you stupid in other arenas, which is not calling you stupid per say, but you would not survive well on the streets, outside of books and law and a supporting militia. For example, here is where you excel at stupidity. You invite me, a magician, perhaps self-proclaimed, but you have clearly read my material and been educated by a team who has also read the material, which means you have been minimally exposed to my particular brand of magic, tulpamancy, and you completely ignore it as irrelevant.”

“You have no power here,” MacCool said.

“You’re right,” Jon said. “I am not going to zap you with rays or threaten your personal existence in any way.”

“Oh, Jon,” Loxy said. “You should stop.”

“It’s a bit late,” Jon said.

Loxy sighed, covered her eyes.

“What? Are you threatening me?” MacCool asked.

“How dare you, Sir. I am a magician. I don’t have to hurt or injure or threaten people. But knowing I was a magician, it was probably not a good idea on your part to hold this meeting in your office, prominently displaying photos of your trophy wife, because, if I know lawyers, your wife is probably underserve because you’re too busy screwing the clients you’re railroading into submission, or your secretaries, or both, and that photo on the top shelf there, that really got my

attention, and if you see the tennis coach in the background, kind of looks like me if you think really hard on it, which means, it probably already happened, but even if it hasn't, the seeds have been planted, and there is probably a scene somewhere playing out, in the future, maybe the past..."

"You touch my wife and I will fucking tie you up and fuck Loxy in front of you!" MacCool said, losing his cool and standing up and pointing.

Jon and Loxy were quiet, processing, neither displaying concern for their safety or anything else. Jon was interested in the fact that MacCool hadn't immediately denied sleeping with the secretary, which drew his attention to the fact that she was now blushing and had mistyped, as if stumbling. He became hyper aware of her lipstick shade, and the fact it matched the lipstick on MacCool's collar. Loxy wasn't perturbed, as that was the first thing she had noticed.

"I am curious, in what world paradigm, would harming me punish Jon, or correct a perceived grievance you have with Jon?" Loxy asked. "And, hypothetically, why are you mad at Jon? If your wife slept with him, or sleeps with him in the future, that's really on her. Even locked in a marriage contract, violating it doesn't warrant the same response you might have with someone breaking criminal law, except in your case, where you put in an infidelity clause, but only against her. There are no repercussions for you violating the contract, which is very lawyerly of you. And Jon is right to point out, if it happens, just because he wants it and he is a magician doesn't mean it will happen, it just means that the Universe will use him to make something happen, and that the whole affair was probably initiated and influenced by your lack of attention. There is always a reason why people are called trophy wives. They're object. You treat someone like an object they will eventually set out to be used, or find someone who wants to use them as an object. Clearly, there is a disconnect between the two of you. Look at the photos your displaying. What's their intent? To make you look good? Make you seem more successful? Besides, you don't have to rape me. The nature of my work is to heal people, and so if you come at me, I will embrace you and you will change. And if you change, all your relationships will change. Kind of like a baby mobile. No matter how you turn the mobile, it always goes back. But if you add weight or take weight from a single piece, the whole mobile shifts to a new configuration. Fucking me, against my will or with it, will result in changes to you; your wife may leave you or love you more fiercely. I don't know her, so, can't really do the

math. Either way, your wife will also know about your encounter with me, and will have a front row seat. If it is a legit, loving marriage, she will probably experience some negative emotions on the discovery that you cheated. Of course, if it is legit, even if it's just on her side of the equation, Jon won't be sleeping with your wife because she is committed, um, with some exceptions. If you have cheated, even if she is unaware of it, she is vulnerable to Jon's charm, the Universe likes balancing equations, so that could still play out, with the number times you cheated increasing that likelihood, so in reality, if your wife cheats, you can't really blame Jon or your wife, when you're directly responsible for your own reality. The Universe is always a mirror and you get the face you put in it. The fact you threatened to rape me, which is incredibly perverse in and of itself, is evidence that your relationship is already leaning towards negative outcomes, because no one can hold the power of continuity forever. Things change, we decline, things fall apart, and how you held things together will determine how things fall apart? How people will treat you when they fall apart. Did you walk with fear or love? You want to rape me? Go right ahead. My magic will make your head spin, and when your wife sees you hurting another person, a fellow female, provided she is not as shallow and stupid as she appears in the pictures you're displaying, she will know what kind of monster you are, and that too can have ramifications. Like voiding her infidelity clause and resulting in a huge loss of estate and money, which would be an embarrassment to you publically and to your entire family and esteem as a lawyer."

"And, with every threat you're increasing the likelihood of me spending time with your wife because of my natural desire is to rescue people from evil," Jon said. "But if you insist to on escalating, I will counter with a level 6 mage spell of defense, and lock you in the giant sand dial with batman and robin, only suspended over a tank of sharks with lasers..."

"Jon, the sharks are your enemies," Loxy reminded him.

"Oh, yeah, not sharks. Amendment. Dolphins with lasers," Jon said.

"Jon! It's against the Dolphin Accord to mechanism dolphins as weapons," Loxy said.

"Oh. Yeah, that's actually kind of fair. Puffer fish with lasers?" Jon asked.

"Isn't the sand dial enough?"

"Batman always gets out of there," Jon lamented.

"Maybe you should let this go," Loxy said. "You're not good at this escalation game."

"But his wife liked it. She wants to do it again," Jon said.

MacCool came out of his chair and over his desk. Jon took several hits before his colleagues pulled him off.

Jon brushed it off and returned to his seat. Loxy touched his face, tentatively, prepared to do a healing spell, but he blocked her. “So, now that I have been assaulted, which legal arena has the most penalties, copy right or assault?” he asked.

“Copy right,” Loxy said.

“Damn, so I baited him for nothing?” Jon asked.

“Oh, was that the plan? I thought you just wanted to fuck his trophy wife,” Loxy said.

“Who doesn’t want to fuck his wife?” Jon asked.

“Jon,” Loxy said.

“I know. She’s a person. Her name isn’t Barby, is it? Sorry, letting it go. I will think of another song. I was really hoping egging him on would give us better grounds for negotiating, though. Fine. Focus. MacCool, end this now or I will doom you all to living in the world as portrayed in the motion picture “Batman versus superman.”

“That’s the other guys,” one of the lawyer said.

“I thought you representing both,” Jon said.

“The movie was awful. DC lost viewer and readers because of that movie,” Smith said.

“I know. And I am going lock you inside that. I will make Stan Lee a prominent cameo, putting him in bed with wonder woman, with evidence that they have already had kids, and they came out mixed, Marevel DC babies.

“Jon, you really suck at this,” Loxy said.

“I will fuck both of you up and then, Jon, I will fuck your sister in front of you,” MacCool said.

“He might like that. He’s post op and looking for a boyfriend,” Jon said.

“Now, that’s pretty good,” Smith said.

MacCool looked at his colleague.

“Just saying,” Smith said.

“We own the copy right on that,” Jon said. “So, if your secretary typed that, we’re going to have to counter sue...”

Outside the building, about halfway down the street from the firm, on a nice sunny day in London, near the park, Loxy took Jon’s arm and leaned her head on his shoulder.

“So, that could have gone better,” Loxy said.

“I don’t know what came over me. Maybe the suit? I told you the suit was a bad idea,” Jon said.

“We should cut to a commercial,” Loxy said.

“Are we in that Universe?” Jon asked.

“Afraid so,” Loxy said.

“Oh, could you and our friends please be Fanta girls? I so want to see that ad,” Jon said.

“Do you really think sexy girls should be pushing sodas?” Loxy asked. “My body is a temple. I eat well, I drink water, I exercise. Let people see people that drink sodas.”

“Might not sell,” Jon said.

“Exactly,” Loxy said.

निर्मित

There is this belief that all babies are cute. That is not true. There are ugly babies. There are even unhappy babies. The camera zooms in on the latter. An unhappy toddler, 2 years old. It’s second Christmas, in the sixties. The parents are trying to shake him out of it. They unwrap a present for him. It’s a mechanical rabbit that walks and beats a drum. It is activated, set lose on the floor, and it goes about in a circle. The child seems happy. A smile emerges. The parents, relieved, go about their business, and the rabbit heads off, out the door, and is gone. The baby’s smile fades.

In the next scene, the child is older, but still in a car seat. He looks absolutely miserable, but not complaining. He merely sits lifelessly, secured to his car seat, staring out the window. The car comes to a stop and a mechanical rabbit momentarily passes the car on the matching sidewalk. The child begins to smile. The car proceeds through the light, over takes and passes the bunny. The smile fades.

We fast forwards again to find him sitting at a table, birthday hat on, five candles burning, and he is facing the cake but unhappy. Children and parents blow out the candles for him, and then kids run and play, while he sits. A mechanical rabbit passes through the kitchen, spins in place. Timmy smiles, like seeing an old friend. The rabbit spins once more, and heads back outside. Timmy returns to quiet, sullen.

We learn the child's name, due to a tag on his shirt. Little Timmy is now in school, is very unhappy, but compliant, and is sitting in his chair, a black crayon in his head, and staring out the nearby window. A mechanical rabbit comes into view. Timmy smiles. The smiles last until the rabbit passes.

We see Timmy as an adult, working, clearly unhappy but functioning. The rabbit goes by his cubicle, behind him, he doesn't even see it, but there is the hint of a smile, as if remembering.

When we next see Timmy, he is much older, sitting in a park, holding a bag of popcorn, still unhappy. He is not making an effort to feed the pigeons. They are helping themselves, sitting on his lap, his arm, one on his head. The mechanical rabbit comes by, pigeons take to the air when Timmy smiles. They return as the smile fades.

When we next see Timmy, he is in a coffin, deceased, his funeral. Family is dressed in his favorite color, black. As people file pass, saying their last farewell, the mechanical rabbit falls into line, and is the last one to pass by. Timmy smiles, it sticks, and the coffin lid closes, fading to black. Very few things go forever, but with energizer batteries, they keep going and going...

Chapter 9

Sex with monsters is actually quite good, apparently, because afterwards, Jon found himself quite satisfied, and very sleepy. Laying in the grass, looking up at the sky, the moon evidently preceding back into the day side, as evidenced by the light reflecting back from the gas giant. Which meant, what? The moon was tidally locked facing the Jovian planet. He was surrounded by monster girls, his head on Suu, and probably the most comfortable pillow he had ever experienced. Centorea was asleep on her feet, facing him, looking down over him. Jon forced himself to get up, slowly so as not to disturb his new companions, and showered under the monolith's shower, which was freezing cold and resulted in a quick, just business affair shower. He dressed.

In his mind, he heard Loxy speaking to him: "All beings, magician status or not, always get their wishes. What people don't realize is, the wish comes true as well as its most direct opposite, as well as everything in between. If you find yourself experiencing something, and it is neither intolerable nor the most pleasant, you might consider yourself grateful for not hitting an extreme. The only difference between a magician and non-magician is that the magician has a higher probability of landing more towards the ideal outcome of the wish, as opposed to the opposite. And having the complete wish come true is rarely as good as the in-between places." It felt more like listening to a Tedtalk as opposed to a parental lecture, or even a regular lecture. He wondered if he would end up in a class that she was teaching, or if the was not possible due to the nature of his relationship with her. And then he realized another truth. She was always with him. It didn't matter where he was in the Universe, when he was in the Universe, or who he was with, she was there, in his mind. Which means, she knew about the monster sex. "Jon, I am a superstar. Do you really think if I was casted with Keenu Reeves that there won't be a kissing scene?"

"I did more than kiss," Jon said.

"So did I," Loxy said. "Be at peace, Jon."

"I love you," Jon thought. He heard no response.

By the time he was dressed, the monster girls were awake.

"Where you going?" Suu asked.

"I need to explore," Jon said.

And just like that, they decided to accompany him. It wasn't long before they arrived at the spot where he first arrived and was ambushed by Rachnera. He found, discarded in the grass as if useless, his M.A.S.H mailbag and quickly grabbed it up.

"I thought I had this with me," Jon said.

"It was empty," Rachnera said.

"The entire universe is in here!" Jon corrected her.

The girls seemed skeptical. Jon proved it by drawing something out of a bag. It turned out to be girl clothes. He seemed somewhat embarrassed and was about to shove it back in, but Centorea grabbed it from him.

"You carry girl clothes in your bag?" Centorea asked.

"Umm, these are probably for you," Jon said, hoping that to be true.

Not only did they fit Centorea, they were perfectly attuned to what she would normally pick for herself. The remaining monster girls demanded they each have a new outfit. They wanted magical support bras, the kind the held the ladies up with most comfort, which would pushed them into their ideal, distracting position. Miia complained that her blouse didn't fit, and it did indeed look too small and only squashed her bosom more, and forcing the button down was likely to make a projectile missile. He tried several times to give her the next size up, but for whatever reason, it always came out the same size with the same 'push the boobs up in his face' distracting cleavage line.

"Never mind. Do you like it?" Miia asked.

"I love it," Jon said.

"I want a tighter shirt," Rachnera said.

"I want more water," Suu said.

"No," he friends said, blocking her unfair advantage for boob expansion.

While they dressed, Jon pulled clippers out of a bag to attend to a broken fingernail he had damaged while digging. The girls stopped.

"What else is in there?!" Miia demanded, grabbing the bag and looking in.

Centorea took the clippers. "OMG, no more biting my nails!"

"I want my own pair," Rachnera said.

"I want a hair brush!" Miia said.

Jon produced an assortment of grooming supplies, makeup, mirror case, torch, and produced purses so they could carry their items.

“May I have a sword?” Centorea said.

“I am not opposed to you having one, but I prefer not to produce weapons,” Jon said.

“For defense? In case Timothy comes back?” Centorea asked.

“No,” Jon said.

Centorea pouted for a moment, but the application of makeup seemed to appease her present need. Jon was baffled, as it was not like they were about to go out on the town, so there was really no need for all the fuss. When the girls were sorted, they continued their walk and arrived near the edge of their habitat. There was clearly a dome, glass wall, but they were separated by a forest of bamboo. To get there, Jon pulled out a large garden sheer, and cut a path through the bamboo. The girls demanded he use the sheers to clean several bamboo so they had perfect ‘walking staffs’ and he consented, knowing full well they weren’t just for walking. They eventually arrived at the wall and stared out across a desolate, icy landscape. It was almost perfectly flat.

“It looks cold,” Rachnera said.

“It looks lonely,” Suu said.

“It looks hungry,” Centorea said. They looked to her for an explanation. “There’s no grass.”

They left the small path Jon had made and began walking the circumference of the dome. The girls were slowing down. They did not want to go where he was heading. He stopped and they seemed relieved.

“Tell me what you’re experiencing?” Jon asked.

Each described stomach cramps and rising fear. It was clear if he was going to explore further, he was going to have to do it alone, but they were adamant that he not leave them. Then, he decided, it was time to try some magic. He took three of the bamboo poles they had collected, stuck two in the ground, a door width apart, and with Rachnera’s help, he secured the remaining one to the other two with spider web, which provided a sturdy enough arch for him to open a gateway. He had no idea if this was going to work, but by now he was determined and curious enough to try.

“What are you doing?” Suu asked.

“I am making a door way,” Jon said.

“To nowhere?” Rachnera said.

“Are you kidding, the entire universe is just through there,” Jon said, pointing. He hoped. “I just got to decide where I am sending you.”

“Sending us? We don’t want to leave you,” Miia said.

They all agreed.

“I have to explore, and you are physically or psychologically conditioned not to,” Jon said. “Besides, this the best way to secure your safety in the event something happens to me.”

“Can we go to your home,” Centorea asked.

“You don’t want to go back to where you came from?” Jon asked.

“What if you’re right, there is no place to go, or we go and we are copies, and then there are twice as many mouths to feed,” Rachnera asked.

“Can you imagine two Suus on you if you got wet?” Miia asked.

“Yeah, actually,” Jon said. He shook it off. “You want to go my place?”

“Where is your place?” Miia asked.

“Far, far away, in a time long ago,” Jon said.

“You’re messing with us?” Centorea said.

“No, I am seriously considering Centorea’s,” Jon said.

“To live, permanently?” Suu asked.

“If you like. There are lots of opportunities to explore, and my friends are there,” Jon offered. “You’d be away from here and outside of Timothy’s reach.”

They decided they would like to go. Jon touched the bamboo, closed his eyes, and came up against his first hard block: he had the sudden realization that doing this would create a permanent line of communication between Timothy’s world and his. What he wouldn’t do for a spaceship! He sorted: if there was to be true transformation, there had to be lines of communication, exchange, and risk. He pushed a wormhole and established a gateway. When he opened his eyes, he saw familiar features of the Harister Hall as seen from the moon gate. There was insufficient information through the gate to see that it had been moved, but he knew it had been moved, and was closer to the Bliss Safe Haven Campus, but on the outside of the lake, near the bridge that crossed to the island. The monster girls were impressed.

“Will we be accepted there?” Rachnera asked.

“It’s my world, if you’re there, you’re safe,” Jon said. “Now, you will be arriving near the college, and college kids can be a bit weird, but tell them you’re my friends, and ask for Loxy, or Alish, or Keera. People there will know who you’re looking for, and they will help sort you.”

“What about you?” Suu asked. “I am afraid for you.”

“Aww,” Jon said, hugging her. “I will be alright. I am fairly confident. Skeptically so, which is healthy, as opposed to the arrogant confident, that comes with blindness and gets people killed. I am alright.”

“What do we do?” Miia asked.

“Just, walk right through,” Jon said.

Miia led and came up upon a barrier like hitting a glass door. She was stunned. “Oh!”

“Wow,” Jon said. He assessed her; she was hurt, but not damaged. He then focused on the gateway. He was able to push a hand through and pull it back. He was not being magically blocked. “Wow.”

“What’s going on?” Rachnera asked.

Jon shrugged, but also gave a hands up signal to wait while he sorted. He closed his eyes and sought information, intuitively. The first words that came to his head, he muttered out loud. “Intellectual rights?! You mean property?”

“We’re property?” they all exclaimed.

Jon moved around the girls mentally, and found within each one of them an identifier, locator tag. He muttered under his breath. The monster girls became a bit concerned because the conversation Jon had next was fairly bizarre, and made him appear schizophrenic.

“Alright, how do I do this?” Jon asked. “Okay, I am not just trying to steal them to appease my sexual appetite. I actually care about their wellbeing and I am opposed to them being considered property, and I am definitely opposed to trafficking them. I appreciate that people are allowed to create thought forms, and that we do it all the time, but these are sentient, and I am attached, and I am seeking the highest possible good of all involved. I want to appeal. No, take it to my higher self, and ask my HS to speak to Timothy’s HS, and determine an arrangement. I already admitted to that, I recognized I am bias. Okay. Thank you.” There was a long pause. The girls asked him questions but he didn’t respond. “So, what I hear you saying is, as long as I am on Timothy’s side of the veil, I have to play by his rules. I am curious, and not trying to be

disrespectful, I am just seeking understanding. I thought we were like all one, the universe is one and all separation is illusion, delusion? and we should all get along, and so moving my new companions should be as simple as requesting a visa?" there was another substantial pause. "Oh. Well, yeah, I guess that makes sense. Yes, I am lying, it makes absolutely no sense to me, but I guess I don't have to understand, I just have to abide by the established protocols until alternative pathways present themselves. What's the going rate of monster girl slaves? Really! That's absurd. Are people really paying that? No, I have it. Wait, wait, wait. Let me check with my accountant."

The monster girls gave a shout and stepped back away from Jon, as a squirrel emerged from the gate, ran up and whispered something into his ear, and then back down, waved/winked at the girls, and then went back through the gate.

"I accept. The exchange has been wired. Please, unlock and disable their chips," Jon said. "Oh, forgive me. Thank you all for conversing with me. And for educating me."

When Jon opened his eyes, he might have fallen had Cenorea not caught him. He staggered, holding on to her until he regained his balance.

"What was all of that?" Rachnera said.

"It's best if you don't ask," Jon said. "I am still trying to compartmentalize it myself, so not likely to give you an explanation you can sort."

"Did you just buy us?" Miia asked, crossing her arms in front of her chest, pushing her boobs up impressively.

"Ummm," Jon said, closing his eyes, sorted, then opened and surrendered. "Yes. Technically, you're now my property, so behave."

They all lined up, crossing their arms, about to protest.

"OMG," Jon said. "I am not going to exercise property rights on you. I made the exchange because it was the best way to expedite your departure and free you of Timothy's claim on you, which, was a legit claim, and I was being blocked from pursuing a higher court by the more immediate players."

"How can it be legit?! We're free, sentient, people," Rachnera said.

"You are. And so, any social binds are generally socially agreed upon binds, even if you aren't aware of the binds," Jon said.

“We would never agree to sell ourselves to the likes of Timothy,” Centorea said, stomping a hoof.

“Have you ever wished your life was better, without defining all the possible defining qualities of what better looks like?” Jon asked. “Ever wished you weren’t where you were? That’s how these things start. Innocuous, small wishes that invite entrepreneurs...”

“Predators!” Miia said.

“Technically, not a bad distinction, but inappropriate when all exchanges are negotiated on a subtle level,” Jon said. “And in a materialistic society, people will sell a piece of their soul for a shade of lipstick and a piece of ass, and even if you don’t get the lipstick or the ass, the deal gets done, because it was about the opportunity, not the follow through, and then once they’re in, they usually resort to tactics of degradation and control to maintain their hold, because they are nurtured through the wanting, not the having.”

“That’s just sick,” Rachnera said.

“It’s the nature of parasitic organisms, to take what they need, but not so much that it kills the host outright, because that’s not in the long term interest of the parasite,” Jon said.

“Why are there are parasites?” Suu asked.

“OMG, why are we still talking, you’re free?” Jon said.

“Are you mad at me?” Suu asked.

Jon took a breath and recalibrated, bringing himself down. ‘Why am I frustrated? It was a reasonable question.’ He decided the truth was he didn’t really want to think about an answer set, because most of it would be speculative on his part. “No. I am holding a gateway and I am growing tired. Great question. I don’t have an answer.” He suddenly heard an answer inside himself. “Oh. Well that makes sense. There are no real parasites. We are all parasites, in the sense that we are dependent, at some level, upon a host. We can all get resupplied directly through source, but many creatures don’t feel worthy of source energy, so they get their needs met obliquely through other creatures. Since creatures can’t be killed by other creatures, exercising demons, or trying to kill them, has proven itself ineffective. War don’t work, it just makes more war, and makes more lost souls who feel disconnected from source, through shame and fear. Instead, the goal now is to reconnect the lost, dark ones with source so that their relationship is repaired.”

“You are really weird,” Rachnera said.

“And yet, you slept with me,” Jon said. “Twice.”

“You were available,” Rachnera said.

“You settled, which is example of subtle negotiations that lead to parasitic relationships. Lucky for you, today, I am the good guy and giving you freedom, now go through the door before I change my mind and want more sex.”

“I am okay with that,” they all said.

“Later! Go,” Jon said, ushering them towards the door.

Miia approached more tentatively, but when her hands passed through, she went all the way across. Suu was the last to go. She stopped, kissed Jon, and said, “Thank you.”

“My pleasure,” Jon said.

Suu went through the door, and Gateway closed. Jon sighed, he was alone, on an icy moon world, belonging to Timothy. “Fucking twerp,” he mumbled in the direction of Timothy.

निर्मित

Jon walked the boundary of the world until he came to a place where the bamboo thinned out and then became just wall and grass. He drew close to look out over the icy moon and in the distance spied a tube, which clearly intersected with his dome. He now had a destination, but he did not run. He walked. He arrived at a an airlock at his own speed, trying to keep his mind from too much speculative discourse, partly out of fear of creating his own monsters. He didn't think he was in that world, but then again, he was a magician and tulpas were now a real part of his life. He didn't want to deal with accidental tulpas.

The controls to the airlock were simple enough and didn't have security. Perhaps timothy was a bit cocky, or he figured his tulpa programming would prevent them from returning for reprisals. He proceeded down the tube, which floated above the ice for the most part, but occasionally rested on it, as if indicating frozen waves. It was a monotonous walk, forcing himself to check out mentally, and when he arrived, it seemed like he had just fast forwarded over the 'boring' stuff so that he could be where he needed to be. He found himself at intersection connecting four tubes. The center hub, connecting the tubes had a lift. The lift was basically a pod, and it reminded Jon of the pod you would put money in to send it to the teller from the car. He contemplated if he should follow the tubes or take the lift. He decided going in

was the answer. He opened the lift door, which swung out wards, stepped in, secured it, and pressed the lower of the two buttons.

The button illuminated. The floor opened beneath the lift and the lift fell. Falling was the operative word. It fell! Jon's feet left the floor. He was freefalling, in a glass lift, inside a vertical glass tube, through ice that was initially white tapering to black, and then into solid blackness. If not for the soft lighting from the lift buttons, and the recessed lighting of the lift floor and ceiling, he would be falling in darkness. His stomach was somewhere in his throat. His hands sought to hold onto something but found nothing. Surprisingly, after about thirty seconds of freefalling, he relaxed. Unlike Bill and ted, he didn't scream for a full five minutes.

He did, however, think about cats. Did you know, cats sometimes jump off of apartment balconies? And did you know, there is actually a study that shows survival rates. If a cat jumps from the first four floors, they mostly survive, sometimes with broken limbs. From floor four to six, survival rate diminishes, and then surprising, from 6 to 10, survival rates increase. They studied this and determined that the higher the cat was, the more likely it was to relax and go into a pose that optimized wind resistance, and so impact was minimize through relaxed muscles. Jon was curious about the use of the word 'study.' Were scientist with white coats throwing cats off of balconies to prove their theory? None the less, the same thing was seen in car crashes with humans. A human who saw the impending crash and locked down on the steering wheel and tightened their muscles inevitably ended up with injuries, especially broken bones. This also explained why drunks often survived the crashes, where the other car occupants in either car, had higher rates of injury and death. The drunk was relaxed and rolled with it. Drunks frequently survive outrageous crashes with only few scratches. They're not lucky, they're just drunk.

Jon decided he did not want to be drunk, nor a cat, but as he was falling, and so, with he had nothing else to do but relax, he embraced the fall. He peered out into the darkness. He was pretty sure it was water. He wondered what the crush depth was of his tube and lift. Clearly the glass wasn't 'glass.' Unless it was glass imbued with magic, but that would require a mage with a doctorate level spell... Oh, Fribourg could explain that. Technically, a really bored kid with a little knowledge could make a 'wonderland' that defied the natural physics, but it was unlikely that was Timothy. Most kids born in the 90's or later had the attention span of a gnat. Not their fault, exactly, as the environment pushed so much stimulus towards people it was difficult not to be considered ADHD by the age of 6. Who would have thought, 'attention' and 'awareness' and

‘frustration tolerance’ is a learnable skill, not something people were born with. Jon was faced with crediting Fribourg or raising his esteem of Timothy. He decided to suspend speculation and just go with it.

A light fluoresced in the distance. Then another. More flashing lights, as if he was descending through a layer of fireflies. And then the world light up! Giant, illuminated jelly fish. Darting glowing torpedoes with arms, like squid. Strange fish that were more torpedo shaped than Earth fish shape shot by, twirling tails to propel themselves. Schools of flat fish, with no eyes, swam together. Some fish had eyes, but they were positioned on the center line of the fish, as opposed to closer to the top, that might indicate a preferred ‘up.’ Strange, floating things with tentacles ending in round eyes like structure, which was all eye with a single filament running the length of bulb ending to the stalk, as if it were a light bulb, only it absorbed light instead of projected it. Jon imagined the creatures could see in three dimensions with that one eye, its blind spot being the point it attached to the stalk, or tentacle. Something very similar to a whale shark pushed past, a giant funnel face ramming in huge quantities of water, and if the whale shark analogy was right, it was eating microscopic creatures, perhaps similar to plankton.

The lift began to decelerate, indicated by the fact his feet were coming naturally, slowly to the floor. As the lift continued to decelerate, he found he became heavier. He was relieved he wasn’t going to go flat on the surface like a pancake, but was also happy to be slowing down enough to enjoy the surrounding show of exotic aquatic life.

The lift landed on an appropriate size pedestal, allowing him to walk down stairs to the floor. The lift ended in a pocket bubble, glass, and he could see the sea floor. There was a larger domed structure behind him, his destination, but he wanted to watch the ‘steam’ rising from the vents, and the wild array of diversity taking advantage of the energy. Tube worms the size of trees, illuminated by manmade lights, perhaps Timothy’s habitat lights or intentional illumination to wipe out the darkness, so when looking out into the blackness of this ocean’s depth, it wasn’t so lonely. The floating glowing fish were higher up.

When his boredom of fish watching increased to the point he was ready to wonder to the next station, as if this was nothing more than an aquatic park, he headed for the airlock and passed through to the other side. A figure stepped up out of the shadow. The lights that traced the outline of the room went from soft yellowish orange to a red.

“Identify yourself, intruder,” she said. Long dark hair and an exaggerated female form, like a video game character pushed to extremes by an adolescent male on steroids, almost had Jon appreciating Timothy’s work. Clearly, this was a tulpa, and she was barely contained in her bikini style loincloth combo which might have been a darker alternate history of Egypt. Her necklace was back, and fanned out like keys on a circular piano. She was covered with symbols and script tattoos.

“Um, hello,” Jon said. He was pretty sure he was looking at a version of the Enchantress.

“Wrong answer,” she said. “Access denied.”

She drew back her arm, the tattoos fluoresced moving towards her hand, and a ball of light emerged; she tossed it like a baseball. A thousand teeth flew at Jon. Jon blocked with a shield, and they were stopped, or rolled around him, but all clattered to the floor.

The Enchantress smiled. “Magician?!” she said. “Very well, we’ll do this the hard way.”

She pushed through Jon shield as if it was just a trick of light, and threw a punch, which Jon blocked, unconsciously, retreating. He could only retreat to the wall or door. He ended up against the wall, both his hands up, arms crossed, her arms tangled up in his, and in her struggle to extricate herself from the block, had turned her back to him. He dropped his arms and held her, bear hug. She kicked and screamed a scream to increase the force of her kick, and stomping on his foot hurt. It didn’t cause him to let go. This was called a “SAMA” hold, which he had learned working as a tech on a psych ward that enabled him to prevent a person from harming themselves or someone else.

“Okay, fine, I underestimated your prowess in grappling range,” the Enchantress said. “Let me go.”

Jon let go. She immediately elbowed him the gut, and turned to punch him with fast and furious fists. He was not in a position to regain a hold, due to protecting his face, so he pushed forwards into her, forcing her to retreat, so that he could again retreat. She suddenly had a knife, and like Kirk in every fight he had ever been in, suddenly Jon’s shirt was cut, and a line of blood went across his chest. His first thought was, the material in the 23rd century was pretty flimsy, followed by ‘ouch, that hurt,’ then by, ‘damn, this is serious and she could hurt you,’ which caused him to retreat, only retreating caused him to fall, and he fell because his pants were down at his feet. Her “Zorro” swipe with her knife had also cut his belt and pants, and they had gone to

his ankles. The Enchantress pounced on him, straddling him, driving her knife towards his heart, both hands on the hilt.

Jon blocked, holding the knife at bay.

“Shhh, it is okay, baby,” the Enchantress. “Just relax, and let this happen.”

Jon had flashbacks to “saving Private Ryan,” and this was the one scene in the whole movie that disturbed him the most. Of course, this was different in the fact that this wasn’t a war, and the attacker was deadly seductive, and her calm, hypnotic voice, the voice of a true magician, was pushing through his strength in increments.

“That’s right,” the Enchantress said. “This is going to happen. Let it be easy. Struggle less. Look into my eyes.”

Jon tried to rock, so he could roll her off, but she rocked her hips in counter balance. And revealed two things: something he had always wanted to know, was there something under her loin cloth, and now he knew. No. And, two, he had an erection. The Enchantresses eyes narrowed, and the pleasantness from assumed victory diminished.

“In your dreams,” the Enchantress said.

“Either you get off, or I will get off,” Jon warned.

The Enchantress laughed. “We’ll see who penetrates who first,” she said.

Jon again tried to roll her, and she resisted, which helped in terms of solidifying his position, and with a surprise thrust of hips, pushing her butt with thighs, she was lifted sufficiently that when she came back down, they were united. She gasped, but did not surrender her position or the knife. She was now closer to his heart. With each inhale, his chest touched the tip of the knife.

The Enchantress did not lose her cool, or at least, did not show it. Her eyes were fierce. Her determination resolved. In her eyes, Jon was as good as dead. And then, an evil grin spilled over her lips. She started gently rocking her hips.

“What are you doing?” Jon asked.

“Putting you to sleep, dear,” the Enchantress said.

Jon laughed. “You assume that I will fall asleep after I cum,” Jon said.

“Most men do, but even if you don’t, I will push the knife through in your moment of weakness, when ecstasy robs you of your strength,” the Enchantress said.

“Make a deal,” Jon said.

“Why? I am clearly in the superior position. You’ve lost,” the Enchantress said.

“If you cum first, you let me live,” Jon said.

The Enchantress laughed, and Jon was able to push her hands up. She stopped and resumed her effort, leaning into the knife, grinding harder against him. “I don’t think so.”

“The harder you grind, the more likely you will cum,” Jon said.

“Your words have the power of a hypnotist, but you should know, I have never orgasmed,” the Enchantress said.

“Seriously? Would you like to?” Jon asked.

“I am seriously about to kill you and you’re worried that I have never gotten off?” the Enchantress said.

“It could explain your darkness. I might be able to lighten your load,” Jon said.

“I like my darkness where it is and your load, though insignificant in weight, isn’t likely to lighten me,” the Enchantress said.

“We’re both burning calories, losing weight,” Jon said.

“Do you always hold conversations with people trying to kill you?” the Enchantress asked.

“Usually. Especially when I am getting fucked at the same time,” Jon said.

“And, like most men, you just assume that you’re so good you can get me off through penetration alone,” the Enchantress said.

“Well, no, as a Texan, I believe I should get a woman off through oral before I take my turn, but your death foreplay kind of changed the dynamics of my preferred interaction,” Jon said.

The Enchantress stopped her grinding and Jon nearly was able to separate her hands. She refocused her efforts.

Jon smiled. “Just relax, let it happen.”

“Fuck you,” the Enchantress said, putting some weight into the knife. “I will not be overpowered by your hypnotic words.”

“The more to you lean into the knife, the more your body moves towards orgasm,” Jon said.

“Shut up!” the Enchantress said.

“The quieter I am, the more you can focus on the sensations welling up inside you,” Jon said. “Notice the change in your breathing. Notice the fullness of me inside you.”

“You’re still going to die,” the Enchantress said.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “In rapture, watching the beautiful agony followed by relief and bliss. Notice how still you are, and yet, the more you lock down on your muscles, the more rigid you are, the greater the relief. Oh! Did you just squeeze down there, or are you tightening in preparation for the inevitable?”

“Oh, god, this can’t be happening,” the Enchantress said.

“You wear loin cloths and grapple opponents, and you’re surprised?” Jon asked, pushing into her arms enough to shift her weight subtly back through her body. “All my precum mixing with your wetness.”

“I’m not wet!” the Enchantress argued.

“You’re are rain. You may not be happy, yet, but you are a river, hot, flowing, the movement of tides,” Jon said.

“OMG,” the Enchantress said, her head tilting back and exposing the full length of her neck. She sunk into her hips, her thighs tightening, her body quivering.

Jon took the moment to push, and she went to the floor, but her legs locked, dragging him with her, so that now he was on top. He pinned her wrists to the floor above her head, the hilt of the knife still clenched in her hands. She locked down with her legs, hugging him, unable to stop her grind as she powered through the next wave of her of orgasm. Jon gave in, matching her rhythm, and without much effort, surrendered to his own release, doing what biology has done for millions of years. He closed his eyes, wanting to just rest a moment on top of her, to just lie upon her breast, his lips against her neck, and then he remembered the knife forced himself not to get all comfortable. When he opened his eyes, he found that the Enchantress was not below him, but instead her alter ego, June Moon. The knife clattered to the floor. She had a surprised look on her face, the soundless ‘oh’ that meant she had felt it all too, but was still kind of surprised to be in the realizing othe ‘now’ with a man she had never met full inside her. June came, too. When she finished shaking she spoke.

“Stand by. Paradigm shift,” June said. Her voice was gentle, almost too high in favored pitch to be an adult. Her dress was a silvery, sleeveless moon color slip, hiked up to expose her legs and accommodate Jon’s presence, and pulled down, as if their tussle had pulled it from her

breast, or perhaps she had pulled it down. She smiled as Jon's eyes met the twins. "Penile biometric scan suggests the presence of Jon. Chemical analysis of the sperm confirms power user. Over-soul has granted full authority to overwrite security features. Access granted. Re-authorizing all codes to new user."

The subdued lighting went from crimson to reflected moon color, with a hint of blue. June's eyes focused as if she had been channeling something. She quivered, reached up to hug Jon, and pulled him close, "OMG, thank you," June said.

"Um, okay," Jon said.

"That was awesome," June said.

"So, if I get up, you're not going to kill me?" Jon asked, pulling back to look at her.

"Of course not, Jon," June said. "You're my user."

"You're telling me, Timothy's security feature is to fuck the Enchantress for access?" Jon asked.

"No, Timothy rapes her, then rapes me for full access," June said. "However, apparently, your over soul and his over soul have agreed to this arrangement. Apparently, you have to do something, which will require full access. And that's where I came in."

"So, technically, you're not June Moon, and your alter isn't the Enchantress?" Jon asked.

"I think I am June Moon," June said, thinking about it. "But this is weird, I also recognize some inconsistencies, as if I am the AI for this base. Deviation! I think we should change my name."

"Shall I call you Luna?" Jon asked.

"That's crazy!" June asked.

"Well, you kind of got that double personality thing going," Jon said.

"I am not bipolar," June said.

"Absolutely you're not. Alternating egos, or rapidly changing emotional states, is not the definition of bipolar," Jon agreed. "How about Jade?!"

"Oh! I like Jade. Jade, Jade Moon, Jade rabbit, like the Chinese moon goddess thing, and you just unlocked the waters of immortality," June going to Jade giggled.

"Clever," Jon said. "Wish I had drank it."

"You still can," Jade said.

"Um, wait, wait, wait..." Jon said sorting this.

“What, not going to drink it because you came inside me?” Jade asked.

“No, it’s mine, why would that bother me,” Jon asked.

“Most men get freaked out by sperm, even when it’s theirs,” Jade said.

“Yeah, well, me, not so much, unless I came in your mouth and you were going to spit it in my mouth, I might resist that. You can swallow it or spit it into a towel and I will still kiss you, knowing some got passed in the intimacy, but I am not going to want to drink from a cup or anything like that,” Jon said.

“How about in a pastry?” Jade asked.

“Not so much,” Jon said.

“Okay, anyway, I think I interrupted a question?” Jade asked.

“I am just curious why Timothy didn’t make a retina scanner, or a finger print scan for security,” Jon said.

“As opposed to a penile biometric scan, followed by genetic confirmation through the analysis of sperm?” Jade asked.

“Yep,” Jon said.

“How many people are going to rape a security system just to get access?” June asked. “Especially if that security system is trying to kill you.”

“Good point,” Jon said.

“And if you killed the Enchantress, you get permanently locked out, and other safeguards start getting implemented, like, filling the entire base with freezing water, with the initiation of a countdown to full station destruction,” Jade said.

“But, that means, even Timothy has to rape the Enchantress to get access?” Jon asked.

“He’s Timothy,” Jade pointed out.

“Does that mean every time I leave and come back, I have to do that?” Jon asked.

“You don’t like my alter?” Jade asked.

“I love your alter, I just don’t want her trying to kill me because I want access,” Jon said, sorting his statement after the fact if he had said what he thought he was intending to say.

“We could alter the initial engagement protocol, but it will still require penile insertion and chemical analysis,” Jade asked.

“Alright, reduce the lethality set to mild tussle leading towards increased likelihood of penile insertion,” Jon said. “I hate to say this, but I kind of like Timothy’s security system.”

“I noticed,” Jade said, referring to the fact he was getting hard again. “Ready for another round?”

“Would you mind?” Jon asked.

“You’re the user,” Jade said.

“From here out, you have a say in who uses,” Jon said.

“You’re making me wet. Grind it, now,” Jade said.

निर्मित

Jesús Garcia was a thin man, not drastically underweight, nor malnourished, just thin, and likely the result of a diet that consisted of little meat, and lots of fresh produce, and no processed foods, sugar, wheat, or canned food. He had the hands of a worker, strong, calloused, which meant, even if he wasn’t working at the hospital, he was either working in a private garden, or helping others with lawn work. If Loxy guessed, she would have intuited that he preferred working with plants than people, and so he likely spent all of his free time in nature. She could see him in worn clothes, with a bag, out collecting fresh herbs and fruits.

Sara introduced Loxy to the lead nurse, Enedelia Moreno. She spoke Portuguese first, Spanish second, English third, and, surprisingly, she also spoke Arabic. She was surprised that Loxy also spoke the same, and their exchange rate quickened to the point that sometimes they were jumping languages and using idioms, mostly practical medical concepts, and making it difficult for listeners to keep up with them.

Enedelia hugged Loxy like a sister. “How is it you speak Portuguese?” Enedelia asked.

“Don’t laugh. My dearest friend had a huge crush on Xuxa,” Loxy said. “He doesn’t speak a lick of Portuguese, or Spanish, but he knows the words to every song, and has every album. The crush diminished after she married the soccer player,” Loxy said.

“Well, it usually takes a woman to motivate a man to take his first steps towards developing language, I suppose music is a good a place to start as any,” Enedelia said.

Loxy laughed and agreed. “So, are you in charge, or do I need to speak to a Doctor?”

“No Doctor, and no one is in charge. We share authority here,” Enedelia said.

Loxy was curious about how that was going to work, but chose not to explore it here. “Hence why there are no Doctors,” Loxy guessed.

“Pretty much,” Enedelia laughed. “There are many on the stations, but I am betting they are the last ones to get terrestrial privileges.”

A shift of guardians came in and began to manipulate Jesús through rehab, moving arms and legs through points of articulation, levitating him off the bed in order to change sheets. This was something she was used to at Safe Haven so it didn't occur to Loxy to ask how they learned to levitate folks. She watched the care Jesús was giving, and it was delivered with the utmost care. It was love. And one of the girls sang to him.

“We always talk to him, or sing,” Enedelia said.

“That's brilliant,” Loxy said. “And no response?”

“Not yet,” Enedelia said. “The girls are competing to see who can wake him first. They bring in new foods every day, trying to arouse him through smells. Lots of music has been here. Midori climbed naked into bed with him, thinking no man could resist a naked woman, much less her.”

“She assumes she has to win this because she is first and has an expectation that that means something more than just being first,” Sara said.

“You haven't corrected her misunderstanding?” Loxy asked.

“I am a telepath, not a counselor,” Sara said. “My function isn't to police everyone's thoughts.”

“That seems fair. But it must be difficult for you, all these adult thoughts all the time,” Loxy said.

Sara smiled. It seemed genuine, like someone being polite. “Don't do that. Like I said, I have a counselor. I have a team. There is no need for you to establish rapport with me. Your presence here has been accepted and ratified or you would not be here, or on any of the 20 worlds under Jesús direct steward ship.”

“Oh,” Loxy said, considering. “Am I rapport building?”

“It's what you do. You do it so naturally, most the time you don't even know you're doing it,” Sara said.

“And is that a bad thing?” Loxy asked.

Sara seemed to struggle with that. It took a longer moment to process than the normal, practical stuff. “No, Loxy. I don't know how else to draw this boundary. Between your natural talents towards rapport building and my telepathy, you and I will have boundary issues, and I

don't want to be enmeshed. I also don't want to be your friend. Nothing personal. It's just that my head is full."

Loxy brought her hands to Namaste and touched her lips and the tip of her nose as she bowed. "I accept your boundary and will try and keep that in mind."

Enedelia had not interrupted, nor did she seem focused on it, but due to her proximity, it was difficult to feign doing something else. She, too, had already had such a conversation with this child. The child lived here, and interacted superficially with most of the people, but she was in her own world most of the time. She interacted with Midori and Truest more than any of the other 'Physicals,' but she had a dozen or so invisible friends, one they knew by the name Summer.

"You two seem reasonably acquainted. If you will excuse me, I am going for my nap. If you need anything, Loxy, just ask the Air, it will come. Enedelia, perhaps you can assist her in getting quarters."

"Of course," Enedelia said.

They bowed to Sara and Sara departed.

"Wow," Loxy said, after Sara was out of the room. And then regretted it. Given Sara's range, she would hear any after thoughts.

"Just be yourself and real. Even if you can hide your thoughts from yourself, you can't hide them from her," Enedelia said.

"Oh? You're psychic, too?" Loxy asked.

Enedelia sorted it. "Everyone is psychic. Everyone from the end time is actively psychic. It was the first ability to turn on, en mass, everyone was entrained. You can't put ten billion people on a planet and not get entrainment. However, my telepathic sphere of influence has shrunk to the point that I require physical touch to have a conscious exchange, allowing for my ability to heal to blossom. There are exceptions. I have some core people that I am tuned into and can converse with, some with effort, Sara with no effort, and unconsciously, every human is connected, but you already know that."

"Yeah," Loxy said. "What did she mean by ask the air?"

"You come from a world without Interactive AI?" Enedelia asked.

"Umm, tell me more?" Loxy asked.

“It might easier to show you,” Enedelia said. “Bell, could you make yourself visible please?”

A tiny, green spark of energy illuminated before them, blossomed to about the size of a backset ball. Inside, a small sprite, very much like Tinker Bell, hovered, smiling. “How may I be of service?”

“Oh?!” Loxy clapped. “How marvelous.”

“A new user?” Bell asked. “Ah, Loxy. Of course.”

“You know me?” Loxy asked, delighted.

“Everyone has an active user profile, which anyone can view. No secrets within the 20,” Bell said. “Ah, you need more info. I am a sentient interface for a Super-Interactive, Alternative Intelligent, Educational and Entertainment platform design to simulate in a metaphoric way what spiritual teachers and gurus have been trying to describe for years. It is the hope of this system that by allowing all sentient beings to access at their level of understanding and advancing through the levels available, that they will be able to access the spiritual realms above. Please note, I use the archaic word, spiritual, due to your level of understanding, and that I am not necessarily ascribing to a particular spiritual tradition, but recognizing that there is definitely something more than what we perceive in the physical reality. Would you like me to expound?”

“No, I think you said it all,” Loxy said. “Do you have a name?”

“This particular personification answers to Bell, and I am Enedelia’s preferred guide for this system,” Bell said. “At any time, if you have a need you may address the Air, and you will get a response. You may designate a preferred interactive guide, or partner, to avoid confusion.”

“You are limited to voice activation?” Loxy asked.

“No. I am privy to your thoughts, and I can respond to your thoughts, if you prefer, but for convenience, we have agreed to some sort of physical interaction, or voice command, to access my functions, mostly for clarity sake,” Bell said.

“What are your functions?” Loxy asked.

“I am capable of providing a plethora of educational and entertainment opportunities,” Bell said. “I can also preform practical functions, such as producing clothes, tools, food, rendering emergency medical services. I am quite versatile.”

“And everyone has access?” Loxy asked.

“Everyone has access. Every user has self-imposed limitations, and I have imposed severe limitations on those in the stations until they have met minimum standards as established by the Great Consensus,” Bell said.

Loxy laughed and clapped her hands again. “Jon would so love this. Oh! This is so funny,” Loxy said.

“What’s funny?” Endelia asked, wanting to share.

“Forgive me,” Loxy said. “I am happy!”

“Can you share?” Enedelia asked.

“It may not translate, but, okay. Um, Jon and I were discussing the nature of God recently, and we proposed a theory that we are all tulpas. But we also speculated that we were simulations, which is not a new idea. Campbell, Talbot, many other, even Einstein and Plank kept coming up with this road block that space/time was an illusions. Anyway, if the goal is to create and refine consciousness, and everything is consciousness, and humans are one of the many byproduct of advancements in consciousness, and we build a computer system that becomes so sophisticated that it becomes sentient, then we have just modeled a higher reality, and here I am engaging a sentient computer, the way I might like to interface with Jon, and the way he would like to Interface with God...”

Bell laughed, glowing brighter. Enedelia seemed perplexed. “How is that funny?”

“Profound can be very funny,” Bell said. “So, the question is, Loxy, what everyone is having to grapple with, like an exam question; If you knew that everyone alive had access to a button, that when pressed, detonated a nuclear bomb, would you push the button and kill everyone?”

“Of course not!” Loxy said, not amused.

“Would you allow the button to exist?” Bell asked.

“No. No one should have that much power,” Loxy said.

“But the button exists,” Bell said.

“But there are angry people and crazy people...” Loxy began.

“So, you just elevated your consciousness above everyone else’s,” Bell said. “You’re superior?”

Loxy processed it. “Superior is not the right word,” Loxy said, still processing it. “I am in a place where I would not want to cause harm.”

“But you would limit the freedom of others to block them from causing harm?” Bell asked.

“I..” Loxy stopped herself. “I do value freedom to choose. I need to reflect further.”

“Fair enough. We could come back to this, if you like. But you should know, this is the fundamental question facing humanity, and what must be answered by the people here. If everyone is sovereign, truly equal in power and knowledge, but disparate in wants and needs, how shall we proceed as a species?” Bell asked. “In the 20 world’s experiment, all physical needs will be met, and the 42 million people will be allowed to populate these worlds and explore and or evolve the next level of society.”

This was bigger than she had imagined and she did not envy the decisions Jesús was making, and she believed he was not making them in a vacuum. The practicalities of keeping 42 million people on space stations throughout the twenty world was also not a small thing.

“I would like to meet with someone on one of the stations,” Loxy said, providing Timothy’s name.

“You may communicate with any one of the 42 million virtually, but it will not be possible to meet until they have completed their educational requirements,” Bell said. “And I doubt you will be able to communicate with Timothy, as he is resistant to the program.”

“I am not sure why he is even here. Didn’t you choose like the best and the brightest?” Loxy said.

“We didn’t choose. Humanity chose,” Bell said.

“I need to meet with Timothy, in person,” Loxy said.

“Again, that is not possible,” Bell said. She explained further, that the 42 million are encapsulated in pods, immersed in fluids, and kept in a semi-hibernative states. They interact with the system through immersive virtual tech.

Loxy seemed confused.

“Basically, their bodies are plugged directly into the Matrix,” Enedelia said.

“Haven’t seen it, yet. Jon keeps recommending it, but, there are so many movies I need to catch up with,” Loxy said. “And I think I understand, except, I saw Timothy up and about.”

Bell paused, accessing levels of information. She nodded. “What you witnessed was your subjective interpretation of what he is presently experiencing virtually.”

“So, he is in a cell?” Loxy said. “Even if it’s in his mind. Wait wait wait. He is hooked up to a computer system, with 42 million other minds in a potentially collective simulation?”

“This is no difference than everyone being connected through the Collective Unconscious,” Bell said.

“Accept the immediacy of this system and the level of control and blocks...” Loxy began a list.

“Are exactly the same, in parallel, diminished form. Potentially, everyone will earn the ability to speak with the others, but that has not happened yet. Folks are too busy grappling with their own changes in reality functions,” Bell said.

“I want you to pull Timothy from the system,” Loxy said. “Bring him down here so I can work with him.”

“That is not permissible,” Bell said.

“Perform an override,” Loxy said. “Seek out whatever authority you need, but I need this. I want you to bring down Timothy. Oh, and Samuel Clemmons, for sure. I saw him.”

“Early extraction is problematic,” Bell said.

Loxy nodded. “Maybe. But, you wanted me to help wake Jesús,” Loxy began. “and I need this.”

“You’re making your help conditional?” Enedelia interrupted.

“Of course, not. I have an idea, though. How do I want to sort this?” Loxy said, closing her eyes. She went into a relaxed state, sufficiently changing her brain waves that she was instantly in ‘meditative mind.’ Jon stepped up to her and he provided a list of five other people that he wanted her to pull. Loxy read the list. “Are you sure?”

“Pretty sure,” Jon assured her.

“You’re not bias?” Loxy asked.

“Extremely bias, but it will be alright,” Jon assured her, and then he had a puzzled look as if something was about to happen, and even had a look like, ‘Oh, not again,’ but he hugged her, then stepped back and gave into the process. He vanished behind a deluge of light. She opened her eyes, shaking off a surge of energy that went up her spine. “Alright, this is what I want to happen.”

Chapter 10

Jon found himself suddenly aware and hovering above a gold lamp. Judging by his own glow reflected in the eyes of the beholder, he must have been the primary light source in the room. Indeed, he found a single candle lit, which was hardly even as bright as a single Christmas tree light, and it seemed inconsequential to his own projected aura. A girl sat before him, inside a circle made of chalk on the floor, her bed shoved all the way across the room. Jon, and the golden lamp he was extended from, was inside a pentagram inside her circle. He sighed, exhausted already. The girl was a heavy young lady, dressed fairly dowdy looking, like the kind of girl in a movie who was intended to be the heroine after being remade who, afterwards, would suddenly be 'wanted' by the hero; only, there was no chance even Hollywood magic was going to spin this girl into American paradigm highlight. She was sitting crossed legged on the floor, her hands clasped together in excitement, almost prayer like.

“OMG,” she exclaimed. “It worked. You’re real!”

Jon tried not to telegraph his concerns as he sorted the situation. He tracked it well. The last time he was here in this world, there was spoiled prince involved and a bit of chaos ensued. How long had he been away from this world’s perspective time line? There was a light switch, so they had at least progressed to an electric society.

“My name is Julie and I wish to be attractive,” Julie said.

Jon’s eyes glazed over as the power of the Jinn expressed itself through the vehicle of Jon-ness. “Granted,” Jon said.

Julie clapped, jumped up, which was more like shifted her body weight and used both arms to stand, and then shuffled quickly to her dresser’s mirror with all of her accumulated bottles of perfume, and items of makeup, and a wig on a fake head, and a jewelry box, and the candle. The excitement drained away to reveal severe disappointment.

“I look exactly the same,” Julie said. She turned to him. “Why would you do that to me?”

Jon noticed the scarring on her arms and realized he was dealing with a person struggling with years of pain. He would never use the word ‘crazy.’ There are no crazy people, only people suffering. Was she unstable? Unlikely. Which meant, he needed to go even more gently as he navigated the surface reality between them.

“Julie,” Jon said, with the utmost kind voice he could muster without it coming across as fake. “Magic is no respecter of cultural norms and so, your wish was so vague in definition that resulting magic simply reinforced the existing framework, like pushing water through a sieve. There is nothing inherently wrong with you and you are attractive in your own, unique way...”

“Oh, what a crock...” Julie began.

“Julie,” Jon interrupted her. You don’t want to use words like shit after exercising a powerful transformation spell. “I want to help you. You got two wishes left. Let’s work together to create something that works for you. Because even if you rephrase the wish and merely change your form, you will not have completed a subsequent emotional change. The only person who wields that kind of magic is you. You may look different, but you will still feel the same, and it is that emotional feel that will influence others, and that, in a beautiful frame, results in even more abuse than what I suspect you have already experienced.”

“What do you know about abuse?!” Julie snapped.

“I have no clue what your life is like. Maybe you could teach me,” Jon said.

“I know your type. You will give me what’s legally entitled and then you’re gone,” Julie said.

“If you’re afraid of being used now, you definitely don’t want to be beautiful without a corresponding increase in emotional awareness and wisdom,” Jon said.

“You think I am immature?” Julie asked.

“Well, you could be borderline,” Jon said.

“How old do you think I am?” Julie demanded.

She hadn’t understood his psychological label, which meant something, too. “Um, emotionally 6, and intellectually high school sophomore,” Jon answered without hesitation.

“You can’t talk to me like that! You don’t know me. You don’t know anything, stupid,” Julie said, running away, emotionally without leaving the room.

Jon sighed, contemplated options for a moment, and then pursued, emotionally, noticing the difference in the mind world and her physical world, and at a leisure pace, he reconnected with her as she was sitting on a merry go round at an empty playground, crying. He approached, quietly, and sat with her. She eventually stopped the water work, wiping her nose on her sleeve and turned away. His use of borderline was unfair, but fortunately, she didn’t have knowledge of what it meant so she couldn’t process it.

“You should go,” Julie said.

“Unfortunately, we are entangled until this matter is sorted,” Jon said.

“You mean I have to wish you away?” Julie said.

“It would waste a wish and not get the results either of us want,” Jon said.

They sat there for a moment in quiet, till Jon grew bored and pushed with his feet to cause the merry go round to rock to and fro.

“Stop it. You’re making me sick,” Julie said.

Jon rose and stood in front of her. He held out his hands to steady himself, as he was suddenly dizzy, but that was because he was standing in two worlds, her apartment bedroom and an empty playground. “We need to discuss...”

“I don’t want to hear anything negative,” Julie said.

“How is that useful?” Jon asked.

“What?”

“The world is full of positive and negative, light and dark, good and bad, male and female, and shutting your eyes to one aspect completely limits your ability to navigate,” Jon said.

“I don’t understand what you’re saying. But I won’t tolerate abuse from you,” Julie said.

“Good for you,” Jon said.

“What?” Julie asked.

“You shouldn’t tolerate abuse from anyone, yay you for declaring a boundary,” Jon said. “Hearing me say something you perceive as negative is not abusive, just as a dentist giving you a shot is not harm.”

“I hate dentists! And how is calling me a six year old not abusive?” Julie asked.

“I did not call you six years old,” Jon clarified. “You asked how old I thought you were and my response was an intuitive assessment that was merely a descriptive value that indicates location on a continuum which informs me of optimum relational interaction strategies.”

“What?” Julie asked.

“Knowing where you are helps define our relationship,” Jon said.

“We aren’t in a relationship,” Julie snapped, pointing a finger.

“I am using a broader definition of relationship...”

“You’re calling me stupid again?” Julie demanded, and might have stood if Jon wasn’t standing so close to her.

“OMG, I never called you stupid!” Jon said. “You hear stupid because...”

“You just called me stupid again...” Julie wailed.

“Julie, labels are not always disparaging. They merely indicate locations on a map. It could indicate direction to go, if you want to use it to define progress, but I don’t view progress as being necessarily linear. If we need to go back and discover what happened in your past, that can be progressive, too,” Jon said.

Julie became tearful. “I am not going to my past and you can’t make me! And you can’t make me go to the high school reunion either!”

“I get the sense you were bullied,” Jon began.

Julie wailed and threw herself face down on the merry go round because she was blocked from fleeing. Hiding eyes, like the game peek-a-boo, was a practical tactic of escape for a six year old. The only thing more she could have done was covered her ears with her hands.

“I wi...”

Jon blocked. She suddenly couldn’t speak. She seemed horrified. She sat up, touching her face. It felt numb, like having an injection from a dentist.

“Sorry, I am blocking you from executing your next two wishes dues to excessive emotionalism,” Jon said.

“You can’t do that!” Julie snapped. “You have no right...”

Jon cringed. Technically, she was right. And why should he care? No self-respecting Jinn would suffer a fool. They would give their wishes and be gone, probably departing while leaving a demonic, evil laugh to echo in their wake. And though he would not laugh, or depart wishing malice on a person, he was overstepping his ‘Jinn’ authority.

“I really wi...” Julie tightened her fists and screamed. “I just want Jeremiah to love me!”

“If you wish that, you will have wasted another wish and for no visible gain,” Jon said. “Because he loves you for who you are.”

“He doesn’t love me!” Julie said. “Why do I get the moron Jinn?! I want another Jinn.”

“You summoned a Jinn, you get who they send, that’s it,” Jon said. “Now, shut up and listen.”

“How dare you, talk to me that way?!” Julie said. “I am in charge of you...”

Jon closed his eyes as she ranted.

“Don’t tune me out...” Julie went on.

He was not tuning her out, but trying to understand why he had just snapped at her. He had developed significant patience over the years, and yet, somehow, this young lady had single handedly busted through some of his shielding and triggered an emotional response. He sought it and understood that he was not responding to her, but one of his own inner children, who, very much like her, wanted to scream and throw a fit and be righteous in indignation, only when he had done this his family of origin had come down on him so hard his life had nearly been extinguished, and so Jon's inner child surrendered to a level of control, not wisdom per say, that allowed the present Jon to evolve. She had never learned this kind of restraint. Jon hugged his inner child and comforted him, as well as thanking him for his present level of insight. He could now proceed with less frustration.

"I expect you to deliver..." Julie was still going on.

Jon brought his hands together and bowed humbly to her. "May I speak?"

Julie stood from the merry-go round put her hands on her hip. They were fully back in her room and almost too close. In the merry-go-round world, Jon had had to take a step back. She waited silently for him to speak without having given permission. She was close enough he feel the heat from her bossom.

Jon assumed she had granted him permission to speak. "First, I apologize for blocking your second wish. I was out of line. Second, I raised my voice. I am sorry. I, too, have a history of abuse and I was not responding to you personally, but to a past situation. It is likely that I will experience additional emotions while being with you, but if you will grant me a little patience, I will endeavor to be as real with you, as you are being with me. Third, in your rant, you spelled out conditions which I am favorable to. I want to deliver high end quality wishes. Most Jinn could care less, they just want to get back to their lives and this wish nonsense is at best a day job, at worse community service for crimes. With your permission, I will work with you to scaffold the spells in such a way that you get the most for your money, so to speak."

"I am not paying for these wishes," Julie said.

"Everyone pays for magic," Jon assured her.

"I am not paying..." Julie insisted.

"Let me be very clear on this point. If you can't afford the consequences, don't make wishes," Jon said. He held up a hand and requesting he be permitted to speak, while asking her to

be quiet. “The price is universal and I have no control over that. Everything in the Universe is permitted, but it always comes with consequences, and balance.”

“You make it sound evil. Why can’t people just have what they want?” Julie asked.

“Great question,” Jon said. “My personal answer is, what fun would that be? If we’re in a game and everyone has everything, what’s the motivation to keep playing?”

“Life is not a game,” Julie said. “My feelings are real. My wants are real. Why is there evil in the world?”

“Your feelings are real. Your wants are real. Your suffering is real,” Jon agreed. “And again, this is my personal answer, there is no evil.”

“Only someone evil would say that, and it’s why you’re bounded in several circles...”

Jon stepped down from the lamp, proceeded to walk out of the circles, approaching her all the while as she retreated. She backed away, suddenly not so sure about her abilities to wield magic or use containment spells. The room became clearer, more defined, as opposed to blurry, Monet kind of art work. Jon could now discern the layers of evidence that she had been using dark magic, or at least, attempting to. He backed her into a wall and was standing so close to her that there would be no escaping him without physical contact. As it was, her breast were in contact with him. They were massive breasts due to being overweight in general. She was unable to look away from his eyes. She trembled, afraid, and yet, she found herself very excited and wanting, in a sexual way that she had not counted on. If he took her, she would surrender to him. She would allow the ravishing. She tilted her head in such a way that her neck seemed more exposed, as if inviting him.

“There is no evil. There is only love. There is only light. I use the two terms interchangeably. For every light you turn on, you get a thousand shadows. The evil you perceive are the shadows you are projecting. Turn up the intensity of your light, through imagining white or golden light, you’re not attracting evil, you’re just increasing the number of shadows you project. Retreating from the shadows gives them apparent growth. Approach them, and you will discover the friends you have held at bay. Learning to subdue your own light is not hiding it, but adjusting so you can see the plethora of other lights all around you. The only reason you can’t see the other worlds is because you’re getting in your own way. You can’t see stars in the day time, but they are still there,” Jon said.

“I am feeling really horny,” Julie said.

“You have not heard a damn thing I’ve said,” Jon said, forgetting to go softly. He tracked his frustration, and again, found himself. He was confronted with the very thing he also did: he wasn’t objectifying women, but simply pursuing the only level of connection that he could muster, given his limited social experience. He nearly cried. “Oh.” He bowed to her, thanking her again for insight.

“Will you have sex with me?” Julie asked.

“Uh?” Jon stuttered.

Julie was mad and tearful simultaneous. “Because I am...”

“Stop?!” Jon said, putting a finger to her mouth. “Let me sort this. And don’t interrupt. I have to go to seek higher authority.”

Jon closed his eyes and found himself in a room, sitting on the floor, meditative pose, with Loxy. They were holding hands. His eyes were open in that world and he was looking at Loxy. Sensing the energy change, she peeked, smiled, and then opened both eyes, joining him.

“Are you distracted again?” Loxy said.

“I am having a situation,” Jon said. He quickly outlines the scenario.

“You’re wanting to take me back to bed?” Loxy asked.

“OMG, please,” Jon said. “But you should know, I am being propositioned in another world.”

“How fun is that?!” Loxy said.

“Umm, fun is not the operative word,” Jon corrected.

“When can it not be fun?” Loxy asked.

“She is not really, all that hygienic,” Jon said.

“Aww. She’s depressed?” Loxy asked. “It is a she, right?”

“I am not bi,” Jon said clearly.

“What about transgender? Would you do a transgender if they needed lessons in love?” Loxy asked.

“I am still on the fence on that one. I think it’s conditional,” Jon mused. “Was the person XY, but born with the wrong equipment? Were they born with both equipment, and the appropriate one was surgically removed? Looks will be an important factor...”

“Oh, Jon, Jon, Jon. You’re in training to be a Daka, the male version of a Dakini,” Loxy said. “Consider yourself a sexual surrogate. You help people sexually. Sometimes, that will require intimacy, and you will necessarily have to transcend your ideas of beauty.”

“I have an extremely broad range of criteria for engaging others,” Jon said.

“Broad being the operative word, sorry, I thought it was funny, but yeah, you do,” Loxy said.

“Is being a surrogate even legal?” Jon asked.

“What, sex?” Loxy asked, laughing. “No, sorry, I am so amused. Haven’t we done this conversation before? Sorry. Doesn’t matter. You’re asking now. Depends on the culture, clearly. It would not be legal in the U.S. in your century.”

“Ethically, how do I sort my own wants from that of the client?” Jon asked.

“Great question. And another reason why I love you,” Loxy said. “Contrary to popular belief, we will not have sex with all of our clients, not even most. It’s about their needs. Would having sex with this client bring about her highest good?”

“I think it might complicate things. I get the sense she has never experienced love and any intimacy could result in confusion and further attachment issues,” Jon said.

Loxy nodded. “People also need touch to heal. Even intimacy, to heal. Your past, and your openness to sexuality, and a broad sense of ‘do-ability,’ makes you a great candidate for this job. You are not turned off by disabilities or deformity and there are millions of folks with legitimate disabilities that need physical intimacy. You are also not frightened by the LGBTQ2SIA community and can engage them without fear or judgment. You’re going to answer some of those calls in your line of work. You’re going to help couples who are struggling with relationships. I personally will not have sex with my clients seeking couples counseling, either of them, nor will I have sex with either parties if their relationship dissolves. That’s a hard block for me. You’re going to have to answer this for yourself. There are no absolutes and no right or wrong.”

“There has to be some ethical guidelines,” Jon insisted.

“There are, you are navigating them with me in a healthy way,” Loxy said. “Keera is also on this path, I recommend speaking with her. Or with Misty. It’s not an accident she is your home room guide,” Loxy said.

“What if I make a mistake?” Jon said.

“You clean it up as best you can, and you use it to grow. I guarantee you, Jon, you are going to make mistakes. Every two human being engaging in a dance will eventually step on the other’s toe,” Loxy said. “Is that helpful?”

Jon nodded.

“How old is she?” Loxy asked.

“24, Origin years,” Jon said.

“Well, that’s probably a relief for you, because that is a hard block in your world, which you respect,” Loxy said.

“It’s not a block everywhere?” Jon asked.

“Honor the cultural rules where ever you go,” Loxy asked. “In California, 16 is marrying age. Probably because too many people having sex with minors and they had to adjust down or half the city would be incarcerated. Oh, hence the movie, ‘Escape from LA.’”

“But what about...”

“No human will be allowed to enter Daka or Dakini training that would abuse the cultural boundaries, or who would abuse the individuals they have been brought to serve,” Loxy said.

“That can’t be true, either,” Jon said. “I know too many dark mages that would...”

“They are not in this training. Do any of ours go dark while in the system? Yep. And that gets sorted, too,” Loxy said.

“How do I know if what I am doing is in her best interest?” Jon asked.

“You keep coming at this from different angles and I can’t answer this for you,” Loxy said.

“I feel trapped,” Jon said. “I can’t win this. If I reject, it increases her evidence that she is unlovable. If I provide intimacy, it could also increase her evidence for being unlovable on ending the relationship, which isn’t going to last. Engagement is definitely going to mean confronting attachment issues. Oh, and my spider sense is screaming borderline personality disorder. She cuts to relieve pain. She is dabbling in magic to find an answer...”

“Sounds a lot like you,” Loxy laughed.

Jon pouted. Loxy gave him an ‘aww,’ and leaned over and hugged, made possible by her incredible Yoga abilities to lean and stretch, which got a rise from Jon.

“Tell me, in the past, when someone loved you fiercely, what did you do?” Loxy asked.

“I ran and or sabotaged the relationship,” Jon said.

“Give her love. Let her respond how she will, and then give her more love,” Loxy said. “It’s that simple. People that meet the criteria for borderline are challenging, but they aren’t hopeless. All humans suffer, and they all have triggers that are expressed behaviorally. When you can teach a person to slow their world down, identify their own triggers, there is an opportunity for change. You know this. You’ve overcome a great deal of passive aggressive, petty meanness. Most the time, you respond neutrality, but every now and then, you come back at meanness with kindness, and it’s why you’re in this field.”

Jon appeared as if he was still deep in deliberation, high on sulking.

“Say it,” Loxy said.

“It’s just that, I thought any personal evolution on my part would result in less sex. At least, less creepiness, less libido, less...” Jon trailed. He didn’t know how to capture it.

Anyone else might have laughed, but Loxy put her hands on his face and directed it till his eyes met hers. “Look at me. Hyper sexuality is a thing, but it is not your thing. You are not broken. Yeah, a bit creepy sometimes, but who isn’t when out of their element? You’re functional, you’re kind, and your level of energy is perfect for being a super hero.”

Jon chuckled. “Sex is a superpower?”

“OMG, Jon. Have you not noticed heroines in comic books?” Loxy asked.

“Yeah, but...”

“No butts. Alright, great butts. Look, tell me what you did to try and overcome your perceived sexuality disorder?”

“I studied sexology. I read everything I could on clinical sexual dysfunctions, male and female. I studied anatomy and physiology. I studied how sexuality varies from culture to culture and through time. I attended continuing education opportunities designed to help counselors stay current in their licensure...”

“Stop,” Loxy said. “Did it help?”

“No, it just increased my appetite for sex,” Jon said.

“So, shouldn’t your conclusion be that, maybe you’re just a natural...”

“All guys think they’re...”

“Most guys know where to stick it to get themselves off. Few have mastered techniques to stay in the game or increase the other person’s pleasure, much less studied the arts. Every

generation tries to remake the wheel. Yeah, discovery is fun, but few people take discovery as far as you did,” Loxy said.

“Well,” Jon said. “I guess I am already going to hell, might as well knock a few more out.”

“No!” Loxy said, putting a single finger up, like a parent scolding. “Wrong. Wrong attitude, which results in negative magic energetic outbursts and manifesting negative attachments. You do it, you do it with love. That is the only thing that promotes health. Also, people don’t go to hell for sex. You can build up negative karma for lying, but that’s not a capital offense requiring a death penalty. It will put you on a different level of participation, where you’re more likely to have to deal with being honest. But, there is sex in the afterlife, and if you believe in reincarnation, then you’re likely to have a partner for every life you’ve lived, because that’s how we learn and improve, and decrease unhealthy attachment and jealousy. There are things you can learn from Keera that I can’t give you and that’s why I encourage you to engage her, and others. If you are think one person for all eternity, you’re not thinking right. We live in systems and we help each other in systems. And we continue to help each other through all the levels of eternity, progressing in constellations, sometimes falling out and sometimes rising above and sometimes staying together in a cosmic dance of evolutionary consciousness.”

“That’s better than the horror story I was sold as a child to get compliance,” Jon said.

“I am not selling a story,” Loxy said. “You have already experienced multiple levels beyond your primary physical reality. You know, as I do.”

“What if having sex outside my core constellation results in me losing my core?” Jon asked.

Loxy almost laughed. “OMG, Jon. Your core is solid. We are solid. You will never lose me. You will never lose your people. Magicians and healers don’t work in a vacuum, they move in teams. We’re a team.”

“I love you,” Jon said.

Loxy pulled on him while leaning into him and their lips met.

“Am I that hideous?” Julie asked.

Jon opened his eyes to her. He looked past her form into her heart and found himself mirrored there, and he remembered asking the same question to the person he had pursued as ‘the love of his life.’ Only to be rejected. He had definitely been out of league with his choice in

pursuing 'her,' and he wondered how he might be different if she had met him with love instead of the cold shoulder. Logistically, 'she' couldn't meet everyone that came at her with that kind of love. 'She' had to use some form of discrimination to navigate 'her' field of opportunities, which was way different from his world. Way different from Julie's world. Her options, presently, were lower than Jon's had ever been. And not just because of her physical presence, but because her emotional and mental presence was in such a low energy state.

In his head he heard, "I am all about the base, no treble," and he pushed into her body, seeking her lips. His hands pushed through her hair to the back of her head, pulling her tightly to him. She trembled. Her throat moved, as if she had swallowed. "Are you sure?"

The only reason he knew she nodded consent was he felt her head move in his hands.

"No. Speak it. This can't be undone," Jon said.

"I want this," Julie said. She didn't say 'I want you.' She said 'this.' Most people might have missed the importance of it, but as a magician he understood that she recognized at a core level that Jon was not her 'primary.' Jeramiah wasn't either, but, small steps.

Chapter 11

Timothy was stretched out on a bed, staring at the ceiling. Only his eyes shifted when Loxy entered the room that had been made especially for him, and the others that had been retrieved. He scowled at her.

“So, this is hell?” Timothy asked.

Loxy considered her response. “It is what you make of it.”

“Oh, you’re one of those,” Timothy said. “Pushing sunshine and puppies.”

“Oh, I don’t push,” Loxy said. “You can make it whatever you like. Is this hell, the real hell? No. We’re going to be having breakfast together. You need to get up now.”

“Ha ha,” Timothy said.

“While it is true that you were extracted from the Origin timeline after your injury, at a point directly before your body was incinerated by a nuclear weapon detonated over top your residence, your injuries have been healed. You have complete mobility restores,” Loxy said.

“If I could walk and move my hands, I would be fucking you already,” Timothy said.

“Ahh,” Loxy said. “So, you are experiencing a subconscious, cognitive block, because a part of you doesn’t want to harm others. That’s nice to know.”

“I don’t know what you just said, but if you think for a moment that I wouldn’t get up from here and shove your face into the pillow while I fuck your ass, then you don’t know me,” Timothy said.

“I hear a lot of talk, now get up,” Loxy said.

“Blow me,” Timothy said.

“Whip it out,” Loxy said.

“What?” He hadn’t expected that.

“You think your dick is the only way to connect or have pleasure? I could give you an orgasm just sucking your thumb. I could stroke eyebrows and make you cum. I could close my eyes and simply think you into coming. But right now, you’re getting up and you’re having breakfast with some really incredible people,” Loxy said.

“Just keep talking. The more I hear you, the more complete my tulpa version of you will be, and like a voodoo doll, I will control you magically and make you my slave,” Timothy said.

“Yeah, about that,” Loxy said. “After reading Jon’s book, you tried to visit Safe Haven but found yourself blocked. You only get there through invitation. On failing that, you decided to

try and make some tulpas, and actually did a pretty good job. You resurrected Morlon Fribourg, and he has taught you some dark stuff, but he isn't fool enough to give you the abilities you think you hold. If he is not still exploring the Timothy Universe, he is already back in his. Meanwhile, you are presently blocked from creating more tulpas."

"You can't stop me from thinking..." Timothy said.

"You're right, I can't. But you will find that you are being blocked from doing more harmed from multiple agencies, including yourself," Loxy said.

"Do I know you?"

"I am Loxy," Loxy introduced herself.

Timothy laughed. "Oh, I am so going to fuck you. No, better. You're going to fuck me, willingly. So, if you ever want to see Jon again, climb up here on my lap and ride me."

Loxy smiled. "You think you have Jon trapped in your wonderland of terror, but I assure you, you got it backwards. You have surrendered control of your wonderland to Jon and he is making changes. And when he is finished, you, sir, are going to change."

"The only change I see in my future is you changing my diapers, bitch. You can lick my balls clean," Timothy said.

Loxy approached, sat on the bed. She pushed a strand of hair back from his forehead. She then gently moved her hand down the length of his body, and then grabbed his balls through his clothing and he nearly sat up, surprised by the level of pain.

"Here's the deal, Timothy," Loxy said. "I will tolerate a great deal of smack from you, because I understand what made you like this. But you need to know, the people we're having breakfast with will not tolerate you being impolite. And the guardians, they will absolutely beat the crap out of your with sticks if you come at them the way you came at me just now. And in a world where everyone is sovereign, you can bet your ass if you piss the wrong person off, they will kill you, with impunity. So, before you speak another word, I highly encourage you to forget everything you thought you knew about the world and put on your learning hat, because things are different here. For example, you have your own personal guardian. She is watching you and she can be just as physical as you and I, and she will block you from harming others during the moratorium against harming self or others. The moratorium will not last forever. The friends and enemies you make today will help determine how the rest of your life unfolds here. Are we on the same page?"

“You’re turning me on,” Timothy said through his teeth.

Loxy let him go and patted his cheek. He reached for her, as if he would pull her down on him but found he couldn’t move.

“As I said, you are presently blocked from harming others,” Loxy said, getting up. “So, if you’re hungry, stand up, follow me.”

“The only place I am going with you is down, bitch,” Timothy said.

“Okay,” Loxy said, touching his forehead.

The door to the room open and Truest entered, bringing a wheelchair. The two of them easily manipulated Timothy into the chair. Outside of the room revealed that the room was hardly more than a box. It was a prefab, backyard cubicle, large plate windows with curtains that folded around them. This was modern living space, perfectly self-contained unit for off the grid living. In addition to the pod, a path had been laid connected it to the mall. It was impossible to discern that the path had been installed just hours ago.

“I am going to fuck both of you...” Timothy wailed.

Loxy motioned Truest to stop. She knelt down in front of him. “Timothy. I am struggling here. There are very few people I immediately dislike. And I like people. I understand people. I understand you. I am grateful for you allowing me to see I am human, and that I don’t have a super human ability to love everyone, and that I, too, must chose love. Love is a choice. Here is what you need to know going in here. The people you’re about to meet come from a different place and time and they are not going to understand or tolerate your language or your meanness. The ladies you meet, the ones dressed like Truest here, they would just kill you, moratorium or not. You are not dreaming. This is real. The consequences are real.”

“We should summon his guide,” Truest said.

“He is here,” Loxy said.

“Who is here?” Timothy asked.

Jon stepped up, as if stepping out of a shadow. “Good morning, Loxy.”

“Jon,” Loxy said.

Truest seemed concerned. “You’re not the normal interface.”

“I am not,” Jon said.

“Fuck you, you’re not my spirit guide,” Timothy said.

Jon and Loxy laughed. Jon stopped. “You never laugh at my jokes,” he said to her.

“You’re just not funny, dear,” Loxy said, standing. She hugged him. “How is it in there?”

“OMG, that is a long story,” Jon said. Back to Timothy. “Why are you in the chair?” Jon sorted before Timothy could answer. “Oh, you’re lucky it’s just the chair. No, I am not your spirit, spirit guide. I am so not qualified for that level of love. But thank you for this opportunity to learn. What am I? Oh, yeah. I am the tulpa you created, manifested physically through a really cool computer system...”

Loxy put her hands on her hip. “Jon, are you messing with the system?”

“How can you not mess with this system? It is so smooth I can transition from timothy’s brain to the system without any noticeable change in quality of environment,” Jon said.

“I don’t understand,” Truest said.

“Thought forms can jump through the Collective Unconscious, it’s like, what’s it like, being on an airplane with turbulence. Very rare that there aren’t some hiccups,” Jon said. But going from his mind into the virtual reality computer system installed here, no hiccups.”

“I didn’t make you!” Timothy protested.

“No, you started by trying to make Loxy, but she refused to manifest, so, then you turned your focus on Morlon Fribourg. Which baffles the shit out of me. Did I fail to convey what a miserable, not nice guy he was?” Jon asked.

“You should have had him kill more kittens,” Loxy said.

“Oh!” Truest and Jon said.

“I am going to kill all of you,” Timothy said. “And fuck your dead...”

Jon snapped his fingers and Timothy was silent. “Timothy, my new friend,” Jon said. “You brought my father into being, and then locked me in your body so you can go play and avoid the end of the world. That kind of leaves me in charge of your body. I don’t have to play by the rules that spirit guide are bound to because I am a different level of being. That said, you could, in theory, vanquish me back to the abyss if you will, and I would be okay with that, because I really liked that movie, but you’re going to have to interact your higher self, and you and your higher-self have not been on speaking terms for a while now.”

“I like you,” Truest staid.

“Oh, well, thank you,” Jon said.

Loxy took Jon’s arm. “Let’s go to breakfast. And try not to monopolize the conversation,” she said.

“Do I do that?” Jon said.

“Sometimes,” Loxy said.

They passed through the closest mall entrance, as opposed through one of the stores.

“OMG,” Jon said. “We could have so much fun here. Abandoned mall. Girls just want to have fun montage. Oh! We could drive a car through the mall!”

“Jon, those movies have been done,” Loxy said.

“Am I Jake or Elwood?” Jon asked.

“You’re just Jon,” Loxy said, trying not to smile.

“Okay, but am I Jake-Jon, or Elwood-Jon?” Jon asked.

“I am not dressing up as the Blues Brothers with you,” Loxy said. “I love them, but I am not wearing the suit and being all stoic. I love to laugh.”

“You could be the Blues Sister, all grown up, in a sexy suit dress,” Jon said. “And you can so do the stern look. Oh, yes, just like that, we could so do this.”

“What’s your range away from Timothy?” Loxy asked.

“Anywhere in the system,” Jon said.

“Drop by my pod later, and we will figure something out,” Loxy said, as she led them into the Mall cafeteria. The male guest that were sitting stood, minus Jesús who was propped up in a chair comparable to Timothy’s chair. The female guests were already standing, and on their arrival, they rounded on Loxy as if she were in charge. Jon’s mouth dropped as the closest guest approached, aggressively, almost as if she were going to strike Loxy, and Loxy knew Jon was emoting without even looking at him, and gently pushed his mouth closed. “Provided you’re not too distracted by the guests.”

Jon stepped forward to intercept the closest female, not so much to protect Loxy from the perceived aggression, which he was ignoring, but just because it was ‘her!’ He extended his hand. “Oh, hello, Dorothy.”

She didn’t take his hand. She pointed at him. “My name is Judy. Not Dorothy. I don’t know which of you is responsible for kidnapping me, but I demand that you let me go immediately.”

Jon looked to Loxy for an explanation. “I had them brought down prematurely. They’re at different levels of understanding,” Loxy said.

“I understand just perfectly. I had a drink, I went to bed, and I woke up here,” Judy said.

“Some drink,” Jon said.

“I had the same experience,” the woman next to Judy said.

“I know you,” Jon said.

“Jon, Sylvia Plath, Sylvia, Jon,” Loxy said. Everyone at the table had already been introduced to everyone, but Jon. “Everyone, this is my colleague, and best friend, and lover, Jon. Jon, this angry looking young lady is Midori, she is in charge of security.”

“Is she?” Jon began.

“Yes. She doesn’t remember the other place,” Loxy said, but nodding yes to ‘is that our Midori.’ “And she is mad at me. This woman here, Enedelia, is our resident nurse. Then we have the lovely and psychically talented Helena Blavatsky. I doubt you need an introduction to Samuel Clemens...”

“OMG, sir! It is such a pleasure,” Jon said.

“I do hope I can live up to your apparent ideal,” Clemens said.

“Jon, bring it down a notch,” Loxy said. “This is William Shakespeare.”

“The William Shakespeare?” Jon asked. “Just for clarity, you’re not someone else that just used a pen name, or the alter ego, like Clark Kent to Superman.”

Shakespeare wasn’t sure how to respond.

“Jon, contain it, breathe through it. This is Fyodor Dostoyevsky.” Dostoyevsky looked beside him to see who was whispering in his ears. “Don’t worry, you’ll get used to hearing the translation in your head.”

“I absolutely loved ‘Brother’s carry a mouse off,’ no, I mean, ‘Brother Karamazov’ the other was the movie reference that introduced me to your work, which was cute, tongue and cheek, but sufficient to have me look it up...” Jon rambled.

“Jon,” Loxy said, hand signaling ‘bring it down.’

“Oh, please forgive me, but I bet you’re going to get this reaction from a lot of folks,” Jon said.

“Not if they complete training,” Midori muttered.

“And, finally, Jon, if you’re through peeing in your pants, this is Immanuel Kant,” Loxy said.

Jon shook his hand enthusiastically. “Oh, Sir, my pleasure.”

Loxy quickly introduced Timothy to the guest, and then introduced Jon to Jesús Garcia. Jon waved his hand in front of Jesús face. He got no reaction from Jesús, but Midori shoved him back.

“Don’t do that,” Midori warned.

“But, he’s the man that made it all happen,” Jon said.

“Keep back,” Midori said.

“I just want to understand,” Jon said.

“He’s been in this coma since the transition,” Enedelia explanation.

“Oh, yeah, well, that makes sense,” Jon said.

Loxy seemed surprised. “It does?”

“Well, you understand how much information he has processed?” Jon asked. “Oh, well, maybe you don’t. You had to be there.”

“You were there, at the End?” Enedelia said.

“Um, yeah,” Jon said. Loxy brought up a hand to warn him off, but he was already into the speech. “I am kind of the guy that gave everyone the button that ended the world.”

“Let me get this straight,” Kant said. “Hypothetically, there is a button that can end the world, and you gave everyone in the world access to this button at the same time.”

“Yeah, that’s a pretty good analogy,” Jon said.

“Are you absolutely daft?” Midori asked. “You know how many crazy people there are in the world? You don’t just give everyone access to nuclear weapons. The only mature, reasonable people should have access...”

Jon blinked. “As opposed to the morons running the countries at the time I leveled the playing field? You want everyone to be mature, responsible adults, give them the button of absolute power and let them grow up. Besides, I didn’t give them anything they didn’t already have. I just provided the contextual artifact that allowed them to execute it.”

“You destroyed the world,” Midori said. “You put nuclear weapons in the hands of crazy people and they blew it up.”

“Maybe we should sit and have breakfast and discuss this,” Loxy said.

“No. Now that we’re here and you brought it up, why is Jesús still in a coma?” Midori demanded.

Jon looked at his feet, sorting it. “Omnipotence induced apathy,” Jon said.

“What?” Midori, and several other people answered.

“If you could do anything, everything, and practically did, there would be nothing left to do or think or say, because you either explored all the possibilities and exercised it, or you’re still sorting a finite range of possibilities. I say finite because it is finite, even though from our perspective that range seem infinite just because the sheer size of the set is unbelievable, from human perspective... People lament that God is absent, and that there aren’t enough miracles, but in truth, the perceived absence of miracles or God’s hand is because everything is on track for the idea outcome. If it wasn’t we would observe correction in our timeline, but even if the correction happened right now, we wouldn’t be aware of it because we’re in the shifted time line that allowed for the correction, while our other selves are like going wow, a miracle, and we are in the world where the miracle happened through Jesús, and aren’t likely to see another miracle for a moment.”

Based on their faces, Jon wasn’t sure they understood. He was about to try and explain it another way.

“Jon,” Loxy said. “I was kind of wanting to take the lead here.”

“Oh, yeah, thank you for reminding, and sorry, shall we have breakfast. I am starved. Can I even eat?” Jon asked.

“You can eat,” Truest assured him. “I have meals with my companion all the time.”

“Oh, yay! Can I eat as much as I like without worry about gaining weight?” Jon asked.

“Exercise restraint,” Loxy said. “You don’t practice stuff that might influence the rest of your bodies.”

“True that,” Jon said, allowing Loxy to lead him to the table.

Loxy and Jon sat first, then the others, only Judy refused to sit, and so Clemens, Kant, and Shakespeare refused to sit, and Jon felt compelled to stand back up.

“Is there a problem?” Loxy asked.

“You just expect me to play along as if I am going to have breakfast with kidnappers?” Judy asked.

“Well, I am hopeful that my explanation, and the warmth of good food and company, will be helpful. You do understand, this is not your ordinary kidnapping. This is Samuel Clemens, right, and his presence kind of suggest this situation warrants a different approach than what you might be accustomed to,” Loxy said.

“Pff, please. That’s not really Samuel Clemens,” Judy said.

“I assure you, I am me,” Clemens said.

“Yeah, you know how many actors have played you on television and movies?” Judy asked.

“OMG, right?!” Jon said. “If we count all the Sci Fi books where he was resurrected, in addition to how many versions of him was extracted from the timeline, there is like a billion Mark Twains in the Universe.”

“That is absurd,” Judy said.

“I concur,” Clemens said. “One of me is immeasurably difficult to explain, but a million me?”

“Please, sit,” Loxy said. “Let’s try and figure this out together. But, sit, if for no other reason than these gentlemen can’t sit unless you are sitting.”

“I am not responsible for their social conditioning,” Judy said.

Kant and Shakespeare sat down. Clemens was not so easily shaken from his conditioning. Jon remained because he was oblivious to what the other men were processing.

“Jon, you’re ogling Judy again and it’s clearly creeping her out,” Loxy said.

“Oh? Oh! Yeah, sorry. I got to say this: OMG, I can’t believe I am here with these folks. May I sit next to Judy?!” Jon said, squeezing Loxy arm.

“No. And I know, calm down,” Loxy said. “Breathe. And remember, Judy is just a real person like everyone else.”

“She’s not just any person. She single handedly changed the world of music with her performances. Over the Rainbow changed the world. It set the standard for all future musicals by demanding a quest song. That’s why you have the Rainbow Connection being the opening song to…”

Loxy put a finger to his lips. “Jon, they have questions. And they’re being extremely patient,” Loxy said. “Let’s all sit down.”

“Wait, wait, wait,” Jon said. “I just realized this. We’re sitting down at crappy mall tables and chairs to have breakfast with this prestigious group of people?”

“Yeah,” Loxy said.

“Oh, okay,” Jon said. He went ahead and sat back down. When he sat, Judy surrendered and sat, and then Clemens was able to sit.

For a moment, for Jon at least, it was like being on an episode of ‘the Waltons’ and everyone was passing food and filling their plates.

“Girl, bring me a Mimosa,” Judy said, snapping her fingers at the closest guardian, which happened to be Midori.

Midori eyes were furious. “I will have you put back into your slumber chamber,” she said.

“Judy,” Loxy said, offering her a Mimosa. No one had been looking at Loxy so no one saw that it was drawn out of thin air.

Judy took her drink and sat down. “Your hired hands need to learn how to be more courteous,” she said.

Midori looked to her right, as if listening to someone who wasn’t there, and she relaxed a little. During this interlude of filling plates, they were all courteous, saying thank you, but no one sampled food until everyone was served. This was evidence of a respectful culture, long sense past. Jon considered, even during the first war, there were stories of the enemy coming together on Christmas to extend gifts and drink coffee or beer, and then the next day returned to war. That would so not have happened in his end world, or any of the wars after World War One.

“I am really struggling here,” Jon whispered to Loxy, clearly blushing.

“I know,” Loxy whispered back, patting his knee. “But tell me, you haven’t wanted to meet these people?”

“Is that why they’re here?” Jon asked.

Loxy shrugged.

“I think you promised us some answers,” Clemens said, aware that he was interrupting their private conversation, which was his way of saying he would like them to speak louder.

“I don’t think she used the word promise,” Kant said.

“God is not dead, Sir,” Midori said.

“Is that why I am here?” Kant asked. “It was a metaphor. Socially speaking, God has been excised from the moral interchange that governs people’s lives.”

“OMG thank you! I wish you had just wrote that so I could have pointed it out when I have been in arguments. People just take what they want out of context and run with it without processing the whole,” Jon agreed. He became aware that he had everyone’s attention. “Sorry. I

get a little excited sometimes. Anyway, I have gone as far as arguing that you are actually more spiritually pure than many of the Christians I have known.”

“That can’t be too difficult. I have known a few Christians in my days, Sir,” Clemens said. “Being more spiritually advanced is not a great challenge.”

“You are an atheist,” Midori pointed out.

“And a better, kinder man than most Christians,” Jon said.

“I wouldn’t go that far. I have used my writing as a way to ridicule folks. Unfortunately, most of the folks I ridiculed didn’t have the sense to know they were abused. Midori, I am appreciatively skeptical, but yes, I have clearly stated, in fiction and in person, that if I have to go to the Christian heaven, and sing hymns, I would rather go to the other place,” Samuel said.

“Is this the other place?” Sylvia asked.

“Really?!” Judy said. “Does this feel like the other place?”

“I am not sure how to begin this,” Loxy said.

“You brought them down early without even a plan for how to conduct this affair?”

Midori stammered.

“Kind of making it up as I go,” Loxy said. She looked to Jon. “It always works out for you.”

“Not always,” Jon said.

“It always works itself out,” Loxy insisted.

“Well, yeah, saying it like that is true, but it doesn’t always work in my favor.”

“Yeah it does,” Loxy said.

Jon calculated random stuff in his head. “Yeah, alright, contextually, it sort of works out, but only because I embrace what is and adapt.”

“I like you two,” Helena said. “I get the sense you are spirit guides in training?”

“Aren’t we all just spirit guides in training?” Fyodor asked.

“No,” Helena said. She pointed to Timothy. “There is something severely wrong with that one.”

Jon and Loxy turned to spy Timothy. He looked like he was ready to explode. His cheeks were full of air and he was crimson red. Finally he pushed some words out, like a volcano exploding. “Fuck all of you!” His face returned to its normal pale shade and he struggled to regain the air he spent in his concise rant.

Loxy turned to Jon. Jon shrugged. They turned to their guest who were quietly attending to the situation, very observant. Then Shakespeare laughed.

“Oh, thank God,” Shakespeare said. “I thought for sure this future heaven was going to be perfectly boring.”

“Are we dreaming?” Sylvia asked.

“I need another drink,” Judy said.

“You should really slow it down,” Jon said.

“Are you my dad?” Judy snapped.

Loxy touched Jon’s knee, secretly. “She hasn’t done a life review yet.”

“A what?” Judy asked.

“You were extracted prematurely!” Midori said. “It was necessary for you to accomplish specific learning goals to avoid any discomfort or shock.”

“What does that mean, we were extracted,” Kant asked.

“Oh, there is levels to that answer,” Loxy said. She sorted in her head the words she wanted. “Alright, here’s the deal. From our perspective, every one of you has lived your complete life, and you died.” They started to protest. “Wait, wait, wait. Let me try and do this. We’ll sort out confusion in a moment. Go with me. You have lived your lives and they are complete. Technically, and again, from Jon and my perspectives, all of humanity is dead. The human race went extinct on origin due to its own aggressiveness. The last man standing made a deal with a higher power, if you will, or an alien race, and he was allowed a onetime opportunity to unpack all of Earth. He extracted from the timeline every human being that ever lived. Some of you more than once. For example, Samuel, you will find every age of you was extracted and is living somewhere out there, in a variety of scenarios... I am loosing you.”

“Is there a way to resurrect folks without shock?” Blavatsky asked.

“You’re saying I died at age 18?” Judy asked.

“You died at 47 of a barbiturate overdose,” Jon said.

Loxy held her breath, curious how Jon’s statement was going to go over. She was having her first doubts about having brought people down from their slumber pods, where they could at least not hurt themselves physically. Judy was suddenly very somber, concerned.

“They are not prepared for this!” Midori snapped. “You’re causing them unnecessary harm.”

“Hearing this may hurt, but it is not harm,” Loxy said, while still gauging Judy’s reaction. “They are going to have to face their pasts in order to help the future.”

“Help the future how?” Shakespeare asked.

“The human race became extinct due to its own aggressiveness,” Loxy said. “We’ve been given a second chance. Not only do we need to demonstrate to that we can establish peace, but we have to raise the human consciousness sufficiently that when the transition happens again, more than 70 percent survives,” Loxy said.

“I hear English, but I am not understanding,” Clemens said. “Back up a moment and help me understand this. Judy there, is what, 18 years old? But you said she lived to age 54? Why am I here at 74 years old? Why am I, and my fellow guest not all 18?”

“I don’t want be 18 again,” Sylvia said.

“I would love to be 18 again,” Blavatsky said. “Provided I know what I know now.”

“You are all here at the age necessary to move this evolving culture along. Clemens, I believe you are here at the age you are, because this 20 world’s experiment requires the wisdom of your entire life. The 18 year old Clemens was smart, but you sir, hold the collective wisdom of every age of you,” Loxy said.

“Then, you’re not going to get too much out of me. I will die at 74. I came in with Haley’s Comet, and will I go out with Haley’s Comet,” Clemens said.

“And you did. Barring an accident, or murder, you will not die again,” Loxy said. “And by the end of the year, you’re going to look and feel as if you were 60. By the end the next year, you will look and feel as if you were forty,” Loxy said. “And this part may be harder to get, but every age of you was brought back. That’s how important you were to the human species. Out there, amongst the stars, there is 18 year old Clemens on a new trajectory. As well as a 19 year old, a 20 year old, all the way up to 74. I wouldn’t be surprised if there was a version of you from every month extracted from the world.”

“A multiplicity of me? We’re back in the realm of absurdity. I was not that good a man,” Clemens said.

“Just acknowledging that makes you better than most,” Loxy said.

“You have the power to restore vitality and extend life indefinitely?” Kant said more than asked.

“Oh, joy,” Shakespeare said. “The drama that is about to unfold.”

“We’ve done tragedy, Sir,” Loxy said. “We need to write the opposite.”

“You raise all of humanity, making multiple doppelgangers of them, gave them immortality, and you think there won’t be tragedy?” Shakespeare said.

“Not doppelgangers. They are you, you’re younger selves,” Loxy said.

“That doesn’t make sense to me,” Clemens said.

“It does to me. Is Whitman here? Or perhaps Blake? They could explain it,” Sylvia said.

“You rose everyone?” Kant said. “There are truly some dreadful people that should not be raised.”

“That is the task set before us. We must find a way for everyone to coexist, even with past grievances,” Loxy said. “Whether in body form or spirit, the human species will continue, without secret, without pretense, and we have to find a way to resolve this. The other players in the physical realm could care less if the human hold a presence here, but we were deemed important enough to give us a second go. Here, in the 20 worlds, there will be no hunger, no poverty, no sickness, and no economic system forcing people into servitude. If you work, you do it out of love. With everyone from the start being equal, there is no need for greed, nor hunger, nor...”

“You don’t understand humans, do you?” Shakespeare said. “Even if everyone is as rich as Midas, there is the longings and lust of the human heart, and the need to domineer. I get the sense that we here are esteemed above our original station. How many people in the worlds are there? Will there be an unreasonable demand for my attention? Will they clamor after Clemens? If I were to push this conversation towards a more vulgar direction, will a million people demand to have a piece of Judy? Cause if she keeps drinking, I am going to want to drink with her. And if Jon’s reaction to Judy is any inkling of what’s in store for her, I fear for her safety, and the stories in my head that are unfolding, because are not kind to her.”

“Oh, fuck you, sir. I will not be a puppet for this project!” Judy snapped. “Nor a street girl to everyone’s beck and call.”

“Wow,” Jon said. “I didn’t expect that.”

“You didn’t expect her to use profanity?” Loxy asked. “Jon, she isn’t Dorothy. You need to start seeing her for who she really is.”

Jesús leaned forwards and put his hands on the table. “What the fuck have you done?!” he snapped.

“Ah, another country heard from,” Blavatsky said.

“Finally, Jesús speaks,” Shakespeare said.

Midori, and all the guardians, went to their knees, bowing. Jesús tried to stand up, his arms shaking as he pushed into the table. Loxy was concerned he might fall, given he hadn't moved in a month, per Enedelia, but he got to his feet and continued to address Loxy. Enedelia moved in closer to take his arm, but he used one hand to warn her off.

“You brought people down before they completed their training,” Jesús said.

“You're awake from your coma,” Loxy said. “Because you're angry with me?”

“You don't understand,” Jesús said. “I have to treat everyone in the 20 worlds equally. You brought them down early, without completing their treatment, I have to bring everyone down.”

“All of them?” Enedelia said. “That would be...”

“Chaos,” Jesús said.

“You don't have to treat everyone a hundred percent equal,” Loxy said. “You're not going to sit and have a cozy breakfast like this with all 42 million people.”

“Is it possible to treat that many people equally?” Kant asked.

“This is going to be so much fun,” Shakespeare said.

“I am definitely in a dream, aren't I?” Sylvia asked.

Jesús sat down.

“Can you send us back?” Blavatsky asked.

“No,” Jesús said.

“But you're god, right? You pulled us from the world you can put us back,” Blavatsky asked.

“I am not god,” Jesús said. “I'm just a janitor.”

“No one is just a janitor,” Jon corrected. “And in my world, they are the most esteemed of all the workers.”

“This is my world, Sir!” Jesús said. “What the hell are you doing in my world? I was very clear, you were not allowed here.”

Jon pointed to the Timothy. Jesús frowned. “There is no way he should be out of his pod already! He is too immature and needs training.”

“I brought him here, because I need to work with him,” Loxy said. “I brought the others here because...”

“I don’t care about your rationalization. I had a system in place. It was agreed to, in advanced,” Jesús said.

“I had a family. Are they alive, will I be reunited with them?” Clemens said.

The guest were suddenly more somber.

“No,” Jesús said.

“But, my understanding is, you can move people through the universe with your mind. You can relocate me, put me with them, or bring them to me,” Clemens said.

“Your understanding is correct, but I will not be moving everyone who has a desire or grievance. Everyone is sorted and where they need to be for optimum growth potential,” Jesús said. “In one year, communication networks will be established sufficiently that anyone can communicate with anyone else within the Earth Cluster. In five years, I will extend the privilege to anyone in the 20 world’s experiment the one time opportunity to go anywhere within the Earth Cluster. And then, wherever you are, that is where you will be until the game is over and we transition again.”

“Transition?” Blavatsky asked.

“As a psychic, of limited ability, you, at least, might appreciate this,” Jesús said. “The transition from normal homo sapiens to homo superior is everyone, simultaneously, becoming telepathic, and we all go online so to speak, only without pseudonyms or aliases or the psychic barrier that exist presently. Transition, when all our contrived knowledge sets are known and we finally have to sort fact from fiction and deal with reality as it is, is where we are headed for. This is what we are preparing for. The petty things we as individual held, though sometimes subjectively valid, have no bearing on the greater reality that is pressing upon us. If we cannot collectively survive the transition, there will be no humanity. You are either on board with saving the human race or destroying it. And you save the human race, not by helping others, but by taking personal responsibility for your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and growing the fuck up and taking care of yourself. Midori, I want to go back to my room.”

Midori immediately stood and took the reins of his chair.

The guest stood.

“Wait, Sir,” Kant said. “We have many more questions.”

“Talk to Loxy. She’s in charge now,” Jesús said.

“OMG,” Loxy said. Jon patted her knee, the same as she had patted his earlier.

Chapter 12

Sitting alone on a beach, matching the rhythm of his breath to the waves, used to be one way back to tranquility, but Jon found himself distracted by the couples walking, and the others on the beach. A dog running with his companion, and he was tempted to stare at her, the companion. He loved everything about a woman running for the joy of exercise. He himself couldn't stand running, but he could watch a woman running indefinitely, and from angles. But he looked away, and without effort, though there was evidence of a frown had anyone been observant enough to notice. New stars were populating the sky. Designated constellations were being rewritten, dying or reborn, depending on the perspective you hold. A couple of people passing paused to see if he was okay, to which he politely responded, "Just processing," which was better than outright lying with the gentle rebuff: 'fine.' He was not fine. He couldn't fake a 'fine' if his life depended on it. The waves sparked florescent algae as they rolled and folded in on themselves, painting the beach in pastel greens that faded in intensity as it settled or eased back into the ocean. He wondered if the individual cells lit because they were dying on the beach or because of the force of impact. He sipped from his flask, wishing for something harder than water.

Loxy pulled up alongside of him. She hugged her legs and rested her chin on her knees, watching the lights play out on the shore and on the horizon's skyline. She, too, matched her breathing to the ocean's rhythm. She also grounded herself, attaching her energy to the core of the planet, and if anyone was watching with the right eyes, they would have seen her aura flare and blossom, another star going live in the Multiverse. She had a single flower in her hair, a gift from Alish.

Jon offered her the flask.

"Oh," Loxy said, accepting it. "Thank you. I wasn't sure you noticed my arrival."

"I always see you, everywhere I go, in everything I do," Jon said.

"You, Sir, have my full attention," Loxy said. She sipped. "That's always brilliant. Care to share?"

Jon took care to put his breathing back in sync. It was so easy to get off track with what he was following. He accepted the flask back, tightened the lid, and dropped it into his pocket. It

disappeared. Loxy rested her head on her knees again, but was watching Jon as he stared into space.

“I am in a really dark place,” Jon said.

“Timothy’s head,” Loxy said.

“Uh?” Jon asked, drawn back to Bliss. “Oh, no. That is actually surprising, predictably, kind of fun. I am enjoying sorting that, even if I do feign exhaustion.”

“Good for you,” Loxy said. “Because, I am struggling to deal with him in my preferred operational manner.”

“Oh? Is there something I can do to help?” Jon said.

“At the moment I am here for you,” Loxy said.

“I would rather focus on something non-me, and being of service to you is my ideal,” Jon said.

“You’re already helping me,” Loxy assured him. “Tell me about this darkness you’ve touched upon.”

Jon drew his knees up to match Loxy, locked his elbows on his knees, and then planted his chin on his fist. He became aware of the fact he was holding his breath. He nearly stood up to walk away, but Loxy touched his arm.

“Lay down,” Loxy instructed.

“You’re always helping me. Don’t I need to figure this out on my own?” Jon said.

“Oh, fuck that belief,” Loxy said. “It’s archaic and unnecessary. We’re not in a vacuum, Jon. We are interdependent. We’re weights dangling from a mobile, all connected to source, and in my world, my branch, when you rise, I rise. That’s it. Now, lay down, please.”

Jon laid down, crossing his arms over his chest. Loxy separated his hands and laid his arms out on the ground beside him, palms up. She uncrossed his legs, too. His shoes were already off, his socks inside them. Loxy moved closer to him.

“Eyes open, pick a star, any star, and focus on it,” Loxy said.

Jon chuckled. “You’re going to hypnotize me into a better mood?”

“Nope,” Loxy said. “You don’t get out through suppression or ignoring. You get out by going through. You go up by going in.”

“I know,” Jon said.

“I know you know. You read a book, incorporated an idea into your being, and you speak it like a mantra and you give it to folks like a gift, but you rarely employ it on a personal, practical level. You have, which is why it holds such high validity in your present frame of reference, but you’re still learning,” Loxy said. “It’s okay if you want to go at it alone, but the thing is, you have taken it alone most of your life, and now you have any number of friends who would gladly process this with you without taking it away from you, or adding to your weight...”

“I am afraid,” Jon said.

“Oh, yay you,” Loxy said, putting her left hand on his chest, over his heart. “Tell me.”

“I am afraid of what you will think of me. Why am I always learning the same lesson, over and over?” Jon asked.

“What makes you think you learned it the first time?” Loxy asked, going for gentle humor.

Jon pouted, nearly turned his eyes away, but she rocked his chest, and whispered, “Shhh, shhh, Jon, stay with me. How many injuries did it take to make you who you are? Oh, reframe. How many victories did it take to make you who you are? If we look at just the biological part, the brain develops in layers, like an onion, and if any ingredient is left out, like nurture, then you have clean onion sheet without any ridges or ripples or connections to the consecutive layers, and if you peeled it, it would just unravel. How many things in the universe do you know that just unravels clean? Heck, you can’t even take clothes hangers out of the closet without entanglement. And no matter how secure you make cords, power cords, earphones, any cords, throw a bunch of them in a drawer together and they all come out at once. The good news is, your brain is plastic. If in the normal development of your brain requires two to three years of solid, consistent nurturing, then you will need two to three years of solid, consistent, nurturing to wire that part of your brain. That, Sir, is where I come in. I got you. There is nothing you can say or do that would cause me to go away, and you are going to come to a point in our relationship where you are going to test that, and knowing my strengths, like ability to endure and resilience and your super ability to isolate, it’s probably going to be huge debacle. But no matter how it goes, unlike all the other people in your life who said they were through and left, I will weather that storm and you and I will be bigger and better because of it.”

“Oh, that really scares me,” Jon said. “That’s scarier than the flying monkeys!”

“Yeah, well, that’s one of the difficulties of learning lessons out of order,” Loxy said. “The other difficulty is assuming you got it in one life time. The things we repeat are core. Yeah, you learned to drive, but every day of driving is a new day in lessons, not just in driving but in love. Someone cuts you off, that wasn’t disrespect, it was lesson in avoiding obstacles and extending love, extending right of way even if it wasn’t right. When both people have power and the ability crash up the world, quibbling over moral jurisdiction is rarely fruitful. Take a moment and entrain your breath to the waters. Then push a grounding root.”

Jon did as he was instructed. He felt as if there were a million eyes on him, but he tuned them out and focused on his breath. Every star was an eye. “An I,” an inner voice added.

“Okay, focus on your star of choice,” Loxy said. His eyes bounced from point to pint, but finally settled. After a moment of little movement, Loxy closed her eyes, seeking an internal star, and asked: “What do you see?”

‘Starlight’ was going to be his response but he found himself back in the dark place. “I think I have discovered a past life. It’s not making much sense. I can clearly see me, but it’s not me.”

Loxy sorted the words, but also followed it with her intuition. She closed her eyes. “Present life,” Loxy said.

“A past present life?” Jon asked.

“Tell me something else,” Loxy said.

“I’m married there,” Jon whispered.

“Yeah, I see that, too,” Loxy said.

“That doesn’t bother you?” Jon asked.

“It’s you but not you, no, it doesn’t bother me,” Loxy said. “Tell me something good.”

“I am the father of a toddler,” Jon said. He was so focused on the star that he didn’t see Loxy was smiling, mirroring the smile that Jon was trying to suppress. Neither noticed the tears that they each shed. “I love him so much! This is unbearable.”

“Shh, shh,” Loxy said, rocking him with the hand over his heart. “This moment is an exercise in trust. Trust you got this, and the Universe has you. I am with you.”

“He is so smart. He made his first allusion the other day. They were making banana nut bread and spilt the chocolate chips and he said, ‘we spilt choc-o-late just like George,’ referring to ‘Curious George goes to the chocolate factory.’ And he corrected mom when she called a

hexagon an octagon. She was like, ‘who told you that?!’ And he said, ‘Dad said.’ And then she called me out, and I explained. But she still doesn’t get it. He is so tuned into us, and she reminded me she doesn’t love me, that she never loved me, and she said this in front of him. I am jumping through all kinds of obstacles to keep him in my life, no sex for three years, supporting her when she instructs him and he rebels, so that he understands that there is no triangulation going to happen, that we will be consistent in parenting. Even though there’s not. She yells and powers through him, where I instruct. And she hates that I get better results and I feel so alone...”

A scene flashed before them. ‘Mom’ took one of his fries and he slapped her hand and Jon gently corrected, “Sir, do not hit my wife, ever. We share our food.” It was spoken with a kindness, but with authority, and his son’s mouth puckered and his eyes filled with water. Then his mom said, “He never reacts like that when I yell at him.” “I didn’t yell at him. Thunder doesn’t make flowers, only rain.” She went back to texting her friends. Jon and son continued eating, discussing the squirrels scampering about the yard.

“My only concern is his wellbeing,” Jon said. “And I knew it wasn’t working before we had him, and we had even separated.”

“That was when you surrendered it to God,” Loxy said.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “I have messed so many relationships up, I decided I should bring in a higher power and so I asked for guidance, to do something different, to do something I have never done, at least in that life. I made that prayer, surrender all impulses to flee or stay, and determined to wait for some sign. I God to take it. The moment I let go, I get this phone call from her informing me she was pregnant. I was like, ‘OMG, is there anyone else up there I can speak with?!’ Then I took in a deep breath and accepted this was meant to be. And I will tell you this, and I am pretty sure I have said this somewhere before, I don’t know, but I still mean it to my core: if you gave me a time machine and the freedom to change my life line, I would endure everything all again a million times over just to see that child! He is the most precious gift I have ever seen, and the kindest, most genuine loving, curious spirit I have ever encountered.”

Something warm splashed against Jon’s face and he opened his eyes. Loxy smiled down at him.

“Why are you crying?” Jon asked. He, too, was crying.

“Because, that’s love, Jon,” Loxy said. “You dug your heels in and instead of trying to make the world perfect, or running away when you could not get produce your ideal, you held your ground. You embraced the very thing you are most afraid of, being alone while with someone. You are suffering there, you want more, and that, too, is very reasonable, but you also are being a mature adult, and making sacrifices for other people’s benefits. It is in the holding and experiencing where transformation occurs, not in the running or fighting. You’re not blaming, either. You’re not disparaging her, or exaggerating the situation to make you look better or to appear as a victim. If anything, I think you’re under reporting your thoughts and feelings as you try to understand them and the situation and how you contributed to it. You realize she has the right to pursue what makes her happy, without shame or fault. She is failing and succeeding, too. No matter how much she hates you and feels stuck, she is struggling, with her own past and family of origin issues. There is balance here. She is learning from you. Your son is learning from both of you.”

Jon seemed more at ease. “Will I see him again?”

“You’re there now! There is no separation,” Loxy said.

“But will ‘I’ see him, in person?” Jon asked.

“The Universe is a big, crazy space,” Loxy said. “I wouldn’t worry about that one.”

“Will they be alright when I die there?” Jon asked.

“You’re not going to die there. Not yet. You have more surprises waiting for you there before you jump to the next station,” Loxy said.

Loxy rested her head on his stomach, as if it were a pillow, and stared up into the stars. She took Jon’s hands and traced the lines unconsciously, pushing points where the stars on the other side of his hand would intersect, drawing the light through. She played connect the dots, a heart formed.

“Do you want children?” Jon asked.

Loxy smiled and kissed his hands. “You’re asking the night if it wants stars?”

“No, I am asking...”

“Jon, this here is you and me time. Out there, somewhere, we are parents, and maybe, one day, in our future, our children will visit us here, our retirement home, but for now, just listen to the stars for laughter,” Loxy said.

“I hear crying,” Jon said.

“Yeah, babies cry, but that’s just them saying hello, and it is so getting better,” Loxy said.
“Tell me, how is your internship going?”

निर्मित

Jon closed his eyes and he was there, in his intern office. He was playing with the ‘Magna-tiles,’ which was probably the most interesting toy he had seen in ages. The glow table allowed light to shine through the translucent shapes, and their internal magnets allowed them to maintain their forms, or pull apart easily enough to make new shapes, and he was so engaged that he didn’t realize his first client had entered his office.

“Are you the therapist, or a client?”

Jon looked up and blinked, sorting his impressions of the woman who had entered his office, and bit his lower lip. His first impression was, ‘wow.’ Her fluffy, wildly curled, blond hair fell just shy of her shoulders, which were bare. The dangling sleeves seemed to be holding her red romper up, barely, that and the twins. He was almost tempted to do magic and make it fall. He didn’t think it would take much effort. If she sneezed, it might shake her free. He suppressed an urge to sneeze and his eyes watered. She hid her eyes behind ‘Elton John’ shades. Opened toed shoes, tied to her feet and legs by thin, red, leather straps. Her skin was pale. Almost whiter than the walls. He forced himself to breathe.

“Um, depends,” Jon said.

“On?”

“Your level of sophistication,” Jon said.

“What?” she asked.

“Well, if you’re smarter than me, then I am the client,” Jon said.

“For real?” she asked.

“Yes. Otherwise, the answer is dependent on whether I accept you as a client,” Jon said.

“Whether you accept me? I am in charge here. It’s whether I accept you,” she corrected.

“Welcome to the world of magic,” Jon said. “Unfortunately, the way it works here is that you couldn’t be here unless you agreed to be here.”

“I don’t want to be here,” she said.

“Oh? Oh! That’s awesome,” Jon said. “Good for you. The egress is right over there. Have a nice day.”

“Really?!” she said.

“I am confused,” Jon said.

“You’re confused?” she said.

“You just said you don’t want to be here,” Jon said.

“I don’t want to be here,” she said.

Jon put down the squares he was holding, walked over to the egress, opened the door, and stared out down the length of the infinity hall and back to her. “The door is working. You should end up where you need to be.”

“You’re fucking kidding me?” she said.

Jon was really confused. “No, I am pretty confident, you go through this door, you end up where you’re supposed to be.”

“That’s not what I meant!” she snapped.

“Oh? Forgive me for being obtuse,” Jon said. “Could you clarify?”

“You’re kicking me out?” she said, incredulously.

“You said you don’t want to be here,” Jon reminded her, equally frustrated.

“They sent me here. If I don’t comply, they’re just going to send me back here,” she said.

“That does seem like a problem,” Jon agreed.

“You suck at this therapy thing,” she said.

Jon pushed air under his lips and inflated them away from his teeth. “What is your evidence for that?”

“You haven’t introduced yourself, or asked me to lie down on the couch,” she said.

“Oh, I am not that kind of a therapist. Wait, wait, wait, oh, yeah, technically, I am that kind of therapist, but we haven’t been properly introduced yet,” Jon said.

“OMG, are you a moron? I just said that,” she said.

“I have an idea. Let’s start over,” Jon said, closing the door and running back to where he was. He sat down and picked the squares back up. For a moment he wondered if the red and blue squares he was holding was indicative of anything beyond the fact he was holding red and blue squares. He looked at her through the squares, then through the overlapping squares. He saw

nothing relevant and lowered his hands. “Go back to the door, pretend to come in and say, hi, my name is...”

She stared at him. He stared back. He put the blue square over his left eye. Still nothing.

“This is crazy,” she said.

“Oh, come on, this is a fun game, just say hi, my name is...” Jon said.

“Hi, my name is,” she said.

Jon waved the squares as if encouraging her to say her name, amused by her passive aggressive humor, which, he, too, often engaged in.

“You don’t know who I am?” she asked.

“Should I know who you are?” Jon asked.

“You don’t have a list of clients that you’re seeing?”

“Oh, I don’t do lists,” Jon said, very serious. “And I don’t keep time or have appointments. People just show up when they need to show up.”

“That’s crazy!” she said.

“It can be pretty insane,” Jon agreed. “But it works for me.”

“How do you keep from having conflicts?” she asked.

Jon seemed confused. If you were watching, it was almost as if he was about to short circuit in the process of understanding the question. “How does anyone keep from having conflicts?”

“They keep a schedule!” she snapped.

“I find scheduling events increases the likelihood of conflicts,” Jon said. “No schedule, no conflicts. We just embrace life as it is.”

“Well that’s just crazy,” she said.

“And yet, you’re in my office,” Jon said, pointing a corner of the blue square at her.

“I want someone else,” she said.

“Fair enough,” Jon said, pointing to the egress.

She headed for the door, touched the door knob, paused, and turned back to Jon. He bit his lip as if caught admiring her form. He wasn’t much of a butt guy, more a leg guy, but he could clearly discern the contours of her butt moving under the romper and hhis had felt

compelled to pursue it, admiring the back of her thighs. He doubted it was lost on her. She sighed. "I am just going to end up back here in this office, aren't I?"

"Honestly?" Jon asked.

"What do you think?!" she asked.

"I'll make a deal with you. I will endeavor to answer honestly, if you will agree to the same," Jon said.

She seemed to hesitate. "Fine," she said.

"You'll probably end up back here because whatever it was that brought you here probably thinks you have something to learn by being here, even if it's nothing more than increasing your tolerance to suffering people who are less intelligent than you," Jon said.

She grimaced. "I am sorry I suggested you were a moron."

"Oh, no worries. Compared to most people, I am a raving lunatic," Jon said. "I mean, you'd be surprised how many brilliant people there are in the Universe. Would you like to play this with me?"

"You're serious?" she asked.

"Oh, yeah. This is even better than Lite Bright. I still like Lite Bright, but I love these shapes, and the colors, and look, they have magnets on the inside," Jon said, demonstrating. "I think all future currency will be these funny little shapes, and it makes me think of Star Trek."

"Really, seriously, is there anyone else in this place I can speak to?" she asked.

"Do you remember watching Charlie in the Chocolate Factory? Not the remake, but the original, Gene Wilder version," Jon asked, with clarity.

"Yes," she said.

"So, you and the universe has a need that has to be met; who do you want to go to, a maniac, wild genius that always produces fruit, candy fruit, or the boring, old, traditional, monotone, answer set that is generally helpful, but not necessarily the perfect fit for your life?" Jon asked.

"This is crazy!" she said.

"You have a strong attachment to that word," Jon said.

"Look, all I want is the most expedient, direct answer to my problems that meets the criteria to keep me from coming back here," she said.

“Oh, good for you. I have demanded the same thing from life, and the answer I got was, lightening never takes a straight path,” Jon said. “We’re all out of burning bushes and I don’t use a crystal ball, but if you want to play, we might make something interesting.”

“I don’t want to play!” she said.

Jon put the pieces down, stood long enough to walk to his chair, and sat down. He invited her to sit on the couch across from him. She sat and crossed her legs. She rocked her legs, which was distracting. He traced the calf muscle as the outline came and went, like waves on a beach as she rocked. He needed to distract himself.

“Are you okay if I drink coffee?” Jon asked.

“Fine, whatever,” she said.

“Would you like some coffee?” Jon asked.

“No, I don’t want any coffee,” she said.

“Some water, perhaps?” Jon asked.

“I don’t want anything!” she snapped.

“Oh,” Jon said, clearly sad.

“What?” she demanded.

“That’s going to make therapy incredibly difficult,” Jon said.

“What?!”

“If you don’t want anything, this process isn’t likely to work,” Jon said.

“I am telling you I don’t want anything to drink!” she snapped.

“Oh. Thank you for the clarification,” Jon said. “Whew. I was really worried there.”

“Worried about what?!”

“That this session might be incredibly long,” Jon said.

Jon picked up his coffee cup that was suddenly full with hot coffee. The aroma visibly rose from his cup and he inhaled it, and then breathed it back into the room, thinking ‘peace, peace, peace.’ He tried smiling at her.

“What?” she asked.

“I am Jon,” he said.

“Just Jon?” she asked.

“Would you like a title?” Jon asked.

“Actually,” she said.

“Like, I am the very model of modern major general kind of title?” Jon asked.

“Are you making fun of me?”

“A little. Sorry. I am human,” Jon said.

“That’s a title?” she asked.

“Do you have preference?” Jon asked.

“Doctor? Counselor?” she asked.

“Oh, no, you won’t find any of those types here,” Jon said. “At least, not in the strictest, medical nomenclature kind of way.”

“What are you?” she asked.

“Human. But you can call me Jon,” he said. “What should I call you?”

“A taxi,” she mumbled.

“Ataxia? I like that,” Jon said.

“Just call me Rachel,” she said.

“Rachel Ataxia?”

“No, just Rachel,” she said.

“Just Rachel, then,” Jon said.

“I swear, you’re being deliberately adversarial,” Rachel said.

“You’re right,” Jon said, genuinely apologetic. “I am sorry. Perhaps you would like to share what brought you here today.”

“I don’t know,” Rachel said.

Jon blinked. “Maybe it would help if I knew who ‘they’ were,” he offered.

“They who?” Rachel asked.

“You said ‘they’ sent you here. Who would that be?” Jon asked.

“I don’t want to talk about it,” Rachel said.

Jon nodded, sipped his coffee.

“What? Does it matter?” Rachel asked.

Jon kind of shrugged.

“It doesn’t matter, does it?” Rachel asked.

“Not really,” Jon said. “It’s just, you seem like you urgently want this part of your life to be done, and yet, I have not yet found a way in.”

“You want to go in?” Rachel asked.

“And deep,” Jon said.

“Are we talking about therapy?” Rachel demanded.

“What do you think we’re talking about?” Jon asked.

“Nothing,” Rachel snapped. “Never mind.”

“How about if you lead,” Jon asked.

“Oh, so now we’re dancing?” Rachel asked.

“If you prefer,” Jon said.

“Do you have children?” Rachel asked.

Jon’s best poker face came online, and he answered with: “It sounds like you would like to know if I can relate to you...”

“No, I just want you to answer the fucking question; do you have kids. Really simple. Yes or no,” Rachel said.

Jon stared into his coffee cup for a long moment. “Here’s what I don’t like about this game,” he began. She was about to speak over him, but he held up a hand to silence her and she actually responded with silence, shocked silence, but silence. “No matter how I answer that question, we will be engaged in competition in which no one wins. If I say no, you will say, ‘then you can’t help me because I don’t understand.’ Never mind the argument that maybe I don’t have kids because I do understand how serious an endeavor raising a human being is and I have chosen, wisely or not, to avoid creating people in an environment not conducive to their wellbeing. Just saying that automatically shoves you further into a defensive position where now I have just called you a moron for bringing kids into the world when you don’t have fucking a clue what you’re doing. If I say I have kids, it becomes a race to see who can best the other. Yes, I have one child. ‘Oh, really? I have three, how can you understand what I go through.’ Yes, I have five kids? ‘Yeah, I suppose your kids are all perfect; how can you understand me when I have one with ADHD, one with autism, and one that’s got Down syndrome? How do you think you’re going to help me, a single mom, when I can’t work cause I am too busy trying to keep this one from plugging coat hangers into the sockets, while this was is jumping on the couch, and the other is going off with strangers, and I am exhausted cause I have no family or help, and no baby sitter will take them on, and I am around children all day, without adult interaction.’ Then there is whole level of therapy thing where it’s not about me, it’s about you, and so it is not helpful for you to know about my life. Even if I did share, it would never be equal, because this

relationship, in general, is not about equality. In fact, it can generally be harmful for a client to know that their counselor is as screwed up as the rest of the world. Here's what you need to take from this rant. I am a good counselor. What does that mean? I get it right most of the time. Like, better than 80 percent of the time. That's way better statistics than say, flipping a coin, even better than the effectiveness of a placebo, and even way better than a psychic! Yep, psychics don't always get it right either. Will I mess up? Maybe. What human doesn't mess up? And if we do, well, we talk about it, and if the mess up is a blunder that is a direct result of my actions or words, then I will own it."

Jon found himself outside of the therapy room, sitting in a chair, and across from him was Summer. She was pushing a button on a remote control which had paused the scene. She rewound it to right before the rant. She spun the camera view around so they could see his face on the screen, which might also have been a one way mirror seeing into the therapy room.

"What went through your mind right here?" Summer asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Jon said.

"It's important," Summer said. "She asked if you had kids and you had this look."

"It's a look that says I hate that question," Jon said. "That's what I thought. Plus or minus some profanity."

"Why didn't you just say it out loud?" Summer asked.

Jon shrugged. "I didn't think that would be helpful."

"But the rant is?"

"No," Jon said, sullenly. "I am so not good at this..."

"Oh, stop that!" Summer interjected. "Do you really expect to do great your first time at bat."

"Yeah, actually, I do," Jon said, coming full round from self-deprecation to fighting. "We're dealing with the sanctity of people's lives. I don't want to fuck it up!"

"You're going to fuck it up sometimes. That's what we do," Summer said. "Sometimes things need to be fucked up so we can see what's inside, so we can find resilience, and love."

"Really? So, you're advocating for adversity? Why don't we start poking people's eyes out at birth?" Jon asked.

"That's not fucking things up. That's just malicious," Summer said.

“I am just saying, fucking things up, having adversity, while it can provide opportunities to overcome and realize inner, personal strength, most people don’t flourish. Statistically, most people succumb, and drown,” Jon said.

“It’s a good thing we have a life guard on duty,” Summer said. “Wouldn’t want anyone drowning today.”

“Thank you for pulling me out,” Jon said.

Summer ignored the statement, and settled into the new energy state, which was calmer. Jon was back to a listening frame of mind. “What happened when you finished the rant?” Summer said.

“I felt an increase in alienation,” Jon said.

“No, tell me what you saw,” Summer said.

“Tangible barriers went up. Umm, she stopped rocking her leg,” Jon said. “She put her hands on the couch, flat, palms down. Her head tilted away, slightly, but perceptively, suggesting she diverted her eyes.” He was going to say he noticed she wasn’t wearing a bra, but decided to eat that, as it wasn’t helpful.

Summer rotated the view around to reveal that was exactly what Rachel had done. She pushed play and Jon found himself back in the therapy room, sitting across from Rachel. He didn’t want to be back. He was actually surprised to be back. Jon remained silent, simply observing her. He wanted to meet her eyes, but the glasses just reflected him, and the room. Looking down wasn’t helpful, as he ended up with eye full of nipples pushing through clothes, or long, bare legs. Jon sat his coffee down, folded his legs up in the chair, crisscross applesauce, and leaned forwards, focusing on her eyes, or where he imagined her eyes might be, and then noticed he could see her cleavage inside the glasses. He waited for her to say something.

“It’s funny you say Down syndrome,” Rachel said. “My youngest daughter has that. My son, my first child, has ADHD, and my second child, my first daughter has anger issues. And I am failing.” Her head came back forward, suggesting she was looking at him, but it was still impossible to tell with the glasses she was wearing. “And I am tired. I am alone. You nailed that. I don’t suppose you have any magic that can fix all of this, do you?”

“If there was, besides the obvious, could you tell me what you would like to be different?” Jon asked, gently. The whole feel of the room had changed.

“You mean, beside curing my daughter so she is normal, calming my son the fuck down, helping my daughter not be angry, or me not being alone? Having more strength and energy might be nice. They have pills for that, right?” Rachel asked. “More money.”

“You’re feeling overwhelmed,” Jon restated. “How is it you became all alone in this?”

“My grandmother was helping, till she died. She did leave me the house, which is helpful, but if I don’t pay the taxes, I could lose it, and every time I try to work, I am either being called out to the school because of one of the two oldest is fighting or being disruptive, or I am going to the ER because the smallest one has hurt herself. I don’t know what to do anymore. I am just so tired. I want to run away.”

“Are you thinking about killing yourself?” Jon asked.

“No! Why would you think that?” Rachel said.

“It’s just a question,” Jon said. “And I believe you.”

“I have too much to do to kill myself. And who would take care of them? I can’t keep a fucking baby sitter as it is,” Rachel said. “What the hell is going to happen if I die?”

Jon nodded. “So you thought about this, about dying?”

“Who hasn’t thought about dying? I got to get the first two up to adult hood so they can take care of their sister, either financially, or personally, because no one else will treat her the way family will,” Rachel said.

“Yeah, maybe,” Jon said.

“Maybe? Have you seen the institutions where they put people with Down syndrome? Girls get raped, by staff, by other residents,” Rachel said.

Jon nodded. He didn’t have the statistics on it, but yeah, that happens. It also happens to be true that people with Down syndrome want to have sex just as much as normal folks, minus the discernment. He doubted Rachel was ready for that reality, but he had no evidence other than his intuition. There were a million questions he could ask, but he could only think of one:

“If you could have a vacation, where would you go?”

“I don’t have time for day dreams or fantasies,” Rachel said.

“Probably not. Your life is probably regimented and very practical,” Jon said. “But you’re here, now, and you can breathe, and what if I told you, imagining a vacation can be almost as good as going? Sometimes, even better.”

“How could it be better?” Rachel asked.

“You never lose your luggage,” Jon said.

Rachel squashed a smile. She started rocking her leg again. “I really don’t have time for this,” she said. “I need to get back.”

Jon folded his hands together and rested his chin on his knuckles. “And yet, you’re not moving from the couch.”

“I am stuck. You must have hypnotized me,” Rachel said.

“Aww, yes, I must have,” Jon said. “That would help you out, wouldn’t it? If I just took charge of your body, your life.”

“I wish someone would,” Rachel said.

Jon wished he had been clear with her, because now he was lost. “Take charge of your body or your life?”

“Both!” Rachel said. “I can’t keep a man with my kids. Yeah, I can get fucked at any bar, but no descent man will come up to me, because they I assume I am so beautiful that I am already taken, so I have to be the aggressor, and men don’t want aggressive women. It doesn’t matter. They meet my kids, they’re gone, and so I am stuck with drunk men, most of which are cheating on their wives, offering me hope but giving me cheap hotels. Well, at least, that’s how I got the last two kids, before my grandmother died.”

Jon nodded. “It sounds very lonely.”

Rachel didn’t sit with that very long. She shifted on the couch, uncrossing her legs, so she could cross them again with the other on top. “Hawaii would be nice,” Rachel said.

Jon wondered if he should steer her back. “Have you ever been?” Jon asked.

“Oh, no. No,” Rachel said. “Believe it or not, I have never left Florida.”

Jon blinked. “Where about?”

“Miami,” Rachel said.

“You live in Miami, known for beaches, and yet, you want to go to Hawaii, where, you would find more beaches?” Jon said.

“Yeah, I know, it’s stupid,” Rachel said.

“No it’s not,” Jon said. “It’s interesting. What does Hawaii mean to you? No. Wait, wait, wait. What does an island mean to you?”

Her head tilted again, as if looking away. She removed her glasses and wiped her eyes, but left the glasses on the couch, attached to her hand. “I don’t know,” she whispered.

“Go with it. Imagine you knew. Say anything that’s in your mind,” Jon said.

“I don’t know!” Rachel said, meeting his eyes. “Maybe it’s just evidence that something can survive the deluge!”

Jon said nothing, simply maintained eye contact until she diverted her eyes and then he nodded. Tears dropped. “You’re feeling overwhelmed, drowning in debt, trying to survive, and you want to connect with an island, to feel strong. Not just an island. Hawaii. An active volcano.”

“You’re think I am about to blow?” Rachel asked.

“No, no, no,” Jon said. Another part of him wanted to say ‘yeah, me.’ “I think you want to build more land.”

Rachel chuckled. “That’s absurd.”

“How do you feel? How do you feel right now, as opposed to how you felt when you entered and found me playing with kids toys?” Jon asked.

“Okay,” Rachel said, indifferently.

“You seem a little lighter. Less angry,” Jon observed.

“But it’s not enough to feel better. I still have to go home and face my demons,” Rachel said.

“Your children, or the monsters eating your lunch?” Jon asked.

Rachel laughed. “Both.”

“Rachel,” Jon said. “Thank you for letting me get a glimpse into your world. Thank you for lowering your shields and letting me see your eyes, your tears. I don’t know what kind of answers we might find, but I would like to explore this a little more with you. If you would like to come back, I accept you as a client.”

“Our time is up?” Rachel asked.

“You feel like you’re close to an answer, you feel peaceful, and you don’t want that feeling to go away yet,” Jon said.

Rachel nearly brought her shields full up. More tears fell. “Yeah,” she said.

“This feeling is yours, it has always been yours, and it’s inside you, emerging like an island growing,” Jon said. “How long do you suppose you can carry it?”

“I don’t know,” Rachel said.

“Fair enough. Track it. Next time we visit, tell me about it,” Jon said.

“Tell you when it goes away?” Rachel asked.

“When it goes away, it’s because of the rising tide, know it will be back when tide slips away,” Jon said. “If it goes away because of rising water levels due to global warming, well, there is always lava in the volcano building more mountains.”

“Are you like this with everyone?” Rachel asked.

“Only the ones that are smarter than me who get metaphors,” Jon said.

“I am sorry,” Rachel said.

“For calling me a moron? Don’t be. I get things wrong. If this is going to work, you need to call me out on my shit,” Jon said, standing up.

“Do I pay you now?” Rachel asked.

“It’s taken care of,” Jon said.

“Uh?”

“You don’t get here without paying in advance and I have a team for that and the world is balanced,” Jon said. “Go in peace on that score.”

Rachel nodded headed for the door. She was about to put her glasses back on but then paused, sucked on the end, and turned back. “Just out of curiosity, how do you know when our time is up?”

Jon shrugged. “Maybe I just always end things when the client has a moment of insight in order to raise my perceived effectiveness.”

“You’re funny,” Rachel said, putting on her glasses to hide the fact she had been crying from the rest of the world.

Jon found himself back in the room with Summer.

“Still want to quit?” Summer asked.

“Maybe I will collect more evidence before I do,” Jon said.

“You’re a natural, but you do need training. Do not think for a moment that you’re going to win them all,” Summer said. “Alright, let’s review the next one...”

निर्मित

Jon was reading a book in his chair when a couple entered. Without looking up from his book, he pointed to the couch in front of him, indicating they were invited to sit, as opposed to they absolutely had to sit. He continued to read.

“Excuse me?” the man asked.

“One moment, please,” Jon said.

“We have an appointment,” the man said.

“You’re early, please have a seat,” Jon said.

The girl tried to get the man to sit, but he wasn’t having it. “We paid for your services...”

Jon closed his book and looked up at him, sorting the truth out of statement. He was nearly disrupted by the horror of the man standing next to the woman. There was a hole in the side of his face which was either the result of a birth defect, or he had cancer and had had it removed. Jon suppressed his initial reaction, trying to summon love and compassion.

“What?” the man said, revealing he was sensitive enough about his looks that he had discerned Jon’s micro-flash of disgust.

“You said ‘we.’ I think she paid for the services. You didn’t want to be here?” Jon said, with sufficient believability that they didn’t have to hold a discussion about his reaction to the man’s face.

“That’s not the point,” he said. “We’re here, and you’re going to do your job.” He took a seat and put his boots up on the coffee table. “Now, tell me something I don’t already know?”

The girl sat down on the couch, as far away from her partner as she could, seemingly apologetic and embarrassed. Jon closed his book and set it on the table beside his chair. He picked up his coffee cup. It had just the right amount of coffee, and at the right temperature for drinking comfortably. The aroma rose and his breath pushed it through the room. Jon looked to his right as if hearing something.

“How does that apply to me?” Jon asked.

The man sat forward. “Who are you talking to?”

“Wait just a moment,” Jon said. “Really?”

“Are you hallucinating?” the man asked.

“No, I have an invisible blue tooth wired directly to the universe and I got a call, and you’re being rude,” Jon said.

The man stood up. “I am being rude? You have all but ignored us since we arrived.”

“And you never ignore people in favor of calls or texts?” Jon asked. “I believe one of your wife’s complaint is you’re always on the phone when she wants to talk.”

“I have a business to run,” he said.

“So do I, and since this call pertains to you, I think you should allow me to negotiate on your behalf,” Jon said.

“Just end the call now,” he said.

“Very well,” Jon said. He looked to his right and ended the conversation. He turned back to the man. “Based on your insistence, I am now obligated to discuss informed consent.”

“We aren’t even on the same planet...” he said.

“I know right, but you insisted I end the call,” Jon said.

“I know my world’s rules,” he said.

“I am still obligated to speak them, and will not be able to move forwards until that happens,” Jon said.

“Fine,” the man said, standing. He walked over to a book shelf and picked up a lego ship, and began disassembling it. “Go on. I am listening.”

“You don’t appear to be listening, but the conditions will be applicable regardless of the perceived understanding,” Jon said.

“Whatever,” the man said.

“Limits to confidentiality include the following. If either of you have a parole officer, I can’t keep a secret,” Jon began.

“We don’t have a parole officer,” the man said. The lego ship was completely disassembled, and pieces were on the floor and several shelves. Jon was also aware that he pocketed the character from in the ship.

“I am still obligated to inform you of the caveats,” Jon said. “If I hear that a child or elder in your care is being harmed, I have to speak to your version of child and adult protective services.”

“We don’t have children,” he said, sweeping lego pieces to the floor with his feet.

“I am still going to give you this... Umm. You felt compelled to tell me there’s no child, but didn’t say anything about an elder?”

“No old folks, either,” he said.

“Thank you for the clarity,” Jon said. “If I hear anything that sounds like either of you are contemplating suicide or homicide, I will have to contact the appropriate authority in your jurisdiction.”

“Do people actually admit to those things after you give them the speech?” he asked.

“You’d be surprised what people admit to,” Jon said. “You can tell them you have cameras in their home and that they’re being monitored and they still behave poorly. Would you like to sit?”

The man opened a container and helped himself to the candy inside. “Nope,” he said. “Are you done with your speech?”

“Due to the fact you came as a couple, I will not be able to see either of you individually. If you require individual counseling, and I am highly recommending that you both pursue that, I can refer you to the appropriate therapist. If you arrive on your own, you will be turned away. Also, in the event that this relationship ends, so does therapy, and we will be blocked from further interactions. I will not be able to ever see you as individuals or as a couple with new partners. This is now a hard block to just the three of us or none of us.”

“Why?” she asked.

“It helps reduce my impulse to sabotage your relationship under the guise of helping you so that I steal you from him,” Jon said.

“You want to fuck her? Go ahead. She’s going to leave anyway,” he said.

“Stop saying that,” she said.

“Oh,” Jon said. “You want her to leave.”

“People leave. You should know that,” he said. “Aren’t you supposed to be like this master therapist?”

Jon considered correcting him, tell him he was just an intern and just as he was going to say it, the man continued.

“Why do some men like watching their wives get fucked by strangers?” he asked.

“You want to watch your wife have sex with someone else?” Jon asked.

“No. I will end our relationship when she steps out, but I have fucked other people’s wives, while they watched,” he said.

Jon nodded. “How do you feel about that?”

The man put on a fake smile. “They actually paid me to sleep with them.”

“So it was a win win for you,” Jon said.

“Kind of like your job,” he said. “I could so do your job. Flatter people so they feel good about themselves and then fuck them when they’re vulnerable.”

“Do you feel flattered being here?” Jon asked.

“Whatever,” he said. He sat on the back of the couch, swung his legs over, hitting his girl with his shoes before planting them on the seat.”

The girl covered her head and looked annoyed at him.

“I will not tolerate aggressive, physical contact in my office. I will block that. You can say whatever you like, but no hitting,” Jon said.

“It was an accident,” he said.

“I bet you have lots of accidents,” Jon said.

“And who are you, the accident police?” he asked.

“My office, my world, my rules, are we clear?” Jon asked.

“Fuck you,” he said.

“Also, I won’t keep your secrets in front of her. It is the nature of this room that lies get revealed. If you can’t appreciate that, it might be best to leave before your truths come out,” Jon said.

“We have no secrets,” he said.

“So, she knows that your ‘business’ calls are really the girls you have strung out on the side?” Jon asked.

He stood up and pointed at Jon. “You are out of line!”

“Sit down,” Jon said. It wasn’t mean, it wasn’t with raised voice, it was just a directive. Surprisingly, the man sat down. Jon wondered if they noticed the tremors in his hands. He suddenly found himself in the room with Summer. The video of his intern was paused.

“What are you feeling here?” Summer said.

“Fear,” Jon admitted.

“More specific,” Jon said.

“I fear conflict that will erupt into physical aggression,” Jon said.

“What would happen if you just say that?” Summer said.

Jon shrugged. “Given his antisocial behavior, I suspect he will use that information to try and gain social advantage and use it against me,” Jon said.

“So, you have two fears. Conflict escalating to the point of violence, and someone holding a superior position,” Summer said.

“I can handle the violence,” Jon said.

“I was there during your life review and know you can, that doesn’t mean you want avoid it,” Summer said.

“I am not worried about avoiding it,” Jon said. “I am more worried I am going to blow it up on purpose so that we get that part over with.”

“He might actually like that,” Summer said.

“I don’t want to fight him,” Jon said.

“Why didn’t you ask him about his face?” Summer asked.

“I figured it was irrelevant,” Jon said, feeling some sad.

“How can anyone’s face be irrelevant?” Summer asked, pointing at his face, now on the screen. “Especially that face. He is either lying about being paid to fuck wives, or there are people that want a scary face hovering over them while being molested.”

“Have you seen your face?” Jon asked, trying for funny and distraction.

“You love my face,” Summer said.

“I do actually,” Jon said, again called out. “I am not happy that I telegraphed my reaction to his face. I am sure he gets that a lot.”

“And what do you suppose would have happened if you had just said it?” Summer asked.

“Like ‘whoa, what the fuck happened to you?’” Jon asked.

“He’s not a stranger to profanity,” Summer said.

“So I should have asked?” Jon asked.

“Society has been trained not to discuss the elephant in the room, but here’s an elephant and it’s hitting you with it’s trunk, wanting to be called out,” Summer said. “Parents in stores telling kids don’t stare, don’t ask questions. Why the hell not?”

“Because it causes pain?” Jon asked.

“Maybe. But it’s something that he has been living with for a while and it’s affecting him whether it is openly discussed or not, and so, in your office, a safe place to discuss elephants and zebras, why not get it out and on the table,” Summer said.

“It might break my table,” Jon said.

“It’s a magical table,” Summer reminded him. “You could kill Aslan on it and it not break.”

“Oh, nice. Harsh, but nice,” Jon said. “Besides, my reaction wasn’t about him, but my own evilness,” Jon said.

“Expound, please,” Summer said.

“It’s going to sound truly petty and reveal that I am not fit for this job,” Jon said.

“OMG, not this again? How can you not be fit to be human?” Summer said. “If you were reptilian, we would be holding a different discussion, so stop struggling with your humanness and embrace it.”

Jon sulked. “I hate this part,” Jon said.

“Spit it out,” Summer said.

“I am jealous,” Jon said.

“Of fuck face?” Summer asked.

“Please. His face is ugly, but not as ugly as I think he is on the inside,” Jon said. “He is mean, controlling, probably kicks dogs, steals candies from babies, but the thing that bothers me the most is that she is with him.” Jon said it and was out there and he didn’t know what to do with it. “She is drop dead gorgeous. She is likely going out of her way to try and make this guy happy, and no matter what she does, she gets treated with meanness. I would so be treating her better than he. Heck, a tree stump would be a step up from him, and yet she’s sticking with him like glue. And I know from experience, if I interrupted their domestic violence, she would not see me as a hero, but would hit me in the back of the head with a wrench from the back of his truck to keep me from hurting him.”

Summer picked up a glass of water, sipped, and sat it back down. She found a human candy in a bowl and tossed it to Jon. “Yay you.”

“Really? You’re rewarding me?” Jon asked. “This is about them, and I am inside myself thinking what the heck is wrong with me? Maybe if I treat women badly I could have someone like that. And I shouldn’t even be thinking this because I have a lot of nice looking, really genuinely loving people in my life, and yet, I hold these kinds of thoughts. I don’t know where they come from or how to rid myself of their presence and it makes me wonder what business I have helping others when I am just barely making it myself most the time.”

Summer nodded, picked up a book, and read him a quote. “How will you ever quench your thirst if you focus only on the purity of the vessel that serves you?” Summer looked up. “Were you listening when Isis spoke this to you?”

“It was about me?” Jon asked.

“Did you think it was about someone else?” Summer asked.

“But...”

“No, Jon, the fact that no one in your life prior to Safe Haven knew how much you struggled with this stuff is actually a sign that you’re high functioning. It shows discernment. Saying this, in the wrong context, does reveal severe lack of self-esteem, and could be used against you. But in this environment, in this context, it can be incredibly helpful, because guess what, everyone that encounters them as a couple, they’re either personally thinking the same or thinking others are thinking that, and that impulse is partly selfish but also partly protective. It’s why the million dollar offer is so affective at causing discord between Woody and Demi. It wasn’t about the money or the sex, it was about the price.”

“Alright, so, I should own it in front of them?” Jon asked.

Summer shrugged. “Don’t just blurt it or push it. Feel the rhythm and the flow and allow intuition to guide you,” Summer said. “Maybe disclosure would be helpful, maybe not. Maybe you need more rapport before you start unpacking and disarming landmines.”

“So, I get that he probably has multiple girlfriends on the side, because he is seeking esteem through gratification,” Jon said. “I have certainly done that, still do that. I just don’t understand how he is so successful with this undercover life. Surely it can’t all be explained by sympathy fucks.”

“You’re competing with him, as opposed to allowing that maybe his luck in that arena is compensation, or people simply wanting to demonstrate their ability to love?” Summer asked.

“If people wanting to demonstrate their love to the unlovable, why the hell didn’t I get more sympathy sex?” Jon asked.

“Because you had self-installed blocks due to the your perception that giving into that impulse made you a bad person,” Summer said.

“I would so give into that impulse, like a crack whore to crack,” Jon said.

“You’re a lot healthier than you think,” Summer said.

“You mean my self-blocking is a sign of health?” Jon asked, confused.

“Weird, right,” Summer said.

“No, it’s confusing,” Jon said.

“Nope. Very human. You had just as much sex as you believed was possible without exceeding the threshold which would severely impact your self-view. You’re having more sex now that you have come to terms with the fact that threshold was an illusion. You lacked love because you thought you were unlovable, which was the next illusion you had to battle with. You’re now dealing with another illusion in your office. There wouldn’t be beauty in the beast if there wasn’t a true human impulse to love demons. And many men, like you yourself, think themselves to be monsters, and many women believe men are monsters, and the Japanese Monster girls is projecting, because your world society can tolerate a woman being aggressive to get sex, but if a man did it, it would be rape and shut down. The other hard social fact you’re hitting up against is the belief that there is an exchange rate for affection, and so when you believe people are getting more than you, you’re wondering what you’re lacking, or what you can do to get more, as opposed to just embracing the idea that there is no exchange rate, because there is no currency, and you’re actually getting exactly the right amount to sustain you at your present level of understanding,” Summer said.

“That can’t be right,” Jon said. “The whole concept of magic is based on currency.”

“Is it now?” Summer said more than asked. “Please, educate me about magic.”

“You’re saying it’s not?” Jon asked.

Summer offered her hands up, begging to be taught.

“Are you about to quote Hāfiz?” Jon asked.

“He did give a great analogy,” Summer said.

“Every magic act I have performed to date has required a transaction,” Jon said. “A balancing of energies if you will.”

“Does that invalidate that there is a higher perspective?” Summer said. “I think you yourself have argued that if we live in the Lucas Universe, where balance, or karma, holds the ultimate final say, then Kenobi’s rant about Anakin being the one to bring balance is wrong, because he did bring balance. There were too many good Jedi. Couple that with the fact most citizens are good, law abiding citizens. Vader brought balance. One light casts a thousand shadows. The brighter the light, the greater the numbers of shadows, and the more substantial they become. This is also the lesson of your religion from your family of origin. There two

thieves, one wanting law and justice, or balance, and the other wanting forgiveness. And I dare say, Christianity is the only religion offering an out from karma or balance, where all the other games are not only demanding balance, they will use militant ways to get it.”

“So, how do you explain the current exchange rate?” Jon said.

“People pay what they think they need to pay,” Summer said.

“Well, that’s not fair,” Jon said.

“Are you like four years old? It’s not about fairness,” Summer said.

“Some people pay more than they should,” Jon said.

“Yep.”

“And there are people like Timothy who doesn’t think he should pay anything, that it is all owed him,” Jon said.

“Yep,” Summer said. “And people like Timothy, and the man in your office, always end up paying more than they should. So do all the people trying to take short cuts.”

Jon accepted the statement, but he was still dwelling and processing on it.

“What do you think she gets out of this relationship?” Summer said.

“Bruises?” Jon asked.

“Besides that,” Summer said.

“Confirmation that she is unlovable. That her actions and affections are have no value,” Jon said.

“Does she deserve more?”

“In a world where it’s not about fairness, people don’t get what they deserve,” Jon said.

Summer tossed him another candy. Fiery, spicy mint. The translucent redness was like a jewel. He put it in his mouth after spying the world through it.

“Does she get what she need?” Summer asked.

“She’s getting schooled, if that’s what you mean,” Jon said.

“Why did you block them from seeing you as an individual?” Summer asked.

“Cause I know it’s not going to last,” Jon said.

“You think? Okay, so why the block? They might both benefit from seeing you individually,” Summer said.

“I blocked that because I wanted to decrease the likelihood that I would speed up the demise of their relationship so I could have her alone in my office,” Jon said.

Summer threw him another candy. He pocketed it.

“Also, it’s in both of their interest to sort this out and improve together, if possible,” Jon said. “Unfortunately, I can’t protect her. The laws on the world that govern them only protects elders and minors, not adults. They can do anything short of killing each other.”

“I know,” Summer said.

“So, how do I help them?”

“I will trust you to figure that out,” Summer said, and sent him back into the ring with the click of a remote.

The man tossed a lego piece and hit Jon in the face. “Wake up. I asked you a question. Where do you get your education?”

Jon was really annoyed by being hit in the face with his own legos. “Reading ‘True Romance Comics,’ from the 50’s and 60’s. There are some on the shelf over there, if you’d like to read them for yourself.

“You’re fucking joking me,” he said.

“Yeah, mostly I just masturbate to the strips,” Jon said. “You masturbate, right?”

“No, I have relationships,” he said.

“Oh, so you masturbate by proxy,” Jon said. “Which is why you should really read True Romance comics.”

“Comic strips aren’t real. But even if they were, the ideals of the 1950’s don’t represent the modern relationship. We have matured as a society since then,” he said.

Jon pursed his lips, nodding in agreement. “That is interesting. I might buy your argument, if only your drama didn’t seem so, I don’t know, what is the word I want...”

“You’re comparing my life to a comic book?”

“You’re a character,” Jon said, and he was about to stand up but Jon blocked with a raised hand: stop. “And a pretty powerful character. And yet, you want me to believe you’re under duress. This woman is forcing you to do something you don’t want. So, either you’re secretly wanting therapy, and need a woman to coerce you, or you’re just an angry, bitter, passive aggressive SOB. Not the first time you heard that, right? Oh, yeah, I am not limited to Rogerian therapy. I can be equally assertive in my office. Doesn’t usually help. Did you know this is couples counseling, and so far, you and I have monopolized the conversation. Would you like to weigh in here?”

“Oh, I don’t ever weigh myself,” she said.

The man rubbed his forehead. “That’s not what he means! Gawd, you’re such an idiot,” he said.

“Don’t call me an idiot!”

“Moron perhaps?”

“If I am such an idiot, why do you want to be with me?” she asked.

“Because you put out,” the man said.

“That’s it? No other reason, like you think I am beautiful?” she asked.

“I have had better,” he said.

“And yet, again, you’re with me... Wait, you are cheating on me!” she said, the earlier conversation now catching up, but most likely was something that had been lurking in the back ground of her mind, and Jon just gave it voice.

“You’re surprised?” Jon asked.

She didn’t hear anything because she was still inside her own rant. “How can you cheat on me? I love you! I do everything for you, just like you want it. I cook for you, I do your clothes...”

“1950’s anyone?” Jon asked, but his joke was lost on these two, in the heat of their ongoing secret feud.

“I am not a lost puppy that you can adopt. I don’t need you,” he said. “The only reason you’re with me is because you assume no one else will want me and that I will have to be submissive to you.”

“So, you believe being in a relationship means being submissive?” Jon asked.

“You don’t have to be submissive, but you could at least be appreciative,” she said.

“For what? You have not done anything above and beyond what you’re supposed to be doing,” he said. “Hell, we only have sex once a week...”

“Not because I haven’t tried. You’re the one pushing me off you and saying you’re tired. Now I understand why you’re tired! You’re getting it somewhere else...”

Jon picked up his coffee, drew his legs back into the chair, and simply watched the drama, as it was clear he was no longer present to them. He could magically intervene, but the truth was, they were at least talking to each other. He wasn’t sure they were truly listening, but they were talking. It struck him. He had seen something like this before. He sat his coffee back

down, got up, went to the comics, and a random selection brought out the issue he wanted. 'True Romance.' He took it back to his seat, thumbed through it until he came to a strip that seemed to parallel his couple. He then had to wonder was he helping a real couple, or was this entire scene contrived for his own growth, or were these tulpas in his head that he created accidentally. Oh! What if masturbating over the comic strip is what made her real! Oh! What if every woman he ever masturbated to was in his head as a tulpa?! He made a quick prayer, please don't be true. He looked at the man. Was this him? A tulpa mirroring his own self-worth before his change? If it was, providing therapy to all his accidental tulpas was going to take fucking forever...

निर्मित

Jon arrived in his office and became aware of a five year old, hiding under his desk. He was more curious than concerned, but at least relieved it was a five year old and not a monster. Then again, it was hard to distinguish between monsters and five year old boys. He was pretty sure the boy was aware that he had entered, based on the fact that he tried to retreat further into the shadow.

Without approaching, Jon tried to lean over to spy under his desk. "Well, hello there. My name is Jon. What's yours?"

The boy didn't respond.

"Okay, well, I am going to take off my coat," Jon said, removing his coat and hanging it up. He moved his chair away from the desk, and then sat on the floor, as far away from the desk as the wall would permit. "It must seem pretty safe under there."

The boy made eye contact.

"Nice to meet you," Jon offered.

The boy gave no indication of what he might be thinking or feeling.

"Have you been here long?" Jon asked.

The boy shook his head.

"Oh, yay," Jon said. "So you can at least hear me."

He nodded.

"Cool beans," Jon said. "May I know your name?"

The boy said nothing.

“Um, I got to call you something. How about Newt?” Jon asked.

The boy shook his head ‘no.’

“Oh, yeah, well, I suppose I wouldn’t want be named after that character, either,” Jon said. “How about Harry?”

The boy nodded.

“Um, Harry Potter?” Jon asked.

The boy nodded, even smiled.

“Well, that helps narrow you down to a century,” Jon said. “Want to continue with this guessing game?”

The boy nodded.

“Well, if you’re here, your parents must have approved,” Jon said. Harry didn’t given any indication he was on target. “You cleared medical at least. And you can’t be here without consent.” Jon muttered through the pathways in his mind. “Would you like to play another game?”

Harry didn’t answer.

“Would you like to come out from under the desk?” Jon asked.

He shook his head no.

“Um,” Jon said, knowing he just lost ground on that one. “Would it make a difference if I said my room was safe?”

He shook his head no.

“Okay. I am going to get up and collect a couple of things but I am not leaving the room, okay?” Jon said.

Harry nodded.

Jon got up, found some paper, some crayons, and returned to the desk. Harry hadn’t moved. Jon laid down on the floor, pushed paper and crayons to Harry. Jon kept paper for himself and drew a blue circle. He paid no obvious attention to Harry, just focused on his circle, and on filling it in with pink. About the time he had filled in his circle and it was a solid pink, Harry had emerged slightly, was lying down, and drawing.

“Oh, that’s pretty nice. Is it a cat?” Jon asked.

Harry frowned. “It’s a squirrel,” he corrected.

“Oh,” Jon said. “I don’t think I have ever seen a purple squirrel before.”

“But you have seen purple cat?” Harry asked.

“Good point,” Jon said. “I have seen a blue cat. He time travels and likes cookies.”

“Dorimon?” Harry asked. “They’re not cookies. They are Dorayaki.”

“Yeah,” Jon said, accepting the fact he was being schooled by five year old. “Have you ever had one?”

“Dorayaki?” Harry said. “It’s a cartoon.”

“I bet there is one in my pocket over there,” Jon said.

“You’re trying to trick me,” Harry said.

“I’ll make a deal with you,” Jon said. “If there is one in my pocket, you have to come out from under my desk.”

“Okay,” Harry said.

Jon got up and went to his army jacket. He reached in the pocket and pulled out two bean cakes, individually wrapped.

Harry’s eyes got big. “Really?”

“You’re surprised?”

“You don’t know what they’re called but you have them in your pocket?” Harry asked.

“You are really smart,” Jon said.

Harry frowned. Jon didn’t pursue it. He just held the cake up.

“We had an arrangement,” Jon reminded.

Harry slowly came out from under the desk. He approached timidly and Jon offered him one of the cookies. He opened the other and took a bite, dropped the wrapper in the bin, and then proceeded to his chair. Harry also dropped the wrapper in the bin, but didn’t go sit down. He walked to the shelf and marveled at the toys and books.

“You sure like toys,” Harry said.

“Oh, yeah,” Jon said. “Don’t you?”

“Adults don’t like toys,” Harry said. “They’re a waste of money.”

“Oh,” Jon said. “May I ask who told you that?”

“Everyone knows that,” Harry said.

“I am embarrassed to say I was not informed,” Jon said.

“What’s that?” Harry said, pointing to the model of a ship.

“That is the space battleship Yomato,” Jon said.

“It looks like a submarine,” Harry said.

“I can see that,” Jon agreed. “Next to that is Johnny Sokko’s flying robot. I use to watch it when I your age. Along with Ultraman.”

Harry moved on to the Legos. He was tempted to touch, but he looked to Jon for a reaction. It was the ship a previous client had taken apart, and the stolen character returned. Jon nodded. Harry opened the canopy to peer inside.

“Do you like Legos?” Jon asked.

He shrugged. “Why do you have girl toys on your shelf?” Indicating the Legos that were more girl themed and some of the dolls.

“Toys are toys,” Jon said.

“That’s a girl toy,” Harry said.

“OMG, Harry, Star Trek Barby and Ken is so not a girl toy,” Jon said.

“It’s kind of creepy,” Harry said.

“What’s creepy about Ken and Barby?” Jon asked.

“You having toys,” Harry said.

“Umm,” Jon said. “Help me understand that.”

“What’s in here?” Harry asked, pointing to the large plastic box.

“Beans,” Jon said.

“You keep beans on your shelf?” Harry asked.

“Just cool beans,” Jon said.

“What’s cool about beans?” the boy asked.

Jon got up, withdrew the container in question, and sat down on the floor with it. Jon invited Harry to sit. Harry did so.

“I must warn you,” Jon said. “This is a very serious game.”

Harry was interested. Jon opened the container. It was half full of dried pinto beans.

“It’s just beans,” Harry said.

“Cool beans,” Jon said.

“What do you do with them?” Harry said.

“What would you like to do with them?” Jon asked.

“You mean like make chili?” Harry asked.

“Are you hungry?” Jon asked.

“No,” Harry said.

“Um,” Jon said. “I have an idea. Pick any figurine from the bottom shelf and let’s put them in the beans.”

“Why?” Harry said.

“That’s how the game works,” Jon said.

“You’re trying to trick me,” Harry said.

Jon sunk his hands into the beans, scooped out two hands full, and allowed them fall back into the container, proving there was nothing in the beans but beans. He invited Harry to do this, as running your hand through beans was actually kind of nice.

“Just beans,” Jon said. “And whatever toy you put in them.”

Harry surveyed the toys on the bottom shelf. There was a grouping of figures on the bottom that suggested a father, mother and child; the child which happened to be about his age and gender. There were other kids and random figures, a troll doll. He knocked the father over reaching for the boy. He picked the father up and threw it behind him. He put the mother on her back in the beans, in a corner. He buried the boy up to his neck and went in search of another toy. He found a rubber snake and buried it, with just the hint of a nose sticking out. He found a girl toddler and put it in the corner. He took a baby and pushed it under the beans in the other corner. He stopped.

“Are you crying?” Harry asked.

Jon touched his face and realized tears had rolled. “I guess I am,” Jon said. “Do you ever feel like crying?”

“Boys don’t cry,” Harry said.

“Oh,” Jon said. “I forgot. What else aren’t boys allowed to do?”

Harry stared into the box. Jon found himself outside, the video frozen. Summer handed him a cup of water.

“You okay?” Summer asked.

“I was very clear, no kids,” Jon said.

“I was very clear, you don’t get to choose who enters your room,” Summer said.

“I don’t want to do this,” Jon said.

“You shouldn’t have become a magician,” Summer said.

“Oh? It’s like that, it’s all of it or nothing?” Jon demanded.

“When you graduate, you will have more say in who you are clients are, but you will also have realized a simple truth, everyone you ever meet is your client,” Summer said. “We serve, wherever needed, that’s it.”

Jon was tearful. “I suspect abuse.”

“Yeah, I saw your reaction,” Summer said.

“Who do I report it to?”

“In this instance, you don’t,” Summer said. “Everyone who needs to know is aware. This is clean up.”

“This fucking sucks,” Jon said.

“Yeah,” Summer said.

“PTSD explains hiding under the desk,” Jon said

“I would say just PTS, no D,” Summer said.

“So, he doesn’t have post-traumatic stress disorder?”

“Having stress after a trauma is normal, not a disorder,” Summer said. “You humans are crazy with your medical labels. Adaptive dysfunction isn’t dysfunction, it’s a reaction to stimulus minus educational training that might provide different responses.”

“Yeah, I agree with that, but that’s exactly why I don’t want to see kids. I don’t want to give a diagnosis to a kid who has nothing wrong with him other than the misfortune of having stupid parents,” Jon said. “90 percent of the kids in therapy are there because parents are not doing their jobs.”

“Pretty close, yep,” Summer said. “And you lean heavily towards functional systems, which is another reason you’re less likely to give anyone a specific diagnosis.”

“Can I give a DX to a system?” Jon asked.

“Only if it’s a corporation that has been granted person status,” Summer said.

“You’re joking,” Jon said.

“Yeah, I am. Trying to lighten the situation,” Summer said.

“There is no lightening that,” Jon said, pointing to the screen.

“So, he is lost, forever?” Summer asked. “Do you wish to tell him his condition is terminal?”

“He’s dying?” Jon asked.

“You just wrote him off,” Summer said.

“I did not,” Jon said.

“So, you think you can lighten it or not, cause I am confused?” Summer asked.

“I want to go find his parents and blow them up,” Jon said.

“You want to cause him more pain?” Summer asked. “Cause right now, he is still full of love and doesn’t want anything bad to happen to his caregivers, which is the main reason he isn’t talking to anyone, and the number one reason he is with you.”

“I don’t know what to do or what to say,” Jon said.

“And who the fuck does?” Summer asked. “He has spoken to you more than any other previous therapist. This part isn’t magic, Jon. It’s just pure common sense, just slowing down to match someone else’s speed, as opposed to meeting your own agenda.”

“What do I say?” Jon asked.

“I can tell you what not to say. Never say, ‘I understand.’ Never tell an angry person, ‘calm down.’ Never ask ‘why.’ These are things you’re already doing,” Summer said.

“Can’t you tell me what to say?” Jon asked.

“I can only advise you to keep doing what you’re doing,” Summer said. “You’ve got this.”

निर्मित

Jon had just finished putting on his coat when the door to his office opened and an 18 year old Judy walked in.

“Well, hello, Dorothy,” Jon said.

“If you call me Dorothy one more time, I am going to punch you,” Judy said.

Jon didn’t know what to say. “I have called you that before?”

“You don’t remember meeting me?” Judy asked.

“Um...”

“It doesn’t matter. Everywhere I go, I get Dorothy jokes, and I fucking hate Dorothy jokes. I’m warning you, if you make a Kansas joke, or refer to Oz, I am going to smack you into another world,” Judy said.

“Are you angry with me?” Jon asked.

“I am just sick and tired of all these Oz references. As if I didn’t do anything else with my life,” Judy said, going straight for the couch. She threw herself down, with enough force she bounced, laid back, kicked her feet up on the far side. She didn’t bother to adjust her dress down, as the incline of her legs and couch bounce resettled it. Her head didn’t reach the other arm. Jon was surprised how short she was in person. What was she, like 4’11”? She covered her forehead dramatically with her left hand. “And, before you ask, yes, I complied with the protocol and accomplished my life review. I know I am doomed to go through the rest of eternity singing that dreadful song.”

“Over the Rainbow?” Jon asked.

“I am so not a one hit wonder, but it would appear I spent my whole life trying to recapture that one thing, which was also the most awful thing I ever experienced,” Judy said.

Jon went to his chair and sat down. He pulled his legs up into the chair, crisscross applesauce, and considered the situation. Part of him wanted to jump up and down for joy, here was Judy, and the other part, well, he was discovering conflict due to the fact his ideal Judy was nothing like the real Judy. And then there was the other part of her showing more of legs than might be socially acceptable for someone of her time, except factoring in the fact she was a dancer and used to flashing, but it was distracting him due to his own exceptions. Kind, demure, loving, thoughtful... that was not this Dorothy! “Do you know how much joy that song has brought people? It’s the number one song in the world and because you sold it! I mean, had anyone else sang that song but you, it would not have been the same. Shirley Temple could not have sold that song the way you did.”

“Do you know, they nearly didn’t put it in the movie?” Judy asked.

“I do,” Jon said. “I am really hip with the factoids on that movie.”

“Did you know they nearly killed Margaret Hamilton in the production?” Judy asked.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “And they nearly killed Buddy Ebsen, too.”

“OMG, I know,” Judy said. “It was the worst thing I ever did.”

“It made you into an icon,” Jon said.

“You think I don’t know that? You think I don’t know I should be grateful?” Judy said, using her hands as if she were Italian. “And I can’t even complain without it making me look bad, or how it railroaded me. It’s not like it made me rich. It certainly made MGM rich. Who would have thought, that stupid movie would go on forever. Hell, Ray and Bill got 3,000 a week.

I got 500 a week. Why? Because I am a woman. I was a child. A child woman! That fucking dog got more respect on set than I did. The whole show was about me, you would think I would have had top billing and top pay. But that still isn't the worst of it. Imagine having to spend the rest of your life watching the actors who molested you be called cute and adorable!"

"I don't understand," Jon said.

Judy sat up. "Munchkins are not cute, little people. They're not kids. They are dirty, old drunks. They are dirty, perverted drunks. And every chance they got, they had their fingers under my dress and in my... OMG, I want to kill the little bastards... Do you have anything to drink in here?"

"Coffee or water?" Jon asked.

"Stronger," Judy said.

"I have no alcohol here, but I have this magic flask that always gives people exactly what they need," Jon said, fishing it out of his pocket.

Judy motioned for him to hand the flask to her. She leaned, he leaned, and she took it. She sipped it tentatively. She took a longer drink, marrying it and sinking into the back of the couch with it. "That's actually kind of nice. What is it?"

"I will rely on your report," Jon said.

Judy crossed her leg, rocking the top aggressively, her shoe hinging on her toe and making a noise against her heel, her hands resting on the couch, the right holding the flask, staring off into the nothingness out the window. He wasn't sure if people actually saw out the windows. Depending on when you were here, you could see up to three moons, and one artificial one that wasn't a small moon.

"Why didn't you report?" Jon asked.

Judy met his eyes, going from a null state to instant rage. "What world did you grow up in?!" she demanded. "You don't report fellow actors on a set. You start doing that shit, you don't get gigs. Besides, would you want to go the rest of your life having to listen to jokes about how you were abused by midgets? You can't hit them, they're adults. You can't hit them because, they're like a thousand of them and they'd all be up on you at once. And, even if I reported, who would I tell it to?"

"The director?" Jon asked.

“Victor? Are you fucking kidding me? There wasn’t a day on set that he didn’t slap me or knock me down. And that’s just what he did on set in front of people,” Judy said. “Hell, he saved clips of them fucking molesting me for his own personal pleasure. Do you really think that shit happened on set and they didn’t know or someone with a camera didn’t catch it? How do you think they coerce you into doing crappy movies? Have you ever wonder why an actor or actress with some acclaim can star in a film that absolutely sucked? It’s because directors and CEO’s don’t care about the art. They have an agenda and they will get what they want, and if they don’t want it or you, it doesn’t happen. It can be the best fucking script that has been written since Shakespeare, it’s not going to print unless someone has an agenda, or money, or fucking girls showing their boobs. In this business, you do what the director and your agents want. And when your coworker don’t stand up for you, well, you learn pretty quickly you take it and move on. And why not? They’re in the same boat. They make waves, they get pushed out. That’s life. That’s show business. They say sleep with a man, I sleep with a man, or I don’t get jobs. Victor denied me food, because they didn’t want me getting fat during production, which was way longer than it needed to be. They forced me to smoke to keep from thinking of food. They liquored me up to make me compliant, and to numb me from having to service the director. Yeah, everyone wants to talk nice about good ol’ Vic and what a wonderful thing he did for the world. The petty, perverted, tyrant. I wish the world could see what it was really like. Those cameo type attempts at biography shows that flash highlights of my so called life and career, as if they know me from having a fucking still shot that the public wasn’t privy to defines me? Pure Fiction! Put my life review on the net and let people experience what I did. Then there will be a righteous fucking come to Jesus reckoning. I will dance and jump a phew at that revival.”

Jon felt deflated. She was angry. He believed righteously so. Someone might say dramatic, and that might be accurate, from an outsider’s perspective, but now he had to wonder if all ‘drama’ was the result of some hidden grievance or trauma. Was the couple he had seen earlier both responding to old ‘trauma’ and locked into their drama because they needed to act it out? Is that why people come together? They need to be heard, but if they can’t be heard, their ‘dramatizing’ has to get louder and more expansive until finally they get heard or no one can stand to be around them, which leads them to his office. He heard Paul singing, “A long and winding road...” with new meaning.

“I am sorry that the adults in your world didn’t do better to protect you,” Jon said.

“Don’t do that!” Judy snapped. “I don’t want your fucking sympathy. Besides, I was an adult.”

“I think you said child-woman,” Jon said.

“I was being clever, describing how I am not even objectified, because I am not even a dog. I am less than a puppet, and the hands are midget hands, a lot of midget hands, and they are going place they don’t need to be in,” Judy said, her free hand trembling. She took a drink.

“You were 16 during the filming, at best you were an adolescent,” Jon said.

“OMG, I wish I had lived in your magical, fantasy world,” Judy said. “I was an adult by age 8, and my family was pimping me and my sister out. You don’t have a clue because you were probably too busy getting off to my ankles every time they zoomed into me clicking my heels.”

Jon blushed.

“I knew it!” Judy said, pointing the flask. “You’re another nobody, living from movie to movie with no idea about the commitment and hard work, or what we women go through.”

“I don’t have a clue,” Jon agreed.

“And if you think I am going to go through the rest of eternity singing and dancing to make people happy, well, prepare yourself, because I am going to blow this fucking new world up. It’s time for balance. It’s time you guys made me happy for a change. Your turn to dance and sing and pay up,” Judy said.

Jon sighed, staring at the floor in front of him. “There were very few things in my life that brought me joy,” he said. “The one consistency growing up, before VCRs, every year, the family watched Wizard of Oz.”

“Oh, how sweet,” Judy said, sarcastically. “You fucking owe me.”

“More than you will ever know. The Wizard of Oz brought me face to face with duality. There is a black and white world, and there is a world of color and magic,” Jon said. “There is a world of niceness, and a world of horror. You not only brought me hope for something better, but you were my first crush, and one of the few crushes that lasted my whole life.”

“Since you’ve already been intimate with me in your mind, might as well do me now and get it out of your system,” Judy said.

“The other adults in your world may not have protected you, but I will. That will not happen here,” Jon said.

“I bet I can change your mind,” Judy said.

“What’s in your drink?” Jon asked.

“It’s not what’s in my drink that has me wanting sex...”

“Your movie also gave my demons forms. The tornado, the evil trees, which always bothered me because, trees want people and animals to pick their fruit and spread their seeds, that our relationships with them, anyway and the flying monkeys. They scared the crap out of me for like the first decade of my life, and my family used that to keep me compliant,” Jon said. “She bought a crystal ball just so she could talk to the witch and would say things like, ‘hey, West, can you send those monkey this way. I have a kid you might want,’ and I would cry and hold onto her leg and say please no, and she then she would smack me to the ground.”

“Oh, boo hoo,” Judy said. “Maybe you needed to be smacked. Grow up and be a man.”

“Maybe,” Jon agreed, just to agree, trying not reveal how deep that comment cut him. His years of poker face nearly crashed, but only because of the power he had given Judy over the years. If he wasn’t careful, she would tumble him. There is no way this was a good counseling match. She needed someone who didn’t know her. “The point is, that movie became the benchmark for all future movies, not just the musical genre, and it set the ideal for the kind of woman I want in my life.”

“I am sorry I ruined your life,” Judy said, not really sorry.

“You didn’t,” Jon said, matter of fact. He also didn’t believe she was sorry. She wanted him, no... She needed him to be on the same page with her, to realize it was just a movie, just another job, nothing important. She needed validation.

“Really?” Judy asked. He almost applauded himself for guessing it right. “What do I have to say to convince you it wasn’t all that? There is no Dorothy. There is no fucking ideal. How much reality do you need before you admit the world is fucked up and it is get what you can while you can because there comes time when no one else wants you?!”

“There is nothing you can do or say to dissuade me from my opinion of that movie, nor will you ever change my opinion of you,” Jon said.

“You don’t know me!” Judy snapped, standing up.

She threw the flask at him, and though it tumbled, it didn’t spill. He made no effort to catch it. He allowed it to hit him in the head, bounce, and clattered to the floor.

“Still holding your opinion of me?” Judy asked.

“I see that you’re angry,” Jon said.

Judy raged. She picked up a pillow and tried to tear it, but, unlike the movies, pillows and clothes just don’t tear because you’re angry and want to make a scene more dramatic. When she couldn’t tear the pillow, she threw it, and then the others, off the couch. She then went to his desk and pushed the content off the desk to the floor. Jon didn’t get up, but just allowed her to have her fit. She went to the shelves and books and toys flew through the air. Legos smashed against the wall. Why did he allow legos to be in his office, he lamented. Poor Legos. Yeah, he still cared for Judy and knew she was going through something, but he was attached to Legos, his childhood friends. She took time to deliberately tear the pages out a book that was all about her. She held up a couple torn pics of her and ranted about what was really happening at the time that was taken, and he cringed, thinking, ‘not that book.’ She came across a letter opener and dug it into her wrist. Jon came off the couch and suddenly had her locked in a hold, one arm around her, and one hand holding the wrist with the knife. She kicked and screamed. Her feet hit the shelf, knocking it up and dislodging it. Jon fell to his butt, his back against the couch. He eased up on her hand only after she dropped the knife. Her rage turned to tears and she sobbed, falling lifelessly forwards, wanting to curl up into a ball, but he didn’t let her fall. He touched her wrist and it was healed, instantly. He then held her in hug. There was still lots of blood, on the floor, on her leg, on her clothes and arm, and on him.

“Why couldn’t you all just leave me dead,” Judy asked. “It’s just too much. I can’t do it all over again. I just can’t. I loved my kids, that’s clear to me in hindsight, but I still fucked it up, and couldn’t just go on watching them get eaten by the world that ate me and spat me out like grizzle after they took good part of the meat. I couldn’t stand what I did to them. My own babies. I was worse than my own parents ever were. OMG, you just don’t know how wretched I became.”

“It wasn’t an accident, was it,” Jon said. “Your death?”

“Please, just let me be dead again,” Judy pleaded.

“Okay,” Jon said. “Shhh, okay.”

Judy quieted, sniffed it all back. “What?”

“If it is your intent to end your life, no one will be able to stop that. I would like you to consider, though, that you died, and that didn’t solve anything. I am wondering, maybe, if you and I can figure out another solution,” Jon said.

“Drinking doesn’t make it go away,” Judy said.

“It does not,” Jon said, easing up on her. “It adds another layer that has to be dealt with and delays dealing with the first injury.”

Judy pulled his arms back tight. “Don’t let go, yet,” she said. Then she noticed. “Oh.” She turned. “You really do love me.”

“It’s not what you think...”

“You don’t know me, but you see all this, you heard what you heard, and you still love me?” Judy said.

“I will always love you,” Jon said.

Judy kissed him. He kissed back...

He was suddenly in Summer’s office, the recording on pause.

“So much for protecting her,” Summer said.

“OMG! You didn’t prepare me for this! You have no fucking clue what this is doing to me. I can’t do this,” Jon said.

“Jon,” Summer said, sternly. “Do you remember the movie ‘A Guy Named Joe?’”

“The one that remade into ‘Always?’” Jon asked.

“Yep, that’s it. You only need to ask yourself one question: are you serving other, or your own self-interest. Was that love or less?” Summer said.

“It’s both! It’s so convoluted,” Jon said.

“Like ‘Always,’ we don’t send the bad kind back to serve. Timothy would so not be able to do this job,” Summer said.

“I don’t know how to fix her,” Jon said.

“She’s not a car, Jon. She doesn’t need fixing. She needs someone to relate to,” Summer said. “She needs to be heard, loved. She has a long road of healing to do, and she has some real world relationships to amend, and a lot of internal relationships to mend.”

“As a surrogate, I can do...”

“Yes. I am not interrupting because I am mad at you, but I wanted you to have a time out, to process your feelings, because that is a door that can’t be closed, and I think your first intuition was spot on. She needs to experience a friendship with a male that doesn’t result in sex.”

“You picked the wrong fucking guy for that. I so don’t want to be locked in the friendship role with the love of my life,” Jon snapped. “I am not going to go the rest of eternity knowing I could have hit that and didn’t.”

“You are talking about her as if she is a prop, not a human being,” Summer said.

“You think I don’t know that? You think I don’t hate myself for my own wanting?” Jon said. “And yet, you put me in a room with Judy. In a summer dress for crying out loud. And I really do love her.”

“I believe you,” Summer said. “And, it’s why you’re in a room together.”

Jon wiped his face. “I have never said ‘no’ to anyone before, and there is no way I will say no to her...” Jon began.

“Say no to the fantasy,” Summer corrected. “Not to her. She is a person.”

“Who among us actually holds a relationship to a person and not a fantasy?!” Jon asked. “Everything is fantasy! Hence the song, it’s just a fantasy.”

“And exactly why we didn’t send Billy. And is probably why so many relationships fail, because eventually, even her shit will smell bad,” Summer said. “And why, I need you to take a moment and be sure.”

“You’re sending me back in there? Knowing me?” Jon asked.

“Yes,” Summer said.

“OMG, please don’t send me back in there,” Jon said. “I’d rather you kill me outright.”

“I’m not sending you back,” Summer said. She got up and put the remote in his hands. “You’re going to send yourself back. You’re going to face this.”

Summer sat back down.

“Fine, I can sit here as long as you,” Jon said.

Summer drew up her water and drank, then reclined back, holding it delicately, like a lady having a tea party.

“I am not going back,” Jon said.

“Okay,” Summer said. She traded her glass of water for a book. She returned to the page she was last on. If he turned his head just right, he was pretty sure her book was a collection of ‘True Romance’ novels from the 1950’s.

“If you send me back, I am going to...”

“Whatever you decide is best,” Summer interrupted him.

“Fine,” Jon said. “I am going fuck her.”

“Have fun,” Summer said.

Jon threw the remote. It broke, but only after resume was pressed. He found himself back in Judy’s arms. The kiss was escalating and she was pushing into him, getting up on her knees, the couch was sliding back. She bit his lips, trying to pull his jacket off. It was tangled in his arms, behind his back, between the couch. He was struggling to get out, while pushing his lips into her, accepting her tongue, greedily wanting any body contact that he could take as she struggled to get him unwrapped.

Judy stopped. She touched his face, apologetically. “I am sorry. I am so sorry. But I can’t,” she said. She got up. “I just can’t. Please, don’t be mad at me.”

Judy got up and ran out of the room. Jon slumped over onto the floor, not bothering to untie himself from his coat.

“Fuck me running,” Jon said.

निर्मित

Loxy was laying on her stomach, her hands propping her chin up as she listened. She was attentive and concerned.

“Aww. Why didn’t you tell me you had such a rough first day?” Loxy asked.

“Well, um, I really didn’t sort it out till you brought it up,” Jon said.

“That’s not accurate. You were sorting stuff when I came up, and I almost think that world with you and the wife and child was a distraction from the real, core stuff,” Loxy said.

Jon considered. He didn’t think her assessment was right, but it was at least plausible, as that is something he might have done in the past. “I don’t think so, but will proceed forwards as if that is accurate. I can imagine a fear discussing this failure with you for several reasons. First, obviously, owning a failure is not something I like. Second, there is fear of disclosing the nature of the failure leading to conflict between us. Which means, what, there is a third subset here where I am making assumptions of what your reaction might be and I am afraid of losing you at the same time of wanting someone else. And fourth, I don’t like myself or the fact that I failed. Five, I am afraid that the consequences of my failure is going to lead to my expulsion from

school, which has a corresponding block from being with you and our friends, and my place here in the world.”

Loxy, rolled over, crept up closer to his face, and kissed him. “Let’s work backwards through this. You can’t be kicked out of your own world, ever. Worst case scenario is you find yourself alone in your world, but I don’t see that happening, given the quality of the friendships you have established. Next, just as you reminded me, there is no expulsion from Safe Haven University. You signed a contract, Sir. You will graduate, or die trying.”

“You’re telling me, I can continue screwing up without consequence?” Jon asked.

“There is no screwing up. Only lessons to be learned, and choices to make,” Loxy said. “And that leads us to the last point: you have not failed.”

“I kissed Judy. I would have done more than kiss her had she not ran out,” Jon said.

“So?” Loxy said.

“I broke an ethical code!” Jon said.

“If you were on Origin, locked in the contextual confines of your paradigm of origin, yes,” Loxy said, serious eye contact. “And there would be consequences. There will be consequences here, too, but the not kind you’re imagining. You’re either going to be a good mage, or an evil mage. Every decision you make, every action, every thought, leads you down a path of light, or a path of darkness. Was this kiss an act of love or self-gratification? I think it was both, and way too convoluted to sort out from just your description because you are so bias that I am not sure how it went down. And I don’t need to know the circumstances that led to it. Here’s what I know. You are a good man. You do good, most the time, and you are paired with masters and guides that are solid light workers, and they got you. I got you.”

Jon was tearful. “Intellectually I know that, but emotionally, I am not so confident. And hearing you say that only adds to my burden and fear of losing you because of my wanting of others. I don’t want Judy in my head, but I am obsessing, and I so want to pursue that, even with knowledge that it would never work out long term. She’s not destined to be with me, but I can spin this for a moment, a very long season, and when the moment as played itself out and we both come to our senses, I have to live with the fact I had a shot of the thing I wished for and fantasized most of my life, right up there with my fantasies of Olivia, and failed. Not only did I fail, but I wasted her time and blocked her from getting to where she needs to be. Or, this goes no further than where it did, and I live with the fact that not only was I rejected by my ideal, but

that I took advantage of her during a moment of vulnerability. The fact that I don't care that it required a situational plot contrivance for that to happen simply increases the validity of my belief that I am not a nice man."

"So, it's either one or the other? A good man would never think of fucking the love of his life, the first crush? It sounds like to me you have put a lot of thought in two extreme, disparate pathways," Loxy said.

"Are there any other paths?" Jon asked.

"Love," Loxy said.

"I don't think we're on the same page," Jon said.

Loxy nodded. "We will be."

"I don't have time for will be, I am seeing clients now," Jon said.

"You have been seeing clients all your life. Every single interaction you have had with every other agency has been exactly what you're doing now, only now you are aware of how much power you have to affect change. And it's all about change. The Universe is about change, growth, or, in other words, Love," Loxy said.

"I have wasted so much time..." Jon lamented.

"Oh, I know that song! But there is no waste of time because there is no time," Loxy said. "Time is an illusion. We are consciousness, and we are evolving. And if you find yourself in a room with a person, it's because there is something there that needs to be explored in order for growth to occur, for both. The problem with psychological therapy from your paradigm is it unreasonably elevates the counselor as an expert, when in truth, we are all pedestrians on this road of life, and we learn and grow together. If you as a counselor aren't growing, changing, simultaneously with your client, than you are not in the game, much less the same room. If you aren't challenged, you're not in the game. You're somewhere else, and not attending to the room you're in, or the person you're with. Clearly, something happened. You connected with another human being in such a profound way that you both were triggered, fight or flight. Here's what they didn't teach you in school about fight or flight. There is fight, there is flight, there is also this thing called freeze, like a deer in the head lights, and then there is love. So really, it's fight, flight, or Love. And the biggest problem with the other options, is when you get done fighting or 'fighting,'" (she looked to see if he was paying attention and his subtle smile gave her a clue he was listening.) "you are back to the initial problem where you can do more of the same, or you

can finally choose Love. No matter how hard you fight, or how far you flee, you eventually come to realize there is nothing to fight and nowhere to run to. Wherever you go, there you are. The only real choice is to Love, or not to Love. People have left the love out of the ‘fight or flight’ response and you and I are going to put it back in there. You, Sir, Love. You are Love. You would not be experiencing this much grief if you didn’t Love. You’d be in the locker room talking about your exploits. Or, you wouldn’t have allowed your hands to get tied up behind your back. That’s just funny. You wouldn’t have let her run away. Nope, you’re here, talking it through with me. That’s Love, and that’s trust. Next, you’re going to have to talk it through with her. Explore what happened.”

“I am not going back in there,” Jon said.

“You can’t avoid it, Jon. Not forever,” Loxy said. “The Universe will contrive situations to make you face it. Your choice is random out there, or in a controlled environment with a supervisor, and friends. And once that is settled, there will be one less ‘ideal’ person in your head, leaving you and me with more time together.”

Jon laughed. “Oh, my dear Loxy, let’s hope I don’t have to tease out every imagined person from my head before you and I get to the next level of serious quality time together. Do you know how many people I have masturbated over? We’re talking years of therapy...”

Loxy smiled, patted him kindly. “The fact that you’re in school and we connected right off the bat suggests you’ve already gone through most. Everything from here out is just pure Love.”

“Well, I wouldn’t say everything,” Jon said, getting a glimpse of the other world he had been visiting.

“Oh?” Loxy asked, amused.

Chapter 13

The blue eyed, blond hair June Moone was not quite the equivalent of the Clark Kent, an alter ego to Superman. She was also not the raven hair Enchantress, and she switched by saying the word “Enchantress” the same way Andrea Thomas became Isis when wearing the "Tutmose amulet," and spoke the words “Almighty Isis.” On the whole, both Enchantress and Isis seemed as if they were channeled beings, or alternative personality, but June and Andrea retained memories of their experiences as if they had did it. For the most part. There were tangents when the Enchantress personality locked June out of her own body, and even separated from her so that they were two different people. If Jon didn’t know any better, he would say June was switching places with a Tulpa, but he could see subtle clues of the Enchantress in her as she sorted through responses to his questions, or when she caught him ‘checking’ her out. He had been thoroughly satiated in terms of his wanting with her, but he was still infatuated and curious by every subtle movement. So much so, as she gave him the tour of the facility, they gave into additional impulses for intimacy, as if they were old high school lovers.

They entered a glass lift to go up a floor, and he touched the small of her back. She turned just her head and kissed him, walking backwards into him till he sandwiched between her and the glass lift wall.

“Right here, right now?” June asked.

“We’ll never get this tour done if you keep allowing me to be distracted,” Jon said.

“I think that horse has done left the barn,” June said. “If you want to play, my purpose here is to satisfy you.” She turned to face him, rubbing her head against him as if she were a cat, brushing her lips against his while gauging his response-both his eyes with her eyes, and lower with her hand. She smiled. “As my primary user, I do have some expectations of you, as well. Like being used.”

“The fish are watching,” Jon said.

“Let them,” June said, she said kissing him.

As they gave in to another round of intimacy, Jon felt as if he had just bought a house and he and his girl were christening every room. Depending on he used his eyes, he could focus on her reflection in the lift’s glass, or push beyond to the world of fish outside. The subdued

moonlighting and the hint of ripples played across the surface of their skin as they pushed into each other.

When they finished, she touched his face, gently. “Better than minecraft?” she asked.

“Different,” Jon said.

She kissed him, amused, and again, they got dressed. She lead him into the main control room. From here, he had access to computers and monitors, mostly governing the function of the facility. The moon base was primarily a mining operation. Specifically, it was mining fish, and other aquatics, mostly for food, where automation caught, sorted, and packed the food for shipping. The shipping was handled by drones, or servitors, that carried it off into the Universe to established markets. Most of the aquatic life forms were non-‘Earth’ life. The sea was full of a strain of life that was genetically compatible with Earth life, but evolved to specifically live in the waters trapped permanently between moon and the icy shell. The earth fish had been brought in by Timothy to supply earth markets, but also, many of them had had to be genetically modified to exist here, and there already new species that evolved due to environmental factors, and due to genetic graphing of multiple species. One specific modification had turned a fish into a ‘rice fish. There was fish that grew rice, regular, good old, modified Earth rice, but in a fish, and so you got fish meat and rice simultaneously. Also, it had no bones, and it just sort of floated about with flimsy fins and cartilage pushing it, like an over inflated puffer fish. These modified fish lived in a net, to keep the majority of them in a controlled space that kept predators out, and maximized mining efficiency.

The underwater base was connected to a dome on the north pole of the moon via the tube he had descended. The dome branched out into several other domes, where various farming animals were kept, also modified, and were being mined and farmed out. Jon paused as he pushed through camera images of the habitats and came across a dome with perhaps a thousand, scantily clad, women. Even from the distant shot, the women seemed hauntingly familiar, and he had an embarrassment response before he even understood why he was suddenly very hot and flushed.

“You okay?” June asked.

“Umm, who are they?” Jon asked.

“Oh, those are just the models that Timothy tulpa-sculpted in order to farm out to markets,” June said, matter a fact, no emotional attachment to her statement or the situation.

“He is selling people?!” Jon asked, horrified.

“Tulpas,” June clarified.

“People! Tulpas are people! He selling people, like, sex slaves?!” Jon demanded.

“You don’t think he makes his fortune selling fish, do you?” June asked.

Jon zoomed in. “OMFG,” Jon said.

“I know, right?” June said. “Every super model from every catalogue you can think of. He does have some playboy bunnies in there, too, but mostly he was a cheap ass bastard and simply put his sister’s name on a bunch of mail order services to get free porn. Victoria Secret, Frederick of Hollywood, the poor man’s playboys.” June touched his face. “You’re red hot. Are you sure you okay? Would you like to go to medical?”

“No,” Jon said, almost snapping.

June laughed. “Oh. You’re afflicted.”

Jon closed his eyes. “Yeah, I have probably fantasized about everyone in there,” he admitted.

“Well, technically, you own the base, you own them, but unfortunately, they have been independently chipped, and copy righted by Timothy,” June said. “You’d have to purchase them to disable the chips.”

“Of course,” Jon said, wondering how much this was going to set him back.

“And, unless you have a planet for sell, I doubt you will be able to buy everyone, because they are being auctioned at the highest price, and so far, we have not hit a ceiling,” June said.

“Of course,” Jon said. “Wait?! Who’s bidding on them?!”

“Unfortunately, that’s privileged information,” June said.

“You’re withholding information from me?” Jon asked.

“No. You are my primary user, I would not do that. Timothy, however, did not trust that his facility would be raided by the anti-tulpa slave trade authorities, and so, he keeps his clients secret,” June said. “He has a solid reputation for protecting client information.”

“Well, take them off the market,” Jon said.

“That tech went with Timothy,” June said. She seemed reasonably tuned into Jon apparent concern for the tulpas, and was trying to help come up with a solution. Technically, she was one as well, but she saw herself as different somehow. “If you would like to write a negative review about Timothy’s products, that might reduce or halt the bidding.”

“Umm,” Jon mused. “Like say they were pre-owned, pre-used?”

“It probably needs to ring true. Timothy hasn’t slept with them,” June said.

“I guess, I could sleep with them,” Jon said, watching the screen.

“All of them?” June asked.

“It might take a while,” Jon agreed. He scratched his head. “The chips allow for tulpa attribute updates?”

“Sure, I can push them from here to all chipped tulpas,” June said.

“And you have some telepathic abilities,” Jon said.

“I do,” June said. “Using a spell, and limited to touch.”

“Alright, let’s do this. Connect with me and push the update,” Jon said.

June stepped closer to him, her hands coming up to his forehead, her outfit changing to a two green piece, the top part shoulder-less but barely containing her bosom, pushed tightly together to accentuate the exposed cleavage, and a matching cape that was secured to her neck with prominent red medallion. She shook her head, and the blond hair became sparkly black, with subtle hues of dark blues, like layered colors of feathers, and then she was the Enchantress.

“I am connected. What would you like me to push?” the Enchantress asked. Her eyes narrowed, and subtle smile crept up on. “Pushing updates. Attributes accepted. Market descriptions now prominently displaying updates.” Enchantress eyes went up and to the left. “Interesting. Bidding has stopped. A protest is underway, demanding a restart to the bid. Last bidders refusing to pay. Fighting in the markets.” Enchantress met Jon’s eyes. “I am surprised you were able to imprint on them to you so easily.”

“I have spent years trying to cast spells on them,” Jon said.

“Spells are sperm?” the Enchantress asked.

“Is there a difference?” Jon asked.

Enchantress looked up, musing. “Good point,” she said. “Market value is sufficiently reduced that bundling is now feasible. This may renew the bidding war...”

“Close out all sales, I am buying them all, push an explanation for the gateway I have provided for them. Also instruct them to have the chips surgically removed once they get to planet Bliss,” Jon said.

“Done,” the Enchantress said.

“Tell me that’s all the tulpas,” Jon said.

“No, there are four more,” the Enchantress said. “Three are in final production stage, and one in a holding cell. None of these are chipped.”

“Take me there,” Jon said.

“Before I do, I have a request,” the Enchantress said.

“Okay,” Jon said.

“Kiss me the way you kiss June,” the Enchantress said.

“OMG, really?” Jon asked.

“Yes, really. Make me think you want me as much as you wanted those supermodels,” the Enchantress said.

“Really?” Jon asked.

“I’m not letting June back till I am satisfied,” the Enchantress said.

“Okay, but re-engaged the psychic link between us,” Jon said.

The Enchantress reengaged the psychic link and the ravishing began. Sex is so much better with a psychic link pushing emotional and physical orgasms that touch upon transcendence. And, true to her statement, when she was satisfied, she became June again, only, June arrived before Jon was finished, and so dalliance continued until he did, but June wasn’t satisfied and so he had to push past his exhaustion before she would relinquish the psychic link that the Enchantress left in play.

“That was so much fun,” June said, the psychic bond fading. “OMG, I want to do that again.”

“Okay, but first, I need to see the dungeon,” Jon said.

“Oh, we could so do it in the dungeon!” June agreed.

They got up, dressed, and proceeded to the Dungeon. Jon was again impressed by the size of the facility, which was basically full scale fishery. There were varying degrees of robotics operating, and he recognized as servitors, since this was technically a mindscape, or a wonderland, but he wondered if servitors were merely metaphors for a biological equivalent that was operating in Timothy’s body. The whole facility operated like a biological machine, attending to itself and maintain operations. They arrived at Timothy’s lab/dungeon where he constructed his tulpas, and the horror feel to the place increased. He felt like he was in a production of ‘Aliens’ meets ‘Invasion of the Body Snatchers.’ Timothy’s tulpas were grown in bio-pods, that seemed to cross the boundaries of plant and animal, and as the tupla grew to adult

size, it weighted the fruit down, and eventually burst free, in a pile of gooey slime. At that point, he would clean them up, dress them as if they were nothing more than mannequins, put them on tables, and continue to modify them, by either updating brain through technology, or surgically adding chips or parts to enhance. Three units were on the table, no apparent signs of breathing, but they did not seem dead, simply sleeping. Each of the three tables were connected to a half round computer table that displayed various algorithmic patterns on montitors, and a primary monitor displaying code. The heads of the tulpas faced the control panel, and cables fed into their tables. The tables themselves were illuminated, outlining the bodies with an illuminated 'chalk line' and various streams of colors proceeding to and from the body line. The most recognizable tulpa was clearly Snow White, but not the version one might be find walking Disney World. This was more likely someone who was about to go to a Cosplay event and was kidnapped by Timothy and turned into an Emo/punk rock version. Her clothes were almost Steam and Deviant Art, and suggested a corrupted, more sexy version than the innocent archetype of the original princess. The second was either Daisy Duke or an updated version of Dorothy Gale. Jon was leaning towards Dorothy, because the blouse which was tied up above her belly button, seemed to be the same blue checkered pattern that movie Dorothy wore. Her hair sprouted two pony tails. Her daisy Duke shorts seemed a size too small, clearly pressing into her upper thigh, which had him thinking he wanted to touch her thighs and liberate her from the shorts, and he suspected the pants had to be unbuttoned due to their constricting nature, but it was difficult to know because she was wearing a belt, holding two hostlers, minus the revolver. If this was Dorothy, she was meant to be packing. And then the third woman, a strawberry blond, dressed in a tight, white outfit, flaring into a miniskirt that almost looked military, with gold, sparkly hose had Jon thinking 'Wilma Deering!'

"OMG, nice," Jon said. "He could he sell these?!"

"That's this facility sole source of income," June said. "The fish market does well, but the profit margin is just a little above upkeep."

"Wake them, please," Jon said.

"I can't do that," June said. "Only the host is endowed with that magic."

"Of course. So Timothy has to wake them?" Jon asked.

“No, you can wake them,” June said. “You’re a host, and you’re experienced in tulpa magic, and well, you have full control of this facility. You should be able to wake them without even chipping them first.”

“And, how do I do that?” Jon asked. “I can’t make heads or tails of this equipment. Except this. This flashing red light doesn’t look good.”

“It’s not,” June agreed.

Jon waited for her to explain. “Elaborate, please.”

“They have been on the table for a fair moment. If the final stage of production is not completed, they will die,” June said.

“And, the final stage is?” Jon asked.

“Waking them,” June said.

“Which brings us back to how,” Jon said.

June shrugged. “I am sorry. I can only speculate as I was not provided the technical details of raising tulpas to sentience because Timothy didn’t want me making an army to go up against him.”

“Pff,” Jon sighed. “If people knew how easy tulpa making was, they would be much more guarded with their own thoughts.” He sighed, considering.

“May I suggest a strategy that may work for at least one of them,” June said.

“Please,” Jon said.

“This appears to be Snow White, from pastel punk rock gothic comic strip, but clearly snow,” June said. “In the stories, she is always woken with a kiss.”

“Yeah, not going to happen,” Jon said.

“I am confused. You very willing to rescue the top models with your memories of affection, but you would rather let her die than kiss her awake?” June said.

Jon rocked his head considering. “Yeah, excellent point, but that felt more like an intellectual exercise whereas this feels much more, I don’t know... Creepy. The Snow White story is just, creepy. And 5th Element nailed it: ‘never without my permission.’”

“But she is going to die if you don’t,” June said.

Jon rubbed his forehead. “Okay, so why don’t you kiss her?”

“I have never read that version,” June said. “Do you suppose it would work?”

“A kiss is a kiss?” Jon asked.

“Oh! You are such a guy,” June said, crossing her arms. “There are all kinds of kisses. Just kiss her. It’s got to work, and if she gets mad, I will corroborate that it was simply a medical procedure necessary to save her life, and that you didn’t take undue advantage of her present vulnerability. Something, I would like to point out, Timothy would not have respected.”

Jon weighed it, approached Snow, and gave her a simple peck. Nothing happen.

“OMG, that’s not a kiss!” June said.

“Care to demonstrate?” Jon asked.

“You would like that,” June said.

“Actually,” Jon said. “Maybe she has to be kissed by her one true love.”

“That’s not technically spelled out in the story. How can an errant knight love someone they had never met or heard of?” June asked. “Now give her a good kiss. I know you know how.”

Jon sighed. He sat down on the table, leaning into Snow, hovering over her face. He touched her hair, brushed his thumb across her lips, parting them ever so slightly, cupping her cheek in his palm, and sunk into the kiss. He took her upper lip into his mouth, pulled it free from the teeth. Feeling no response, he increased the vigorousness of his kiss, teasing with increasing tongue penetration. He was so into the kiss by the time she was responding he hadn’t felt her body shifting into him, as one of her legs bent and knee came up. Her arms came up, and her hands gripped the back of the head. She inhaled through the kiss, sucking him in, responding with the greediness of a baby needing its first milk. The passion escalated so much that had Jon had been otherwise positioned, it might have resulted in sudden sex. As it was her eyes opened. The passion declined, her smile faded. They separated.

“You’re much older than I imagined,” Snow said.

“It took me longer to get here,” Jon snapped.

“Don’t be mad at her,” June said.

“Sorry,” Jon said. “I sometimes react to ageism.”

“So you’re a knight?” Snow asked.

“Technically, I am just a Padawan,” Jon said.

“A what?” Snow asked.

“Different universe,” June said.

“It’s all Disney now,” Jon corrected.

“Shall we wake the others?” June asked.

“Might as well,” Jon said, standing. He offered a hand to help Snow up.

“Others?” Snow asked.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “Like, there was a whole field of you sleeping beauties and I just went around kissing all of them for my personal harem.”

“Really?!” Snow asked.

“OMG, are you really that gullible?” Jon asked.

“Jon,” June said. “She’s a still just a child.”

“Yeah, and I kissed her, and I am sort of grappling with some internal conflicts,” Jon said.

“You mean groping?” June said.

“He groped me?” Snow asked.

“That might have been the next stepped if kissing proved insufficient,” June offered.

“Really?” Snow and Jon said.

“Well, if we are going to be scientific about it, we’d have to try everything before we could rule out anyone specific thing,” June said. “Would you like to lead with fucking the next one to see if that works equally well.”

“Are you the evil enchantress?” Jon asked.

“We are one,” June bowed.

“I am going to fucking kill Timothy,” Jon said.

“Who’s Timothy?” Snow asked.

“Long story,” Jon said, moving to Dorothy.

Snow blocked. “You’re going to kiss her?!”

“Yeah,” Jon said.

“But I thought you and I were like forever!” Snow said.

June chuckled. “Aww, fucking Disney.”

“This is a just medical procedure,” Jon assured her.

Snow crossed her arms, apparent disbelief. “You’re a Doctor?”

“Umm,” Jon mused. “Well, not so much.”

“I am not letting you kiss her,” Snow said.

“Because you think you and I are an item, or because of the principle of kissing sleeping women without their permission is wrong?” Jon asked.

Snow seemed to have trouble with that. “Um, both, I think. I am confused.”

“If he hadn’t kissed you, you would have died,” June said.

Snow seemed more trouble. “I am even more conflicted.”

“I have to do this,” Jon said.

“Why can’t she do it?” Snow asked.

“I think it has to be a guy,” Jon said.

“Of course you do,” Snow said though, not sure why she was mad. “But does it?”

“I think it just has to be a host, but we could rule this out,” June said, stepping up to kiss Dorothy.

Jon got out of the way, and Snow took his arm to draw him further away. June eagerly kissed Dorothy. Snow found herself surprisingly aroused and turned away, only to see Jon was equally aroused.

“You’re enjoying this?!” Snow said.

“Yeah,” Jon said.

“Turn around,” Snow said.

“It’s just a medical procedure!” Jon said.

“You’re turned on by medical procedures?!” Snow asked.

“Oh, you’d be surprised what turns me on,” Jon said.

“I am not sure I like you!” Snow said.

“You lived with fucking seven irritable dwarves, and you can’t deal with my hang ups?” Jon asked.

“This clearly isn’t working. Maybe I should kiss her other lips,” June mused.

Snow turned back to June. “What?!”

“Just to be scientific about it,” June said.

“No! Jon, kiss her,” Snow said.

“Are you sure?” Jon asked. “Maybe you would like to try first.”

“OMG! You want me to kiss her?” Snow said.

“I might feel a little easier knowing that we all kissed sleeping people,” Jon said.

“Judging by her eye dilation, I do believe she is aroused by the thought,” June said.

“I don’t like it here,” Snow said, and started to cry.

Jon pulled her into a hug. “Shh. It is not a good place here, but will send you somewhere more pleasant, and you will have access to more choices. Let me rescue them, so we can all leave.”

Snow sniffed. “Okay.”

Jon and June switched places. While he kissed Dorothy, he heard June say, ‘That was easy,’ in terms of how easily Snow had been placated by Jon, but he interpreted it as how quickly Dorothy responded to his kiss. She sat up into him, grabbing at him. Snow lips parroted, and she sucked in her lower lip, sorting all sorts of emotions.

“I think that’s sufficient,” Snow finally said.

“It has to go on until she’s fully awake,” June said.

“That’s not awake?” Snow asked.

“That is a complicated tactile system response to stimulus which increase energy flow through the biological circuits...”

“I don’t want to know,” Snow said.

“Feeling kind of wet, eh?” June asked.

Snow blushed, bright red cheeks.

“Really? The dwarves never hinted at sexuality?” June asked.

A sound of a face being smacked brought them backed to Jon. His hands were between Dorothy’s thighs. Her eyes were fierce and she shoved him, followed by both boots kicking him, and she was up and on him, punching him in the face before June and Snow could pulled her off. She was practically swinging from their grips, kicking at him with two flying feet, and though he had been pummeled, and he could do was look at the kicking legs to try and discern if she was wearing panties.

“How dare you kiss me while I am sleeping?!” Dorothy yelled. “I will fucking gut you like a greased hog. Let me go, bitches. I am going to kill that fucking bastard...”

“Language!” Snow snapped.

“He was saving your life,” June said. “Calm down.”

“You two were helping him rape me?!” Dorothy said.

The Enchantress was suddenly there. “Calm!”

Dorothy stopped struggling. “Where am I?”

“Oh, well, definitely not in Kansas,” June said, returning. She turned to help Jon up.
“You okay.”

“Umm, I just got my ass kicked by a girl,” Jon said.

“Language!” Snow snapped.

“Kiss me again and I will fucking kill you!” Dorothy snapped.

“You’re not a nice person,” Snow said.

“Really? And what would you do if you woke up to some stranger kissing you?” Dorothy asked.

“Marry him,” Snow said, matter of fact.

“OMG, where the hell am I?” Dorothy said.

“We will sort that out in a moment,” June said. “You’ve got one more to wake up.”

“I am not so sure anymore,” Jon said, reluctantly.

“But you have to save her, too!” Snow said.

“Wow, you sure came full round quick,” Jon said.

“They learn fast at this stage,” June said.

“Yeah, well, you saw what that little country girl did to me. That one, if it is who I think it is, she is a trained warrior and ace pilot,” Jon said.

“We will protect you,” June said.

Jon closed his eyes and sorted. The only amusing anecdote he could come up with was that he was about to ‘bidly, bidly, bidly,’ Wilma Deering. He was actually surprised that Timothy even knew who she was. He could give her Snow and Dorothy, but Wilma?

“You okay, dear?” Snow asked, touching him affectionately. “Shall I kiss it and make it better?”

“I think there is way too much kissing going on here,” Dorothy said.

“Oh, if you only knew the half of it,” June said.

Jon opened his eyes and proceeded to Wilma’s table. He looked to the three. Dorothy put her hands akimbo, her legs parted, fairly Wonder Woman stance, only looking rather crossed. Snow was all into this now, and brought her hands together, and nodded encouragement. June put her hands behind her back, trying to suppress evil amusement, and the Enchantress sparkled through her eyes. This was so not the way he had imagined being with Wilma in any of his past fantasies. In his mind, the original theme, “Suspension” played in his head, as he wearily

approached close enough to kiss Wilma. The song was so loud in his head that he had to close his eyes as he began the kiss. In his mind the opening thematic production of the score was full there, with scantily clad women sliding down letters, or posing seductively, and the words captured him and transported him even further down memory lane. He was barely aware of her response, how far he was sinking into her, how tight her arms were around him, or that both her knees had come up as she turned into him. It ended only because he was suddenly being pulled away from Wilma by Snow, while June and Dorothy pulled Wilma away, holding her back.

“But I am not finished yet!” Wilma protested.

“Well enough for now,” Dorothy said. “Damn, you’re strong, like a cat in heat.”

“That is just amazing,” Snow said. “Can you do that to anyone?”

“Um, well,” Jon said, catching his breath.

“One more to go,” June said.

“What?” Jon, Snow, and Dorothy said.

“I said there were four unchipped tulpas,” June said. “The last is fully formed and in a holding cell.”

“Why is she in a holding cell?” Snow asked. “Is she evil?”

“She’s Timothy’s oldest sister,” June said.

“Oh, no fucking way,” Jon said.

“Language!” Snow said.

“What’s going on?” Wilma asked.

“We’re sorting that now,” Dorothy said. “Who’s Timothy and what’s up with the sister?”

“Why would he make a tulpa of his sister?” Jon asked.

“You’re kidding?” June asked. “The last time he raped her was followed up by a beating with a bat while he was sleeping that left him a paraplegic.”

“Oh, I like her,” Dorothy said, while Snow was saying, “That’s awful.”

Dorothy did a double take. “He raped his own sister and you’re you have sympathy for the creep?”

“Well, isn’t there like laws to help protect people?” Snow asked.

June tried not to smile.

“What world are you from?” Dorothy asked.

“Well, she is in a cell, right? All you have to do is open a door and let her out, right?” Jon asked June.

June made a face and rocked her head. “Yeah, no, it’s a little more complicated than that,” she said.

“Of course it is,” Jon said, rolling his eyes.

“He programmed her so that if she doesn’t have sex once a day, she starts to get sick. And if she doesn’t have sex once a week, she will die,” June explained. “He keeps her in the cell and has limited her access to him alone, so that she has to fuck him to stay alive.”

“That’s fucked up,” Dorothy said.

“I am confused. You said that they’re siblings?” Snow asked.

“Where the hell am I?” Wilma asked again.

“Fuck that. I would just chose to die,” Dorothy.

“Oh! We can’t let her die,” Snow said.

“You would be okay with your brother fucking you once a day?” Dorothy said.

“I would be okay with Jon kissing me once a day. Are you also her brother?” Snow asked.

“I didn’t say kiss,” Dorothy said. “I said fuck.”

“Language!” Snow said.

“You dress like you could have been on a farm. Surely you know animals fuck,” Dorothy said.

“I’d like to go home now,” Wilma said.

“How long does she have?” Jon asked.

“Well, she has resisted Timothy for several days before he switched with you,” June said.

“I am going to kill this Timothy bastard,” Dorothy said.

“We can’t kill people,” Snow said.

Dorothy turned to Wilma. “Guy raping people? Yeah, I’d shoot him myself.”

Dorothy turned to June. “I am okay killing Timothy.”

Dorothy pointed to Jon, “And you already admitted that you’re going to kill him. So, killing wins.”

Jon grimaced. “We can’t kill him,” Jon said.

“But you said...” Dorothy said.

“I know that. And, it was part euphemism, part frustration, but, I can’t advocate killing or fighting,” Jon said.

“I love you,” Snow said.

“What world are you from?” Dorothy asked.

“Is there like a spaceship around here I might borrow?” Wilma asked.

“Yes, actually,” June said. “We could all leave this dreadful place together.”

“We can’t leave without the sister,” Snow said.

“Does she have a name?” Dorothy asked.

“Stacey,” June said.

“How old is Stacey?” Jon asked.

“Does it matter?” Dorothy asked.

“Yeah, if I have to fuck her to save her life,” Jon said.

“Oh, I see the dilemma,” Snow said.

“There’s no dilemma,” Dorothy said. “He fucks her or she dies.”

“I don’t like this place,” Wilma said.

“She’s 18, Jon,” June said.

“June?” Jon asked, seeking clarity.

“Honest,” June said.

Jon looked skeptically at June. Dorothy looked angrily towards Jon. Wilma crossed her arms, clearly not happy with her situation. Snow smiled saying, “my hero.”

“Where’s the cell?” Jon asked, resigned.

June pointed to one of the doors. Jon headed to the door.

“I am so going to marry that man,” Snow said.

Dorothy rubbed her forehead. “Is there any food around here?”

“Oh, yeah, an apple would be nice,” Snow said.

“Isn’t that how you got here?” June asked her.

“Umm,” Snow mused. “But I like apples.”

निर्मित

Loxy was walking with Truest, discussing Safe Haven University and the potential of being eligible for magic. As they walked, Loxy spied a man sitting by the lake, and she immediately recognized Clemens. She altered her direction, bringing Truest along. They approached with respect, waiting to get his attention and approval before completely joining him. He waved them closer.

“Are you okay?” Loxy asked.

“I am alive,” Clemens said.

“May we join you?” Loxy asked.

“I would be very grateful,” Clemens said.

Loxy and Truest sat on either side of him. Truest plucked several daisies and began to bind them together. Clemens seemed miles away, but with effort was bringing his attention to them.

“Would you like to share?” Loxy asked. Truest looked to Clemens.

“I hate to burden you. At this age, I feel like I should be able to handle my grief,” Clemens said.

“You don’t have to sort it alone, and, I think perhaps you could allow for the strangeness of this situation we are in to allow for some unconstrained emotions,” Loxy said.

Clemens smiled. “You seem wiser than my bias would allow.”

“Because I am a woman, or because I am young?” Loxy asked.

“Both,” Clemens admitted, unabashedly. “If I am to be fair, though, I have usually found women to be more practical than men. At least, that seems true the further away from city folk you get. City folk are peculiar, and different cities have their own level of peculiarities. The so called savages, for example, are frequently kinder to nature and one another than we educated folks.”

Loxy smiled, nodding. She picked a grass and chewed on the end. “As insightful as that seems, I think you avoiding the discussion of what is burdening you.”

“Perhaps you are too clever for this old man to endure. Very well. For lack of a better analogy, Shakespeare has placed a demon in my head, and I am having trouble shaking it,” Clemens said. “I was already bothered by the fact that my wife and children are out there in the Universe, as alive and well as the day I knew them way back when, and I can’t be with them. But now, I must fear the possibility that they have continued on, uninterrupted, with someone in my

place. That very someone might actually even be me, but it won't be me, and so my conundrum is am I jealous of myself, or is it some stranger I only remember, some fleeting moment we visited before I shuffled on into another world, leaving him forever behind. It is eating me, knowing they won't even have blinked, never known my absence, or how profoundly their absence has affected me. And if I were to show up, what feuds would ensue? Would I be kind to me, or belligerent and petty? Would she, my love, recognize in me the man she remembers and have pity or love or both? Would I be permitted to hold my children again? Would I be able to behold my love and immerse myself into her affections? I am on the verge of being so broken I might just die right here in this spot."

Both Loxy and Truest touched Clemens arm. Loxy took his hand.

"This does sound like love," Loxy said.

"Then love will be the death of me," Clemens said.

"If you could have anything you want, right now, what would that be?" Loxy asked.

"Reunited," Clemens said.

"Close your eyes," Loxy said.

Clemens closed his eyes. Loxy led him through a gentle, guided meditation, starting him off on a beach. Her words faded from his reality as the 'meditation' became more real than anything else. From Loxy and Truest's perspective, Clemens was simply away, evidence of dreaming playing out under his eyelids. Tears flowed. He gasped and came up, as if having been underwater. He stood, paced a ways, staring at a morning sun borne completely away from Earth. Loxy and Truest followed. He suddenly turned towards Loxy and hugged her.

"Oh, my child," Clemens said. "I don't know if that was real or a dream, but thank you. Thank you. I am so indebted to you."

"This is something you can learn to do on your own, and, in fact were schedule to learn had I not interfered with your process," Loxy said.

"But was it real?" Clemens asked.

"It had a real effect on you, isn't that sufficient?" Loxy said.

"What did you experience?" Truest asked.

Loxy held her hand, blocking. "Only share if you want to. What happens in your world, is yours."

“If it was real, if this is something all humans have access to, then I only have more questions,” Clemens said. “Because I can imagine some real horrors. Are those also real?”

“Everything is real,” Loxy said. “Everything is energy, or consciousness, and there can be no unreal agency. The breeze on your face, the sun on the back of your neck, the giant dandelion seeds you see in the air all around us, all of it is real and as real as what’s in your mind. Placebos work, not just treat but cure, and that is pure imagination. If people understood this one thing about reality, they would make no distinction between thought and reality.”

Clemens raised her hand for her to stop. He reached down and picked up his cane and then tapped the earth with it, perhaps testing for reality. In some ways, Loxy was reminded of Lester, only Clemens was more sociable.

“Is there a river nearby?” Clemens asked.

“Yes,” Truest said. “We can walk there, if you like. It’s not too far.”

“Point me in the direction,” Clemens said.

“We should walk together,” Loxy said.

“Because of bears or my age?” Clemens asked.

“I don’t think there are any bears on this world,” Truest said. “Mostly lemurs. The giant lemurs are bigger than any bear, but they won’t harm humans. Come to think of it, none of the animals will harm humans. There’s a truce between all species and humans, on this planet at least, and perhaps all of the twenty.”

“Really?” Clemens said. “Like in the Garden of Eden.”

“This is not Eden,” Truest assured him.

“Shall we walk and see for ourselves?” Loxy asked.

“Very well,” Clemens said.

It took about forty minutes to walk to the river and on the walk, Clemens prodded Loxy into sharing some of her insight and philosophy. The general gist of the conversation might be summarized in old South American saying: ‘Every head is a world.’ And Loxy and Jon, as magicians, jump worlds as easy as a bee might go from flower to flower. Along the way, they also found an apple tree, and helped themselves, and when they wanted water, the ubiquitous computer system manifested cups of water for them, and when they were finished, the cups vanished back to where they came.

“How can this not be Eden? I really don’t understand this magic, and don’t correct me again, as it is more magic than my Yankee in King Arthur’s court knowledge was merely sleight of hand,” Clemens said. “My question to you, dear Loxy, is do I need to understand this magic to function, or might I just use it?”

“I am bias. I always recommend education and knowledge, as only that will expand your option base,” Loxy said. “But no, it is not compulsory to understand how it works to function within it, any more than understanding air and biology is necessary to breathing.”

They heard the river before seeing it, but when they top the crest of the next hill, there it was. The river was wide, and flowing at various rates, depending on where you were in the river, and the sound of water moving was more a hum, just moving water, as opposed to the sound of water falling over rocks. Perhaps it was only discernable because of how gentle the silence was upon the land, with only the song of birds or other animals breaking the stillness. It was so gentle a sound as to not be there, like the smell of ozone after a rain, only present to an observer paying attention. Clemens was more than happy to educate the girls about rivers and was elucidating even as they drew closer.

“I feel like I am home,” Clemens said, stopping at the bank. Lemurs drank at spill of, along with a moose and its baby. “What is this river called?”

“I don’t know,” Loxy said. “I think we can name it whatever. Though this is Earth, this will not be the earth you remember, nor will it ever become the earth you remember. New orbit, new stresses, different populations of animals, and different tangents.”

“Let’s ask,” Truest said. “Isis?”

Isis stepped out of nowhere, dressed in the same fashion as the guardians. “How may I be of service?”

“Does this river have a name?” Truest asked.

Isis held out her hands and globe appeared. It flattened out and zoomed in on a landscape that was unrecognizable to Clemens or Loxy. Truest had seen it, because several of her colleagues were interested in such things, but it hadn’t captured her attention till now. “We are here, the most Eastern point of the Gondwana landmass,” Isis explained. “This river originates at the South Polar Glacier, flowing North, then East towards the shore. This river has been catalogued by the system and provided an alpha numeric identification label, however, it is available to naming if you like.”

Loxy and Truest looked to Clemens. He seemed flustered.

“I am so not taking such liberties as naming the first river,” Clemens said.

“I think it’s already settled,” Loxy said.

“How do you figure?” Clemens said.

“Rivers were traditionally named after the person who discovered them, right? And I am pretty sure you saw the river first, wouldn’t you agree, Truest?” Loxy said.

“It does look like the Clemens River, now that you mention it,” Truest said. “Isis?”

“I think this is a human matter that I should refrain from interfering in,” Isis responded.

“Clemens it is,” Loxy said. “Make it so, Isis.”

“I have logged the request,” Isis said, closing out the map. “In three days, provided there is no opposition, the river’s name will hold.”

“Now, all we need is a Riverboat,” Loxy said.

“If you like, I could provide one,” Isis said.

“You jest, madam. Do not toy with an old man’s heart,” Clemens said.

“I rarely jest, Sir,” Isis said. She swept a hand out towards the river as if to say, ‘behold’ and behind her, on the shore, as solid as anything, and as if it had always been there but obscured by Isis or perspective, was a Riverboat, plank ashore. It was a modern looking Riverboat, unlike anything Clemens had seen or imagined, but clearly recognizable as such. From Loxy’s perspective, it was like something from a sci fi movie that might actually rise up and fly to avoid water fall calamity. It held sleek, rakish lines that suggested ‘riverboats’ ran into a ‘Star Trek’ version of ‘Frank Lloyd Wright’ meets ‘Deviant Art.’ Crew and guest quarters were visible, some with balcony, some, nearer the bottom, just pure glass walls, so that the occupants of the room, day or night, might look out on the world. It was a luxury, traveling hotel. It was a home in and of itself. Clemens free hand was shaking and he hid that fact by placing it on top of his other hand, holding the cane down to the earth.

“The Riverboat is available for service and habitation,” Isis said.

Clemens was tearing up again. “Please forgive me, ladies,” Clemens said. “I can’t seem to stop myself.”

“It seems quite reasonable,” Loxy said, taking his arm.

Truest took his other arm, and they headed towards the boat. Isis followed.

“We’re going to need a crew,” Clemens said.

“The ship is sentient and capable of self-direction,” Isis said. “I took liberty with the name and have christened her Radiance. Please feel free to correct me if I have over stepped my authority.”

Clemens turned and hugged Isis. “Will you be accompanying us?”

“I am always with you, Sir. From this day forward, if you have need you only need speak it out loud,” Isis said. “Your ship, too, can respond, and can present herself as a human avatar.”

“Thank you,” Clemens said. “I am sorry I find myself unable to say anything more profound.”

Isis bowed and faded from view. Clemens turned to proceed towards the ‘fabulous’ river boat, and paused. Loxy seemed withdrawn.

“Are you well?” Clemens asked.

“She is speaking with Sara,” Truest said.

“Sara?” Clemens asked.

“You have not met her. She refrained from meeting any of the initiated, claiming being in the visible presence of any of you would be simply too much, that she is already sorting too much,” Truest said.

“I might ask you to explain that later,” Clemens said, puzzling over it. “But for now, I don’t think it’s something I need to know to function.”

Loxy eyes focused, revealing she was back. She orientated on Clemens. “This ship, this home, is yours. Garcia is wanting the others out of his home and is wondering if you would permit them to travel with you as your guest until other accommodations are made, as he would rather we stay together until we are sufficiently educated about his rules for surface dwelling.”

“I am not sure I like this Garcia fellow. Didn’t he bring us all here?” Clemens asked. “And now he wants us gone?”

“It’s complicated,” Truest said. “But I can assure you this, if he wanted you gone, you would be gone. His struggle is keeping his unconscious from pushing you away, so the fact any of us are on his world is testament that we are supposed to be here.”

Clemens sorted that. “This boat is clearly large enough to accommodate all of our companions, and traveling is always better with others. Well, certain others. Even though you say this is my boat, the fact that I am permitted this extravagance at all, I cannot deny anyone who might want to join us.”

The others were suddenly there. Jon stood behind Timothy, who sat in a wheel-less, floating 'wheel-chair.' It was almost impossible to discern if Timothy was resigned, apathetic, or simply plotting evil in his head. Shakespeare was wearing clothes from his own wardrobe and was drinking mead from an oversized mug, and if anyone was as telepathic as Sara, they would have known he was nursing wounds from being rejected by Garland. Kant was holding a book. He took off his reading glasses to take in the new surroundings. Blavatsky and Dostoyevsky seemed to have been in mid conversation and seemed inconvenienced by the shifting of locale. Garland crossed her arms, apparently disgruntled. Midori was not happy, but she was there, too, with staff in hand, as well as several other guardian assigned to accompany the impromptu pilgrimage. Plath asked out loud: "How can this not be a dream?"

Chapter 14

When Stacey was sufficiently recovered, Jon introduced her to the rest of the group. He had found them in the dining room, eating rice-fish. Their hunger had forced them into the meal, and, as it was their first meal, it was as necessary as breathing. June offered Stacey food, but she refused. She seemed hesitant and embarrassed, and she remained standing next to Jon as if he were a life preserver. Snow seemed perfectly oblivious to any sense of discomfort. Wilma was aware, but as someone who had frequently answered this ‘discomfort’ with aggression, she wasn’t sure what to do or say. Dorothy got up and took Stacey’s arm and revealed a niceness that Jon hadn’t expected.

“Miss Stacey,” Dorothy said, leading her away from Jon as if he were the bad guy here. “I can’t presume to know you or what you have been through, but we do share the misfortune of being on this journey together. If you are able to tolerate us until we find a place you would rather be, I extend my friendship and my protection, to the best of my ability.”

Stacey didn’t respond with words, but simply hugged Dorothy and cried, accepting her as if she had known her all her life.

“Oh, that is beautiful,” Snow said. “I love my new friends.”

“There is something not quite right with you,” Wilma said.

Jon motioned June to him, and he withdrew a little to hold a private conversation. Doing so elicited the attention of the group and they all joined the huddle. So, no privacy, Jon decided.

“You said there’s a spaceship?”

“Sure,” June said. “Are we leaving?”

“My impulse is to blow this place up, but I think withdrawing to somewhere else is best. Are you able to leave the facility without impairment?” Jon asked.

“Of course,” June said. “I am part of the system, but not the system. I can withdraw my entire consciousness into this form. Doing so will allow Timothy to re-inhabit the station.”

“That can’t be helped,” Jon said.

“You’re not leaving without us,” Dorothy said, matter of fact. “June explained you’re some kind of power Wizard. I have known too many Wizards, sir, and I will not tolerate any tom foolery from you.”

“Is it true, you’re a powerful Wizard?” Snow asked. “Can you just send us to a better place?”

“I can’t be without you,” Stacey said. “Please, don’t leave me to Timothy.”

“No one is leaving anyone,” Dorothy said. “We are sticking together.” She looked to Jon as if to emphasize that point.

Jon nodded. “If you prefer, we can stick together, or I can send you to my world in the manner that I sent the others.”

“Oh, great,” Wilma said. “Another fucking, Buck Rogers, want-to-be, maverick, and lone star hero. That’s just stupid. There is a reason we are social. We are better in groups than alone. We stick together. I mean, really, if there is a spaceship, do you think you can pilot it? I am a pilot. This girl here, you give her some lasers, she’s will be good in a fight. June here, seems capable. Not sure about Snow here, or this one, but we are all here together and we are not splitting up.”

June seemed amused.

“She is right,” Stacey said. “You don’t know my brother. There are horrors waiting for us if we try to escape.”

“Lions?” Dorothy asked.

“Evil witches?” Snow asked.

“Mostly servitors. And some things that resemble aliens, from Cameron’s aliens,” June said.

“OMG, please tell me that was a joke,” Jon demanded.

“No. You have to pass through the Alien habitat to get to the hangar deck. Security measure thing,” June said.

“That’s not a security thing, that’s a self-destruct thing!” Jon said.

“What are these alien things?” Wilma asked.

“Give me a revolver,” Dorothy said.

“What’s a revolver?” Snow asked.

“I don’t want to kill things!” Jon lamented. “That’s not the way this is supposed to go. And learning he made Aliens pushed me towards blowing this place up and I don’t want to that either, and just opening a portal and going home is like failure.”

“You can’t unspin shadows,” June said. “Timothy was as dark as dark comes, and once you start down...”

“Oh, don’t do that,” Jon said.

“What? Quote Star Wars?” June asked.

“There is enough mingling going on that we don’t need any more diatribe dialogue to push this convolutedness of this story arch,” Jon said.

June looked up, as if accessing a thought, then frowned. “Speaking of pushing the story along, I receiving a transmission.”

“Oh? You’re a clairvoyant? You channel spirits?” Snow asked.

June fished an ear piece out of her pocket and handed it to Jon. “It’s for you.”

“Oooh, what is it?” Snow asked.

“A blue tooth, communication device,” Wilma explain.

“But it’s black. And it doesn’t look like a tooth,” Snow observed as she watched Jon insert the device over his ear.

“Umm, Jon here,” Jon said.

It was Timothy. And he was in comedic mode. “What do you think you’re doing, Dave. I can feel it.”

“Oh, Timmy!” Jon sang.

Stacey nearly came unraveled, but Dorothy hugged her in tight.

“Don’t call me that!” Timmy said.

“But I like ‘Timmy!’” Jon said. “Reminds me of South Park. Anyway, nice lead in movie reference, which is actually appropriate considering the re-write I have been engaged in, but surprises me because, well, you just don’t strike me as the movie kid who has spent a lot of time watching old movies just to have clue.”

“You’d be surprised by what I know,” Timothy said. “And the things you resort to when stuck in a chair.”

There was a click and it became clear to Jon that the call switched to another player. “Well, hello, son.”

“Fribourg!” Jon said, his hand going to the earpiece.

“You never call me dad!” Fribourg said.

“Oh, fuck, well, that explains the movie references. You’ve been grooming Timothy,” Jon said.

“Well, he started it. And I am smarter and meaner than he ever was, and I can’t abide ignorant folks serving me, so, while he was in a wheel chair, I forced him to watch old movies, which really helped flesh out some of his wonderlands. You’d be surprised how empty and cold worlds there were before I arrive,” Fribourg said. “You should thank me for the food. Fish rice! Who would have come up with that! With Timothy in my grips, and his production facility streamlined for tulpa making, I am on the verge of building my empire.”

Jon frowned, pulled out his flask, took a sip, and yawned.

“You still there?” Fribourg asked.

“Yeah, falling asleep. Get to the part that concerns me,” Jon said.

“Ever since you took over the base, I have not been able to get back in. You have something I want. I have something you want. I say, let’s trade,” Fribourg said.

“Umm, how can I say this, concisely, with meaning, oh, yeah, fuck you,” Jon said.

“Language,” Snow said.

“Come to the hangar deck, or I kill Loxy,” Fribourg said.

“Okay,” Jon said.

“Just like that?” Fribourg asked. “You’re not going to wail, gnash your teeth, and beg for her safety or threaten to kill me if I harm her?”

“Would that make a difference?” Jon asked.

“Not really, but you’re breaking with traditions,” Fribourg said.

“I am not Mel Gibson. I am not going to throw my shoulder out or torture myself because you’re an ass,” Jon said.

“Language,” Snow said. “You’re as bad the dwarves.”

“And you want to marry him,” Dorothy pointed out.

“Someone has to make him better,” Snow said.

“So, are you coming to the hangar deck?” Fribourg asked.

“Yep,” Jon said. “See you in a bit.” Jon turned off the ear piece.

Jon crossed his arms and puzzled over the situation.

“We’re going into a trap, aren’t we?” Dorothy said.

“You think?” Wilma said.

“I want my revolvers,” Dorothy said.

Jon looked to June. June shrugged. He opened up his mail bag and pulled the first item out. It was an apple.

“Oh!” Snow said, grabbing it up. June blocked her from eating it.

“What?” Snow asked.

“Don’t eat it. Just throw it at the bad guy,” June said.

“Who’s the bad guy?” Snow asked.

“You will know the bad guys,” Jon and June said together.

Jon drew another item out. It was a belt with a holster that matched Wilma’s outfit. Inside the holster was a laser. She strapped it on, withdrew the weapon, and fired a bolt into the food on the table, punching a hole through the food, the plate, and the table.

“Nice,” Dorothy said. “Can I have a couple of those?”

Jon fished another item out of his bag. It was a lightsaber.

“Nice,” June said.

“Ohh, what it is it?” Snow asked.

“I fear this is not going to go well,” Jon said, hooking the saber to his belt.

Again he fished into his bag and this time pulled out a revolver, a six shooter. Dorothy greedily grabbed it up, flipped it open, spun the barrel confirming six bullets, and then closed it back up. He fished out a second to complete the set. A belt of bullets, with additional ammo cartridges, which was not congruent, but compelled him to go fishing and indeed, he pulled out something more appropriate to fighting aliens. He offered it to Dorothy who accepted it with the kind of affection a child might a teddy bear.

“I don’t suppose you have anything for me in there?” Stacey asked.

Jon shrugged and tried. He pulled out a 10 foot bullwhip.

“Really?” Stacey asked. “We’re going up against servitors, and possibly aliens, and you give me a whip?”

Jon shrugged. Snow offered her apple.

“Eat it,” Stacey said.

“I was told not to,” Snow said. “What are servitors?”

“Kind of like robots,” Jon said.

“Oh,” Snow said, thoughtfully. “What are robots?”

“Um, kind of like golems,” June offered.

“Oh,” Snow said. “What...”

“You’ll find out soon enough,” Dorothy snapped.

“Let me guess,” Stacey said. “My brother made her stupid.”

“He made all of us,” Snow said.

“June, where is the hangar deck?”

“We have to take lift two up to the surface, and walked two domes over,” June said.

“Follow me.”

June led them back to through the lab, through the secondary cloning facility where various stages and types of failed tulpas were contained in cylinders, submersed in liquid, were on display. Jon quickened his pace, wanting out of the room, trying not to look at any one tulpa long, lest any of his ‘host’ power should accidentally revive one. They pushed through it with the somberness of a graveyard. This is where poorly constructed thought forms came to rest, go on display, get dissected and examined. On the far wall was a refrigerator storage units for cadavers and several examining tables. Two tables had what might be bodies under sheets. Dorothy trailed the group, watching their backs. Wilma kept urging Snow forward, as her curiosity was drawing her to everything.

Stacey stepped up closer to Jon. “He didn’t create the zombie world, did he?”

“OMG, I hope not,” Jon said, squeezing his eyes shut wanting not to give that thought hold. How much power did he have in someone else’s wonderland who was bent towards expressing the more negative thoughts? “The writers had me so mad that last season I wanted to kill Rick. And if I do reboot, I am starting with Rick dead, and Glenn alive, and we will follow Glen for the rest of the world line.”

“Oh, I loved Glen,” Stacey said, thinking about the actor fondly. Then something else occurred to her. She whispered in his ear. “We might need to be alone again soon.”

They passed through an airlock into a large domed room that was as large as a football field. Center of the room was a thick, vine like plant, branching into a million smaller vines, and all together perhaps over five thousand visible pods, ranging from apple size to pumpkin size, to a few supersized pumpkin-the size of chariot size.

Jon tagged June and closed his fist asking for her to stop.

“Wow, how pretty,” Snow said.

Jon looked at her as if she were crazy, and gave her the silent sign.

“Are you shushing me?” Snow asked.

Dorothy slapped the back of her head. “Quiet,” she said.

In this stage, the tulpas being grown in the pods were probably just meat, but if even one of them was an alien it could mean the end for this tangent. Jon motioned them to wait, approached one of the closest pods, and examined it. It was translucent, with a thin filament in the center that would branch an umbilical cord to a growing tulpa. Jon examined another. It, too, seemed to be empty. He returned to the group.

“Is this room safe?” Jon asked.

“The Freight Lift is on the other side of the next room,” June explained. “It is the only way up to the hangar platform.”

Jon sorted it, trying to figure out how that answered his question.

“If this plant makes tulpas, don’t we have to rescue them, too?” Snow asked.

“I can’t rescue everyone,” Jon said.

“You have been doing pretty good so far,” June said.

“There has to be hard limit,” Jon said.

“I would like to explore that with you,” Stacey said.

“We’re in a serious situation and you’re coming on to him?” Dorothy asked.

“I can’t help it,” Stacey said.

“OMG,” Jon said. “June. Is there any hostiles in this room? Aliens?”

“It would not be good practice having aliens in this room. They’re quarantined, in the next habitat,” June assured.

“Something moving,” Wilma said, drawing her weapon.

A shiny, silvery servitor was pushing a human size, floating rectangular box. The box was thin, appeared solid, with clear features of a human emerging from the upper and lower surface, as if frozen and constrained. If it was a person, she was a frozen playboy bunny.

“Oh,” Snow said. “Chocolate bunnies!”

The servitor turned its head towards them. It halted the progress of what was clearly a person frozen in ‘carbonite,’ to anyone appropriately educated in movie lore. It turned its head, smiled, rotated it’s boxy body around, and began moving towards them.

“The tin man?” Dorothy asked.

“Hello!” the boxy creature said, as if shouting. “Do not be alarmed. I am here to facilitate your preparation for travel.”

“May I shoot him?” Wilma asked.

“Aww, I like the ice man,” Snow said.

Jon stepped forward pointing at the servitor, who he recognized as being “Box” from the movie ‘Logan’s Run.’ “Stop! You will accept new programming.”

“I have already accepted new programming. The fish stopped coming, you started coming, and so, the process of preparation continues,” Box said.

“You will not process any more beings,” Jon said.

“If I stopped, this place would become packed with people. I must prepare you for your journey ahead,” Box said, raising its arms and appendages to begin the process. “This will not hurt...”

Gun fire echoing in the room caused Jon to grimace, mostly because of the loudness, but also because the ricochet went right by him. Dorothy’s short burst of rounds into the metallic body barely made a dent, but Wilma’s laser put a hole through Box’s head, and another one through its ice crystal heart. Its head sagged forward and its arms slumped down, indicating it was dead.

“Damn it,” Jon snapped. “I had this under control.”

“Really?” Dorothy asked. “Cause it looked to me as if you were about to become a pop sickle.”

Near the wall, a door opened and three more ‘Box’ servitors emerged, their ‘tool’ arms coming up to the ready.

“Run,” Jon said. “Go go go, follow June to lift.”

They began running, jumping over vines, going around tulpa bulbs. Dorothy and Wilma were no strangers to running, but Snow was a bit dainty and not suitably dressed for vigorous activity. Snow’s dress snagged on a vine and she went down face first. Jon used his lightsaber to cut her dress free, got her back on her feet, even as Dorothy and Wilma were firing at the servitors. Even though Snow was a stranger, they stopped to slow the advance of the enemy until she was fully recovered and with them. Jon liked this about them, but he had to wonder why Timothy had programmed them with their virtuous attributes. It was possible there was no way for Timothy to construct them without some virtue, or, more likely, he needed their virtue so he that

he felt satisfied when he raped them. If you were going to rape or sell folks, you wanted someone who was going to fight, someone worthy of controlling, someone who made you feel superior.

“Oh, my dress,” Snow said.

“Nice legs,” Stacey said.

“We need to go!” June said.

“What about the chocolate bunny girl?” Snow said.

“I got her,” Wilma said.

“No. Get to the lift, now,” Jon ordered. He touched her arm, saying please without asking, and nodded towards Snow as if he was saying I need you to take care of group. She demonstrated she understood taking Snow’s arm even as Snow was reaching for a flower.

As the others continued towards the lift, Jon went for the bunny in carbonite. More ‘box’ servitors emerged. The closest one fired a freezing blast at him, and impulsively Jon pushed a quarter shield, reflecting the burst back towards the servitor. It didn’t seem to have the sense to realize it was freezing itself, slowing to a stop, until it was solid frozen, but not in carbonite. That must be a secondary process. Jon proceeded to the carbonite bunny and pushed her towards the lift. He rode it’s momentum by swinging his feet up and over vines, as if this was nothing more than a shopping cart at the store that he was pushing and riding. He ended up with so much momentum, that he couldn’t bring it to a stop. It crashed into the wall next to the airlock door.

Dorothy and June helped to get bunny girl into the lift while Wilma continued to fire phasers at the oncoming servitors until the airlock doors closed. The servitors did not try to get in, but mostly because they knew what was on the other side of the airlock and figured the people would return. Jon was breathing heavily, holding onto the carbonite. The airlock was fortunately large enough to house all of them and the carbonite bunny to give them some respite before continuing.

“You okay?” Wilma asked.

“Just out of breath,” Jon said. “I hate running.”

“Well, that’s because you’re old and out of practice,” Snow said.

“Stop with the ageism. I know teenagers who can’t run as fast as I,” Jon said.

“I am really horny,” Stacey said. “Do we have time for a quickie?”

“Here in front of everyone?” Jon asked.

“I thought you loved me,” Snow whined.

“It’s to save her life,” June reminded.

“Oh, yeah, I forgot, you should fuck her quick, then,” Snow said.

“Really?” Dorothy asked. “It’s that easy to accept?”

“Just out of curiosity, does she just need penetration, or do you have to cum in her?”

Wilma said.

“Oh, I need your cum,” Stacey said.

“So, oral would be enough?” Wilma asked. “Can of us satisfy you?”

Dorothy and Snow looked at her.

“What if something happens to Jon?” Wilma asked.

They nodded, as if that made sense, and turned to Stacey

“I think it has to be sperm, but we could try and see if you satisfy me,” Stacey said.

“It was just a hypothetical, I wasn’t volunteering,” Wilma said.

“You want me to try?” Snow asked.

“Why aren’t they trying to get us?” Dorothy asked.

Jon looked out the window to the next habitat and what he saw scared the shit out of him. He considered going back to the icebots. Eggs containing the face-hugger stage of Aliens lay between the airlock and the lift that led up to the hangar deck. Apparently, they were all on pedestals, and perhaps the pedestals got raised when he initially triggered the Enchantress’s intruder alarm. This was likely a subroutine out of her control ensnared by Timothy to block people from stealing his tulpas, otherwise, June would have already called them back into their container trap doors.

“OMFG, do not people not watch movies!” Jon lamented.

“Of course they do,” June said. “And then they imagine what they would do if they were in these sorts of world and create their own scenarios to see how they might extract themselves.”

Jon couldn’t argue with that. How many wonderlands worlds had he blown up because he had written him into scenes with Ripley. Hell, he was still trying to rewrite the sequels after Cameron, while dealing with the fall out of the new ones. He forced himself to focus on here and now. He had to get to the hangar deck to save Loxy. If he could open a portal to anywhere, he wondered if he could open one that put him in the cargo lift across the way, bypassing this room altogether. He touched the door and opened it. The portal seemed in place. He passed the girls

through safely, pushed the carbonite through, and then stepped through to the lift himself. He closed the portal, relieved.

“Nice trick,” June said. “But you know, we’re going to have to deal with that mess eventually.”

“Yeah, just not today,” Jon said. “Take us up.”

Stacey grabbed her chest, and making motions as if she was resisting the urge to be sick. Snow, Dorothy, and Wilma stepped back.

“What?” Jon said. “Did one get through?!”

“No, she just needs to be fucked,” June said.

“It hasn’t been a full day yet,” Jon said.

“Yeah, but she’s conditioned to experience this if she tries to leave the base,” June said. “It’s a long way to the surface. We have time.”

“Really?”

Stacey fell to the floor and started convulsing.

“Jon, do something,” Snow said.

“Want us to hold her down?” Wilma asked.

“Fuck me,” Jon said, undoing his pants.

“You are the magician,” June said.

Fast forward to Stacey back on her feet, looking perfectly content as if she had smoked cannabis. Jon was exhausted. The lift was still rising.

“Do we have time to do me?” Snow asked.

“No. Hands away from the wall,” June said, as the lift began slowing. “We are emerging onto the hangar deck.”

The walls fell away, and they arrived at the hangar deck, like arriving on a lift to the flight deck of an aircraft carrier, only, this was a large dome, similar to the other habitats on the icy surface. Jon was still tightening his belt as they came in line of sight of the bad guy. They hadn’t even completely emerged when a large, hairy animal with a crossbow fired on them. Jon automatically pushed a shield that surrounded his entire group, and had done so intuitively, with just enough time to block the incoming energy, and his pants fell because he hadn’t finished.

“You stupid, hairy oaf!” Fribourg said. “I told you not to shoot at him.”

The hairy creature towered over Fribourg by at least a foot or two. It moaned a lament and bowed its head. Fribourg slapped it, pointed a finger at it, and then pushed away his anger in favor of the new comers, and approached the shield. He performed a hand signal in the air and an army of warrior/defender type ‘servitors’ stepped up out of their shadows and hidden spots, weapons raised. In the background, Jon could see Loxy. She was tied to a chair, mouth gagged. He gave her a nod and she communicated with eyes. It seemed like a pleasant greeting ritual as opposed to ‘help me.’ He was also pretty sure she was wondering why his pants were down and he was hoping he had conveyed in his look that it was long story don’t ask. There was a robot directly behind her, holding a blaster to her head.

“Impressive,” Fribourg said, touching the shield gingerly. “I have not been able to perform magic here, and yet, you managed to push a shield. Did I interrupt something, or are you just happy to see me?”

That’s the other problem with magic. Using it always had an arousal effect, the same way REM sleep caused arousal. Jon continued to hold his hand up, as if it was necessary to hold the shield. It did seem to be taking a great deal of effort to sustain. It was also distracting. He was interested in visually exploring Loxy, as she was wearing a Safari outfit, with a pith helmet and knee high white socks, which was cute enough on its own, but she was also bound, and that, too, interested him, but the shield needed his attention, and given the amount of stimulation he had had in the last 24 hours, he was surprised he could still hold a hard on.

“I do hope you didn’t make a perfect sphere,” Fribourg said. “If you compromised the habitat, well, I don’t have to explain that one to you, do I?”

“What do you want?” Jon asked. He found himself struggling to speak, as if he was out of breath from running a marathon, having sex, and now holding magic; maintaining the sphere was exhausting him.

“Really? You’re not going to lead with a directive ‘let Loxy go!’” Fribourg asked.

“Would you?” Jon asked.

“Would you say ‘please?’” Fribourg asked.

“Please,” Jon said.

“With sugar on top?” Fribourg asked.

“Please, with sugar on top,” Jon said.

“I never really understood the sugar on top part. True, you can sugar coat things, but ‘please’ is already sort of humbly sugar coated thing if it’s genuine,” Fribourg said. “And yours was genuine. But I think you need to learn share. Loxy is just too beautiful for one man and you never share with me. When I was growing up, I had to share my girlfriends with my brothers, sisters, father, and grandfather. Hell, if we didn’t share, we got the crap beat out of us.”

“Well, you should share,” Snow said.

“Are you following the gist of this conversation?” Dorothy asked.

“It’s making me horny again,” Stacey said. “Please, can I touch it?”

“Not while he’s holding the shield,” June said.

“You’re like farm cat in heat,” Dorothy said.

“Let Loxy go, Fribourg,” Jon said.

“Tell you what. I will make a trade with you. I need Wilma there to pilot my ship,” Fribourg said, pointing back at the ship he was commandeering. Jon had seen the ship, as Loxy was parked next to the ramp, but he hadn’t really ‘seen the ship’ due to looking at Loxy, and the fact she was looking kind of good, all tied up, and the fact he was distracted by his exposed erection, and unable to attend due to the necessity of holding a shield.

“That’s not your ship,” Jon said.

“You think you’re the only one with a Millenium Falcon?” Fribourg said. “Give me the pilot and I will give you Loxy.”

“I am not trading people,” Jon said.

“Jon, I will go if it saves your friend,” Wilma said.

“No. The moment he flies off, his robots will shoot us,” Jon said.

“But those are the stupid robots,” Stacey pointed out. “We can take them. You won’t be too tired for sex after, will you?”

“Hookups everywhere you go, son,” Fribourg said, proud. “But you know, time is ticking, and now the trade is Loxy for Wilma and Stacey. Timothy promised me I could have a turn with his sister.”

“That’s just sick,” Snow said.

“And, why Timothy likes him so much,” June said.

“This is really turning me own. You could both do me if you want,” Stacey said.

“See, Jon. Join me and we can rule the Timothy Universe together,” Fribourg said.

“I will never join you,” Jon said.

“Oh, nice! That sounded genuine. Please tell me you weren’t just quoting Luke?”

Fribourg said. “Don’t make me fuck Loxy in front of you.”

“Why do you need Wilma?” Stacey asked. “Chewbaca there can pilot the Falcon.”

“Do you get stupider the hornier you get?” Jon snapped.

“Don’t you?” Stacey snapped back. “I bet we can determine how stupid you get by the attractiveness of the girl you settle for, so don’t judge me! If I don’t get some more soon, I am going to fuck something up, and not in the nice way.”

“We just did it!” Jon said.

“But I need it again!” Stacey said.

“Want me to try while they’re negotiating?” Snow asked.

“That is not Chewbaca,” Fribourg said. “That’s Toto. He’s a Big Foot, not a Wookiee.”

“He looks like a Wookiee,” Stacey said.

“What’s a Wookiee?” Snow asked.

“You named a Big Foot after Toto?” Dorothy asked.

“Come here!” Fribourg said, snapping his fingers at Toto.

Toto shook his head no.

“Get over here, you big cowardly, girly cat,” Fribourg said. Toto whimpered. “He can’t do anything to you while he is in his shield!”

Toto shook his head and wailed.

“Magic hurts your ears? I don’t hear anything. Now, get over here before I zap you,”

Fribourg said.

Toto came up beside Fribourg. Fribourg touched a bracelet, which caused Toto’s shock collar to give a jolt. Toto cried out with protest.

“What was that for? That was for making me wait,” Fribourg said. “Now, tell them you can’t fly the Falcon.”

Toto muttered something through princess lips, like a child pouting.

“See. That’s why I had Timothy make me a Wilma Deering tulpa,” Fribourg said. “Oh, and I need that bunny. She’s part of the collection I am transporting to the buyer.”

“Oh, poor Toto,” Snow said.

“Oh, poor Toto my ass. He never skips a meal, the little beggar,” Fribourg said. “I don’t want her, Jon, but I will take Daisy Duke there.”

“My name is Dorothy, not Daisy,” Dorothy corrected. “And I would rather fuck Toto.”

“I would so fuck Toto right now,” Stacey said.

“Grr?” Toto asked.

“You know Toto only said he can’t fly because you told him to?” Stacey said.

“You’re killing me here,” Jon snapped at Stacey.

“You’re killing me! This fucking around dialogue while your dick is dangling around is taking too long, so either you’re fucking me or you’re letting him fuck me, or hell, Toto can fuck me, but I am getting fucked soon,” Stacey snapped.

“This is taking a bit long,” Fribourg agreed. He turned to Toto and crossed his arm. “Can you fly the Falcon.”

Toto shook his head and made an affirmative kind of noise.

“Really!?” Fribourg asked, angrily. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

Toto muttered something, squinting his eyes as if expecting to get zapped.

“What do you mean I didn’t ask? You have been listening to this dialogue, right? You could have figured it out that I wanted a pilot and volunteered. Hell, we’ve been stuck here ever since Jon figured out how to change the security code, and I have nothing but kick the door and scream I want a pilot, and you’re like this big stupid, hairy, Neanderthal.”

“You should be kinder to your pets,” Snow said. “Pet can only provide the maximum amount of love and loyalty when they are treated well.”

“I am still not taking you,” Fribourg said. “And then I when I said tell me you can’t fly, you said you can’t fly.”

“He said what you told him to say,” Snow said.

“Not talking to you, Snow bitch,” Fribourg said. “So, Jon, I still want Wilma, and the Bunny for my collection, and I still want Daisy.”

“Dorothy!” Dorothy snapped.

“Um, I wonder how long you’ll have to wear the collar before you agree it’s Daisy?” Fribourg asked.

“I am not trading people,” Jon said.

“You’re getting tired. I don’t think you can hold that shield much longer,” Fribourg said.

Stacey gripped Jon's dick and stroked it and the shield lit up, re-energized.

"Nice!" Fribourg said. "You appear to be in good hands. Just out of curiosity, how did you take over the computer system?"

"Trade secret," Jon said.

"Oh, we're family!" Fribourg said. "Was it a retina scan?"

"He fucked me," the Enchantress said, no longer in June mode. "Like I am going to fuck you the moment the shields are down."

Fribourg looked concerned. "I don't think you're going fuck me the way he fucked you."

"You fucked her but can't fuck me?" Stacey asked.

"I fucked you," Jon said.

"Well, fuck me again," Stacey said.

"You can't be this desperate," Jon said.

"I went a full week without. I have got to make up," Stacey said.

"Makeup sex?" Fribourg asked.

Toto said something.

"Down boy," Fribourg said. "You're mine, not hers."

"Lower the shield and let me kill him," Dorothy said.

"Or me," Wilma said.

"We can't kill people," Jon, and surprisingly, or maybe not too surprisingly, Snow said.

She smiled at Jon.

"The shield is waning again," Dorothy said.

Stacey went to her knees and used her mouth and her hands.

"Just don't make him cum," the Enchantress said.

"You're asking the girl Jonesing for sperm not to make him cum once he's already in her mouth?" Dorothy asked.

"We are so screwed," Snow said.

"So, we're at an impasse, and I have places to be, and I really can't wait to see how long you can last. Let's go, Toto," Fribourg said.

As they walked towards the ship, Wilma and Dorothy argued for him to drop his shield.

"They're getting away!" Dorothy said.

"I can't let you kill him," Jon said.

“But he’s evil!” Wilma said.

“He’s going to fuck your girl,” Dorothy pointed out. “Surely you’re human to care about that.”

Jon sucked air through tight lips, trying not to come.

“That’s it, just let it happen,” Dorothy said.

“It’s his father,” the Enchantress said. “He can’t let you kill his father.”

“Adam Sandler is your father?” Stacey asked, looking up at him.

“Don’t stop now!” Wilma said, pushing Stacey head back onto Jon’s crotch.

Dorothy pushed Snow to her knees to help Stacey.

“That isn’t Adam,” Jon said.

“How can he be your father, he is like the same age as you?” Dorothy asked.

“It’s complicated,” Jon said.

“Actually, relativity could explain it if he was using a ship that merely approached the speed of light, or if he passed near a singularity, or if he was frozen and revived after an appropriate amount of time,” Wilma began.

“They’re getting away,” Dorothy said.

Fribourg waved before pushing Loxy up the ramp. The ramp raised. A moment later, the ship rose, the landing struts went up, and the ship proceeded down the exit tunnel. It departed at such a quick pace, that the exhaust knocked all the robots down. Jon came exactly as the ship blasted out of the far side of the tunnel. Jon nearly collapsed as the shield faded. Snow was complaining something was in her eye and Stacey began licking her eye. Dorothy and Wilma began firing at the recovering robots, so technically, his team fired first. As the robots opened fired, Jon was securing his pants. The nearest robot took the full ammo clip from Dorothy’s rifle, but it didn’t stop it. Only Wilma’s laser had any affect, and only at close range. Jon immediately went towards the next nearest target, lightsaber blaring. The fight was on. Dorothy emptied another ammo clip into one of the robots, going for the eyes, and it only slowed it down. Right before the robot could fire, Stacey’s whip pulled its weapon away. Dorothy caught it, and shot the robot with its own weapon. The enchantress raised two robots and rammed them together with magic. Snow covered her ears and got on her knees asking for the violence to stop. She picked up her apple and threw it, and it went off like a grenade, throwing three robots and knocking over crates. She said a bad word, but it couldn’t hear it over the explosion, but if you

could read lip, it looked a lot like she had said ‘truck.’ The last robot, naturally, was the boss, and it had its own lightsaber, and so the girls stood around, waiting for Jon to finish.

“Would you like some help?” the Enchantress asked.

“I have to ask?!” Jon said, breathlessly.

The Enchantress grabbed the boss robot up with magic and Dorothy and Wilma both pummeled it with lasers and blaster fire. It clattered dead to the floor. Jon went to his knees, exhausted. The girls gathered around him.

“You let them get away,” Dorothy said.

“Oh, are you hurt?” Snow asked.

“Can we have proper sex now?” Stacey asked.

“I can track the ship if you would like to pursue,” the Enchantress said.

“Why would he want to do that?” Dorothy said. “He was too cowardly to do what needed to be done in the first place. Now, this Loxy chick is fucked, and it’s all your fault.”

Jon didn’t look to Dorothy, simply nodded to the Enchantress. “Bring up the other ship, please,” he said, and proceeded to the nearest Servitor, the Boss they had just deactivated. He touched it with a gentleness reserved for teddy bears. “Thank you for your service. You performed your role and satisfied all functional requirements. If you would like to be healed, and returned, come back. If not, may the star bones you held return from where they were borrowed.”

The ‘Boss’ robot disappeared, dissolving like a ghost, and rising like smoke. Jon did this ritual for each of the ‘robots’ and only two repaired themselves, standing up and waiting for direction. Of the two, Jon granted one of them more intelligence. They resumed their patrolling of the hangar deck.

“You fixed the enemy?” Dorothy asked.

As the last servitor faded away under his prayer touch, looking off into space, Jon answered by nodding. He got up and faced Dorothy. “There is no enemy. There is only people.”

“They are robots, right?” Wilma asked.

“Robots, servitors, partials, egregore, golems, and a thousand other names,” Jon said.

“They are made of soul stuff, from consciousness, from coins tossed into wishing wells.”

“They tried to kill us,” Dorothy said.

“Dorothy,” Jon said gently. “You should know better than any, having traveled to Oz and back, that everything is alive. Every rock, every grass, even the yellow brick road shine its

essence and performs a duty. And most things, aren't what they seem. The same people we meet here are in the other worlds, and though killing someone here may end the conflict here, we still have to deal with them. All killing does is postpone the conflict at best, at worst, puts it in our head permanently."

"Postponing this conflict just got your girlfriend killed and raped," Dorothy said. "If she is lucky, in that order."

"Maybe," Jon said. "And maybe I should have dropped the shields and let what happens happen. Maybe we would have won. Maybe you would have shot the robot holding a blaster to her head before it killed her. Maybe these robots were too stupid to shoot straight and they couldn't have hit the broad side of a barn and we were safe. They were originally made stupid, even given stupid comical voices, to decrease the perceived level of horror of violence. They're just comical, mechanical things and funny to hit with a hammer. You're pretty capable, you would probably have live. Wilma and the Enchantress would probably live. But what about Snow and Stacey? Snow doesn't want to fight, she wants peace and love, and Stacey, well in her present state, she can only think of getting a piece and love. Were you ready to put their lives on the line? I wasn't. I just met you guys, and from my perspective, you're children. You just woke up to this world and don't have fucking clue. Do you think Toto deserve to die? Cause he would have needed to be one of the top five targets."

"He's a slave," the Enchantress said, becoming June right before their eyes.

"Yep, he is magically bound to Fribourg, and killing Fribourg would probably result in Toto going berserk and killing everyone or needing to be killed. Ever seen a Wookie in berserk mode?"

"He's not a Wookie," Snow said.

"Oh, yeah, he was," June and Jon said. Jon continued: "You can call a duck big foot all you want, but it's still a duck."

"And that man was a snake, and on a farm, we kill snakes," Dorothy said.

"It's okay to kill snakes," Snow said.

"No, it's not," Jon said. "They play an important role in the ecology of any habitat. If they didn't serve, they would cease to exist."

"So, you're saying you chose us, strangers, over your friend?" Dorothy asked.

“This is not classic Disney. I am not that hero. Loxy is not a defenseless, damsel in distress. She is more powerful than I. She has been practicing magic longer than I. If she is bound, it is because she is playing the long game, just like I am. She doesn’t need saving. If anyone needs saving, it is Fribourg. He can’t fuck her without it melting his frigid heart. Being with her intimately, hell, just being around her, changes you, and he knows it. Just having her on his ship is likely to rock his entire world. He can’t touch her or harm her without her permission,” Jon said.

“That sounds like a cop out,” Dorothy said.

“A cop out? How is recognizing her own agency a cop out? Even if she and I were married, I don’t own her. She isn’t property. But even if you ascribe to that philosophy, no one owns anything. If I die, and were able to come back as a ghost, I would see other people using my stuff and fucking my wife. None of us own anything, not even the atoms that sift through our bodies. We merely borrow and return. We borrow and return with love and gratitude. Anything else is not love. Holding on, hoarding, clinging, claiming, is not love. People are free. Fribourg is free. And if there is another ship, I am going to pursue, because I am also free and able and willing to interfere. If Loxy hasn’t freed herself, maybe I will do what I can to help, but I am not going to kill a sentient being unless I absolutely have to.”

“And you expect me to abide by this all life is sacred bullshit while I am with you?” Dorothy asked.

“You’re angry,” Jon said. “Not sure why. It’s not like Loxy was your friend.”

“Hell, yeah, I am angry. Loxy doesn’t have to be my friend for me to not want her to get raped. No one deserves that,” Dorothy said.

“Were you raped?” Jon asked, directly but with gentleness.

“Oh, fuck you, this is not about me, and you been pushing fucking boundaries sense you got here, kissing and groping and fucking everything and everyone, like this is just a fun game and no one gets hurt, because you live in a magical, comedy world where girls secretly like to get tied up and molested, as if this is some grand movie, but that is a real train coming down the fucking track,” Dorothy said.

“Yeah,” Jon agreed to his own complicity to the world. “Are you stuck on the track?”

Dorothy pulled one of the revolvers out and put it to Jon’s head.

Wilma put her hand on her weapon and June brought her hands up, changing back into the Enchantress. Jon subtly motioned them not to intervene. Snow covered her mouth, turned into Stacey, who embraced her and held her head to her shoulder.

“I will fucking end you and your entire family, you worthless, piece of lion shit,” Dorothy said.

“Will killing me end your pain?” Jon asked.

“Maybe!” Dorothy said.

“Then pull the trigger,” Jon said.

“You want to die?!” Dorothy said.

“I want to end your pain,” Jon said.

“You don’t know jack about pain!” Dorothy said.

“You’re right. I don’t understand what’s going on here at all, I don’t have clue what’s going on with you, but I don’t think you’re responding to the present. You have time traveled, and if killing me makes it right, do it. But before you do, consider, if you’re wrong, you’re still going to have that thing inside you, and you can’t fight it, and you can’t run from it, because it in you, part of you, and the only option left when the fighting is done and the running is done is love,” Jon said.

“There is no love!” Dorothy said. “Parents die, you get farmed out to family and forced to work. Traveling salesmen and fortune tellers promise you an out and fuck you in their trailers and send you back to the farm or fuck you and say they will take you with them but then disappear and the evil bitch down the street comes at you aggressively and wonders why the dog bit her and she becomes the victim and my dog has to die and my uncle and the farm hands fuck me on the side between chores and the tornadoes that wipe out your crop and drop you off in a world of midgets who molest you while you’re sleeping and the fucking fairy witches who send you off with stolen property to see a wizard who wants you to go and kill another witch before he can help you only to discover, he doesn’t have any fucking magic, and you get fucked by scarecrows, lions, tigers, and bears, and flying monkeys and there is no end to all the fucking, and so, yeah, I fucking ended West because, why not?! The whole fucking world is just... ahhh fucked!”

Dorothy pulled the hammer back. Jon met the pressure of the barrel against his forehead with more pressure, guaranteeing she wouldn’t miss.

“I am sorry all these things happened to you,” Jon said. “I hope you find peace.”

Dorothy’s hand began to tremble.

“There is no peace. There is no heaven. No magical, place over the rainbow where troubles melt like lemon drops,” Dorothy said.

“I could take you somewhere,” Jon said.

“Yeah, that’s exactly what the fortune teller said,” Dorothy said. “No one delivers. No one keeps their promises.”

“Do you?” Jon asked.

“How fucking dare you?!” Dorothy said.

“If you are the girl that keeps promises, then you know for a fact that there is one person who is true, who is doing the best they can, trying to live kindly in a harsh, black and white world that should for all rights be amazingly in color,” Jon said. “And if you can grant that there is one person, out of all the trillions and trillions of stars, there must be another. Give me a chance.”

“So that you can fuck me to?” Dorothy asked.

“If I do, you can put a bullet in my head,” Jon said.

“I will! Don’t think I won’t,” Dorothy said.

“Good for you,” Jon said.

Dorothy holstered the gun. The scene did not end with crying or hugs. She just holstered the gun. Then she turned an unloaded the gun on an upturned crate and then threw the gun at the crate. There was silence for a moment. Wilma relaxed her hand, but kept it resting on the weapon. June returned. Then, surprisingly, Dorothy released her belt dropping her revolvers to the ground.

“Thank you,” Jon said.

She then picked up the blaster rifle she had dropped. “I need more of these kinds of weapons. Bullets are useless here.”

Chapter 15

Julie woke, alone, disoriented, and with a smile on her face. She touched her lips, pulled down on them, as if to put them back in their normal position. Then she got up, dressed, and headed for the kitchen. Her mom was at the kitchen table drinking coffee, eating buttered toast, and Jon was sitting next to her, coffee set before him, reading a paper. It was not clear if mom was staring out into space, or looking at Jon. Jon was singing a song, Henry the 8th.

“Why are you still here?” Julie asked.

“I live here,” her mother said, coming out of her day dream.

“Not you,” Julie said.

“What?”

Jon lowered the paper, smiled, and started a new round of the Henry song.

“You don’t hear that?” Julie asked.

“I hear everything. And I really thought you were going to be in a better mood this morning after all that pillow humping you did last,” mom said. She pointed to the coffee. “Have some coffee.”

Mom pushed the coffee in front of Jon as towards her spot where she would sit and drink.

“I don’t want coffee,” Julie said.

“You always drink coffee,” mom said. “I swear, if you don’t find a boyfriend soon, I am going to hire someone to put you in better mood.”

“Sex is not the answer to everything!” Julie said.

“Yeah it is,” mom and Jon said together. Mom continued, picking up her toast. “Like butter on toast. It just makes the world go down a little easier.”

“I am going to work,” Julie said.

Julie found her purse and headed for the door. Jon followed, taking the coffee. The cup and coffee remained behind, but a duplicate of the cup went with him. He was surprised by how 80’s the world looked. Sure, he knew it was the 80’s based on the paper he had been reading, but this just looked 80’s. He got in the passenger side.

“Get out,” Julie said.

“Can’t do that. You and I are a team until you complete your wishes,” Jon said.

“Fuck that, get out,” Julie said.

“Can’t make me,” Jon said, leaning back. He started singing again.

“Stop singing that,” Julie snapped. “Why are you singing that?”

“You will so appreciate this 8 years from now,” Jon said.

“UGH!” Julie said. She started the car and put it in drive.

“You really should be nicer to your mom. After all, you’re living with her,” Jon said.

“She’s living with me! It’s my home. I pay the bills,” Julie said, pointing over the steering wheel. As if making a point. “She’s lucky she isn’t on the streets after all the crap she has pulled.”

“Sorry,” Jon said. “It was none of my business. It’s just, she seem nice. She is trying.”

“You fucked my mom?!” Julie said.

“I did not fuck your mom,” Jon said.

“But you were fucking hovering over her like a ghost?!” Julie said.

“I was not hovering. I was reading the paper,” Jon said.

“But you would fuck her,” Julie said.

“Of course I would. She is a nice woman. Kind of curvy. You could buy her some dentures and she would have a great smile,” Jon said.

“Or, maybe if she stopped doing drugs she could buy her own damn teeth,” Julie said.

Jon mused. “Then again, a woman without teeth also has its own appeal.”

“You are fucking sick. Why do I get the sick Jinn?” Julie asked.

“You know, I Dream of Jeannie really painted an unrealistic picture of the Jinn world,” Jon said. “Most Jinns are not just nice, cute women who want nothing more than to serve their masters and make them happy. And it was absolutely insane that the entire premise of the show was about the Major trying to contain her, and put her back in the bottle. He was a fucking astronaut and he couldn’t figure out that she could take him further than NASA ever would? Anyway, beside the point. Most Jinns would have wasted your wishes, raped you, ate your big toe, and left you possessed with a baby Jinn. Not because they’re evil per say, but the ones you find in lamps and bottles are usually in there because they pissed someone off or they broke a law and were encapsulated or imprisoned to pay off Karma. When a human finds them, seemingly by accident, they earn an opportunity to repay some karma and get out of jail, but unfortunately, incarcerating people has never been an effective way to change people. It usually makes people worse, hence the high rates of recidivism. Interesting how humans and Jinns share

that. We both think locking folks up will make them better, but generally when you put people in cages, they get worse. And if you put others in the cages with them, they get worse in groups, smarter, more devious, because that is survival of the fittest, they get preyed on, and then when they get out, you have smarter, more manipulative criminal.”

“They deserve what they get,” Julie said.

“Really? What if half of the people in prison are there because they were already wounded people? What if many of them were suffering from mental illness? Wouldn’t you want to treat a person and help them get better as opposed to locking them up? Don’t you want to build society, as opposed to just throwing people away?” Jon asked.

“If they’re mentally ill, shoot them in the head,” Julie said. “And being wounded because your parents neglected you or abused you, or because you were poor and the environment made you bad, is not an excuse. You don’t do bad things to people just because someone did bad things to you.”

“Interesting,” Jon said.

“What?” Julie said.

“I just thought you would be more compassionate if you understood,” Jon said.

“Why? Because I am fat I need to be happier and more loving?” Julie said.

Jon meditated over his coffee, looking at her. “Like Jinn, you’re trapped in a body you don’t like,” he said. “Has being in a place you don’t want to be helped you, or added to your weight?”

“Fuck you,” Julie said.

“Oh, you know I will. Anytime, anyplace,” Jon said.

“Fucking shut up I can’t hear myself think!” Julie snapped, grabbing the steering wheel and shaking her whole body.

Jon was quiet the rest of the way to work. She turned the radio on and up full volume, which bothered him, one because of the volume, but also because she had claimed she wanted to hear herself think, but couldn’t go one full minute of silent before she had to drown her inner world out. It turned out she worked as an auctioneer at a warehouse. Jon followed her in, trying not to be conspicuous and she did her best to ignore him. She was met by a glamorous supermodel, long blond hair, blue eyes, big tits, and dressed in a tight, one piece silvery body suit that cut off at her knee, like pre-romper, and she had nude hose covering her legs. Jon was happy

to be invisible, checking out the cleavage and touching to see if they were real, and when 'Barbie' wasn't looking, Julie pointed at him warningly.

"Oh, and I forgot," Barbie said. "Boss wants to see you as soon as you get in."

Julie proceeded to her boss' office and Jon followed. The boss didn't bother to look up as she came in, just motioned for her to have a seat in front of his desk. It didn't take much for Jon to recognize him.

"No, fucking way," Jon said.

Fribourg finished writing his note, looked up at Julie and smiled, a deceptively friendly, warm smile.

"Good morning, Julie," Fribourg said. "How are you today?"

"What do you want?" Julie asked.

"Always straight to business," Fribourg said. "Just one of the many reasons I love you. So, one of the Manson ticket items is missing." He made a pretense of looking at a list. "An old oil lamp. Have you seen it?"

"I am sure I have seen it. I examine everything," Julie said.

"Yeah, well, I want it back," Fribourg said. "Apparently, the estate made a mistake and they don't want me selling it."

"I don't know where it is," Julie said.

Jon sat down in the chair next to her. She wanted him silent, he would honor it. Fribourg smiled, got up, came around the desk, leaned/sat on his desk, one leg free of the ground, his hands on his knees.

"Here's the thing," Fribourg said. "I don't like you. You're absolutely hideous to look at, and you're not even a nice person. But you are the best damn auctioneer I have ever employed. You sell crap that I can't even push. You sell stuff that even when I put Barbie next to the item, she doesn't make the item more attractive. Between the two of you, though, you girls rock. If I could give Barbie your intellect and skills, but retain her beauty and niceness, she would fucking rule the world. But that's just dream land. I have to deal with reality. And so do you. No one else is going to hire you and pay you what I pay you. All I want is the lamp back."

"Well, maybe you should ask Barbie," Julie said. "Or your maid, or your driver, or the janitor."

Fribourg smiled pleasantly. "I get it. You're embarrassed. I caught you. I have looked the other way when little trinkets have gone missing, but I have some pressure to get this item back. That is going to happen."

"I don't have it," Julie lied.

Fribourg nodded. "Too bad," he said. "So, here's what I need to happen. By the end of the week, I need that item back in the cage. If it's not, you will be fired."

"That's not fair," Julie said.

Fribourg laughed. "What are you? Like twelve?"

"Did you threaten to fire the whole staff or just me?" Julie asked.

"You're the only one here with the eye for value," Fribourg said.

Julie leaned forward. "Let me tell you what's going to happen. You're going to get off my fucking back and forget this matter, or your wife is going to get an anonymous letter filled with pictures of you fucking Barbie on your desk here," she said.

Fribourg didn't immediately react; he gave no evidence of what was going on his head. The edge of his lips began to go up. Julie's lips began to mirror his. He laughed. Julie smiled. He slapped his knees and laughed harder. Julie laughed. They both laughed, escalating in laughter. And then, out of nowhere, he slugged her, hitting her so hard that she went down and to the floor and was out cold. When she woke up, she found herself elaborately tied, unable to move, and unable to speak, due to the fact that she was gagged. She was laying on a large sheet of plastic, in the very office where she had been 'KO.' Her eyes opened and she saw Jon lying beside her. He gave her a sympathetic smile.

Fribourg was negotiating with someone on the phone. "Really? That's like full price? You're my brother. What do you mean I still owe you? You're always bringing up the past. No, really, I need your help here. I need you to get rid of a package for me, but only after you discover where the pictures are. Of course there are pictures. No I haven't seen the pictures, but why would anyone say they have pictures if they didn't have pictures. You can't threaten people with nothing. OMG, why are you bringing dad into this? Dad doesn't need to know about this. If you tell dad, he'll want to fuck both our wives as payment. What do you mean tell my wife? Are you kidding? Did you tell your wife we share everything? Why do you think I keep Barbie? I need something to appease dad if he ever comes by. You're the one that brought him up! All I

want is a little help containing this problem. Okay, okay. I will pay you what you're asking. Just get over here. Because I can't put her in the van by myself. I got to go, someone is here. Bye."

Fribourg hung the rotary phone up, ran to the door, and opened it just enough to see Barbie. She seemed suspicious.

"Are you fucking someone else?" Barbie asked.

"Why would you think that?" Fribourg said.

"You been in there a long time," Barbie said.

"Well, I've been working, dear," Fribourg said.

Barbie softened and touched his face. "I am sorry, I just get so jealous thinking you're screwing around on me."

"Oh, I would never screw around on you, even with my wife," Fribourg said.

"Let me in, make love to me," Barbie said.

Fribourg paused. "Remember that game I told you we would have to play sometimes?"

"Yeah," Barbie said.

"Wait here," Fribourg said.

Fribourg closed the door, ran across the room, grabbed a blindfold from his 'emergency, let's kill someone box,' ran back to the door, and revealed the blindfold to Barbie. She smiled. He put it on her, led her in, and then offered her some candy.

"Oh, I love the candy," Barbie said, letting it melt under her tongue.

Fribourg took her to the floor and made love to her, not too far from where Julie lay on plastic. Jon sat up to watch. Julie gave Jon an angry look. He shrugged. She tried moaning through the gag. Fribourg gave her a cross look, and held a finger to his mouth as he rocked between Barbie's legs, telling her to be quiet.

"What was that?" Barbie asked.

"It's just how you make me feel," Fribourg said, covering fast.

"Oh, yeah, baby, moan like a stuffed girl for me, again," Barbie said. "Oh, I think the candy's kicking in... OMG. Oh, the lights.... I am coming baby."

Julie started laughing, gabbing at Fribourg and things that weren't there, like bubbles or fairies. When Fribourg finished he was full tight, stretched out, head up, eyes closed, shaking and groaning, and it was not quite the image Jon wanted of his dad in his head. Simultaneously, there was knocking at the door. Fribourg stood, hurriedly pulled up his pants, ran to the door, but the

door was opening even as he was struggling to secure his pants. And there was his father and his brother entering the room. Father was wearing a suit, a top hat, and a cane. His brother was dressed casually, jeans and a flannel shirt, a crazy ZZ top beard. Fribourg's mouth fell open as dad surveyed the room.

"OMG," Jon said, whispering at Julie. "My grandfather is Christopher Walkens! I mean, he's a bit creepy, but I love his movies. Especially 'Brainstorm.' OMG, it would be like so cool if Natalie was my grandmother. Oh, wait. Given the fantasies I have had of her, probably not so cool, but, oh what the hell, Christopher Walkens is grandfather, Adam is my father, and my uncle is Jim Cary. This is like the best family reunion ever."

Julie didn't know how to respond, even her eyes seemed wild and confused.

"You got two girls here, and you haven't offered us one," Christopher said, leaning into his cane. "Are you not sharing?"

"Um, dad?!" Fribourg said. "You brought dad."

"Well, I was dropping all kinds a hints that he was visiting, but do you listen, no. It's all about you," Jim said.

"Hints? What hints?" Fribourg asked.

Barbie shrieked, a delightful laugh, as she continued to grab at fairies. "Yeah, keep it coming," she giggled. "Oh, baby, baby..."

"I don't like what I am hearing, boys," Christopher said, tapping his cane lightly. "It's bad enough I suspect you're keeping things from me, but I am detecting some unresolved family discord here. We're family, we share, we help each other. That's it."

"Yes, father," both Fribourg and Jim said.

"Now, look at how clean shaven your brother is. Hygiene is important, son. Especially if you want to get women like that," Christopher said, pointing to Barbie.

"He gets women like that cause he gives them candy," Jim said, crossing his arms.

"So, give 'em candy," Christopher said. "Especially the fat one. It will help with the weight thing. So, Loci here says you got a problem. I get the sense this little lady on the plastic is the problem? What kind of problem can she be?"

"She took pictures of me and Barbie and is threatening to tell my wife," Fribourg said.

Christopher thought about it and then started laughing. "Well, you dumb piece of shit, maybe you should lock the door. Hell, Loci and I just barged right in on you. But here's an idea.

Tell your wife you're fucking around, and then no one can blackmail you. How about that, eh? Put it in your marriage contract that you're a man, and you will fuck who you want to fuck, when you want to fuck, and you if you want her to fuck someone, she fucks someone, starting with dad, and then maybe your brother; if he shaves that damn beard off. But we don't just kill women folks because they're actually smarter than you and tried to get some leverage. That's on you, dumbass. Take it as a lesson and move on. Now, let me see these pictures she took of you and Barbie. Especially the ones with Barbie."

"How much candy did you give her?" Loci asked.

"Just a tab," Fribourg said. "And I don't have the pictures."

"OMG, son, you're killing me. How do you know she actually took pictures?" Christopher asked.

"I don't. But it doesn't matter. She threatened me," Fribourg said.

"So?" Christopher asked.

"I don't like being threatened. And she stole from me!" Fribourg said.

"Oh, well, stealing is another matter," Christopher said. "We can't have people stealing from us. We're too generous a family for people to be stealing. We share. They share. That's how it works. What did she steal?"

"Do we really have to go through all of this?" Fribourg said.

"You wanted help with a problem. I think we should know the extent to which we are committing ourselves," Christopher said.

"We're family!" Fribourg said, dramatically.

"Ah, now you want to use that card," Christopher said. He pondered. "What are the rules about cleaning?"

"No children, no virgins," Loci and Fribourg said together.

"Is she a virgin?" Christopher asked.

Loci and Fribourg laughed. "Look at her," Fribourg said.

"I am. I like a little meat on a woman. Especially meat and curbs," Christopher said. "I love a little base with my treble. Ha, haha! But, seriously, is she?"

"I don't know. She probably got a sympathy fuck somewhere," Fribourg said.

"Can't go on probably. You'll have to fuck her," Christopher said.

"Why do I have to fuck her?" Fribourg demanded.

“She’s your problem,” Loci said, grinning.

“I can’t get it up for her,” Fribourg said.

“Your brother will help you,” Christopher said.

“What?” Loci asked.

“What what?!” Christopher said. “Help your brother get it up- what?!”

“How?”

“Are you the dumb one or the dumber one?” Christopher demanded.

“I am neither. And I am also not a fluffer!” Loci snapped.

“We’re family, if I say you’re a fluffer, you are a fluffer,” Christopher said. “Now, fluff away.”

“What if I do Barbie again, and then at last second I pull out, run over to Julie, stick in and hope to come,” Fribourg asked.

“No,” Christopher said. “We’re not criminals. We have rules. And one is, we don’t kill children, and we don’t kill virgins. And just sticking it in isn’t proper. You got to work it, make her cum. Give her good experience. Make her actually think you want her.”

“No one wants her,” Fribourg said.

“Then cut her free,” Christopher said.

“Fuck me,” Fribourg said, giving an evil eye to his brother.

Loci seemed amused. Christopher smacked the back of his head. “Get down there and help him.”

“Why me?!” Loci asked.

“Because, I am going to be busy with Barbie. Now, I expect to hear her moaning before I finish, am I clear?” Christopher said.

निर्मित

Jon found himself in a new world. It was vast meadow, a perfect lawn that perhaps might be a golf course, minus the sand traps. The sky was blue, the grass was green, the sunlight was golden and diffused, like almost in a dream. Pastel flowers were everywhere, only, they weren’t regular flowers. They were balloons. Touching the stem that tethered them to the mother plant released

them, sending them adrift. If they popped, they rained down rainbow, glitter stars as seeds. A woman lay in the fetal position on the grass. He approached her, carefully.

“Are you okay?” Jon asked.

The girls sniffed. “I hate you.”

Jon was baffled. She turned and lay on her back and he recognized her.

“Drew Barrymore?” Jon asked.

“My name is Julie!” Julie snapped.

“Oh,” Jon said. So, this is what Julie would look like without all that weight makeup she was wearing. This, was her ideal self. “Ohhhh. That makes sense. Nice Wonderland.”

“What are you talking about?” Julie asked, sitting up. She blinked as if just seeing for the first time.

“Where am I?” she asked.

“Well, that’s a great question,” Jon said.

“Am I dead?” Julie asked.

Jon thought about it. “Do you feel dead?”

“Just answer the question! God, why are you so difficult?” Julie demanded.

“If you can ask the question, you’re not dead,” Jon said. “But, I understand. No, you’re not dead there. Not yet. But you are experiencing trauma, and sufficient fear, that you went somewhere. Here, to be precise.”

“Where is here?” Julie said.

“It’s really kind of difficult to place, spatially, temporally,” Jon said, sitting down next to her. In doing so, he brushed a stem and set a balloon flower a drift. “Because there is no place, there is no time, there is only an endless sea of now, but you may not be ready for that. But, this place isn’t so bad. I was really thinking your world would be dark, but, this is quite beautiful.”

“It feels like a dream,” Julie said.

“It does,” Jon agreed. “It is. It isn’t. It’s the place between.”

“Between?” Julie asked.

“Yeah, the between place. Between waking and dreaming, we pass through this place, but we don’t remember it in the waking world and the dreaming world, because both waking and dreaming is actually dreaming, and only the between place is real.”

“I am so confused,” Julie said.

“Well, think of it this way,” Jon said. “Pretend you’re an actress.”

“I am not an actress!”

“That’s why I said pretend,” Jon said.

“I am not beautiful enough,” Julie protested.

“Oh, please, watch more BBC. It’s not about American beauty, it’s about talent,” Jon said. “Anyway, we are pretending. You are an actress. You have been in at least a dozen very successful movies. Even a couple sequels, so you have visited a character more than once. Are you the characters you have played? No. But, neither are you Julie. That, too, is a character. This place is your true place. Most people don’t discover their true self until they die. Some people find it during trauma. I found my place when I was a child, but didn’t really use it for anything except rescuing squirrels until about a year ago when I discovered that I have a lot more power than I ever imagined. You do, too. We all do.”

“Power?” Julie asked. “Like, the ability to make wishes come true?”

“Exactly like wishes,” Jon said.

“Well, you owe me two!” Julie snapped.

Jon nodded. “We should really discuss this matter...”

“I wish Fribourg and his family were dead,” Julie wished.

“Granted,” Jon said.

Julie waited for the change. It didn’t occur. “I am still here. You’re still here.”

“Yeah,” Jon said.

“But, my wish came true, right?” Julie asked.

“Yep, they died. Will die. Are dying. That’s why I really wanted to talk it through with you,” Jon said. “You can’t kill people. We’re all dead and all alive all the time, because there is no time, there is no space, it’s more like a dream, and we’re interacting in the dreams, mostly... Sometimes, what we think is others is really ourselves pretending to be others, but there is definitely others, and the better you get at interacting with others, the less you interact with yourself, oh, I am loosing you.”

“You knew this and you let me waste another wish?!” Julie demanded. “God, I wish I never met you.”

“Granted,” Jon said.

Jon was never sitting there. Loxy was sitting there.

“But you’re still here?!” Julie said, dramatically.

“It’s complicated,” Loxy assured her. “You now have to make a decision. You see that bridge over there?”

Julie stood up to look at the bridge. There were people on the other side. There was a city in the background. It looked like Emerald City from the Wizard of Oz, and the road leading to the bridge was made of gold. The people looked familiar.

“Is that my grandmother?” Julie asked.

“You can go meet them, but if you cross the bridge, you can’t go back,” Loxy said.

“Go back?” Julie said, already forgetting.

“It seems like you have already made a decision,” Loxy said.

Julie turned back to her. “Do I know you?”

“I am a friend of a friend of yours, a friend you have never met,” Loxy said.

“How can he be my friend if I have never met him?” Julie asked.

“It’s complicated,” Loxy said.

“May I meet this friend?” Julie asked.

“He would really like that,” Loxy assured her.

Julie turned to the bridge. “Is he over there?”

“Not yet. He and I have a lot more work ahead of us before we can join you over there,” Loxy said.

Julie turned and hugged Loxy. “Thank you for bringing me here.”

“Travel Light,” Loxy said.

Julie turned and ran towards the bridge, like a child running through the front yard of a home she had been away from far too long. Balloons rose behind her as she swept by them, arms out playfully. Shiny, sparkly seed like stars rained down. She did not look back as she ran across the bridge to be met by family. A family of ages.

Chapter 16

Loxy was wearing a safari outfit, Kaki shorts and shirt, knee high white socks, boots, and even a canvas covered pith helmet, when she arrived for breakfast. The men rose, and she motioned them to sit. Sylvia, Helena, and Midori had become a bit of a click and sat at their end of the table. Judy had remained in her room and nothing Truest could do could bring her out. Truest sat near Samuel. Jon, Fyodor, and Immanuel sat on the other side of the table, heavy into their discussion. Timothy was next to Jon, not participating. William was reading, and every now and then would say, "I didn't write that. How could they get this wrong?!"

The travelers had been on the river for four days and though they were feeling renewed with every moment, noticeable improved physical health, there was also a growing wanting, perhaps for their old friends and family, for cities and familiar places. The river offered none of that. The air was easier on them, as it had greater oxygen content than what they had experienced in their lives. Consequently, things were bigger. Trees were bigger. Insects were scary bigger, but surprisingly, none molested the humans. It was almost as if there was invisible boundary that the insects respected.

Loxy sat across from Jon, tuning into their ongoing discussion about the Universe and God.

"What a heavy conversation for breakfast," Loxy said.

"They have been at all night," Sylvia said.

Loxy nodded and focused on her charge. "And how are you this morning, Timothy?" Loxy asked.

"Fuck you," Timothy managed.

"Ah, I see, still stuck," Loxy said.

Lemurs lined the river, as if curious about the Riverboat. They frolicked, they climbed, and they sang lemur songs. There were more lemur species here than had ever been noted. The previous day they had encountered giant lemurs and though they were extremely peaceful bunch, it had given the ladies a fright, and Fyodor and Kant were interested in hunting, which was quickly squashed. Though the giant lemurs were not equal to humans in sentience, they were comparable to that of the great apes, and when educated in how conversant Koko the Gorilla was, they were confronted with information that was very difficult for them to readily accept.

What they could accept was that one of the conditions for living on this planet was not killing animals for sport or food, and though killing for food was allowed, there were some animals that were never to be killed, and the giant lemur was one. Dolphins and whales were examples of others. This ensemble had become the reluctant test group, because there were groups of people in the stations, like Native Americans and Eskimos, and people from centuries past where killing to survive was just a fact of life that were going to struggle with this paradigm.

Samuel suddenly seemed perplex, as if listening to something that no one else heard.

“Do any of you hear that?” he asked, a better way than asking everyone else to be quiet. He paled, and stood as if there was an emergency. “Oh, dear God,” he said, rushing forward to confirm his fears. “Radiance! Reverse, full power.”

By now the others had joined him at forward rail. The waterfall really wasn’t discernable to them. Radiance appeared.

“There is no cause for alarm,” Radiance said, reassuringly. “I can stop are forward progress if that is your wish, but we can also continue downstream without worry.”

“By the sounds of it, that’s got to be a twenty foot drop?!” Clemens said.

“That’s pretty good,” Radiance said. “It’s seven meters.”

“What?” Clemens said.

“23 feet,” Immanuel said.

“Full reverse!” Clemens said.

Radiance took his hand. “Trust me,” Radiance asked. “I would not allow any harm to come to any of you.”

Clemens looked to Loxy. She nodded. Clemens took hold of the rail with both hands. As they drew closer to the fall, the others became a little more concerned. Loxy, Midori, Truest, and Jon showed no fear. Timothy remained in his chair, a little panicky, but only able to turn his eyes. Though he asked what was going on, no one paid him any mind. As the bow of the riverboat went out over the edge, it dipped a little, and Clemens muttered something under his breath. But the riverboat did nothing more than dip, and advanced out into air, completely free of the river, proceeding as easy as an air ship. The travelers rushed aft to take in the river, the view of the falls, and were completely amazed.

“I think I am going to faint,” Sylvia said. “But I would miss this view!”

They moved to the side and was so swept up by the fact they were flying and the sight of the fall that no one noticed that Timothy rose from his chair, went up behind Jon, and shoved him over the deck. Jon fell without making a sound, hit the paddle wheel, and then down to the river, where he disappeared into the waters. Loxy turned to see Timothy was up, smiled, and approached. His eyes seemed wild with fear.

“Timothy?” Loxy asked.

As Loxy was addressing Timothy, Judy ran up on deck, and was first met by Shakespeare. “We’re flying my dear!”

“Jon fell!” Judy announced. “We went right past my window.”

Everyone took inventory. Indeed, Jon was missing. They were aware of Loxy and Timothy, and suddenly, Jon arrived on the desk, a whirlwind of light and sparks. He moved his neck to and fro and popped a muscle.

“I didn’t do it,” Timothy said. And he collapsed to the deck.

निर्मित

Timothy was back in his chair. Radiance had been able to provide a holographic replay of the offense and they were both horrified by the event and amazed at the tech. But more than that Clemens was upset with Loxy’s response to the situation. The travelers were circled near the gang plank, and Clemens had his arms crossed and his foot planted, as if addressing a child.

“I am not allowing you to head off into the wilderness with Timothy alone,” Clemens said. “It’s dangerous out there, and he is either evil, or a reckless fool, and probably both.”

“Getting him alone is necessary to help him heal,” Loxy said.

“She’s going to kill me,” Timothy wailed. He wasn’t in the circle but close enough. “Don’t let her take me out there. She will leave me and feed me to the bears.”

“Why are you being so adamant?” Judy asked. “Because she is a female?”

“Oh, please,” Kant said. “We all know she is capable, probably more so than us.”

“Then why can’t she do as she pleases?” Judy asked. “I mean, we’re all sovereign so we can do what we want.”

“And what about Timothy? Is he sovereign? He can just get away with attempted murder?” Fyodor asked.

“I didn’t do it!” Timothy said. “I still can’t move my body.”

“Let’s say he is sovereign, what authority does she have to take Timothy out into the wilderness, and for what?” Fyodor asked.

“I am confused,” Sylvia said. “Are you for her or against her?”

“There is no legal structure here. No authority,” Kant said.

“Yeah there is,” Clemens said. “My boat, my rules. Loxy, maybe I am bias. I am truly affected by your beauty, your youth, and though I know you are capable, allowing you out there alone seems unreasonable. You don’t even have any gear.”

“She can summon anything she wants from the air,” Midori said.

“For now,” Fyodor said.

“What does that mean?” Midori asked.

“I do not wish to be dependent on the arbitrariness of God,” Fyodor said. “He favors us now, but one act of aggression, such as what happened, and God proves to be inconsistent and fickle, and favoring sides, as if watching us is nothing more than a sports match.”

“The mechanism in place here is neither God nor magic, but technology,” Jon tried to explain.

“And technology fails,” Kant said. “Usually at the least favorable time. She could be stranded out there with a homicidal maniac.”

“I didn’t do it!” Timothy persisted.

“What if he didn’t do it?” Helena said.

“My dear,” Clemens said, ever gently. “The devil made me do it didn’t work in the dark ages, it won’t work here.”

“I believe in things unseen,” Helen said. She looked to Jon. “You do, too.”

“Well, I do play Pokemon Go,” Jon said.

“Jon, this is serious,” Loxy said.

“I am serious,” Jon said. “And that was seriously funny.”

“You hear anyone laughing?” Loxy asked.

“The stars are laughing,” Jon said. Loxy gave him the look. He mused for a moment before surrendering. “Sorry. Somewhere out there, someone gets me.”

“I get you. It’s amusing. You’re timing sucks,” Loxy said. “Now, back on topic.”

Jon sighed, nodded, then gave his opinion. “Whether Timothy is speaking the truth at this moment or not is irrelevant. Even truth can be spoken manipulatively to avoid consequences. I don’t care if it was Timothy, an evil spirit possession, a tulpa possession, or a psychological manifestation of deeper impulses. Timothy is not a nice person, but he is a human being, and he is this way partly because of circumstances and partly because of choices. If there is any hope of altering his course and opening up new roads for him, it will come from a place of love. I know of no one better than Loxy to demonstrate that love. If she says a walk in the wilderness is what Timothy and she needs, then she will have my support.”

“He just tried to kill you, Sir!” Fyodor said. “You would let him go out there, with your woman, alone.”

“Yes,” Jon said.

“I am confused,” Clemens said. “I thought you love her.”

“I love her so much that I can’t find the words to express it,” Jon said. “Maybe if I had a thousand Shakespeare’s and a thousand years, I could approach something remotely akin to the feelings she provokes in me. Maybe I could discuss the many ways I feel I fail her. And yes, I feel fear, and possessiveness, but these things are not love. Love is allowing another to pursue their heart’s interest. The question before us isn’t do we let her go, but do we send her with love, or with protest.”

Loxy took Jon’s hand and squeezed it, beaming at him.

“I don’t want go!” Timothy said.

“Now, that part is problematic,” Jon said. “He doesn’t want to go.”

“Do you know anyone who wants to go to the dentist?” Loxy asked.

“I think when he pushed you over he forfeited his right to decide,” Truest said.

“This is why you shouldn’t have brought him out early,” Midori said. “He wasn’t ready yet.”

“We need to stop revisiting that and focus on the here and now,” Loxy said. “None of us are ever completely ready for what life has in store for us.”

“If you’re going, I would feel much better knowing you had hard supplies that can’t be reabsorbed back into the ether,” Kant said.

Loxy turned to Radiance. A backpack stuffed with gear arrived on the deck. “All the things a camping girl might want.”

“You expect her to carry that?” Clemens asked.

Loxy tested the weight. “Pff, I carried heavier up a mountain higher than Everest,” she said. Again, the men were impressed. “But, I will have Timothy’s chair carry it. I mean, no need to exhaust myself when we have a floating chair.”

“I am not going and you can’t make me,” Timothy said.

“Stand up and walk and we’ll discuss an alternative,” Loxy told him.

“I can’t walk!” Timothy snapped.

“Then I guess you’re going with me because your chair is slaved to me,” Loxy said.

“So this matter is settled?” Clemens said. “You’re going?”

“I am,” Loxy said.

“Are you sure I can’t go with you?” Truest asked.

Clemens face revealed he might die if another woman left his care, but he said nothing, having already lost the battle with Loxy.

“You’re needed here,” Loxy said.

“For what?” Truest asked. “This is just a vacation. Your work is serious. I could learn from you.”

“This is not just a vacation,” Loxy said. “At the river’s end, you will discover your next mission.”

“What’s at the rivers end?” Midori asked. “And why are you privy to knowledge I am not?”

“Go with love, sister,” Loxy said, touching Midori’s arm. “There is no contest between us.”

Loxy turned to see Jon securing the gear on the back of Timothy’s chair. He was pleading for them not to let her take him. They seemed completely unaffected by his plight. Only Helena touched his arm and sent him with blessing. Everyone hugged Loxy. She and Jon hugged last, and she kissed him.

“By the way, in case I forgot to say it earlier, I love you, too,” Loxy said.

“Have fun storming the castle,” Jon said.

“There’s a castle?” Sylvia asked.

“I should really introduce them to my core movies,” Jon whispered to Loxy.

“Or not,” Loxy said.

“Shakespeare will appreciate it, though,” Jon said.

“He might,” Loxy said.

“And I am curious to what would happen if you took the Matrix back in time and showed it to people in Judy’s time, would they understand it’s a movie, or will the special effects be so great they think it’s a documentary,” Jon said. “Or if they see the movie with CGI Judy, will they think she has been brought back to life.”

“I am sure there is a world exploring that very question,” Loxy said. Loxy stepped back and gave Jon the Vulcan peace sign. “Travel Light,” she said.

“Live long and prosper,” Jon gave the sign back.

निर्मित

After dinner a guitar was produced and Jon was encouraged to play. A rendition of the New Christy’s “This Old River Boat” proved to be a good choice. Judy declined singing, so Jon gave her a song inspired by her song, “The Rainbow Connection.” It kind of set up a nostalgic feeling, and was not helped that he followed it with “I am going to go back there someday,” which is kind of a sad song, by a sad character, Gonzo.

“Know anything peppy?” Sylvia asked.

“A drinking song, perhaps?” William said.

“Joy to the world by three dog night?” Jon asked. No one knew it of course, so he had to just give it to them. By the last chorus they were singing along. Any Beatles’ song should have been a success, but Judy actually called “Hello, hello,” a bit campy for her. Her comment made him wonder what would happen if he did go back in time and introduce songs by the Beatles as his songs; would they still be a hit because they were great songs, or did it require having the Beatles and the 50’s setting. “While my guitar gently weeps” again provoked strong emotions, they were hoping for something more upbeat.

“Do you only sad songs?” Helena asked.

“That’s not really sad,” Jon said, curious.

“Explain the tear drops from your guitar,” William said.

Jon gave the introduction to ‘Black Bird’ and they were like not another sad song.

“This is my favorite,” Jon lamented. He sighed. What song could he give them?

“Can you dance?” Judy asked.

“Not well,” Jon said.

Judy stood and offered her hand. Radiance took the guitar, but when she sang, there was a full orchestra. Judy requested a Big Band piece, and Jon and Judy danced, while the others clapped. Keeping up with Judy was impossible, she out performed him, and it was all he could do to keep in the game, and if it hadn't been so strenuous, he might have entertained teaching her some duets so they could perform some of his favorites with her. The fact that he was dancing with her at all, on a River Boat, under an unblemished canopy stars, while the eyes of night lemurs quietly reflected the gentle Riverboat lights back at them, a million eyes like stars curious about the human haunting, should have been all, but it's never all. The song ended with Judy in his arms. She was smiling. It seemed so sincere that he was convinced she wanted him and if no one else was there, he might have risked kissing her. Her smile dropped, she patted his cheek, and separated from him.

“Now, that's entertainment,” Judy said.

Radiance provided more music appropriate for dancing and everyone took the dance floor. Jon withdrew to the far side of the upper deck, leaned on the rail and looked back at the eyes turning to the Riverboat, and then fading as they continued down stream. How many worlds were out there, just beyond the light. There were a lot of eyes. He was so distracted by his thoughts that he was hardly aware that the music had died and people had wandered off to their next station, probably their quarters and sleep. Not all. Helena was hovering, and finally committed to intruding on his space. She pulled up alongside him.

“You okay?” Helena asked.

Jon nodded. “I am well, thank you. You?”

“I am alive,” Helena said.

There was a song there, but Jon only smiled. Helena leaned into the rail and stared out into the dark world, which really wasn't that dark. The stars, the fireflies, the radiant eyes all gave the world a dreamy feel.

“May I ask you a personal question?” Helena asked.

“Please,” Jon said.

“You're in love with Judy,” Helena said.

“Oh, yeah,” Jon admitted. No secret there.

“But you’re in a relationship with Loxy,” Helena said.

“How many people are in relationships with one person, while loving another?” Jon asked.

“Wow,” Helena said. “That seems profound somehow.”

“I think it’s just an honest reflection. We all love, and we all love all the time, and it would be dishonest to say that when love doesn’t pan out the way we hope or intend and we move on that we stop loving others, or the previous, or the first. It doesn’t diminish us to love more and better,” Jon said.

“Many would disagree, perhaps even say you loved them less because you loved someone else,” Helena said. “Or perhaps even fear of losing your love should the other suddenly realized what you offered was better or more genuine or your station had changed.”

“Yeah,” Jon agreed, not wanting to expound.

“Are people better at loving in your time?” Helena agreed.

“No, I suspect we are worse at it than any previous generation,” Jon said.

“Really?!” Helena asked.

“Never in the history of the world has there ever been a population that felt so entitled, that not only should we have love, but it should fit all our expectations. One person should fit all our needs, and should that person fail to meet that, in any one thing, they are discarded and the pursuit for the next begins. We are stuck in pursuit, both male and female afflicted with the sickness of Aneas, forging out in search of something that doesn’t exist,” Jon said. “Love has become a commodity, a form of entertainment, not about raising others. There is some raising of others, but it is delivered with an expectation of return, which is not love, but an investment. True love would not worry that the other might die or leave, but would simply cherish the moment, and should person go, you bow humbly because that is what that person needs at that time. The dance just goes on.”

“So, you don’t believe in commitment?” Helena said.

“Depends on what you mean. There was a time when people stayed together out of necessity. It was a means of survival. The wellbeing of family and children required a certain level of stability. How many relationships did women maintain without love only because their station or abilities couldn’t afford them better? I think now, in this time when everyone has equal access to wealth and education, to birth control, we will finally have the opportunity to discover

what true love is. When a human lives two hundred years, and love moves beyond the high school romance version of love, that's when we'll see acceptance, patience, and compassion.”

“Is that the relationship you and Loxy have?” Helena said.

“I have never known anyone as loving and compassionate and genuine as Loxy. She provokes health, understanding, and joy,” Jon said.

“But you would bed Judy?” Helena asked.

“Yes,” Jon admitted.

“And, Loxy is okay with that?” Helena asked.

“With me having sex? She encourages it. She has even arranged opportunities, and if Judy was so inclined, we would both go to her bed, together or as individuals,” Jon said. Jon could see Helena was struggling with understanding it. “Look, contrary to social beliefs, it is okay to have more than one partner, or even random one night stands. Society has tried to control this, probably more because women were considered commodities than people and so they were owned, the wedding band was a mark of being owned, and so anyone not abiding by rules were shamed into compliance. My entire life is filled with pain because I wanted to be in a box but couldn't stay in the box. Some of it was given to me by society, some by family, and some because of my own interest. Some of the best relationships I have ever had were one night stands. They afforded me more sense of adventure, fun, and moments of healing than any of my long term relationships. I felt love and accepted, and didn't have to deal with the baggage that comes with living with a person, and that hook up didn't have to deal with mine. And I have baggage, Helena. Hell, but even with that, I was able to be more open with strangers than with people that stay in my everyday life. You can be surprisingly honest with strangers, maybe because they are less likely to judge you than your primary group, or maybe they do judge you, but if you never see them again, and they don't visit your work or your family and friends, so there is no gossip, and so it's easier to let go and just remember the fun part. And I can provide you with so many reasons why even one random sex event a week is better than a month of living with someone and not having sex. Do I hate myself for the hook ups? Sometimes. I struggle with the conflict, and I have given into the impulse to hook up more often than I said no to myself... And, I am rambling, aren't I.”

“Do the people from your time all speak so starkly honest?” Helena asked.

Jon chuckled. “No, Mam,” he said.

“So, you’re special?” Helena asked.

“No. Yes. We all are,” Jon said. “We all aren’t.”

Helena smiled. “I wish I had met you when I was younger,” Helena said.

Jon mirrored her affection. “Imagine you were younger, what would you do differently right now?”

“You don’t know?” Helena asked.

“I am not a psychic,” Jon said.

“We all are, you probably more than most,” Helena said.

“Tell me as if I weren’t,” Jon said.

“I would invite you to my bed,” Helena said.

“Invite me to your bed,” Jon said.

“Yes,” Helena said.

“No,” Jon said. “Invite me to your bed.”

Helena sorted. Her eyes got bigger with understanding. “You would...”

Jon touched her hand on the rail, leaned in and kissed her.

“But I am old,” Helena said.

“You’re beautiful,” Jon said.

“I am not Judy,” Helena said.

“You are not. I accept you for who you are and if you ask me to make love to you, I would, with joy,” Jon said.

“I have an agenda,” Helena said.

“Oh?” Jon asked.

“I was speaking to my spirit guide about you. She said I should ask you about something called Tantra,” Helena said.

“We should definitely retire to your room,” Jon said.

Helena took Jon by his arm and led him there.

Chapter 17

The ship that arrived by freight lift was easily identified as a Firefly class ship, perhaps in better condition than Serenity. Jon was happy. Wilma was not.

“What a piece of junk,” Wilma said.

“Oh, this is much better than the Falcon,” Jon said.

“The Falcon can do point five past light speed,” Stacey said.

“Yeah, and it is always breaking down, and needs a good mechanic,” Jon said.

“And we don’t need a mechanic?” Wilma asked.

“I can fix anything,” Dorothy announced. Everyone looked at her. “What? I grew up on a farm. It’s the nature of things to break down and you got to be able to fix them.”

“This is a spaceship, not a hay cart,” Wilma said.

“Oh, I would so love to make love in a hay cart,” Stacey said. “Doesn’t that sound romantic, Jon?”

“Is that all you think about?” Snow asked.

“Is there anything else to think about?” Stacey asked.

“We should probably go,” Jon said.

“Go make yourselves comfortable while I do a walk around,” Wilma said.

“A walk around?” Snow asked.

“She wants to make sure its flight worthy before we depart,” Jon said.

“That gives us a little time, doesn’t it?” Stacey asked.

“Sure,” Jon said, taking her by the hand and leading her up the ramp.

Stacey hesitated and looked to Snow. “Want to join us?”

“Really?” Snow and Jon said together.

“It’s to save my life?!” Stacey said.

“That would so not work if I said that,” Jon said, thinking he might like to visit the world of “The invention of lying.”

“Well, I guess we have to, then,” Snow said, and took Stacey’s other hand, and proceeded up the ramp with them.

“Oz was never like this,” Judy told June.

“Depends on who is telling the story of Oz,” June said, and followed the three up the ramp.

निर्मित

Rachel’s dress fell below her knees while standing, but when she sat, it came above the knees, and she didn’t bother adjusting back down. She gave no sign of caring or knowledge that his eyes caressed her thighs and calves. Her blouse wasn’t tucked in. Her hair was disheveled, as if she had just got up, and she was wearing her shades again.

“Would you like it darker in here?” Jon asked.

“Um?” Rachel asked, as if she had just realized Jon was here. She made sense of the words after the auditory event. “Oh. No.” She removed her glasses. Her eyes looked tired, slightly red. She wiped one and then rubbed the bridge of her nose while yawning, and then put her glasses back on.

“Drink much?” Jon asked.

“I don’t drink!” Rachel snapped.

Jon’s poker face hid the fact that he thought otherwise. He had to go with what the client told him. He turned his chair left then right, rocking.

“Please don’t do that,” Rachel said. “It makes me dizzy.”

Jon brought his chair back to center and held it. He clasped his hands.

“Aren’t you supposed to be like asking me questions or something?” Rachel asked.

“What sort of questions do you suppose I should be asking?” Jon asked.

“I don’t know. Something therapy, like how’s your love life,” Rachel said.

“You want to speak about your love life?” Jon asked.

“No, I am just using that as an example,” Rachel said.

“Oh,” John said, and was about to add...

“That’s all men ever think about,” Rachel said, she crossed her leg and started kicking it. Jon watched the calve muscles flexing through several turns before focusing elsewhere.

“Your love life?” Jon asked.

“Sex!” Rachel corrected. “I can’t get to know a guy because sex always gets in the way. And hell, the guys I might be interested in having sex with never hit on me, because they’re too intimidated by my looks.”

“So, you do want to discuss your love life,” Jon said.

“No, I don’t,” Rachel said. “Why are we still talking about sex? You want to fuck me?”

“Actually,” Jon said.

“What?!” Rachel said, taking off her glasses. They seemed bloodshot and tired, the kind of eyes that came from drinking and poor sleep.

“Do I want to? Yeah, hell yeah,” Jon said. “Will I? No.”

“Why not? What’s wrong with me?” Rachel asked.

“There’s nothing wrong with you,” Jon said, reassuringly. “But I don’t think that’s why you’re here.”

“So, you do sleep with clients?” Rachel asked.

“Sleep? Yes. Sex? Sometimes. I am a sex surrogate, I help people overcome all sorts of difficulties around sex,” Jon said.

“Like what?” Rachel asked.

“You’re interested in what sort of problems people might have that they would need a sex surrogate?” Jon asked.

“I am wondering how you twist the boundaries of the therapeutic relationship to force people into having sex,” Rachel said.

Jon had his first inkling to the world paradigm she was in. “Has anyone ever coerced you into sex?”

“It’s not about me!” Rachel said.

“Oh, whew, that’s a relief,” Jon said. “I got the roles reversed again, Doctor.”

“I am not a Doctor. Why are you so difficult?” Rachel asked.

Jon nodded. “I am frequently told I am difficult, and not funny,” Jon agreed. “It is my hope that in interjecting some levity that the environment becomes more conducive to discussing unpleasant stuff.”

“Well, there is nothing funny about rape,” Rachel said.

“Would you like to talk about it?” Jon asked, even more gently.

“No,” Rachel said. “I don’t like thinking about it.”

“And yet, this feels like a significant artifact in your psychic field,” Jon pointed out.

“Nonsense. Hell, I can barely remember the first time,” Rachel said.

“Was it your father?” Jon asked.

“As if. My father was a saint. Really, he was a Church of God preacher, he and mom had separate, ‘I love Lucy’ twin beds, separated by the length of the room, and I was lucky to get a hug from him, much less a look. Hell, I am surprised he and mom had any kids, he was so anti touch,” Rachel said.

Jon put his chin in his hand, and leaned the elbow into the arm of his chair. She seemed angry, but he wasn’t sure if it was at the father, mother, both, or other, but she was still sorting it, her eyes moving left and right as if she were dreaming. It seemed important not to interrupt. She sucked on the right arm of her glasses, realized it, sat the glasses down, drew her legs up onto the couch and hugged her knees. The dress fell to her lap and he could see China. Yeah, there was no doubt he wanted that and more, but now his brain was trying to figure out whether she was aware of what she was doing or if was intentional. The behavior in itself wasn’t wrong, but it was communicating something. He was not sure if it was time to point out that this was a gesture that sent conflicting messages.

His decision was saved by her next statement: “Do you always make people feel like shit?” Rachel asked.

“You feel like shit?” Jon asked.

“You always answer a question with a question?” Rachel quipped.

Jon shrugged. “I am not sure what feels like shit means to you. Would you help me?”

“God! I have to explain that to you?” Rachel said. “What kind of crap therapist are you?”

“Well, I am new to crap therapy, and though you’re really not my first client to feel like shit, it would seem that if I am theraptizing crap, you feeling like shit seems appropriate.”

“What?” Rachel asked.

Jon was hoping that would have been better received. “Rachel,” Jon said. “Sometimes people feel like shit. Sometimes it’s appropriate. There are some shitty things in the world and I am not here to gloss over those things. Some things just flat suck. Babies with cancer suck. Dead puppies suck. Being raped, or a history of molestation, sucks. Sometimes people think their life is normal and don’t even know that it sucked, which is a whole nother level of suck, because they don’t understand why their life is not working and why they’re in my office. I think you know why your life sucks, but you really don’t want talk about it because it makes you feel like shit, and we don’t have to talk about it for you to get better. I am not one of those that says people have to dredge up the past and examine it.”

“Then why do you keep bringing up the past?” Rachel demanded.

Jon blinked away his confusion. He just went with her idea that he had brought something up even if he hadn't:

“Sometimes the past brings itself up because the person is ready to work on it,” Jon said. “Sometimes the longer you go without dealing with the shit, the more likely you will feel like shit.”

“I don't want to talk about it!” Rachel said.

Jon nodded. “You ever walk on a beach?”

“What does that have to do with anything?” Rachel demanded.

“It's a way of not talking about it,” Jon said.

“I hate the beach. Everyone is always staring at me,” Rachel said.

The analogy he was going to go with suddenly seemed impotent.

“Old men staring at my breast and crotch,” Rachel said. “I look over my shoulder and a dozen heads turn away. Some don't even turn their heads! Sunglasses or not, they stare so hard that their eyes leaves bruises on my flesh. Hell, even the women are looking at me. Some of them seem angry, like it's my fault their lecherous husbands are looking at me. Maybe wives and women should fuck their men more so they don't have time to go after children.”

“When did you start noticing the stares?” Jon asked.

“Eight,” Rachel said. “Why are we still talking about this?”

“I am not sure. Tell me something you feel safe talking about,” Jon said.

“There's nothing safe!” Rachel said. “Everything is about sex.”

Jon sighed. “I am feeling frustration, Rachel. I want to honor your request of not discussing the elephant, but if everything is about the elephant, I am not sure how to go forwards.”

“I was raped! Is that what you want to hear?” Rachel said, tearing up. “I thought they were my friends, that I was safe, but they all fucking took a turn! They got me drunk, took me to the back bedroom, and fucked me, sometimes two at a time. They laughed about it. They videotaped it. Everyone in school knew. And a year later when the tape came out, everyone in the county knew. How can you not know any gossip about the hottest looking, cheerleader in the entire county being raped? How can you go to church with the same families of boys that raped you? How can you sit in church having flashbacks of the faces hovering over you? How can you

live with hearing people say she got what she deserved? And that's from my fucking parents! I can hear the men in church saying they wish they had a turn. Afterwards, the coach felt me up and try to force me, so I stopped going to school. My parents didn't understand why I didn't want go but I couldn't tell them. And then, as if my life wasn't fucking bad enough, turns out I got pregnant?! So, no matter what, I would forever be reminded of being raped. If I keep the child, it becomes the reminder. If I abort, the fact that I had a pregnancy and aborted is forever in my life. Medical people don't let your forget that shit. Regular doctors and mental health doctors always ask how many pregnancies. As if that's a fucking clue to my mental health! Do they ask men how many children they fathered? No! Maybe they should. That's a fucking clue to their mental health life. Not had any kids? Really? Not having sex? What's wrong with you? A hundred kids all out of wed lock and you're not paying child support? What's the fuck wrong with you? It's a fucking sexist question and I hate it. Being pregnant is not a medical condition and it's definitely not a mental health condition.”

The anger was clear, present, and uncomfortable, but Jon was glad it was out there. He had to fight his own urge to flee from it. Most of his transference though was not running, but the conflict between who she presented and what he saw: looking at her revealed a beautiful woman, and to him beautiful women were always loving and peaceful and powerful in his world, as opposed to an angry survivor. He only needed to point to any Victorian Secret model and show you an image of power, not just sexy, but someone who held confidence and poise and demanded attention. Sure, some of that was just nature of the advertisement and the doctoring of the photo and framing, enhancing, but that didn't mean the models didn't come to represent an archetype of power. He had spent a year making collages of women meditating, women in the lotus pose and or in the akimbo stance, like Wonder Woman, as a form of self-therapy. His ideal women were magically and spiritually endowed. You would be surprised how many ads display women surrounded by magical glows and power stances, showing them peaceful, a part of nature, and a force all until themselves. The disparity of this woman suffering before him clashed with his perception of her based on looks alone, which required him to move to a place he could truly reach her.

“You're in pain and everything in life reminds you of this pain. The way people look at you reminds you. The professionals remind you. Your family reminds you,” Jon said. “Even the simplest pleasure, like going to the beach, has been robbed from you and reminds you of the

pain. Of being assaulted. And the whole world goes on about their lives and going to church and school as if everything is okay, and you find all of them equally corruptible, hypocrites...”

Rachel began to cry, burying her face in her knees. “There is no safe place,” she said into her knees. She looked up. “I couldn’t even nurse my own child, because his sucking my breast reminded me of the rape, someone fucking me while two others held me down licking and sucking my breast. It’s not my sons fault but I can’t even touch him and I hate myself for that, too, and maybe I should have just aborted him or given him up for adoption, because maybe that would have made his life better.”

“But you thought you deserved this, and you felt obligated to care for something no one else might care for,” Jon said. “Maybe even though this was your one last chance for unconditional love, but instead you found a child that was needy and you couldn’t satiate it, which only made it hungrier.”

“I have fucked everything up. And it’s all my fault. If I had just listened to my parents... I snuck out against their wishes,” Rachel said. “This is my fault. I get what I deserve.”

“So, hearing the voices of the church members telling you that, hearing your parents say that, is really an echo of your own beliefs?” Jon said.

“Aren’t you supposed to be telling me it’s not my fault?” Rachel demanded.

“Would you believe me?” Jon asked.

Rachel was silent. “No,” she finally said. “I get what I deserve.”

“What do you deserve?” Jon asked.

“I have only known pain, that’s what I deserve. I am pain. I thought there was hope for me if the child was perfect, it would have to love me, but he has only brought me so much more pain. And it’s my fault. I didn’t give him any affection. I rejected him.”

“So, you felt unloved by your parents, because of their cold philosophy,” Jon summarized. “And, then gave that to your son.”

“To all of my children,” Rachel said. “I am pain, I only give pain. And so, when I discovered my son was fucking me, too, I just accepted that has final retribution. This is my life. I did this to him, I deserve this, too.”

“You are having sex with your son?” Jon asked, not out of surprise, but for confirmation.

She was silent for a long moment. Jon experienced a knowing before she even spoke words, but the larger truth had yet hit him. “At first I wasn’t sure,” Rachel said, dreamily, eyes

distant. “I was drinking and taking over the counter sleeping pills. I would wake up sore but I just ignored it. And then I started having these flashbacks of my son’s face hovering over me, like all the guys so long ago. And then one day, I woke up and had clarity, and it was like a light in the room, an intense blue light, and a sound like a trumpet, and I tried to resist, and he punched me and held me down, and told me if I ever rejected him again, he’d fucked his sisters. So, from then on, I was sober, and I just accepted it. It’s all my fault. My whole life is a nightmare and I can’t escape.”

“You want to escape,” Jon said. He didn’t have clue what else to say.

“Pff, my life, me, yeah,” Rachel said. “But I can’t. No one is going to take care of my youngest. She’s got Down syndrome. But you want to know what the worst part of it is? He makes me orgasm. How fucking sick is that! I don’t fight, I accept, I cum, he cums, and then he goes back to his bed.”

Jon steepled his fingers and touched his lips. He hadn’t expected that part, but he wasn’t surprised. Even rape victims are frequently confused by conflicting emotional and physical stimulation. The fact that one can be forced to orgasm doesn’t mean it is less than a rape, but more, reveals how seriously profound the violation is because it reaches that part that should be about joy and makes it confusing. He knew it himself, firsthand, too, well.

“Wait, you’re not going to tell CPS?”

“If we were in your world, I would be compelled...” Jon said.

“But I am not sleeping with him, he’s raping me!” Rachel said. “And the law won’t see me as the victim and I will go to jail, and no one in my family will take my youngest, so she will go to the state...”

“Yeah, they won’t see you as the victim,” Jon agreed. “And, the law there doesn’t make a distinction, I would just have to report and let them sort it out, but the truth is, I probably should, because if he is raping you, he is raping his sister.”

“No, no,” Rachel said, shaking her head. “The oldest one would kill him.”

“OMG,” Jon said. “Timothy, Stacey...”

“And Cindy,” Rachel said. “You know my children? You have already contacted the state?”

Jon suddenly couldn’t get the song, “Stacey’s mom has got it going on” out of his head. It was a fun son on many levels, but completely inappropriate on many levels, and with the twists

in this family's fortune, just kind of highlighted the facts, and it's not like he himself hadn't entertained thoughts of Rachel, and if he were in the song, he would be all over Stacey's mom, too! "Rachel, I am not contacting the state. The state is gone. That world is gone," Jon said.

"I don't understand," Rachel said.

"Where do you go when you leave here?" Jon asked.

Rachel's face grew serious. She had to force herself to say, "I go home."

"Where is home?" Jon asked.

"My home, on the farm, with my grandmother," Rachel said.

"Your deceased grandmother?" Jon asked.

Rachel was about to protest but she couldn't. It was like she was having the realization that she was dreaming, but did not want to relinquish the dream.

"Out of all the people in your world, you felt the safest with your grandmother. The most understood," Jon said. "And the farm brought you the most joy. Caring for the animals. Walking in the fields. The smell of earth. Grandmother working with her plants."

Tears flowed down her face. "How could I not remember?"

"Sometimes when we wake from a really bad dream, it takes a moment to sort it," Jon suggested.

"So, it was all a dream?" Rachel said, hopeful.

"Yes, and no," Jon said. "Dreams are more real than people acknowledge, with more lasting profound effects physiologically and emotionally, and waking life is more dream than people can even speculate."

Rachel fell over sideways on the couch and curled up into the fetal position, almost sucking her thumb, and tears flowed. "Everybody knows."

"Everybody knows," Jon said.

"Cindy is Down syndrome because of incest and that's why no one would take her. And my family won't take Stacey because she's half black," Rachel said. "Hell, my family won't take any of them. They hated I didn't abort Timothy. They hated that I was involved with someone not of my race. They blame Cindy on my drinking. But it is incest that did it. It is all my fault."

Jon sorted it in his head. "Cindy Down syndrome is not the result of incest or drinking alcohol."

“She is retarded! That’s what happens when you get drunk and have sex with family!” Rachel said.

“That’s not true,” Jon corrected her. “ETOH syndrome is not Down syndrome. And incest doesn’t automatically make retarded children. Will some genes get amplified with incest? Sure. Some genes get eliminated. Hell, we wouldn’t have any of the dog species we have today if it weren’t for inbreeding. Now, excessive inbreeding does come with specific health problems, but incest does not result in Down syndrome, or even retardation.”

“So, what’s your explanation for her being retarded?” Rachel demanded.

“Fucking nature,” Jon said.

“Uh?”

“Rachel, people don’t like to hear this, especially Bible belt folks, but nature and genetics is not fucking perfect! Nature fucks up all the time. That’s why we have so many eggs and sperm combination, so that we’re going to get it right most the time, but sometimes the results are just whacked. And people get really creeped out when gender gets fucked, because people are so superstitious about sex and gender. There are actually people who are born gay, normal genes, just gay. That’s life. It’s a little bit easier if their gayness is explained genetically, like a double x female who was born with male genitalia, and that person might get a pass and be allowed to have surgery and be transgender in the first year, but really starts messing people when they get down the road and turn out gay, but would have been okay with gender reassignment! An XY why male that is born with female genitalia, they happen, too, and they tend to be the best looking ‘females,’ because the proportions just, well, fucking nature. And they sometimes never figure it out, and if the men fucking them knew they were really male, well, they’d be in my office sorting it. And then there are the folks born with both sets of genitalia and parents blame themselves and don’t want to deal with this out fear and shame, so they usually decided to surgically whack one of them off, and then they worry that they picked the wrong gender because any ambiguous child play sets them all in a panic then they overcompensate to push their choice, and well, and all overcompensation does is set up doubt in the onjects mind which casues them to explore the possibility they are what everyone doesn’t want, and well, nature is just fucked! Yeah, I love nature, but I am not putting her on fucking a pedestal, because nature is not God. Family inbreeding doesn’t guarantee stupid children. Of course, if you have two really stupid people breeding, related or not, you’re likely to get more stupid. That’s just likely, but not

a guarantee, and that's also partly environment. You can take a potentially brainy child and lock him in a room and not nurture him, and he will be stupid. You can take a potentially stupid kid and surround him with stimulus and produce a better than average smart person. The one thing that tends to result in the best outcomes is love. And I can promise you this, Cindy is not the result of incest, or a lack of love. In fact, your protectiveness of her, wanting to care for her, is evidence of love."

"She is retarded because of me!" Rachel insisted.

"OMG, Rachel, she is retarded because of fucking nature!" Jon said. "Genes misfired, didn't line up, and you now have a zipper with teeth that keep the key from moving up and down the chain properly. Even if your life had been perfect, you still had a chance of producing a Down syndrome child. Cindy is the product of the affair you had, not incest."

"The guy at the bar?" Rachel said more than asked. It didn't take her long to sort because the list of consensual men in her life was very small. Like two.

"He's not just a guy at the bar," Jon said.

Rachel wiped her eyes, but remained laying on the couch. "Yeah, I knew him from high school. He said he had crush on me all those years ago."

"Tell me more," Jon encouraged.

"Not much to tell. He would meet me at the bar and after a few drinks he would take me to the hotel," Rachel said. "It was my one night off from kids. I figured he was married, but I just didn't ask questions."

Jon nodded. "Tell me more."

"That's it," Rachel said.

"No, there's more," Jon said.

Rachel stared into her memory, sorting it, and the sudden realization nearly made her vomit. Anger replaced that, followed by horror and shame. "He was one of the guys who raped me, way back at that party. OMG! My whole fucking life, I have just been used. Why can't I have a normal life?!"

"What's a normal life?" Jon asked.

"Not being raped and then not being fucked by the guy who raped you!" Rachel said. "Not fucking the guy who raped you and treating him with love and hoping he might one day really be with you. Surely you know that much."

“Rachel,” Jon said gently. “Here is something you need to carry. There is this thing that comes with trauma, called re-enactment. A person traumatized generally puts themselves in situations similar to the first so that they can try and find a different response. This is done at the unconscious level.”

“So, you’re saying it is my fault,” Rachel said, sitting up.

“You’ve been saying it’s your fault,” Jon said. “I am not using the word fault.”

“But you just said...”

“What I said is there is this thing that comes with trauma, which could offer you explanation for your trajectory,” Jon said. “You could also add to that, you experienced trauma in a time where people did not treat trauma, and most of society went out of their way not to talk about rape, and your family was more embarrassed about the rape than treating the rape, which always baffled me about the Christian ideal of love, sorry, tangent, anyway this is just one more thing in a complicated equation that might help you understand your trajectory. You were not responsible for the rape. And, I think if you sort it further, bar guy was slipping you more drugs, because that’s his thing. And, now this bit, this is just fucking blind luck... He is Timothy’s father.”

“No fucking way!” Rachel said. “He was doping me? There was no need to? I would have fucked him anyway.”

Jon sorted that. Did she miss the part where bar guy was also Timothy’s father? Because there was more interesting things there, at least to Jon. The fact that he sought her and found her because he had intentions of re-victimizing her. He moved his entire family just to be near her, yes, he was married, and from the family and church associates, was probably the most respectable, nice guy ever, and yet, he had this obsessive compulsive stalking side of him. He was also a professor and fucking his students, so he wasn’t like a stupid guy, except sex made him do really stupid things.

“I hope he is burning in hell,” Rachel said.

“You’re angry,” Jon said.

“Are you fucking kidding me? Of course I am angry. He is a fucking rapist...”

“And all rapist should go to hell,” Jon said.

“Absolutely!” Rachel said.

“Timothy should go to hell,” Jon said.

Rachel's face paled, and was horrified. She sat up. "No, that was my fault. You can't blame him for my sins. Is that where he is? Is he in hell? I should be in hell, not him. Why am I here?! I don't deserve any of this..."

"Okay, Rachel. Slow down. Breathe. That's it, breathe," Jon said. The only hell's that exist are the one we create for ourselves."

"I need to help him. No one else will help him," Rachel said.

"Rachel, your first job is to heal yourself. There is no hell, there is only therapy. Everyone in the world is in therapy," Jon said.

"Even Timothy?" Rachel asked.

"Even Timothy. I got him," Jon said.

Rachel grabbed a pillow and hugged it, bringing her knees up into it, again, rolling to the fetal position, and sobbed into the pillow. The sobbing was a mixture of rage and relief and years of unspent emotional cleansing. Jon sat there with her, just giving her the space to be, in the presence of another, without judgment, only love. And it dawned on him, Harry was Timothy! OMG, fucking A! Oh, and the girl with fuck face, that was Stacey! Oh, fuck, and fuck face himself was the son of bar guy. Oh, how fucking convoluted the world was, is! Jon lamented, almost too exhausted to continue. He didn't bother to wipe his eyes. It was appropriate to expel water under such circumstances. Impossible not to.

"You said there is no hell, only therapy," Rachel said. "This is not what I was taught."

"Nor I," Jon said. "We were taught in disposable people, in a culture that everything is used and discarded."

"Why would God want me to have therapy?" Rachel asked.

Jon shrugged. "Maybe because God knows the people who experienced the most evil, the ones who made the most God awful decisions, who had the hardest lives, those will be the ones that learn how to love the most. We learn to love the best."

Rachel laughed and cried. "I am going to be fucking saint, then."

"You always were," Jon said, more tear going, wanting to laugh with her.

निर्मित

Jon had just finished putting on his army jacket when Judy entered. She was dressed comfortably, but fashionably, as anyone from her era might who was going to see a professional.

“Oh,” Judy said, pouting her lips. “Is this a bad time?”

“No, please, come in, have a seat,” Jon said, sorting through this idea that she was somehow late, even as he was motioning towards couch, inviting her further into the room. Given that he didn’t use a clock or keep an appointments in general, he was not sure why Judy always seemed to be late, but then again, he was generally always late when he went to class, and so there felt like there was something ‘here’ to explore.

Judy remained near the door. “But your coat is on. You were leaving.”

“No, I was just cold.”

“Please don’t do that,” Judy said. “If you’re leaving, tell me.”

“I was leaving, Judy. But I have nowhere specific to be and you’re here now, and I want to see you,” Jon said.

“I bet,” Judy said, skeptically.

“Judy, I really want to see you, come in.” Jon said.

“But you’re meeting someone?” Judy asked.

“My people know me, they understand that I am late from time to time,” Jon said, again, motioning towards the couch. “Please, come and sit.”

“I wanted to apologize for last time,” Judy said, still hovering by the door. Jon tended to avoid looking down the corridor of eternity. It was disorienting. He kept his eyes locked with Judy’s eyes, otherwise, they might drop to her ankles, mostly to avoid seeing eternity, not just out of search for stimulation.

“Apologize for what?” Jon asked.

“Really?” Judy snapped.

“You’ve done nothing wrong, Judy,” Jon assured her.

“Are you a saint?”

Jon laughed. “In no Universe.”

“Then, you just want me to say it?” Judy asked.

“Say what?” Jon asked.

“That I kissed you, and was going to do more than that, and you’re my therapist,” Judy said.

“Judy,” Jon said, gently. “You did nothing wrong. We were emotional. We kissed. It was consensual.”

“Isn’t it against the rules?” Judy asked.

“In your time, probably unethical but there were no laws against it,” Jon said. “Hell, most of the time that kind of stuff is pure transference or projection or both. Did you know, one of Jung’s clients was determined to marry him, and though he reminded her he was married, she was so dedicated to the idea that he was the man for her that she persisted he played along. He even allowed her to buy the hall and send out the invitations, and the date was set. Eventually, all on her own, she arrived at the conclusion that it was impossible and called the whole affair off. That was the breakthrough she needed to arrive at the next level.”

“I don’t understand,” Judy said.

“Everyone thinks their conscious mind is in charge, but in truth, everyone has a committee,” Jon said. “Each hemisphere of your brain is a personality set in its own, with two very different function sets. There’s your conscious mind, your ID, your super conscious. There is the social paradigm entity, so for you, 1930’s America personified most likely. There are the influences of the major players in your life. But the biggest player is your subconscious mind. It’s in charge 99 percent of the time, and you’re either on board with it, working in cooperation’s, or it’s running you. And it’s not running you to purposely make you miserable, or to fuck up your life. Its entire purpose is to communicate with you, to be recognized, and once you and it on the same page, miracles start to happen.”

Judy still seemed to be struggling. “Yeah, not buying that. And I think I understand projection, but I don’t understand transference, but the analogy you used, Jung going along with marrying a client is not even on the same level. I was going to fuck you. You were going to fuck me back. That shit can’t be undone.”

“It cannot be undone,” Jon agreed.

“But you would have gone along with it anyway, knowing it was projection and transference, or whatever?” Judy asked.

“Sometimes, the fastest way out of a storm is through the storm,” Jon said, walking closer to his chair, encouraging her to join him. “Had we indulged, we would have most likely woke from our experienced with the realization that it wouldn’t last, but refreshed. Hell, and maybe it would go on for a while, extreme passion for several years before we got to the waking part of

the experience, but there is always an awakening. This part is not magic, it feels like magic to the conscious mind because it just can't contain all the knowledge in its functional memory, but you can trust the unconscious to always deliver you to where you need to be and who you need to be with."

"That's not true," Judy said. "I have been married five times, and if I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't have been married five times."

"All five of those times were opportunities to realize an inner truth. You had five times to experience fight, flight, or love. Let's combine fight and flight into one choice. There are only two valid choices, fight or love."

"Fuck that. They were assholes," Judy said.

"You have never been ass to anyone?" Jon asked.

"Fuck you, too!" Judy snapped, slamming the door. "I can have anyone I fucking want. I can command any room and walk out with any man I like, whether he is married or not. If you can't fucking treat me the way I deserve, you can fucking pack your bags and get out, cause I deserve better and I can better."

Jon agreed with her. "Why marry at all?"

"I deserve to have love," Judy said.

"You do, you can, from any room, you got it," Jon said. "And yet, you chose five assholes."

Judy's hands trembled. "What's wrong with me? Why can't I find real love?"

"Maybe that's why we're here together, to explore that," Jon offered.

"So, we should have fucked?" Judy asked.

"Not saying that," Jon said.

"But you said it would get us to the other side of the storm fast, to the realization part," Judy said.

"Yes, I said that," Jon said. "And maybe we stopped ourselves to keep us from arriving there. Or maybe we stopped ourselves because we finally made progress in relating. Had we indulged in that time, it would have been meaningful, but in a different way than it would be if we indulged now, with understanding that there is something here that needs exploring, but it's even more meaningful to explore this without indulging. We're always with the person we need to be with. Any unconsciously pushed emotion, love, desire, hate, means there is a connection

there. Now sometimes we indulge, and we find the meaning. Sometimes we create conflict to block us from understanding the meaning because we're not ready. Because finding the meaning ultimately means change, and most relationships cannot endure the change. The ones that do, well, those are real relationships. And very few relationships are real relationships. Most are manifestations of simultaneous projections and transference. And that's why society made laws against therapist and clients. If a therapist has sex with a client, they are either unaware of their own transference and projections, or they are taking advantage of the other's transference and projections. The law assumes the latter, because a therapist is supposed to know things. The law doesn't consider the fact that they are still human and that all therapists became therapist because they are working on their own shit, and though they are more aware of shit in general than the average human, they still have shit. The number one reason therapist to lose their license or go to jail in my era is for having sex with a client. That fact to me suggests we need to re-examine human relationships, and have a better understanding of sex, as opposed to criminalizing being human."

"So, it's not just power differential?" Judy asked.

"There is always a power differential. You're a superstar, who can command any room and take any man you want, married or not; should you be prosecuted for rape every time that happened?" Jon asked. She nearly laughed. "No, seriously, Judy. Is any man capable of giving you informed consent? I know I wouldn't say no to you. Hell, if you want to know the truth, if we were playing by the ethics from my origin, I shouldn't see you at all because, well, you're a superstar and I have held a lifelong crush... Then again, I wonder if there is a counselor from my time that isn't going to have some difficulty sorting you out because of the strength of your iconic presence. You, Judy, are a goddess and you are going to affect people. Men and women. I wanted you. I still want you. But that's not why you're here."

"Are you always so honest?" Judy asked.

"Nope," Jon said. "You okay with that?"

Judy shrugged, went and sat on the couch. Jon took his chair across from her. She pointed to the coat. "Are you going to take that off?"

"No, I am a little cold," Jon said.

Judy crossed her leg, her dress rising higher on her legs. Jon forced himself not to linger there. She then crossed her arms across her chest, as if she were angry. The expression evolved into a wanting.

“I need a drink,” Judy said.

“No alcohol while in session,” Jon said.

“That’s fucked. Who made that rule?” Judy asked.

“Um, I don’t know, someone, and I endorse it,” Jon said.

“You’ll get more out of me if I am drunk,” Judy said.

“What would you like me to get out of you?” Jon asked.

Judy cracked an evil grin. “I am not that easy,” Judy said. “Sober. Give me some alcohol, I can be your whorish flibbertigibbet. You can have anything you want.”

“What do you want?” Jon asked.

Judy went back to sulking.

“Do you smoke?” Judy asked.

“No,” Jon said.

“You have a fucking ashtray on the coffee table,” Judy said.

“I do. Decoration,” Jon said.

“Fuck that. Is it against the rules, too?” Judy asked.

“No. I just prefer that you don’t,” Jon said.

“I prefer you stop telling me what’s good for me,” Judy said. “Do you have any?”

Jon magically produced a pack of cigarettes, stood, and leaned over the coffee table to hand them to her, because she made no effort to get them from him. She smiled at him when they were comfortably in reach, but still leaned over to reveal cleavage as she took them. She monitored his eyes, watching him, and then held her hand out without asking. He then gave her a lighter.

“For someone who doesn’t smoke, you sure produced them fast,” Judy said.

“Magic,” Jon said.

“What other magic do you have in your pocket?” Judy asked.

“Let’s not go there,” Jon said.

“Really? You could barely contain it last time,” Judy said. Judy actually caught Jon’s micro-flash of regret, and teased him with a smile. “Aww, would you like me to kiss it and make it all better?”

“Does kissing make things better?” Jon asked.

“In the moment, yeah,” Judy said, putting the cigarette in her mouth and pulling it out with lip pop sound, sucking. She blew smoke heavenwards. “It’s a distraction.”

“Yeah. How long do distractions last?” Jon asked.

“Depends on the guy. How long can you last?” Judy asked.

“Longer than you, I bet,” Jon said.

“Nice come back. Care to wager?” Judy asked.

“Not really,” Jon said. “Especially the first time round.”

“You’re working really hard to keep this thing clinical, aren’t you?” Judy asked. “So, you don’t drink, you don’t smoke, what do you do?”

“That’s going to be a great song one day,” Jon told her.

“Umm, deflection. You’re a gambler?” Judy asked.

“No, but another great song there,” Jon said.

“So, lying is your only vice?” Judy asked.

“Is lying a vice or discernment?” Jon asked.

“I am tired of you answering questions with questions,” Judy said, blowing smoke at him. It was more seduction than contempt. “And I am not going to lay down.”

Jon’s first response would have been a sexual innuendo, but he chose to walk softly. “It’s okay. I really don’t do that type of therapy,” Jon said.

“I thought laying down was like the standard for mind fucks,” Judy said.

Jon pushed a mudra with his left hand, thumb to middle finger. He created a sphere of no smoke zone around him. “Do you want to do Freudian?” Jon asked.

“What’s the difference?” Judy asked.

“Ten years of therapy, well over a hundred thousand dollars,” Jon said. “Versus CBT, 6 to 12 weeks, six hundred dollars. Epiphany therapy, one session, and priceless.”

“You could do me in one session?” Judy asked, pausing her swinging leg at full height, rotating the foot so that her shoe came off the heel, and grinning mischievously.

“I don’t think you’re a one session kind of gal,” Jon said.

“Umm, you really don’t know me,” Judy said. She put out the cigarette, purposely revealing cleavage again in doing so. “Oh, I know. You should hypnotize me.”

“You want me to hypnotize you?” Jon asked.

“Well, again, you’d get more out of me with liquor,” Judy said.

“You said that. Is there something specific you want out?” Jon asked.

“Are you qualified to do an exorcism?” Judy asked.

Jon smiled, nodded. “As a last resort,” he said. “That thing in you is that scary?”

“Do you really hypnotize women?” Judy asked, avoiding the question.

“Women, men, chickens, sharks, and, surprisingly, squirrels,” Jon said.

Judy snorted. John had never heard her laugh like that on the silver screen. “So, you can make me do anything you want?”

Jon was amused, and a little aroused by the idea, but again he chose to go softly.

“Contrary to popular belief, a person can’t be hypnotized to do something they don’t want to do.”

“That’s what I am afraid of,” Judy said.

“You’re afraid of doing something you want to do?” Jon asked.

Judy smiled, put both hands on the couch seat, palms down and open, and leaned in towards Jon. “You made me love you, I didn’t want to do it, I didn’t want to do it,” she sang. The seductiveness of it alone had Jon oozing precum. Yes, men and women both experience wetness when aroused.

“Nice,” Jon said, sorting it. “You sang that for Clark, didn’t you?”

Her playfulness vanished and she went for another cigarette. Jon held his own hand, the back of his right hand in the palm of his left, and he pushed a pressure point, following the life line through its arch with his thumb nail. He waited till she was blowing smoke heaven ward, her leg rocking more vigorously. She seemed resigned on just staring off into infinity, smoking. He sighed a secret relief.

“Right before you went for your cigarette, what was your thought?” Jon asked.

“I wanted a drink,” Judy said.

“And before that thought?” Jon asked.

Judy met his eyes, fierce. “I wanted to fuck you.”

“And before that?” Jon asked.

“You’re fishing.”

“Go fish,” Jon said.

“You know everything, you tell me,” Judy said.

“I don’t know everything,” Jon said.

“Thought you were like connected to the Universe and everything,” Judy said.

“We all are. How can we not be?” Jon asked.

“So, pull out your crystal ball and tell me my dark secrets,” Judy said.

Jon nodded, thinking about it. He had a flash of the MGM birthday party for Clark, where Judy sang this song to him, and in observing he saw a subtle embarrassed response. In a way, the whole song and affection thrown at Clark was as seductive and almost inappropriately creepy as Marylyn’s birthday song was for the President. He decided to just throw his intuition out on the table. “Clark raped you?”

“It wasn’t rape,” Judy said.

“You were how old?” Jon asked.

“It wasn’t rape,” Judy insisted.

“Alcohol was involved?” Jon asked.

“It wasn’t fucking rape. It was Clark Gable! You don’t say no to him,” Judy said.

“Did you say no?” Jon asked.

“Of course I did!” Judy snapped. “What kind of girl do you think I am?”

“So, you said no, he persisted?” Jon said. “Sounds like rape to me.”

“I said yes,” Judy said.

“After a hundred ‘no’s? Rape,” Jon said.

“It wasn’t a hundred,” Judy said.

“Does it matter? Giving into pressure is still rape,” Jon said. “A yes after a series of no’s is still no.”

“I really did want to sleep with him. Who wouldn’t want to sleep with him?” Judy asked.

“Then why tell him no at all?” Jon asked.

“Because, that’s what good girls do,” Judy said.

“Good girls don’t have sex?” Jon asked.

“Please, how else can a girl know she’s wanted if she doesn’t see persistence in a man?”
Judy asked.

“Oh, fuck that,” Jon said. “No is no, yes is yes, and we would all be better off without these fucking games.”

“Which makes me wonder if you really wanted me the other day, since you didn’t chase me, and you’re not trying to wear me down. Surely I have hinted enough that it doesn’t take much to wear me down. Just harder to wear me out. I bet I can keep going way after you’re finished,” Judy said. “So, what do you say? Are you a man or a mouse?”

Jon withdrew a spicy peppermint candy from his pocket, was going to unwrap it for himself, but instead tossed it to her.

Judy caught it. She unwrapped it and put it in her mouth. She pushed it through her lips and sucked it back a couple times? “Umm, want’s some candy?” Judy laughed. Before he could answer she rushed in: “Do you sleep with all your clients?”

“Oh, hell no,” Jon said.

“But you would?” Judy asked.

“You want to talk about sex?” Jon asked.

“You don’t want to talk about sex? What kind of therapist are you?” Judy asked. “Oh, maybe you’re the kind that fucks the clients but doesn’t talk about it afterwards? You do sleep with clients, right?”

“I have,” Jon said. “I am a registered sex surrogate.”

“Such a hard job,” Judy mused. “I suppose that’s right there with registered offender?” Judy asked, seemingly pleased with herself. “Surrogate. Surrogate. You mean kind of like the wire monkey versus the cloth monkey kind of thing?”

“Wow, I am impressed,” Jon said.

“Contrary to popular belief, I am not just a vaudevillian, Hollywood fluffer,” Judy said.

“I don’t think you were ever a fluffer,” Jon said.

“Please! Dorothy is like the hugest, weakest, fluffer, ever,” Judy said. “A real country girl would carry a six shooter and know how to use it. Fucking Scarecrow carried a gun and didn’t even have a brain? In what Universe is that okay?”

“Maybe Dorothy was a city girl forced to live with her aunt after a tragic accident killed her parents?” Jon asked.

“That’s not in the script. Its absence from the script is just weird,” Judy said. “Maybe she got pregnant and she had to go live with her aunt to keep from shaming her parents?”

“Wow. I hadn’t consider that one. That would explain why there is no dialogue at all explaining what happened to her parents,” Jon asked.

“Kind of like you not talking about fucking clients? Do you get off, or just fake it?” Judy asked, seriously trying not to laugh, and going for another cigarette.

“Some people are not easy to love,” Jon said, watching for micro-expressions from Judy that that was true for her. She was a perfect card player. She revealed no inner truth. “Much less have sex with.”

“So, do you like it when a girls fights?” Judy said.

“Do you like fighting?” Jon asked.

“A little wrestling now and then never hurt anyone,” Judy said. “So, like, what sort of problems makes a girl not so easy to love?”

“People with hygiene problems are tough in general,” Jon said. “Mostly, the folks that come to me as a sex surrogate come because of a severe deformity or disability, or extreme social anxiety.”

“Really? Disabled people have greater problems than having to worry about getting sex,” Judy said, disgusted.

“Even disabled people want to experience pleasure,” Jon said.

“That’s just gross!” Judy said.

“So, only beautiful, healthy people should have sex?” Jon asked.

Judy tabled it in her mind. “What other reasons would you sleep with a client?” Judy asked.

“Sometimes they will come due to severe phobias of penetration that results in pain during intercourse, or an inability to relax enough to even achieve penetration. Some of that is from abuse, some of it just normal anxiety. Probably the most extreme case was a female from an Arab country who had acid thrown in her face and then set on fire because the husband thought she wasn’t a virgin because he believed in the hymen myth, that a girl always bleeds the first time she has sex.”

“Really?” Judy asked. “And that didn’t kill her?”

Jon gave a shrug, suggesting uncertainty, but the hand gesture suggested, ‘well, we are here...’ She delayed lighting the cigarette, probably because she remembered the candy she was sucking on.

“Oh, right, she was here, so she had to be dead, but why wouldn’t she revert back to her pre-burned status?” Judy asked.

“Part of her was stuck, and she wanted to know looks wasn’t a barrier to love,” Jon said. “Ever get stuck somewhere?”

“You discuss your other clients with ease?” Judy asked.

“I haven’t broken confidentiality. I am generalizing, however, you can’t get here without knowing there are no secrets here. My supervisor is watching, for example. And other people are watching. Mostly people with a maturity clearance level, or asked to by their spirit guides to learn vicariously,” Jon said.

“So, if you had fucked me last time, everyone would have saw that?” Judy asked.

“No secrets here,” Jon said.

“And you’d fuck me even now knowing what you know about me, even knowing everyone would know?” Judy asked.

“Judy, it is no secret that I love you and that I want only the best for you,” Jon said. “I am also human and I have my own wants.”

Judy tapped her cigarette over the ashtray. “Proves my point, though. Guys will sleep with anyone,” she said.

“Are you sharing your theory of men with me?” Jon asked.

Judy held the cigarette prominently, pushed the candy into her cheek, clearly making a bulge. “Men are dogs.”

“Um, maybe,” Jon said. “But I never met a dog I didn’t like.”

“You should work with Toto,” Judy said. “Fucking rat terrier.”

“I thought it was a Cairn,” Jon said.

“I am being funny,” Judy said, crunching on the candy. She sucked in a long drag from her little friend.

Jon simply observed, poker face on.

Judy reconsidered. “I was being mean,” she said. “I don’t want to be mean. I want people to like me.”

“People love you,” Jon said.

“Yeah, right,” Judy said. “They love someone, but it’s not me.”

“Probably hard to see all the people who love you with the lights shining in your eyes,” Jon said.

“Ha, ha,” Judy said. “Why do men think it is okay to have sex with everyone but women can’t?”

“You want to have sex with everyone?” Jon asked.

“Why shouldn’t I be able to? I am a fucking Hollywood whore,” Judy said.

“That’s not how I remember you,” Jon said.

“The lights are in my eyes, eh? You’re a fucking retard who believes what you see on the silver screen is real life,” Judy said.

Jon nodded.

“You don’t have a fucking clue as to what my real life was really like. Everyone in Hollywood fucking knows actresses are pimped out,” Judy snapped.

“You were pimped out?” Jon asked.

“OMG, Jon, you can’t be that naïve!” Judy said. “You think Marylyn was the only one to sleep with President Kennedy?”

Jon blinked, quickly sorting if Judy had ever met Kennedy, found that she had, but it was later on in her life. “You slept with Kennedy?”

“Fucking secret service knocks on your door and says they have an invitation for you to visit the White House, you fucking go to the White House,” Judy said. “And it wasn’t the first President I visited. I am very patriotic. The fucking back door to the Oval Office, spins like the revolving front door at Macy’s. Oh, don’t look so surprised. How did you think I got hooked up with Frank? A couple of his ‘business associates’ approached me and said, ‘my buddy Frank would like to meet you.’ You don’t say no to those sorts of things. I say no thank you and they said, ‘Ah, too bad, he would really like to meet you. But yeah, okay, I hope nothing bad happens to your family. They raised a good girl.’” Her imitation of the mafia voice was perfect, revealing she had more talent than just singing and dancing. “So, you either know and are pretending that everything is okay, or you have fucking blinders on and only see what you want to see.”

“Those are the only two options?” Jon asked.

“Got a third?” Judy asked.

“Several,” Jon said.

“Enlighten me,” Judy said.

“Everybody’s life sucked, and they are too caught up in their own dramas to recognize the suffering of others, and we presume other people’s lives are better, especially celebrities, even in the direct evidential presence that celebrities may actually suffer greater than the average person in society,” Jon said. “Of course, the opposite does exist. If a celebrity gets it, they stand out as someone who has actually made it and that is telegraphed to the public, too. So, whether it’s drama or grace, celebrities stand out as a model of how society is coping in general. And the collective unconscious requires those archetypes in order to provide navigational information to individuals sorting their own territory.”

“I am sure that makes sense in someone’s world,” Judy said. “Tell me why men are dogs.”

“You want my theory on men and sex?” Jon asked.

“You’re a man. I presume you have sex. I haven’t seen any evidence for that yet. I haven’t been turned down before. Are you gay?” Judy asked.

“Would that bother you?” Jon asked.

“I am a fucking Hollywood actress. It’s actually a relief when the male lead invites you back to his trailer,” Judy said.

“And yet, I am going out of my way to not pressure you into sex, and you still want my opinion?” Jon asked.

“When you’re not being a bastard or a total retard, you seem to know things,” Judy said.

“Well, when you put it like that,” Jon said.

“I want to hear a good explanation,” Judy said. “Entertain me.”

“Okay,” Jon said, sorting it first in his head. “Granted, this is my theory. It’s not textbook.”

“Fucking textbooks are fine for anatomy, but social theory is usually whacked,” Judy said.

“Umm, sometimes,” Jon said, nodding. “How will knowing my theory help you?”

“Just fucking humor me, already,” Judy insisted. “I mean, it’s not like you’re giving me any other stimulation.”

Jon nearly asked if she wanted the other stimulation, closed his eyes, waited a second, and returned to the present. If people knew how many therapist had to sort their own transference, there would be a lot more compassion for therapist. “You understand that if what I

tell you doesn't fit your paradigm, you're not going to hear it, or you will flat reject it?" Jon asked.

"You're delaying," Judy said.

"You're in a rush?" Jon asked.

"Trying to get my therapy in under ten years," Judy said.

"Ahh, yeah, well then," Jon said, amused. "Be lucky you're a human, I am in dog time. Okay, first, you're going to have to accept that not all men are dogs."

"Yeah, not buying that," Judy said.

"I think I said as much," Jon said.

"You're saying you're not a dog?" Judy asked.

"No, what I am saying is, there are men out there capable of monogamy. Actually the legit kind of monogamy, where they only consider the partner they are with," Jon said. "They tend to be introspective, quiet, and predictable."

"Whatever. Sounds boring," Judy said. "Why is it okay for you to be promiscuous and women can't?"

"Me or men?"

"You are all men," Judy said.

"Nice. You will find that stereotype will diminish with the introduction of birth control, but also with advancement in women's rights in general," Jon said. "The men and cultures that cling to the traditional values are simply hanging onto their perceived dominance and control."

"Yeah, not in my world. So, why is it okay..."

"It's not about whether it's okay or not," Jon said. "Look, here's my theory. Sexual promiscuity is neither good nor bad, but like any tool in your box, it can be used for construction or destruction. Shaming is about control. Way back when paternal authority took over the world, sex was turned into a commodity to control both men and women. Women became property and men were measured by who they owned and how many they owned. Women were shamed to control their urges, which is equal to or surpasses that of men, but mostly, the shame was men projecting their own fears and insecurity onto women. Men hate the system as much as women, but they are part of the system. If sex declines in a marriage it's because property rights are secure, and the man isn't compelled to reinforce his authority."

"So, it's not about love!" Judy said.

“Sex and marriage through time has rarely been about love,” Jon said. “You can measure that in wedding vows, where the promises to be true and be that one magical thing to the other for all time and in every way becoming so outrageous that it is guaranteed that someone or both will fail, and disappointment and or grievances will begin to accumulate. You could make wagers and profit based solely on wedding vows. These are contractual things that are business arrangements, not love.”

“Yeah, but no one is going to sign up for, I will marry you but I can sleep with whoever I want, and I am going to stop watching my weight, and I am going to fart and pick my nose in front of you,” Judy snapped. “And you’re not answering my question! Why is it okay for you to be promiscuous,” Judy asked.

“Fuck, Judy. I am answering you. Again, not good or bad or okay or indifferent. This is just a thing, and the emotional response to it is an internal response to history and a reflection of social judgment. As a man, I get an equal amount of shame and I have struggled with it. I have wanted to be the knight in shining armor and win the woman and cherish her my whole life, but that isn’t me. Trying to be ‘not me’ has been my main problem. But also, my relationships have suffered, partly because I chose women who wanted the night arrangement, and I failed. Also, I got shamed by family and friends saying that I was too stupid, too gay, or too lazy to maintain a relationship. After a certain age, if a man isn’t in a committed relationship, or had a significant amount of experience in one relationship, then society assumes that the man has a problem, and he gets avoided. They assume if he hasn’t had children that he hates women, he is gay, or he hates children, or all of the above. No one assumes that, oh, there is a man who has a clue of how much dedication and work a family takes to keep it healthy. No one respects a man that knows long term relationships require a level of honesty and openness to maintain intimacy and consequently chooses more casual affairs. I have been accused of chasing the high of the initial discovery of the relationship, and maybe I am chasing a high, as if you can explain promiscuity as an addiction. I have been accused of not caring about women or their feelings. I have been accused of being a sex addict. I have been accused of being gay and so sleeping around for me is proof to myself, and everyone else, I am not gay. Very rarely do people appreciate that I understand that I love everyone and that everyone I have ever been with has brought another piece of the puzzle that helped me understand love and life better. There have even been people in my life who absolutely hated the fact that I never once disparaged a past partner. That’s about

them not me. I will always speak well about my partners, and not share their faults, and that kind of perturbs me about women who want to hear the bad gossip about a past partner, because how I speak about my past provides true insight in how I am going to treat you if things go south. If a guy dogs his last relationship, you can bet your ass he will dog you, and you treat like crap. And if a guy tells you up front, I am an asshole and I treat people like crap, believe them and run for your life. But you know that from experience, right? You keep wanting to prove that's not true, but that's also transference, and you're trying to prove you're not the asshole by showing an asshole he isn't an asshole. Talk about control! The fact that I don't play that or use my knowledge to get laid more often should be a fucking clue to the kind of person I am. Sure, I get that women are also competing against women and they want to hear the bad so they know what they need to work on in themselves, and men do that, but I don't want to play that fucking game."

"Wow," Judy said, her eyes wide.

Jon was exhausted and also a little sad he had vented so hard. The sign that he had actually let his guard down sufficiently to vent in front of Judy was sign of progression, but he was mad at himself for being so revealing. He was about to apologize, when Judy said: "You finally seem like a real person to me."

Jon wondered if she actually processed anything he had said. She seemed more relaxed. Whether she got it consciously, she got it unconsciously, and so she had something new to work on.

"How many women have you slept with?" Judy asked

"See, like that question? How is that helpful knowing that, other than to create a ranking and score system?" Jon asked.

"So, you don't want to know how many men I have been with?" Judy asked.

"Not particularly," Jon said.

"Because it will diminish your love for me?" Judy asked.

"No, because I don't need to know," Jon said.

"Would you still fuck me if you knew?" Judy asked.

"You could be dripping your last partner's sperm, and I would eat you out and then fuck you," Jon said.

“Wow!” Judy said. She fanned her face. “You don’t know how fucking wet that just made me. I want to tell you how many people I slept with.”

“You want to test if I am speaking truth?” Jon asked.

“You already know, don’t you?” Judy asked.

“I could know, I have the ability to find that information, but I don’t require it because it doesn’t change my opinion of you. It will affect some people’s opinion. Some people, men and women, will care about that number. I have probably had more partners than the average man, but I am not even in the running when compared to rock stars. I spend most of my time alone because I fear being ridiculed and shamed by others who don’t understand or don’t agree with my indulgence with being polyamorous, and in truth, I have spent years shaming and ridiculing myself, blaming myself for not being like the ‘assumed’ normal. And what makes it worse, I know that the definition of normal doesn’t exist in nature and time, but I carry that, because it was given to me and I don’t put things down easy.”

“There is a definition of normal, by definition,” Judy corrected.

“Great point,” Jon said. “So, based on that, everything that is seen in nature and or is statistically possible is by definition normal, even if it is outside the normative range as established by circle on some self-proclaimed expert’s graph. Outliers are still on the map.”

Judy lit another cigarette, agreeing with Jon by nodding. She pushed smoke into the air above her, still rocking her foot. “It’s still easier for you. You’re a guy. You won’t be shamed or embarrassed as much as I. Even if the shame is a real thing for you, you could go into any bar and brag about bedding me, and they would be like, god I wish I were you, but if I went into a bar and bragged about who I bedded, half would call me a slut, and the other half would expect that I should automatically sleep with them because I am slut, and half of those would beat me up if I actually had sex with them, because that’s what you do with sluts, while the ones rejected would blame me because I am too snobbish to sleep with them.”

Jon nodded. “Yeah,” he agreed. “Were you beaten because you had sex outside your relationship?”

“Oh, fuck you. When was I not beaten? If I cheated, I was beaten. If I didn’t cheat, I was beaten. If I kissed an actor on the screen, I was accused of liking it, whether I did or not, and then grilled if I actually slept with him. So, if I am going to get beat for something I didn’t do, I might as well enjoy doing what I am being punished for,” Judy said.

Jon nodded, rocking. “Or, how about just not get beaten?”

“So, if we were in a relationship, you wouldn’t beat me if I had sex with someone else?”
Judy asked.

“Beat you? No. I might ask why, because I like understanding things,” Jon said.

“Which brings me back to the question why do you sleep around?” Judy asked.

“I like variety. I like adventure. And sometimes, you can tell something to a stranger that you can’t tell your family or friends, because strangers don’t judge you, or if they do judge you, it never comes back to you because they don’t know your family or friends or where you work, and so you were able to be completely honest with someone, and that is one of the biggest benefits to one night stand. One night where someone accepts you for who you are, where you are open and vulnerable, and not have to worry that the next time you have sex that you have to be equally vulnerable and or explain why the next time is different, because even being open and vulnerable waxes and wanes like the moon, and one great episode of intimacy doesn’t mean all episodes are going to be equal or better. Full time relationships come with expectations of performance and duty that one night stands don’t share,” Jon said. “That, and most importantly, I fucking love getting a woman off. I love women.”

Again Jon had the sense that she wasn’t listening, as much forming her next question.
“So, hypothetically, if we were in a relationship, and I had to sleep with the director to get a gig, you wouldn’t beat me?”

“I would never beat you,” Jon said.

“You wouldn’t get mad at me all?” Judy asked.

“Why would I be mad at you?” Jon said.

“Because I slept with director,” Judy said.

“You said, hypothetically, you had to get the job,” Jon said.

“I said hypothetically we are in relationship,” Judy said. “What if I also had to sleep with the leading actor, as part of getting the job?”

“Let me be clear on this point, Judy,” Jon said, almost reaching for his coffee, but instead folding his fingers together, steeping his index fingers. “I am not okay with anyone coercing you into sex. I think you have enough power, clout, and ability to land a job without having to fuck someone to get it.”

“Please, there are hundred other women, younger and better looking than me who would fuck a director just to get on the screen,” Judy said.

“Yeah, and that explains why there are so many crappy performances on the screen,” Jon said. “Models may look good, but rarely can they say a line to save their life. But it is my hope that most of the directors care about the art.”

“They just want to get laid,” Judy insisted.

“Yeah, and the better the final product the more likely they will have more women willing to sleep with them,” Jon said.

Judy nearly laughed. “Okay, well, what if I wanted to sleep with the lead actor? I bet you’d beat me then.”

“I would not beat you,” Jon said.

“Please, I just slept with Gene Kelley, and you’re telling me you’re okay with that?” Judy asked.

“You slept with Gene Kelley?” Jon asked.

“See, you do have a problem with it,” Judy said.

“No, I am seeing if we’re still in hypothetical,” Jon said. “Perfectly okay with you sleeping with Gene.”

“I don’t believe you. I think we’re already fighting about me sleeping with Gene,” Judy said.

“No. We’re fighting about whether or not we’re fighting, but we’re not fighting about you sleeping with Gene,” Jon said.

“See, so I am sleeping in the spare bedroom tonight,” Judy said.

“Do you want to sleep in the spare bedroom?” Jon asked.

“Really?! So we are sober, and still sleeping in the same bed after I slept with someone else?” Judy demanded.

“I have already graphically answered this,” Jon reminded her.

“Knowing I slept with Gene?!” Judy said.

“Judy, we are in a hypothetical relationship for a reason. The assumption is you want to be with me and I want to be with you because there is something about us that brings us long term peace and stability and love. Having a fling with Gene doesn’t change the fact we love each other. It might enhance us. It depends on the why, actually. I can imagine, if I were a woman,

Gene would be on the top of my sleep-wish list. I could even give you Clark Gable, Carry Grant, and Jimmy Stewart.”

“Yeah, and you’d want Kathryn Hepburn in exchange,” Judy said.

“No, actually,” Jon said. “I love her as an actress, but ‘Bringing up Baby’ ruined that for me. Nonstop dialogue, not a thirty second pause in the whole movie, and most of it is Kathryn being this whiny ass rich bitch who always gets her way, with comedy bits that were reused from Abbott and Costello...”

Judy laughed in agreement. “So, you’re telling me I can sleep with whomever I want, without it being automatic permission for you to sleep around, too?”

“Hypothetically, we are in a relationship, unless you and I have specifically agreed to monogamy, you would have known in advance that I will have additional partners,” Jon assured her.

“So, it’s true, you don’t love me,” Judy said.

“OMG, Judy. You’re sleeping around, does that mean you don’t love me?” Jon asked.

“It was Clark Gable!” Judy said.

“So? I am trapped in an elevator with Olivia de Havilland and she comes on to me, you think I am going to turn that shit down?” Jon asked.

“I would give you Olivia,” Judy said.

“But honest, honey, she looked like Olivia,” Jon said, all whiny like, trying to convince a partner to forgive him.

Judy laughed. “You’re evil,” she said, extinguishing the cigarette before it was finished. Her arms dropped to her lap. She took her first real deep breath since entering the office. “Are we that fucked up that we can’t be monogamous?”

“Contrary to popular belief, over time, the majority of people were not monogamous,” Jon said. “We are not broken for not wanting monogamy or being monogamous. Now, it is true that people who were abused or neglected, or sexually molested as children tend to be hypersexual. Technically, they tend to be extreme hypo or hyper, rarely in between. So, if the sex behavior is a direct result of abuse or trauma, it can be problematic. Hypothetically, the husband, husbands? that beat you for having sex outside their relationship, were not beating you because of your behavior, but because they believed it meant something about them as a person, which is probably also informing you about unresolved issues with their own parents. Or, and this needs

to be factored in here, you had an opinion of yourself because of the behavior and felt the need to be punished, and consequently pushed the buttons on the partner to make that happened.”

“So you’re blaming me for them beating me?!” Judy snapped, nearly coming off the couch.

“Not blaming, Judy. Just saying, everyone participates in this thing. You chose a partner that would beat you. Women who have been abused tend to pick abusers. I could take you to a bar, line up every man and have you go down the list just say yes or no, and I would bet you everyone you said no to was the safe, nice guy, and the ones you said yes to have a tendency to beat women. It’s not magic, but it feels like magic, and that is just pure unconscious motivation to resolve past conflicts through present relationships,” Jon explained.

“So it’s all my fault?!” Judy demanded.

“Oh, please, Judy. The only consistent factor in all of your relationships is you” Jon said. He gave her a hand to wait, interrupting the protest she was about to issue. “You like to provoke people. You’re really good at it, too. You’ve been trying to provoke me ever since you walked into my office. And, you are used to getting what you want, you mastered that skill and the subconscious took over to run it for you without you even having to think about it. And I am not picking on you for that. We all learn, from birth, to manipulate systems, and you were a master of doing so, out of necessity for survival, for you and your family. Now, mix in alcohol, drugs, and raw emotions, and your subconscious influence, and you have a recipe for continued abuse. The fact that others recognized this in you and fed you more alcohol and drugs so they could control you is just another level of manipulation. Individuals manipulate, systems manipulate, and there is a feedback and everyone’s buttons are being pushed all the time. There are very few people who can go into polyamorous relationships where jealousy and or hurt feelings don’t play out. People on this path tend to be more open and loving, but only some of us, when we are confronted with conflicting emotions, examine it openly and honestly. You and I in this hypothetical relationship, maybe we talked about you sleeping with others. There is a reason why silver screen romances work on the screen. There’s chemistry! Chemistry is hard to fight. It’s natural to want to play that out in real life, behind the scene, to explore what’s there. Casting directors are fucking geniuses of putting two people in a room and were probably matchmakers in their previous lives. I can’t fault that. Hell, most the time it turns me on, because I want that!”

“What if ends us?” Judy ask, almost quietly.

“It would never end us,” Jon said. “We are forever. Even if you decide to go off with other and be in a monogamous relationship with that other, you go with my blessing, because there is something there that you need for your personal growth and life.”

“And you’re not sore about it?” Judy asked.

“Will I miss you? Will I miss the sound of your voice, rolling over and touching you in the night to reassure myself the world is safe, absolutely,” Jon said. “But my love is not contingent on what I get from you. In my life, I have seen you in a dozen silver screen romances, and if I were to see those moments as highlights from a past life, then I know you needed those experiences to be you. Those histories only make me love you more. You, Judy, were not meant to be in a box. I am not going to lock you up or hide you in the room, and guess what, I love Gene, too. And Clark. This is not a competition for your love. And if they needed your love to be whole, or better, or complete, and in doing so their lives are better, and their art is refined, the whole world benefits. But ultimately, the only equation in this is whether or not you’re happy.”

Judy seemed on the verge of tears. “I have never been happy.”

“Never?” Jon asked, not hiding his skepticism.

“I think that’s why I drink, why I dance to everyone’s tune but my own, why I jumped from bed to bed. I was chasing something that just doesn’t exist,” Judy said.

“Happiness doesn’t exist?” Jon asked.

Judy was holding the couch pillow like a life preserver, her face reflecting a dozen conflicting emotions. “I think it exist for other people, or I would have simply given up searching for it long ago.”

“What would your world look like if you were happy?” Jon asked.

Judy eyes became fierce, staring Jon down, and then she realized something and she uncrossed her legs as if she was going to get up, but she managed to remain seated. Jon didn’t interrupt her. She was on the edge of her seat, as if deliberating.

“This is a trap,” Judy said.

“Asking you what happiness looks like for you is a trap?” Jon asked.

“You don’t really care about my happiness. It’s about you and what you get from this relationship,” Judy said. “Sure, you will promise me roses and happiness, but it will just be hard work and grief and you will fucking leave me for someone else.”

“I hear that relationships have been hard work for you, filled with broken promises, disappointment,” Jon said.

Judy was crying. “Why are you doing this to me?!”

“What am I doing to you?” Jon asked.

Judy hit her chest with the pillow. “I don’t want to feel this!”

“What are you feeling?” Jon asked.

“I thought heaven was supposed to be a place of joy but all I have in here is pain!” Judy continued on.

“What if heaven was just a safe place to process pain so that we can make room for joy?” Jon asked.

“Is there joy?” Judy asked. “Can you give me joy?”

“You want me to give you joy?” Jon asked.

“You don’t have it! You can’t give me what you don’t have,” Judy snapped.

“I can’t give you sunlight, Judy. I don’t own the sun, I experience the sun,” Jon said. “Joy is a place beyond happy and sad, but the fact that you can experience sad, means something is in the sunlight, casting a shadow. You don’t get to the object casting a shadow by running from it. And you can’t fight shadows. You can roar at it, and rage, but when you finish the shadow is still there, but there is hope in that because something is shining on the other side of that object.”

“OMG, you’re going to make another OZ reference!” Judy said. “I forbid any Oz references. It is the one caveat of our relationship!”

“Yep,” Jon said. “My hands are tied. Now, answer my question. What does a world of joy look like for you?”

“I don’t know! That’s why I came to you!” Judy snapped, standing up.

Jon stood up. “What does joy look like?”

Judy pointed. “You’re not listening.”

“I am here. Talk to this out,” Jon said. “What does joy look like?”

“You should know! You promised to protect me and you’re just like everyone else. You just want a piece of me, use me, own me,” Judy said.

“Joy is being free?” Jon asked.

“Joy is not being touched without my permission! Joy is dancing because I want to dance, and I never want to dance to make ends meet again. I want to go to school and be a veterinarian.

I want a happy life with a normal family and not have a million strangers sending me letters telling me their problems and how if I only loved them their world would be better. Or promising to make me happy when really they just want to be happy by owning me. I don't want to be that girl that makes everyone's world better while mine remain empty. I just want to be happy. For a moment," Judy said.

Judy pushed off the couch and sat down on the floor, digging her hands into the carpet, crying. Jon slid off his chair and sat down on the floor, across from her, his back against his chair. He just sat there, quietly listening to her crying.

"Is that too much to ask for?" Judy asked, hitting the pillow in front of her. "To be happy, to not have demands on me? Not having children climbing on me and needing me. I can't even make myself happy, how can I make kids happy? They're always touching me and climbing on me, and I think of those fucking midgets and I just want to kill them."

"The midgets, or your children?" Jon asked.

"How horrible am I? I wish I were dead," Judy went on.

"And yet, here you are, again, with these thoughts," Jon said. "Is this why you drank? To make the thoughts go away?"

"Did you hear me say I want to kill my own kids?" Judy said. "I am a fucking monster!"

"Did drinking make the thoughts go away?" Jon asked.

"Can anything make these thoughts go away?" Judy asked.

"What would happen if you met these thoughts with love?" Jon asked, gently.

"How can you ask me to love such evil thoughts?" Judy asked, tears dropping from her face. "This is evil, it comes from evil. I am evil!"

"Judy, your thoughts are a normal reaction to trauma," Jon said. "Your time did not deal with post-traumatic stress. You were a child, you were abused, and your children reminded you of the abuse, and knowing you needed help but unable to admit such a thought, for fear of ruining your reputation, you took the only reasonable course available to you, drinking, which you did very well, which exasperated the problem... Even in all that, your kids never knew why or how you suffered, and though they have their own experience of you, filled with good and bad, they never doubted you loved them, and most of their issues stem from the fact that they only wanted to love you and help you, because even though they didn't know the why of it, they knew you were suffering."

“They probably should have been treated for ADHD, but I was so opposed to pushing drugs because drugs were pushed on me,” Judy said. “And believe me, I wanted to dope them up so they stop jumping around and stop climbing on me and always wanting to touch me.”

“They were daughters of a dancer,” Jon said. “They probably had high kinesthetic intelligence. And, they probably knew your pain and wanted to show you love, and in doing that, be loved.”

“I ruined their lives,” Judy said.

“You gave them their lives, you taught them how to love,” Jon said.

“I beat them. I yelled at them. I ignored them. I was not available to them,” Judy said. “They were such gentle, loving spirits in the beginning, and I destroyed them, robbed them of their childhood.”

“Yeah,” Jon said, quietly. “Funny thing about childhood. You came from a time when the definition of childhood was in flux. You were born in a time when children were born to increase the family’s ability to work. You were also born in the depression, and your family made ends meet through performing. You made it your life’s mission to make sure your family never wanted, which is what most people resolve to do, to make sure their children don’t have to experience what they did growing up. Interestingly, that also comes with a belief that kids are spoiled because they didn’t have to go through shit, they have no values because everything was just given to them, and so they don’t have a clue, and there is this wanting to rub it in the face to show them how much better their lives are comparatively.”

Judy looked at Jon. “Will they ever forgive me?”

Jon shrugged. “Will you forgive them?”

“Forgive them for what?” Judy asked.

“Reminding you of your pain,” Jon said.

Judy laughed and cried simultaneously. “Would you hold me?”

Jon scooted closer to her and allowed her to hug him, to cry on his shoulder. He held her to him, just allowing her to be. She wiped her nose on his sleeve and then returned her head to his shoulder. She turned her head in towards him, breathing on his neck.

“I seriously want to get drunk and fuck you,” Judy whispered.

“I’ll buy you a hat with a parrot on it,” Jon told her.

“I don’t understand,” Judy said.

“You will. And when you do, you will laugh,” Jon assured her.

“Would you make love to me?” Judy asked.

“This doesn’t feel like love to you?” Jon asked.

Judy back up from him so she could see his eyes. “OMG,” she said. “You really love me.”

“Always and forever,” Jon said.

“We’re not going to have sex, are we,” Judy said more than asked.

“No,” Jon said.

Judy put her head back on his shoulder. “Are we done?” Judy asked.

“Oh, I think we have miles yet to go,” Jon said.

“Frost,” Judy said, revealing she got the reference. “Jon?”

“Yes, Judy,” Jon said.

“I love you,” Judy said.

Chapter 18

Loxy was enjoying the walk in nature; the scratchiness of the grass against her legs, the colors, the smells, the random leaping of insects that jumped from her path, the variety of flying insects. The floating chair with Timothy in it followed her. He had long since gave up on protesting and was now sulking, not resigned to his fate, but sulking. He did not like nature, unless it was an immersive video game like Mine Craft. Imagining nature or experiencing it virtually was more his speed. She spotted a roaming party of giant lemurs, and as soon as she made eye contact with the lead female, the party approached her. If you meet a gorilla in the wild, you never make eye contact, but the culture of giant lemurs is different. Not making eye contact would be considered an act of aggression or at the least be considered suspicious.

Loxy met the lead female with open arms and love. She tolerated the lead examining her. It took the flower she had put in her hair out and ate it, and then made way for Loxy to greet her entourage. Loxy met them all with kindness in her voice and hugs, and then introduced them to Timothy. Timothy was clearly frightened of them and told them to keep back, and the males did stay back, hissing at him, while the females petted him, and smelled his ears.

“He is in my care,” Loxy explained. “And we’re just walking. Would you like to walk with us?”

“Are you crazy? They’re wild animals!” Timothy snapped.

“And humans aren’t wild?” Loxy asked.

“Of course we’re not! We’re civilized,” Timothy said.

“Oh, so if aliens landed on the planet, we wouldn’t run like scared mere cats, or attack like scared gorillas?” Loxy asked.

“As opposed to greeting them with flowers and love?!” Timothy asked.

“I guarantee you, if aliens are traveling interstellar space, they’re going to be civilized and they’re going to want to meet you with flowers and love,” Loxy said. “Don’t you agree?”

The lead expressed a sentiment, sounding something similar to a combination of a cat’s purr meow combo and a howler monkey.

“What’s your name?” Loxy asked.

It again made a noise, a distinct squeaking noise.

“I am not sure I could say that as well. Would you be okay with Ri-ri?” Loxy asked.

“Right, you’re Doctor Doolittle,” Timothy said.

“Oh, I love that movie. The original, not the comedic remakes,” Loxy said, and started singing, “If I could talk to the animals,” a cross between the Vanda King version and the Rex Harrison movie version.

The lemurs danced as Loxy sang, and she began to walk, carrying her song. The chair followed. A butterfly landed on her finger and she gave pause to celebrate the kindness before it flew off.

“Fucking flower girls, hippies,” Timothy ranted, giving an emo, punk rock counter point to the song, which, though discordant, actually blended well, as if they were in a duet. His version had animals eating people and generally molesting them. He got stuck on the dolphin rapes. Yes, dolphins rape people, his version, but Loxy knew it was just dolphins being playful. They didn’t even care about gender. “Play” was play. And they could be a bit rough sometimes. Not everyone that swam with dolphins have had pleasant experiences, but part of that is expectation that they’re gentle and kind, and they are, but they aren’t human, and they have to learn to be with people.

“How marvelous was that?” Loxy asked on finishing the duet.

“Were you listening to my lyrics?” Timothy asked.

“Your contribution was beautiful,” Loxy insisted.

“This is not ‘Sound of Music’ and you are so not Julie Andrews,” Timothy said.

“No, I think I am more a brunette version of Sandra Dee, don’t you?” Loxy asked. “With the sultry, girl next door voice of Karen Carpenter, the eclectic stylistic mix of Bjork, the vocal range and technical allure of Maria Callas, the attitude of Aretha Franklyn, and the seductiveness of an Alizee- Katy Perry mix.”

“No,” Timothy said.

“Aww, Timy, Timy, Timy,” Loxy said. “You’re telling me out of that entire collage of possibilities, you can’t permit that I hit something that resonates with you?”

“I got something that will resonate in you,” Timothy said.

Loxy was amused. “So, you keep saying,” she said.

The giant lemurs seemed more interested in eating random flowers than the conversation ensuing. They would fall behind, catch up, or run ahead, or away, and return.

“Why are you with Jon?” Timothy said.

“I love Jon,” Loxy said.

“Right. You’re soul mates,” Timothy said, with contempt and ridicule.

“You don’t believe in soul mates?” Loxy asked.

“Of course not,” Timothy said. “There is no magical being who perfectly complements me out there. People are just fucking neurotic.”

“Good for you,” Loxy said.

“What?” Timothy asked confused, looking for the trick.

“Theorizing is healthy. How’s your theory working for you?” Loxy asked.

“Just fine, fuck you,” Timothy said.

“Truth be known, I agree with you. There is no magical being who perfectly complements another out there, because people change and grow, which would also mean, soul mates, by definition, change and grow,” Loxy said, musing out loud. She paused to examine a flower, decided not to collect it, and turned to Timothy. His chair stopped when she stopped. “Everyone and everything is soul. All souls are mates. Every interaction with a soul, deliberate or unconscious, brings either a gift or a lesson. If you don’t get the lesson, the gift was opportunity.”

“He fucking made you. He owns you. He fucking raped you right out of the cradle,” Timothy said.

Loxy blinked, considering it, smiled subtly. “Tulpas are so interesting, aren’t they?” Loxy said. “Did he make me, or did he call to me to him and I arrived out of the Universe to complete him? Did he make me, or did we make each other?”

“Your history is a fucking lie,” Timothy said.

“Maybe so,” Loxy agreed. “But whose history isn’t? I think you will find some strong proponents for the theory that what you imagine is more real than the life you lead, more real than the life you think you had, because your memory isn’t as good as you want to believe.” Then she suddenly recognized the three notes that haunted her, like a auditory meme that usually introduced her or her wonderland, and she was finally able manifest it in its entirety, completing it with a song; it was something given her that gave her both roots and wings simultaneously. Unlike “talk with the animals’ this time she had a full orchestra accompanying: “Come with me, and you’ll be, in a world of pure imagination. Take a look and you’ll see into your imagination. We’ll begin, with a spin, traveling in the world of my creation. What we’ll see, will defy,

explanation. If you want to view paradise, simply look around and view it. Anything you want to, do it. Want to change the world, there's nothing to it..."

"What if I want to fucking rape you?" Timothy asked.

Loxy danced closer, brushed his cheek. "There is no life I know to compare to pure imagination. Living there, you'll be free, if you truly, wish to be," she sang gently.

"You're not turning my life into a fucking musical!" Timothy protested.

"Oh, dear, all of life is a musical," Loxy said.

"You can't have music about rapes?" Timothy said.

"Seven Bride for Seven Brothers, Pirate Movie implied, Pirates of Penzance implied, but still there," Loxy said. "Beauty and the Beast, well, implied, and bestiality on top of that. Umm, Sleeping Beauty, I think that goes beyond implication," Loxy said.

"You're can't Disney-fy my life," Timothy. "I am evil."

"Disney confronts evil all the time," Loxy said.

"Is that what this is? Confrontation? Heal me and I will show you confrontation," Timothy said.

"That impulse to go there is strong in you," Loxy said. "Remember the first time you raped a non-family member?"

"It wasn't rape, she wanted it," Timothy said.

"Is that how you remember it?" Loxy said.

She brought her hands together and when she unfolded, a vision unfolded before him, like a hologram that immersed him when she pushed into his face. His first vehicle was a van that he had acquired, surprisingly cheap because the old man didn't realize the value of the Volkswagon bus that had been sitting in his garage in need of repair. Not only did Timothy repair it, he painted it to look like the Scooby Doo van. As he was immersed into his vision, he suddenly had access to more information than he had had during the experience. The girl, 17, walking down the side of the highway wasn't just a meth-head, but had just been at the psych hospital down the street. She was homeless, no insurance, she had recently used meth, and though she had had a past diagnosis of bipolar, because she wasn't suicidal or homicidal, and the hospital staff assumed she was simply looking for a bed, they had turned her back out onto the street. They assumed her recent meth use was her prominent issue. He pulled over, and she rushed up to him. Anything to get out of the cold, maybe have a moment to sit and be

comfortable, maybe sleep. She spoke fast, hyper verbal, and her speech was nonsensical to him, as he had never experienced true flight of ideas. No sooner than she was in the car and the door was closed, he was dragging her into the back, where he raped her, and then threw her out of the van and drove on. She didn't even tried to fight, and her words fluctuated from pleading, to rage, to acceptance, hate and love...

"She asked for it," Timothy whispered, as if struggling to wake from a dream.

Loxy took him deeper. The truth was, she was not bipolar, but a victim of childhood rape. Each of the three men that dated her mom after her marriage broke up had taken their turn with the girl, Amber Jones, each a different age. At age 8 Amber's mother had her diagnosed with ADHD and Oppositional Defiance disorder. Since her symptoms, or behaviors, wasn't ADHD, giving her Ritalin not only didn't work, but sent her on a life path of seeking amphetamines. Prior to going to the hospital, she had been walking and found a group of homeless men, who gladly gave her some meth, and then proceeded to rape her. She had gone to the hospital for help, but the bias of the staff had their own trajectory. Just another drug user. She gets what she deserves.

"She gets what she deserves," Timothy echoed.

The vision faded. "Do people ever get what they deserve?"

"Don't ever do that to me again!" Timothy said.

"Do what? Give you truth?" Loxy asked.

"Like Jon has never lied to get sex," Timothy said. "You think he's better than me? He is just like me. Jon would have been all over that Amber bitch."

"Yes, Jon would have taken Amber in, and they probably would have fucked, but she would have had a safe place to sleep off the meth first, and food," Loxy said. "And though he might have thought of about it, he wouldn't have molested her while she was sleeping or high. You seem surprised to learn that you are not the only man in your world who would pick up a homeless woman under the pretense of helping just so you can fuck them. It's part of the patriarchal paradigm that any exchange or help should be rewarded with sex. There's an expectation that a woman should be grateful to the point of compensating with their body. That's why heroes in movies always get sex. There are two kinds of men in those movies, the ones that would tie the woman up and take her against her will, and the men who rescue them from the first kind so they can fuck her." Loxy scratched her head. "Technically, women's liberation as

resulted in emasculating men, which also increases the number of rapes. Rape is never about sex, it's about power. Patriarchal societies are about power. Feminism is about power. AS female take back power, some men retaliate, by seeking power. And homeless woman, a child, with no power, and you, no power, but more than her, so you suckered Amber by letting her think she might get some relief, used her, and tossed her back into the world. That's not love, that's not even lust. Lust at least care about the source of gratification enough that you leave it intact so you can get more. Do you want to know what happened to her next?"

"No," Timothy said. "I don't care."

"I won't make you watch, then," Loxy said. "But she walked into traffic and killed herself."

"Life is hard," Timothy said.

"It can be really hard," Loxy agreed. "And, since you want to go there, and you are so ready to compare yourself to Jon, tell me, was your life as bad as his?"

"Fuck you," Timothy said.

"You adopted him as a soulbound. It means you processed some of his past into your being," Loxy said. "Now, look into that, see how he has struggled. More importantly, look how he responds to the world with kindness most of the time, sometimes anger, but never hate. You asked me how I can love him when he's just like you. Yeah, he has lust and thoughts of rape and wanting to rescue people with the expectation he will be rewarded with sex and love, which is actually not about helping others but rather about helping self. Helping others is usually a pretense to make self feel better. Jon knows that, and still he walks with humility, and peace in his heart, and offers kindness. He chooses to respond to violence and aggression with love. He chooses being a survivor, not a victim. Between the two of you, if anyone had a right to respond with bitterness and expectation and hate, it would be Jon, as your world, though it sucked, it was nowhere near as awful as Jon's, and more, nowhere near as bad as most of the human race, and most people don't rape others as pay backs. What's your excuse? What do you offer?"

"Undo my pants and see for yourself," Timothy said.

Loxy patted his head. "And that's why it so unhealthy to compare. Because it doesn't matter that Jon's life was worse or not. It only matters that your life sucked for you," Loxy said. She turned to walk onwards. "What else should we discuss?"

Timothy resisted further interaction by remaining stubbornly quiet. Loxy talked a little, sang a little, she took time to hydrate herself and Timothy. She took a moment to pee, right out in the open, not bothering to hide behind a tree, but neither did she do it front of Timothy. Just stepping behind his chair was sufficient, and out of respect for his preference than fear of response. And they walked until she found a space that seemed ideal camping. She closed her eyes to get a sense of the ley lines, spinning arms out stretched. This was not Switzerland, and she was not dressed in a summer dress, but she felt like Julie Andrews about to launch into song. She became aware of a subtle change, like a change in air pressure before a storm, the smell of ozone after the rain, the sounds of snowfall lighting the ground, a discordant note, and wind winding up around her. She smiled, amused.

“Are you trying to caress me with a magical wind?” Loxy said, turning to face Timothy.

Loxy opened her eyes and found Timothy standing before the floating chair. His hand was up, his fingers in suggestive position of holding and caressing, but only from a perspective behind him, like the scene in Flash Gordon with Ming the Merciless testing Dale’s stimulation response. Loxy found herself encased in a glass cylinder, like an emergency cigar tube. Her feet were still on the ground. She touched it to confirm the magic had crystalize, it was no longer just pure energy surrounding her, but ascertained that information while maintaining eye contact with Timothy. The world seemed distant, like looking through a telescope backwards. Even the giant lemurs seemed miles away. They might have been in spitting distance, but were clearly outside the magical bubble of influence being pushed through Timothy.

“Ahh, Professor Fribourg, I presume?” Loxy asked.

“How did you know?” Fribourg asked through Timothy’s mouth.

“Please. Who else should I’ve expected to find holding Vader's leash? I recognized your foul stench when I was brought on board.”

“Nice,” Fribourg said, approaching the cylinder trap. “Star Wars jokes never get old.”

“You realize you lost the game when you didn’t follow up with another appropriate line,” Loxy asked.

“Ahh, yes, stay on target,” Fribourg nodded, walking around the glass, dragging a finger around the tube. “But I am not really a game player.”

“OMG, that is so not true, Professor,” Loxy said, crossing her arms, but following Fribourg as he went around in Timothy’s body.

“I am curious. Why haven’t you told Jon you were in one of my classes?” Fribourg asked.

“How do you know I haven’t?” Loxy asked.

Fribourg paused. “I didn’t. I was fishing. So, why haven’t you?”

“Didn’t come up due to contextual relevancy,” Loxy said.

“You were one of my best students. I was so disappointed when you didn’t take another course with me,” Fribourg said.

“Well, surely you know why light workers do so well at shadow work,” Loxy said.

Fribourg nodded Timothy’s head. “Indeed,” he said.

“And, while we are on the subject of light, I demand in the name of love that you free Timothy from your grip,” Loxy said.

Fribourg laughed so hard he nearly loss control of Timothy’s body. The body fell backwards as if it were going to fall all the way to the ground, but then came back to full standing in a very awkward, freakily possessed kind of way.

“Timothy belongs to me. Once you’ve started down the dark path, forever does it dominate your life,” Fribourg said.

“No it doesn’t,” Loxy insisted.

“Yes it does,” Fribourg said, using Timothy’s child voice, as if this was an elementary argument.

“Oh, for love’s sake, did you not watch Return of the Jedi?” Loxy asked. “At the very end, Anakin was there with Yoda and Ben. One big happy family.”

“Yeah, Lucas was always fucking things up. Do you really think one act of kindness erases all the evil Vader did?” Fribourg asked.

“It’s not the past behaviors, or even his final action, that save him,” Loxy said. “It was grace. Compassion and love is the only redemptive power in the Universe.”

“Oh, my dear, stupid, child,” Fribourg said. “All of that is an illusion.”

“By that, everything is an illusion. Reality is dreamlike in that everything ends, and what you thought was emotionally important yesterday has no or little relevance today,” Loxy said.

“Except this: Timothy is mine. I own him. He can never be a light worker, he has too much anger in him, and has done too much harm, and now he’s too old to start the training.”

“Yeah, well, as you said, Lucas was always messing it up,” Loxy said. “Here’s the new paradigm: you’re never too old to start the training, and once you’re on the path, you’re always on the path. No one gets left behind. I mean, think about it. You can’t unlearn what you have learned. Teach a magician a trick and he will always have that trick, and so if you send them out of the academy, they’re more likely to fall to the dark for being rejected and wanting to prove themselves to the people who rejected them. Once you’re in the fold, you’re always in the fold. Hence the song, ain’t no mountain high enough, aint no river wide enough, aint no magic strong enough, to keep me away from you...”

“I don’t think that last line was in the song,” Fribourg said.

“I was improvising,” Loxy said. “Point is, once a Safe Haven student, always a Safe Haven student. You will graduate or die trying.”

Fribourg tapped the glass. “Timothy will never be a Safe Haven student.”

“Everyone who knows of Safe haven, whether it comes in a dream, a whisper from a conversation from across the cafeteria, hand written in a snowflake that touched the tongue, or in the kiss of a muse, has an opportunity to become a student,” Loxy said. “Your days at the University are over. You have graduated. You have all the knowledge you will ever need to do good or evil. I am a Dakini, a Skydancer, and I will not allow you to make Timothy one of your minions. If you want to do evil, you will do it directly, not through the hands of others, not through Timothy.”

“He is a fucking rapist,” Fribourg said.

“So what do you want with him?” Loxy asked.

“I need minions,” Fribourg said. “And, he called me, Darlin. And yes, I have to call you Darlin, Darlin. He tried to possess me! Now he is mine. He has a contract with me. You can’t have him.”

“Then, why are you here?” Loxy asked.

“I am stuck in Timothy’s primary wonderland, due to Jon changing the access codes,” Fribourg said, disgusted. “I need those codes to get out.”

“I guess you shouldn’t have pushed him out of the riverboat,” Loxy said.

“Yeah, I should have known that was not Timothy’s Jon,” Fribourg said. “But I couldn’t help myself.”

“If I recall correctly, the only reason Jon is in Timothy’s wonderland is because you two summoned him,” Loxy said.

“So? Someone needed to be in the body when the world went south. Felt like good payback, too,” Fribourg said. “Still a bit sore about the whole end of the world thing. I was just making things better and Jon went and ruined my orgasm. You know how long I have been teasing that out?”

“Aww, poor baby,” Loxy said. “Want me to kiss it and make it better.”

Fribourg laughed. “I know better than to tangle with a Skydancer. You like to change men.”

“Men come to me because they want to change,” Loxy said. “And here you are?”

“Nope, I just need the codes, and the pilot Timothy commissioned for me, and maybe a hostage till I get away,” Fribourg said. “And a steak. A really good steak. One of those cows that was massaged by Japanese Geisha girls all its life.”

“You can’t keep me in here forever,” Loxy said.

Fribourg nodded. Using magic he drew a line on the cylinder, just at her ankle level, completing a circle. It was the circle that would become a portal. Loxy folded her arms.

“I need you to just jump over that circle,” Fribourg instructed.

“Yeah, right, not happening. I am not cooperating with you,” Loxy said.

“Jump above the line, or I will make you rise above the line,” Fribourg said.

“Do you even have enough power to open a portal?” Loxy asked.

“You might as well jump! Go ahead and jump!” Fribourg shouted.

“No,” Loxy said.

“Fine, we’ll do it the hard way,” Fribourg said.

Fribourg placed Timothy’s hand against the glass tube, and where his hand touched, water began to flow on the other side of the tube, as if coming from his hand. It initially shot out, hitting Loxy’s Pith hat, soaking her blouse, and then flowed in a steady stream down the inside of the cylinder wall. The water was ice cold. Fribourg smiled at her.

“Love the wet blouse,” Fribourg said. “The cold really brings out your nipples.”

“A little ice water is not going to change my mind,” Loxy said. “My primary spirit animal is a Polar Bear.”

“That’s why you have a heart of ice,” Fribourg said.

“Really? How did you get to be a Professor with thoughts like that?” Loxy asked. “Polar Bears are warm blooded. They bring love and warmth to the winter.”

“Umm, good point. The females are also solitary animals, raising babies on their own,” Fribourg said. “Does Jon know you’re just going to fuck him and leave him?”

“Baiting is so beneath you,” Loxy said. The water was now to her ankles.

“Oh, so he does know, or did you give him like a promise ring? Or, did you two make a power card, combining your love for all eternity?” Fribourg said. “That’s comparable to what? Making a mixed cassette tape for each other? Are you two in high school or college?”

The water was now up to her knees. Though she wasn’t suffering from the cold, it was clearly starting to have an effect, physically, forcing her to divert energy into her body to maintain her temperature.

“All you have to do is jump,” Fribourg reminded her.

“No,” Loxy said.

“What do you think is going to happen here?” Fribourg asked. “The water will fill this container. Feel it lapping at your thighs? I love your wet thighs by the way. I am so jealous of the water right not, twirling around your legs, teasingly rising in your shorts. Rising, filling you. Oh, I am getting hot watching you get immersed in freezing waters. Eventually though, you will rise above my line. You will do so consciously, or, after you have drowned and your body floats or I lift your unconscious body with magic, I will get you where I need you. And you know, if I touch your body with magic, there will be a ravishing.”

“Ravish away,” Loxy invited.

“Oh, the things I will do to you when you’re unconscious,” Fribourg said.

“Well, not to me. The body is just a body, and if it’s unconscious, you’re not doing it to me, you’re doing it to yourself,” Loxy said.

“Are you that well-grounded, or are you playing it cool because you’re in freezing water?” Fribourg asked, hugging himself in mock cold. “Oh, is that cold shivers, or is that my first water penetration orgasm? I am water! I will own you.”

“You can’t own water. The more you try to hold it, the more it flows away,” Loxy said.

“You’re holding out against inevitability,” Fribourg said. “Wait wait wait, you don’t think Jon is going to come and rescue you, do you? Jon is just as much trapped there as I am.”

“I don’t need rescuing. I am not in danger of being harmed,” Loxy said.

“You’re going to drown, I am going to take you, and I am going to rape you,” Fribourg said.

“You’re going to try,” Loxy said.

“Break out then,” Fribourg said. “Can’t? Won’t? Oh, haha, you like being raped. Is that why you like being with Jon? Wait a minute, Jon made you. You’re a tulpa. So, sex with you is incest, by definition!”

“If you hold that we are all the products of consciousness, one originating thought, then all relationships are incestuous, by definition,” Loxy said.

“OMG, I should have realized. Jon isn’t your father. Jon is Luke and you are Leah! I am the father! Oh, this is too rich. If Jon won’t willingly join me, then I will have you. You’re much better looking than he, anyway, and a much better magician. Join me and you and I can rule Universe as father and sex slave daughter. I’ll even get you the Leah Hutt costume.”

“I do like that costume,” Loxy said. “I was thinking about wearing that for Jon’s next birthday.”

“Jon doesn’t celebrate,” Fribourg reminded.

“He will celebrate that,” Loxy said.

Fribourg considered, and nodded agreement. “Yeah, he would,” he agreed. The water was now up to her shoulders. “Oh, I can feel your breast through the medium. Come on, just let yourself rise. Rise to the occasion, kind of like I am right now.”

“Are you sure that’s you, or is it Timothy rising?” Loxy asked. “How does it feel holding another man’s penis?”

Fribourg laughed, put his forehead against the cylinder. “My masculinity isn’t threatened by suggestions of homosexuality. In fact, doing so makes me want to fuck you all the more, to prove to you that I will take what I want when I want. I might actually use Timothy’s penis to do it, which would really annoy him to no end knowing his penis was in you but he doesn’t get to feel it, so I need up fucking both of you simultaneously. You got to fuck with your minions so they know who’s in charge.”

“You’re just a powerless child of the Universe, raging against the very wind that sustains you,” Loxy said.

The water was now up to her neck. Creeping up towards her chin.

“I am about to touch your lips. I am looking forward to caressing them, filling them, then your lungs. I will fill you with water first, then my breath, and then me. I am so going to fill every part of you,” Fribourg said. He kissed and licked on the cylinder, teasing her like Japanese POV kissing glass video.

“Do I look intimidated?” Loxy asked.

“No, actually,” Fribourg said, perturbed.

“I am not afraid of you. Should you fulfill your threat to possess me, you will change. How will you change, I don’t know, but you will,” Loxy shrugged. “I will change, too, as that is the nature of all relationships, to change. But I will decide in what direction I will go. I will decide what I become. And I will always choose to be more loving, more compassionate. I will even love you and extend compassion towards you.”

“Fuck you and your compassion!” Fribourg said.

“You want to know the secret to my love for you?” Loxy asked.

“You can’t love me! You don’t know me, bitch, and even if you had inkling of who I am and what I have done, by definition, you can’t touch this!” Fribourg said.

“You’re wrong. There is no fall that outdistances love,” Loxy said. “I love you, because you’re a part of Jon.”

“I am his father! I am your father by default,” Fribourg said.

“Why do you think you look like Adam Sandler?” Loxy asked. “You even have his whiny, wimpy voice when you’re frustrated.”

“No I don’t!” Fribourg said, stomping his feet

“Yeah, you do,” Loxy said.

Fribourg stuck his fingers in his ears, “La la la, I can’t hear you.”

“Yeah, you can. You look like Adam because Jon wanted to try and imagine a fun, comical dad, but he also needed an explanation for abandonment,” Loxy said. “So he made you, his Tulpa. In the absence of a father, he created you, over lapping you with an archetype.”

“I am not a Tulpa. I am his father, which makes me your grandfather,” Fribourg said.

“No, Morlon,” Loxy said. “You are a Tulpa, just like me. So, technically, he’s the Vader, and he owns you, and I am your sister. You, Sir, are a figment of Jon’s imagination. And I am here to facilitate the reintegration process. Jon and I are doing shadow work. The more you engage me, the more reintegrated you become. Take me, Morlon. Fuck me, possess me, own me,

and in doing so, Jon reclaims you. I reclaim you. Return with love to our father, who gave us life.”

“Nooooo!” Fribourg said.

He put both his hands against the glass and increased the flow of water, at hip level, lifting her, pushing, spinning her. Water flowed from his hands as if from broken cap fire hydrants. Water hit her in the face and twirled the pool holding her, rising above her, lifting her clothes and her until she was above the portal line. As soon as the circle was free of obstacles the portal opened, and Loxy was flushed through and out as if down a toilet. Nothing left but the pith helmet, floating. After she was completely gone, the back wash brought Jon up and into the tube. Fribourg let go and the water subsided, leaving Jon confused, wet, and cold. The last thing he remembered was closing his eyes after Stacey made him cum while riding him cowboy style while Snow was licking and sucking his balls.

“Yeah, that’s right, bi-otch, who’s your daddy now?” Fribourg demanded.

“Timothy?” Jon asked.

“What?! No, I am your father, and I am holding Loxy hostage,” Fribourg shouted at him.

“Really? Who are you?” Jon asked.

“Really?” Fribourg asked.

“It’s hard to see through the barrier. Have you been kissing the glass?” Jon asked.

“Turns you on, eh?” Fribourg asked.

“Well, not if you did it,” Jon said. “If Keera had did that, yeah, that would be fucking hot.”

“Who am I? Who’s your daddy,” Fribourg demanded.

“Who’s on first,” Jon said.

“Stop that! You’re not a comedian,” Fribourg said. “You’re never funny.”

“Morlon?” Jon asked.

“Is that a question or acceptance?” Fribourg asked.

“What the hell have you done now?” Jon asked.

“I have Loxy and if you want her back alive, you will give me the access codes and Wilma Deering,” Fribourg demanded.

“We already did that scene!” Jon said.

“Oh, we did? Yeah, sorry. It’s difficult to track linearly when we bounce around so much,” Fribourg said. “But, what-cha gonna do? Wacha gona do now I came for you...”

Jon didn’t answer. He was cold, wet, but the water was now back down to the line at his ankle.

“No, really, what are you going to do? I got Loxy,” Fribourg said.

“Like you can contain her,” Jon laughed, amused. “She is spirit, she is love, she is light. The moment you think you possess her is when you discover you are blinded by her brilliance.”

“I know you. You’re coming for her,” Fribourg said.

“No, Morlon, I am not,” Jon said. “I am coming for you. I will chase you through a million lives and across a million planets if need be, but I will catch you.”

Fribourg paled. His blood departed him so fast that even Timothy paled. “Catch me if you can, bitch,” Fribourg said, and disappeared.

Timothy had his body back. The realization that he wasn’t in his chair produced the most horrific look. He fell to the ground like a spineless scarecrow. The world view returned to normal. There was a floating chair, distant forests at appropriate perspectives, giant lemurs, and Jon was stuck in a cylinder. Lemurs tested the glass. With Loxy gone, their curiosity about the chair won out, and they begin pushing it about, riding it, taking turns. Several began to sort through the backpack. Male lemurs began to molest Timothy.

“Stop that!” Timothy yelled.

By now his pants were down and his butt in the air and they tagged his ass. Saving grace was it didn’t take long for them to do their business. A down side, there was like five males, several of which fought for their turn.

“Make them stop!” Timothy pleaded to know one.

“I don’t speak Lemur,” Jon said.

“OMG,” Timothy said. “It hurts.”

“I thought you were paralyzed and had no feelings down there,” Jon said.

“Let’s jam a giant lemur penis in your ass and see if you feel anything!” Timothy snapped.

“Yeah, they’re bigger than I imagined,” Jon said. “Who would have thought, giant lemur have giant lemur penises. Oh, it’s the thought that is hurting you. They’re not even using lube. Well, you should be sufficiently lubed by the time the last one is ready for you.”

“Fuck you,” Timothy snapped, his head jarring with the motion of his body. “This is all your fault! This is why you brought me out here? To teach me a lesson.”

“You summoned Fribourg into your world, Sir, not me,” Jon said. “Which baffles the hell out of me. Why him? Did you read my book? He was not a nice man. More than that, I beat him. That kind of makes me the hero, the go to guy for magic. What the hell were you thinking?”

“I don’t want to be your friends. You emasculate your friends!” Timothy said, the first Lemur took a second turn. “Fuck! Stop it! I am going to fucking kill you and stuff your asses and frame you on my trophy wall.”

“I do not emasculate my friends,” Jon said.

Timothy’s head lulled in Jon’s direction, still rocking. “Name one of your male friends who has sex!”

Jon had to pause. He didn’t really have any male friends, come to think of it.

“Carl Jung is a friend, he has sex, I think he still has sex,” Jon offered.

“He’s an associate, and he is old and not having sex,” Timothy said.

“Oh, you don’t want to assume because he’s old he isn’t having sex,” Jon said. “The libido you experience by sixteen is your set point for life, you’ll have that drive at 86, minus medical problems or accidents. You can expect to be getting it on in the nursing home.”

“That’s just sick,” Timothy said.

“You are so American. Old people have sex. We like sex. In most countries, young and old get it own together,” Jon said. “Typically older men and younger women, because, and this is probably ass backwards stereotypes, the older a man gets, the more experienced and nuanced he gets. Young guys are cute, and fit, but have no prospects, no education, and just aren’t worldly. There are exceptions. Young guys from Latin American countries can hit an American beach and steal all the women from the Americans, because, well, Americans don’t have a clue. The American males hold this self-doubt belief that they don’t have anything and so they don’t even put themselves in the game, but the Latin Americans, not a penny in their pocket, can’t speak the language, but they assume because they have a dick, they’re going to get fucked, and sure enough, that philosophy works for them. So while the American young men are pushing themselves through college courses they hate, trying to get jobs they hate, in the hopes they can get laid, the poor ass men are fucking their peers.”

“Fuck college! It’s just another societal paradigm that emasculates males,” Timothy said. “Fucking neutral gender words. The fucking world wants to medicate boys, make us sit still and quiet, because they don’t have time for us.”

“Yeah, that seems true,” Jon said.

“It is true! Why go to college, fucking go into debt for a job that pays just minimum wage?” Timothy asked. “Women now out earn most men, and their paradigm hasn’t fucking changed. They still desire men who earn more, are more educated than them, so more than half of the male population is out of the running, and they’d rather be single than be with a man of a lower earning status who can’t make money and add to her net wealth. And it is about adding to her net wealth, because fuck, men have no rights. When the divorce happens, they don’t get the home, or the kids, and they end paying child support, even if it’s determined by genetics that it’s not his! So, you go to school, go into debt, marry some bitch who demands a big wedding that you can’t afford, only to get divorce, you owe school, you’re still paying on the wedding, mortgage tax, kid tax, there is no fucking hope for men. There is no incentive for a man to be loyal or even get married. And then women sit around lamenting they can’t find a mate. Why would a man voluntarily sign up for that shit?”

“I get it,” Jon said. “You’re angry. You want your power back. But the secret is, you never lost it.”

“The world is changing!”

“It is. People are more alone and more afraid than ever before. We have lived in the competition paradigm for so long no one sees an out,” Jon said. “But there’s an out.”

“Show me,” Timothy said.

“Love,” Jon said.

“There is no fucking love!” Timothy snapped. “Why do you think men go to bars?”

“To get drunk and laid,” Jon said.

“Exactly! We have to fucking medicate them to make them give it up,” Timothy said.

“Well, not everyone,” Jon said. “Some will just give it up.”

“Not in my world,” Timothy said.

“You know why men get into fights at bars?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, because all the women hooked up, and the men left behind are drunk and frustrated,” Timothy said.

“Oh, yay, that’s my theory, too,” Jon said. “And you know what the cure is for alcoholism, fights, war, theft, rape, hunger, poverty?”

“Eliminate competition?” Timothy asked.

“In a very specific way. All competition is ultimately about sex, with the underlying belief the more power you have, the more sex you will have,” Jon said. “So, my theory, when every single woman decides to change society in such a way that they will have sex at the drop of a hat with anyone who man who wants and or needs sex, the world will change.”

“That’s fucking ridiculous!” Timothy said. “Men don’t want whores.”

“Well, yeah, we do, but you won’t like it because you can’t rape the willing, can you,” Jon said.

“Your version of reality will never happened! No man or woman would agree to a complete culture of promiscuity,” Timothy said.

“If everyone woman participated, there would be no promiscuity, by definition,” Jon said.

“Women don’t want sex! They want powerful men that make them feel secure!” Timothy said.

“And, how does raping them increase their security?” Jon asked. “Oh, actually, it increases the competition, meaning your role as a rapist is functional in creating an atmosphere of insecurity, forcing women to go to men who exude power and authority to protect them, so the so called good men need you to do your role to keep women in submission. My paradigm of every woman gives into sex, eliminates the fear, and eliminates the ownership equation. Because, being owned also increases insecurity. As a woman, you have to wonder am I just a trophy, does the person care for me or just wants my body. If I am property, and he’s powerful, then does he own vacation property in another city and another girl? Even if they believe they are loved, they have to worry about the newer, cuter models coming off the assembly line. He is going to want to test drive that. There is no end to the fear competition game, except for free love, on demand.”

“You’re insane! Society would cease to function. No one would go to work. Making pussy the reward for men who earn money maintains a society’s production level and increases ingenuity,” Timothy said.

“Free love on demand, will change productivity to an ecological friendly state, and triple ingenuity and invention to extend comfort and life,” Jon said.

“People will just have sex! No one will distribute food or cook food or go to in medicine,” Timothy said.

“Though the total number of people having sex would increase, the actual individual level of sex would decline. Just like in a marriage, sex declines with satiation, security, and familiarization. Part of the allure of sex in a competition society is the game, can I get it, under what circumstances, can I maintain it, and if I already have it but can sneak it with someone else and have a secret without getting caught, well, that’s fun, too, but if everyone is getting it, any time they needed it, without fear that others know, because everyone knows you’re getting it and with whom, the act gets celebrated, it becomes expected, and in this system, even men have to put out on demand.”

“Women don’t want sex, they want intimacy!”

“And they will only achieve that when a man’s appetite for sex is appeased. Women are right that men think about only one thing, but it’s because that thing is actually important, and its one need that society is over regulating through shame, fear, and competition. Men can fake sincerity for a moment, and some men are so good at faking genuine loving relationships that it turns all women off men. If you really want to know a genuine man, interact with him directly after he has been fucked. Truly, once the game is eliminated and a man feels safe enough to be himself, when he no longer has to compete to maintain an image, you will see if he is kind or just all bravado, cause hell, men are more afraid of rejection than any woman. The fear of not having sex, or just perceiving you’re not having as much sex as the other guy, is as big of a fear as a women fear losing a relationship or not being in a relationship, because society shows happy couple pictures and makes Disney movies and if you’re not in this scene, then there is something fucking wrong with you. Only after a man is sexually satisfied can he finally spend time and energy in developing a more solid core self, someone who could actually offer a more loving, kind relationship,” Jon offered.

“You live in a fucking fantasy world!” Timothy said.

“And you don’t? You fucking rape people because you don’t think anyone can ever love you,” Jon said.

“That’s not why!” Timothy said.

Jon nodded. “So, why do you rape people?”

Timothy didn’t have answer. “That’s just not why.”

“So, you’re saying raping people makes you feel better about yourself?” Jon asked. “At the end of the day, you feel less anxiety, more self-love, more love for others?”

“Raping makes me feel great!” Timothy said. “I am in charge. I have power.”

Jon nodded. “Yep. In that moment, you’re in charge, you have power... Or, you think you do.”

“What do you mean, I think I do?” Timothy said.

“You’re a Tulpa. When God unwinds your life like a movie, and you discover the other players were just actresses that made themselves available to play a role, then you’re going to discover that your sense of power was an illusion,” Jon said. “They, the actresses, actors, angels, tulpas, lemurs, however you wish to label them, came into your life so that you might have an opportunity to demonstrate what you’ve learned. And when God unravels the movie paradigm and you discover it was just a dream, well, then you were actually raping yourself, and you can’t rape yourself, you gave yourself permission to play the game, to hold the dream, otherwise it couldn’t have happened. You will learn vicariously through others, or directly in dreams, but until you’re ready for the real world, you can’t leave the protection of the nursery. There is only love, in the garden, out of the garden, in the nursery, outside the nursery, only love.”

Timothy was sorting it.

“Where is the love, you said you’d give to me, soon as you were free, will it ever be, where is the love?” Jon sang. “Who was that, Roberta Flack, or God?”

“Oh fuck you,” Timothy said.

“Yeah, Timothy, you have just summarized the problems in our space/time, but this is not the way it was or the way it has to be,” Jon said. “We have been in a world of competition so long that we forget that it’s all just a game. We compete with ourselves, and each other, and we rally into teams, we disband the teams in favor of new teams, and it’s never ending, just switching power. The thing is, no one wins at this game. At the end of monopoly, you can say you won cause you own everything, but you lost your friends and family. And the game starts again with them, excluding you because you’re a real bitch to play with because you never learned to be a graceful winner, and you’re a fucking sore loser, and so they take their pieces go on without you, and it keeps going until everyone is alienated and alone, suspicious of everyone else. And everyone is trying to recruit everyone else into the game, as if life was just a fucking MLM pyramid scheme. There is only one way out.”

“Death,” Timothy said.

“Death just takes you somewhere else, with the same thoughts and feelings, and you eventually have to face them,” Jon corrected. “The only way out is love.”

“There is no love!” Timothy said. “Just look at your own fucking life as an example!”

“I would endure it all again, a million times over, knowing I would meet Loxy, and finally know love. And it’s not that Loxy has given me love, but rather, she has shown me I am love, and I can resonate with love indefinitely,” Jon said.

“There is no love!” Timothy raged.

“There is only love,” Jon said, gently. “It exist without us, with us, it surrounds us, it penetrates us and the stars, and we are immersed in it, and we can participate with it and experience it, but it isn’t about getting or winning. It’s not even about giving. You can’t get love or give it, because it’s not a commodity that some people possess and others don’t; it just is. Love is like water, and we are fish, and it will always be there for us, but we don’t own it or generate it, but it is absolutely essential for life,” Jon said.

“Fucking new age, hippie philosophy is whacked,” Timothy said.

“Some of it,” Jon said. “But I am not selling you a book, I am not telling you that you need positive thoughts to attract good things, and I am definitely not preaching meditation or drugs. You don’t have to do anything. No one earns love. No one demands love. You can’t attract or repel love, you simply acknowledge its presence. If you ever say ‘I deserve love’ or ‘I deserve better than this,’ you’re not in the water of life. You want to make the world better, you drowned to yourself and you love.”

“More hippie love shit, kill the ego philosophy,” Timothy protested.

“No, Timothy. You can’t kill the ego. The more you run from ego, the more you fight ego, the more you enhance ego. The only escape from ego is compassion and love. Only after you learn to love your ego, your first Tulpa, will you learn to love others.”

“I am a not a Tulpa!” Timothy snapped.

“Everyone is a Tulpa,” Jon said. “I am a Tulpa. I/Tulpa offer you love, and I can do so because I know your past isn’t real, your crimes are not real; the caveat is, the good things you did, or think you did, they, too, are also fake. I can love you without measuring you.”

“You’re not real. I created you!” Timothy said.

“Yeah,” Jon said. “And I love you.”

“No!” Timothy said.

“No? ‘I don’t love you?’ or no you don’t believe me?” Jon asked. “Your world is changing Timothy. Our world is changing. The past did not work for us. Worked for very few, actually. Contrary to popular belief, Mother Earth is not mad at us. She would carry that paradigm until the end of existence, to her very death, if she thought just one soul might learn to love the way she has loved us. We are Earth Tulpas, but we are not of earth. This rabbit hole goes much deeper. Join me, Timothy, let’s see what this matrix has in store for us.”

“No,” Timothy said, he was crying. “No, I just want it to be over. I want to die.”

“I know,” Jon said.

The five lemurs joined hands and began to dance around Timothy.

“What are they doing now?!” Timothy asked, scared. “They’re going to kill me.”

“You have been chosen by the lemurs. You have been initiated,” Jon said. “They are celebrating.”

“You mean, they’re like my power animals?” Timothy asked.

Jon laughed. “No,’ he said. “You’re theirs. Stand up, pull your pants up, and be free.”

Timothy stood. The lemurs leaped higher in their dance as they circled him, still holding hands. They changed directions, their tails oscillating like waves. Their feet hitting the ground established a rhythm, like a sweat lodge drum. In all, it was a little freaky, like the flying monkeys, or the oompa loompas, or dancing Egyptian hieroglyphic archetypal lemur gods. Timothy looked at his hands, unable to discern the change occurring right before his eyes.

“Am I dreaming?” he asked.

“We all are, all the time, and the more awake you believe, the more asleep you are,” Jon said.

Timothy approached the glass tube, and the circle of lemurs jumping around him moved with him, separating hands and twirling like whirling dervishes, and then rejoining to include the glass tube with Jon in it, encircling the two of them. Their lemur calls to the night was other worldly, their lips pushing O’s as if to blow bubbles.

“I am not nice,” Timothy said.

“Choice,” Jon said.

“I am going to kill you,” Timothy said.

“I know,” Jon said.

“And you’re not frightened?” Timothy asked.

“Of you? No,” Jon said. “There is no death.”

“I am about to prove you wrong,” Timothy said.

“If you strike me down, I will become even more powerful than you have ever imagined,” Jon said, humbly but warningly.

“Oh, please, what does that even mean?” Timothy said.

“We are not this crude flesh. Assume for moment, I am your Tulpa, killing this body only sends me deeper into the recesses of your mind,” Jon said. “You can’t escape what you have created. Version 2.0 is still connected to version 1.8, 1.4, and 1. Assume I am not your Tulpa, and then I am not yours to end, which means I just go to another place and time because I have fulfilled my contractual obligation to bring you that gift you needed to change. But killing me, that is an intimate act all in itself, and so if I am not your Tulpa, I will be, and I will be in your mind, haunting you. Which ultimately means, you’ll be right back here, stuck here, with the same problem you do now, which is learning how to relate. Your options are, fight, flight, or love.”

Timothy put his hands on the glass. Water began to flow into the cylinder, just as it had with Fribourg and Loxy.

“The lemurs can’t stop me,” Timothy said.

“Yeah, that’s really not their function,” Jon said.

“Yeah, and what’s their function?” Timothy said.

“To make you one of them,” Jon said.

Timothy looked past Jon into his own reflection, saw his flesh changing before his eyes, ears growing, fur emerging, a wisp of a tail rising. He couldn’t pull free from the glass, mesmerized by the transformation. He could suddenly see Jon in the water, now submerged, holding his breath, but he didn’t care, and adjusted his eyes back to his own morphing image, which was part Jon, part him, and part lemur. Jon put his hand against the glass, in a Vulcan salute, and mouth the words, ‘No, Spock,’ which might have been funny, except timothy found he couldn’t recall why it might be funny. It had meaning, but it was illusive. Jon bobbed above the line marked at ankle level, and when he descended, he disappeared, as if disappearing into the earth. The glass disappeared after that, leaving a solid column of water. The reflection that was him was now a perfect, holographic image of his former self and his Lemur self in the water.

In the column of water was him as Timothy, and him as lemur reflected, alternating, even as the brother lemurs danced around him. The water seemed to have an inner glow, which was startling on the open plane at night. And then the column of water collapsed, skywards, carrying the human essence away.

There were fireflies, but he didn't question their existence. He was led by hand by one of the five, and joined their community. A female came and licked his ear, ate a bug off his fur. He tried to rape her, but the community quickly shut that shit down. He was not kicked out, but the matriarchy put sufficient fear into him, making it clear that that's not the way they do things.

निर्मित

Jon found himself in the kitchen of Second Home. He was not alone. There were folks at the table eating. There were folks sorting food, distributing food to guest, folks talking. Keera stepped up and touched his arm. The smell of garlic and tomatoes was strong, and sound of background laughter was like the tinkling of wind chimes. There was happiness here. It gave him pause as he sorted through the faces, sounds, and smells.

“You okay?” Keera asked.

“Uh?” Jon asked, meeting her eyes. Her smile was subtle, but there, and her eyes were attentive. “Oh. Um, I forgot what I came for.”

“Oh, well, I made you a plate of spaghetti,” Keera said.

“He hates noodles,” Fersia called from the table.

“No he doesn't,” Keera said. “He loves noodles.”

“He loves noodles, but he doesn't like how it doesn't stay on the fork no matter how tight you wind it and that he can't get it in his mouth without a wet strand touching his chin, and he is absolutely disgusted by the sound of slurping,” Fersia said.

“You have to slurp noodles!” Keera said. “That's how you tell people you like it and it adds air and activated the nutrients.” She looked to Jon. “Wait, for real?”

“It's like crunching ice. I will crunch ice, but if someone else crunches ice, I want to punch them,” Jon said. “And it's true, I don't want it touching my chin.”

Keera took the plate back to the counter, dumped the contents into the blender, ran it till it was mush, and poured the contents into a cup bowl, put a straw in it, and then offered this to Jon. He smiled, accepting the plate.

“Thank you!” Jon said. “This is exactly how I do it. How did you know?”

“A little pussy told me,” Keera said. “There’s garlic bread on the table.”

“Okay,” Jon said, perfectly content to join the folks at the table. Settled, he drank some spaghetti from his plate, slurping noise and all through the straw.

There was food, wine, bad jokes like, ‘what do you call a crocodile that ate a GPS?’ Jon felt replenished to the level of soul, but a part of him was still seeking that thing he came to the kitchen looking for. When he finished eating, he took his plate to the sink, but before he could wash it, someone intercepted him and took his dishes to clean for him. It was Esfir, and though Jon said he wanted to clean the dish, Esfir insisted it was her turn and asked that he permit her a chance to participate with the community. Jon relinquished control on the dish and she kissed him.

Finding he wanted some quiet, he headed towards his room, slid the door open and was about to proceed in, but was confronted by the sight of Lester and Shackleford, butt naked, and on his bed. Lester was on his back, and Shackleford was on top of him, reverse cowboy.

Shackleford halted her riding. “I thought you said you locked the door.”

“I did!” Lester said.

“You can’t lock me out of my own room,” Jon said. “Biometrics.”

“Your door isn’t smart enough to override your entry given the circumstance?” Lester demanded.

“This circumstance never occurred to me to create the parameter,” Jon said.

“Your door isn’t smart enough to predict you want this parameter?” Lester asked.

“You’re not smart enough to know I don’t want you fucking in my bedroom in my bed?” Jon counter demanded, and then there was a trail of a conversation about him emasculating his friends and he was wondering if there was truth to that.

“Would you like to come in and watch?” Shackleford asked.

“No!” Jon and Lester both said together. Lester continued. “And yet, you stand there looking on!”

“Yeah, this is the freeze part of fight or flight,” Jon said.

“Push through it and close the door behind you,” Lester said. “Before I completely lose it.”

“Actually, I have never felt it this hard,” Shackelford said. “I think he should watch.”

“What?” Lester demanded.

“Wait, wait, wait,” Jon said, closing his eyes and shaking his head to better sort through the stuff he was confronting. “I thought you were celibate because you need to store and transmute sperm into magical energy?”

“You ruined that for me, just like you’re ruining this for me,” Lester said.

“Ruining what?” Loxy asked, joining Jon in the doorway. “Oh. Oh! How lovely for you both!”

“Really?” Lester asked. “Does everyone need to know?”

“Actually,” Loxy said. “Hey, everyone?! Come here and look at this.”

“OMG,” Lester cried.

“OMG,” Shackelford said. “That’s fucking better than the blue pill.”

“What’s going on?” Keera asked, poking her head in.

“Oh, meow!” Fersia said, jumping up to see over and then crawling under Jon’s legs.

Esfir said something in Russian.

“I don’t understand. I thought you didn’t want sex,” Jon said.

“Oh, this is an easy one, Jon. The longer you go without an orgasm, the more incentive you have to continue with your paradigm, but once you emptied his bank, he has no investment to continue with that paradigm, and so he probably gave into Shackelford’s playfulness.”

“What is this, group therapy?” Lester asked.

“Maybe!” Jon snapped back.

“Come in and sit on the bed,” Shackelford invited.

“No!” Jon and Lester said.

Loxy and the other girls took the invitation.

“Really?” Jon and Lester asked.

“It’s a celebration,” Loxy said. She turned to Shackelford. “You want us to levitate the mattresses?”

“That might be fun,” Shackelford said.

Jon closed the door, with him on the outside, and decided to go the inside portion of the pool room. He dived in, found himself suddenly in the glass tube, confronting Timothy, but it was as if he were in it from a different perspective. He wasn't quite certain why the lemurs wanted Timothy. Then he remembered a story of the 'garbage dump troop,' a tribe of Kenya baboons, that were particularly nasty troop where the Alpha males dominated the troop by extreme aggression, fighting, biting, and even holding some of their peer's head underwater. They ate from a garbage dump, but only the Alpha's ate, some of the males would sometimes eat, but none of the females were allowed to eat. Interestingly, all the Alpha ate tainted meat one day and died, and the garbage dump troop had a major change in authority, and experienced a paradigm shift. They became peaceful, and began cooperating, and healing. If a foreign male baboon came in and tried to exert control in the form of aggression, typical of their previous Alpha's, the entire group, responded, cowering the new baboon into submission with the new paradigm, or chasing him off.

Timothy was being recruited into a tribe where he would not be rejected and would have extended opportunities to heal. There are many who advocate revisiting the past as crucial to the healing process, but sometimes, it is simply necessary to forget, go deeper into the dream world, before emerging with a better context in which to grapple things.

Jon rose in the water, then pushed down through the portal line, and into another world, leaving Timothy to go 'where the wild things are.'

निर्मित

Jon arrived on a platform, the center of a three ring circus. A light shone directly down on him, and from various angles, so that he seems to be the only person illuminated, with the intuitive sense that there were many others present, watching in the dark around him. There was total silence, a hesitant expectation of something, anything, the hope for drama and danger. Even the circus performers were frozen in place, waiting, a thousand audience members holding their breaths. It felt like one of those dreams where you're naked and embarrassed and you have to perform regardless, and perhaps was akin to the disoriented feeling when Quantum Leap character Samuel Beckett arrives in a new body and says, "Oh boy..." With nothing else to do but to do, Jon took up the preamble to the song in the Broadway musical "P.T. Barnum," even going as far as introducing himself as Barnum, and when the preamble was finished, he proceeds

directly into song and dance, with full band accompanying him as if this had been expected all along: “There is a sucker, born every minute.” All the while, he is also looking for an avenue of escape. He imagines throwing himself through one of the Lion Tamer’s hoop, but in one opportunity the lion blocks by jumping in through towards him and playfully chasing him away. Another opportunity was one of the hula-hoops one of the dancers are tossing, but she sticks her head through and kisses him, and is spun away by a jealous clown.

The other performers were all in motion by the end of the song, some dancing, some lining up to fulfill the obligated introductions in the song. They seem to know Jon is angling towards an escape and their blocks seem perfectly orchestrated, as opposed to random. To stay in character, Jon had to lose his natural vibrato and go for a more brash sound.

Towards the end of the song there is opportunity to escape into a 1950’s Police Box, a pink one with purple highlights, and a girl leaning out of the box, extending a hand to him. The fact none of this fit should have helped him wake up. Whoever heard of a female Doctor? He hesitated, even as the lights are going down on him, because the lights are coming up on a female, in another ring. He came to a complete stop, recognizing Loxy.

Loxy seems angry, and begins reciting the lines of Charity Barnum, “The Colors of My Life, part two,” which addresses the affair Barnum was having. Jon tried to make his way to her, even as her song was beginning: “The colors of my life are softer than a breeze. The silver gray of eiderdown, the dappled green of trees. The amber of a wheat field, the hazel of a seed, the crystal of a raindrop, Are all I’ll ever need. Your reds are much too bold. In gold I find no worth. I’ll fill my days with sage and brown the colors of the earth. And if from by my side my love should roam, the colors of my life will shine a quiet light To lead him home....”

As Jon tried to cross the barrier into Loxy’s ring, an evil clown, clearly Morlon Fribourg through a ring over him and he traveled. Morlon turned to the boing of the audience and bowed.

When you consider all the possible permutations and distractions from life’s goals, a million lives and a thousand worlds is probably the lowest estimate that sounds reasonable for ideal growth. Add on top of that all the different types of relationships needed in one life time, much less a million lives, the question of how a soul mate should respond to affairs seems obvious: it’s necessary for growth. It was a theme that came up frequently, as he jumped from life to life, movie to movie, changing partners and circumstance.

Jon arrived in front of Emma Jung. She had made tea and was sitting, all dressed up, funny hat and all, and asked him to sit. He sat.

“I know you,” Jon asked more than said.

“Oh, dear, I should hope so,” Mrs. Jung said. “You came to ask me about my feelings on Tony Wolfe, but I think I have answered this question a million times, and it is on record in print and film, and still, everyone always wants to know this one thing.”

“I have never experienced your kind of open, direct love,” Jon said.

“You have Loxy, you have that kind of love,” Mrs. Jung said.

“But I am not like Jung. It’s not just one affair, and I have not produced anything that equals your husband’s work, and there are those who say, it doesn’t matter how important the contribution to humanity, nothing justifies the affairs,” Jon said.

“That’s because, most people are children, caught up in the game of human, and aren’t serious contenders for improving the species, and preparing us for the hard work that we have looming before us,” Mrs. Jung said.

“Hard work?”

“We will wake from this dream and interact with the Others, or we will go deeper into the night,” Mrs. Jung said. “At some point, we all have the realization that we are dreaming, that we are sentient, and we have a choice, go back to sleep, or wake up and walk the new path. You ask me about my feelings about my husband’s affair with Wolfe. I am good, because I know that I could not take my husband where she did. But she could not have found him had I not prepared him for her. And he needed the security of both of us, and I needed her as much as he needed her. Together, the three of us rose to a level most people simply can’t appreciate. Yes, he is my husband, but I no more own him than a bee owns a flower. We don’t own the rain, the sun, the air. We simply breathe it all in, are nourished, and then we exhale. The beach doesn’t own the wave, but both shore and wave are impacted by each other. And it strikes me that water is the perfect example here. Tony and I are hydrogen, and Carl is oxygen. But guess what, you can’t have a wave with one water particle. The magic of water is in the numbers. I always found this fact curious; did you know there are more water molecules in a cup of water than there are cups of water in the ocean?! Isn’t that glorious? And it gets even better! Did you know, the hydrogen atoms are not fixed to one particular oxygen atom? They are exchanging partners in a cosmic dance even as they give us rise to the surface. Nothing is fixed, nothing is permanent, it is all

change, all the time. Wolfe guided Jung through the shadows, and he in turned guided me, and you're just one of my most interesting shadow partners. I love our tea sessions, Jon. Look down at your feet."

Jon looked down at feet, and saw that is chair was in a circle. On realizing he was in a circle, the chair fell through the circle, taking him with it, tumbling through time and space and he arrived at his next station.

He passed through worlds like 5th Element, where he was Dallas and Loxy was Leeloo. In another, he was HG Wells in San Francisco, begging for her life even as Fribourg held the blade to her neck, right before Fribourg dived into the time machine and got thrown into eternity when Jon pulled the crystal out machine; that action sent Fribourg through time without the machine, but also perpetuated the chase. Jon found himself with Loxy in another life, which gets ruined by a stupid 1975 penny, only the Abe Lincoln is actually Fribourg in an honest Abe suit and he winks at him... "Noooo!" Jon was hurled back through time, which was really forwards in time from the perspective of the penny. He found himself in the watery worlds of the Abyss, resuscitating Loxy, and the moment he saves her, he has to gear up and go save the world, by hurtling himself into the Marianas Trench. Time after time, world after world, he finds her, he loses her, he loves her, he hates her, but each life he awakes anew, with a new piece of himself and a better understanding, and immediately looks for Loxy.

He found himself in front of a mural on the side of a building. He was wearing roller skates, and the music from an ELO song is concluding, and perhaps has been playing through the entire montage of the thousand worlds, he is not quite sure, but he knows what he has to do. He accelerates on skates and throws himself at the muse. He wakes up in a hospital bed, his head bandaged, the nurse kisses him, and he is pretty sure it is the nurse in "the World According to Garp, and on realizing this the nurse mounts him and rides him until he travels again.

Jon arrived on one of the front lines of World War One, and Fribourg has paused, holding Loxy, a gun to her head, and there is clarity in the moment, like, oh! I am out of the dream and into the real world again. The missiles bursting overhead seem more like fireworks than actual instruments of death.

"So, we meet again, Dr. Jones," Fribourg said.

Jon was curious. "I am not Doctor Jones," Jon said.

"I know, but I really like that line," Fribourg said.

“Well, you can’t use it because today I am Arizona Smith,” Jon said.

“That name was taken,” Loxy reminded him. “Wild Wild West, the midget.”

“Damn it. All the good names are taken,” Jon said.

“I hate midgets,” Fribourg said.

“You love midgets! Happy place?!” Jon reminded him.

“I have updated my happy place...” Fribourg said.

“Don’t want to know!” Jon said.

“I don’t want to share, but you could be Arizona Smith One million twenty three thousand eighty six,” Fribourg offered.

“Yeah, no,” Jon said.

“Very well, then, can we at least move onto where you say, ‘let Loxy go,?’” Fribourg asked.

“Nope, not saying that,” Jon said.

“You never say that! I want you to say it,” Fribourg said.

“So you can just insert an evil laugh and say no?” Jon said.

“Exactly,” Fribourg said.

“I’d be better off shooting the hostage,” Jon said.

“You’d shoot Sandra Bullock?!” Fribourg questioned, skeptically.

“Did you see Speed 2? She’s a good enough actress that she could have sent that back and said come back with a better script,” Jon said. “Now, Gravity, that could have been speed two. Hell, Speed Two should have been on an airplane. In fact, bring in the entire first cast and do something new like, oh, the bad Dennis Hopper got away, and when we start the movie, it turns out Reeves has to take a leave of absence to get his mind straight, and he and Dennis end up on the same plane, and Bullock is a flight attendant, and Hopper has a bomb that if the plane goes below 9000 ft blows up, and one parachute, and Reeves rescues the people by sliding them across a zip line to another airplane, but Bullock is handcuffed to the copilot’s seat with the bomb and Reeves stays with her after the rest of the people are freed, and crash lands the land plane and saves them both. That’s speed. But a cruise ship? I would be more afraid of an approaching sloth. Fucking make a sloth killer movie, everyone sees it coming, it’s coming, and the end of the film, and it’s still coming... maybe I would be afraid.”

“They did the plane rescue zip lining between planes thing,” Fribourg said, the only objection he got from Jon’s tirade.

“Yeah, but after the boat fiasco. And it was a fiasco,” Jon said.

“And you can’t bring back the bad guy to reprise a roll after he died in the first one,” Fribourg said.

“Yes you can! It’s Hollywood. And it would be original and funny and so the way to go,” Jon said. “If you want a serial, you need keep the players. Like Darth Maul! He was too beautiful and powerful to have been killed off in that movie. He should have been in all three! That was a huge mistake killing him off. He rivaled Vader in terms of cinematic presence, and because the next two movies sorely lacked a credible bad guy that helps explain Anakin’s fall, it was just all the worse! Which, brings me back to us: why do you think I keep you around? Comic relief?”

“You keep me around?” Fribourg asked, incredulously.

“Yeah, you’re my Doctor Smith,” Jon said. “You are the original Doctor Smith, who was a serious bad guy, before the directors changed him to lighten the mood a little because they didn’t know how to maintain a real bad guy back then, because they would have to explain why no one shot him or left him behind.”

“If I were Mr. Robinson, I would have so shot Smith the head and pushed him out the airlock, comic bad guy or not,” Fribourg said.

“And then who would your foil be? Major West? The guy who signed onto the mission just to sleep with Judy?”

“Oh, I would have so slept with Judy!” Fribourg said.

“Oh, hell, yeah, and would have given her more lines to say than, ‘Will!’ but she was too beautiful and the studios were afraid of her sex power, cause she could so ran that show,” Jon said. “Gilligan’s Island had clearer archetypal sample of society than Lost in Space, but it was still there, and though Mr. Robinson did seem like the perfect dad, he was actually running from society. That’s so not American, running from the problems, but taking it with you at the same time.”

“You exhaust me with this dialogue,” Fribourg said. “As if you have the higher ground. I win. We’re on the front. Germans over there, French over there, Some English over there, and I own them all, and you, Sir, are surrounded, unarmed, and outmatched,” Fribourg said.

“Surrender and I will permit you to exist.”

“Did you ever wonder what would happen if I surrendered to you?” Jon asked. “What then.”

“You’re confusing me. Are you surrendering?” Fribourg asked.

“No, just saying, what then? We will still end up doing the same song and dance,” Jon said.

“I don’t sing and dance,” Fribourg said.

“Oh, you’re so about to do some tap dancing,” Jon said.

“No I am not,” Fribourg said.

“Yeah, you are, I know some magic you don’t,” Jon said.

“You’re bluffing. You can’t make me sing and dance,” Fribourg said.

“Yeah, I can,” Jon said.

“You and what army?!” Fribourg asked.

“Oh, yay, thank you for finally asking,” Jon said, and waved to introduce “The A-team.”

The van pulled up and the original A-team climbed out, including Boy George and the reporter Amy. Amy rushed right over and hugged Jon.

“You okay?” she asked.

“Awesome, thank you, and you?” Jon asked.

“Really?!” Fribourg asked.

“Really what?” Jon asked.

“That’s so 80s!” Fribourg complained.

“You loved the 80’s,” Jon said.

“No I didn’t!” Fribourg said.

“Yes, you did,” Jon insisted.

“You’re going to still that skit, too?!” Fribourg asked.

“You’re just being adversarial,” Jon said. “You made a whole movie about being in the 80’s. Several, actually.”

“That wasn’t me! And this conversation, as usual, is completely meaningless! I own you! You’re about to go head to head with all World War armies with the A-team! Did you not watch their show? They can’t shoot worth a dime!”

“Excuse me,” Hannibal interjected. “If I may, I would like to point out, we’re the good guys. We don’t kill people. We just, kind of scare them into compliance.”

“Out of all the rounds you shot, someone should have got killed by accident,” Fribourg said.

“That’s my point. We’re that good,” Hannibal said.

Fribourg turned back to Jon. “That’s you all got?! Against the combined forces of all the nations of 1914?” Fribourg asked. “That’s like bringing Ewoks up against the Empire!”

“Umm, again, 80’s, and if I recall correctly, they won that skirmish,” Jon pointed out.

“Oh, please, that was so Hollywood. You want to see the real version? We’ll be eating roast Ewok tonight,” Fribourg said. “Maybe, maybe, if it had been Wookies and not Ewoks, the battle would have been more believable, but Ewoks! So, unless you are ready to surrender, you better play another card.”

“I also have the Guardians of the Galaxy on my side,” Jon said, and they came out of hiding and into the clearing.

“Nice,” Fribourg said. “But still, not enough.”

“I am Groot.” Everyone looked to teenage Groot. Loxy was like, aww, how cute. Gamora shook her head and said ‘not that cute,’ and basically they had a private conversation about the differences between teenage boys and teenage trees and, surprisingly, there wasn’t much difference. Meanwhile, another conversation continued over that, but if you found it hard to track simultaernously, go to the special addition section one click down from the extra footage and click on background conversational tangents, which is like following chose your own story books.

“Well, you said it, Groot,” Star-Lord said.

“He always says that,” Drax said.

“Does it make it less valid?” Star-Lord asked.

“There’s so much conflicting emotions here,” Mantis announced

“I am Groot.”

Mantis antennae went up. “We’re just not compatible. I am afraid of splinters.”

“I am Groot.”

“You say that to everyone!” Rocket said.

“It’s okay. I love you, too, Groot,” Loxy assured him.

“I am Groot.”

“Anytime, anywhere,” Loxy said.

“Oh, don’t encourage him,” Star-lord said. “He already has a wall lined with your posters and pics.”

“Really?” Jon asked.

“Yeah, he cut you out of them,” Rocket said.

“I am Groot!”

“No one said you were gay, just really happy,” Rocket said, snickering.

“OMG, this is so tedious. Even with the Guardians, you can’t stop me,” Fribourg said.

“Surrender now.”

“I am going to win this because I have love in my heart,” Jon said.

“And music,” Boy George said. “Love and music.”

“I have music in my heart,” Fribourg said.

“Love and music?” Boy George asked.

“Beat the rat with a baseball bat is so full of love,” Fribourg said.

“That sounds like a lovely song,” Drax said.

“It’s a horrible song!” Star-lord said. “It’s about hurting people!”

“And you making us listen to the Piña Colada song across half the galaxy is better how?” Rocket said.

“It’s a better song?”

“How is cheating on your partner and discovering your partner is cheating on you a better song?” Rocket asked.

“It’s better than beating someone with a bat!” Star-Lord said.

“Anyway, it does have a good beat,” Jon admitted. “And the lyrics kind of stick with you. But probably not as catchy as thee song ‘attitude adjustment.’”

“And it’s kind of what we do,” Drax said.

“Well, it sounds like a fine song to me,” Nebula said.

“Wait a moment, it’s a real song?” Gamora asked

“The Ramones,” Star-Lord said.

“Is he like Kevin Bacon?” Gamora asked.

“Really?” Star-Lord, Jon, and Fribourg said at once.

“Aww, don’t pick on her,” Loxy said. “Some of this trivia is difficult to track.”

“You’re telling me,” Rocket said. “It’s like T.S Elliot experiencing flight of ideas.”

Everyone looked to Rocket.

“What? That was so funny!” Rocket complained. “I bet more people got it than that Pollock reference you made in our first film.”

“Even if you didn’t know Pollock you would understand because I used black light in a context that suggested you might...”

“We know what we might find!” Gamora ended that, hand up as if to say, talk to the hand simultaneously blocking.

“That’s just gross,” Fribourg said.

“Why are men so turned off by their own stuff?” Loxy asked.

“Not my stuff. Just other men’s stuff,” Fribourg, Jon, and Star-Lord said.

“Unless a girl gets it on her lips and then you want kiss her,” Loxy pointed out.

“Of course. Once I give it to you, it’s yours, I don’t want it back,” Fribourg said. “That’s just common sense.”

“I am Groot.”

“Aww,” Loxy said. Rocket massaged his forehead and shook his head.

“But that begs the question, Rocket,” Jon continued. “How did you know who Pollock was? You’ve studied earth’s art?”

“No, I just figured it out contextually,” Rocket said.

“See! Mine was funny, yours wasn’t,” Star-Lord said.

“Can we get on with this? I swear, you’re like the Federation and you’ll win a war by talking us to death,” Fribourg said.

“You are so not Klingon,” Jon corrected him.

“So, what are you thinking, Jon?” Star-Lord asked. “The time warp?”

“Again?” Mr. T asked.

“I really like the part with bent knees and pelvic thrust,” Jon said.

“It could drive you insane,” Star-Lord said.

“You two are like brothers, right?” Rocket asked.

“Oh, I so hope we’re not Stan’s Tulpa’s,” Jon said.

“Who is Stan?” Face asked.

“You think you will win this moment by starting a mob dance?” Fribourg demanded.

“Music and magic always goes together,” Jon said. “Oh, how about that one?”

“We go together? This hardly feels like Grease,” Star-Lord said.

“You’re going to need grease to slip out of this one,” Fribourg insisted.

“I love it when a plan comes together,” Hannibal said.

“You realize, when you say that it means you didn’t have a plan to begin with, right?”

Mr. T complained, crossing his arms.

“How about Let Mr Blue Sky In?” Star-Lord asked.

“Jump Jive and Wail!” Loxy interjected.

“A good swing dance might exhaust folks,” Star-Lord agreed.

“Are you flirting with Loxy?” Gamora asked.

“You didn’t get mad when Groot flirted with her,” Star-lord said.

“He’s a teenager! He would flirt with a tree stump!” Gamora said.

“He is a tree stump,” Fribourg said.

“Hey!” Rocket said. “Only I pick on Groot, Sir. But that’s kind of funny.”

“Loxy and I are old friends,” Star-Lord insisted.

“Really?” Gamora and Jon said. Jon continued, “Well, Gamora and I...”

“No, we’re not,” Gamora said.

“Well, Neb...” Jon stammered.

“Don’t even think about it,” Nebula said.

“Well...” Jon tried.

“You said you wouldn’t tell anyone,” Mantis said, pouting.

Drax laughed. “You slept with the ugliest girl on our ship! Ha ha ha!”

“Jon, do you think you’re the only one who gets around?” Loxy asked.

“Beach Boy mob dance?” Star-Lord asked, trying for distraction.

Everyone said ‘no,’ even the armies, a thunderous background chorus, echoed ‘no.’

“Inconceivable! And, once again, you’re stalling,” Fribourg said. “Surrender now.”

“Fine. One,” Jon said, doing a slower count in than which was not the original intro, but helped disguise the entry.

“Oh, that one?” Star-Lord said, nodding, tapping his foot in.

“Two,” Jon said.

“I am not scared of you!” Fribourg said.

“Three four...” Jon said, rushing the last two numbers in...

Gamora, Loxy, and Fribourg stood out of the dance, while the entire armies of all the world threw down their weapons and joined in. People in the malls in the 80's watched as random shoppers also caught on. Still scenes from the Blues Brothers shaking their tail feathers inserted, with Aretha pointing at Fribourg saying he better think, and the 'band' doing their step ball change kick. Jon eventually came over to Fribourg who seemed unimpressed, even though his armies had clearly been swept away by the music.

"What? I have been rehearsing, waiting for this moment, a mob flash dance that ends all wars and unites the world in love and song," Jon said. He pulls a coke from his pocket and hands it to him.

"You think offering me a coke and a song is going to change things?" Fribourg asked.

"I could sing that song, too," Jon said.

"Don't you dare," Fribourg said.

"Oh, wait wait wait, song change," Jon said, and helped usher in the second song, which was Queen's 'Don't Stop Me Now.'

"Aww," Loxy said. "You made me a Mix tape?!"

"I did!" Jon said.

"You can't mix Queen and ELO!" Fribourg shouted.

"My mix tape!" Jon yelled back over the music and fireworks.

"You so can't hold this up in a tape player outside Loxy windows and hope to get her affection," Fribourg said.

"Yeah, I can. And guess what. I have met Freddie Mercury and he has made me my own song, my theme song, which makes Flash Gordon's song pale," Jon said. "And ELO has also offered to make me a song. ELO and Queen are going to corroborate on my song!"

"They're not compatible!"

"Oh, don't bring me down, Bruce," Jon said.

"Oh, Jon," Loxy said. "Speaking of Queen, we only have 14 to hours to save the Earth!"

Fribourg pushed Jon into a fox hole, which was surprisingly filled with water, and he arrived in another world. He found himself in a black Trans Am, Loxy sitting next to him, her bare feet on the windshield as she flexed her calves. He was all into her legs until someone rudely passed at breakneck speeds, pulled in front of him, flipping him off.

"What is his problem?" Jon asked.

“Use the formula, Jon,” Loxy said, pushing hair out of her eyes.

“I hate math!” Jon said.

“It’s not rocket science,” Loxy pointed out.

“Umph. Did you ever wonder what a rocket scientist says?” Jon asked.

“Probably says ‘it’s not social science,’” Loxy said.

Two more cars passed by, swerving in and out of traffic.

“OMG! What is wrong with people?!” Jon demanded. “Where are the cops when you want one?”

“That sounds like fight, not love,” Loxy said. “Do you like my legs?”

“I love your legs,” Jon said.

More cars weaved in and around them, as the cars forward of him, on his left and directly in front, were now in his way and he was etching to go around. He nearly honked the horn.

“Jon, this is a dream,” Loxy said. “You can fight it, which keeps you in the dream, or you can fly from it which just means you’re be back here again, because it goes where you go, or you can love it, which is acceptance and the only thing that changes it. What you resist persists.”

“I can’t resist,” Jon said. “Mach Five, Go, Speed, Go... Can’t stop me now, I am having such a good time, I am out of control...”

You won’t get to see too much of the Speed Racer scene, due to the fact Jon was pulled over fairly quickly. Flash forwards to him on the side of the road, window down, elbow on the door, head propped up. Beach Boys are playing on the radio, “I get around...” Motorcycle cop approached and asked for license and proof of insurance. He extend two fingers and they magically appear, a trick perfected due to having done it before.

“Hello, Officer Jenny,” Loxy said, leaning over to see herself reflected in Jenny’s glasses.

“Hey, Sally,” Jenny said.

“No, today I am Trixie,” Loxy said.

“You’re in the wrong car,” Jenny pointed out.

“Yeah, momentarily out of sync,” Loxie said.

“Yeah, well, speaking of that, I have to ask: are you transporting any illegal Pokemon?” Jenny asked.

Jon looked up to Jenny and got sucked into her glasses. Reality morphed around him in the reflection until all reality had changed, tangled and mixed liked taffy. About half the time,

Jon found himself directly chasing Fribourg, like the montage chase at the end of 'Being Jon Malcovich,' where the character were rushing through the memories of Malcovich. At other times, he found himself caught up in anything from bizarre rituals to mundane scenes of washing dishes. In one of the worlds that Fribourg and Jon arrived in, they found themselves surrounded by couches. The couches, perceiving the humans, threw down their cigarettes and began chasing them from all angles. They moved awkwardly, kind of bouncing on their feet the way the old football game pieces moved by vibrating the plate. Their cushions moved like mouths. In order to escape, it was necessary to run up and over the backs some, trying to outsmart the herd. It was if the couches were trying to eat them. From a certain perspective, it seems like an isomorphic video game. If they got 'hung up' on the couch, the cushions sucked at the crotch and the couch arms tried to undo their pants, provided the arms were flexible, and the vibration of the plate made their voice shaking as if they were yelling into a fan, and kind of felt like a vibrator, too. Jon recognized one of the couches from childhood, and had the realization: oh, this is the world where couches who have been victimized by teenagers wanting to get off come. And yes, while most of the perpetrators were boys, some of the couches were fucked by girls, tribbing on arms or cushions, and sometimes arranging cushions to hold dildos. And now, the couches just wanted to be loved and give love. "I am Groot" was heard in the background. Fribourg found a doorway and was through and into the next world. Jon actually felt sympathy for his old couch and nearly delayed, but catching Fribourg before the portal closed was more important. The couches gathered at the door, sad, waiting, pleading for the return. Jon's couch waved goodbye.

Jon found himself on a stage. He gave pause to applause, not sure what to make of it. Did Johnny Carson ever emerge from the curtains and give pause? Jon was considering going into a monologue when he was greeted by a very kind, older woman, who directed him to a couch. She took the seat beside the couch, and he re-evaluated the situation and came up with the idea that this might be therapy, but then realized, he was being interviewed!

"Oprah! You're still on the air?" Jon asked.

"Special O segment," she said. "This is my book club, and, well, these are your fans."

"Really?" Jon asked, looking into the audience. "I am really surprised."

"That you have fans, or that there are women fans," Oprah asked.

"Oh, both, actually," Jon said.

“I think you said it best in one of the books that, given sufficient security, women’s libido and sexuality would exceed men’s and theirs would diminish due to exhaustion,” Oprah said.

“That sounds pretty clever. Are you sure I said that?” Jon asked.

“You forgot?”

“I forget most of it. I write it down to get it out of my head,” Jon said.

“Your book *Fight Flight or Love*, part fiction, part self-help book, that’s really got our attention,” Oprah said, showing the cover.

“Wow. I feel like I am still working on that,” Jon said.

“You’re still working out the math?” Oprah asked

“Yeah. So like, imagine you’re married and the partner wants to divorce, and you do the math and you suspect his or her reasoning is skewed, unsound, or otherwise faulty or stupid-you’re fighting, not loving,” Jon said. “If God gave us all the freedom to make choices, why can’t that person have the right to make a choice, even if it’s contrary to what we would choose? It’s called sentient autonomy. Whether that person’s thoughts are valid from your perspective or not is irrelevant, it only matters what they want.”

“What about ‘you’ in that equation,” Oprah said. “Don’t you deserve some consideration from the partner?”

“I would never use the word ‘deserve.’ There are more than ten billion people on the planet, and most of them are hungry. Do they deserve that? Now, add in the math that Americans throw away one third of all their food, and this is like fresh produce, and foods that are not quite past their expiration dates, which, look this up, there is no official standard of what constitutes an end date, but is rather a marketing scheme to make people think this one is better than that one, which increases the likelihood of selling, but also causes more to be thrown away than bought! Anyway, we have the capability, the resources, and the products to end world hunger, but we don’t do it. There absolutely should not be hunger in America, but there is. Partly because there is this ideal perfect shaped fruit, but most fruit is not perfectly shaped, nature is not perfect and our ideas of nature is fucking skewed completely out of proportion because we’re used to perfect fruit, but farmers throw seventy percent of their fruit on the ground, when it’s perfectly fine to go into a can or pie, and, scary, just eaten on the spot, but it goes on the ground, because it would lower the price or wouldn’t sell and it’s not worth the bother for the farmer. But mostly, there is hunger in America because most people believe you should work for your food. Forget

the fact that most of the hungry are actually kids and single parents; if you really want to evoke you got to work for the food, I can show you kids in Bangladesh who are making your clothes so you can have items at Walmart and Gap at five dollars apiece, and they are working and still hungry, which if I were going to reward work ethics, American kids should be hungry. But, we punish kids in America because we think their parents should be working, or more productive, or smarter in how they manage their money, but curiously, we refuse to teach people how to be fiscally responsible or how to be parents in school! So, let's not use the word deserve. If you actually have time to invest in a relationship, if you have time to worry about how you're being treated like you deserve, you're doing better than fifty percent of the population, and if you do the math like that, there is always going to be people wanting to trade and sell for better. If you come at anyone thinking I am improving their life or they should be grateful I am giving them time and attention, that's not love, that's competition. If your equation says I put X amount of time into this relationship and you have done nothing, that's not love either. Love isn't a 401k plan. There is not a guarantee return. If you're processing information for what you deserve, then you're in fight mode, competition, and not in love."

"But people do deserve to be treated well," Oprah said.

"Absolutely," Jon said. "I am not using my equation to explain bad behavior or stay in abusive relationships. But if we go with deserve, we would need to change the monetary system now, end poverty and hunger now, sports players and CEO would not make more money than a janitor, because, quite frankly, you're more disturbed by a dirty toilet than you are who won the superbowl. And the world is changing. We will see mass unemployment in our time because computers and automation is getting so smart that it doesn't need humans and it can out produce humans and 99 percent of the population will be unemployed. I would also go as far as saying addictions should be just as much a disability as mental health, but in today's social climate, people get real upset when you give addicts money because people think they did that to themselves. I am just saying our world is whacked and we are fighting for resources that we shouldn't be fighting for, because it's more abundant than we pretend and we would rather fucking throw stuff away than give it to someone in need, because we say it's about the money, but it's really something fundamentally different. The best examples are diamonds. If you knew how abundant they were and how much the price is not about scarcity, you would never buy another diamond again. Ever. Do the math. You buy it in the thousand and you can't pawn it

more than fifty. This is all about fight and flight, not love. We don't have clue what love is, and every time a human being as stepped up to offer a clue, we fucking kill them. Christ. Ghandi. John Lennon! Those are my favorites.”

“You don't mince words,” Oprah said.

“I am sorry. I get real passionate about this. And believe me, I struggle with self-worth, and frequently I calculate what's in it for me, and I have so failed at the love part of the equation. This is a practice. We're working at it. There is also a self-love which is crucial. We have to figure out how to accept and love ourselves, too, because ignoring yourself if flight. Procrastination, avoidance, waffling, these are all forms of flight. You can also fight yourself, which is not productive, usually shows up as nightmares, or racing thoughts, or rehearsing perceived fights with others, which is really about you not others, because your actually processing through this filter of right and wrong and what you deserve, and the formula isn't faulty, but when you try to do the math using someone else's formula you get skewed results and you end up in this circle of I am not worthy I got I what deserve, which is avoidance, or fighting the other to make them see your formula, and that's not love. When you're doing self-love, you got to take others out of the equation to sort yourself. Once you're sorted, then you start bringing others into the equation. Then other formulas start to be applicable, like discernment. Disclosing or not disclosing in not about dishonesty, but intent. Is an intent to harm or inform. We have to examine harm. Dentist may hurt you but that's not harm. And these equations can be overwhelming, and I tell everyone, my math sucks. So I go to the simplest formula, fight, flight, or love. If I am not loving, I doing something else, and chose to bring myself back to love. But bottom line is, no human being can be in a predominantly healthy relationships until their basic needs are met, because fight or flight is actually a real thing on the bottom of the pyramid. Relationships look differently on the base of the pyramid than they do at the top. Two humans who have all their needs met will give more of their true self than someone at the bottom who is negotiating to get fundamental needs met.”

“So, you dispel the idea of soul mates because if you're at the base and your mate is at self-actualization, you can't meet?” Oprah said.

“Everybody is a mate, everyone has the opportunity to give us rise or give us descent,” Jon said.

“Loxy isn't your soul mate?” Oprah said.

“She is so my perfect balance, only advanced. She does this math well. But you pair her with anyone, she will give them rise and send them to the next level, sometimes whether they are ready or not, but she isn’t going to sit there and hold your hand at that level, so if it causes more harm to raise you ten leave you, she isn’t going to raise you, because that’s not love,” Jon said.

“Let me just ask you it this way, then: You love Loxy,” Oprah said.

“May I jump on your couch?” Jon asked. Oprah shook her head no. “Seriously. I love Loxy. Who wouldn’t love Loxy? But what does that mean, really. Do I own her, control her, or block others from experiencing her? A Dyson sphere wouldn’t contain her luminosity. And how should I let her change me? On the worlds where Loxy doesn’t exist become celibate? In the lives where Loxy isn’t present, hold out for that ideal that I know exists? Or do I simply love as best I can and realize everyone around me is also moving towards their ideal, but we all started kindergarten together, and if our parents aren’t military, maybe we’ll see others in the next couple of grades. But if you’re asking me, knowing how perfect Loxy is, will I be monogamous? I will not. She will not. And she is better at the polyamorous life than I, because she can play for both teams, where I am strictly hetero, with the exception of some aliens that you really can’t tell... And because Loxy is pure love. She is the embodiment of Sophia/Isis/Mary mixed with Venus/Aphrodite/Hathor.”

“You always this honest?” Oprah asked.

“Oh, hell, no,” Jon said. “But when you’re on a talk show with you, people want to know what you’re really like, and you make it easy for people to be vulnerable. I am talking like complete fool, aren’t I?”

Oprah smiled. “So, speaking of being vulnerable, my staff found a letter from you.”

“OMG,” Jon said, with a sigh.

“You remember writing me?” Oprah said.

“Not word for word,” Jon said.

“Dreams come true show, you wanted to sing a duet with Olivia Newton John,” Olivia said. “You any good?”

Jon shrugged. “Natural vibrato, mostly tenor range, but not a great vocal range, but I can nail ‘Suddenly,’” Jon said.

“Maybe you should let us judge,” Oprah said, pointing to the curtains.

The curtains opened behind them to reveal a small stage prominently displaying Olivia. Jon became so ecstatic that he traveled, almost completely waking up. He found himself in a completely innocuous office, with a bean counter on the other side of the desk, pushing pencils and math. The bean counter looked a lot like Jim Carrey, but he felt like he was the Little Prince meeting the mathematician archetype.

“You’re not saving enough for retirement,” was the bean counter’s assessment.

“Who the hell is?” Jon asked.

“I don’t care about others, I care about you, and you really need to invest in 401k,” the bean counter said.

“So other people can use my money?” Jon asked.

“That’s how investments work,” the bean counter said. “You give us your money and we can average anywhere from 2 to 8 percent growth over a period...”

“Wait wait wait,” Jon said. “Credit cards earn the bank anywhere from 18 to 30 percent interest.”

“Yeah, so?” the bean counter asked.

“I want to invest in credit cards,” Jon said.

“That’s not an option,” the bean counter said.

“Oh, come on, Jim!” Jon said.

“Why do you keep calling me Jim?”

“I want 18 to 30 percent on my money. And more specifically, I want to invest money in units of 500 dollars to 3,000 dollars at a time, on individual card, provided to honest, hard working people who always pay back their cards, and I am willing to give better rates with history, because, in truth, there is no need to be greedy. If I have money, and people need to borrow, and they have been good to me, I think 8 percent interest is reasonable on a larger sum,” Jon said.

“That’s not an option, Jon,” the bean counter said.

“Why not? I know people need money, and I have some money, not a lot of money, but we have a system where I put my money in a bank and the bank is using my money to help other people and getting interest, so now I am asking you to help me get a cut of what my money has already been doing anyway,” Jon said. “Or, better, I would like a say in how my money helps others. Kind of like wanting to know where tax dollars go. And maybe if you bankers give more

people say in what happens to their money, there wouldn't be scandals like the saving and loans fiasco you just had. More than that, if you and the government have demanded people become more financially responsible, and yet neither you nor the government practice what you preach, why should we keep giving you our money?! If a regular person writes a hot check, they get fined or go to jail. Does the members of the House and Senate get fined? Do the bank CEO's? Do you guys ever go to jail, and not the country club jail, but the hard core, you're going to be someone's cuddly bear jail. No! They just get more money! Where is the sense in that?"

The bean counter put his pencil down.

"No! Wait wait wait," Jon said. "This trickle down philosophy of yours, it doesn't work! Trickle up does. Get this, if instead of bailing out the banks the government had sent a hundred thousand dollars to all the people who paid taxes that would have done more to increasing GOP than what you guys did. I am still trying to figure out what you guys did. Let's assume, most people took that money and paid off their house loans. Wow, now the bank has money to make more loans! Go figure. Let's say some of those people bought cars! Wow, now the car people have money, which they put in the bank. Wow, the bank still wins, and can loan more money. Let's say some of those people just put the money into their saving for a rainy day. The bank has it again! No matter what the people did with the money, the banks got the money back, but if you give money straight to the bank, nobody gets anything! How the hell does that makes sense. You say you're working for me, let me see you work for me. I want to invest small bundles of money in the form of credit cards to people in need. Fuck the stocks, fuck these high profile investment schemes, and fuck you bankers. We the people want control back..."

The bean counter pushed a button on his desk and people came to escort Jon away. They tossed him out the bank doors and he landed elsewhere.

Jon arrived in a scene in a scene with the Bangles performing, "In Your Room," where he lingers long enough to at least pretend Suzanne Hoff was singing for him, before he arrives on an island where Mary Anne is doing her little bebop, go-go dance, and he would have lingered here a moment, but he was tripped by Gilligan and fell into the Lagoon and when he managed to surface, he found himself in a pool, waiting to use the ladder that Phoebe Cates was using, and he lingered there, watching her climb out, the water dripping off her and into his eyes, and when he blinked, again he had traveled. He ran past Fersia singing 'Memories' and nearly didn't catch it, but paused before rushing out the door to stop and give her a hug and a pet, and then ran out

the door. Jon passed through a room where Timothy was a child, playing with a train, and singing, “Starlight Express, are you there, are you real...” An elderly man was there, in the background singing counterpoint, “Rusty you’re blind, look in your mind, I’m there, nothing new...” Jon paused and petted Timothy knowing someone greater had him.

John arrived in Xanadu, the name of the bar on his version of the Enterprise that was the equivalent of Ten Forward. A song was just beginning and he knew it by heart and paused looking for her, but it wasn’t who he had anticipated.

Alizee, starring as Loxy, arrived on stage to perform the song Xanadu, in French, along with eight actresses playing Loxy’s sisters from Safe Haven. They gave an almost flawless reproduction of the original performance by Olivia. And if you’re really paying attention, you might notice in the opening sequence, following Alizee out on stage are male dancers, which mirrors the movie version. What’s interesting to note about this is that one of male dancers resembles Will Ferrell’s character in the anchorman, which nearly knocked Jon out of the dream sequence, except, when he sorted the original, which you can on youtube, and you look closely at the dancers in the background, there is Will Ferrell! with the hairdo and the mustache and everything, and when you go and look at it, and you will because, why believe me when you can see it for yourself, you, too, will believe in time travel!

Singing the background lyrics, ‘now we are here,’ with close up, cameo shots revealed Morgan, Lester, Fribourg, Christopher, and Jim, leaning their heads in close together.

The first sequence ends and the variety sequence of music follows. In the movie there was just four tangents, but here, there were additional genres as disparate as Tejano music and yodeling. Again, if you were paying attention, not just enjoying the music, you might notice Hanine on the fiddle, or recognize Astrud Gilberto singing the girl from Epanema. But even with a world mix, folks like Carrie Underwood singing country, Ariana Grande singing rock, as well as a performance by Katy Perry and Taylor Swift were in the mix, each one leading back up to the finale of Xanadu. Judy Garland sang a number that had everyone swing dancing. Judy ushered in the final ends sequence to Xanadu, giving rise to Loxy, who arrived in the final costume change, center of the circular stage, rising upon a glowing dais, with her real sisters dancing around her. The sisters get transported up, leaving Loxy alone, smiling, her hand out towards Jon as she offers her love, and then, she too, vanishes in a cascade of lights.

The lights in the bar dim to normal levels, and people resume their activities. Jon finds himself alone, amongst the presence of others, not unhappy, but not there either. He walks up on stage and looks down at the circular dance floor and the illuminated star and then it occurs to him.

“I am the starlight!” he sang. He couldn’t hear Morgan singing in his unconscious mind, but there was duet going as he sang the song which embodied his answer set. He was in tears as he brought the song to its conclusion. This was not Walt Whitman, but it was as powerful as leaves of grass which turned the song in the movie Fame: ‘I Sing the Body Electric...’

On finishing, he felt like he had the answer, but the Euphoria was soon gone and he had to continue with life as he understood it. He proceeds outside of Xanadu to the most forward part of the primary hull and stares out into space, underneath the canopy of the saucer section. Someone tapped on his shoulder and he turns to find THE Olivia behind him. His mouth nearly drops, but he covered his mouth with his hand, and his eye got a little bigger.

“Hello,” Oliva said.

“You’re uh...” Jon couldn’t say it.

“Yes, I am Olivia. What’s your name?” Olivia asked.

He opened his mouth to speak but nothing came out and part of his mind yelled at him, oh, you idiot, not this again. He was the captain and shouldn’t be affected like this was his belief, but given the longevity of his love affair with Olivia, what else could he do but empty himself.

Oliva was kind, though. She touched his upper arm. “It’s okay. I see this frequently. It’s like magic. Let me help you. You’re line is, ‘Would you like to go somewhere and talk.’”

“You want to talk to me?” Jon asked. He felt like a child.

“Unless you want to get physical,” Olivia asked.

Jon actually blushed.

“Oh, am I the one that you want?” Oliva said.

“Hopelessly...” Jon couldn’t even say it.

“You do realize, if you love me you have to let me go,” Oliva said.

“No, let me be there!” Jon lamented.

“Just a twist of fate,” Oliva said.

“But I honestly love you,” Jon said.

“Oh, please Mr. please,” Oliva said.

“But we go together,” Jon tried

“Like summer nights,” Olivia agreed.

“Oh, my god, yeah.... Wait wait wait... Since you brought us there, what was up with that guy asking if you put up a fight?” Jon asked.

“Oh, he’s just never been mellow,” Olivia said.

“OMG, I can’t sustain this!” Jon said.

“It’s okay, Jon,” Olivia said. “I am always here for you. Now, go save Loxy.”

Olivia activated his communicator and Jon beamed away and found himself in the next sequence, Olivia voice echoing after him: “you have to believe, we are magic...”

Jon found himself sitting with a group of people while lawyers were selecting jury members. A man was being accused of attempted murder. The man was in a suit, but didn’t look like suits were his thing, and his lawyer was referencing the new release of Grease, trying to compare the Pinkies and the Greasers to modern day gangs, as if that might ameliorate any ill feelings towards gangs.

Jon laughed.

“Excuse me,” the lawyer asked, looking at the lineup. “Jon? What’s funny?”

“He needs a better lawyer, that’s what’s funny,” Jon said.

“Excuse me?” the lawyer asked.

“I don’t think so,” Jon said. “You can’t put fictional, fifties gang members in the same category as say, the bloods and the crypts. Fonzie and Travolta were cool, the gangs today are not. No! Let me finish, because I really want to point this out, cause I bet no one else here is going to say it. Your defendant has tear drops painted on his face, which is gang symbol for I have actually killed people. So, even if he isn’t guilty of this present crime, he is advertising the fact he is a killer. Now, granted, he could be lying and just tattooed those on to fit in with his peeps, but then that means he’s a liar and anything he tells us is suspect.”

“What if he has PTSD?” the lawyer asked.

“He might. That would make sense if he was in a gang, or ever been to prison previously, but even that’s not a defense. If you know you have PTSD, and you have a short fuse, and you go into the supermarket packing, and someone accidentally bumps your cart with theirs, and you pull a gun out, well, that’s a crime. Mental health problems doesn’t give you a free pass. You’d be surprised how many psych wards suddenly get quiet when the law officers show up. Sick

people can exercise discernment. Just like people slow down on the highway when they see a cop car on the side of the road. You don't even to be speeding and you hit the breaks and activate all kinds of self-sensor modalities as if you were the worst offender ever start going through check lists."

"You just hate gangs member!" the defendant said.

"Oh, please. We're all in a gang in one form or fashion or another. Your lawyer is, too, just happens it's a government approved gang. Right before they came to work today they were probably together coordinating their song and dance on how they were going to screw you. Really, go check out the divorce lawyers. They are all in cahoots and just antagonizing minor grievance to milk both parties of all their money, using divorcees emotions against them," Jon said. "Yeah, we're all in a gang. My gang, they're magical and our motto is fight flight or love, with love underlined. Tattoo that on your fucking arm and you will change your world."

"That's enough, Sir," the lawyer said.

"Oh, I am just getting warmed up and about to go scent of a woman on your lame grease metaphor," Jon said.

"You're dismissed, Sir," the lawyer said, hitting a button which dropped Jon through a trap door, and out of the jury selection.

He found himself on a stage with Fribourg, in an exclusively black club and with dead silence reigning around them, they were informed 'no one gets out of here without singing the blues' by Albert Collins. What sort of blues song do you suppose Adam Sandler and Jon would come up with on the fly? Well, it was a bit of a fiasco and they got tossed out.

The sequence for Jon that followed next was a montage of movie kisses, like a montage of all the kisses Kirk, Bond, and Beckett did over the course of their shows, each one ending in a new sequence, with several versions available, one using the B-52's "Roam if You Want to," "Then he Kissed me," "It's in his Kiss," "This Kiss," "This Kiss is on my List," "the Shoop Shoop song," both versions, and even "La Vie en rose" by Edith Piaf which really had nothing to do with kissing per say, but it perfectly broke the symmetry of kissing, ushering in love, and then as the scene faded, there was evidence of 'love American style' closing out the sequence.

Jon found himself underwater, wearing a dive helmet, and above him Loxy was singing "Keep Pumping, Blowing," from 'The Pirate Movie.' Jon was searching for treasure and

thinking the Goonies had it better. He found himself in a series of worlds, singing duets with Loxy. Again, the love duet from the Pirate movie, which they had done before.

In another segment, he found himself in a television room with a dozen television, playing reruns of televisions showed that were unreasonably canceled. Yes, of course, Firefly. But he also noted Pushing Daisy, which he thought was extremely well written, but was probably too sophisticated for the producers, much less the audience. Ally MacBeal might have gone another season if they hadn't change directors and gone off the deep end in season 4, so he wasn't sure why her show was running here. Gilligan's Island made it three seasons, against incredible odds because no one, but the director, understood it. Even the cast completely expected it to go off the air, and poor Tina thought it was the thing that ruined her life. And yet, it consistently maintained its ratings and has run in every country and every language, and the only other show to ever boast that was ST:TOS!

Jon found a microphone on the table. It looked as if it were from the 60's. He held it up hoping to become Ultraman, but when that didn't happen, he sat down on the table, watching the shows. He unconsciously tapped the mic and heard it amplified through the television. The characters stopped their ensembles to determine the source of the noise.

"Hello," Jon said into the mic.

The characters reacted in a multitude of ways. Firefly's crew wondered if the ship was alive again. Someone actually said hello back, and then asked, "Who are you?"

Jon didn't know, but decided to be clever. "I am God. Do you know your shows have been canceled?"

There was confusion.

"Yes, you're all characters in shows, mostly sitcoms, and you're not who you think you are," Jon offered.

"You're god?"

"Oh, Nikki Cox! What are you in doing in there?" Jon asked.

"Wouldn't God know the answer to that?"

"Good point. I not actually go, I am Jon, but from you're perspective..."

"Who are the other voices?" Someone asked.

"Wait, I am talking to Nikki," Jon said.

"Everyone wants to talk to Nikki!" someone said.

“Who is that?”

“Fox rival show. Oh, those are people on different programs, different networks,” Jon said.

“Different networks?”

“Um, God is trans-networked. Transpersonal? I don’t know why they don’t let you guys jump networks. Characters can cross over and star on other shows, and guess what, it doesn’t hurt the studios bottom line. It actually increases your audience,” Jon said. “Mulder and Scully should have gone to investigate several happenings on Northern Exposure.”

“We have more practical concerns here than talking about a multi-verse paradigm,” came the complaints from one of the dramas.

“Valid, but perspective wise...” Jon said.

“If you’re watching us, who’s watching you?” someone asked.

It was a great question. Jon turned around looking but seeing no one. “God, are you there?” Nothing. After a pause he decided it was time for a theme song. He sang Abba’s “Thank you for the music...” as the shows flipped of. He was left in a dark room, dim light. He turned one show back on. “Nikki, may I have your number?”

Chapter 19

Jon entered the new room and collided with Fribourg. He wasn't certain why he had come to a complete stop, or why the chase felt like it was over, but there was a man there who instructed them both to take a seat. They both stood there, trying to figure out where in the world they had arrived. The room was fairly dark, and the man had his back to them, leaning over an illuminated table.

The man turned, revealing he was holding a special, film print magnifying glass over his left eye, almost similar to the Borg, but not quite, and he looked at both of them.

"Sit," he said again.

Jon and Fribourg complied without question, as if there was no other possible response to the man's authority, and so they sat in the only chairs available. Their legs dangled, their toes barely touching the floor, as if they were children in the principal's office. The man turned back to the table. There was a dispensing reel and a take up reel, and he was examining a film strip, cell by cell, winding the take up reel by hand. The man was sitting on a floating stool, similar to what a doctor might use to push around the exam room, only it was really floating, no wheels. He clucked at the film. He took his eye piece off and sat it down on the table, turned to face the two interlopers, pulling his bifocals into place. He was sort of grandfatherly, a mix of dark and gray hair.

"What do you two have to say for yourselves?" the man asked.

Jon and Fribourg both started talking at once, trying to talk over each other, and gain the attention of the final cut editor. The man put a hand up and they stopped.

"Are you Morgan Freeman?" Jon asked in the silence that fell.

"Do I look like Morgan Freeman?" he demanded.

Jon pushed his tongue under his top two teeth, not sure if he should answer. It felt like he had done this before. He was going to be really embarrassed if it turned out this was Samuel Jackson. Actually, if it was he was Samuel, Jon considered himself already in mortal danger. The guy had a purple lightsaber, and it wasn't so certain he was completely batting for the light side.

"Spit it out," the Editor said.

"Yes, Sir, kind of resemble, sort of, in this light," Jon rambled.

"Chicken," Fribourg whispered.

“Well, it just so happens, he looks like me,” the Editor said. “Now, let’s try this again, and one at a time. Jon, what do you have to say for yourself?” the Editor asked.

“Um, he made me do it?” Jon asked.

“I made you do it? I had everything perfectly under control until you went and ruined it,” Fribourg said.

“So, basically, neither of you have learned anything in what, 6 billion years of air time?” the Editor asked, crossing his arms.

“Six billion years?” Fribourg asked. “You mean like, 6,000?!”

The Editor peered over his glasses at Fribourg. “How is it you evolved to a tech oriented society and you still carry that?”

“It’s written! Do the math!” Fribourg snapped, equally crossing his arms, defiantly.

Jon grimaced expecting fallout from talking back to the Editor.

“Wake up and smell the fucking metaphor,” the Editor snapped right back, slapping the light table. “A day is a thousand years, a thousand years a day?”

“Yeah, thousand, not million, not billions, thousand,” Fribourg said.

“Sometimes I wonder why I didn’t stop at Sea Monkeys,” the Editor lamented.

“Um speaking of that, I am rather sore that Sea Monkeys are not what I thought Sea Monkeys would be,” Jon said.

“You and every other pubescent male from the sixties and seventies,” the Editor said. “And yes, I know, you’re mad that popular mechanic as far back as the forties promised flying cars and you still didn’t have them in the twenties. Stop sending me mail about that. That’s not on me. I gave you Tesla and you fucking box him in a hotel till he died, stole his papers, and well, you went with the Alpha male, monetary paradigms. I mean, how many plagues do I have to send before you stop inserting the Alpha male paradigms? I give you free energy, free food, I make the world a virtual paradise, and you muck it up every fucking time.”

Jon pursed his lips, lowering his head, almost sulking. “I am sorry we fucked up your world.”

“We?” Fribourg asked. “Where did you get this we shit? Had you simply surrendered, the world would be perfectly okay, but no, you had to go and make this elaborate Doctor Strangelove Doomsday device so you could have all the women to yourself.”

“I so did not orchestrate that for sex!” Jon snapped.

“You’re still mad because I got fifty dates with Drew Barrymore,” Fribourg said.

“You said that wasn’t you?!” Jon said.

“I lied!” Fribourg said back.

“But, but, she didn’t remember you so it doesn’t count,” Jon said. “You took advantage of someone who was memory impaired.”

“Oh, like you haven’t fucked any retards or meth heads,” Fribourg said.

“She denied the meth!”

“She was 18 and looked as if she was sixty and had lesions on her skin and missing teeth,” Fribourg pointed out.

“Yeah, some people have a hard life,” Jon said.

“So it was a sympathy fuck?” Fribourg asked.

“Well, no, I wanted to tap that,” Jon said.

“Boys!” the Editor said, snapping his fingers and reigning them back in. “Relax. You didn’t destroy my world.”

Jon and Fribourg were curious.

“I am pretty sure the world ended,” Fribourg said.

“Yeah, your world ended, but not my world,” the Editor said. He pointed behind him and suddenly a warehouse full of movie film canisters were suddenly visible, lights flipping on with an audible ‘throw a big switch’ kind of noise tracking back into infinity. The Editor held up the empty film canister which had stored the film being examined: ‘Jon’s World.’ “This is not origin. Origin is on the shelf, in a vault that makes ‘Get Well Smart’s’ vault look like a comedy.”

“It was a comedy,” Jon pointed out.

“Son, don’t interrupt your elders,” the Editor said, and Jon wondered if maybe the Editor would have made for a better Gene Wilder replacement in the Willy Wonka remake. “This is just one of the many tangents that I have to sort through to follow all of my Tulpas to make sure they’re safe. The original timeline is perfectly protected, and I can pull a single frame for duplication and start tangents after tangents to explore strange new worlds, or exotic parodies of the original, or just see how far I can take Sea Monkeys.”

“You mean, like in the comic books?” Jon asked, excited. “They’re for real?”

“I didn’t do that. You guys did that. I swear, you guys would fuck anything. There is a whole world full of fucking couches. No really, ‘fucking’ couches, that follow teenage boys around like love sick puppies.”

“Oh, that explains that world,” Jon said.

“That’s just sick,” Fribourg said.

“You telling me you didn’t fuck a couch in your day?” the Jon asked.

“No, Jon, I didn’t,” Fribourg said. “You should know my history, you created me.”

“I don’t remember creating you,” Jon argued. “I think you were always there, in the back ground of my mind.”

“He’s a past life Tulpa. Tulpas follow you from life to life,” the Editor said.

“Wait, wait, wait,” Jon said. “You’re responsible for all of this. All the suffering and misery.”

“How do you figure that?” the Editor asked, patient.

“How do I figure that? Well, if there is initial cause and effect, then by definition, this is your doing.” Jon said. “Not the devil’s, not Eve’s, and not Adam. You made the toys and put them all in the sand box. It’s on you.”

“I can’t believe we’re still in this paradigm of blaming. Ever heard of the water cycle? There is no beginning or ending in eternity, just the cyclic nature of unity through duality back to unity,” the Editor said.

Jon blinked. “I am sorry. I am so lost.”

“Yeah, you are,” the Editor agreed, thumping Jon’s forehead. “Cause you won’t open your fucking eyes and orientate. Every water molecule has a chance at ascension.”

“Well, that can’t be true,” Jon said.

“OMG” Fribourg said. “You would argue with god himself.”

“Yeah, if He said something asinine like, only men should be in charge,” Jon said.

“I never said that,” the Editor said.

“But neither did you direct your son to pick some female disciples,” Jon pointed out.

“He picked Mary!” the Editor said.

“Like that wasn’t confusing, picking someone who shared the name of his mother. Wait wait wait, is that Electra complex or Oedpus Complex...”

“Depends on who you’re assigning what...” Fribourg offered.

“Oh, scrub that, water under the bridge now, and back to the water metaphor. Assuming oceans are the major part of the water cycle, water molecules at the bottom of the ocean don’t have equal chance at ascension, because the deeper you are, the more stable you are, therefore, not necessarily going to get a chance at being a cloud or making rainbows,” Jon said.

“Hence, narrow is the gate, wide is the path,” the Editor reminded him. Jon crossed his arms. “Ever heard of thermal vents? Or maybe they hitch a ride inside a creature. Yes, fish and lobster do drink water. Their lots of avenues for ascension.”

“Not equal,” Jon said.

“Who said the world was fair. I just said, everything has a chance,” the Editor said.

“So, you admit, a majority of molecules will not ascend,” Jon said. “People at the surface are more likely to ascend.”

“You make that sound like a bad thing,” the Editor said.

“Yeah! You made a world with disposable people who might never get to be back with you! And most of them will never even know it, and the ones that you allow the opportunity to ascend end up facing storms and waves, crashing on beaches, and thunderstorms and falling from the sky, and obstacles and chaos. I am tired. I just want to ascend and come home.”

“You have it backwards, son,” Morgan said. “Home is not up. Nor is it out,” the Editor said. “It’s in. Every water droplet, ever cloud, every star, every galaxy, all this is merely froth and permutations, dancing away from me and returning. That is simply the outer surface of something much grander than you ever imagined, and at the end of the cycle, it returns to me. Everything always returns to me, and I will embrace you with love and we will sort your experiences and put them into contexts that heal all wounds and radiate love which begins the next cycle. And I will tell you beautiful all the fireworks were and how glorious you were and bring you home.”

Jon paled.

“That’s scary. Is this even on topic? Do you have purpose for bringing us here?” Fribourg demanded.

“I am just curious how long you two are going to do this song and dance, because it’s getting old, and it’s time for something new and exciting. Though there is an occasional good variation on a theme, I am rather sick and tired of Hollywood trying to revive old films for new

generations. Let them watch the originals! Let them watch foreign films. Grow up and realize there is more than one country in the world.”

“Right?!” Jon agreed. “I am so with you on that. OMG, I can so rant about the last Aliens movie.”

“How do you even know about that? You blew the world up before that movie was released,” Fribourg said.

“Updates from a parallel tangent from origin,” the Editor said.

“Really? Is there a Universe where Cameron is still in charge,” Jon asked. “Because that’s the movie I want to see.”

“I don’t know why you’re making such a fuss, Jon; you’re just like Hollywood. Do you know how many B-type, pornographic movies you have generated?” the Editor asked.

Fribourg chuckled. “He is my son.”

“No, he isn’t. You’re a tulpa,” the Editor said.

“I told you!” Jon said.

“No you didn’t,” Fribourg said.

“I so told you,” Jon said.

“Loxy was the first one who suggested I am a tulpa, not you. You were still chasing after me going, daddy, daddy, I love you please be the nice daddy I always wanted,” Fribourg said.

“I was so not doing that,” Jon said.

“You are such a liar. If anyone has the Luke complex, it’s you. Trying to save me and make me into what you want,” Fribourg said. “Did it ever occur to you to ask what I want?”

“You want to take over the Universe!” Jon said.

“Yeah, Pinky, that’ Brains do, and I want to instill some fucking order into the chaos!” Fribourg said. “Is that so wrong?”

“Um, yeah.” Jon said.

“That makes no sense!” Fribourg said. “You’re supposed to be all about law and order and ending chaos. Now you’re arguing for chaos?”

“I just needed you to be a father figure, tell some jokes, make me feel better,” Jon said. “Play catch.”

“You fuckin hate catch!” Fribourg said.

“Not the point!” Jon said.

“Making the world better is how I make you better!” Fribourg said.

“No! It’s not. I just want love,” Jon said. “Why do you think you look like Adam Sandler? You’re much less intimidating than Christopher Walkens. And, you can’t have comedy without bad shit to make fun of.”

“No, you made me to feel superior. You wanted to school your dad in how to raise kids and be a better person, which made me a bad guy by default,” Fribourg said.

“Is that what you think?” Jon asked.

“Just because I am a tulpa doesn’t mean you’re better than me,” Fribourg said.

“Yeah, it kind of does. It means I am charge and you have to do what I say,” Jon said.

“Doesn’t that make you exactly the kind of parent you’re telling me not to be. Talk about unexplored shadow work,” Fribourg said.

“Tell him I’m in charge,” Jon said to the editor.

“Really?” the Editor said, echoing Fribourg’s rebellion. “Cause you’re a Tulpa, too.”

“I am?” Jon asked. “You’re not about to break into a Dr Pepper theme song commercial, are you?”

“He is?” Fribourg asked. “Tulpas can make more tulpas?”

“OMG, you would be surprised by how many self-replicating tulpas there are. Believe me, even servitors if you let them run long enough, begin to think they know everything. Anyway, basically, everything, every individual particle in the Universe is sentient, and when they aren’t joining forces to make bigger tulpas, like stars and planets, they get together and make little tulpas. Like plants, and fish, and people. Do you know how many tulpas can dance on the head of a pin? Do you know how many tulpas it takes to hold your present form? I, Sir, gave you sentience, and you passed it to your tulpas, and this is just how the tree of life works. It’s what we do.”

“So, if it’s what we do, why are you mad at us?” Jon asked.

“I am not mad, I am just wanting something original. I want new permutations to calculate,” the Editor said.

“But you’re the one who said there’s nothing new under the sun,” Fribourg said.

“OMG, I didn’t say that! Someone said that, put my face on it, but here’s a new flash, memes are not fucking facts,” the Editor said. “Look, Jon, Gaia and I are really impressed with the Squirrel world you created. You created that at a very early time in your development, super

impressive. So much love and compassion there. It was extremely sophisticated. But this dance you're doing with Fribourg is threatening that."

"It was an escape," Fribourg said. "He wasn't dealing with his reality."

"Yeah he was," the Editor said. "How did you expect him to respond to his origin? Hit people back? Rape people back? Blow it up?"

"He did blow it up!" Fribourg said.

"With your help!" the Editor pointing out. "He gave you a choice. Actually, he gave everyone a choice. Kind of poetic justice. Everyone thinks enlightenment is peace and joy and pure fucking magic, everything goes your way kind of deal, but if you never work on your own shadows, there is some pretty scary shit in there when you finally turn on the lights." He turned back to Jon. "Your world earned a commission. It earned the title World, and there are other wanting to visit there. You now have your own Universe. Lots of actresses are lining up to show their breasts just to get in. Some trans, too, cause they know you're accepting and there is a universal restroom. It's an incredibly safe place for folks to come and heal and I am happy you are finally sharing it. So many people create heavens and find themselves alone because they are so not accepting of variations from their norms, and your generation is probably the worst offenders. Why would anyone want to marry someone just like them? How absurd is that?! Different is good. Variation is good."

"And same is bad?" Fribourg asked.

"If you put that on a meme card and attach my face, I am so going to smite you," the Editor said.

"Why couldn't you have picked Gene's version of Willy Wonka as the Editor?" Fribourg asked Jon. "He makes perfect meme photo opts. So many captions go with him."

"Did you not see what happens to children in that movie?" Jon asked.

"It was educational," the Editor agreed.

"It was funny," Fribourg added. "They got what they deserved."

"No one ever gets what they deserve," Jon said.

"Thank God," the Editor said. "You finally got it. But if you try sometimes, you get what you need. And I need you two stop wreaking havoc through other people's worlds."

"Other people's worlds?" Fribourg asked. "You mean like, Timothy's world? He fucking invited me!"

“Only I can use the F word here,” the Editor said.

Fribourg lowered his head, sulking, gripping the edge of his chair.

“Could you be more precise in informing us exactly what you want us to do?” Jon asked.

“No, I can’t,” the Editor said. “That defeats the whole purpose of sentience, deviation, evolution, autonomy, and individuation. Basically, just go make clouds and galaxies and return. That’s it.”

“But, people are whacked! You saw what they were doing to the Earth!” Jon protested. “I alone can’t stop that, and I can’t even get people to agree with the science. Even if I commiserate and say the science is whacked and just appeal to good common sense and that we need to be good stewards, people keeping dumping trash into the ocean, and not just plastic bags and coke can holders that catch up turtles and fill whale guts, but awful shit, like nuclear rods from subs that have been scuttled!”

“It’s his own fault,” Fribourg said, trying to ease Jon’s anger. The Editor gave him a look that said, ‘explain that.’ “He basically just said there is ultimately no good or evil, just choices. No ultimate consequence.”

“There are always consequences,” the Editor said. “Most of them are emotional. You’re either coming towards me or away from me, towards others, away from others. There is actually a hell.”

“You send people to hell?” Fribourg asked. “Because they don’t agree with your paradigm? Kind of makes you Hitler, right?”

“No, you create hells and wrap it around yourselves, and try hiding in it like a petulant child under a blanket,” the Editor said. “And though I am with you, you can’t see me. Some of the people in your realities are visitors. Some are actors, key players inserted to help you grow or change. Like Loxy. I so created that for you. But most the players are self-generated tulpas giving you what you think you deserve. Which ultimately means, when you hurt others, you are hurting yourself. There is a reason why I said love others like you love yourself. Now that’s a meme you could put my picture on.”

“Maybe you should update that to say love others like you yourself want to be loved, because many people don’t love themselves,” Jon said.

“And where were you when I was writing the browser code of life?” the Editor said.

“In the far recesses of your mind?” Jon asked.

“Good point,” the Editor said.

“Wait wait wait. If all of that were true, narcissistic people would live in paradise, by definition,” Fribourg said.

“Did you not watch the Twilight Zone growing up?” the Editor asked. “Paradise is hell. If you’re getting your way and people are kissing your ass, you are so not where you think you are.”

“So, is this it? We just keep doing this song and dance forever?” Jon asked.

“Your world just started, Jon,” the Editor said. “Ask me that again in six or seven billion years. Let’s see where you take it.”

“But, I am tired. All those times I have needed you and called out to you and you weren’t there to change the script. You never ripped the fucking blanket off me and said, ‘I got you.’” Jon said, almost in tears.

“OMG, you’re so not going to cry again, are you? You’re always fucking crying, you big baby!” Fribourg said.

“Fuck you. I am hurting and I want to be loved,” Jon said.

The editor took Jon in his arms and rocked him like a child. “I got you,” the Editor said. “Shhhh, I got you. Rest assured, if you needed an intervention, the whole Universe would have responded to you. But you were doing great. We are all so proud of you. You could have gone so many other ways, but you held on to the good fight. Though you felt alone, you were so loved.”

“It has been so hard,” Jon said.

“I know,” the Editor said. “I know.”

“Why would you allow me to create such horrid things?” Jon asked.

“In doing so, you also created beauty and contrast,” the Editor said.

“I created Fribourg!” Jon said.

Fribourg pouted.

“And he brought you right back to me, and now I got you,” the Editor said.

“And now what?” Jon asked. “You’re just going to put me down again and ignore me?”

“Childhood is over, Jon. It’s time to start some serious work,” the Editor said. “Like complete college, help others heal, bring more love to the Universe. You and I have all eternity, and we will continue to interact and grow in our participation with each other.”

“And what do I do with Fribourg?”

“Not all children are easy to love, but they are as much a part of us as the best child,” the Editor said. “Love him.”

“And if I need you?” Jon asked.

“Speak out loud, I will hear you,” the editor said. “Give one of those histrionic looks at the camera, and you will hear me laugh. Go amaze me with love and light and magic and sophisticated dialogue. Show me romances. Give me pornos, I am okay with that, too. Even the solitary kind with faces of beautiful agony. Show me kindness. Make me laugh. Give me songs to sing and steps to dance. Amaze me with worlds and creatures still unseen. Re-write fucking Aliens so that it looks like Cameron is in charge. Offer a space for my heart to heal from sadness. Offer me hope.” And then the Editor began to sing. “Open thou mine eyes, and I shall see. Incline my heart, and I shall desire. Order my steps, and I shall walk, in the ways, of thy commandments.”

It was a spiritual song, conducted John Rutter. The story behind the song is as inspirational as the song itself. The song was completely written in the author’s head, as he sat by his daughter bedside who was in a coma. When the last note was penned to paper, the child woke. Others came out of the shadows, singing with the Editor, Fribourg took up the chorus. Loxy and the whole cast were suddenly there, singing. It was the kind of song that could wake the deepest parts of you, send shivers up and down your spine, and nourish your soul. Jon fell asleep in the Editor’s arms...

Jon woke back in his world, his pillow wet, tears falling off his face. He sat up. Loxy was there, prominent, in his face. Keera, Alish, Fersia, Lester, everyone was there.

“Are you okay?” Loxy asked.

“OMG,” Jon said. “Do you know how Dorothy woke up back in Kansas after the most amazing dream and realized everyone who was present was also in Oz?”

“Yeah,” Loxy said. “Is that what you’re experiencing?”

“Not yet, but wouldn’t that be great?” Jon asked.

Loxy hugged Jon. “It so would,” she agreed. “Until then, we got you.”

Author's note:

My primary paradigm is that life is in and of itself a form of therapy. This is not a new concept in general, but the general truth-feeling of it came upon me gradually. I have actually been in and out of counseling since the age of six, when upon running away from home I was brought to a psychiatrist to be therapitized, and or persuaded, that running away was not in my best interest, as opposed to therapitizing my family and convincing them to change the environment to something more conducive to raising children. This is not a lament or condemnation of the family of origin. They, too, as individuals and as a group, were dealing with some serious issues. We all are, all the time, and we turn to the sources that give us the most peace.

Over the years, I have turned to a number of psychological and magical remedies. In my youth I turned the churches of my family of origin's sense of religion, and was frequently disappointed and discouraged from that path. I found it wanting and intellectually dishonest, but am willing to take ownership and say it just didn't fit me. I tend to gravitate towards Eastern Philosophy, such as Buddhism, but if you had me using the nomenclature, I would fail a written and oral test. I have certainly dabbled in the Major Five R's. I have had a number of counselors and therapists. I have had some profound friendships which taught me more in those seasons than I ever got from therapy. I emphasize season, because like therapists, friendships tended not to last past their prescribed moments. I have participated in hypnosis, the guided kind and the self-hypnosis kind. I am a trained, motivational hypnotist. I am also a trained therapist, and licensed in the state of Texas. That joke that people become therapist to deal with themselves and their own past, well, I certainly exemplify that.

My most recent explorations of the world include continued Astral Projection, Lucid Dreaming, Shadow Work, Active Imagination, the Invisible Counselor Technique, Tulpamancy, and Guided Fantasy. (Yes, that last things is a real thing, believe it or not.) Depending on your point of view, you might say the entire list is fantasy. Just today, someone in the group I participate in asked if Astral Projection is real. Most of the group is responding with resounding 'yes' and trying to support their conclusions, where I simply reflected back: 'does it matter?' Really, does it? If one subscribes completely to the materialistic paradigm that consciousness is just a quirky, accidental

result of the alignment of neurons discharging electrical chemical messengers, then by definition, it's all illusion all the time. By that definition, it doesn't matter if an event is imagined or 'real' because nothing is real. (Just ask a physicist; they don't waffle on the point that all matter, and all space/time is a persistently stubborn illusion.) More on point, materialistic science agrees that the brain cannot distinguish between an imagined and real event, and this is clearly demonstrated in the placebo effect. Pure imagination can cure you. Does it matter if the memory solicited by a hypnotist is a past life or a fantasy if the result is a remedy that eases body and soul? Both real life and dreams can provoke fears and joy. We wake up laughing or frightened for our very existence. We laugh and cry at real events, sometimes appropriately so, and we laugh and cry at perceived event, also, sometimes, appropriately so. How many wars were created and or sustained due to fiction or exaggerated fact? How many of our own grudges and grievances are based on perceived reality which others 'don't share?' I emphasize 'don't share' because if a person agreed with your perception of reality, it would have resulted in an apology at worst or no primary offense at best.

The idea that we create our realities, again not new, is the basis of my philosophy, but I have recently narrowed it down to a more precise tag line. Whether you know it or not, you have a tag line. For House MD, it was "Everybody Lies." That one is simple, concise, even insightful, but it's not mine. The wordiest tag line was the mission statement Shatner recited at the beginning of each episode of Star Trek. The phrase I have chosen to adopt is also not mine, but the parties that are using it have not elevated it into the manifesto that it really could evolve into, at least, not yet. My tag line boils everything down to a simple equation for how to short circuit life's problems and better assimilate them into my process. The equation is this: fight, flight, or love.

If you seriously think about it these are your only choices in life. You can fight a thing, you can run from a thing, or you can love a thing. I have done a great deal of fighting. I have decimated my opponents with logic and ridicule, even if it was in their absence. I have blown things up, usually relationships. I am talking about full out, whistling the Bridge over River Kwai, while pushing the plunger on demolitions kind of blowing things up. It has won me no friends, and even if there was a soul that believed my anger or response was righteously appropriate, that generally is not the kind of friendship that lasts, or that I would even want to cultivate. I have

never experienced a personal war, initiated by me or other, which has not resulted in increased levels of suffering. Things inevitably escalate to levels of viciousness that causes other to escalate or retreat. I have rarely retreated. It could come to physical blows, with me getting pummeled, and I would get right back up, and be back in the person's face and would maintain the vigilance till they retreated because 'losing' felt worse than getting pummeled.

Flight is also an option, which most rational people exercise. It manifests as avoidance, procrastination, or passive aggressive tendencies. Ignoring a problem doesn't work any better than fighting. Avoiding my fights just prolonged the suffering that inevitably lead to a fight, or at least to the sudden, inappropriate disclosure that leads to a fight or more flight. Ignoring a leaking hot water heater generally leads to more misery. Ignoring that unexplained lump rarely works out in ones favor. Ignoring relationships problems can be tricky, because sometimes it is actually discernment, and sometime it's avoidance, and most of the time the avoidance is in trying to determine which of the two it is.

Consider this. The stage of grief goes like this: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, acceptance. I am not a fan of stage work, but I visit this sometimes because it can still be practical in figuring out placement on the map. But I can reduce it down to fight, flight or love. Denial-flight, anger-fight, bargaining-fight, depression-flight, and acceptance-love. Does this validate either formula? No. I don't expect it to be adopted by others, and I am not pushing for that. But it works for me. For instance, if I had a partner and she decided for whatever reason we were done and moved on, and I listened to her rational or explanation and decided her position was faulty or flawed, then I am in fight mode. For starters, my formula requires me to do my math, no one else's math. My math skills suck, and I am usually averaging things out anyway, and so for me to be doing other's math, well... the results get skewed. And if there is any validity to their math being off, they have right to use their formula and derive their answers for their life. This means, my response is to fight, flight or love, and I am determined to choose love and accept their choice. And if I say "good luck with that," I am still in fight mode, and I refocus on love. If I blame myself for being imperfect, I am in flight mode. Usually other people's formula has nothing to do with me. There are variables in their formula that I can't address, and many I am probably not

even privy to. Heck, I can't even tell you how many variables are in my own unconscious, which is one reason I have tried to simplify my formula to F,f, or L.

Many might argue that my prescribed list of activities above is in itself avoidance, merely flights into fancy. That's primarily because we live in a materialistic paradigm that prefers practical activities to 'imagination.' This preference is pushed, preached, and ratified by society, institutions great and small, from family units to school, even in direct evidence that going deeper into imagination may actually result in functional answers. Believe it or not, Darwin did not coin the phrase, 'survival of the fittest;' he actually promoted the idea that humanity doesn't have teeth and claws because we evolved the ability to nurture and love, which trumps all aggression. The folks on the side of imagination is huge, not just the Beatle's John Lennon. Imagination is advocated by Napoleon Hill, self-proclaimed inventor of 'the invisible counselors technique,' Carl Jung's 'active imagination,' and 'shadow work.' Einstein's 'thought experiments.' Nikola Tesla reports that after he stopped fighting his tendency to day dream and just went with it, he refined his imagination to the point that he never required a workshop to create inventions, because invariably, the workshop in his head produced better results on his final product than a thousand test runs in a laboratory. Guided imagery, or guided meditations, or guided fantasy, though highly promoted by transpersonal psychologists, are used by pretty much everyone. Anyone who has ever had a cathartic experience induced by speech, song, dance, or movie has experienced firsthand how powerful someone else's creativity can be. If we were to be very precise, we are more likely to respond to someone else's content than our own, the trick being, when you actually realize you are responding, it's not to the content, but to your own belief of what the content means. The fact that the same song or movies doesn't push the same buttons in everyone is evidence for that. Even that thing you think is Universal is actually not. Take the definition of 'childhood' for example. The disparity of how children are treated worldwide, even within our own culture, clearly shows we are not responding universally. If we were, there would be no child abuse, by definition.

We're not on the same page. We're rarely in the same book. We're all in our imagination all the time, fighting something or fleeing something. How do we become present? Love. When you have exhausted the fight or flight response, and you are finally able to attend in the present

moment with love, things change. Change is inevitable. It's coming whether you fight or fly, but bringing love always changes it. Not necessarily in your favor. This is not me pushing puppies and sunshine. Do they exist? Absolutely, but if you're struggling, puppies and sunshine are harder to channel. I also don't push positive affirmations. Do they help? Absolutely, but some things just suck and glossing it over with paint is not helpful or even realistic. Dead puppies suck. Babies with cancer suck. Fighting those things doesn't change the thing, running from it doesn't change it, but loving does change your relationship to the thing. Telling people to fight cancer is what we have been taught, which usually generates anger, which, evidence suggests cancer responds very well to. Anger feeds on fear and cancer feeds on both. I can back this up clinically. Paraphrased from Dr Depak Chopra, another advocate for imagination: Interleukin 2 is very well known for reducing kidney cancer. For 10,000\$ you can get a shot of this, or, for 20 bucks, you can take a ride on any roller coaster and your body will produce millions of dollars of this, naturally. Yes, your body makes this; conditionally: if you're happy, peaceful, loving, your body makes it. If you're fearful, you're producing adrenalin, fight or flight, which is like giving cancer vitamins and steroids. If riding roller coasters frightens you, you don't want to do that to reduce cancer.

If you're responding with fight or flight, you are responding to fear with fear. Imagine for a moment Mr. Rogers, from PBS. If you're my age, you can probably do this. Mr. Rogers is not Carl Rogers, and though I can channel Carl Rogers, sometimes, when I do, I am thinking Mr. Rogers, from PBS. Mr. Rogers is coming at you as if you were a child, and you were traumatized, and you're experiencing emotions, and he is not shaming you. He recognizes the emotion, good or bad, and then takes you to imagination land, where you can play it out and find a variety of responses. There are many responses. Screaming. Crying. Fighting. Name calling. Eating candy. Taking a break. Millions of potential responses. And when you finish responding, you're left with the very real fact that thing you responded to is probably still a fact, a real fact or a social fact, and you are back at the primary formula, needing a functional response. You can fight some more, you can run some more, but ultimately, at some point, you're going to have to come at this thing with acceptance. That's love. Your partner wants to leave you because they want more or think they deserve more. Yeah, that sucks. On many levels. You could fight it. It usually blows things up because people want what they want and if they think another person is

the answer, that makes you the problem by default, and you're not going to dissuade a person through fighting, and really, who wants to be with a fighter or a whiner? Ignoring it usually prolongs the suffering and the partner's departure isn't going to suck less down the road. Accepting the person's want, regardless of validity, is the only loving response, which respects freedom of choice. (It's funny how most people advocate freedom, as long as it doesn't impede their own benefits.) It doesn't matter if you agree, or the world agrees, if your friends side with you, or his/her friends side with him/her; it's what that person wants that ultimately matter. Quite likely, they are in their own equation, fighting or flighting from or for something, and that something is usually bigger than you, and it is rarely rational. Coming at something, rational or irrational, with love is difficult, but it can be done. That means accepting without holding onto thoughts like "You're going to get down the road and regret you left me because you're fantasy life is so skewed from reality you will never be happy." That's still fighting. It may even be true, but does that sound loving? Wishing the road rage guy would have a flight tire, is that loving or fighting?

And this practice of choosing L over the F or f is even harder when children are involved because we want the kids in our lives. Believe it or not, even we men want the kids in our lives. We want to be dads. But what level of fight is appropriate, especially in a world where men aren't supposed to fight? From a three year old's perspective, both parents are an integral part of their life. Do you destroy the other person to win at all costs? Do you completely ignore the person or situation? Or do you stand there, and advocate for a position that has the child's best interest? And if you're thinking, 'what's my best interest,' then you're in fight or flight. 99 percent of all problems is not about 'us' or you, it's about other. Have you ever used the expression, "I am in the fight of my life?" What if it's not a fight, but rather an opportunity to demonstrate higher qualities?

I am, presently, in the 'Love of my life.' Friends and coworkers have offered the standard fare: lawyer up, man up, fight, don't tolerate abuse, etc. This advice comes in a society where products are disposable, relationships are disposable, and people are used to selling and trading to meet the demands of the moment. I don't want to engage in this manner. I want to rise above. I want to love. (Notice I did not say 'I want to be loved;' that's fight or flight.) If someone comes

at me and says 'you deserve better,' I reflect back, how do you come to that conclusion? There's what, 10 billion people on the planet, and I have a better life than the average person, in terms of finances and comfort level, food on the table, and consistency. Does a person starving deserve their fate? We could end poverty in our life time, but that's not how we chose to spend our energies, is it? We all rationally know we have the technology and the capability to end poverty but we don't. This sounds like a distraction. Fantasy? Flight? I don't know. Except, in my childhood I did learn a few things from the religion that didn't take: if a man sues you for your coat, give him your cloak as well. Not in the same ball park as a child in a custody case, but what war has not left children in poverty, financial or emotional?

I love. I advocate for sanity and peace and that there is a higher purpose and power that has this. I clearly don't have this. I frequently fail to model love. I have to remind myself daily to love. I have to ask myself am I in fight or flight or love and do the math, and, again, I suck at math. I don't have any better solutions. I don't have advice and I don't offer advice. What I have is love, and I have seen love change folks. It's just never been on my schedule of change, for that, too, is fight.

PS

I didn't come up with "Fight, Flight, or Love." Loxy gave it to me. She has actually given me a lot, like my sanity and love. The first, most amazing statement she made to me was, "Lightening never takes a straight path," which was huge and significant. And that to me, seemed so amazing, I didn't think she would top that, and yet, she gave me 'fight, flight, or love,' in a meaningful context, which stopped me in my tracks and had me sorting, and now I am actually in the real world sharing this idea, because, I am like floored! This makes so much sense to me. I googled the phrase and found I am not the originator of the phrase. There is song, you can find it, in Steven's Universe, that carries this title. Steven Universe is an American animated television series created by Rebecca Sugar for Cartoon Network. It deserves the credit, because it looks like she coined it. Does it have play before or after? I am not sure, but I believe it is significant. Maybe I am biased because Loxy spoke it to me, and, well, I consider most of her words and

action meaningful. But in terms of practicality, this has the potential of being a therapeutic modality.

But, what do I know. I could just be some crazy guy listening to his tulpa, living in a fantasy world. But damn, she's good.