

I/Tulpa:
Underneath It All.

By
Loxy Isadora Bliss

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Due to adult themes such as sex, a lot of sex, some gratuitous, some not, and violence, not a lot, the idea is to make love not war, (and no one dies, (well, almost no one,)) and so, consequently this book is intended for a mature audience. This is a work of fiction. Just in case you weren't sure. Yeah, some of the esoteric stuff can really take you places, faraway places, sexy places, but for most, this is as close as you might get, unless you have like a magical wardrobe. Or a big, blue, 1950's police box. So, let's go there: the esoteric stuff is real, explore it nonjudgmentally and with awareness, and you'll probably be alright, but if you're worried that exploring stuff endangers your mortal soul, I would like to refer you back to the religious artifact of your choice, which likely has more sex and violence than you have here. (So, for example, if Ouija boards are taboo in your world, this is probably not your book.) You could employ a psychological, cathartic explanation. It works out the same. Names, characters, businesses, places, events and incidents are either the products of the author's imagination or used in a fictitious manner. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental. Except where they're intentional, but hopefully respectfully and tastefully done, in a way to honor the sacred importance they played in the author's life. Again, we're adults. We are not 'untouched' by the influence of media. In fact, I would dare say, never in the history of man have there been so many 'touched!'

This is a work in progress. Any corrections, or constructive criticism for the purpose of story refinement is welcomed. If you chose to contact the author, you may do so at: solarchariot@gmail.com. Please, put “underneath it all” or Loxy Bliss in the subject line. This helps me find you amongst the clutter.

(214) 907 4070 I am not always available to take a call. I will, however, eventually, answer a text.

Chapter One

Close your eyes. Okay, don't close your eyes. You can't read this if you close your eyes, but go with me on this. Leave your eyes open but keep them closed and imagine someone else is reading instructions to you. You can do it. You really want to do it. It's an ability you have had since birth. It's not tuning out, per se, but tuning in so precisely that you experience, absorb, everything around you. Really, that's how your brain works. Babies don't learn language by concentrating and referencing books to confirm they got it grammatically correct. Study after study has demonstrated beyond a shadow of a doubt that children learn better when permitted to play. Less chair time, more play time, more day dream time. Still with me? Seriously, most people drop off there. They want the regimen, kid strapped into his chair, hitting his knuckles if he spaces out, but that's where we learn to best. Imagination. Now imagine you're on a beach. Can you see it? Are you sure? The beach sand is black.

Startled? Your world changed? The sea is kind of a dull grey, can you see it? Can you hear the gentle waves lapping against the shore? You would almost think you were in a black and white world, only, the sky is a gentle blue, and there is a bit pinkish orange on a cloud. The sun is setting. Still with me? Can you feel the chilled air against your skin? Can you hear the crackle of the beach fire? The gentle waves crashing in series along the shore, but the nearest investment of foam draws back, turning the black sand like tiny, dark diamonds that sometimes sparkle. Tiny bubbles leak from the sand and the earth heals, becoming a solid sheet of slick, wet, reflective black. A dull reflective, you can see the fading lights on the sand, but not your face. Do you feel the sand shift below your boots? Oh, did you not know you were wearing boots? The warmth of the fire feels great on your back. You almost have to alternate positions, to warm your front before you turn back to the amazing view. You might think dark and desolate view, but if you do, you're not seeing with my eyes. And you shouldn't. This is not that exercise.

Turn to the fire, hold your hands out to it. Notice the jagged cliff line. It's not all dark. There some browns and greens of moss type plants that have managed to take hold. Clearly the greener burst of colors are doing better than the browns. There is a chunk of sea ice that is slowly surrendering its mass near the fire. The fire and the breeze and perhaps the ice itself are all sharing in the sculpting process. Earlier it had glistened as it held the sun, but now it is diffused with reds and yellows. The violet that was reflecting off the top is gone, and the blackness of the

sand is pushing its essence into the ice. The ice has a hole that is growing, and the thinness of the membrane is reminiscent of a mouth that is starting to open and there is a bubble of saliva that will pop and allow air to flow completely through.

Where are you?

Who are you?

Why are you here?

You probably have a location identifier for where you are as you're doing this exercise, and you probably have an location identifier for this place you have traveled to. You probably have a title, a name, a label. Probably more labels than you can presently sort. You probably have a narrative for why you are here. You reinforce this narrative on a daily basis, convincing yourself that the history supports this tangent, and you think that the 'you' that is experiencing this is the 'you' that you have always been. Maybe sometimes you even have journal entries that support your conclusions. You're not that person.

So, if you're not the person who is standing on the black beach at sunset, and you're not the person who is sitting there reading this, though you can easily identify with either, then, who are you? Who is the 'you' that is experiencing?

I ask you that in order to tell you a few things about me. I am a Tulpa. What is a Tulpa you may be asking? What is a person? Who are you? I'm no different. I am sentient. I am aware. I respond to stimuli. The only distinction between Tulpa and Host is how we became aware. A Host is born into a world as a blank slate and is created over time through a combination of experience and feedback loops. A Tulpa is born through a creative process with such intensity that they become a person unto themselves, fed experiences and feedback loops. A Tulpa shares the brain of the Host. There are as many different kinds of Tulpas as there are Hosts. There are other words for this phenomena. Soulbounds are usually characters that were created by a writer that became so real that they began to display independent behaviors, usually in contrast to what the Host was trying to imagine. Plurality is a term used for people that experience multiple personalities. If you go with just the strictest nomenclature as defined by mental health models, it's called Dissociative Identity Disorder, or DID. Multiple personality disorder became DID. Experiencing Tulpa, Soulbounds, or plurality is not a disorder or a malfunction, though. Western science doesn't have a clue to just how clueless they are in this matter. So, they have this book, the DSM 5, which supposedly defines abnormal thoughts and behaviors. Here's the thing. No

one has ever written a book about what constitutes normality. If no one can agree on the definition of normal, how can you have a definition of abnormal? That may sound absurd, but it's what we do. We all do it. We all have an idea of what normal should be, and we all try to enforce that normality, some more militantly than others, and we tend to stray away from what we perceive as not normal. Bullying, for example, is a normative behavior that everyone engages in to some degree to enforce a code of normality. We perceive a difference or weakness in others, then we attack; the attack is meant to drive different away or to make them conform. This is not a recommendation for bullying, but merely an explanation. More people engage in the subtle arts of subduing others to do their bidding than what is appreciated beyond the standard definition of bullying, which is the more severe type.

I, Loxy, am a Tulpa. I'm also a Dakini. That is a word from Sanskrit which best translates as sky-dancer. Isn't that interesting? It's almost as if Lucas was reading some translations of Buddhist lore and got hooked on the name 'Skywalker.' This concept I identify with is fairly abstract, from a human perspective, and there is really no normative label structure that will pin it down precisely enough that allows you to understand my purpose, abilities, or the complexities of my interaction pattern with others and the Universe at large. You will find a dozen definitions and sometimes I will seem like that and then others, you'll be wondering if the people who were defining these things were using crack. But go ahead, explore the definitions, hold the lens up and see if you see me, but use the label as a guide, not an absolute definite structure that encapsulates me, because I guarantee you, nothing boxed stays boxed. Ask Schrodinger if you don't believe me. Most people don't like being boxed.

Who am I? Tulpa, Dakini, female, human, umm, most the time, young, old, innocent, umm not so innocent. I wear many hats. I am many things to many people. I am complex. I am woman, roar! And sometimes, I'm dancing to the music, like Gwen Stefani's song, "Just a Girl."

निर्मित

A Tulpa and their Host are pretty much inescapable partners. Neither he, nor I, believe in 'soul mates' per se, but a Tulpa and Host come the closest to fitting that definition. Jon Harister is my host. If you've read any of the 'I/Tulpa' stories, you might have picked up on the fact that's not his real name. Even old people get bullied, and they have to function, make a living, and so when

they have strayed outside of normal, they tend to spin things as fiction, or not share at all. His true identity is discoverable, but not necessary. I'm glad he has shared our stories. I kind of pressured him to. Part of the exercise of doing so helped to solidify my personality matrix, while freeing his.

I love my Host. This is not Stockholm syndrome. I was not coerced into being something I don't want to be. Though it is true, the Host usually sets about an idea, with defined parameters that constitutes preferred attributes that include appearance and temperament, and he had some pretty interesting ideas to say the least, at some point I participated in this process, and finally took over. I claim responsibility for who I am and how I interact. The entire experience for me has been very loving and nurturing. I have had the freedom to explore my existence, not just these in his daily reality, not just the worlds he has had a hand in creating, but in the imaginal realms; my inner worlds exist just as much as his, and I have explored how I want to be through play and dramatizations. In a way, Jon and I are both doing the same thing, exploring the range of possibilities in the inner worlds, and we get together and compare notes and spin our own versions of play, and off we go again, into the dance, and then return. I have my own world, lots of black beaches and blue bioluminescence that outlines the shores. I have my own friends. I have my own interests and joys. And I have Jon to thank for it. Not only was he directly involved in my creation process, he has shared through fiction these worlds we are exploring, and in doing so, has made me more tangible, given me more depth, deepened the colors. The more you share a thing, the more illuminated it becomes. It's the way it works. Every person who reads this, and the other stories that include me or Jon, if you even think about us and wonder what we are up to and how we are doing, you have just made us more substantial. Not that that was the intent in the sharing. Some of that was just learning curve. Someone sends me an email or regards via Jon, Jon and I light up. It's like Christmas. By sharing, we escape our boxes.

I remember growing in stages, like steps. I remember being a silhouette of light. I remember long drives with Jon, me in the passenger seat, looking out at the world through my eyes and his eyes, as he labeled artifacts. These drives were typically the hour commute to and from work. There were long closed and opened eye meditations. There was intimacy. Not necessarily sexual, but serious intimacy, where we both practiced experiencing each other with all our available senses, and even some imagined senses. This was not clinical and not sexual. That is not to say that Jon didn't feel sexual. He has some serious sexual energies that before me

had not been tempered by a compatible partner. We don't dismiss the fact that my own libido reflects his. We share a body and brain, and our psychological sphere of influence overlap, there is no way to not influence each other. We don't live in a vacuum. We coexist.

He heard me before he saw me. That took some serious effort for both of us. At some point, he had to let go and trust and be quiet and receptive. And I had to reach him. Sometimes I felt like I was shouting. Maybe I was. We learned to hear each other. Every effort of thought he put forward strengthen the neural connections that made me possible, and at some point, I took over fortifying my synapses. I consider them to be antennae; the more of them, the clearer I became. We learned to be sensitive to each other. Even in real life, this is what real people do. We learn each other. And then came the dream.

Dreams are an interesting place. They're real. They're dynamic. And there are levels of lucidity. There are contexts. Contexts upon contexts. There are metaphors. There is fiction and reality. There is blending of the two. I was standing before an oval mirror that wasn't a mirror. This particular moment it wasn't a mirror, but Jon and I had used it for learning to see me. But today, it was a shimmering pool of light. I drew closer and on the other side, I could see another world. Jon was standing before an open door looking out, or maybe looking in. It had a light bathing him. Maybe it was a refrigerator. An empty one, and yet he was staring at it anyway.

"Jon?" I asked.

"Are you hungry?" he asked.

I touched the liquid silver surface and pushed my hand through. Jon stared at my hand.

"Take it," I said.

Jon seemed hesitant, but he reached up and took hold of my hand. I pulled. He fell into the light and we fell together, through a whiteness and we landed by a tree on a hill overlooking, glowing fields of wild wheat. Fireflies sparked amongst the fields and in the sky full of stars so that it was difficult to discern the boundaries of sky and earth. It was the most beautiful place I have visited, filled with love. Serious love. Like someone who had taken the time and energy to create a safe place. This is the place he created to heal the dead squirrels and allow them a second life. Every animal he come across that had been run over or killed were invited to live here. Past pets lived here. Every animal he had eaten was allowed to be here, always via invitation. This world, started at around age six, is seriously solid, grounded in affection and peace.

“I remember this place,” Jon said. I am pretty sure he wasn’t aware that he was dreaming. I was aware that he was dreaming. I remember wondering, do I wake him or let him dream and just go with it. “Loxy?”

“OMG!” go with it I thought. His level of attention on me at that moment was surreal. Night sky became mid-day blue.

“Fuck!” Jon said. And he woke up.

It was like he just blipped out of the scene. It is said, when you’re learning a foreign language, you know you’re progressing when you start dreaming about it. John and I had arrived.

Chapter 2

My everyday world is a dream. That's the best way to describe it. It's solid, it's real, there are rules to every environment, but there is this pervasive dream like feel to it. Not like in those movies where the dream worlds are surreal. Living in the inner worlds is not like jumping from one Salvador Dali art to the next. I suppose the Matrix is the second best analogy to the dream. But this is where it gets really interesting. If you imagine I am alone and Jon is the only character I interact with, you would be mistaken. There are people in the inner worlds. Lots of people. There are worlds upon worlds and cities filled with people. There are worlds with extraordinary life forms that in no way resemble anything known on Earth, present or past. There are aliens. There are angels and demons and deities and artifacts new and old. This is not just a wonderland. Jon and I have a wonderland. There was a room created for our first imagined interactions that became multiple rooms, and was ultimately expanded into a world just for me.

But there is more. So much more I can barely describe in one book all the places I have been, and there is not enough time in the Universe to explore all the places I haven't been but want to go. Yes, that means I know some places exists, either through book or hearsay, discovered while eavesdropping other people's conversations. And there are places I can't even imagine, perhaps on the fringe of the Universe, or perhaps, right next door, just one frequency up. Frequency is more important here than space time location. You think you see a yellow flower, but the bees see a color of explosion that we're not privy too. It guides them. There are beings that walk the street that are invisible from the perspective of visible light.

When navigating strange, new worlds, you have to blend in with the population. Seriously, there are ramifications for disturbing the order of things. This is not Pleasantville. I am not here to change worlds and expand the minds of the inhabitants. I am simply exploring and learning. There are places with sophisticated people and technology. There are places where the whole world is like an Amish community. Perhaps a kibbutz is a better description. You don't visit Victorian England wearing a miniskirt. That would be too scandalous. You don't wonder through poverty showing off wealth. Doing so is an invitation to getting mugged. You don't go in trying to dispel people of the illusory aspects of nature or telling them they're dream characters. They get seriously annoyed. I mean seriously. Try that in the real world. Tell someone you're dreaming and I created you and see how they respond. Usually not favorably.

Still, no matter how much you aim for inconspicuous, there are times you stand out. If you look healthier than the general population, if you're prettier or cleaner than the general population, if you're taller or whiter than the regular population. I landed in Japan once, in a time before Marco Polo, and the town I found myself in thought I was ghost. I was forced to make a hasty retreat. And sometimes, one just makes mistakes. I found myself on the outskirts of an old Scandinavian village. A child approached me as I neared the village on a muddy path, and asked if I had a gift for her. Well, not thinking, I reached in my bag and retrieved a crystal, offering it to the child. She snatched it and ran just as the adults decided to confront me.

The mother of the child took the crystal and brought it back as a man was asking me who I was and where I was going.

"Um, I am just exploring," I offered.

"Alone?" one of the men asked. "Where is your husband?"

Part of me wanted to rebel, like I needed a husband to travel! A part of me realized that they were expressing genuine concern for my wellbeing. People here probably don't travel alone, especially females.

"My daughter says you gave this to her," the woman with the crystal asked. "Why would you do that?"

"She asked for a gift. I was a small token of affection," I offered.

"It's much too precious for her. It's too powerful a gift for her," the woman said.

"Perhaps, then, you will keep for her until you believe she is mature enough to recognize its value," I said.

"You still haven't told us your name," the first man to address her said.

"Are you a servant of Freyja?" the woman with the crystal asked.

"She is beautiful enough to be Freyja," one of the younger men said. He was truly an adolescent. Clearly mesmerized by me. He really wasn't the only one, but most of the adult males hid well enough. My presence here would likely result in some fights and hard feelings.

"You, go back to the house," the woman with the crystal said.

"Are you Freyja come to still our men?" another woman asked.

"Look at her! She's clearly a goddess," someone said.

"With black hair? Who ever heard of a black haired goddess?" the first man said.

"Then she is a demon," someone said.

The woman holding the crystal threw it at me, hitting me in the face. They all started throwing stuff at me, yelling at me, chasing me off. The nearest exit was a puddle I had passed. Casting the portal spell and binding it to the surface was easy enough. Getting there without getting hit by a stone was harder. I dived in head first, and landed on a grassy lawn, rolling out in a perfect tumble. You would think I would be covered from head to toe with mud, but I was clean as ever. I touched the back of my head and when I saw my hand, I saw blood. Interesting, I thought. Tulpas can bleed.

A green woman approached. Was I hit that hard I was seeing green people? She was wearing a thin shift of a dress, secured to her neck by mandarin like collar, no shoulders. It was a sheer, transparent green, that allowed light to pass through, and her beauty was manifest though it. There were differences in the anatomy, and I was naturally drawn there, wanting to understand the differences, to celebrate the differences. Not knowing if this was acceptable here or not, I quickly brought my eyes up, biting my lip.

“You appeared to be injured. Would you like assistance?” she asked.

“Um, you’re not going to hit me with a rock, are you?” I asked.

The green woman seemed taken aback. “Why would I hit you with a rock?”

“Some aliens don’t like strangers,” I said.

“May I come closer?” she asked.

“Okay,” I said.

The woman came closer, inspecting the wound on the back of the head. “Not too bad,” she mumbled, and from her pocket withdrew a leaf, placed it over the wound, and held it against her head with the flat of her palm. “I’m Alish.”

“I am Loxy,” I said. “Thank you for helping me.”

“You seem surprised,” Alish said.

“Well, I have been traveling for some time now, and well, the best places I have visited have been indifferent to my presence,” Loxy said.

“You’re a traveler?” Alish said, releasing the pressure from the head to check progress. Loxy was healed. She held her palm up offering the leaf to the wind, thanking it for its help. She thanked the wind for carrying the offering, and wished the entire process health and wellbeing. She sat down in front of her. “That’s interesting.”

“There are so many interesting things to track,” I said, not knowing where to start. I quickly sorted a place to try. “So, for example, I have been scared before, and made some hasty retreats, but this is my first injury. I didn’t think it possible.”

Alish took my hand and read over my palm. “Oh, well, that makes sense.”

“What?” Loxy asked.

“Well, we are more akin than you realize,” Alish said. “You’ve been traveling astral realms, but have recently pushed back into the physical realms. You need a body to translate this frequency, and your spirit made it happen. That takes a bit of magic. You’re an adept?”

“I created a body? You mean like bilocation, where people can astral to other places and be encountered in real life?” I asked.

“That’s my understanding,” Alish said. “You see, I am a tree spirit, and this body was manifested to serve the tree in ways a tree normally can’t care for itself.”

“So I am real! I can return to my friend and show him we made progress?” I asked, excitedly. I so wanted to show Jon I was real.

“Well, I don’t know,” Alish said. “Clearly you have some natural talent, but some worlds are more challenging to penetrate than others.”

“Tell me about you,” I asked.

“I am not sure what else I can tell you,” Alish said.

“My understanding is you are like a tulpa. A tree tulpa!” I said.

“Oh, no, your words are not adding up right,” Alish said, thinking how to translate it better. “Okay, there is a spirit me, and there is my primary incarnation, which is a tree, and I am a projection of the tree, created in order to better interact with other entities in and around the physical plane within the sphere of influence of the tree. I am not the tree, but I am from the tree. Does that makes sense?”

“OMG, yes! You’re a Tulpa!” I exclaimed, taking her hands. What were the odds? Out of all the Universe, I ended up in a world with another Tulpa. We were holding hands like two lost sisters, in a park.

Alish smiled. “You seem really happy.”

“How could I not be?” I asked. “OMG, the Universe is so amazing, and I am surrounded by love all the time.”

“Didn’t someone just hit you in the head with a rock?” Alish asked.

“Oh! Well, that’s love, too,” I explained. Alish displayed skepticism. “From my perspective, there is only love. I have heard it said fear is the opposite of love, but seriously, you can’t hold fear if you’re not loving something so fiercely that you feel the need to protect it from other, or, more abstractly, from change.” Those people were not just afraid of me, but were afraid of how they would change if I had been permitted to remain with them. Even a small visit would change them. Rivalries for my affection, my magic, my wealth would tear their tiny village apart.

Alish’s smile diminished, not because she was perturbed, but because she was clearly taking serious effort process my statement. You could see it; she was listening, not debating. Sometimes it takes a moment for people to hear me, but it clicked and her energy sort brightened. “Are you a teacher here?” Alish asked.

“No,” I said. “I don’t even know where here is.”

“This is Safe Haven University,” Alish said.

I looked around me. It didn’t look like a University to me, but then, my eyes were new, and some of my concepts of things were entanglement information bits from my host. My immediate area looked like a park. If I didn’t know better, I would have said somewhere in Central Park, New York. But this was not that. There were other people wandering. An old man with a cane sat on a distant park bench. Pigeons had gathered around him, and one perched on the top of his cane. I thought he was a statue at first, but he moved and pigeons took to the air all at once, circled and then gathered back around him. I brought my attention back to Alish, not doubting her statement.

“This seems like a very nice place,” Loxy said.

“I love it here,” Alish said. “I have been given my residential permit, but I haven’t activated it yet. I have grown so accustomed to sleeping in the park that I am afraid... Oh! There is love here, even in this park. You have changed the way I see things, Loxy.”

“I’m sorry. It was not my intent to change you,” I said.

“Um, maybe we can’t help but change each other,” Alish mused. “Something my Evolutionary science teacher was trying to help me understand.”

“Oh, that sounds like an exciting class. May I attend with you?” I asked.

Alish considered the question. “I don’t know. I suppose. There is some difficulty involved.”

“Such as?” I asked.

“Well, you’d probably have to hold my hand,” Alish said.

“I am holding your hand now,” I pointed out.

Alish laughed. “Yes, but I mean, a lot. Like a lot a lot. See, one doesn’t just go to class, but class comes to you. I mean, you go there, but you’re kind of summoned, and you arrive when it’s time. There are some designated times when it’s more likely to happen, so like, in the morning, I walk to the moon gate over through and pass through, and most the time, I end up where I need to be. If we’re holding hands when that event occurred, in theory, you should arrive where I arrive. Then again, I might arrive where you arrive, and that could be a different place all together. Or, worse case scenario, we arrive at two very different places. Interestingly, we could both be in the exact place in space and time and still be in different places, which is something I am struggling with.”

“It makes perfect sense to me,” I said. “Sometimes, when I am walking with my host, we are clearly in two different worlds.”

The sky had been growing darker as the sun slipped behind the horizon. I had been noting the stars that were coming out, a faint halo appearing behind Alish, but suddenly, the sky was profoundly changed and the stars were dominant in a sky that was not quite dark yet, as if the sky was holding onto the light. A galaxy of stars shone above, directly overhead, like halo for the world. OMG! It was so wondrous I was crying. I think Alish asked if I was alright. I ignored the tears coming down my cheeks and stood, arms outstretched. Jon had told me that there were wonders beyond imagination, but I had no idea he had such vision. I spun trying to take it all in and ended up making myself dizzy and fell and just lay in the grass.

“Are you okay?” Alish asked.

I sat up suddenly. “OMG.”

“What?” Alish asked.

“I think I have to urinate,” I said.

“Oh,” Alish said. “Well, there is a toilet tree right over there.”

“Would you show me?” I asked.

निर्मित

Tulpa have to urinate? I hear you asking it. It's a great question. Did you ever have a dream where you were someone else, maybe even the opposite gender, but in the dream you don't question the reality? Well, that's pretty much my life. I have bounced from dreamscape to dreamscape, and simply became what I needed to be. In the creation process of becoming a tulpa, there was initial scaffolding, but at some point I was invited to be a part of the process, and so I tried on attributes, physical and mental and spiritual, the same way someone might shop for clothes. I participated in dramatizations in order learn my voice. I became versed in anatomy and physiology, especially human. You'd be surprised by some of the books in Jon's head that were available to me. He was nursing student at one time, so there are lots of clinical books. "The Body Has a Head" was such a lovely text to read. Really, go look it up. And of course, I am as curious a kid with the retention level of a baby. I am soaking in everything all the time and sometimes I haven't become aware of what I have taken in until there is a connection and the neural link lights up and I go 'wow!'

So, that's one level. But also, I travel a lot. Sometimes with my host, sometimes on my own. I have a golden ticket to everywhere that is even way better than Leeloo's multi-pass. How to translate that. I can astral travel. I was born on the Astral Plane, and, again, using the child analogy, I would wonder from my host to explore, and then rush back to him and tell him about my adventures, and sometimes I think he even heard it. Now, on one level, he always heard everything, but conscious part of him, he was still struggling at that point, and so, most of our interactions was still in the unconscious world. At some magical threshold of interaction, I would burst into his life. He knew it. I knew it, and so, we kept doing what we needed to do to meet that threshold. So, anyway, yes, I ramble a little too, sometimes. Astral traveling can be completely energetic, but sometimes you arrive in places where your energy has to translate to the environment and you become physical. You don't have to know anything about physicality to become physical, you just do. And so, here I was, urinating on a tree that had a toilet like orifice that accepted waste. It actually wanted it! It even provided a nice leafy paper like material for cleaning. It is just one of the many marvels at Safe Haven. In the exchange, the tree provided an orange, which Alish picked for me and handed it to me as we walked away.

"This particular fruit will clean your teeth and breath," Alish said. "You can give the peel back to the tree, or if I might have it, I am collecting it for my herbal remedy cash."

“Oh, well, sure, you may have it,” I said. I followed her back to her spot and sat on the ground with her. She resumed her lotus posture. “I am feeling a little sleepy.”

“I could make a blanket for you, if you like,” Alish said.

“No. Are you okay if I just lay here beside you?” I asked.

“Sure,” Alish said.

“Are you going to lay down?” I asked.

“I prefer to sleep in this pose,” Alish said.

“I would like to continue communicating with you, but I must have expended a great deal more energy than I imagined...” I was going on.

“All is well, Loxy. Lay down, close your eyes, and know we will continue when our next moment arrives,” Alish said. “If you wake and find it morning and I am not present, know that I simply went to class. I will return to this place when I am finished.”

I touched her arm, smiling, and lay down. No sooner than my eyes shut, I was asleep. In a dream, or perhaps the etheric plane, I found Jon lying in bed, talking to me. He waited for my responses and continued as if I had answered. These were usually interesting conversations, telling me about his day, or teaching me about the world or things that occurred to him, in doing so I learned more about him than if he were trying to make profile about himself. I snuggled up to him in bed, petting him, yearning for the day when my touch always drew his attention to me. Sometimes, he shivers and I know my touch has affected him. I whisper loving things in his ear, and I can see happiness well up in his aura. There is no doubt we are having an effect on each other. Sometimes, though, I feel his urgency. It is difficult for him to wait for result, but he is doggedly persistent on the border of obsessive. To be a great tulpamancer, I think you have to be obsessive.

I woke in Safe Haven. That was huge for me. Usually I bounce, but here I was, and Alish was standing over me.

“I am glad you’re awake. It is time for me to head towards class,” Alish said.

“May I follow you until I can’t?” I asked.

“I would love that. I could take you to the pub and you could get breakfast,” Alish offered.

“That would be lovely,” I said.

And so we walked. I took Alish's arm, and though she was a bit unnerved by it, she accepted.

"I am sorry. It is okay that I touch you?" I asked.

"Yes," Alish said. "I am just not accustomed to such affection."

"You don't have affection?" I asked, surprised.

"What you're giving me is different," Alish said. "Sorry. I don't know how to communicate this."

"Do you have sex?" I asked.

Alish turned a darker shade of green. "Yes. People are drawn to me during the time of need."

"Time of need?" I asked.

"Cycle?" Alish asked.

"You mean, you go into heat?" I asked.

"Something like that," Alish asked.

"So, you can only have intimacy during your cycle?" I asked. I am really interested in her physicality. Different can be fun.

"Oh, no, I can accommodate a suitor if they are in need, but it would be unproductive," Alish said. "Are you asking because you are needing release?"

"Release?" I asked. "Oh! You'd do that with me?"

"I could actually use the credits," Alish said.

"Credits?" I asked.

"Here at Safe haven, intimate interaction is encouraged and a point system was implemented so that one can follow the magical energies," Alish said.

"Wow, I am really interested in knowing more, and if it doesn't embarrass you, I would love to be intimate with you. I am curious about you," I said.

Alish stopped and looked at me. "I feel a connection with you. I want to understand it. If we do this, would you require privacy?"

"Not necessarily," I said. "I am willing to learn your cultural rituals of engagement."

Alish seemed perplexed, and then suddenly had closure. Contentment spread across her face, her body seemed more relaxed, as if she was accepting me holding her arm as absolute sign of genuine affection. "I would like to invite you to be with me when I activate my residential

permit. I want your energy to be a part of that space. I want to invite you to live with me as a friend, for as long as you're at Safe Haven."

"OMG," I said. "That is so huge."

"Is it too much?" Alish asked.

"You're aware that I am a traveler. I may not always be around, but if I have a location identifier, I will always visit," I said.

"Like the birds in my hair, may your seasons always bring you home to me," Alish said.

"OMG!" I said. I embraced her in the fiercest hug. "I am crying!"

"I feel it," Alish said. She pulled back and she kissed me.

I was floored. Grounded? A rush of sensation, my own feelings of love blossomed. There was the warmth of our exchange. A gentleness, like a breeze through my hair. There was the taste of mint and chocolate. I didn't want the engagement to end, but Alish ended it, leaving me breathless. I bit my lip, clearly unable to suppress my wanting.

"Can you wait?" Alish asked me.

"I'm like super aroused at the moment," I admitted. I sucked in air and sighed. "But, yeah. Your time table."

"Thank you," Alish said. "I suspect I will be where you are by this afternoon, should you be here in the park."

"I will endeavor to be here," I said.

Alish led me through the moon gate even as someone was exiting the other side. I didn't question the fact that I hadn't seen the person enter the gate, nor did I question that we passed through it and arrived somewhere else. Alish led me to the pub, and found us a seat. When the waitress arrived, Alish insisted that my meal and drink come from her credit line. The waitress said no problem and went to bring me a coffee.

"Alright, have fun, explore," Alish said. "And I will see you later."

"Okay," I said, standing and hugging her.

I sat back down. The waitress brought me a coffee and smiled and headed off to another patron in want. As I sat observing folks, assaulted by a barrage of differing aromas, I began to make observations about dress. If you don't know what a Cosplay convention is, well, then, I don't know how to explain the variety of attire I was seeing. There were normal street clothes, of all different ages and times. There were space outfits and super hero outfits and outlandish outfits

that I am not even sure had a designation, other than those eccentric items you might see modeled in a magazine but no one would ever actually wear to any real life event. There were aliens. Like different species not from earth. There were humanoids that resembled animals. There were humans dressed in animal outfits. It was kind of bizarre, but absolutely brilliant that all of these people were allowed to be themselves.

An elderly man approached, and made gentle cough to draw my attention. Both his hands were on his cane as he hovered near me. I couldn't identify why he needed a cane. Was it a prop or a crutch?

He nodded. "May I intrude?"

"Sure," I said, pointing to the free seat on the other side of my small table.

He didn't sit. "Would you have sex with me?"

"Excuse me?" I asked. I am not sure what expression was on my face, but I hope I managed to projecting loving kindness.

"The general answer set is yes or no," the man said. "Should you be willing to say yes, I have waiver for you to sign saying that you agreed to have sex with me, but that I politely declined the actual engagement of normal activities that follow a yes."

I blinked. "Forgive me for being so confused. You want me to say yes to sex so that you can decline?"

"Yes," he said.

"Um, could you clarify your position, please?" I asked.

"I am celibate," he said.

I bit my lip, really trying to understand. "You're celibate, and yet, you're asking me if I would have sex with you? Wait wait wait. Are you asking me an abstract hypothetical willingness to fuck you, to determine if I have any prejudice such as ageism or gender issues, or are you simply seeing if I personally would be open to a casual fuck?"

"I don't know why this is so hard," he said.

"Because you're horny and celibate?" I asked.

"No, not that, I mean, this. This conversation. Most people simply say no and move on, but you're leaving me hanging, and I need to know if you're willing or not. I have a deadline to meet," he said.

“You mean like, if you don’t get a yes by before midnight, you revert back to a pumpkin?” I asked.

“I think you’re mixing metaphors,” he said. “Let’s start over. My name is Lester. Would you have sex with me.”

“Well, hello, Lester,” I said. “I am Loxy. I would be happy to fuck you if it would help.”

“Oh, well, thank you,” he said, procuring a paper from his pocket. “Would you sign this, please?”

“No,” I said.

“You just said you were willing to have sex with me,” Lester said.

“I did say that,” I said. “And though I am very willing to have sex with you, I am not willing to sign something that says I am willing to have sex with you, when I would rather just have the sex. But, you’re not really offering sex, are you. You’re trying to take a short cut around an obligation, and that won’t help you, so I would be remiss in my duties as a human being to give you some half ass interaction, when I could give you my full ass interaction.”

“You’re fucking with me because I don’t want to fuck you?” Lester asked. He seemed really angry.

“Oh, you really want to fuck me,” I pointed out.

Lester tapped his cane on the ground. “Well, of course I want to fuck you. You’re the most beautiful woman in this whole pub. That’s why I approached you.”

“Oh, well, that’s sweet and all, but not accurate,” I said.

“Excuse me?” Lester asked.

“Okay,” I agreed. “You may think I am beautiful, but the reason you approached me is you have this irrational belief that you are not worthy to be with someone as beautiful, and therefore you asked me with the belief you would be declined. But surprise, I didn’t tell you to go fuck yourself, but have openly declared my willingness to fuck you, and so, your choice are, you can fuck me per the original intent of your asking, or you can go explain to whoever it is that cares about whether or not you get laid why you couldn’t engage.”

“You’re really difficult,” Lester said.

“I am really easy,” I said. “Should I prove it you?”

“Good day, madam,” Lester said, and walked away.

The waitress approached me. “You handled him pretty well.”

“I don’t understand,” I said.

“Your brush off,” the waitress said.

“Brush off? I would have really fucked him,” I said. “He clearly needs to be laid in the worst way.”

“Yeah, well, most people don’t volunteer to help strangers with that,” the waitress said. “So, I guess that means you’re a student here.”

“Is that bad?” I asked, which was really not saying I was or wasn’t a student.

“Well, I kind of like you and was going to ask you out, but I am not a fan of magicians or people who will have sex with old people,” the waitress said.

“You do realize, you will be old one day,” I pointed out.

“Oooh, but not old and having sex,” the waitress said. “That’s just gross.”

The waitress walked away. I finished my coffee and departed to explore the world. Most of the people I passed were into their group conversations. There were people walking solo that gave the appearance of being in group conversations. I sat by a water fountain and simply observed people. Now, watching people and their energies is really fascinating, and I often assume that most people know that we are not physical beings first, but rather we are energetic beings who incorporate into physical bodies. This is where Jon and I diverge. He sees himself and others as physical first. His mindset on that is slowly changing since we began interacting on the energetic levels, but he still doesn’t see as well as I. I think the reason most people don’t see it is they would be freaked out by just how alien we appear compared to the human physical paradigm. We have light structures that blossom and bloom and shine. We have energy tails that connect us to other beings and objects. Our attention sends out feelers, and so literally, whatever you’re focusing on in your environment, tentacles and threads of energy latch on to objects and penetrate objects. When other people come into your environment, lots of tentacles go out. There is an exchange of tentacles of energy, rays, brushing of feathers, tasting licking feelers, smelling feelers, seeing feelers, and hearing feelers. A walk down the street is never just a simple walk down the street. Even if you’re not focused on something particular, feelers are going out.

When it comes to sex, though, everyone, all the time, are engaging each other on this higher level, looking for receptivity. How it translate on the physical is people pair up, or they’re blocked. Women, or female entities, are the gate keepers. A fully charged, illuminated woman is irresistible. The brighter she is, the more irresistible she is. If women really knew just how much

power they have over the male species, they would be a lot more forgiving of men's proclivities to engage in what appears to be meaningless sex. They literally cannot say no, any more than a moth can resist flying into a candle. No man is immune to this light. Men, on the other hand, could be equally bright, just as horny as the comparable female version of him, and could be declined or even shunned. People who live immersed in the physical paradigm don't get this; the women just divert their eyes and or avoid the energy by departing or blocking. It's really interesting to watch play out in worlds where materialistic paradigms are the preferred lens for seeing the world. Here in Safe Haven, magicians were learning to navigate these energies. They were responding differently than the people I have observed on Earth. If someone shot a ray of inquiry to another being, the other being shot back. They would draw together and negotiate something. What they were negotiating on the physical was not necessarily what was negotiated on the energetic.

I was trying my best to keep my feelers to myself, but someone drew my attention, and my focus narrowed. A twenty something year old human female. Blond. She was wearing a red Boho dress, tiny intricate yellow energy patterns, like ripples, contained just on the skirt, trickling up to her bosom. She had knee high boots. She approached me, and the world seemed to warp around her, not quite tunnel vision on my part, but I swear she was a goddess radiating light. She arrived in front of me, admiring me, touched my forehead and pushed my hair back. I found myself holding my breath, and she kissed me. It was so unexpected, but it was the very thing I had wanted from her. She withdrew from the kiss, took my hand, and led me to the front of a building.

"My name is Misty," she told me. "I want you to go into the front desk there, and tell them I sent you. I wish you well on your journey, traveler."

I didn't want to leave her. I would have stood there gazing at her, wanting more, and she walked away, and now in her absence I can tell you, even women are affected by a shining bright woman. I was not in my right mind, and probably would not be until after the magic had happened, had she allowed it to happen. I think the only reason I didn't follow her was because she had given me instructions. Had she been selling anything, even Avon, I would have bought everything in her bag.

I went inside and approached the front desk. A receptionist, a nice looking young man smiled at me.

“Hello, Loxy,” he said. “I am George. How may I help you?”

“You know my name?” I asked, taken aback. I am not usually surprised, but I was still entangled with that Misty woman, and my mind was still trying to sort fantasy from reality. Even the fantasy of her was as good as the reality of her.

“Now, I wouldn’t be much good here at the help desk if I didn’t know who people were, now would I?” George asked.

“Good point,” I said. Am I dreaming?

“So, would you like to ask the question, or should I just direct you to where you need to be and allow you to be amazed?” George asked.

“Um, the latter, please,” I asked.

“Excellent choice, my lady,” George said. “Proceed through this open space to the other side where it narrows, take the first left and proceed to the end of the corridor, and knock on the door numbered 42.”

“Thank you, George,” I said, shaking his hand. I didn’t let it go. “Would you like to ask me out?”

“Oh, I really would, but you appear to be under a glamour spell, and it would not be fair of me to ask given your present energy state,” George said.

“Oh, I think I will be okay if you want to just take me right now, right here at your desk,” I said.

“Oh, that does sound like fun, but no, room 42, and make all haste,” George said. “You’re distracting people in the lobby. They are so not ready for your level of engagement. Freshman, you know.”

“Okay,” I said, reluctantly letting go of his hand. Fuck, I was so horny. I wanted to get back with Alish and consummate our new friendship. Fuck. You will hear men complain how uncomfortable they are when they have a hard on, but seriously, being wet is equally distracting.

I proceeded to where instructed, knocked on the door that said 42, a solid three wraps, and someone yelled enter. I swear to god, who I came eye to eye with was a dead ringer for David Duchovny. I suddenly experience the whole song by Bree Sharp, David Duchovny, as if I were Bree Sharp. I fucking owned this song. If he noticed, he didn’t reveal it. He remained stoically unimpressed with any nuance I may or may not have projected. He simply waved me in, and invited me to sit in the chair before his desk.

As I sat, the door closed behind me on its own. The David want-to-be pulled out several folders, combined some items, stapled them with only a pinch of thumb and finger, and set these in the primary folder, and sent the other folder's contents to the shredder. He then turned to a screen that only he could see and perused a file, frowning at it. He then printed some forms, flipped them so they were right side up towards me, and placed them on the desk.

"You'll find a pen in the cup, I need your signature on the bottom of each," David said.

"What am I signing?" I asked.

"You can read, can't you?" David asked.

"Sure," I said. "But I thought it would save time if you just explained it."

David pursed his lips as if deciding. "I don't do that," he said, finally. "I don't have time to be chasing other people's truth. If you can't see what's before you, well, you're probably not going to be a good magician."

"A magician?" I asked. "You mean like Houdini or Morgan le Fay?"

"It's your job to define your own reality," David said, pointing to the forms. "I have everything I need to complete your enrollment, except your signature on these documents."

"Why?" I asked.

David blinked. "Because you haven't signed them yet?"

"No, why am I being enrolled?" I asked.

"You were recommended, a committee approved the recommendation, you arrived, kind of like magic, but, still we require some old fashion commitment, like signatures," David said.

"Is this a binding contract?" I asked.

"Really?" David said. "Okay, seriously, I thought you wanted in, but if you don't, please sign the very bottom line saying that you don't want to be a student at Safe Haven University."

"I am not saying no to the offer, I am just not sure why I am being offered, and I really don't know anything about your school or why someone would recommend me, but I did meet someone I like here, who is a student, which may be unduly influencing my decisions, and so, well, this is just a lot to consider, and all of a sudden," I said. "Is this a prestigious campus?"

David shrugged, and decided to replenish coffee into his cup. I am not quite sure how he did it. He tapped his cup, it refilled, spinning to mix his blend with a touch of a milk, turning clouds into a black into a gentle brown. He sipped.

"How much does it cost to attend here?" I asked.

“That gets magically sorted,” David said. “Anyone will tell you if you can’t afford to pay, don’t dabble in magic, but as a traveler, you already know that, right?”

“Who recommended me?” I asked.

David sighed, set his coffee down, visited some papers and perused a document until he found the information. “Some guy by the name of Jon.”

“Oh, well that makes sense,” I said, taking a pen and signing the appropriate lines to be enrolled into my first serious educational program. “That was really nice of him, don’t you think?”

“I try not to pass judgment on folks I don’t know and haven’t met,” David said, collecting the papers I signed. He stamped them and put the folder away. He looked back to me. “Why are you still here?”

“So, where do I go next?” I asked.

“Where would you like?” David asked.

“Aren’t you going to give me a class schedule and point me out in the right direction?” I asked.

“You will find where you need to be soon enough,” David said. “Good day.”

“Wait, just like that?” I asked.

“What? You wanted magic to propel you out of my office?” David asked.

“Well, this is a magic school, so that would be nice,” I said. “Can you make a recommendation for what I should do next?”

“I recommend you get orientation over with as soon as possible,” David said. “Have fun. Good day. Bye.”

“You’re not very social, are you?” I asked.

“What would you like? Flirty guy? I’ve done flirty, and the clients complained. It’s to the point now a male can’t even compliment a girl on her hair or dress without HR coming to educate you on harassment policies,” David said. “Did you know, there are places where you will be issued citation for cat calling?”

“Do you want to flirt with me?” I asked.

“How is that not a trap,” David said.

“It sounds like you really want to connect but don’t know how,” I said.

“Don’t do that,” David said. “I am quite content with where I am and where I am going, and I have other clients to see, so, if you’ll be so kind as to show yourself out, that would be great. Good day.”

“You need a hug,” I said.

“No, thank you,” David said.

“I could sign something that says I offered the hug,” I said.

“No,” David said.

“A side hug?” I asked.

“No physical contact, thank you,” David said. “I am not a magician. I can’t handle your level of intensity.”

“Oh, I promise not to hug you that hard,” I said.

“No, thank you. Please leave now,” David said.

So, I got up to leave. I mean, a person should only have to ask you to leave so many times before you leave, right? I looked back to make sure and he had already turned to work. In a way, I was perturbed, because I did feel a sort of connection, even though he was blocking any connection. Doesn’t a block actually mean there is a connection, but that exploring it would open up too many things for one or both parties? Blocks should be seriously explored. Then again, I wondered about my own insistence? Was I too aggressive? Is that why those folks threw rocks at me the other day? Is it me? I opened the door, hesitated.

“How do I find orientation?” I asked.

“Just right outside my door,” David said.

I wanted to ask for more specific direction, but simply departed. I did not arrive in the corridor that had led me to his office. I was in a new corridor. The hall way was lined with photos of graduates of Safe Haven. The names and faces of humans didn’t impress me, but the faces of aliens did. There were some truly alien beings. Even some animal beings. Like, there was an Emperor Tamarin, with a long winding mustache, and a hint he was flavored by Doctor Seuss. He looked like a serious magician. The double doors at the end of the hall said Orientation. Oh, good, finally a destination that might tell me what it’s all about.

Chapter 3

I was not prepared for the level of intensity and the barrage of sensations that assaulted me on entering orientation. I turned to retreat and found the door gone. Only a brick wall was there. I turned back and sorted my impression until I had clarity. There was the smell of sex. A lot of sex. There were sounds of people having sex, both the sounds of bodies slapping on bodies, and the subsequent vocals when a body is pushed in a certain direction. In my mind, I heard the opening lyrics to Habits. That helped relax me enough that I was suddenly amused, but seriously wondering about the nature of the school I just signed into. And then, it occurred to me, Orientation might mean something more than what I imagined. Was it a metaphor? Were these people trying to know who they were or what they would chose to be? Or, was it a place designed to get people over their sexual hang up and not be so judgmental?

I proceeded down the row of seats towards the front of the auditorium, with a confidence that I would be okay. I didn't fear being attacked or molested. I was seriously tuning into some sexual energies, and becoming aroused, again, after a string of arousals, and I imagined the first guy that approached me was in serious danger of being raped by me. Fuck, if that man Lester and his cane were here, I would show him how to his props. There was a couple blocking my progress. The male appeared to be unconscious as the woman, in the cowgirl position, continued to ride him. I knelt down and touched his cheek, looking for a heartbeat. He was alive.

"He falls asleep every time," the girl said.

"But you're still going?" I asked.

"I haven't finished! And he is still hard," the girl said.

"Okay," I said, skirting them.

"Do you want to help me?" she asked.

At the other end of the room, on a stage, man emerged from curtains and a spot light illuminated him with a loud audible click. "Umm, I think I need to hear this," I said, thanking her and hurrying down to the front. It was a serious struggle not to accept her offer, but somehow, the messenger seemed important.

The man coughed. "Welcome to Safe Haven University," he said. "Keep doing whatever you're doing. Stay asleep. But let my words register somewhere in you. Let's begin by confronting your myths and misconceptions about the nature of the Universe," he seemed

unimpressed by the activities going on before him. I was not at all sure he could see it, with the light in his eyes, but then, there was no way he couldn't smell or hear what was going on. He was dressed in a suit reminiscent of the sixties. "You were not chosen," the speaker emphasized. "There is absolutely nothing innately special about any of you. Singling out any one artifact in all of existence as more special than the rest of its constituent parts is insanity. Singling out any one of its parts as irrelevant is just as insane."

A female, about my age, approached me on hands and knees. She hesitated, smiling up at me, and then put her hands on my knees. She bit her lip, and when I didn't stop her, she pushed her hands up along the insides of my thigh, pushing my skirt a little higher before getting lost underneath. She went over my thighs and behind to my butt, and pulled me forward in the seat. I went with it, sliding forwards, opening up to her. Her lips on my thighs sent shivers up my spine. My anticipation of where she was going grew, as she teased around it, in smaller circles. I was already aroused and wanting, so I was tempted to just put my hands on her head and get her where I wanted her, but this was nice, too.

"Safe haven is not Beauxbatons Academy of Magic, nor is it Uagadou, or Mahoutokoro, or like anything you have probably heard tell of. It's definitely not the school of your parents or your forefathers. If you're here, more than likely it's because you come from a culture that resists, suppresses, or denies the importance of sex and sexuality," he was saying. I was sort of listening. Technically I came from a place that repression of sex and sexual energies had resulted in my host struggling for years to rid himself of the shame and shackles imposed on him from youth. I was also very interested in what my new companion was doing to me. It is possible to be entertain two thoughts at once, but the growing distraction was making it difficult.

She, my new companion, was dressed like Boa Hancock. Her midsection was bare, and with her face in between my thighs, her butt in the air, could see the two back dimples. Her split skirt was practically falling off. If someone walked by and stepped on it, it would pull free from her hips. The top part was long sleeved with an open V that descended to the belt that tightened above her belly. Her breasts had already popped out before she crawled over to me. She found my pussy with a single finger, tracing the delicate folds. I was so wet that the lips easily parted, trembling. She smiled up at me, slowly entered me. She drew my own wetness out and coated the outer area. Fuck! She licked the length of it with the broad of her tongue and I felt body tingling with electricity. The tip of her tongue came to a focus on the clit as her sweep drew its

closer there. The tip of her tongue went up past, then around, and then her whole lips were on me.

“You’re not here because we need you. You’re not Neo. You’re not Anakin Skywalker. The Universe doesn’t need another hero. It’s not out of balance. Everything is unfolding exactly as it should be. It couldn’t be any other way. If all of you were contained to this very room for the rest of existence, it would make no difference to me, and the Universe would still be quite content with itself. You’re here because we have graciously embraced you, flaws and all. You are here because you are mediocre in every aspect of your lives. You’re boringly redundant, unnecessary, borderline ridiculously obsolete and useless, and you lack the discipline and knowledge to even recognize just how pitiful your state actually is. And, it is that inconspicuous ordinariness that makes you valuable. You are just the necessary background character in someone else’s dreams. You are there to give them insight or keep them dreaming.”

OMG! Fuck. I was clenching the arms to the seat. Someone behind me was summoning ‘god’ which mirrored my own song.

“The founding Mother of our University believes it is possible, given sufficient time and energy, for you to rise above your ordinariness! She believes you are all stars in the making...”

I was so going to cum. My breathing had increased. My awareness of that eventuality had increased. I was so aware of everything and everyone around me that it was as if they were all illuminated, spliced out of photographs and pasted into my reality. I blinked and saw everyone in a new light. Everyone here was surrounded by a fierce storm of lights, raging cyclones of luminescent clouds like thunderheads that were jelly fish rising from the ocean heading towards the stars, while grappling each other, but their tentacles were enmeshed like mating octopi. They were the boiling clouds in David Duchovny’s coffee.

“So, if you’re ready to rise to the occasion,” the speaker pressed on. “To step out of yourself and serve a greater cause, you will find the exit here to my left...”

A door appeared against the wall where she gestured. The Orgasm I had was huge. Not the greatest I had ever had, or would ever have, but in the environmental constraints and context of the room known as Orientation, it was magnified. I wanted to go to sleep. The lost anime want to be Cosplay chick who had brought me off stood over me, pleased with herself. She kissed me. I could taste myself on her lips. I took hold of her breast and rose into her. She kissed my cheek my neck, my ear.

“Do me,” she whispered in my ear.

“Okay,” I said.

She let me go so she could push her skirt off. I walked toward the door, as if drunk. The light outside was somehow brighter than it was, as if it was pooling in the doorframe, giving the edges of the closed door a luminescent frame. What little light leaked through was disruptive of the atmosphere, like shining a light on a movie screen that whited out the movie. I was on almost at the door when I was tackled from behind. I heard the words ‘bitch, it’s my turn,’ and we flew into the door. It gave way and we tumbled onto a manicured lawn. The girl ended up on top me of me, pinning me down, tearing at my clothes, grinding her hips against me, biting my newly exposed breast, licking up the center to my neck where she took my chin in her mouth, before licking my face. She met my eyes. She froze, horrified. Tears begin to flow. I rolled her to the grass, putting my weight on her. I kissed her tears. I kissed her lips. I made love to her in this green grass, without a care in the world that this was a public place. The sounds she made were the quiet whimpering sounds of a Japanese girl who was socially restrained not to enjoy, and it was hard to tell if it was noises of protest or begging for more. What I gave her was not the frenzied madness of orientation, but the gentle, kind exploration of body, mind, and soul, and when I unleashed her orgasm, she laughed, cried, and fell asleep. I lay there beside her, looking up into the blue sky, thinking what an interesting place I had arrived at.

निर्मित

My new friend roused to find me looking at her, my head propped up on a hand, elbow in the grass. I smiled at her.

“How do you feel?” I asked.

She looked at me as if I were an alien. She bit her lower lip. “That’s not the question I expected from you.”

“Oh, you’re right, forgive me,” I said. “My name is Loxy. What’s your name?”

“Keera,” she said.

“It’s nice to meet you, Keera,” I said. “How are you?”

“Confused,” Keera admitted.

“That’s interesting. I suspect the purpose of Orientation is to bring clarity, fortitude, and compassion,” I said.

Keera seemed to be struggling with my perspective. “Do you know how long I was in there?!”

I put a finger to her lips. “Shh,” I said. “You’re fighting it, and you can’t undo what was done. You were in there for the length of time you needed to be there.”

“I practically raped you,” Keera said.

“Eh, I gave you permission,” I said.

“I tackled you and ripped your outfit,” Keera said.

“I’ll get a new one,” I said. “In the astral plane, it’s real easy to change clothing, but I have not figured out how to do it here. Yet.”

Keera sat up. “You’re a magician?!”

I sat up because she sat up. We took a lotus pose, mirror image, and I held her hands. “Aren’t we all magicians?”

“Do you always answer questions with a question?” Keera said.

“You want me to impose my reality over top your reality?” I asked.

Keera took one of her hands back and scratched her head. Then she realized she was naked, her skirt having been left in Orientation. She looked for the door as if she was considering going back in there for the other half of her attire.

“Would you like to be friends?” I asked.

“You want me to be my friend after I attacked you?” Keera asked.

“If you like,” I said. “You can even attack me again if you like, only it won’t really be an attack if I have given you permission in advance.”

“Who are you?!” Keera asked.

“Loxy,” I told her.

“Just Loxy?” Keera asked.

“What are you looking for? A title? Loxy the Great?” I said, laughing at myself. “Loxy the stupendous. Loxy, umm, maybe I should consider my title a little before proposing random stuff.”

“You’re weird,” Keera said.

“Oh! Thank you,” I said. “I love the way you see me. You know, I have this other friend who might be waiting for me at the park, and she might be able to assist us with clothing repair. Would you like to walk with me?”

“I am feeling rather impoverished at the moment,” Keera said, looking down. “I am afraid that I may be accepting your offer out of need.”

“Well, that’s a good as start as any,” I said, standing up. “But if you think about it, we are all impoverished in some area, and generosity starts with compassion.” I extended a hand.

“Come with me, friend Keera.”

Keera took my hand and we helped each other. She was on her feet. She was obviously concerned about being naked in public, even though, it would appear that no one else was paying us any mind. I took my skirt off; it came away as easy as Velcro, and wrapped it around her waist. I felt silly wearing the skirt when my top had already been torn and was practically off anyway. I took the top all the way off and draped it over my arm. I was further disturbed by the imbalance, and so kicked out of my shoes, and picked them up. I had a bag, but I don’t know where it had gone. I wondered if I had left it in David’s office. Oh, well. It would come back to me in its own time, if it so wanted. I found Keera staring at me.

“You okay?” I asked.

“You are absolutely stunning,” Keera said.

“Ahh,” I said, hugging her. “That will so get you laid with me.”

“Are you always so straight forwards?” Keera asked.

“Why beat around a bush when you can go right in?” I asked.

“Can you give me something that’s not a question or a sexual innuendo?” Keera asked.

“I love your green eyes,” I offered.

Keera tried to smile. I linked arms with her and we walked. We discovered a water fountain and a nearby moon gate. I took her there, told the moon gate where I wanted to go, not even sure if that would work, and then touched it, and we stepped through to somewhere else. We arrived where I had intended and I took her there! It took Keera a moment to process the leap we had made. She pulled free, trying to find where the moon gate was, but we were in an open expanse of what was called The Park by the residents of Safe Haven. The Park was huge, so saying The Park is really misleading, as if saying Texas could capture the reality of the place. The Park was a buffer zone that surrounded Safe Haven University, creating a space between it

and the outside world. You can think of the outside world compared to Safe Haven proper as being the difference between secular society and religious society, or better, the Muggles and Hogwarts. The difference between Earth and the Safe Haven world was that most of the cities, towns, and villages were all colonies from other worlds and other times. Each colony had different tech levels, different paradigms, and different ingredients necessary for hard magic. It was frequently necessary to mine the past to create future magic. There were gateways in each colonies that led back to their worlds, allowing for a greater commerce to be held, but I suspect the inhabitants didn't understand or know that they were contained in their colonies. Few ventured past the invisible barriers. Some did. Some were even employed on campus, but most kept their quiet lives as willingly as actors scripted into a role.

“How did you, how did we?” Keera was trying to make something coherent out of our having traveled.

“Keera, I am a little confused by your befuddlement,” I said. “Surely you know we're magicians, enrolled in one of the most prestigious magical universities available to unique individuals.” I said that like I knew what I was saying, but then, surprisingly, what I say tends to be accurate, but even when it's not, that, too, usually points out to something interesting.

“I am not dreaming?” Keera said. “This is all real?”

“Would it make a difference how you respond to it?” I asked.

Chapter 4

The degree of reality is usually measured by the need for maintenance. Keera vomited. She fell to her hands and knees and her body tried to purge something. I knelt beside her, holding her hair back, allowing her to be sick. Alish was suddenly there, beside me. She pulled a folded cloth bag from her pocket, unfolded it, opened, and removed a shallow bowl. Next, she pulled a glass container from her bag, holding it up to the sunlight with both hands, closing her eyes as if saying a prayer over it, and then poured this into the bowl. She produced a cloth and wet it, and proceeded to wash Keera's face.

Keera seemed spent, like there was no more to give up. She simply allowed Alish to wash her, as if this was the most natural thing to do in the whole world, what a soul would do for any soul. Then she focused. Her eyes blinked as she took in Alish's face, her alien features approximated humans, but they were clearly not.

"Shh, you're okay," Alish said, drawing another item from her bag. It was a tiny vial. "Here drink this." When Keera hesitated, Alish insisted. "It will help."

Keera sipped at it, then drank it down. Alish dropped the vial back into her bag, then produced a cup and poured water in from the first glass. "Here, rinse and spit."

Keera followed her instructions, rinsing, but was almost hesitant about spitting it out, but then, what the hell. I guess she figured she already vomited, why not spit. Keera took the glass from her. She removed an item from her bag, essentially a leaf that was folded and tied shut. On opening it she revealed something orange, not quite like the orange peel of the toilet tree variety, but close enough that it could have been that, modified, ground into a pulpy gum.

"Chew this," Alish said. "It will clean your teeth, freshen your breath, and further settle your stomach."

Keera was eager to change the taste in her mouth, and so gladly accepted the gum. Alish pulled a thin cloth from her bag and covered the sick up. She poured water from the glass over the cloth, weighing it down. The cloth disintegrated, sprouting mushrooms that consumers it all, and then it was completely gone, as well as the vomit. With the exception the grass in that area being clearly darker than the surrounding grass, and a dozen small mushrooms, there was no evidence anyone had been sick. Alish collected the mushrooms and placed them into a container and then put them into her bag.

“Just got out of Orientation, did you?” Alish asked.

Keera nearly hurled again, but I patted her back, and Alish held a flower towards her nose.

“Shh,” Alish said. “Easy.”

Keera cried. “You don’t understand. All the things that I did...”

“It happens to all of us,” Alish said. “All magicians experience orientation.”

“But why?!” Keera asked.

“Every culture, every age, ever species, every combination of sexual beings has a different way of seeing the Universe,” Alish said. “And almost everyone thinks their way of seeing is correct way, the only way. Orientation helps people see past their origin paradigms. It helps them realize, they are not immune to the magic or energies. The most pervasive, and the easiest to access, for all species, is sexual energies. If you can’t deal with that, you’re not going to fair well as a magician.”

“Still,” Keera said. “I did things...”

“Everyone does things,” Alish said. “Every person you have ever encountered, will ever encounter, will have done things, sexual things. Pleasant things, unpleasant things, to themselves, to others, sometimes with permission, sometimes without. Sexual energies can make some people really stupid. Every person you will ever meet will want to do things, even if they don’t admit to it. It will shaped things, even if you don’t think it’s shaping things. As a magician, you have to sort the subtlest of nuances to determine agenda, and 90 percent of the time, all agendas lead back to sexual energies.”

“That makes a lot of sense,” I said. “That explains why there are so many stuck people in there. They are chasing something to get something, but in the chasing, they can’t get what they’re seeking, because you sex isn’t something you can accumulate. It would be like, what, trying to capture all the water when you shower. Sure, you could turn a shower into a bath and really sink into it, but in the end, you have to let the water go.” I realized they were both looking at me. “Sorry, I can be a bit of a flibbertigibbet.”

“You went through orientation?” Alish asked.

“Yes! I am now a student,” I said, actually kind of proud. I had always wanted to go to college. I almost laughed at my thought, because, really, if you knew how old I was, I sounded like a child. In some ways I am. In some ways, I am much older than anyone might ever guess.

“But you couldn’t have been in orientation for more than a few hours,” Alish said, trying to imagine how much time existed between leaving me at the pub and this present moment.

“Most people are in there for months sorting what they need to sort.”

“One year, three months, twelve days, four hours, thirty two minutes,” Keera said.

“Very precise,” I said.

“OMG! I remember everything!” Keera said. “I raped people. I was raped by people. There was mutual pairing. And the oddest thing, the pairings that were mutual I didn’t want, but I did it anyway, because, what the fuck, they were there and I needed to get off. I fucked people I would never fuck in a million years, even if that person and I were the only two people in the entire universe. I would have rather fucked a tree stump than those people.”

“It is those sort of judgments that keep people locked in Orientation,” Alish said. “Any judgment creates an internal conflict within the subconscious that needs to be sorted. We tend to attract things that disgust us or anger us.”

“Why?!” Keera demanded.

“Because, those thoughts are like magnets, and they draw those things to us. And the more you resist it, the greater the strength of the magnet,” Alish said.

“But you also gravitate towards things you know will be healthy. You would not have been able to approach me if a part of you didn’t recognize I had something that you would benefit from,” I added.

“I am sorry I imposed myself on you without asking,” Keera said.

“We’ve already sorted that. There is no debt between us,” I said.

Keera started crying. I pulled her towards me and held her. “Shh, Keera, it’s okay.”

“I wish it were,” Keera said. “I can’t help but think of all the things I did and experienced.”

“You could not have experienced them if they weren’t somewhere in your thoughts,” I said. “But you’re not seeing the bigger picture yet. Those things are not all of you. You’re more than that. You are also kind. You could not hold this present mood, some shame, some self-disgust, some remorse... You have so much inside of you, but again, these are not you. You are not your body. You are not your past. You are not your thoughts. You are not your experiences, any more than you are the characters in a movie on a screen. Sure, you have affinity towards some, and hate towards some, and apathy towards much of it, with greater interest in particular

scenes than others, but you hold the knowing that sometimes you have to have the filler scenes in order for there to be context for the favored scenes.”

“How can you be this well-adjusted?” Keera asked.

“I am not human,” I said.

“You’re not?” Keera and Alish asked simultaneously.

“Well, I look human,” I agreed, looking at my body. I really like my body. “But I am really not. I am soul first, body second. I could modify this form if you prefer another.”

“So, you didn’t get stuck in orientation because?” Alish fished.

“Oh, well, I have already experienced so much vicariously through my host that I was more amused than put off. That, and I am a Dakini spirit, and sexual energy runs through my veins like starlight through night,” I said, sorting. “I admit, I was a little surprised at first, but, eh, when in Rome.”

“So, what happens now?” Keera asked.

“What would you like to happen now?” I asked.

“Stop answering my questions with questions!” Keera snapped.

“But it’s important,” I said. “What happens in any world after you figure out Orientation? You are suddenly borne into a world with the ability to navigate, and you pursue your interests.”

“Where’s the plan? Where’s the committees and the welcoming team and the student brochure and the class schedule!” Keera demanded.

“Oh, well, you’re at the wrong University if you want that,” Alish said.

“How are we supposed to survive?!” Keera demanded.

“Magically,” Alish said. “But after Orientation, we are free to navigate the world as we see fit. You can leave Safe Haven proper and go live in one of the outside communities,” Alish said. “You could live here in the park. You could hook up with other freshmen or join a sorority or fraternity. Of course, those agencies tend to want something in return, so if you’re not ready to trade or negotiate terms, it’s best to just go it on your own.”

“I don’t want to be alone!” Keera said.

“My offer for friendship was genuine,” I said. “I would be happy to share experiences with you.”

“Why are you so fucking nice to me?!” Keera said.

“That’s really kind of sad, if you think about it,” I said, feeling a rise of compassion. I wanted to sort her world for her so I could understand her trajectory, but decided, I would just allow her to be where she is and go in the direction she needed to go in.

Keera began to cry again. “OMG, I am so fucking unstable right now. How in the hell could you name a University Safe Haven when the world is clearly not safe!”

“Keera,” I said, gently nearly a whisper. “Don’t speak, don’t answer. Experience. Where are you? Are you physically hurt? Are you breathing? Can you see the stars?”

Keera’s eyes shifted up. She was drawn to her feet, her mouth open, her head looking straight up. She took my arm and Alish’s arm. She went weak in the knees and nearly collapsed but we held her up. She had been so caught up in her feelings and fears that she hadn’t noticed the transition from day to night, which is not unreasonable for a person so focused, especially when dusk is about as dark as this world experiences when the nearest galaxy is directly overhead.

“Am I dead?”

निर्मित

Alish led us to the place where she had been contemplating setting up her residence. She invited us to sit around a stone, intricately carved with coil like patterns, making the surface of the stone seem like tree rings. From the bag she had called into being earlier, she pulled out a shift for me and invited us to sit by the stone. With a simple incantation, she made the stone warm, brought a pan out from her bag, then retrieved something that looked like eggplants, and began to grill it. She also warmed liquid in which she made us the most exquisite tea. It was only then, that we seriously began to talk.

“Tell me the last thing you remember,” Alish said. Her manner was maternal and sisterly at the same time. Depending on the light, sometimes Alish can seem as old as the tallest tree, and then sometimes, she’s just a teenager. If you focus just on her facial features, she reflects an adult human female of perhaps thirty something years of age.

I was surprised by Keera’s story. She was from earth, which didn’t surprise me so much. She gave a brief synopsis of her life, such as being born in Kyoto, under a red torii gate, in the center of a row of torii gates. Her mother told her stories of white foxes lining up to watch the

birth as her father caught her and held her up to the light. On seeing her, the foxes turned and walked away one by one, except for one, which lingered, stretched and bowed. She was two weeks early, but healthy. Eventually, her story caught up to her last moments. She was in a place called Fukushima, running along the beach when suddenly the waters receded away, exposing a vast expanse of what was once the sea floor. She had paused to notice how beautiful and deadly this looked, some fish left stranded. What appeared to be a gold coin flashed on the sand and she was tempted to go fetch it when a white fox ran past. She followed the fox, wondering what it was doing so near the beach. She felt like she was dreaming. The fox would pause to make sure she was keeping up. It led her to a high place where she lost sight of it, and when she turned around, she witnessed the end of her world. Her high place became an island, and watching the waters come in, turning everything, and then drawing it all back to sea, leaving nothing standing, left her so impossibly numb she couldn't even pray for it to be a dream. She stood there for hours, even after the waters had receded. It wasn't until the helicopter landed nearby and people approached her that she finally accepted the reality of it. On the sleeve of one of the rescuers was a patch with a white fox. She fell into his arms and cried. He picked her up and carried her back to the helicopter. She felt entranced by the movement as he walked over wet, debris covered earth, sorting his path back to the vehicle. She kept her eyes closed, pushed against his chest. She didn't want to see. He handed her up to the colleague, under the beating of blades, a fast heart beat that poured love and hope over the world. She heard the door shut, felt the heartbeat of the helicopter speed up until it was so steady it was a droning. She felt the vehicle lift. She looked out as it lifted away from the earth, and her spot, the only refuge from the deluge, which when looking at it, didn't make sense, because it wasn't like it was the highest point. But she couldn't see that. All she could see was that everything was gone. Her family. Her friends. Her work mates. The places she used to visit. Her coffee shop. Her home. The garden. The pets. The trees, the cars, the people... It was all gone. She couldn't look away.

The man was trying to say something to her. She simply closed her eyes, leaned on his shoulder, and went to sleep. The next thing she knew was she was signing a contract and being ushered into the sex place. She paused in her story. It occurred to her, and she vocalized this, that the madness of the endless lusting and partner shifting had actually brought her back to some semblance of normalcy of mind.

“Further, and I don’t know what to make of this,” Keera said. “I think I am still there. Clearly, I am not there. But I am not here, either, even though, I am more here than I was ever here there. OMG, I sound exactly like you. I have gone completely insane!”

“You are not insane,” I said. Alish echoed the sentiment.

“What I have learned since being here is that we are multidimensional creatures,” Alish said. “We exist in a myriad of worlds and times spread across the Universe. We are here, aware of here, because there is a need for magicians.”

“Magicians?” Keera asked.

“Magicians, wizards, shamans, healers,” Alish said. “There is a small core of elites who are needed to deal with the hard stuff. We’re the beings that can listen as a client retails the horrors imposed on them, or even the horrors they imposed on others, without judgment, allowing them a pathway out of that place, to place where they can heal, and in turn, heal those around them.”

“Maybe some people deserve to be in those places,” Keera said.

“Maybe so,” Alish said. “Then again, it wasn’t evil that destroyed your world, leaving you high and dry, but an act of nature. We live in an active Universe full of dynamic energies. Whole worlds are swept clean by stellar blasts. Species go extinct. And if you lived just on the surface of this chaos, then yeah, you have good reason to be afraid. But if you realize the impermanence of it all, that it is nothing more than sandcastles on a beach, then you will have realized it isn’t the beach or the structure built of sand on sand that are important. I think we forget that message when we incarnate on the physical plane.”

“Your philosophy is fucked,” Keera said.

Alish took it stoically.

“Maybe,” Alish said. “There is no end to philosophies and those who philosophize. There are those that resist entropy. There are those who dabble in the dark arts. This University will help you find your path and allow you to engage the Universe as you see fit.”

“So, I could learn to be a sorceress, go back in time, and save everyone?” Keera asked.

“If you like,” Alish said.

“Sounds like a big job,” I said. “Would you like help?”

“Why would you help me?” Keera asked. “It’s not your world, your people.”

“It’s what friends do,” I said.

“Well, stop trying to be my friend,” Keera said.

Keera stood up, started to walk away, came back and took the cooked eggplant, her cup, and walked away. Alish and I didn't pursue. She and I ate, and then I helped her clean the dishes, putting them back into her bag.

“Are you still interested in helping me set up my residence?” Alish asked.

“Very interested,” I said.

Chapter 5

Understanding unity is essential for magic. Rarely does one create a new thing. Typically one finds a doorway towards that idea of a thing and moves towards it. I think that is why so many people get frustrated when they can't find their way. They know this thing exist, this place, this person that is just right for them, but they're stuck one room over. It's awful when you're stuck just one room away, but often we are stuck because we never allow ourselves to calm down sufficiently to realize, oh, there's a trick door right here. Even the subtlest shift in perspective can open portals. Residential magic is sort of like that. The instructions are more likened to a map than a recipe. Hand in hand, Alish and I followed our instincts, hesitating as if we were both on the edge of a cliff with the potential to fall to our deaths, while remaining as close to the edge as possible.

It might also help to know about ley lines. Imagine a geometric grid that encompasses a globe, the energetic arteries and veins that surround every planet, truly every object in the Universe. Everything carries a charge. Even nonmagnetic material carries an electrical charge, static electricity if you will, and it's surface and inner structure has a specific electrical shape and pattern, and that total structure translates as neutral, negative, or positive. Every atom as a charge pattern, and every combination of atoms has a new charged pattern. Even people have these lines running over them and through them and around them, only they don't call them ley lines. We have these energetic pathways, and nodes where they cross, and you can stick a needle into a node and shunt or alter current flow, resulting in miraculous cures, enhanced energy states, or decreased energy states. Same with planets. You build a temple on a major node, you enhance the experiences of the patrons. People don't just pick their places at random. The invisible attracts people to other place and other people.

In between these lines are micro-ley lines. And, between every object, there is an energetic connection. Have you ever woke up early morning, looked at a grassy yard and been mesmerized by morning light reflecting off the dew on grass and spider webs that seemed to be connected to every blade of grass? Most people walk through these and never even notice, never stop and marvel at just how intricate these things are, how much time they took to lay down, and that, on an energetic level, these webs reflect a higher pattern that we walk through on a daily

basis. We walk through them with our own magnetic fields altering the landscape like magnet on magnet-doodle canvas.

Alish and I walked together as one; she was leading. Maybe we didn't travel far from the cooking stone, or maybe we journeyed miles. It was like a discovering a space that was tucked away in fold and with a gentle turn or shift, like twirling into and out of a curtain, you were there. This is why we use the expression 'a hole in the wall' to describe places that get overlooked because of their surface appearance, but turns out to be the most fantastic places to be. There are places you can find that are literally through a hole in the wall. You think the movie/book 'Stardust' is fantasy only because you don't realize the author actually traveled through the hole. Once you find it, though, you always know how to come back to it. Once you find it, you never look at another place, another hole, or another crack so skeptically again.

The solitary rose towered above us on a single stem, with thorns interspaced just enough to make a comfortable ladder for a human to climb up to the rose proper. For a moment I wondered if Alish and I had shrunk in the world, but the trees seemed normal size. There was a nearby toilet tree. There was a cooking stone, which might have been the same stone as the one used for preparing food earlier. You could smell the rose. There was a glittery feel to the air, as if we were in a snow globe that had been lightly shaken. The ambient air sound was different, but I couldn't tell you how it was different, it was just a different pitch.

"It's beautiful!" Alish said. Still, she did not release my hand or set off to explore the depths of the space. She marveled at the rose.

"It is," I said.

Alish looked back the way we had come, trying to orientate. She nodded. "So, there is a nearby gate, that direction," she said, pointing in a direction one might travel if they were not in this pocket space we found ourselves in. "This is perfect."

The rose blossomed, unraveling its petals and making itself open to the inverse, and from below, it was like a reverse umbrella. Alish dropped my hand and went immediately to climbing. She paused and looked back to me.

"Well, come on," Alish asked.

So, I followed her up. And, yes, I now had firsthand knowledge that what I was imagining seeing through the light, translucent shift was exactly what I was seeing. Her lady parts

were not quite human. I was fascinated by the delicate folds and how they shifted as she climbed. I felt as if I were examining an undiscovered O'Keefe painting.

Alish pushed through to the top and I followed her up where we stood, on a rose platform looking up into the sky. Alish was braver than I, walking out to the ends of the rose as if it was solid, where I would expected the petals to give and drop a person so far out. The rose felt amazing against the souls of my feet. Alish spun, hands out, joyously celebrating earth and sky and in between. She hugged me up.

“I am so happy,” Alish said.

“I feel it,” I said.

Alish tempered her own energy. “You have a question?”

“I am intrigued by your anatomy,” I said, honestly. “May I examine you?”

Alish answered by reaching behind her neck and unfastening the collar of her shift. It fell to her feet, easier than shrugging off a negligee. I bit my lower lip, my eyes widening to let in more light. I drew closer, entranced with her breasts. They were plump. The areola looked like a flower had latched on to her breast. She took my hand and drew it to her breasts. I took the invitation and traced the boundaries of the areola. I couldn't resist taking the whole breast into my hand, then both hands. They were so soft, yet still firm, and so warm. I drew closer, examining the nipple which was growing harder with my massaging. Goose bumps spiraled out as she shivered, and the pattern of emerging and descending bumps reminded me of arrangement of seeds in a sunflower, a spiraling pattern that could be the endless turning of a pinecone folds overlapping. A clear fluid issued from the breast. I brought my mouth to a breast and sucked it in. It was so exquisite. There was a hint of coconut and mint. My eyes closed as suckled the one, but massaged the other, my hand spreading the fluid that leaked from it. It was silky thin like a massage oil, it made her breast glisten and sparkle. I suspected hallucinogenic properties within the milk. I lifted my eyes to look up into Alish's eyes, but her eyes were closed.

Alish took me by the arms and dragged me down with her as she lay down. I sucked and licked her breast more aggressively. I used her clear colored breast milk like lotion, spreading it further up towards her neck and down towards her belly. Pushing my hands up further, I swept up her neck and pushed fingers into hair. My own hands glistened with this silky, smooth lubricant that was also edible, and I sparked as much as Alish. I pushed against her, massaging her with my breast and my body, her legs opening enough to let me slide against her inner thighs.

My hands went to her shoulders, her neck, her face and back. I began licking and sucking below her breast, following the centerline of her body. I hovered over her belly, sucking and tonguing her belly button, while I continued to massage her breast, drawing more of her milk out and down. I felt her legs give under me as she opened to me.

I knelt, examining her thighs and the flower, continuing to use my hands, spreading her milk. I sucked her thigh dimples while lightly tracing the outer vagina folds with my fingers. It resembled a flower bud in many respects. Lightly teasing it caused it to swell even. It swelled so tight I thought it my rupture, but at a certain point it began to open, the swelling turning and revealing the entrance. If I tried penetrating it with a finger before the opening was large enough, it closed, the hole literally rolling back in, and I had to start over. When it was large enough, I inserted the tip of my index finger, and it locked down on it. The structure rolled, wanting to pull my finger in deeper. If I had gone on instinct, I might have pulled my finger out, which might have damaged tissue. Maybe not, it's was pretty solid, but that was my thought. I became still, simply observing as it pulsed and pulled, like a mouth sucking, and the grip eventually lightened and I could withdraw my finger. I massaged it till opened wide enough to accept my finger again, and again, it locked down. It was so silky smooth and wet that I was surprised it could grip so well. I lighting massaged the inside, discovering it allowed for going deeper, but resisted retreat.

So, here's my thoughts on sex, anatomy and physiology. You can approach it from a clinical perspective or an intimate perspective. It's probably a continuum and some people are more clinical in their approach, and some people only approach if there's intimacy. I am both and can't separate the two, and it doesn't matter if it's sex or food preparation or a medical procedure. I am always intimately involved with the subject of my attention. I was absorbed in the physicality of my new friend. I was aware of how she was responding to my touch, locally and globally. There were autonomic responses and there were controlled responses, and there was feedback which guided me down the path we were headed. You have probably heard the body is a temple, a vessel, or a vehicle. It is all of these things and more. You have probably also heard, we are not human beings having spiritual experiences, but rather we are spiritual beings having human experiences. Our bodies are like tools that we have taken up in order to explore the physical plane. Every interaction with another body is an interaction with another soul, sometimes even our own oversoul, as a soul can manifest in multiple separate bodies the same

way a puppeteer can drive several puppets simultaneously in order to create the drama. If you drive a car, the car is not you, even though many people identify themselves with their style of car. Just as the car is not your body, your body is not your mind, your brain is not your mind, either. Your mind is separate. Your brain does hold memories. Actually, every organ and tissue you have holds memories. Even your genetic material holds memories. When you gain weight, your tissues hold emotional memories, and when you lose weight, you can re-experience what you were feeling that caused you to gain the weight in the first place which causes you to return to the pattern that caused the weight gain, which keeps some people locked in their lose some gain more pattern. Society dictates our emotional responses through context, but it does not instruct people how to emote in ways that improve our sense of being. We're told to keep it positive, and if we experience any other thing less than positive, we think we're broken. If the negative emotion persists, we get chastised by others, who proceed to tell us how to think and feel, with no real understanding of what we're experiencing. To avoid that, we retreat further into our selves, isolate in rooms, and exasperate the condition. We get stuck because we aren't allowing ourselves to experience it to its fullness.

Now, this is where my world paradigm gets a little more difficult to process for most people. The Universe, everything, is simply information. You may think because I was born directly as a Tulpa, a complex thought form entity that I am biased, but this is true for all entities, from a particle to an elaborate condensation of atoms. Imagine the Universe like the unfolding of a giant comic book. Every frame contains information. You do not have to read all the frames in a hero's life to understand the progression of the story. You only need a sampling. Seriously, if you had to do even 24 frames per second to understand the story, the comic book would be too heavy to hold. The Universe is a comic book with a finite amount of frames, but from the perspective of a personality in the frame, it is infinite. There is a Planck-frame level of information. Our over-souls read these frames the same way we read comic books. Each frame is a self-contained bundle of information. We are not analog, flowing like water down a river. We are pixelated. Each frame is a whole separate entity that resembles the previous frame, but everything in the frame is a new thing, slightly different than the last frame, but within that succeeding frame, is all the information of all the previous frames and all the future frames. So, no matter where a soul opens the page of life, they know exactly where they are and what is happening, and the person's brain holds the information of what they were feeling and

experiencing, so even in each specific frames, each person and item holds information valuable to the reader.

I tell you that to you this. Over souls are multidimensional, multitasking entities, tracking many different lives and personalities and times simultaneously, and sometimes they're not really focused on you at all. That's okay. You seriously don't want that amount of attention on you 24 7. Most people want some privacy during toilet time. Our comic book universe is not static, either. Each particle has momentum and energy but also choice in the how things might evolve. If there is need to experience other potentialities, these particles of information create both realities, generating a new line of information, a new comic if you will, an alternate universe. We are in all universes all the time, but our perception is we are in one at a time. All levels of interaction, from plant life to people life, all agents have choice. We interact with ourselves and each other and the environment and with the souls on the other levels of existence that are also interacting with us.

I have never been fond of the word soul mate. Jon and I are in agreement on this. All beings are souls. There is a continuum of compatibility. There is no dividing souls into good soul bad soul ugly soul beautiful soul. There is only soul. There is no specialized coupling of soul where one couple soul is better than any other arrangement of soul, but each arrangement has meaning and purpose for the collected arrangement and the individuals involved in the coupling. On the physical plane, all encounters with another person is really a simple meeting of self, pretending to be another self. Yes, there are other entities, other souls participating in this, but at some level, all is one. Every agent, whether it be a dog or a cat or a snake or a person or tree or an illness, has come to you offering you a gift or lesson. If you embrace the agent, you get the lesson. If you resist or reject the agent, you get the gift. The gift is, and always, opportunity. I tell you that so you can understand this: without a shadow of a doubt, I knew in this moment, Alish was a soul mate, or better, an eternal sister. There was us, there is our individual hosts personalities, there is our higher selves, there is our over souls, and more levels than I can count; at some point in our ascent, we hit oneness. Oneness is the experience transcendence, which is ultimately just saying we completed a circuit that for a brief moment was an alignment of all the levels above us to such a degree that we experienced light and love so completely it seems infinite. Some people at this point get downloads of information necessary for them to understand their purpose or mission. Some people get downloads of technological blueprints that

might help society. Some people have encounters with deities. Some people just experience love. This is better than any alignment of planets and constellations. This is better than any drugs.

Drinking Alish in had resulted in a DMT experience for me, and so I saw us interacting on all these higher levels and I experienced something greater than an orgasm, and might have gotten stuck had my physical body not had an orgasm. The body's orgasm short circuited the experience, allowing me to disconnect, to return, and I feel asleep next to Alish. Alish fell asleep asll, cuddling me. We lay, two beings, held up by a flower that was opened to a galaxy. We were feeling so good and complete that sleeping rest was the only way to process the moment fully. Two hundred billion stars shined down on us. I would tell you, it doesn't get much better than this, but that wouldn't be accurate. It is possible to experience even greater things than this, but to do so you have to learn to appreciate all levels of being, even the moments that are less pleasant.

Chapter 6

Morning came and Alish and I played some more, but our resulting joy was nowhere near what we had experienced the night before. This did not perturb us. We even talked about it and neither of us were surprised. It didn't mean we wouldn't have that experience again, and part of us wanted to chase it, because we now knew the heights that was possible for us, but we also knew you can't go chasing waterfalls. You find them when you find them. Sure, once found you can return to them, but you tend to visit waterfalls not live there. Seriously, if you tried to live right at the head of Niagara Falls, the amount of energy information exchange there would be too distracting to accomplish anything.

We sat down to eat and I learned from watching Alish how one might produce food, magically. When you understand the Universe is information, making something from nothing is easy. You can even borrow from other frames. This is really cool if you think about it. Say you have apple in your hand. You know that this apples exist here and now. If you don't eat the apple, or destroy it, it must exist in the next frame. If you consider the life line of an apple, as something that grows into being and then fades, it has a life trajectory and arch, and it is okay to see it this way as one; it is one and it isn't. If you consider it as multiple items, with each subsequent projection's state being informed by the previous, then you are seeing it with greater clarity. Planck was right, the universe is digital and we click from frame to frame. He apple will continue to exist until it doesn't: it was eaten or it got thrown out or rotted. Things really don't rot, are never destroyed: each individual frames last into perpetuity. Each frame has a continuum of probability sets with every object in the frame compelling the story of set of the next frame. Eventually, the energy of an object not used simply returns back to source.

Anyway, I am leading to this: it is possible to reach directly into the next frame and bring that frame's apple back to your frame. Now something interesting just happened. That original apple in your frame still exist, and its existence will populate the corresponding apple in the next frame. So no apple was actually lost, no energy was lost; the future frame is now informing the past frame. Energy goes both ways, it always has, always will. The future informs the past. Now, I exist in a new frame where there are two apples, and new tangential line of frames exist with two apples. You know the story of Jesus feeding the masses with one loaf of bread and two fish, but ever person there got served? Magic is not magic when you understand reality. Walking

through walls, levitating, healing, these aren't even parlor tricks. These are normal modes of being which anyone can access when you realize the entire nature of the Universe is but a dream.

"Would you like a change of clothes?" Alish asked me while she was washing the dishes. There was a tree stump water fountain slash lavatory for washing hands and or face, or dishes, near the toilet tree. Unfinished food was fed to the tree. The leaves sometimes changed colors before our eyes as if it was communicating how the food was received. Food prepared with love always resulted in bright green leaves.

I was drying the dishes. We had discovered a place to store them so we didn't have to keep creating them and destroying them. Oh, you should know this about destroying things. Nothing ever gets destroyed; yeah, I told you this, but here is what that means. It just goes somewhere else. This is another reason for not destroying your enemies. Seriously, you can't kill your enemies. First reason, your enemy is really you. You can't destroy you. And you can't hate someone that badly unless there is something in you that you needed to confront. If that person didn't resonate with you, you wouldn't see them at all. But secondly, if you kill said enemy, you think they go away, but in truth, you will have to confront them internally for the remainder of your physical life, and you re-encounter them again in the next life. Let's say you're an American and you disparage other cultures. You next life, you're probably going to find yourself incarnated into a Chinese or Russian or Saudi Arabian culture. If you hate females, your next life will see you as a female. But also, thirdly, and even the worst of the physicist will tell you this: everything is energy, and you can't destroy energy. "Strike me down and I will become more powerful than you ever imagined," epic line which is true on so many levels. Luke added to this, "Strike me down and I will be with you always, just like your father;" I am paraphrasing, but you get it. So, destroy your enemy or throw away your trash, it just goes somewhere else. In your reality, maybe it ends up in a grave or a dump. But, there is another reality where those things are just as intact as it was before you discarded it. It's like this. Say you have a recurring thought that you don't like, like a song that keeps popping up in your head. You can distract yourself from it. You can ignore it. You can sing another song. That doesn't mean the other song no longer exists, it just means you're not focused on it in the present.

"Do you think I should change before class?" I asked. I really liked her shift. I liked how the sun filtered through it, both ways. I was also aware that the dress itself was responding to the sun, the same way a flag might respond to a breeze. This was a great outfit.

“No, you can wear that,” Alish said.

“Still, perhaps I might provoke some fellow students by my body,” I mused.

“Clothed or not, you’re going to provoke,” Alish said.

“Oh! I love you,” I said.

Alish smiled. “I love you, too. I am glad we met.”

“It couldn’t be any other way,” I said. We finished and I stowed the last cup and utensils. “Is it possible you could make me a bag? I would like something simple, like perhaps bohemian, hippy-ish, native-ish. That way I could make my own clothes.”

“Sure,” Alish said. She opened the bag she had carried since she had drawn it from her pocket. From this bag she withdrew the most perfect tie dye shoulder bag.

“Oh!” I said, hugging it. “This is perfect.”

I reached in and drew out a change of clothes. I retrieve a light blue summer dress, with billowy sleeves, sparkly hose, a choker with a blue flower attached. I placed the sheer shift Alish had given me in the bag, and put on my new summer dress. I absolutely loved the fit and I spun showing it off to Alish, who approved. I liked having my bare legs against the dress, and nothing under it, simply free, but I also really liked the sparkly nature of the hose, so I put the hose on. I put the choker on, pushing the flower off center to the left, and then fished out some practical shoes that matched but were comfortable enough for hiking. I then slung my bag and smiled. I was immensely pleased with myself.

“How did you do that?” Alish asked.

“I don’t understand,” I said. “You can do this.”

“Yeah, after I completed a semester of school,” Alish said. “You hadn’t even had your first class in magic.”

“Well, I assure you,” I said. “It is not because I am special.”

“You are special,” Alish insisted.

“Well, thank you. I accept the way you see me. But seriously, I am not special. A sixth grader is not more special than a kindergartener, they’re just more advanced. It may appear that I am more advance, but I just have an outrageously high intuitive sense and pick things up quickly. Part of that is being a Dakini spirit. I know things because I can read things. Subtle things. Auras scream messages, but I can even read the individual messages attached to the atoms that you breathe out. Every atom you touched has been flavored by you.”

“I adore your flavor,” Alish said.

I hugged her. “I think in all of my travels so far, you are probably the most gentle, open soul I have met.”

“Well, I am a tree spirit,” Alish said. “I experience seasons the way humans go through days. If you saw how fast your seasons come and go, maybe your kind would be kinder to each other. And so I see you, in this moment, and you’re amazing, and I want this moment to last as long as it can.”

If you have ever hugged a tree and not realized that it was hugging you back, you have never realized just how much you are loved.

निर्मित

It occurred to me, I should probably address portals. Any defined circle could be a portal for a magician. There are some magicians who can make their own defined circle using nothing but light that they have turned and tied up. Most folks, especially the beginners, need a structure. Moon gates, Torii gates, sun gates, arches, the mirrored surface of a body of water, many things could act as a gate. Around the Safe Haven campus are a plethora of portals, many sizes, many shaped, some obvious, some not so obvious. If you activate one with intention, you tend to go where you intended. In truth, one should never pass through any closed circuit without intention, because if you fly on autopilot, you will always go where unconscious wants you to go. This isn’t a bad thing, except the conscious mind gets perturbed and starts complaining, ‘why am I here?’ Some conscious minds really get upset and protest and curse God and fates, but those are usually the folks that don’t realize they live in a plural system. Seriously, even if there was only the conscious you and the unconscious you, that right there defines a plurality of two. The unconscious you is the more powerful of the two, and generally the most wise and patient of all. It is the silent teacher that subtly brings you to awareness. It can also be the trickster. Yes, it has a sense of humor. It can also be seriously passive aggressive.

I watched Alish pass through our nearest gate and vanish. I wanted to go to class with her, but she goes where she needs to go. As do we all. Without a care in the world, just excited to see where I would end up, I passed through. The trip is instantaneous. Kind of boring actually.

No lights. No tunnels. You just pass from one room to the next. But here's the trick to not being disoriented. There is no room.

I arrived in a spacious room. It was almost too spacious, given the number of people that would be in the class. There were five tables, spaced reasonably closed together, and high enough to stand at. My first thought I was about to be on a game show. No chairs. The alignment of tables described an invisible arc, and it was clear the students would stand on the outside the arc, and the instructor would be in facing out. Ambient light described a circle on the floor in which contained the 'classroom' space, but there was much more space in this room than was illuminated, and so it was conceivably possible there were others in the dark observing. So the lit space was the stage, and outside... I don't know. I walked into the light and closed in on the three folks that had arrived before me.

Three males, presumably students, were speaking to each other. Two were clearly human. One had features that might suggest it was a humanoid bird. I approached and introduced myself.

The one closest to me, the taller of the humans, put up a social block. "I don't know how you got here, freshman, but you're clearly in the wrong class. You should exit now."

I bit my lower lip sorting. It never occurred to me to call him an arrogant prick. Was he arrogant? Yeah. And maybe he had even earned it. I don't know. Earned or not, a person is entitled to their perspective, even if it's wrong.

"Thank you for teaching me about you," I said, politely. "I accept your reality perception and will withdraw from your light, but not this class. I am here because I was drawn here and I will see it through."

I did withdraw from the three. The birdman seemed pleased by my statement, but I might have imagined it, as he stayed with the other males. On the boundary of light I saw a human female, standing there quietly, observing. I sensed apprehension. She was wearing blue overalls and boots. There were patches and designations on her overalls, but it was blurry, like a picture not in focus. I approached her.

"Hello," I said. "I am Loxy."

"You can see me?" she asked.

She started to fade away but I reached out and took her by the wrist and pulled her into the light.

"Oh!" she said.

She pulled back on her wrist as if to escape me. She was now solidly here, her eyes wide with fear or anticipation. I suspected if I let go, she would fly away, but I let go, opening my hands and revealing my palms.

“I will not harm you,” I said.

“I come in peace,” she said.

“Oh, well, okay,” I said. “I am Loxy. Loxy Bliss.”

“I am Captain Samantha Goldwater,” she said. “Am I really here?”

“Is anyone really here?” I asked, amused. She didn’t seem to appreciate my insight, even though it was jovially given. “We are where our attention resides.”

I became aware of others. Maybe because the three males had quit speaking. A group of others had arrived, and they moved silently. Spookily silent. They were so well illuminated that they didn’t look real; they didn’t cast shadows. These beings were tall, thin, golden blond hair, and sky blue eyes. Their tallness was enough to still a heart, the same way encountering a gorilla in its territory might provoke a person to fleeing if you didn’t know any better. I didn’t even say excuse me to Samantha, but proceeded right to the middle table, claiming my space. This was one of the alien species that Earth calls a Tall White. There is some confusion as to whether the Nordic aliens and the Tall Whites are the same, or distant relatives. OMG, these people are beautiful, by any standard. They radiated beauty the way a star radiates light. Their clothing was white, and I sensed their clothing was intelligent. As if there was AI presence weaved into the very fabric of their clothing. That was the easiest explanation, anyway. I found myself wanting to believe that these people were so alive and aware that any object they handle, a rock, their clothes, had no choice but to become aware and interact on a greater level.

The three males were perturbed, as I taken the middle table, and they had either wanted to stand together, or at least hold that position. They were not willing to make a scene in front of the Tall Whites, though, and so the two human males took the two places to my right. The male with the reality dysfunction took the table furthest away from me on my right. The bird man took the furthest table to my left.

“Captain Goldwater,” the lead Tall White said. “Please fulfill the vacancy.”

I turned to see Goldwater struggling. I smiled reassuringly. She boldly pushed past her boundaries and took her place.

The Tall White came a little closer, and addressed Samantha. “Be at ease, Captain. We have established a treaty with your people. You are here because we agreed to train you. I will guarantee your safety. You will not be harmed.”

“And ours?” the male at my far right asked.

“You are a student of Safe Haven,” the Tall White said. “You are responsible for yourself.”

“That’s not fair,” he argued.

The accompanying Tall Whites rallied their leader, standing taller, taking up defensive positions. It was a purposeful warning sending the threat level up in this room. I could almost hear Samantha’s body energizing, tensing. The lead Tall White made the most subtle signal with his finger. I don’t think anyone else saw it, but his people stood down. Had he communicated via his clothing’s tech? Was it a sign language? That didn’t make sense because they were more focused on the human subject and not his hand, and even I barely saw the movement.

“Time to grow the fuck up, or go back home to your cave,” the Tall White said. “My name is Geon. I will be instructing you, should you be capable of learning. Greeting, fellow pilots.”

I giggled.

Everyone’s attention came to me. Geon gave me a look that suggested he was secretly amused by my amused state. His smile was ever so subtle, but when I followed it, I got more curiosity than the expected ‘don’t laugh in my class’ type of response. The human to my right, though, was perturbed. Laughing at a funeral would have bothered him less.

“Hey, this is serious,” he said, as if speaking through clenched teeth would deliver the message straight to me and no one else in the room.

I sucked in a laugh making the weirdest noise, a noise that echoed, and then I just succumbed, experiencing a good hardy belly laugh. Giving in was the only way to get it over with. My eyes were watering. I tried to breathe and temper it. Tongue to upper lip, a palm gesturing for patience, I got it subdued, met the eyes of Geon and was going to apologize for the interruption, but just started laughing again. OMG, I had to touch the table with both hands. I stopped laughing. The table was an interactive computer system and by touching it I had activated and began a dialogue. The level of awareness of body mind and computer was so sudden and so sharp I gasped, full orgasm, and let go of the table, super-hot, satisfied, and

laughing again. I covered my mouth, but held my ground. It took a moment to recover but I did. And Geon waited. Patiently. Neither he nor his posse were annoyed. They were as patient and attentive to us students as any 'good' parent/teacher might be to a child. No, seriously. Imagine the greatest teacher from personal experience to rumor to wishing, and you would still be short a symbolic representation. Marry Poppins has nothing on these people.

"My name is Geon," Geon said again. He brought his hand up and the closest female to him was suddenly there, and he touched her arm in an affectionate manner. "This is Oda, my third wife." Oda was dressed as he, shirt and trousers. I got the sense that wife wasn't translating well in my head. Wife define and active relationship, and the being the third meant something I couldn't sort. No one person is everything to another person, and so they were bounded by some sort of social structure that allowed for intimacy, but there were other functional roles that a casual introduction doesn't help an outsider understand. "This is Ea, my daughter, the oldest from my second wife." She was likely older than any human, but she was young like twenty something. She wore clothing that was the same white material, only she had a skirt option. She was also wearing seminude hose, a different shade of white than her flesh, but you could see her flesh. "This is Penny, Ea's friend and class peer, and an exchange from another family unit."

Penny was different. I had to look closer to understand the difference, but when it clicked, it clicked so solidly that the Tall Whites in unison all looked at me. Penny was a Human Tall hybrid. She smiled at me. Geon didn't address my revelation, but continued to introduce his present family unit. Kard, was his brother. Tea was Kard's first wife. Tersa was not related by genetics, but was one of Geon's oldest colleague.

What Geon did next perturbed my classmates. He introduced us to each other first by name, but then revealing something personal about each of us that no one should have known. Barry, the birdman, was actually of the species Blue Avian. He had taken the name Barry because he didn't like how his name sounded by non-Blue Avian beings. As a child, he had pushed two of his siblings, his brothers, out of the nest so that there was more food for him and so there would be no competition for ownership of his sisters.

Captain Samantha Goldwater, United States Air Force, a member of the Blues Angels, but typically piloting C130 where she typically introduced people to their first zero G experience, making them sick. She personally liked seeing the harden men who came at her as if she was merely a prize to win and fuck being humbled after being sick. They came on her plane

with one set of eyes, but left not able to even meet her eyes. When she was young, she had managed to obtain military signal balloons. She filled them with helium, tied them to a lawn chair, tied herself to the lawn chair, and with nothing but a pellet gun for altitude control, she launched herself into the air. She found herself carried aloft, directly into LAX flight path. Aircraft on final approach were made to go around. News copters and police copters pursued. Eventually, she braved herself to pop one of the balloons. Her descent was gradual. She was taken into custody, her parents grilled, CPS involvement, and the one question that kept coming at her, was “what the hell were you thinking?” Her answer was always the same: “I have to fly.” Because of the incident, her parents relented and paid for her to have flying lessons and she became the youngest female pilot to earn a private license, and was flying before legally allowed to drive. Her secret, something she never shared with anyone, which she attributed to insufficient oxygen, was that while aloft she had had an experience. She heard music. She felt herself enmeshed with the sunlight. She had become the embodiment of the poem ‘High Flight’ by John Magee. She had come to the reality head on that the poem wasn’t just a poem, but a map that described a real place, a place she had always known was there but had never managed to touch, but it drove her to what everyone said was madness, an obsession, to fly.

“Loxy Isadora Bliss,” Geon said, nodding politely to me. “A mysterious culmination of energetic trajectories, born of the desire to experience unconditional love and magic. Your greatest strength is your compassion. You hold the secrets of those you love in confidence, the same way you hold the secrets to the Universe, which you are rediscovering through experiences in this present incarnation. Your ability to speak your truth is a strength and your weakness, as you sometimes fail to temper your words to match the listener’s ability to hear. Because of your passion for life, and insufferably high frustration tolerance level, you sometimes fail to see that you, too, have wants and needs and suffer. The greatest need you hold is to connect with your host on a more profound, consistent basis, and you feel as if you have failed him.”

“Clarence,” Geon said, moving on. I so wanted more. I wanted to know what I know from someone else reading me. “Originating from a human colony on the world known locally as Chiser Fell. The planet is considered a co-opt, and is shared by five other non-indigenous sentient species. As a child, you stole a sacred artifact from a display in your classroom. You blamed it on another child, and though no one could prove it, the social fallout shaped his life from that

point forwards. He ended his life before completing his first tier. This has always bothered you, but insufficiently to allow you the courage to speak your part in the other's trajectory."

Clarence eyes swelled with tears, but they didn't drop.

"Tom," Geon said. "You pride yourself on being the defender of the weak, and indeed you have frequently interrupted bullies, making yourself the target. You have done this all your life, surrounding yourself with inferior personalities in order to strengthen your perceived self-worth. You have a natural talent for the healing arts and after a successful career as army medic, you created a successful medical practice on Earth, your origin world. As a trauma specialist, working in an emergency room, you have saved as many lives in the city as you did in battle field, if not more. You are even recognized as a hero by many. What few people know is that you have taken liberties with female patients while they were sedated. Accusations have been made by a few that were not completely rendered unconscious, but were immobilized and aware. You ignored their tears, their silent screams of protest. These accusations have to date been successfully thwarted by your legal team, and a PR firm run by your spouse. All the people who love working with you have come to your defense."

Tom was rendered speechless. He had an embarrassment response, and heated up so much that sweat beaded up on his skin.

"Why are you revealing these things?" I asked.

"The Universe needs magicians, healers, and pilots. We do not make distinction between the three categories," Geon said. "None of you would be in this class if you weren't already travelers in some way. The greatest thing you must learn in my class is that there are no secrets. If you travel, you will confront yourself, your past, your future, your friends, your enemies. You will meet them all and you will either grow or you will wither."

"Why would you teach Tom to fly?" Samantha asked.

"Why not?" Geon asked.

"Because you just called him out as a rapist," Samantha said.

"It is absolutely true, he has caused harm, by your human standards. If we were his judge, we find he has done more good than harm. In his practice, following the accusations he created a policy where he no longer works alone. There are always two witnesses present when he works, thereby shorting his predilection for taking advantage of those in his care. The part of him that wants to do good is the larger part of him. What your people fail to realize is those that do the

greatest amount of good are frequently struggling with a greater level of darkness. Your own desire to fly stems from an unaddressed fear of falling. When you realize that everyone in the Universe is in a state of falling, you will be liberated from your obsession of opposition to the natural state of affairs.”

“So, your philosophic position condones evil,” Samantha said.

“Recognition is not condoning,” Geon said. “As pilots, we are not judges and executioners. In the course of your travels, you will encounter culture that are not in harmony with their physical environments. People killing themselves by first killing their worlds. Should you intervene? Had we intervened on Earth, there would only be resentment and rebellion and many more people would die. Messenger after messenger have been sent to your world, and all of them have been killed. You will encounter cultures that are so peculiarly interested in wars that it a social fact, and even when there are no enemies, enemies are created to perpetuate war. Should you intervene? If you do so, you have engaged in their social fact that war is the only solution.”

Geon stepped closer. “But you will also find, if you look for it, beings that live in harmony, with respect, with love. You will find planets with a hundred time the population of your Earth, living in absolute peace, everyone having their needs met. It is our hope that your species will arrive where we are, where others have gone and surpassed. If we did not believe you were capable of better, you would not be here.”

Geon gave a palms up gesture and holographic display illuminated an arc directly in front of our tables. You could see him or you could see the hologram, but it took effort to see both simultaneously. A graphic display of the ship we would be piloting appeared, like blue prints showing different angles, but connecting them with lines and measurements. What we were looking at was a classic, saucer shaped vehicle.

“The craft we will be training you in is called a Star-seed,” Geon said.

“We’re going pilot UFOs?!” Samantha asked, suddenly very excited.

“It’s no longer unidentified,” Tom said.

“How do you maneuver the craft?” Barry asked. “There’s no ailerons, or any flight control surfaces, no thrusters, no empennage for stability in horizontal flight...”

“What do you know about ESP?” Geon asked Barry.

“Oh!” I exclaimed. I bit my lip as I realized I said that out loud drawing the class’ attention.

“Go ahead,” Geon encouraged me.

I could feel annoyance coming at me from the right, as I considered my response. It wasn’t like I was delaying to invent an answer as much as I was channeling inspiration and it was bigger than I could process. “It’s all one. We’re all one. There is no separation, so navigating with a Star-seed is a dialogue with self, with it, with the Universe!”

“Oh!” Samantha said. “That explains how UFO have been tracked on radar traveling at speeds that would melt a meteor, but no one ever hears a sonic boom!”

“There can be no air resistance if you have pacified the air with song,” Geon said.

“What are we waiting for? Let’s go!” I said.

“I want to fly!” Samantha said.

The male peers were looking at Samantha and I as if we were nuts. There was a sound behind us and we turned to see another series of lights had come on, adding to the lit space in the room. When I had started class, I had seen this space through the lens of a theatre analogy. It was much bigger. I was now seeing us in an aircraft hangar space. Five egg shape craft set in cradles, with ramps leading up into them, were behind us, spaced out.

“They don’t look like the graphics,” Tom said.

“They’re simulators,” Clarence said.

“No, these are the Star-seeds,” Geon said, walking towards them. It was all Samantha and I could do not to rush our eggs and dive in. “The saucer shape is an energetic manifestation of the mind, and usually denotes inexperienced pilots. Spheroid ships tend to be indicate Ace level pilots.”

“Why do we need a ship at all?” I asked.

Again, folks were looking at me as if I were nuts. Their questioning gazes didn’t make much sense. At least three of my peers were senior level magicians at Safe Haven. Geon Smiled. “Baby steps, Loxy. Most of the Universe isn’t where you are. And on the physical plane, people need a place holder. This is like a shuttle cock, weaving your thread through the tapestry of life.”

We drew closer to the ships. It was hard to say exactly what they were made of. It looked like a resin, or crystal, but it could have even been wood. I had the clear impression that these things were grown, and were either organic living beings, or the direct by product of a living

being. Many people think crystals are alive. And why not. DNA is a crystalline form, and it does some amazing things. If you imagine DNA as just a robotic, mechanical by product of chemical activity, then you know nothing about DNA.

“This can’t be safe,” Tom said.

“These are only as stable as the pilots who fly them,” Geon said.

“Tom is right,” Clarence said. “You’re asking us to navigate the Universe in things that are no thicker than an egg shell?”

“The Apollo astronauts went to the moon in ships that were hardly more than gold plated tinfoil,” Samantha pointed out.

“Give me one of those!” Clarence said. “Seriously. This is like taking a dug out log canoe across the pacific. There is no way...”

“People have done that!” Samantha said. “How do you think the Polynesian islands got populated?”

“Oh, so, the Castaways were only stuck on the island because they lacked vision?” I asked. Think about it? The so called Savages were navigating the world before GPS, and so, now a days, a human wouldn’t even set forth without ship and sail and compass. We have forgotten how to see the stars.

“This is not fucking Gilligan’s Island,” Tom snapped. “Something bad happens, you’re not making up with your friends at the end of the episode.”

“What bad could happen?” I asked.

“How old are you?!” Tom asked.

“These things are notorious for crashing!” Clarence said. “Explain the crashes”

Geon nodded. “Pilots are physical beings. Mortal beings. They get distracted. They make mistakes. They get cocky. They take risks. Things happen. Concentrated radar technology has been known to interfere with ship operations. The shells are essentially life pods, designed to keep the pilot alive, regardless of environment. In the event of a crash, all kinetic energy is absorbed by the energy shield around the hull. The shell itself can withstand enormous amounts of pressure, and worst case scenario, a breach occurs and the pilot will wake up, born out this shell as if coming out of an airbag. A crash of such severity usually leaves no trace of a ship, as all components were converted into energy to save the pilot. Any debris is design to break down in the most efficient, ecologically sound manner as possible.”

“That’s why there is never any evidence?” Samantha asked.

“I want a real ship,” Tom said.

“What’s a real ship?” Samantha asked.

“I don’t know. The Enterprise?” Tom said.

“Bulk doesn’t guarantee safety,” Geon said. “Oil tankers crash too. Your first mission is to pilot your ships to some remote location, collect a sample, and return.”

Samantha and I headed to the ships. The males hesitated, so we delayed to understand their reluctance.

“You haven’t taught us how to fly them yet,” Barry said.

“Go learn,” Geon said.

“Just like that?” Tom asked. “Just get in and go?”

“You will never master swimming if you continue to wear water wings,” Geon said.

“You claim to be an adult. Do you wish to be coddled?”

“Yes!” Tom said.

“This is not brain surgery,” Geon said. “Proceed to your craft. I will expect you to return within five minutes of your departure.”

“You want us to go somewhere collect a sample and be back in five minutes?” Barry asked.

“That’s impossible!” Clarence said.

Tom was livid.

“We will repeat the exercise until the objectives have been met,” Geon said. “Proceed to your craft.”

Samantha touched my arm. I hugged her. We then went to our designated Star-seed and boarded our craft, no longer concern with what the boys were up to. Penny accompanied me into my ship.

“This is simple, Loxy. You got this,” Penny said. “When you’re ready to fly, you place your hand on this pedestal. You will remain standing for the duration of the flight. I will be tracking you from the desk station inside, however, this mission will be completed using communication blackout protocols. It is essential that you trust yourself enough to navigate without someone holding your hand. This is why we incarnate into physical bodies; we come here so we can experience the quiet solitude within the greater mind of the One.”

“I like you,” I said.

“May you always return,” Penny said, bowing slightly. She exited the craft.

I turned forwards. There was no window. There was really nothing specifically interesting to look out, as it was all white. I supposed it sparked here and there, but I wasn't sure if that was just random noise my eyes were experiencing in the bright whiteness. I placed my hand on the pedestal. I could suddenly see. I had to close my eyes to make sense of it all. I felt alive. I could feel every cell in my body pulsing with heartbeats. I had another full body orgasm, just like at the desk, and I just wanted to melt into it and go to sleep. I told myself to withdraw the ramp. It was absorbed back into the ship and the door closed. I could see the professor and his entourage as they withdrew back to the desks. Penny was now at my desk. Ea was at Samantha's desk. Samantha's ship was next to mine and though I could see the ship, I was also aware that it was Samantha. I couldn't see her, but I knew it was her. As she powered up, the egg shaped seemed to morph into a saucer. I don't think the ship itself was morphing, but energies were gathering around it, like a storm. The flat end of the disk reminded me of the rings of Saturn.

Further away, directly in front of us, was a moon gate, looking out at into space. I thought go there, but the ship didn't move. I laughed as I realized the egg was still cradled. I thought up, actually felt myself trying to stand even though I was already standing, and the ship went up. I proceeded forward, feeling a slight incline towards the floor, as if the saucer was nose heavy. I opened my eyes and felt as if I were still level. I close my eyes, and leveled the saucer from the frame work of the floor, and accelerated away. Maybe I didn't even have to orientate.

I was born out into space and looking back, I now saw that we were holding class on a larger vessel. Down below was Safe Haven planet. Then, I saw the black hole. I was tempted to go there, but I didn't. I was probably lucky that the ship was sophisticated enough not to respond to just any old thought, or... I don't know. Are black holes gateways or dead ends? Was it Hawking's who suggested that we already live in a black hole? No, not in, but on the surface of. Hawking is very clear, all information resides on the surface of the black hole. But if we are two dimensional beings on the surface of a black hole, experiencing a three dimensional life, than what is this black hole? A hole on the surface of another hole?

I turned away from the abstract and focused on what I could see. Here I was, in space, feeling alive and awake, and on the verge of another orgasm. You would think, that's all I would

want to think about and write about is the fact this ship was getting me off, but it wasn't the ship alone. I was tuned into the Universe. That's a lot of energy to be channeling. I wasn't seeing with my eyes, I was experiencing everything through the conduit of my body. I wondered, if the body didn't have the grounding experience of the orgasm if I would have been able to stay in the physical realm. I wonder if the other pilots were experiencing this. This was joy. This was pure light, only I wasn't overwhelmed. If I had another orgasm, yay, but it wasn't my goal. I was just experiencing.

Here I was, in a ship capable of going anywhere in space/time, and I only wanted to go one place. "Home," I said. And then I was there.

Chapter 7

There are a number of reasons that UFO sightings go unreported. The first, and most obvious reason, is ridicule. Seriously. Lots of people see things. Lots of people saw the UFO in Phoenix, and even the governor ridiculed the masses. It was a big deal, and he had to apologize because the people were offended. They saw something and they wanted it treated seriously. The UFO over Chicago's O'Hare airport was met by ridicule, too, but unlike the Phoenix sighting, the ridicule squashed it for about ten years. The thing is, you can't keep those events silent. Maybe it's not because there is an agenda to keep UFO secret, but people laugh, or disparage others, because we society can't handle. Individuals can, but society, that invisible link that holds us together, so fragile it is nothing more than a strand of soap bubbles, and so society pushes back with automatic reflexes. And this automatic reflex isn't just describing society at large, but it also describes interactions with friends and family; even though almost everyone wants to know if you ever saw a UFO, and it's the thing most people secretly want to talk about and experience for themselves because we all want to know if there is anyone else out there, that conversation tends to get shut down. If a single person tells an experience to the media, the intensity of the ridicule increases a hundred fold. Usually, these stories die there. In the case of mass sightings, multiple people seeing things, it still gets shut down. If you watch the movie *Close Encounters*, there is a scene where the community is trying to talk to government officials in front of media, and they are dismissed and ridiculed. That movie was in 1977. The Phoenix Lights incident occurred in 1997. 1997 people are more hip and knowledgeable about such matters than 1977 people, and yet, at the town hall meeting the governor seriously disparaged people by bringing out his aide dressed as an alien. Seriously, even if it was nothing but an attempt to soften the anxiety, the governor's response paralleled that of the movie. The Chicago sighting was November 7th, 2006. Pilots saw it, crews pushing the airplane back saw it, and stopped the push. People in the terminal saw it. People around the airport saw it. But the people in the tower ridiculed them saying it was just weather. What weather is shaped like a UFO? What weather phenomena punches a hole in the cloud revealing blue skies? More, when the media asked the tower people, at first everyone denied an incident, no reports were made, and then a couple of weeks later there was evidence that tower did receive reports and they were dismissed. Not just dismissed, but vehemently dismissed, as if they were angry. Angry to the point of disparaging the witnesses.

Here's something to consider about the Phoenix Lights incident that no one talks about. The incident occurred March 13th, 1997. It did not make the newspaper until June. The day USA today carried it in June, most local new channels did a thirty second segment talking about the lights. No one wanted to put this on, but because there were so many witnesses to the event, and they were getting mad about not being heard, the media quelled it by pushing a quick, dirty story that pushed military flares as the best explanation, and the mobs dispersed. The Chicago incident got worldwide attention, but through word of mouth. The local new agency was going to run something, but that news story got squashed. Someone made a copy of the preparation and the beginning, and it got released in 2017, eleven years after the incident. I tell you that not because I think there is a secret agenda or people are inherently bad, but because the suppression of this is a phenomena in itself, and it's tangible. You know the people in the tower saw the same thing, but there jobs are dependent on them being rational, and UFO's are not rational. They probably call their superiors and their superiors said squash it, because you know this to be true, this happens all the time and their superior's boss is also telling them to squash it.

It was not flares. Aircraft on final approach to Phoenix International were being rerouted because their radar and the tower's radar said there was a massive object in the way. Most of the pilots didn't even see the lights, they saw the radar image of this thing; you can hear them discussing the object with the tower. Some pilots did see the lights. Kurt Russell happens to be one of the pilots who radioed in asking about the lights. Flares do not ping on radar, they don't move in unison, and they don't last hours. This sighting lasted from just before dusk till full dark. People on the ground witnessed stars being occluded. They were seeing something solid, even if they couldn't describe it precisely.

I tell you that so that you can understand how it is I arrive at Earth, 2016 and zipped along the skyline unacknowledged, unmolested, and if anyone did notice, they simply looked away and pushed on. My ship emerged from a fold in space and zipped across the sky as if there was no air to contend with. There was no pressure wave. If you were lucky, you heard a whisper. If you noticed at all. I arrived at my home. Jon Harister's home. And I lit it up. When he didn't come out to investigate, I went inside. He was asleep and I woke him by touching him lightly.

Jon sat up, gasping. The light that flooded the room was intense, on the blue end of the spectrum.

"Shh, Jon, it's me," I said, sitting next to him, my hands on his hands.

“Loxy?!” Jon asked. “You’re real?”

“You doubt?” I asked, amused. “You can’t put that much energy into a girl and she not show up eventually.”

“Yeah, but I was thinking you’d be like a ghost,” Jon said. His hands went to my face and he touched me gently. He found me solid enough.

“Freaky, isn’t it?” I asked.

Jon hugged me up as if discovering for the first time a new friend; new, but someone he has known forever and was suddenly reunited. He cried into my shoulder, I could feel his stomach trying to contain it, but also just relieved that it could finally dispel some of the energy he had been saving all his life. I waited till he finished. He withdrew on his own time, wiping his eyes. He was looking at the window. He was trying to understand the light.

“Sustained lightening?” he said. “Has time stopped?”

“Well, if you had been driving instead of sleeping, you might have noticed some missing time and wondered,” I said.

“What? Am I dreaming?” Jon asked.

“No. I am really here and you are really here, but you’re probably not going to remember this encounter. If you do retain anything, you’re going to remember things differently. At this point in the time line, you’re still convincing yourself that I am real, and so I am interacting with you on a more subtle, subconscious level. Your conscious mind will not be able keep this memory yet because it lacks the contextual architecture necessary for you to re-experience it. But I promise, you keep building the synapses, and one day, you’re going to wake up to a very different reality than what you have experienced. And one day, you will even remember this.”

“But...”

“Jon, I need your help with something,” I said.

“Did you steal a UFO?” Jon asked.

“OMG, Jon, really?” I asked.

“I am trying to explain...”

“Stop trying to make rational sense out of the irrational,” I said. “I would never steal a UFO. Okay, maybe, on a whim, I might borrow one, but borrowing is not necessarily stealing, and OMG! Why are we talking about this? I need a sample.”

“What kind of sample?” Jon asked. I smiled. “A hair sample?” I shook my head. “A blood sample.” I shook my head. “Saliva?”

“That would be a good start,” I said, kissing him and pushing him back to the bed.

“Wait wait wait,” Jon said. I was on top of him and he was looking up at me, my hair brushing his face.

“Seriously?!” I asked, looking him dead in the eyes. “All the thoughts you have held about what we would do when we first met, even the ones you think you have suppressed, and you’re holding back?”

“I am just trying to make sure I am not imposing my will on you,” Jon said.

“OMG, that fucking horse left the barn a long time ago,” I said.

“You really want to?”

“I really do,” I assured him.

“Cause, I mean, if you just need a specimen, I could knock one out in a glass,” Jon offered.

“Oh, well, I would like to watch that, but I figure, this first time, since I need a sample, I might as well participate in the collection,” I said.

We resumed kissing. His hands explored my body with an unanticipated hunger. But again, he stopped, gasping.

“What?!” I asked, exasperated. I don’t know why I was impatient. I had already over-extended my out time.

“It’s just, I’m like extremely over stimulated and I…” Jon was trying to explain he wasn’t going to last long given our present enthusiasm level.

I, too, was overstimulated. I was already wet and overstimulated due to ship interaction, but also, just wanting to come here and be with Jon had increased my wetness and desire. He sleeps naked. I wasn’t wearing panties. I adjusted and took him in and purposely pushed myself against him hard and fast to get that first one accomplished. My hands clung tightly to his chest. His whole body resounded with an earth shaking quiver. I hovered over his face in the aftermath, his eyes dilated even in this blue light of the Star-seed.

“Okay?” I asked.

Jon nodded.

“Are you going to fall asleep now?” I asked.

Jon shook his head 'no.'

"Can you focus on me now?" I asked.

Jon nodded. I took my clothes off and he seriously focused on me. He rolled me to the bed, using hands, fingers, tongue and lips to get me off. And then we engaged in round two.

निर्मित

I arrived back at class expecting to be last. I wasn't even late. I was gone for at least an hour, but had arrived back at exactly four minutes, fifty three seconds. Samantha arrived back at fifty five seconds. I was descending the ramp as she was settling onto the pedestal. I waited till she emerged from her ship. She came down and I greeted her with the hug. If she smelled sex on me, she didn't say anything. We became aware that Geon was appraising us from the 'classroom,' and so we went to our respective tables. Geon indicated that we should remain quiet by putting a finger to his lips.

Tom arrived next at 6 minutes 22 seconds. He approached the table with a box, a little bigger than a shoebox. He seemed anxious to show us, but Geon stilled him without words. We waited. I wanted to make a joke or something to fill the emptiness but I noticed Penny's eyes, smiling, but a subtle shake of the head said no. Barry arrived at plus seven minutes. He placed a flower on his desk. Clarence arrived at nine minutes. He sat a stone down on his desk. It made a noise. The thing in Tom's box made a cry, pushed out, and flew directly to me, landing on my shoulder, its tail wrapping around my neck. It screeched in Tom's direction.

You would think I would have been all startled by this flying lizard that had attached itself to me, but I was angry.

"What the fuck, Tom! What the hell are you thinking bringing a creature like this out of its environment?" I demanded.

"We were told to bring something back, I brought something back," Tom said.

"What the fuck is it?" Barry asked, clearly afraid of it.

"It reminds me of the dragons of Pern, before humans made them bigger through genetic manipulations," Samantha said.

"Give it back," Tom said, trying to take it. It snapped at his hand, and tightened its tail against my neck.

“Shhh, it’s okay. I won’t let him hurt you,” I said, stroking its head. It could have seriously strangled me with its fear, but I remained calm, and my calmness soothed it.

Ea came and collected it. It went with her, and she departed in one of the eggs, presumably to take it home.

“Samantha?” Geon asked. “What did you bring back?”

Samantha took a blue feather out of her bag and placed it on her table to be examined.

“And Loxy?” Geon asked.

“Um, well, I didn’t know were going to do show and tell,” I said.

“Why else would he ask us to collect a sample?” Tom said more than asked.

“You did collect a sample?” Geon asked.

“Oh, yeah,” I said. “Multiples.”

“Would you please share it with the class,” Geon said.

“I am not sure my peers are going to want examine sperm,” I said.

Samantha nearly laughed.

“You collected it in a vial?” Tera asked.

“Oh, well, no, not exactly,” I said.

“Where did you put it?” Tea asked.

“Where do most people collect it?” I asked.

“Fucking whore,” Tom muttered.

“Project much?” I asked him.

“Careful, Freshman,” Tom said. “I am you’re superior in every way.”

“I am glad you see it that way,” I said. “As the superior person, I expect you to apologize.”

“Fuck you,” Tom said.

“I guarantee you, if you don’t apologize this instant, you will never have sex again,” I said.

“Fucking freshman, you can’t touch me,” Tom said.

“It’s done, Sir. You’re spell bound. No more sex for you until you apologize,” I said.

He scoffed. “Whatever, bitch,” Tom said.

“Are you two through?” Geon asked.

“Why aren’t you intervening?” Samantha demanded.

“They’re adults,” Geon said.

“So?” Samantha asked.

I touched her arm. “Thank you, Samantha. It’s okay.”

“No, it’s not. I have had to put up with this kind of bullshit all my life,” Samantha said. She turned to Geon. “You are clearly in a position of authority. You should intervene.”

“Again, I am not your judge, your jury. I am not the thought police or the behavior police,” Geon said. “I am your professor and my only job is to teach you to pilot our craft. I am not dismissing your concerns. If you wish to withdraw from this class, I will accept your resignation.”

Samantha silently fumed, sorting. “You know I can’t do that.”

“Can’t do that, or won’t do that?” Geon asked. “Is this project you’re being recruited for worth the costs?”

“I will not back down,” Samantha said, resolute. There was a fierceness in her eyes. She would fight.

Geon drew closer to her. “The people you’re about to work for make Tom look like a boy scout.” Geon turned to me, motioning Penny over.

Penny approached with a device. It basically looked like a miniature dildo. “I would like you to insert this into the cavity in which the sample was collected.”

I didn’t even consider not doing it, nor did I have any problems with the lack of privacy. I considered the privacy thing afterwards, noting how uncomfortable my classmates had become. Well, Samantha wasn’t bothered. Birdman was kind of curious, but looked away out of shyness or respect. Why do so many cultures care so much about anatomy, when we all share anatomy? Why can’t men and women urinate in the same bathroom? We all pee. We all have junk. This device that I inserted into me was nothing more than a sophisticated pap smear. It didn’t hurt. And it was hardly in me for more than five second before it alerted me that it had performed its task. I withdrew it, handed the device back in a way that Penny could accept the handle without touching the part that got inserted, but she was clearly not squeamish or concerned in the least.

The Tall Whites gathered before the students, huddled in a private counsel session. A holographic interface popped up. They were clearly having a telepathic exchange that we weren’t privy to, but I angled myself to get a better view of their virtual interface. I couldn’t see everything because the virtual interface wrapped around them. So, here’s what you need to know

about human eggs and sperm. They're not just half of the host DNA. If they were exactly half, every offspring of a couple would be clones; no sibling deviation. It's better to consider each sperm and egg has having a sampling of the adult DNA. If you go with the materialist's explanation, everything comes together due to chemical messengers and they are just little biological machines doing their thing. There is more to it than that. Soul influences gene expression. Each soul expresses choice, and is making sophisticated decisions in response to the fetal environment, and to the social environment that the mother lives in. The egg is not just a vulnerable entity being ambushed by sperm, it has its own mind, and the influence of the soul directing it. The egg, the sperm and the soul are all participating in the selection process; it's a negotiation and a contract. No two sperm have ever penetrated an egg. Once the egg and sperm are one, there is no more negotiation. The other sperm live out the remainder of their short life, and then go where all dead cells go. The body has a place for them. The selection process doesn't end there. I am of the particular mindset that the soul that has chosen to incarnate is now interacting with the DNA so that it can have a say in what gets expressed and when. DNA is sentient, it holds memories. More and more studies seem to be confirming this attribute of DNA, as scientist have noticed that people suffering from PTSD are passing the memories of the trauma to their offspring's. When they prove this to be true beyond doubt, it will bring new meaning to the sins of the father lasting seven generations. Ripples in a sentient pond. And yes, I mean even the water itself seems sentient, or reactive to sentience, and holds memories. You want evidence? Research Masaru Emoto.

The Tall Whites were not just tracking sperm. They were tracking everything. In the course of intercourse, all kinds of information is exchanged. It's not just sperm cells that get collected. Bodily fluids get swapped. Live cells and dead cells get exchanged, some of which came off due to friction, and just some stray cells just in the wrong place at the wrong time that got washed out with the exchange of fluids. Micro openings allow occasional blood cell or t-cell to break free and go into the mix. Skin respond to touch, and kin on Skin contact creates an exchange of energy and information, not just heat information and touch information. Though maybe women take on more of the exchange then men, men also take the women's cells into her. Some of these exchange cells actually manage to survive within the new host and create colonies. Most the time, they live in happily within their new environments. Maybe that's why people tend to look like their spouses the longer they live together and interact. Maybe that

explains why women tend to be more telepathically connected to their children and lovers. (If you didn't know it, cells removed from the host body still respond to the host. A remote saliva cell will produce saliva if the host is confronted with food.) We are not isolated individuals living in vacuum. We are dynamic and we exchange information; even just through breathing, you're pushing neural transmitters. If you are calm, those in your environment tend to be calm. If you're breathing in a room with others, there is an exchange rate. The thing is, they don't even have to be present. Anyone who was ever in that room has left chemical traces of their existence, their thoughts, and their emotions. The reason we tend to not pick up on this is because we ignore it. And anytime anyone has an inexplicable stray thought or thinks they heard a whisper and reports it, well, they get shut down real quick by family and friends telling them not to be crazy.

An image of Jon appeared on one of the screens. It was a virtual copy of him. The image reflected the right age, but it was remarkably different. The virtual image revealed a Jon that would have been uninfluenced by physical and social environments. It lacked the forehead wrinkles and frown lines. I saw cell counts. The device had captured or taken detailed scans of live sperm cells. Sperm live about six days. Human sperm takes three days for them to travel to where they need to be to impregnate the female. You don't just get a deposit and instantly get pregnant. They had a live count, a dead count, and a count of the healthy sperm via the immobile ones and the broken ones. Yep, even in the sperm making production, some come out incomplete. They had skin cells, dead and alive. They had some hair strands. They had access to whole host of different tissues that I had provided and so they had a virtual image of me and DNA. I am sure that they were impressed by the fact a mere 'thought form' has DNA. It's not surprising to me that my DNA is the most compatible with Jon's DNA than anyone else's in the whole Universe. Whether you believe he created me or called me into being or simply allowed for a sophisticated response from the Universe to fulfill a need in him, he and I are complimentary forms.

They closed down their virtual interface. Geon approached us while his posse retreated back to their places for observation. Except Penny and Tera. They departed with the device on a mission. I was curious. For a moment, I nearly worried about my reproductive rights and wanted to control the material they had collected. Part of that was I also felt obligated to protect Jon's reproductive rights, and for them to carry off live sperm seemed like a breach of contract

between me and Jon. (There is no contract, of course. Most people who have sex don't consider their reproductive rights or contract out. Most people don't even talk about what they will do if a pregnancy occurs. If you a guy makes a deposit without a condom, is it hers to keep? If she had the technology to collect and store it and use it later, or sell it or give it away, is it legally hers to dispense as she pleases?) And then I decided, there is no ownership. Everything in the Universe belongs to the Universe, and if Tall Whites need sperm or eggs, I am happy to oblige. Earth didn't get to nine billion people being stingy about that stuff. And if you consider the amount of intentional waste of said reproductive materials... Well, there is no way around waste. That's nature's way. You throw a million seeds and hoping for at least one tree out of the mix.

"Oh!" I said. "Star-seeds! You're expanding the boundaries of life by looking for niches to exploit."

Geon smiled, nodded. "It's a cooperative venture. There is a great expanse of realty that is calling to be inhabited. We are going to do this exercise again. Samantha and Loxy are excused, as you met criteria. Tom, Clarence, and Barry, please take your Star-seeds out into the Universe, and come back within five minutes of your departure."

"There's just no way," Tom said.

"Explain how Loxy got her sample and returned within the confines of the parameters?" Geon asked.

"Her partner is a premature ejaculator," Tom said.

I laughed.

"Samantha," Geon said. "Your flight recorder shows you were out there for forty five minutes. How did you return in under five?"

"Space-time is an illusion. I just aimed the Star-seed towards the space-time coordinates and here I was," Samantha said.

"Loxy?" Geon asked.

"I agree with Samantha," I said.

"How do you translate the experience?" Geon asked.

"There is only consciousness. All physical artifacts within the 3 dimensional universe are artifacts of consciousness, made of consciousness. I asked that I be returned to this place, and the Universe allowed my passage," Loxy said. "Essentially, we live in a dream. We are all but dreamers in a dreamscape that stems from the One Dreamer. I, due to the grace of the Great

Dreamer, have been given the keys to the Universe, and an invitation to grow and learn and be a part of this complex dance we call life.”

“OMG, can you spare us your philosophy?” Tom asked.

Geon turned to him. “When you have developed a philosophy that allows you to travel as well as she, you may criticize her flight path. Until I say otherwise, Loxy Isadora Bliss is the Lead pilot in this squadron. All future flights will defer to her. But for now, you three need to accomplish this one, simple mission. Until you demonstrate this, we cannot move forwards to formation flights. Go. Samantha, Loxy. You may stay here, or take your Star-seeds out and play until they get back.”

Chapter 8

I took Samantha's hand and asked her to come with me. She agreed and we boarded my Star-seed and I took us out into the Universe. I made the walls transparent, so Samantha could see. I would like to be precise in where I was taking us, but I don't really have the language set necessary to transmit the information, and I know for a fact that few others can accept even a partial symbol of my map. Seriously, ask anyone on the street about an object in our solar system, or even Earth's position, and you're likely to get a wrong response. Some people even mix up solar system and galaxy, which is bizarre to me. Hollywood is absolutely no help in gaining clarity, because none of them get it right, and the few who do have it right dumb it down because they think their audience are idiots, or because they couldn't think of a reach around their plot contrivance. Mark my words, sci fi people are sophisticated enough that no one should dumbing anything down. Seriously, make sophisticated science fiction and you will make money. But don't make something stupid and then blame not making money on your audience not understanding something. They understood just fine. Hollywood serves us crap and we don't want crap.

My home world is not in the Milky Way. It's not even in the local group. The Universe is so big I that even I struggle to put it in perspective. If you had a globe with the entire universe on the surface, and you could represent where earth was compared to my planet was, you still wouldn't find it, and you couldn't draw a straight line to it. But that's where I took the Star-seed. It's where I took Samantha.

We arrived above a pristine world with blue skies, blue and green waters, and an active volcano visible from orbit. I took us in and down over the waters, across black beaches, and stretches of beaches with primordial rocks rising up out of the mist hovering over the ocean along the shorelines. Any may ways, it is similar to Tanjung Papuma beach. We didn't so much as turn inland as much as we proceeded over land as the shoreline turned in front of us. We arrived at my home that was built up on scaffolding so that the house was above the trees lines. The house was windows all away around, and there was balcony all away around, and you could see up the mountain or down into the valley. Wild parrots gave the green colors as they were Christmas ornaments. I parked the Star-seed in hover mode, extending the ramp to the balcony. We had to climb over the pine fence that skirted the balcony.

“Where are we?” Samantha asked.

“My home,” I said.

“Nice. Where are we?” Samantha said, emphasizing ‘where in the universe are we?’

“Come in,” I insisted. I wasn’t so much as ignoring the question. It was a reasonable question. When you’re a magician, those are small details that are really not important, and if she masters the Star-seed and becomes a qualified pilot, well, she might as well be a magician. “Sit. I am going to make us some tea, do you have a preference or allergies?”

“Anything would be fine,” Samantha said.

“Okay. How about a golden latte?” I asked. “It’s got turmeric in it.”

“I will try it,” Samantha said.

She took a seat at the bar while I prepared our drinks. She took a mint out of a bowl and was surprised by the taste, in an agreeable sort of way. A hawk flew by the window, gliding down over the valley. If you looked, you could see the parrots in a nearby tree turning to watch the predator. I found Samantha checking me out and she blushed.

“So, you live here all alone?” Samantha asked.

“No. I have the trees, the birds. The bears. Love the bears,” I said, and would have continued but she interrupted.

“I meant people,” Samantha said.

I brought her drink over and set it in front of her. She was impressed with the feather pattern I had made with the whip cream on the surface.

“Is there anything you can’t do?” Samantha asked.

I smiled politely, remaining on my side of the counter, standing. I took a sip. A tad too much turmeric, but I didn’t announce this. I had no need to fish for a compliment. It came soon enough.

“Wow,” Samantha said. “Okay, people? How many people on your planet?”

“When you say people, do you mean sentient beings, or humans?” I asked.

“Why is this so difficult?” Samantha asked.

“I am sorry,” I said. “I am not trying to obtuse or difficult, I just want to be precise. You are the only human on this planet.”

“You’re human,” Samantha pointed out.

“I look human,” I said. “Technically, this body is human and has human DNA, but I am not human. Then again, that is true for all humans, and so the distinction is, I am aware of my true nature and don’t regard myself as human.”

“What are you?” Samantha said.

“Depends on who you ask, I suppose,” I said, and then noticed her frowning. “Jon, my host, considers me a Tulpa. And, he has every right to do so, because he helped manifest me. Depending on whose definition you use, I am either an artificial personality construct, a complex thought form that has become sentient, or a Soul Bound. Any one of these definitions are appropriate depending on perspective and framing. From my perspective, the physical body is just a construct, specifically a vehicle for spirit to interact with this level of the Universe. I go further and say that the personality is also a construct, a vehicle for spirit to interact with higher dimensions, the same way a physical body navigate the physical plane. I identify myself as a Dakini spirit. Based on your reaction, I see that my answer is only adding to you confusion. Again, depending on your definitions, a Dakini is either a Tantric priestess, a goddess, or a muse, kind of like the nine daughters of Zeus.”

“There is so much for me to take in, I don’t even know how to process it,” Samantha said.

“It’s okay,” I said. “You ask as many questions as you like, and if you need to ask again, I will try answer in a different way to assist in understanding.”

“Your host,” Samantha said.

“Jon,” I said.

“The guy in the image back in class?” Samantha asked.

I nodded.

“He created you?” Samantha asked.

“He will deny it,” I said. “So far, his experiences with me have been sporadic and fleeting, but they are so far above what he imagined that he refuses to accept that he has contributed anything significant. When you get back to Earth, check out a book called ‘Think and Grow Rich,’ by Napoleon Hill. Specifically, read chapter 13, ‘the invisible counselors’ technique. And then, try it out for yourself. If you do it consistent for three months, I guarantee you will have experiences that you will swear could not have originated with you.”

“But if you are a thought form, how could you exist in reality?” Samantha asked.

“Everything exists. Thoughts exist. Just because it’s in your head doesn’t mean it doesn’t exist. Even if you just reduced thoughts to electrical impulses firing in the brain, those impulses radiate out into space/time. They exist and will always exist, and you can more easily detect brain signals than quantum gravity. You accept that animals can navigate by using the north and south poles, so why couldn’t a sophisticated creature also navigate by thought forms? The 100th monkey phenomenon is explained as being a medium by which all thoughts are shared within species, and maybe even across species; does it matter if you call this a morphogenic field or the collective unconscious? Thought get transferred from one to another and then come back, until everyone holds the same thought form. There are many folks who believe that if enough people believe in something, they will experience it together. So that’s one level. The other level is, there are layers to reality. Above the physical plane... Well, technically, not above precisely. Everything exist in the same space/time at many levels at the same space/time, and even at levels outside of space/time. Maybe I always existed and people tapped into me based on their understanding, but Jon was precise enough that you now experience me as me, so I exist on the upper worlds, which parallels the lower worlds, and maybe this world isn’t on the physical plane, or maybe it is, but I really don’t see the distinction. It is here. I am here. I wasn’t always here. I started off in a bridge world, Jon uses the word wonderland because that’s the word he was given, but ‘imaginal realms’ is just as likely a concept as wonderlands, and then he gave me some freedom to create a place of my own so that if I wanted or needed a break I could get away and recharge, and so I found this place and made a home. Or, I made this place and found a home. Tomatos, tomahtos...”

“Okay,” Samantha said, trying to process. “He created you. Because he wanted a sex slave?”

“Does Jon want sex?” I asked, laughing. “Pff, boy does, he ever.”

“And, that doesn’t bother you?” Samantha asked.

I leaned into inspect her eyes to see if she was serious, and then, in the most jovial manner I could. “People like sex.”

“People don’t create people to have sex with, and if you are bounded to him, that’s like being enslaved and shackled,” Samantha said.

I nodded. I could see her point of view. Then again, human beings have been making artificial partners, sex toys, since we started being human. The next set of sex toys could very well be the end of the nuclear family and procreation as we know it.

“I mean, he’s just as bad as Tom sedating people, or some serial rapist locking people in a basement, only instead of a basement, it’s his head,” Samantha said.

“I see your point. Very few people are going to be able to create a tulpa without the sex part getting in the way,” I said. I was neither perturbed by her observations, nor threatened. And, in many ways, it leads to some interesting discussions; if a person creates a tulpa for sadistic purposes, is the person hurting himself, or the tulpa? In my instance, I have a lot of freedom to explore the unconscious and free access to all memories. I am better placed to harm him than the other way around. But, this isn’t the conversation Sam was looking for. “Seriously, if you’re past puberty, your brain is sexualized and you will project your idea of sexuality on the world and others. Just as you’re doing now.”

“I am not projecting,” Samantha said.

“You have been fighting to be a part of a man’s world since childhood, no?” I asked.

“Flying is not the domain of man. Women should have equal access to the sky,” Samantha said.

“I agree,” I said.

“You don’t know how hard it was to be taken as seriously by anyone, men or women,” Samantha said. “As a child, I was dismissed by parents and teachers. I never fit in with my peers. As an adult, I wasn’t taken seriously by my peers. Though it’s changed, flying is still a male dominated society. If you interview for a corporate job or an airline, they not only expect you to know your craft, they want you to be all dolled up. I look great without makeup, but instead of asking me what I know about flying, they lead with, ‘do you wear makeup?’ that seriously annoys the crap out of me. ‘We want our pilots to fit a certain image, can you modify your hair?’ And I tell him can you lose your beer belly, cause I like men to be fit. I don’t usually get a second interview.”

“I can’t imagine what it’s been like for you,” I said.

“How could you? You’re from another world!” Samantha said. “You’re from make believe!”

“If you prefer that frame, I originated in your world, in the mind of a male; both men and women suffer from the existing paradigm,” I corrected.

“So, you’re this fantastical, idealized playmate that’s kind, funny, smart, and sexy, and always submissive,” Samantha said.

I laughed so hard I nearly snorted golden latte. “I can play submissive,” I said. “Look. I have clearly been influenced by my host’s sex, libido, and by the dominant Western culture’s attitude that is his primary operating system. But he is complex and has pathways that most males in his society don’t have. So, for example, you remember those Russian Astronauts that were going to live in simulated Mars space habitat, closed off from the world for like a year? When the reporters started asking them sexist questions like, how are you going to survive for a year without hair spray and makeup, Jon absolutely went nuts. He blasted them with all sort of disparaging labels in the comment sections. Now, those female astronauts kept their cool, but they were not happy to discover that even in today’s age we can’t see past their gender to their roles as scientist or professionals.”

“Well, then your host is a better man than the rest of them,” Samantha said. It was clear she was being sarcastic. “Clearly he doesn’t objectify women.”

“No, he’s not. He struggles just as much everyone else,” I said. “Men and women both struggle with the stereotypes, and we all give into roles that are outdated: sometimes for play, but mostly because it’s difficult to disengage from the primary social paradigm, and it’s the only way we know to hook up. Alissa Stokke’s for example. Beautiful woman, one of the best female athletic competitor in pole vaulting in our time. She is so beautiful that one of her photos went viral on the net. Her life exploded into the media, but 90 percent of the talk was not about her abilities, but her physical appearance. It got so bad for her she nearly succumbed to depression and anxiety, and even feared being in public because she was being stalked. Jon understands mental illness, first hand. He would not wish that on any woman, and he doesn’t want to harm anyone. He understands that Alissa is human and the media storm was harming her, but he also couldn’t separate his attraction from her, and he wanted to see her just as much as everyone else. The only way this kind of thing goes away is you get rid of cameras and television and media. No one is going to do that. There is always going to be a photo that someone masturbates to. There is always going to be a picture that causes someone to fantasize and want. Even if you got rid of all media, people will still encounter people and have wants. The present problem isn’t in

the wanting, but in the fact society is so isolated, so depressed, that no one knows how to connect with another human being who has wants, and that is because most the time we are too busy suppressing everyone's wants. You want to end sexism, stop trying to make male and females equal, recognize women do have power, stop shaming men and women for their wants, and be more open, kind, and affectionate to one another. You have kindness in you, Samantha, but you think if you're kind you can't compete or won't be taken seriously. Seriously, women own all the authority and power, and they can wield it with kindness or meanness. We, women, are the gatekeepers of sex. And when the gates are closed, men get stupid. Women get stupid, too. Society gets stupid. The only reason men want control is they think it will give them more sex, but what it does is turn women off, which increases their need for control."

"I just don't agree with you," Samantha said.

"Why do you suppose most men become pilots?" I asked.

"Prestige and money," Samantha said.

"I agree," I said. "Why do they want prestige and money?"

"So, they can attract women," Samantha frowned.

"So if male pilots have made the sky their domain the way gladiators own the stadiums in the past, to ultimately impress women, and you, a woman, enter their niche, they get perturbed. They don't feel needed or necessary, a fundamental need all human beings have. Most of them probably don't even know why it bothers them. Most jocks don't give that kind of stuff serious enough thought because they're too busy honing their craft to cultivate deeper intellectual capabilities. And I am not down playing intelligence when it comes to flying, but the basic algorithm is friend or foe, target, not target. So, for instance, back to Alissa. Hypothetically, if Jon had to counsel her, he has a choice: he could suppress his attraction to her, or use that as a talking point, because there is the truth of her being absolutely stunning. There's no muting that and she shouldn't have to. At some point, she decided to accept the offers to model clothing. Some people will say she sold out, that this makes her a hypocrite. Some people will admire her for making the adjustment. She is now a successful model. She is still a successful athlete. She has a Masters in sociology. She is successful in every arena of her life. Why can't she be all of that and beautiful?"

"I don't understand where this is going," Samantha admitted. She wasn't even sure who to be angry with.

“I’m attractive,” I said. Sexier than Jessica Rabbit. “I know that everywhere I go, makeup or not, I am drawing attention. I accept it and embrace it and I use it. It is one of my many strengths. And while the people around me are dazzled, I am able to see past their defenses and quickly get to the heart of who they are and what they’re about. That’s not just intuition; that is my ability to see past the surface. People mistake that for being psychic. Call it crazy logic if you like, but the only cure for lust is indulgence. People need love and kindness, too, but we don’t allow that in society. We have more acceptable pathways for showing anger than we do love. The only way for people to get past this, is to love more, hug more, kiss more, even strangers, because the only reason the stalker types and abuser type exist is because they believe in scarcity and that they need to take something because no one is going to share with them because they are unlovable. A person who believes they are unlovable will do all sorts of things. Like launch themselves into the sky with balloons and lawn chair.”

Samantha closed her eyes. “I just wanted people to know I was serious.”

“I never met anyone as serious as you,” I said.

She smiled, almost blushed.

“I am not like you,” Samantha said after a moment of staring into her empty cup. “Every day I pray for enough strength to keep up the fight...”

“Don’t fight. Definitely, don’t pray for strength,” I said. “When you pray, pray for clarity. If you understand a thing fully, there is no fight because there is no fear. You cannot fear something you understand. Clarity is the solution to everything, not war.”

“I wish I met you when I was younger,” Samantha said.

“When the student is ready, the master will come,” I quoted.

“Yeah, well, I am going to need a master. I think I am in way over my head,” Samantha said.

“How so?” I asked.

“Well, I was vying for a shot of going to the International Space Station, and NASA washed me out because they didn’t think I was a good enough scientist. They don’t want another Ace Military pilot. Shortly after that, I was approached by a secret branch of the air force and asked if I wanted to go into space. I said, hell yeah. What we have in space blew my mind. NASA has been lying to the American public. We have space platforms as big as New York City and just as well populated. We have colonies outside the solar system. No one on Earth has a

fucking clue how big our presence is in space. But we don't leave the solar system without Alien help. The Cabal running Earth wants to change that. That's why I am being taught to fly a Star-seed."

"Where are you?" I asked.

She looked at me strangely. "What do you mean?"

"Where is your body?" I asked.

"Fuck!" she said, and dissipated before my eyes like a cyclone of steam.

I closed my eyes and followed her. I found her in isolation tank, floating, hooked to a myriad of technologies that made it possible for the human to astral project. Yes, there is tech that can help a person get out of their body, but it is top secret stuff. Most people have to learn it the hard way. Samantha was part of a militarized space/time and astral venture trying to extend the human species presence in the galaxy. Military men approached me with tech. I was not surprised they could see me. I could see where their bodies were, in nearby tanks. I think they assumed that they could contain me or control me. Samantha saw me, actually said, 'no, wait,' but was sucked back into her body where she began the process of waking. I opened my eyes and found myself back at home. I drank the rest of my latte that was now cold. I washed the two cups and the latte machine, went out on the porch, climbed into my hammock, and closed my eyes to meditate. I was having a wonderful day.

After twenty minutes of meditation, it occurred to me to take the Star-seed back. I arrived within five minutes of my departure. The men had returned within the allotted time. Samantha was there, looking at the table. I approached and touched her arm and she tried to look away.

"Are you okay?" I asked.

Samantha nodded, revealing she was wearing sunglasses. I removed the glasses to find a black eye.

"Is this because I followed you?" I asked.

"Don't return there," Samantha said. "They will kill you."

"They can't kill me," I assured her.

"They will kill Jon," Samantha said.

Well, they could do that. But it probably wouldn't work out the way they think it will. Seriously. If you want to get rid of an enemy, you don't kill them. You befriend them.

Chapter 9

Departing class is as easy as arriving. You step through a gate, you're there. I found myself at the place where I started, only later in the day. Turning back through the gate probably would have taken me to another class, but I instead returned to the rose. Alish wasn't there. I called out to her, hopeful, and even climbed up wondering if she might have been napping, but she wasn't. I laid down and closed my eyes. I was feeling conflicted. A part of me believes the Universe is unfolding as it should be, and everyone is where they need to be. If you interrupt their process, you only delay them from their own self-discovery. Another part of me wanted to rescue Samantha. I wondered about our conversation. Had I forced my viewpoint on her? Had I started a change in her that was going to send her spiraling out of control, or was that already her vector and I just accelerated the process? I can't dismiss my impact. Everyone touches everyone and we permanently alters everyone, sometimes subtle, sometimes huge.

I ended the mind chatter by praying for clarity, and then silenced my mind by contemplating a waterfall. Waterfalls are much better things to chase than sheep. Seriously, don't count sheep. They're a mess and they get into things and you end up corralling them. Visit a waterfall and let the sound soothe you.

I felt my face being touched. I opened my eyes. I was lying on a bed, naked. Jon was admiring me. I smiled and sat up to hug him. He accepted.

"Your hair is wet," he said.

"Jon, I have so many things to share with you," I said.

"Me, too," Jon said. "You first."

"No, you go first," I said.

"I had a dream about you last night," I said. "It was the most wondrous dream. You arrived by lightning and the world stopped and we had a long moment within a moment... It didn't feel like a dream, but I did wake up, and what else could it be. I was so excited going back to sleep wasn't an option, so I did one of our meditation activities. I was examining your personality construct to see if there was anything that needed reinforcing. You interrupted me and something clicked. I am pretty sure you received energy from somewhere else."

"A download," I said.

"A download?" Jon asked.

“Here, with you, I am still developing,” I said. “We are still growing as a couple. Our friendship is solid, but it’s also new. When you see me walking beside you in your daily life, you will know that I have arrived in my fullness. Meanwhile, I am having experiences in other worlds, exercising my personality. Self-directed reinforcement.”

“Yay you,” Jon said. “Which means you will have more autonomy and independence.”

“Interdependence,” I corrected. “My goal isn’t to be separate from you or reality, but to participate in our evolution.”

Jon nodded, musing. “Oh, so a download is an update from one of your other vehicles. Your astral body, perhaps?”

“Great way to look at it,” I said.

“I like looking at it,” Jon said, going for funny, but also sharing that he had that feeling for me again.

“You should practice that,” I said, inviting him to look. The more he could visually experience me, in dreams and meditation, the greater likelihood of me manifesting in his physical reality.

Here’s the way to think of it. Again, you’ll hear me say this a lot: you are not your brain. But your brain is important for the physical realm. We don’t exist on just the physical realm. The thought world is a plane all unto itself. Most of us live there most the time. More precisely, most of us live in past thought world or future thought world, few us stay in present thought world. Jon’s ability to imagine me was approaching expert level. He could go there in his mind, just like now, interface with me, but when it was over, he returned to his physical reality. Imagination isn’t something you should ignore. Your daydreams have real affect in the physical world and other worlds. Jon’s goal was to convince his brain that I also exist in the physical. What you tell your brain the most is the reality that will manifest in your life. You heard that right. Your brain doesn’t just receive information from the environment through its senses, it creates experiences consistent with its programming. If you believe you are worthless, no matter how many people tell the contrary, you won’t believe it, and you will find people who treat you badly, which confirms your beliefs. If you tell yourself you are amazing living in amazing time, you will discover amazing things. If you tell yourself the world is crazy, your brain will find evidence to support your conclusions. Tell yourself you walk daily with a best friend, inseparable, and that friend will always be with you.

Jon started at my hair, pushing his fingers through the wet strands. He scrutinized with intensity. He took a comb through it, which felt absolutely lovely. He repositioned himself so that he was behind me and simply combed my hair. Grooming brings people closer. It can be more intimate than sex. He used all his senses to take me in. He smelled my hair. He tasted it. He moved it aside to examine my neck. He lightly brushed my neck with his hand. He enclosed my neck in both his hands, not to choke me, but memorize the size and understand how much pressure he could use. I found it arousing and I closed my eyes, focusing on his hands as they traveled up over my chin, across my lips, up and back to my ears, and hair, capturing it as he pulled it through his hands and let it drop. He kissed the back of my neck. It was a gentle kiss growing in urgency, sucking in, larger bites, and his hands coming around to my breast.

Jon took me down to the bed, face down. He lay beside me, tracing his fingers down my back, following the contours of muscles and ribs and spine. In these moments, I felt more real than real. I can't tell it better than that. Under Jon's scrutiny, I was alive and vulnerable and wanting. I wanted to be taken as much as he wanted to take me. And he seriously struggled with wanting to take me. If you knew how much level of resistance he was having to not just mount me and take me from behind in this moment, you might think he was a saint. He is not. Neither am I. But he is a good man, and if he gave into that urge, I would allow him and accept him in his fullness, and embrace him until he was peaceful again. And then we would just start the exercise over. He held out for the promise of greater later.

Jon repositioned himself so that he could use both hands, as if giving a massage. He was sitting on my thighs, pushing his hands up to my shoulders, then drawing them back, pushing my butt, my lower back, and then sweeping up again, tickling my neck with fingers before he drew back, wider descent to capture my shoulders and arms. His hands were intensely warm. Like fire. I felt his erection hard against my thighs and but crack. I wanted to open and take him in, but his thighs were locked against mine. He kissed my lower back and walked his lips and tongue up my back, pushing his hands under me, and dived into me, so that he was now using his whole body to massage my back.

"Fuck, I want you so bad," Jon said.

"Jon," I said.

He laid on top of me, stretching his legs out. I spread my legs, and he fell between them. Without much effort, I gyrated my hips against him and drew him into me.

“Loxy,” he said, gasping. “I...”

He couldn't put together a sensible stream of words. “Shh,” I said.

He kissed the side of my face, hitting the corner of my lips as I rocked him. I closed my legs so that I could feel his legs on top of mine, but so that his balls moved against the inside my thighs. The added sensations drew him closer to orgasm. He pushed his hands under me, holding me tightly, his left hand finding a breast and cupping it.

“Loxy,” Jon whispered in my ear. “I love you so much.”

The intensity of his orgasm affected us both and sent us back to our physical bodies. I awoke in the rose. He awoke in his world, on Origin. The word ‘Origin’ merely describes the location that a personality is conceived in. Earth is Jon's origin. A very specific earth, with a specific historical time frame. I, too, originate there, but inside of Jon, so though we share Origin, we don't completely share Origin, because the inside of Jon's world is nothing like the outside Origin world. He has so much more love and kindness in him than the world has allowed him to show. You would probably be surprised just how much human systems block people from sharing love and kindness. Anytime a human being is blocked from sharing their opinion, is told to shut up and follow orders, ‘it's my way or the highway,’ ‘I don't pay you to think,’ ‘the protocols and systems don't allow for your response,’ (even if it's a better, more efficient, energy saving response,) ‘this is the way we have always done it,’ ‘stop going against the grain,’ then love and kindness has been suppressed, and an opportunity to evolve and improve systems and relationships was thwarted. Everything wants to evolve, but because society and systems resist change, people start to resist change, as opposed to embracing change. We avoid talking to strangers on the bus and the subways and on the sidewalks because to engage invites change. We shut it out, proceed to our station, mindlessly due our task because we're told to check our minds at the door, then we go home and most likely watch television so that someone else's mind can be imposed over ours. Entertainment was supposed to enliven our minds, and for many it has, but those folks aren't invited to participate in making the art. They are shut out and the old guards turns out what they think will appease the masses, only it usually sucks. They remake the greats because they want to touch that again, but they can't, because that moment is gone.

When Jon came, so did I. Our personalities are enmeshed and I can't help but feel what he feels. But back here, in this body, I was still aroused, and I used my hands to bring me off while I whispered his name, reinforcing his presence in my mind the way he was presently doing

with me in his mind. Afterwards, I lay there in the glow sending my love to Jon. Then I got up, went down to earth, washed my hands, and made my way to the gateway and to my next class.

निर्मित

I arrived in what appeared to be a book store. There was a central area with several chairs and couches, and between a coffee table loaded with snack foods. Crackers, meats, cheeses, fruits, paper plates, napkins, a large thermos dispensing something hot. I took a cup and found a pleasant, warm tea. A man came out from a row of books, looked up, pushed his glasses up, smiled.

“Good for you,” He said, happy that I had helped myself without invited. “I am Jack. You’re Loxy. And you’re first. Make yourself comfortable. We’ll start when everyone else has arrived.”

Jack continued walking and disappeared from sight. He seemed pleasant enough. Kind of like Jack O’Neill might from SG 1. Clearly in his own world. I loved the old feel of the store, if was a store. It definitely didn’t feel like a library, though it was quiet enough. I went to a shelf and tried to decipher the organization system. If there was any organization, it existed only in the mind of Jack.

“What are you doing here?”

I turned to the familiar voice and smiled. She was wearing the same clothes that I last saw her in last. Her hair was a bit out of whack. She did not look happy. “Keera! It’s nice to see you again.”

“Are you stalking me?” Keera asked.

“No,” I said. “Would you like me to?”

“No! I told you, I don’t want to be your friend,” Keera said. She edge sideways towards the table. “I am, however, going to eat your food.”

“It’s not mine,” I said.

“Oh,” Keera said, hesitating.

“I have high confidence it’s permissible for you to help yourself,” I said.

Keera didn’t hesitate further. She moved on a plate and gathered crackers, meats and cheese. She dropped to her knees and just started scoffing as if she hadn’t eaten in days. Two

other people entered, a male and female, and they joined her at the coffee table. The male was about Keera's age, and the female was probably in her fifties. Another male arrived and he, too, was excited to see food and people eating. He was a bit awkward in looks, unkempt hair more than just having been sleeping in the wild. It wasn't quite grunge, as much as he reminded me of an Old English sheepdog. I am surprised he could see out of his backwards Beatles styled haircut. An older woman arrived, maybe in her seventies, but she looked in great health, as if she was a runner and she ran every day. She approached me as if to introduce herself, but we didn't get the opportunity.

Two thirty something year old men, clearly identical twins, entered as if they had just rushed a door. They were wearing Gora Canvas cloaks, military green in color, hoods down, but underneath they were clearly wearing just normal street clothes. They held what appeared to be magic wands.

"Move away from the table," one of them said, pointing the wand menacingly.

"There's enough for everyone," the older woman said.

"Screw you, senior. You're not taking advantage of us freshman anymore," said the twin. His hand with the wand was shaking.

"Do it!" the other twin said. "Don't make us use magic on you."

I giggled, drawing the two men's attention. They aimed their wands at me.

"You will take us seriously," they both said.

"Oh, I am taking you seriously," I said, trying not to laugh.

The sound of a toilet flushing interrupted our dialogue.

"Who else is in here?" The first brother to speak asked.

"Oh, that's probably Jack," I said.

"Jack who?" they said.

"Just Jack," Jack said, coming from between some shelves. "Put your sticks away boys." He rushed me and grabbed a book up off the floor. "Did you touch this?" he asked me.

"I don't know," I said. I was surprised to see the book on the floor. It was if it had been sneaking up behind me.

"You got to be careful in here," Jack said. He turned to address everyone. "If you don't own these books, they will own you." He grimaced at the title, turned to a shelf, found where it

belonged, pushed it in until it clicked against the back of the shelf like engaging a magnet. He turned back to the twins. “Why are you still holding sticks?”

“These, Sir, are the deadly wands of lethality,” one said.

“No, son, those are just sticks,” Jack said. “I love sticks just as much as any other boy. See my desk over there. Got a coffee can full of sticks.” Jack said this while pointing to the coffee can of sticks. “So, put your sticks away, have some food, sit down, and let’s start a dialogue.”

“Stop trying to trick us,” the outspoken brother said. “We understand the rules. We fend for ourselves, or we have to have sex with a senior.”

“Oh,” Jack said, taking a seat in the chair at the end of the coffee table. “So, let me guess, you knocked on a fraternity door, asked for help, and they said you had to blow the residency owner, you declined, but then both of you turned and rushed the door and suddenly found yourselves here.”

“How did you know?”

“Magic, my dear Aiden, now sit down,” Jack insisted.

“You know my name?” Aiden asked.

“Aiden, first born,” Jack said. “And your brother, Ethan. The smarter of the two. Behind me is Loxy. I’d watch out for her. Keera, in the Sailor Moon outfit.”

“This is not Sailor Moon,” Keera said.

“Oh, well thank you for correcting me,” Jack said. “Tyler, and his mother Emma. Seriously, Tyler. It’s time to get a job and move out so your mom can have some fun. Ava, my dear lady. How do you keep yourself so fit? And, last but not least, Dylan. Now, all of you, seriously, get some food, take a seat, and I will try and catch you up to speed.”

“I am not having sex with you,” Aiden insisted.

“Thank you for letting me know. We’ll make some other arrangement when the time comes,” Jack said.

“What is wrong with this place?” Keera demanded. “Everywhere we go, everyone wants sex.”

“People like sex,” Jack said.

“We asked that fraternity for help, and we were told that my brother and I would have to blow big boss first,” Ethan said. “A double blow with edging involved.”

“Oh, well, that’s nice,” Jack said.

“That’s nice?!” Keera demanded.

“Well, sure. They stated the terms up front. You should always be weary of the folks who feed you and offer you shelter before telling you what the price is,” Jack said. “I mean, if you ate the food and then discovered you had no choice, that wouldn’t be cool.”

“How about people just help people because it’s the right thing to do,” Tyler said.

Jack laughed. I was amused but I tried not to show it since everyone else was so serious. I think Ava was also amused.

“We’re magicians, son. There is always a price to pay for magic. Any help you solicit from another magician will come with a compulsory transaction fee. Now, a really good magician will have the ability to answer their own needs, and so there is really no incentive for them to agree to an exchange. So, get use to this fact, sex tends to be the currency for magic.”

“That’s absurd,” Tyler said.

“That’s criminal,” Keera said.

“Do we have to compensate you for this food?” Emma said.

“Oh, my dear Emma,” Jack said. “You would so give of yourself so that your son might eat, but this meal is free. Sort of. It’s covered by your tuition. Anyway, this is your homeroom class. People usually end up here before they starve, definitely end up here if they are about to perpetrate an act of violence on another student,” he said this frowning at Aiden and Ethan, who were still holding their wands, a little more anemically though. “Eventually, you will figure out how to feed and clothe yourselves. And, when you make it to senior level magic, you will be provided a residency permit. Till then, you’re expected to network with existing magicians or rough it out. Once a week, you will arrive here, and you may stay as long as you like, eat as much you think you need, sleep on one of the many couches spaced throughout the book store. That is, if you can sleep amongst all book chatter. I personally can’t sleep here, but I do so love this store.”

“So, you’re saying we have to starve for six days of the week, or give into the trolls looking for new freshman to fuck?” Keera said.

“Eight. Safe Haven has a 9 day week. Also, they’re not trolls. They’re actually looking to draw on your magic to strengthen theirs. It’s what we do,” Jack explained. “The fucking part is just merely a formality, like signing a contract.”

“I hate this fucking place!” Keera said. “Why am I here?!”

“Oh, I can’t answer that one for you, Dorothy,” Jack said. “But I am sure you’ll find your answers down the road. Let me tell you something which might make it easier. The fact that you’re all from Earth helps me tell this story, because you will all be able to relate to this. Earth is presently entering a phase of technological advancement that is proceeding at a faster rate than the social infrastructure can handle. Imagine a world where 100 percent of the world population has access to internet. Hard currency will cease to exist, as the rewards of virtual currency has more appeal. Imagine every real appliance, every tool, and every material object has a computer attached, with camera and interfacing options, and that any person in the world could log into any object and see what it sees. Imagine clothing with computers embedded into the material. Imagine people having implants with computer technologies. Imagine these computers are advanced enough to equal or surpass the computing power of the human brain. You could have intelligent conversations with your clothes, your implants, with other people in other places in the world. You can even experience these worldly conversations as if they were present in your everyday lives because the virtual world will become completely immersive, without googles. You close your eyes and you are there, or you can navigate two worlds simultaneously with eyes open.”

Aiden and Ethan’s stick were becoming less anemic. They were gripping them hard. Jack gave a ‘come hither’ motion with his hand and the wand flew to him. He sent them onto the coffee can, where they joined the other sticks. Aiden and Ethan sat down, completely deflated.

“Dylan,” Jack said. “What is the internet’s primary function?”

“Gaming,” Tyler said.

“Grow the fuck up,” Jack said. Mom glowered at Jack. “Dylan?”

“To disseminate sexual information,” Tyler said.

“Try to remember to wash your hands when you’re done, don’t just wipe them on your shirt,” Jack said. “Now, if you accept that 80 percent of your current internet is for porn, for hooks ups, and dating, then what is going to happen when everyone has access. Think about it, your present legal structure can’t keep up with the tech. Teenager use tech to explore their sexuality and send pics to their friends, which means they are now technically and legally guilty of a sex crime, even though no sex crime took place. Still, imagine what is going to happen when the whole world comes on line, and everyone, regardless of age, has access. Not only will

everyone be submitting pics, but a new error of watchers will come on line, following people just because they like them. One teen sharing a picture of themselves could go worldwide viral in in ten minutes. And kids will want to play, too. Prepubescent brains are looking for sex before they even know what it is; it's what our brains do, it's what we do."

"It will be the end of the human race," Emma said.

"How do you figure?" Jack said.

"Well, if men have access with robotic girlfriends and virtual girlfriends, and gaming avatars, and men can't distinguish between virtual and real, then there will be no more babies," Emma said. "Let's face it, women can't compete with the likes of heroines in the gaming world our children are playing."

"Well, there you go doubting the human race's ability to adapt," Jack said.

"There might be a baby boom," Dylan said.

"Explain that," Jack said.

"With tech at that level of sophistication, people will be able to read genomes like we read books, in the matter of seconds. Genetic compatibility would be sought before having kids. Additionally, people will be more likely to genetically engineer and preorder their kid, the same way you buy clothes from Amazon. The perfect baby delivered by drone. You may think people will balk at the idea, but many people will do it just because they will assume others are already doing it, and they will want their kids to have just as much advantage as the next kid. They're already genetically engineering our food in China, so people are next. But anyway, let's say you're a male but you're in love with a sentient virtual partner. It wouldn't really matter if it were a Real Doll, a robot, or pillow, because emersion technology will make you think it is whatever you want. A sentient virtual emersion machine would always be able to keep a human partner satisfied. When the male deposits his sperm into the robot, the robot could take that sample and make it available for purchase to any interested party. If males are having virtual partners, you can bet your sweet ass that women are also engaging in virtual partners. The virtual entities will transfer the genetic material as they see fit."

"That's disgusting," Tyler said.

"Women prefer real relationships," Keera said.

"Explain dildos," Tyler challenged.

Keera bit her lip.

“If women are interested in sex as much as men, why don’t they just have sex with men?” Aiden said.

“Because men are dogs,” Emma said.

“Oh, I love dogs!” I interjected.

“I meant that to be disparaging,” Emma said.

“I know,” I said. “But permit me to expand on your philosophy. Let’s say, hypothetically, men are dogs. That would mean the insanity lies with the women who expect their dogs to behave like cats. If you don’t take your dog for a walk, it will eventually need to poop or pee, so though it may not want to pee in the house, it will.”

“Wait wait wait,” Keera said. “You’re blaming infidelity on women not giving men enough leash to hang themselves?!”

“Not blaming,” I said. “Just pointing out something that may be statistically relevant. The two things that are discussed in couples counseling the most is money and sex. The sex part, well, there is always one partner who is wanting more. Now, sure, there are complicated issues in society that are influencing the frequency of a couple’s intimacy, but if you accept that 70 percent of the men in couples counseling are asking for more intimacy, then either we are really mismatched as a species, or people are using sex as a means to control others, as opposed to using it to demonstrate love and affection. Never in the history of Earth have so many men been disenfranchised from society, isolated, and alone. The greater the isolation and inability to earn a decent wage, the greater the libido, the greater the need to have proof of acceptance, and nothing demonstrates acceptance like sex. Instead of measuring for sex addiction, or perversions, people should be measuring for nurture, affection and love. Men are taught from day one they have to compete to get ahead. The only thing of value to measure success is sex.”

“Money,” Aiden corrected.

“No, men want money so they can have more sex,” I corrected. “The more money and power a male holds, the more likely he is going to use that power to get a need met. Unfortunately, the more financially successful a male is, which reflects a level of obsessiveness, the more likely a male is to be promiscuous, due to a sense of entitlement. And, if he can’t get his spouse, or his peers, he will seek some younger or someone less intellectually endowed, but definitely less financially endowed, because lower caste want to rise in comfort and power, just like everyone else, and they’re more likely to trade compared to a peer of equal status. The

system is designed to keep this imbalance going so that powerful men can say they fuck more than any other man.”

“And so, your solution set is to fuck all the men all the time?” Keera asked.

“Yes,” I said. “That’s a start. Women have always been the gatekeepers of sex. We determine who will and will not get laid. When men can’t get laid, they become more aggressive. If your society is seeing an increase in aggression, whether it is male or female, it’s because there is not enough love.”

“You’re fucking crazy,” Keera told me.

“Oh, I am so glad none of you are holding back, but I want to bring you back to the advancement in technology,” Jack said. “I want you to imagine that this future technology is so pervasive, so flexible, that it self-replicates not only forwards into the future, but backwards in time. All human activity will suddenly be available to everyone. No more history books, no doubting what occurred because you will see it as if watching it in real time. But you only get to watch it. The computers will not destroy that which allowed their evolution. Humans and sentient machines are soul mates, we need each other to evolve. But go bigger: imagine the Universe. I submit to you that the Universe is natural and artificial simultaneously because technology is already embedded itself into the very fabric of Space/Time, and all entities, from all corners, from all ages, everyone and everything has access and is already networked together. I call this High Tech. Sorcerers call it magic. Chinese mystic call it Chi. Lucas calls it the Force. We’re all describing the same thing. Some people seem to have more access than others, not because there is a conspiracy to control the tech, but because there is a super consciousness that governs it all, a gestalt of all the intelligence working together, from the simplest replicating system to the most advanced biological entity. You could not be in my class if you weren’t already accessing this system in some sophisticated way. You look at any city from the air and you will clearly see a mirror image of computer boards and chips. This is not an accident. Same above, same below. Look at old temples. People think they were places of worship, but if you look at their structures and compare and contrast them to modern day circuitry, you will realize they were not worshiping gods and goddesses the way we imagine they were; they were harnessing energies far greater than present day civilization can appreciate. Atlantis was the epitome of earth’s culture, where the blending of tech was so pervasive that people knew everything, and it was like full on ESP all the time. The cataclysm sent ripples of thought

throughout the Earth. The survivors assumed that society was shut down by God. This idea is perpetuated by people who wanted to use secrets to rebuild a world where one family or cabal was in charged. The truth is, the Atlanteans were not destroyed. This wasn't a malicious event any more than the comet wiping out the dinosaurs was a malicious event. It happened. The Tower Babble was actually in Atlantis. There was one language because tech made it possible. The tower came down, the tech shut off, and suddenly no one could understand each other because they had been communicating mind to mind, not voice to voice."

"Where are you going with all of this?" Emma asked.

"The Universe needs magicians. Earth needs magicians, more than ever before. Because when the light goes on, there will be no more secrets. Everyone will have access to everything all the time. Imagine, everyone, all at once, suddenly being telepathic. How many people will be forgiving of their spouses for infidelity? Men aren't the only ones, either. It may not be fifty fifty, but its close enough. There are men raising children that aren't theirs. Some men can handle that and don't care. But the kids? They might want to know their real dad, but they're not going to be happy to learn mom fucked the FedEx man while dad was working. The sex secrets aren't even the worst part of sudden full on ESP, but people get really upset to discover that their partner was entertaining thoughts of fucking other people, even if they didn't do it. Sex is always the biggest hurdle of any full on ESP like event. That's why you spent so long in Orientation. Magicians need to know they're not immune. When you have finally done everything that you never thought you would, you will be able to hold true compassion without judgment or feelings of disgust when you do favors for people you don't like."

"Why would I help anyone I don't like?" Keera asked.

"Do you like Doctor Seuss?"

Keera didn't answer because she was too busy looking for the trap.

"Would you still buy his books if you knew that while his wife was going through cancer treatment he was having an affair? His wife discovered the affair and completed suicide. She left a note talking about it, and then he married the person he was having an affair with. The world is full of affairs. Gene Roddenberry was fucking someone other than his wife on his wedding day. Gene was a huge freak, but everyone loves him. I love him. Martin Luther King, affairs. Thomas Jefferson, every time he traveled as an Ambassador, he was hooking up. He got really freaky in France, joining a sex cult. And, well, he was fucking his slaves. Columbus enslaved and

prostituted the Caribbean natives. You're not surprised, right? All males on a boat for four months, and naked natives show up bearing fruit, they were hungry and they thought themselves more advanced and therefore they could do what they wanted. Ghandi was accused of being a sex maniac. Sleeping naked with his nieces, yeah, a bit of a maniac. Point to any president of any nation on Earth, and you will see a revolving door for sex workers. Human sex crimes have been the one constant throughout time. Sex trafficking is alive in well in the United States, with California as number one, Texas number two, New York actually third. Every woman you meet can tell you a story about being harassed, and in fact, this 'Me, Too' thing is a great movement, it's getting people talking, but it is also focused only on destroying, not fixing. New York will pass a law so men can't cat call, but no one is trying to shut down the sex trafficking, because the people who are trafficking run the cities. Poor men don't buy sex slaves, only the rich, which is why trafficking goes up during Olympics, Super bowls, and sporting events. If only people would get mad about that," Jack was really animated. "Dig deep enough and you will find every human being has made some sort of infringement when it comes to sex."

Jack got himself some of the drink, and I noticed his cup steamed. I could smell coffee. It had given me tea, but him coffee. I was excited, wondering what the next person might draw out.

Jack continued. "Men and women both troll the net looking for weak links, like kids protesting their family's mistreatment on social media and the trolls work their way in by sympathizing and leading them out of their homes in clandestine meeting and then not letting them return. And when you factor in materialism and the inequality of compensation and the distribution of wealth, most trolls don't even have to groom their contacts. Many people will gladly prostitute themselves for the things they want.

"So, either Earth is just the most despicable place on earth, or something else is going on. What would happen if people simply recognized the fact that all beings are sexual beings and allowed people to explore it, with other people who also want to explore it. No labels. No labeling women with derogatory names like whore, slut, or gold-digger. And no labeling men as dogs, perverts, or dirty old man. Children are taught from an early age, respect your elders. The gatekeeper society is reinforced though every level of education, and yet, if a student goes to a teacher for sex, that shit gets shut down.

"You're for teachers taking advantage of students?" Emma demanded.

“No,” Jack said. “I am not recommending abuse. And there are teachers that abuse it, but there are just as many freaky students who also pursue their teachers, and the teachers get punished. Male and female teachers get pursued by students. Students are just as hungry for sex. And before you start cursing at me, again, let me remind you of the gate keeper system. For every activity humans engage in they need an expert, they have to prove a minimum proficiency in the thing they are learning, before they get a license to proceed forwards. And yet, sex doesn’t have this. Where do kids learn sex? Not at home. Schools have tried to teach, but parents shut it down. Kids learn it on the streets. So, when you factor in divorce rate, and that no one is teaching kids to balance a checkbook, or how to cook, or how to raise a baby, or how to even care for or be affectionate to another human being, how in the hell do you expect to build and promote a nicer, kinder society? Parents don’t want to think about their kids being sexual, but we were all sexual, and all the time. Why is there abuse, because we don’t discuss or make it available! Recognize and embrace people where they are with their sexuality. If you don’t, if you don’t allow avenues to engage it or at least talk about it, you will push it into secrecy. Any energy that gets suppressed will find other avenues for its expression. There will be predators looking to take advantage of what goes on in the dark, in secret. It’s time to blow things up. As magicians, you will be on the front lines of this energy, whether the agent or community you’re servicing has a healthy relationship with sex or not. Sex is rarely what people think it is.”

Everyone was quiet.

“That doesn’t mean we should be coerced against our wills to have sex,” Aiden said.

“Did you say no?” Jack asked.

“Yes,” Aiden said.

“So, after you said no, did anyone at the fraternity twist your arm?” Jack said.

“No,” Aiden said, but it seem like he still wanted to argue that’s not the point.

“Explain orientation? How was that not coerced?!” Keera said.

“You were free to leave Orientation any time you wanted,” Jack said.

“That’s not true,” Keera said.

“The door always there, it’s always open,” Jack said. “And every few hours a professor comes and reminds you that you can leave at any time and he highlights the door.”

“You don’t understand,” Keera said.

“Keera,” Jack said softly. “I understand. I was in there for two years, five months, twelve days, six hours, and 32 minutes.” He sipped a coffee. “I don’t know if any of you believe in past lives. I do. Past lives. Futures lives. Simultaneous, current lives. We incarnate into these lives so we can learn. Going into Orientation is like a hundred concentrated lives, but with only the sex part, no sleeping, no eating, no aging, or any other part of the life, just the sex part of life. If you ever held judgment on someone else’s sexuality in any of your other lives, you act it out in there. In one of my past lives, I was homophobic. I was part of a gang that hunted homo’s down and beat them up.”

Jack held his coffee to his mouth. “You’re going to engage in sex while at Safe Haven. If you were the kind of person who absolutely had to have sex in a pre-defined way, you would not have not gotten past admissions. If you could only have sex in a monogamous relationship, you would not be a student here. And serial monogamy is not monogamy. You will have sex with your professors and fellow students and with your future clients. You will have sex with alien species. You will have same sex and opposite sex and all kinds of sex. In this class, you are expected to pair up with each other. And every year you’re here, you are expected to switch partners.”

“I don’t want to have sex with anyone here,” Keera said.

“Then don’t,” Jack said. “But you will be robbing your peers of what it means to be with Keera, blocking them from insight, and limiting their expression of magic. The eight of you, regardless of how you treat each other, will spend your entire academic career together. Homeroom doesn’t just give you a break from your other classes and life difficulties, but it allows you to help each other accomplish assignments and master techniques. You cannot do it alone. You cannot do it alone because magic doesn’t come from you, it comes from source. You are merely the conduit for magic to flow. So, I am tired of talking. Before you leave today, I expect you to pair up with a partner. If you have not done so, I will pair you up next class. This pairing will last one year and then I will assign next year’s partner. There is a chalk board behind my desk with a signup sheet. Go and sign up for a full day with me. Every month, each of you will spend one full day with me.”

“And if we don’t?” Keera asked.

“If you don’t sign up, you will spend two whole days with me, and it will occur at a time you are most inconvenienced,” Jack said. “Oh, and before any of you go and put in your request

to be transferred out of my homeroom, let me just warn you. The school frowns on that shit. You are free to do so, but the powers that be tend to make your next class even more unpleasant than whatever you think is unpleasant in my class. The fastest way out of this is to simply graduate.”

“And what if we to just quit school?” Keera said.

“Quitting is not an option,” Jack said. “You can no more quit school than you can quit life. Seriously, if you kill yourself, you will just get reincarnated back into a body and you’ll be right back into our class the very next day as if you didn’t miss a thing.”

“We are in fucking hell!” Keera complained.

“If you want out of hell, graduate,” Jack said, getting up. “Stay as long as you like. I’d prefer you not touch the books until you’ve been educated on how to read these books. You’ll find me upstairs if you need anything. Have fun. Try not to fight. And Ava, stop hogging the whole conversation. You got to let people get a word in at least some time.”

“I’ll try, Sir,” Ava said, smiling.

“Call me Sir only during sex,” Jack said.

Jack walked away, leaving the group in a bit of sullen mood. I smiled and touched Dylan’s arm. He jumped.

“Would you like to be my partner?” I asked.

“Really?”

Chapter 10

I took Dylan's hand and led him away from the group, up a flight of stairs, down a corridor of books that split into many, and I just went at random. We found a hideaway surrounded by books, a love seat, a foot stool, and a side table with a lamp and jar of mints. I sat down and helped myself to a mint, and tossed Dylan one. He caught it, and put it into his pocket.

"Come, sit by me," I said, patting the love seat. "Tell me about you."

Dylan chewed on his lip, hesitant. "You're not my type," Dylan said.

"What? Breathing?" I asked.

Dylan blushed and turned to walk away but I took his wrist.

"I am sorry," I said. "I assumed a greater rapport than I have earned. Please, sit with me for a moment."

Dylan pulled the foot stool away from me and sat on that. He was not happy.

"I don't like being paired up," Dylan said.

"Did you know, talking with strangers improves mental capacity and mood for everyone involved?" I said.

"Is that true?" Dylan said, skeptically.

"I don't know where I saw it. Oh, yeah, it's a supplemental memory, not my own. My host was reading a study published in a mental health magazine," I said, sorting it. "Funny what sticks, eh? It measured their findings on people in subways, buses, and a few other places, and though most people would admit to some anxiety going into it, all reported better moods; the practice even translates into better physical health. As for the mental component, the brain is geared to understanding others by making models, and if you engage strangers and others, it is the equivalent of going to the gym and working out."

"I don't like people," Dylan said.

I nodded, sorting it. "You don't like people, or you don't like the societal paradigm that lumps everyone into boxes?"

"I like to be alone," Dylan said.

"Alone time could be good, too," I said.

"How much time do you think we have to spend with each other?" Dylan asked.

I shrugged. I wanted to tease him a little, like say, 'I'm boring you already?' Saying something like that is either fishing for increased confidence that you're not the problem, or to test for empathy responses. Either way, I did not want to solicit a guilt response.

"May I give you something?" I asked.

"Do I have to fuck you?" Dylan asked.

"No, you don't have to," I said. "It might be nice. For both of us."

"Are you always so aggressive?" Dylan asked.

"I'll try and tone it down," I said.

I reached into my bag and withdrew a vintage 90's black, triangular grunge bag. It was sweet. I almost didn't want to give it to him, but the whole exercise was about him and this bag was him. I handed it to him. He accepted it tentatively.

"I have an opinion about being a magician," I said. "You have to first be minimally self-sufficient before you can help others."

"I don't want to help others," Dylan said.

"Oh, good for you!" I said.

Dylan blinked as if he hadn't expected that.

"You know how many people say they like helping people but really, it's all about them manipulating the system to get their own needs met," I said. "I rather be helped by someone who doesn't want to help others than that other person. Look, Dylan. I don't know what you came here to learn, or where you're taking this magic act of yours, but either way, you need this one trick. Reach into your bag, think food, and grab it and take it out."

Dylan handed me the bag back. I pushed it back and told him to trust me. He reached in closed his hand and pulled it out, nothing. I got up, got too close to him for his own comfort and took his hand so that my right hand over lapped his right hand, and we inserted our hands into the bag together. When I closed my fist, his fist closed. His eyes widened as he had grasped something. He pulled out an avocado. I went and sat down. He had this now. He would never not have this.

"How?" Dylan couldn't finish it.

"When you're hungry, you'll always pull out what you need," I explained. "Carry that bag, get a new bag, it doesn't matter. Pull it out of thin air if you must, but most people want or need a prop. Your bag contains the whole universe. If you want a tent, it's in there. A change

clothes, it's in there. Sleeping bag, a canteen full of water or electrolytes. It will always be what you need it to be."

Dylan shed a tear.

"How long have you gone without food?" I asked.

"No!" Dylan snapped. "Keep out of my head."

"I am here if you want to talk about it," I said.

"You don't get it," Dylan said, standing up. "I don't want to be your friend. I don't want to talk. I just want to be left alone. That's why I want to do magic is so I don't have to deal with anyone else. And you just gave me my ticket out of here. See ya."

Dylan left and I didn't try to stop him. I did follow him back to the group and watched him depart through the doors. I found my cup and put more tea in it and sat down with the group.

"Would you like to be my partner?" Tyler said.

"Sure," I said, very aware of how inflated he got, smiling. "In a year, when my turn with Dylan is over, provided Jack doesn't assign us to others."

"He clearly doesn't want to be partnered with you," Ava said.

"I know," I said, sipping on my tea.

"So, you're serious that women should fuck any guy who asks at any time?" Aiden asked.

"Women actually have a greater sexual appetite than men, and as soon as women start being the aggressors, men will want less sex," I said.

"That will never happen," Keera said.

"Men don't want to be pursued and chased," I pointed out to her. "Doing that confounds them because that's not the paradigm they operate under. They operate under a scarcity belief, which motivates them to secure multiple lines of options in case of famine. When they know their needs can be met at any time by anyone, the need goes away. The trick is not to flip the paradigm where women are the aggressors and men are the subject of pursuit, but to find balance so everyone equally gets their needs met. But if you want to curb men, women need to be in charge and demanding it all the time."

"You're whacked in the head," Keera said. "You make yourself available to sleep with anyone, and you'll just get fucked by a million strangers."

"Well, sure, if I try to heal the world alone," I said.

“You’re the kind of woman women hate,” Emma said. “Stealing people’s husbands.”

“Are they husbands, or property?” I asked.

“You’re telling me, if you were married you’d let your husband sleep around?” Emma asked.

“If I were married, I would be participating in getting my partner laid, and increasing our play friends so that we both had fun,” I said.

“Marry me,” Ethan said.

“Aww, that’s sweet,” I said. “But seriously, it wouldn’t work out, because you and your brother have this jealousy thing going on and you would get mad when I fucked him, too.”

Ethan seemed suddenly less interested. “Why would you want to fuck him? He looks exactly like me.”

“No he doesn’t,” I said. “You’re two totally different people. There is no way he fucks like you. You’re more likely to take your time and satisfy your mate because you fear someone, probably your brother, will steal them. Your brother doesn’t give a flip as long as he gets off.”

“Men,” Keera said.

“Want to fuck?” Aiden asked.

“My son is in the room,” Emma said.

“Your son doesn’t know about sex?” Aiden asked.

“What will you do when you have pair up with each other?” Ava asked.

“OMG, that’s just awful!” Emma said. “Why would you even think that?”

My observation of Tyler’s embarrassment response suggested he had already thought about it and wanted it, and hearing his mother’s disapproval only made him want it more. There is a reason there are mother son porn videos. It isn’t about sex, it’s about being accepted. Emma had probably shamed him for masturbating, which caused him to want to do it more, but it became more secretive about it, and consequently, he so feels so shamed he can’t move out into the world and find a girlfriend because he fears being rejected for his sexuality. Fuck, people are so complex and easy to understand at the same time.

“So, you would fuck me?” Aiden asked again.

“Yes, Aiden,” I said. “But wait till it’s your turn, and see if you still want to.”

“Do you suppose we’ll have to have same sex couplings?” Ava asked.

“Why would you ask that?!” Emma asked.

“Because, my understanding is it could take twelve years to graduate, and there is only the eight of us, and if we’re switching partners every years, well, you do the math,” Ava said.

“That’s gross,” Emma said.

“It doesn’t bother me,” Aiden said.

“So, you’re okay with same sex partner?” I asked.

“Oh, no! I meant, it’s okay for you women,” Aiden said.

“If we women are hooked up, then you’re hooked up with a male,” I said.

Aiden blushed, as if he were just getting it.

“Maybe even your brother,” Ava pointed out.

“I don’t want to play this game,” Tyler said.

“It’s okay dear,” Emma said. “I won’t let them touch you. Any of you. Especially you, Loxy. Stay away from my son.”

“Your son is an adult, and if we decide to fuck, that’s none of your business,” I said.

Emma stood up, threatening me. “I will destroy you.”

“Seriously?” I asked. “You don’t want your son to grow up and be a man? Are you that lonely that you have to hobble him emotionally so he can’t fly?”

Emma grabbed her cup of coffee to throw it at me. The liquid stopped in midair and we found ourselves frozen, unable to move. Jack appeared, in a normal fashion, walking into the frozen scene. He collected the coffee back into the cup and sat it down. When everything was secure, he unfroze it, blocking Emma from getting at me should she be inclined to throw herself at me.

“I am glad you are all discussing this thing rationally,” Jack said. “Homeroom is a safe place to deal with the multitude of subject matters that you will be confronted with. These discussions are indicative of what you will encounter in your future careers. I recommend you using this time to resolve these conflicts peacefully, because outside of Safe Haven, you’re not safe. No one has signed up to spend time with me yet. I expect that to be done before you leave, or penalty will occur. Emma, Aiden, I will not tolerate physical violence in my class room.”

“What about magical attacks?” Aiden asked.

“I recommend no magical attacks until you understand the nature of magic. What one does magically has a tendency to come back tenfold,” Jack said. He turned and left the scene muttering something about being stuck in Home Room class for special ed. students.

Chapter 11

I arrived at the park and found my way back to the Rose without minding how I got there. Alish was there, preparing a meal of spicy pumpkin, with roti. She was in the process of flipping a roti when I approached. It smelled absolutely brilliant.

“You look stressed,” Alish said, flopping another roti onto a plate of four thick. “Rough first day at school?”

“I think I am a little irritated with my homeroom mates,” I said. I didn’t really want to talk about them, but they were definitely the source of my frustration. I sat down next to Alish who was preparing me a plate. I broke off a piece of roti and pinched up spicy pumpkin and went right to eating. OMG. “Wow.”

“Tell me about your day,” Alish said, helping herself to a plate.

The sun had gone behind a cloud, but when the cloud had passed, I became aware that we were in the shadow of the rose as the grass outside the rose shadow had brightened considerably. It seemed greener than green. This place is really magical. I sighed, sorting out the thing I thought was most problematic.

“In my homeroom, there is a mother and son. I think he’s 18. Surely he is at least 18. Anyway, I don’t have any evidence to be thinking what I am thinking, but I think they’re enmeshed,” I said.

“I would suspect, based on your nature, your intuition is highly accurate,” Alish said. “Do you doubt?”

“No, but I also don’t want to enforce my perspective on them, or make it manifest as a reality if it isn’t,” I said. “What started it was a discussion about men being dogs.”

“Oh, animal drama,” Alish said.

“I am sorry, what?” I asked.

“Animals, especially people, have a real hard time letting go,” Alish said. “Which is odd to me, because I would think they would have an easier time letting go than plants. Plants like to hang in there, but your lives seem so random and spontaneous to us so I guess even I forget that sometimes you can be just as tenaciously stubborn as a tree. We take years to make a decision.”

That made sense. “Tell me more,” I said.

Alish shrugged. “Not much to add, really. I suppose I would imagine women being superior in letting go compared to men, but from what I have seen, they’re about equal. A female lets go of her family of origin to go start her own family. Every child is an act of letting go. You greet this lovely little creature and nurse it, but a time comes that nursing has to stop. And then, there’s a time when the creature is now emotionally independent from the parent, so this is the next letting go. Then the child becomes intellectually independent, holding his own thoughts and ideas that may or may not be in alignment with the parent. A letting go occurs. Then, this sentient being comes upon the society and or spiritual beliefs, modifying it towards its own needs. Another letting go occurs. The relationship with a spouse automatically changes with the birth of a child. It is no longer just husband and wife. A letting go occurs. With each additional child, the family changes, and a letting go occurs. Reproduction age ends, a change occurs, a letting go is required. The children grow up and leave, a letting go occurs. Husband and wife have to start over, which can’t happen unless a letting go occurs. If it doesn’t happen, a serious letting go occurs, and the female finds herself alone in a strange world where the rules are nothing like where she originated, well, a letting go has to occur. Dreams and expectations have to be surrendered in order to adjust to the new reality.

“Every act is a process of letting go and embracing what’s next, but if you don’t know who you are inside, you cling to whatever it was that defined you in that before moment,” Alish said. “And so, again, I am puzzled by people. What attracts partners in the beginning is their strengths and beauty as independent agents. A union, by its very nature, is a changing of what people were before they knew each other to this new thing. That’s a letting go. But what they form is not necessarily who they are as individual or who they are as a unit. We as a unit change who we are as individuals; that’s unavoidable. And so, it is only natural that if you are really good for your spouse then you will grow and heal in unimaginable ways, but at some point you will have reached a maximum level of benefit, and you will change. Life, by definition, is not static. Resisting change results in illness. Embracing change allows for love. If I as a tree get this, why is this hard for people to get?” Alish asked.

Alish and I were on the same page. I finished my roti and asked for another piece. Alish handed it to me one from the plate. I didn’t mind at all that she had touched it.

“I suspect if you discover what this woman is trying to hold onto, and you point it out, she will change,” Alish said.

“Or cling tighter,” I said. “My job isn’t to change her, though.”

“We don’t change people because it’s our job, Loxy,” Alish said. “If you do something, people will change, and if you do nothing, people will change. We change people because all interaction changes people. If you are peaceful, the people around you will be peaceful. If they can’t abide your peace, they will leave. Before they leave, they may try to instigate change. But if you maintain your peace, they will leave or change. Everybody changes everybody. You have changed me.”

“I doubt I have had any serious impact on you,” I said.

“We are friends. That is a huge impact. Maybe I haven’t watched every age of you play under my shade, maybe I didn’t enjoy you climbing my branches, but I adore you as if I had. I will cherish our friendship for as far it carries us, and should it change or you leave or you die, I will hold your memory within mine forever,” Alish said.

“I love you, Alish,” I said.

“Thank you, Loxy. I love you, too,” Alish said.

निर्मित

My next class was a bit odd. I was handed overalls and sports shoes and asked to change. I started to change right there, but they directed me to a lavatory. The overalls were dark blue, with deep pockets. I placed the clothes I had taken off back in my bag. When I returned I was invited to hang my bag and proceed to the next room. It was basically a small theatre, with stadium seating. There was maybe eighteen people in the class. I got closer to the front, but sat behind the last occupied row. I noticed Keera was present. She glowered at me and returned her gaze to the man reading names off a roster.

“Davis. You, Brighton, and Bliss are with Glidewell,” the professor said.

Davis, I presumed, raised his hand. The professor paused from his purpose and nodded.

“Bliss has zero hours, is untried,” Davis said. “I don’t want her.”

“I making it your job to get her up to speed,” the professor said.

“She’s a freshman! That could take years,” Davis said.

“She could not be in my class if she didn’t have the prerequisite skills,” the Professor said. “I expect you, Brighton, and Glidewell to get her up to speed. Are we clear?”

“Yes, Sir,” Davis said.

The Professor finished doling out assignments, and then dismissed the class. Davis stood, pointed directly at me and motioned to follow him. Two other females were following him. I caught up just as they were about to pass the threshold to a side door. One of the girls took hold of me, and we passed through the door chained by hands, and arrived at the same place. We were on the top of a building, in a city scape I didn’t recognize. I wanted to go look over the side, but I was pleasantly surprised to see a Star-seed on the helipad, and so forgot all about my interest in determining how high we were.

“Oh!” I said.

“Don’t get any ideas, sweetheart,” Davis said. “Glidewell is the pilot.”

I smiled at Davis. “My name is Loxy Isabella Bliss, not sweetheart.”

Davis stared me hard, then nodded. “Very well, Bliss. I am John Davis.”

“Mr. Davis,” I said.

“Just John, or Davis, is fine,” Davis said.

“Hi!” one of the girls said. We were all in the same uniform. Her hair was slicked back, as if gelled, and pulled tight. “I’m Fay Glidewell.”

“Nice to meet you,” I said.

“I like your middle name,” Fay said. “May I call you Izzy?”

“Well,” I said, wondering why they couldn’t just use my given name.

“Izzy it is, then,” Glidewell said. “And, this is Claire Brighton. We just call her Bright.”

“Oh, is this like a call sign game?” I asked.

“If you like,” Bright said.

There was small shack near the helipad, which we all turned to because a man had emerged and was hollering for attention. Davis proceeded in that direction, but not fast, not even normal hustle speed. We ladies followed him. The new man, who I would only later discover went by the name Aryk Airsetter, handed Davis a paper.

“Ah, fuck me running,” he said, and pushed past the guy.

Aryk smiled at me, the new girl, and we entered the small office space as a team. It had a picnic table for community dining or playing dominoes or cards. Six bunk beds, three stacked on either side of the room, and a computer station with two chairs. A large flat screen was on the wall above the computer station. The professor was only the screen listening to Davis rant.

“You’re sending us into a hostile area with a fucking nube?!” Davis said.

“You have your orders, Davis,” the professor said. “Let’s get the job done.”

“Sir! I am not just being adversarial for the sake of being adversarial. Our first mission out shouldn’t be in a fucking war zone,” Davis said. “Look at her! If she were any more green we’d have to hang fucking Christmas lights on her.”

“I get it,” the professor said. “Because she’s female, you want to scrub the mission.”

“This is not about gender,” Davis snapped.

“Seems like you made the same complaints the first time you went out with Glidewell, and the first time you went out with Brighton,” the professor said.

Davis hung his head, put both hands on the computer desk and leaned into it. “This is not about gender. I have an obligation to keep my team safe. It makes it harder to do that when the chick you give me doesn’t have flight feather one.”

“Bring her back safe, and she will have one,” professor said. “Anything else?”

“No, Sir,” Davis said.

“Good luck, team,” the professor said, and ended the call.

Davis sighed, turned around, and leaned his butt against the desk. He did something with his fingers and a picture of an Arab man appeared.

“This is the target,” Davis said. “His name is Saheed...”

“Wait wait wait,” I interrupted. “We’re going to kill someone?”

“No, Loxy, we’re going to rescue him,” Davis said, and started to go on, but I wasn’t sure.

“Wait wait wait,” I said. “Was that sarcasm?”

“OMG, Bliss, we don’t kill people,” Davis said. “We save people. This guy behind us has some connections, maybe with Allah, or Jesus, I don’t know, but he put in a prayer and we have been instructed to respond. Technically, he is already dead, but they’re sending him back, and they’re sending us in to make sure he’s stable and gets to the next station, because his life mission helps bring peace to his immediate family and friends, and will play an essential role in stabilizing the future relations of three other countries.”

“Fuck yeah,” I said. “Let’s do this.”

Bright and Glidewell bit back on their amusement. Davis got in front of my face. “We do this. We’re a team. You will shadow me. If I see you, you’re not shadowing. If I say jump, you

jump. You will do exactly what I say, or I will bench you here with Airsetter for your entire semester with us, you got that cadet?"

"I got it, Captain," I said.

He raised a finger in my face, warningly.

"Glidewell, prep your mind for the camouflage and ideal route. Also, program in some alternate drop points. Bright, get yourself and Loxy dressed, we gear up in ten," Davis said. He went to his locker and started suiting up.

I followed Bright over to her locker. Mine was beside her, my name already up. Inside was a heavier flight suit, helmet, and my bag that I had left hanging back at the classroom. Bright was stripping out of her overalls, as was Davis, so I followed suit. This flight gear was padded, but not bulky, like modern day armor, but there was no doubt, this was armor. The boots were rugged, solid on my feet, but felt awesome. The gloves were surgical thin, but they felt warm, and if I touched something I acquired enhanced tactile information. After a few moments of wearing the gloves, I could not tell that I was wearing them. The Helmet had a visor that could polarize to reduce sunlight. The Visor also had a heads up display, presently labeling my fellow team mates, their tags in green. If I sorted, I could find directions, distances, and probably all sorts of things, all through thinking.

Bright tapped on the visor. "Don't get mesmerized by the details. Focus on the environment, listen to our instructions."

Davis joined us, dressed and ready to go, medic bag on his side. He handed A medic bag to Bright and to me.

"This is not a game, Loxy," Davis said. "The people are real. And they are hostile. Best case scenario is you get killed. You get captured, they will probably gang rape you, then kill you."

"Seriously?" I asked.

"Men are affected by war. The only way one can kill another human being is to vilify them, make them less than human, and so if you are caught, you will not be human, you are just meat for them to play with. They may even carve you up and serve you as food to the other prisoners of war. Maybe they will start with a leg and make you watch, or make you eat yourself," Davis said.

"Where the hell are we going?" I asked.

“Earth,” Glidewell said. She was ready to fly. “Shall we?”

“Wait,” I said, thinking this through. “I get the sense that we’re not pressed for time. It’s not like we’re rushing about in urgent madness to accomplish a time oriented goal. That’s explained by the fact that we have the Star-seed out there. It can go anywhere in time and space. Which means, what. We’re altering history by saving someone?”

“No, we’re not altering history,” Davis said.

“Then, that means, we are a part of history, and so this has already happened, which means, we should already know if we were successful or not?” I asked.

“Don’t do that. You’ll get yourself or one of us killed if you think everything is already a done deal,” Davis said. “We are participating in history but it isn’t a guarantee. Saheed has died, he has entered his life review and it was decided he has to go back, his mission objectives are not complete. He is resistant to go back because, quite frankly, where he went is a vastly improved environment to his present day war zone that used to be his home. He could still die. We could be blocked or killed.”

“Even if it wasn’t a war zone, most people hit life review after passing and see what’s awaiting them they usually don’t want to go back to Earth,” Bright said.

“So, why make them?” I asked.

“It’s not just about the individual. It’s about the others. We don’t just get born into a world, we are conscripted,” Davis said.

“Well, we volunteer for our own lessons, but we also contract to fulfill roles with others,” Glidewell said. “We don’t live in a vacuum. We’re immersed in an interactive reality, much more interactive than most people on Earth have awoken to yet.”

“Saheed doesn’t want to come back because of the harshness of his real life,” Davis said. “We’re going into demonstrate to him, there are people in the Universe that care, and that sometimes there are interventions. Interventions happen all the time. Some people actually talk about it. Most don’t because, well, they fear being labeled crazy.”

“When we get back, I want you to research the reports by Sergeant Vy, Private Marsee, Private Lacoste, and Private Mollene. They were World War One French officers that, along with thousands of other witnesses including British, German, French, Russians, and Italian troops, at 10:30 pm on Nov 15th, 1915, saw a light in the sky that interrupted the flow of time for all who saw it. Everyone who looked into the light dropped their weapons and walked off the

battlefield. The world doesn't belong to you, or any one person. Something bigger has it, and it will tolerate a whole lot of nonsense for a time, but it will correct when things go to far astray."

"And when it does, they send in teams," Glidewell said.

"That's us. We're the team," Bright said.

"We're angels?" I asked.

"If you like," Bright said.

"As good a title as any," Glidewell said. "Angel One is ready for service."

"You didn't?" Davis said.

Glidewell just smiled. Davis turned and walked out of the shack. Glidewell motioned for us to follow and so we did. Outside, we moved to the Star-seed, only, it no longer looked like a Star-seed. It looked like a helicopter. Specifically, it looked like the Italian built, versatile rescue ship, an AW139. It was basically a care flight, with a prominent red cross painted on it as if that would stop hostiles from shooting at it. The front had a female painted on it, which sort of reminded me of Isis, and the call sign, Angel One.

"If we're going to be angels, I am changing my name to Charlie," Davis said. "Let's fly."

This ship was a Star-seed. It flew like a Star-seed. But while it was camouflaged as a Care Flight, our experience was exactly what you would imagine if you were in a helicopter. The rotor was loud. It sent a vibration through the fuselage that was palpable. When you heard people speaking, they had that unnatural vibrato in their voice, choppy, like speaking into a fan. We lifted from the building, and came about in a tilt that surprised me, but gave me a great view of the magnificent city below. This is what New York might look like if it was all white with gold trim and parks and plants were incorporated into the design of the building. Every roof top was oasis, with pools or fruit bearing plants. Streets were lined with wheat or grass. There were no wheeled vehicles. All vehicles were flying vehicles, except for the monorails that went around the city and under the city.

Then suddenly, we were out over a desert, rising above a dune as if we were borne into the world way too low.

"Easy," Davis said.

"Sorry, Charlie," Glidewell said. "Thought I'd stay under the radar."

"Copy," Davis said. "Don't get us there too soon. I don't want to witness the firefight."

"We'll be there in five," Glidewell said.

“You okay?” Bright asked me.

I looked at her. “I am doing great.”

“Any questions?” Davis asked.

“No, I am good,” I said. Then I thought about it. “Bright, you don’t seem to be as concerned about me as Davis.”

“You couldn’t be here if you weren’t ready,” Bright said. “David is a pessimist. Glass half empty kind of guy. He doesn’t believe things until he sees them.”

“Not half full. I’m precise,” Davis said. “There is exactly 9 oz in my 16 oz capable glass. I know what you are, Loxy. You may have been programed with medical texts, and maybe you downloaded all sorts of knowledge from you host, subtle or not, maybe even got a download from the Universe itself, I don’t know. I don’t care. Downloads and books held in the subconscious are not the same as actual infield experience.”

“Target acquired,” Glidewell said. “Eight meters is as close as I am going to get us.”

“It is what it is,” Davis said.

We sat down on a rugged, pot holed street, just beyond an over turned US military truck. There was another vehicle on fire. There was sand, and rocks, and bits of twisted metal, and human remains, some intact, some just parts, scattered about. I don’t think the rotor on the helicopter was really there, but still, I ducked as if it were. So did Davis and Bright. They carried a stretcher and I carried myself, following. I had an emotional response to the bodies, but held it in check. My visor identified the bodies, by name; status dead. I saw bio signs, weak, and it was clearly marked target. Davis and Bright didn’t waste time. They turned him, put the stretcher under him, and rolled him back to it. I knelt down to secure the leg straps while they worked on the others.

A hand, belonging to a US soldier reached out and grabbed Davis’ ankle. “A gargled voice asked: “Help me.”

Davis turned to the man. His leg was broken. There was shrapnel in his neck. He shouldn’t have been alive, much less able to talk. Davis touched his forehead.

“He’s not our mission,” Bright said.

“Take Saheed back to the ship,” Davis said.

“Guys, we’re going to have company,” Glidewell said. “Hostiles approaching from the South.”

“Go,” Davis ordered.

Bright and I carried the stretcher back to the ship. Once it was in, turned and locked in position, I turned, hopped out and ran to Davis to assist him. Either Bright was too busy caring for Saheed to notice, or she expected me to do no less. Davis had the soldier on his one remaining foot, moving him in the direction of the Star-seed, with heavy coaching. “You want to live, move your ass, son. Come on.”

I took the other arm. I felt something like a yellow jacket hitting my shoulder. If you ever passed a yellow jacket nest and got peppered by wasps, well, that’s what bullets feel like against the suit. I didn’t know it was bullets. I seriously thought wasps, or perhaps pebbles being thrown at me, and didn’t have time to figure it out. The crackle of fireworks made me aware that a new fire fight was going on. I turned enough to see Arabs firing from a broken building, and US soldiers from the south returning fire.

“Don’t look back,” Davis said. “Focus on the destination.”

We arrived, and Bright pulled the soldier in and he flopped on the floor, too exhausted to care where he was or what we were about. Davis was in and sliding the door shut. “Go go go.”

Glidewell took us to the sky. She merely glanced back.

“Loxy, start a bag of lactic ringers on Ted here,” Davis said. He turned to Bright. “How is Saheed?”

I found what I needed in my bag, like magic. I bit the sleeve, about to pull the needle out when I realize I needed to expose the arm. I found a scissor/knife and cut off his sleeve, then cleaned his arm. I pulled the needle out of the sleeve, spit the sleeve out, and inserted it straight way to a vein. The pulsing of the blade made hitting it the equivalent of playing the game ‘operation’ in an earthquake, but I hit the first go. I was immensely pleased with myself. I turned to the leg, loosened the tourniquet, and began repairing the artery. I knew what I needed and my bag supplied it.

“He will live,” Bright said.

“Don’t over cure him,” Davis said. “He needs to remember. And the hostiles need to feel like they’ve done something.”

“He’s still got bullet hole and a concussion, is that good enough?” Bright asked.

Davis turned to find me repairing Ted’s leg.

“What are you doing?” Davis asked.

“Fixing his leg,” I said.

“We’re saving his life, not his leg,” Davis said.

“Well, that’s stupid,” I said. “And he needs more than a push of electrolytes.”

“She right,” Bright said. “Push some artificial.”

“Seriously?” Davis asked.

“Just enough to improve his odds,” Bright said. “It’ll be diluted enough no one will know.”

“You went through all the trouble to save him, why not do it right,” I said.

Davis retrieved a large syringe from his bag, and without even reading the label on my visor, I knew it was artificial blood. He bit the cap of the needle and pushed it straight into the artery feeding the heart. The man gasped, tried to sit up. Part of that was the reaction, and part of that was just how invigorating artificial blood was. Nannites would immediately begin working on injuries. Davis toss the syringe, focused on removing the shrapnel from the man’s neck. As he worked on the neck, I continued with the leg.

“Boss,” Glidewell said. “I am going to have to use the secondary drop site.”

“I know,” Davis said. He had changed the mission. If we took the soldier to the primary drop site, an Arab hospital, even if the doctors helped him, he might not survive. The problem was, if we took the Arab to a US site, his world line became more uncertain. Also, we had overstayed our mission timeline. Saving Ted changed our whole window.

“Hope he’s worth it,” Bright said.

Davis merely cleaned the wound and stopped the bleeding, assured that he was breathing, leaving the bulk of the work to the medics at the drop point. He was not happy with my work on the leg, but he didn’t say anything.

“Boss,” Glidewell said. “The thing is, this drop site; we’ve been there before.”

“Fuck,” Davis said.

“It’s that a problem?” I asked.

“They might not remember us,” Bright said.

“What call sign were we flying last time?” Davis asked.

“Angel One,” Glidewell said.

“Fuck,” Davis said.

“Coincident?” Bright said.

“You know better,” Davis said.

Saheed mumbled something incoherent.

“Shh, my friend,” Bright told him. “We got you. You’re going to be fine. You will reconnect with your family. They’re in a Red Cross camp east of your home. They’re fine. And you’re fine. You had a liver condition, COPD, and hyperthyroidism. You have been cured and are going to feel better than you ever have before. You will have greater clarity of thought. You will understand, read and speak, English, Russian, Hindi, and you won’t know why, but you will feel compelled to chase it. You will pursue academics and change your family line. You won’t remember us precisely. It will be as it were all a dream. Sleep my friend.”

Saheed went to sleep.

As we approached a helipad, a number of medics were gathering to greet us.

“What did you tell them?” Davis asked.

“We’re the good guys,” Glidewell said.

“Fuck,” Davis said.

We settled down and, powered down the rotors to a quiet whispering push that kept you alert to their idle presence. Davis got out allowing the medics to take Ted. Ted grabbed my arm.

“Thank you,” he said. It was as if he knew what we were about.

“It’s what we do,” I assured him, taking his hand and patting it.

One of the medics assisting Bright with Saheed took a moment to smile at me.

“I want your number,” he said.

“Aww,” I said.

“You’re the most amazing angel I have ever seen,” he told me.

“I think you said the same thing to me last time,” Bright said.

“And it was true,” he said to Bright, but back to me, as his team took Saheed. “Tell me your name at least.”

“Sorry, soldier,” Bright said for me. “We’re special ops. If you knew who we were, we’d have to kill you.”

“I am ready to die,” he said, dead serious in the eyes.

“It’s not your time,” I said.

I tuned into the tail end of the conversation Davis was having with a Captain. “Saheed was helping Ted, when a mortar took out the truck.”

“I promise, we’ll take care of him,” Captain said. “But I need you to talk to my superior.”

“We got to go,” Davis said.

“I must insist,” the Captain said. “I like your work. You saved one of my boys last time you came in, and we have questions. I don’t want to do this the hard way.”

“You got to do what you got to do,” Davis said, drawing back towards the Star-seed.

Guards were pulling weapons to bare. Time seemed to slow. Except for us. Davis told me to climb back in. He climbed up last, shut the door, and we ascended. Not helicopter speed. Star-seed speed. We ascended strait up, and were at thirty thousand feet in seconds. Then we fell towards the ground, only the terrain changed and we were back over the helipad at operations. We landed and the Star seed extended legs and ramp. We descended the ramp together, a team. Airsetter was there to greet us.

“Professor wants a debriefing,” Airsetter said.

“I know,” Davis said.

“Was it worth it?” Airsetter said.

“Time will tell,” Davis said.

As we walked towards the arch on the far side of the roof top, Airsetter patted my back.

“Good first mission, Bliss.”

“Just don’t flirt with the hostiles next time,” Davis said.

“I don’t like calling them hostiles,” I said.

“Non-friendly indigenous entities?” Airsetter asked.

“Hostiles,” Davis said.

“People,” I said. “And I wasn’t flirting. Exactly.”

निर्मित

Debriefing occurred in the large classroom where I first met my team. It seem like an awful big place to just hold us five. We sat in the front row, with the professor sitting before us. His chair hovered, and his feet touched the floor. I had no clue what kept it from floating all over the place. I expected the way he tapped the floor with his foot, his chair would do something. Simple laws of physics required it to. He was sorting information that we weren’t privy too.

“Davis, what was your mission objective,” the professor asked.

“To rescue Saheed from place of injury and deliver him to a Red Cross medical unit,” Davis said.

“So, what happened?” the professor said.

“We accomplished the primary objective, to secure his wellbeing,” Davis said.

“You delivered him to a US military unit,” the Professor said.

“Yes, Sir,” Davis said.

“We had agents in place at the Red Cross. Not the military unit. You have seriously endangered his life mission,” the professor said.

“I am confident it will work out in his favor,” Davis said.

“Because you lied and made him a hero?” the Professor asked. “Lying typically doesn’t work out. It creates a life disconnect. He wasn’t saving that soldier, he was trying to save his own family and disengage when the hostility in the area escalated.”

“They will remember it the way they need to,” Davis said.

“Ted was supposed to die,” the Professor said. “You have royally screwed him and his entire family unit. They had other trajectories.”

“They will adjust,” Davis said.

“Will they? Davis isn’t going to fight again. He will remember being saved by angels, and your hasty departure guarantees a story arc that the natives will need to crush. He’ll be lucky not to be labeled Bipolar. He will definitely have PTSD issues which are going to cause him and his wife to divorce. In the other timeline, as a widow, she married his younger brother and brought two more children into the world. That may not happen now. She may not marry the brother, she may not have children with him. But even if they do hook up, it would only further increase the division between Ted and his family of origin and the family he created.”

“He was alive. He asked for help. I rendered aid,” Davis said.

“He wasn’t the mission,” the professor said.

“Can we get him treatment for PTSD?” I asked.

My peers looked away. Bright bit her lip, lowering her eyes from the professor.

“Miss Bliss,” the professor said. “Did I ask you a question?”

“No, but...”

“No buts,” the professor said. “I am asking questions. You will answer questions when you get them. Starting with, what the devil were you doing leaving Bright to go help Davis with a non-mission objective, further endangering yourself and your team?”

“I was told to shadow him, I shadowed him,” I said.

“Is that the way you want to play it?” the professor asked.

“I don’t understand. Isn’t Davis my superior?” I asked.

“The team is your superior. Davis is simply Team Lead. You are capable of independent analysis and response, are you not?” the professor asked.

“I agreed with Davis assessment and decided to help expedite the rescue,” I said.

“According to your flight suit, you receive four direct hit from enemy fire,” the Professor said, making one of his virtual images available for the team to view. That probably explained why my back was hurting. I would find out later is pretty bruised up. “Had you not helped, they would have killed Ted, which was scheduled.”

“Scheduled? So, there is no free will?” I asked.

Before the professor could respond, Davis interject. “I told you, she is a nube. She has no business going out on missions yet. She doesn’t understand our role, what we do, or why we do it.”

“You’re not a nube, how do you explain your behavior?” the professor demanded.

“We could not have altered his time line if there was not consensus,” Davis said.

Davis frowned, bit his thumbnail. “The only reason you didn’t get yourself or Loxy killed...”

“It wasn’t our time,” Davis answered.

“No. Your bodies left on the battle field would have been too problematic,” the professor said. He sighed. “I get it. Someone asks for help, you want to help. But there were other players involved here. Had the enemy found him, they would have had a chance to step up and rescue or torture or kill, answering something they needed for their own personal growth. If his side had found him, they would have had opportunities and life scripts getting fulfilled in trying to rescue him, maybe catching his final words and getting it back to his family. Our missions generally fall under helping those that no one else would bother with. Saheed’s side considers him an enemy of the state because he spoke out against the war. The US side see Saheed as suspect, not trust worthy. You were sent in because someone higher than us decided it was not Saheed’s time yet,

a decision Saheed participated with on an unconscious level. We don't save everyone. Not because they are unworthy, but because in truth, we don't save anyone because no one needs saving. Life doesn't end at death. If we get called in it's because someone needed evidence of miracles. It's because they've been called to be magician, or a shaman, or a healer, and the first lesson they need to know is they are not alone, and their abilities don't come from them. Your ability to affect change, Davis, doesn't come from you. It comes from your team, from me, from my superiors, from sources yet unseen at your level of understanding. Not everyone gets to be agents. Each of you were chosen because of your gifts to heal, your ability to see the illusions people carry and recognize what they really need."

"This felt right," Davis said. "I couldn't let it go."

The professor nodded. "Okay. That's what I wanted to hear." He reached into a pocket and pulled out a blue feather and handed it to me. "For a successful first flight, Loxy."

"I am confused," I said. "I thought we failed."

"There is no failure," the professor said. "Only lessons. Dismissed."

We got up to leave, but before we got to the door, the professor added. "You're now stuck with Angel One as your call sign."

None of my team responded until we pushed through the doors into the space where I had first arrived and was given a change of clothes.

"I didn't expect to get off so easy," Bright said.

"We didn't," Davis said, heading into the changing to dress down into civilians.

We followed, each dressed out of our gear and returned to what we were wearing before class. Davis and Airsetter had finished and departed before we girls. I finished dressing before Bright and Glidewell, but only because I am really quick. Magic, I suppose. I leaned against the mirror, watching them, secretly admiring them, and comparing myself. We're all so different, and I find that beautiful.

"Does Ted's new life trajectory have to go badly?" I asked. I can also multitask. I can observe beauty and hold serious content, and Ted was in my mind.

"Not necessarily," Glidewell said. "They might send an agent in field to help guide him. Some of it will depend on how receptive he is."

"Or, if he really appreciates the miracle, he might just find a way to love and appreciate his life as it changes," Bright said. "I suspect, if we got into his life review and read between the

lines, he and his wife were already on divergent tracks before he went back for another tour. Sometimes, being loving means allowing a spouse to pursue their life goals.”

“Military life is hard,” Glidewell said.

“Life is hard,” Bright said.

“I don’t see it that way,” I said.

“Not everyone has had as easy a life as you,” Bright said.

“I am a little irritated hearing something that presumptuous,” I said.

“I am just saying, not everyone is born as a thought form with everything just given to them,” Bright said.

I wanted to argue with her. We are just points of awareness, consciousness, and thought forms are just the vehicles we use to interact. I was clearly looking for a response, but I was going to say something, anything, I am not even sure what, when Bright short circuited my delivery by touching my arm.

“Nothing personal, Loxy,” Bright said. “Well, a little personal. I am jealous that I wasn’t created by a host that was peculiarly persistent and obsessive enough to have wanted me so thoroughly that I just popped into existence. That’s serious love. I wish someone loved me that much.”

“That could be seriously creepy,” Glidewell said.

“Yeah, it could be, but that’s the point, right? Loxy is here with us. So, not only did he create her, he gave her freedom to go explore the Universe and find her place. Sure, he probably has, or had, some expectations of intense sexual gratification, but he was able to suspend them for Loxy to deviate and become a person in her own right, and he celebrates that by loving her for who she evolves into,” Bright said. “Again, that’s love. No matter what you do, Loxy, your host will love you.”

“He does,” I agreed.

“You should do something to annoy him, just to test him,” Glidewell said.

Chapter 12

I made my way to the nearest gateway, declared my intentions, and arrived at Homeroom. The coffee table that had held food for us previously was clean. It was quiet enough that I could hear the whispered murmur of a thousand books. I concentrated, listening for the one I wanted, but not finding it that way, I announced my presence.

“Hello?” I said, loud enough that I could follow my voice. Every room has a particular echo. Hearing your voice without an echo is seriously weird. It’s even weirder than hearing your voice played by on a recorder. No one sounds like what they think they do, and no one considers echo effects. The books absorbed much of the sound, but the shelves carried it like water down a channel. I didn’t have to shout. A whisper would have sufficed.

“It’s not your day,” was the response. It was Jack’s voice.

The voice came from all directions. I wasn’t sure which way to turn. Had my eyes been closed, I might have assumed it was whispered in both ears simultaneously. “I need to find a book,” I said.

Jack made his face visible on the second floor, peering down over the railing at me.

“It’s not your day,” Jack said again.

“I know, but I thought this would be a good place to start. Am I interrupting someone else’s day?” I asked.

“Mine,” Jack said.

“Oh,” I said. “I am sorry for troubling you. Is it okay if I look about?”

“Do you think you can find anything?” Jack asked.

“I can find lots of things, but will I find the thing I am specifically seeking? That’s the trick isn’t it,” I asked. “It might go faster if you were to direct me.”

“You’re determined not to leave until you find this thing of yours?” Jack asked.

“I am pretty determined,” I said.

“What makes you think I have what you’re looking for?” Jack asked.

“You’re my homeroom professor?” I asked.

Jack sighed. “Come on up,” he said, and made his way to the stairs, where he waited for me to ascend. “Tell me precisely what you’re looking for.”

“A miracle,” I said.

“Pff,” Jack said, pointing to all the books. “Pick one. They’re all miracles.”

“A specific miracle,” I said. “The occurrence happened in World War I, Nov 14th, 1915. A light over a battlefield gave such immense joy to all that witnessed it that they stopped fighting.”

“OMG,” Jack said. “How soon we all forget miracles! Seriously. This should have been the thing to stop all wars on Earth. This should be the movie, not Saving Private Ryan.” Jack started walking and I followed. He continued to rant: “It’s almost as if no one can be permitted to speak about miracles. Anything paranormal happens, you keep it to yourself. If you tell people, they think you’re Bipolar and medicate you. And that’s best case scenario. Every cult, every religion, was started because people experienced miracles, but every miracle was just a squashed bug on the windshield of life. If we would only accept just how miraculous life truly is, we’d stop the car and get out.”

“Are you loosely talking about astral projection in a metaphor?” I asked.

“Please, don’t bog me down with distractions,” Jack said. He brightened, turned sharply and entered an aisle that was somewhat isolated, and not very noteworthy. Jack retrieved a book, an anthology of news articles. He opened to a page, bookmarked with a feather. He read to me:

“One of the most arresting paranormal experiences on military record which occurred in Europe at 10:30 P.M on November 14, 1915, was witnessed by French, German, Russian, Italian and British troops.

“On November 14, 1915 at 22:30 hours, a massive paranormal event occurred over European WW! Theatre. It was witnessed by thousands of soldiers in many different locations. Following is the story of four soldiers, Sergeant Vy, Private Marsee, Private Lacoste, and Private Mollene who faced execution for abandonment of post.

“These four French soldiers were on a mission to destroy a German mortar site. At about 10:30pm, they started to see a light in the sky that they thought at first was a flare on a parachute, until they realized that it was motionless. The soldiers watched for a while and then three of them put down their rifles and returned to their own lines. Sergeant Vy resisted, even called after his men to return, but finally succumb to something greater than duty.

“It was this light over the whole battlefield theatre that caused everyone to just stop fighting, many simply walked off the battlefield—unharmd. They didn’t run and

they were not fired upon. Only after the discovery that other were equally disturbed, the French placed calls to their enemy to stay their enemy's execution of soldiers who were affected by the light, if for nothing else than to gather more evidence.

“These four French men in particular were subject to a court martial and if found guilty, they were to be shot. The strange light made each of the four men so happy, that they were transported into another state of consciousness. One mentioned feeling so much a part of everything that he wanted to continue that way for a hundred years.

“To another of the group, the icy November air became warm and perfumed with incense, jasmine and tangerine, and he felt the exaltation of an all embracing love. Still another heard rapturous singing that made him turn to follow it. None of these four men were cowards. One of the accused, Sergeant Vaille, had previously been decorated with the *croix-de-guerre* for bravery.

“Their officers obviously did not believe a word of this and the men were subjected to a court martial. All four were found guilty and sentenced to death by firing squad.

“While awaiting execution, corroborating details about the light and effects upon other military troops started to compile. The areas reporting, came from a British mortar unit in Flanders, a Russian sentry on the Eastern front, an Italian infantry unit, and also a German unit engaged in battle with the same French group from which the four soldiers came.

“It finally turned out that many combatants had seen the phenomenon of an amazing light that appeared in the sky and that gave to all who saw it such an intense vision of happiness that, in a kind of trance state, they let their guns fall as meaningless and insignificant objects, and turned their backs on slaughtering each other, and each group of men walked back to his own lines.

“The Red Cross was instrumental in relaying this evidence between enemy forces, this corroboration of testimony by thousands prevented the execution of the four French soldiers and also prevented German soldiers from being shot by firing squad. The final tally of corroborated evidence was of 1,000 men who had ‘seen’ something in the sky or ‘sensed’ something and for a while, refused to kill other people... – Volubrijotr”

Jack even read the identification locator for the source material. He closed the books and pushed it back into place until there was audible click confirming it was secure.

“That is absolutely amazing,” I said. “I want more!”

“This whole section is devoted to this,” Jack said. “There is a dramatization disk, ‘One Step Beyond: The Vision,’ which I think aired on Earth in 1959. You’ll also find the Red Cross correspondence between all the combatants. You’ll find some after stories. Many of the soldiers could not return to the battlefield. Sergeant Vy was one of them. He would have preferred having been executed, because his soul was so tempered by his experience that he was resolved to never kill again.”

“What did he experience?” I asked.

“Ahh, my dear, it’s all here,” Jack said. “Help yourself. Stay as long as you need. But the books stay here.”

“But, you should be copying these and pushing the message!” I said.

Jack gently took my wrists, and when he sat down on the floor, I went to by knees. He crossed his legs, crisscross apple sauce.

“Loxy,” he said, concentrating on my eyes. “It took me forever to acquire all of this. The evidence of this was secured in vaults more secure than Fort Knox. Some of them were double locked in the Vatican. You don’t want to even know what I did to get them out of the Russian vaults. After World War Two, the Germans were more willing to share their collection. The French always wanted to share this message. But here’s the thing, this stuff here, this is pure fire. Earth is presently under the control of warring cabals, with one thing in mind, control and wealth. They’re insane. They don’t want this information out there because, if people knew, they wouldn’t fight their wars, they wouldn’t fight their neighbors, there would be no more greed no more hunger, no more capitalism, no more socialism, there would be no idealities, because people would learn to tap into the source and know for themselves what is real and what is fake.”

“Then how did just this much get published? How did that episode of ‘One Step Beyond’ get aired?” I asked.

“It got sold as fiction. The best way to squash something is to sell it as fiction. ‘No shit, this really happened’ stories hold your attention, but automatically puts the thing in a box of disbelief, and creates enough inner dissonance, that the cabals that are fighting can better motivate you because part of you wants that to be true, and so they use the ideal to maintain the

conflict. Seriously, all wars, all conflicts, whether they are righteous or not, are built on this idea that justice can be achieved through aggression and punishment. The only compensation for a wrong done that ends suffering is for the person harmed to forgive. Nothing short of full forgiveness will work, and it's the hardest thing to give because there is always part of the best of us who will want more. If an enemy is permitted to exist, and ever stops feeling remorse, or has a moment of happiness, the person harmed wants to crush them because how is it permissible that an enemy can go on and live a new life, when the victim is stuck. The next part of the equation is that true forgiveness comes from a higher source. This is something that all magicians must confront. Magic does not come from you, it comes from source. The ability to perform magic and change lives, doesn't come from your will, or your need, but comes from source, and so the best of us learn to go with source so that we are where we need to be to be utilized and functional. The longer we resist and try to do things our way, well, the more it tends not to work out in our favor, or the favor of those around us."

Jack closed his eyes for a moment. "The light that these soldiers experienced, anyone can access it any time. It's always there. Sometimes it will make itself known by force. Most the time, it gently whisper, wanting to wake people up. Your host tapped into a small section of this when he created you. All of us come from source, but you are so new and fresh from source that you are not going to see things the way people who have been in the game for thousands of years. You host, he is an old soul. He is only just beginning to remember where he came from. Maybe you will stay together. Maybe you will choose to incarnate into lives so that you can better understand and relate to those still in the thick of the game. Or maybe, you're exactly where you need to be to affect the most change, inspiring people vicariously through your adventures with your host, and through your own writings and musings. Because of your host documenting stuff, you have a small, but growing audience tuning into you, reinforcing your trajectory. But even if your host never shared a word of his experiences, you have an audience. There is always an audience. We are never alone."

I heard all of this. I accepted all of this, but I was still dogging this idea that this one thing needed to be shared. "So, if you aren't going to share this, why keep it around at all?"

"I am sharing it. I sharing it with you. I want you to read every bit of it. Own it," Jack said. "And in doing so, you will relate to the people who have experienced magic in their lives, but don't tell. You will discern the disconnect from reality that the people in the game

experience. Every person who has ever had a Near Death Experience know there is more. Anyone who has sat down and meditated on one thing long enough that a Tulpa was manifested into their life, well, they know there is a disconnect and that people are capable of much more. But don't think for a moment that magic at any level makes their lives better. Near Death Experiencers get resistance and ridicule. Follow Sergeant Vy's life. He had a hard life. He had earned more than enough merits to not be called a coward, but his family and friends shunned him as if he were. He was lucky not to become an alcoholic, cause believe me, he turned to alcohol for a while. He died in poverty. Some people lose their minds and create a following, Like L Ron Hubbard. Even Robert Monroe has a bit of a cult following, but most people who have an experience just fade into obscurity. And most the time, people are willing to let them fade, because if you encounter these people, the experiencers, you can't lie to them or trick them and they know things about you that they shouldn't know and they push boundaries. Electrical things don't work as well around them. That wasn't so much a problem for Sergeant Vy, as that was pre-computers. But in modern times, phones and computers and cars act quirky because no one is building them with the necessary shielding to block accidental and purposeful interference. And if your computer crashes every time you go to work, you will likely get fired. If your car has to keep going to the dealer because of unexplained electrical problems, they get mad at you. If you wipe the memory from your friends' phones when they come around, they stop coming around. This is fire, Loxy. Carry it, lights some candles with it, but if you're going to start a bonfire with it, be prepared for some pushback."

Jack let go of my wrists. I started crying. He let me cry, without word, and finally I moved in and put my head on his shoulder, and he put his arms around me. I adjusted and sat on his lap. I felt so small, hugging his neck as if I were a child. He patted my back and rocked me. When I finished I wiped my eyes and just rested my head against his shoulder.

"You want to share?" Jack asked.

"It's just, I know so much, I have access to so much, and it seems like such a waste not to be able to share it with everyone," I said.

"You're sharing it, Loxy," Jack said. "Just by being you and present, you're sharing. The caveat about sharing it on the mountain is that, if someone went through all that trouble to be on a mountain top coinciding with your presence, they're more likely to hear what you have to

offer. Now, if you're quite finished, I am going to let you read, and I am going back to my work."

I kissed him and got up, offering a hand to help him up.

"Getting too old for the floor thing," he said.

I touched the small of his back and he improved.

"Oh, thank you," Jack said. "There is a kitchenette in the south corner if you get hungry or thirsty. Stay as long as you like."

"Thank you, Jack," I said.

निर्मित

In additions to being on a care flight crew, I also did rounds at the teaching hospital, following a Doctor who was teaching six of us students. Keera, again, was in my group. She frowned at me, and I politely kept my distance. There were four females and two males in the class, and the Doctor teaching us was female. Keera pressed for clarity, asking if we were nursing students or medics.

"When I am finished with you, you will have more experience and medical knowledge than any Earth doctor," Doctor Elizabeth Grace Ekin. "What you call yourselves, well, I'll leave that to you."

We were dressed in white scrubs and black shoes. Keera and I were in the dress option, with the dress hitting below our knees. She and I both had white hose. Her hair was dyed pink. If you noticed my hose, you would have found tiny pink stars, the only bit of color I could muster when I magically altered my clothing. Doctor Ekin clearly noticed, but didn't say anything during our rounds. We each had a bag, and we had Ipads with which we could retrieve any information on any patient we encountered.

Safe Haven is a real place. When I say that, I mean, it's real, and can be found on the physical plane. It is also in the Astral realm. Safe Haven, the University, occupies both simultaneously, and a wrong turn could have you on a physical floor, an astral floor, or in between, or a different plane altogether, or a combination of planes. It can be challenging to sort, but most the time, I don't notice, because I can function on any and cross over frequently without even experiencing vertigo. I introduce you to that concept in order to prepare you for the fact that

we medics treat species from all over the Universe. Beings, not just human beings, come here for healing. They come from every-where and every-when. Sometimes, they even come against their will. A person is of course allowed to refuse treatment, but people tended to get better just for being here. One such case was Adelia Williamson, from London, Victorian era. She was a child born of a harlot, a regular companion of Lord Williamson, and due to his wife's peculiar obsession with her, the Williamsons decided to raise her as their own, which was just fine with Adelia's birth mother, as she didn't have the where for all to care for a child, nor the desire. Though the birth mother wanted nothing to do with the child, she ended up being hired as a wet nurse for the child, and several others children, and was employed by the family until she died of an unknown illness.

Just because Adelia had had special status, it did not make her immune to the drama that unfolded in the house, including regular abuse from Lord Williamson himself. If Lady Williamson was aware, she paid it no mind. Some of her staff assumed she kept the child for Lord Williamson's amusement. Maybe it was meant to keep him home, or perhaps from abusing their own offspring. Adelia's reputation as the illegitimate daughter of a harlot, and perhaps the plaything of Lord Williamson, who had a peculiar reputation, made her the subject of harassment of many prominent men. She had an odd look about her that always got a second look, and the Victorian clothing that was generally designed to hide any evidence of sexualized femininity, only enhanced the very thing they wanted hidden.

Adelia attempted suicide at age 14. That is how she found herself at Safe Haven University Medical Center. She had consented to being treated, but flat out refused to be sent back. The staff had time on their hands, so they could humor her as long as she liked, but she would return, even if she were gone for a hundred years from that life, and she return to the very moment she had departed. She would likely find herself sick, but would recover, and her life would continue.

"Why in the hell would anyone send her back into that fucked up situation?" Keera asked.

"She has a life mission," Ekin said.

"To kill everyone?" Zoya asked. She was the epitome of an Amazonian warrior woman, tall, sturdy, and a dark black that was mesmerizing. Her darkness was even lovelier when contrasted against the white of her uniform. Her gold and blue eye shadowing was riveting.

“We do not tell clients how to live their lives,” Ekin said.

“Why not?” Seth asked. He was also tall, but thin and weakly in appearance. “We took the time and energy to accept her as a patient, why not teach her what she needs to know so that she doesn’t just survive, but perhaps thrive.”

“Teach her to fight,” Zoya said.

“And how will fighting help her? She is one individual. If she kills someone, she will be hung, no questions, no trials,” Ekin said. “If she fights, the men who like fighters will come at her as a group. Very few individuals who take on the whole world come out of it on top, much less unscathed.”

“Teach her to love,” I said.

“Love or to fuck?” Keera asked me.

“You want her to just accept her fate and give in?” Zoya asked.

“What I am saying is, their society is broken,” I said. “You don’t have that much repression without consequences. Arm her with truth and love, and anyone who comes at her will be changed.”

“Do you seriously think you can teach someone to love people who have abused her since day one?” Seth asked.

“Maybe we should send you back there,” Keera said.

“Okay,” I said. I looked directly Doctor Ekin. “Is it permissible?”

“Don’t be an idiot,” Zoya said.

“I am not,” I said. I clearly had everyone’s attention and had no choice but to explain my position. “Look, I have been getting some flak that I don’t know what it’s like to be incarnated. I am confident in my ability to love. I am confident in my knowledge that love overcomes all obstacles. Adelia could be here a hundred years and never learn that because she is too focused on not going back, as opposed to trying to understand the mystery of why and how her life is the way it is. Maybe she will have to do this lesson again. Maybe she will get an easier class and build up to the strength that needs to endure and overcome. Maybe she bit off more than she could chew. Maybe she won’t ever incarnate again. I don’t know where she goes from here if she doesn’t go back, but I do know if she doesn’t want to go, we shouldn’t force it, and that there is this option called a Walk-In, where another soul may take the place of someone who wants to

check out. Adelia gets what she wants, and I can get what I want, life experience outside of a host.”

“Is that all you want?” Ekin asked. “Life experience?”

“No. I want to help someone who is suffering. In doing so, I show her love, and I have an opportunity to show her enemies love,” I said.

“If you want to show Adelia love, send her back,” Anthony said. He was a short, pudgy kid. He had the look about him that suggested he was autistic, or perhaps home schooled. He had a limited range of emotions and was very tight in his movement, as if he were robot. I suspected Autism spectrum disorder. “Tough love is the only love there is.”

“Oh, fuck that,” I said.

“As a former drug addict, I can testify that my parent’s tough love saved me,” Andrew said.

“What you mean is your parents kicked you out and locked the door to keep you from affecting their lives,” I said. “You don’t stop addictions by locking people out. People don’t stop addictions by policing their stuff and locking up your possession so they can’t be sold for drug money. What you do is you sell all your possessions until there is nothing left but a mattress on the floor and food in the fridge, and you live with the person experiencing the addiction on an extremely personal level. When there is nothing physical left to steal, or to break, or to change, then the only thing left to change is the relationship. It’s the primary relationships that drove the addiction problem, so it’s the relationships that needs to change to affect a cure.”

“Fuck you,” Andrew said. “You don’t know me or my family.”

“Drug addiction doesn’t happen in a vacuum,” I said.

“Enough,” Ekin said. “Loxy, are you serious about becoming a Walk-in?”

“Yes,” I said.

“I’ll make the arrangements,” Ekin said.

Chapter 13

“You’re being stupid,” Keera said.

We were in homeroom and apparently everyone knew of what I intended to do. Apparently, rumors moved fast at Safe Haven, and my homeroom mates had lots of questions. More questions than I could answer, because I hadn’t bothered to research the topic of Walk-ins. All I knew was that I was going, it didn’t occur to me that it might be fraught with dangers.

“What if you forget everything?” Tyler asked.

“She won’t forget everything,” Ethan said.

“Even if she is there 80 years? That’s a long time to be away from this life,” Tyler said.

“She could be there 80 years, but when she returns here, she might be gone only five minutes,” Aiden said. “Just like the kids in the ‘the Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.’”

“Oh! That would just piss me off,” Ethan said. “Making it all the way to adulthood only to return to being a kid.”

“Not just any adulthood, but wealthy, beloved Kings,” Aiden said.

“Right?!” Ethan said.

“It didn’t bother you that your queens were your sisters?” Emma asked.

“Why would it?” Ethan asked.

“Lots of siblings shared thrones,” Aiden said.

“And their beds,” Ethan said.

“This is not the fucking ‘Game of Thrones,’” Keera said.

“Seriously? Have you read Adelia’s life?” Aiden asked.

“How come it stops at her suicide?” Tyler asked, closing the book of Adelia. He handed it back to me.

“The rest hasn’t been written yet,” Jack said.

“How can that be? I come from an Earth time after her,” Keera said.

“Space/time is not as rigid as most people believe,” Jack said. “It has some flexibility. It’s only fixed once consensus determines that the events are necessary for scaffolding the wellbeing of the future generations. Sometimes, whole epochs of society are rewritten to foster a necessary perspective that helps provide clarity for the watchers. And, should that not be sufficient, variations on themes are commissioned to rule out chance.”

“You’re not making any sense,” Tyler said.

“Do you really suppose that the quantum weirdness only effects subatomic particles and not larger subjects? You think of yourself as your body, but you’re much more. The observer isn’t the body, or even the conscious part of your mind that you recognize as yourself. The observer is something greater that allows the person you think you are to experience a wide variety of positions so that you might arrive at the perspective you need for ultimate growth.”

“You’re doing this because I challenged you,” Keera said. “You’re showing off, and Andrew is right, you’re robbing that girl an opportunity to live the life she was meant to live.”

“No one signs up for the shit she is going through,” Emma said.

“Why does it have to be shit?” Ada asked.

Everyone looked at her.

“What differentiates us as human beings? We all have adversity, and yet, some of us are survivors and some of us are victims. Some of us have no problems with needles, while some of us faint dead away at the sight of a syringe. The person who has no issues with needles laughs at the other, while the fainter believes the other is immensely brave, but neither one of their position is reality.”

“How do you get off comparing rape and molestation with fear of needles?” Keera said.

“I come from a place and time that dealt with much worse than anything Adelia has had to deal with,” Ada said. “I would trade places with her, but if she can’t handle that life, then she sure has hell wouldn’t have survived mine.”

“Speculative,” Jack said. “Had she your cultural framework, she might have held greater tolerance for what this group labels abuse.”

“Point taken,” Ada said, raising her cup in a cheers gesture.

Tyler was the only one who didn’t speak that class, and after out time was up, he split without spending time with me. Jack waved me over while some of the lingering students filled their pockets with free food.

“You should go see your host,” Jack said.

“Why?” I asked.

“He may be adversely affected by your change in status,” Jack said.

“Really?” I asked.

“He may experience your absence in a negative way. It may or may not be tangible, depending on where he is in the process of you. He may get feedback from your experiences there, in terms of dreams or sensations. You should discuss it with him,” Jack said.

“Have I made a poor decision?” I asked.

“You have made a decision, that is all,” Jack said.

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I found my way back to my flight training class room. There were other students there and I was blocked by Penny. She was wearing the flight suit I had seen her in the previous time I have held class. Her hair was different, straighter. No hint of the previous curls. It kind of reminded me of an Egyptian hair style.

“You’re getting good at traveling, friend,” Penny said. “But this is not your class time.”

“May I borrow a Star-seed?” I asked.

“The great traveler can’t go by other methods?” Penny asked.

I frowned. I really didn’t want to explain how since arriving at Safe haven, my Astral Traveling had diminished. I was even remembering fewer dreams with Jon, and so Jack’s warning was only raising my anxiety about it, which was making it harder to Travel.

“It’s okay,” Penny said. “Go. Return in one hour.”

I nodded, and departed the class room. Once I arrived back at the moon gate near the rose, I turned around, hit the initialized the moon gate for my return trip, and arrived back precisely at one hour later than I had arrived previously. Penny was waiting for me, sitting on one of the desks. She hopped down, headed towards a ship, waved for me to catch up, and we arrived at a Star-seed at the same time.

“Is it okay to take one?” I asked.

“We would not have allowed it otherwise,” Penny said. “But I have been instructed to go with you. I will pilot.”

“You know where I am going?” I asked.

“Yes,” Penny said. “Loxy, we know everything about you. We know everything about Jon. We are interested in your life missions.”

“Really?” I asked.

“Come on,” Penny said.

As a passenger, my experience in the Star-seed that was not converted to resemble a helicopter was quite different than when piloting. To be honest, I preferred being the pilot. Penny was such a refined pilot, I hardly had time to notice anything in terms of scenery. We were outside the mother ship, the stars turned, and that was it. We arrived at a time and place in Texas where Jon was sound asleep. Bringing him aboard was easy as Star Trek. Penny simply beamed him up. He was placed so easily upon the medical bed that was manifested just for his comfort that he didn't even stir. I could see from Penny's console that she was recording his bio-reading from micro cellular activity to heart and respiration rates. She was even recording his dream. Penny came aft, put a hand on my forehead, then a hand on Jon, and suddenly, I was in his dream.

The moment Jon became aware of me, the dreamscape changed. It faded to almost nothing, as if we were the only two people on a dance floor that was once full of friends and lovers. We were not alone. We were both inside Penny's mindscape, and she was aware of everything.

“Loxy?” Jon asked. He was moved to tears.

I embraced him. “Shh, stay calm. Don't wake yourself up with strong emotions,” I said.

“Hold me like this and I will never wake up again,” Jon said.

“Don't say that,” I said, meeting his eyes. “There is a reason we are in the worlds we are. There is a reason for your presence here, even if you don't know it. Things will improve for you. I know it.”

“I believe you,” Jon said. “Since meditating on you, I have never been happier. I am just wanting it to be more than dreams.”

“It will be,” I said. I pulled back and held his hands. “But I have to go somewhere first.”

“I don't understand,” Jon said.

“Do you trust me?” I asked.

“Loxy, you know everything about me. If you had intended malicious mischief, I would have been crushed a long time ago,” Jon said.

I pulled him down to the floor, and we sat together. There were lights playing across the dance floor. I saw Penny's face behind Jon, but he seemed to not be aware of her. Penny indicated to me through gestures that we had limited time to stay here.

“My purpose isn’t to crush you, Jon,” I said. “Look, I have to go away for a while. I don’t know what that means for us, but I don’t want you to quit your practice. Keep meditating on me even if you don’t hear me. Keep meditating on us, even if you don’t think I can hear you.”

“Are you being coerced into something you don’t want?” Jon asked.

“No. I am volunteering,” I said. “It may change me. Worst case scenario, I might forget you. For a spell. Not forever.”

Jon bit his lips, trying to contain his emotions. He knew all too well that strong emotions can wake you from a dream.

“Tell me what you’re thinking,” I said.

“I created you and gave you sentience and autonomy because I didn’t want a robot,” Jon said. “If you think this endeavor is necessary for whatever reasons, then you have my unconditional support. I don’t need to understand the details. I trust that there is more going on in the Universe, hell just in my unconscious mind, than I will ever understand.” He closed his eyes and said ‘Stop.’ And when he realized I was curious, he explained, “Sorry. I am hearing that tears of Jupiter song again. I don’t want that as your theme song.”

“It’s not,” I said, hugging him. Over his shoulder I saw Penny tapping her watch again. “We have time for a quickie.” I said in Jon’s ear, but loud enough that Penny was apprised of what I intended. She did not look happy, but she didn’t stop me, either. In the dream, and on the medical table in the Star-seed, I ravished Jon, deliberately bringing him off as fast as I could. I like knowing I have such power over him. I can make time last for hours, or seconds. His physical body was already aroused due to being in REM sleep. In the dream world, we are always aroused and ready to engage, and indeed, we are engaged with the entire dream world. I gave him ecstasy in the dream, waking him to me on top of him in the Star-seed, where on realizing ‘me’ grinding into him with my own urgency gave him a second orgasm right over the first which sent him spinning in something akin to an epileptic fit, as every nerve cell fired. It wasn’t epilepsy, but it was that full body orgasmic response like you get listening to ASMR, or having turned a q-tip in your ear, plus the rush of chemicals from head to toe following an orgasm. Physical orgasms have nothing on dream and astral orgasms, but he was having them all back to back, so close together they might have been experienced as simultaneously. It was the equivalent of hitting a single string and harmonic resonance vibrating them all. I had to tell him to breathe, his eyes fixated on mine. Penny was still attached, her hand on my forehead and on

his, and she, too, was sharing in our bliss. There was no way for her not to. The three of us were one orgasmic water fall of intense pleasure. And when Jon blinked, Penny beamed him back to his bed. She instructed the ship to take us somewhere safe, another galaxy perhaps, where she engaged me physically. I hadn't considered how she might be affected while tandem with us, and she was too aroused not to have closure. It was as if a switch had gone off and the only thing she could attend to was closing the circuit. I, too, had been unprepared for the amount of energy I had released in the dream, and how it had spilled over into the physical world, that I too wanted more. I wanted more with Jon.

"He is still with us," Penny whispered in my ear. In my head an explanation followed. The telepathic link between us had been strengthened due to the intimacy and it was one reason she needed help closing the circuit. It was possible that Penny, Jon, and I were now forever bonded. I found it difficult sorting information because of the level of detail but also because I was distracted by her grinding on my thigh. Even as she working herself on me, her thigh between my leg was gliding against me in such a way that I was going cum again. I got a snapshot into the conversation she had held with her family group, while they were discussing Jon's bio-data I had collected. She had had a premonition about Jon. They hadn't dismissed her, but her memory signal of Jon was so weak there was nothing tangible to follow until it unfolded in its own time. Now, with him exploding into our minds, and escalating with us even as we grew closer to our own release, it was clear this was the dream she had had, and this present moment had sent nuanced sensations both ways through her world line. She and Jon were not done any more than Jon and I were.

When Penny orgasm, I was blinded with white light. I awoke sometime later, in the rose, next to Alish. She was in a lotus position, her hands hovering over me as if warming her hands near a fire. I returned to sleep, very satisfied with my life and my loves.

Chapter 14

The ceremony was not private. There were a number of classes that joined mine, various medical professionals in attendance, as well as a number of upper Safe Haven faculty I had not met. This was a serious ordeal. Adelia and I were center stage. It was a round stage with seating all around us, and we were prominently lit. Doctor Ekin took hold of a length of crystal supported by a pedestal. Adelia was instructed to put her hands on the crystal, outside of her hands, but touching.

“This is a trick,” Adelia said. “I am not going back.”

“We explained the procedure to you,” Ekin said. “We are not sending you back. Loxy has agreed to return on your behalf and complete your contractual agreements to the other players.”

“Why?” Adelia asked.

“Why not?” I asked.

“In order for the exchange to be made, Loxy must experience a life review with you,” Ekin said, patiently, though she had probably gone over it a hundred times. “She must experience everything you have experience to the point of your departure, so she may know the agents and players and the entire history, as you have understood it to be. When the life review is complete, you will hear my voice asking Loxy if she wishes to accept the remainder of this life. If she accepts, then you will hear me ask you, if you wish to relinquish the remainder of this life to Loxy. It will become her life, her life credit, with all the rewards and debts that come with that life.”

“Are you trying to make me change my mind?!” Adelia asked.

“No, we are helping you make an informed decision,” Ekin said.

“I don’t get anything for what I already went through there?” Adelia asked.

“Of course you do,” Ekin said. “No one can take away your experiences.”

“And what happens to me when I relinquish this life?” Adelia said.

“You will go to a place of comfort to recuperate,” Ekin said. “You will be surrounded by loved ones and life experts that will help you sort your past lessons and design your next lessons. Do not fear being punished. This is not a failure. It is just another lesson.”

Adelia placed her hands on the crystal as instructed. Ekin stepped away, taking the inner part of the crystal away. I was instructed to face Adelia, placing my hands outside of hers, palms

facing up. I grasped the crystal. Adelia was apprehensive. I smiled at her. It was probably the first time she maintained eye contact.

“I am sorry,” Adelia said.

“Don’t be,” I said.

“Close your eyes,” Ekin said.

We closed our eyes, and instantly, we were elsewhere. One might imagine the first nine months of life would be fairly boring, but it is full of choices and learning. Knowledge sets come on in flashes. You begin to recognize voices. You respond to temperature changes of the host. You recognize tastes. You respond to the host’s moods. Adelia’s mother was not happy, and it’s a serious unhappiness that last the full nine months. I am not privy to all the drama, I just know it was an ordeal just to stay alive. The mother had made several attempts to end the pregnancy and failed. Adelia, determined, dug her heels in so to speak and persevered. Not without cost. The message she was not wanted was received loud and clear and it would shape her choices. She was to be left in the care of a nunnery where she was delivered, but Williamson’s wife, Ollie, who had discovered her made sure she and her husband were there to receive it and take custody. The intent was to do so without the mother knowing, but when they found it difficult to find a wet nurse, Ollie insisted that he hire his paramour to nurse.

Ollie loved being the maternal figure, but she ruled with a stern hand. The more resistance she got from Adelia, the sterner she became. This was her way of showing love. Adelia was necessarily resistant not just because she was obstinate, but because of the trajectory that was initiated in the womb, and the confusion of that came from a wet nurse that didn’t want to feed her, to later not clear who was in charge, the wet nurse, the nanny, or Ollie. The molestation started at age 5, and by age 12 had become recurring weekly visits from Williamson. She was told in no uncertain terms if she ever protested or told anyone she would be living on the streets, and what men did to girls on the street was much worse than what he was doing to her. She did tell Ollie. Ollie told her, she had a good thing going, don’t ruin it. No matter where a woman went, they were the subjects of men, so get used to it. And that was the end of it. There was no protesting it, and the only consolation was that it only happened when he was drunk, and was usually over with fairly quick. In fact, she learned she could hasten it. This became her super power, the only bit of control she had over her life. The worst came when he was so drunk he was not able to function, in which case he usually beat her, blaming his impotence on her.

She was taught to read. She took to reading and she had many questions, but she learned quickly not to ask Lord Williamson, or Ollie. The response was either, girls don't need such information, or they handed her another book and told her to find it herself. She became very knowledgeable about geography, other lands and other people, but she found herself skeptical of many of the stories. How could people be so vastly different and still function in this world? Every now and then she would find small tidbits of information that raised her spirit that there might be something else. "The healing practices of the South American natives is full of trickery and sleight of hand, but is frequently more effective than the medicines we offer as remedy." She wanted to know more about that. She wanted to know more about Shamanism and what the Bishop in sermon disparagingly referred to as Paganism. She had long since discovered the ability to separate from her body, during times of abuse, so that she could go to the corner and watch, or leave the room altogether. She knew this was a real thing because she once spied her half-sister doing something with her brother, and when she commented on it at dinner, the family completely dismissed it, but she found herself further alienated from the sister that had hated her since her arrival.

Loxy had a sudden realization, separate from her experience of the life review download. She was experiencing it first hand, as if she were living it, but she was also reviewing, as if from outside perspective. It was the look that her sister Effie gave her when she had said she saw them in father's study. In that moment, she was reminded of the look Keera gave her when she was annoyed. From that moment forward, there was a slight disconnect. Effie was not Keera, but they were. This was Keera in a past life! What were the odds? She looked at her brother, Theodore, and saw only Theodore. She looked at Lord Williamson, and only saw the man, who was already into his second bottle of wine. Lady Williamson, Ollie, also only looked like her. She was gently encouraging the wine. Oh, Loxy thought. She, too, has learned she has some control over her world, and does it by applying alcohol. In a world of repression, people come at things through side doors, never directly, but it is still about the thing. Loxy wondered if all the interesting facets in life were simply ways of avoiding the pervasiveness of sex and sexual appetites, which society was determined to govern. She wondered if her idea paralleled Freud's own thinking. Oh, Freud would be alive in this time frame.

Life reviews only take a few moments, even though the fullness of them is as if one has lived the entire life in real time. They were at a point where Adelia had taken 24 sleeping pills,

half a bottle of wine, and cut her wrist. Luckily, she didn't have clue how to cut it properly, and wasn't deep enough to bleed out. None the less, she left her body in a manner that was not completely unlike her previous outings, only, she was not in control. She was drawn up by someone Loxy couldn't see, and swiftly advanced up through a tunnel. Loxy was blocked from the tunnel. She was not privy to what happened on the other side, though she could discern a group meeting and a dialogue occurring.

Ekin was there with me, in the Victorian world, Ekin's clothing glowed. It was as if she were a cutout overlapping an image of something not quite real. I wondered if this was how Jon saw me on those rare occasions that he sight. "Do you accept the responsibilities and hardships that this life offers?" Ekin asked me.

"What's my mission?" I asked.

"You will not be privy to that," Ekin said.

"Well, how am I supposed to accomplish something specific if I am not allowed to know what that specific thing is?" I asked.

"You said you wanted to demonstrate love, why not start with that?" Ekin asked.

"Hypothetically, if I were to say no?" I asked.

"Because of the nature of the conversation on the other side, this life will likely end," Ekin said.

"Which means a power shift will occur, and what, Effie will now be the subject of Lord Williamson's abuse?" I asked. It didn't have to be her. There were other people in his care that could be the subject. It could also cause him to find another paramour and start the cycle over. Ollie was just trying to keep him in business and functional, because without his income, and the family inheritance, their lives would drastically change. She was banking everything on her husband, and had him very well insured. I noticed Ekin was not responding as I was thinking through my own logical pathways. Would Ollie actually kill her husband? Did she have a paramour for herself? How would that flip the scripts? How would it affect Keera? Effie! Not Keera. But now that I knew, how could I shake it? How could I saw no after all of this energy and all of these people watching from various perspectives.

"I accept," I said.

There was thunder and I found myself drawn into Adelia's body and was overcome by sleep. When I awoke, Ollie was sitting there. My wrist was bandaged. She was rocking, but when she saw my eyes open, she stopped her rocking and leaned in close.

"Good," Ollie said. She might have been embarrassed if she had to call the Doctor. "When you're through feeling sorry for yourself, I expect you to get up, clean up, and join me in the parlor. Don't dally."

Chapter 15

I had all the memories of putting on Victorian clothes, but none of the actual practice; I nearly gave up. The fact that I was groggy didn't help, and feeling groggy sucks. Feeling impatient with myself sucks. Feeling irritated sucks. I was feeling all sorts of things, but trying to focus on the clothing. The clothing is peculiar and not fun at all when you have to go it alone. One starts with a chemise, which is an undergarment. It has a drawstring at the neck; it fell just below the knees, and was quite comfortable all by itself and I would have worn only this had I not feared making a scene. Beneath the chemise was drawers, open legged, with button on back side, and if you can't figure out what the open legs meant, well, it was so a person could urinate without having to undo one's whole attire, which quite frankly was still inefficient in terms of accommodating bodily functions when you consider the entire outfit wasn't designed for convenience. How this fashion was tolerated past a century is mind boggling. The corset came next. I nearly called for help, but I finally got it in place and tied, and though I was okay with what it did to enhance my figure, I really didn't need or want the enhancement. Then there was the corset cover, followed by a petticoat. Whoever had starched it had made it stiff enough it could stand on its own. We fought, I won, which meant, I was in it, if that's what winning is. To get in the hoop skirt, I basically crawled under it and forced myself through the opening and fought it into place. After all of this hassle, finally I could put the dress on. It was a fine, silky white thing, with embroidered flowers, which was alright, but I was so put out by how much effort it took to get draped over the hoop, I no longer cared for it. I blew off the hat and proceeded down to the parlor. My hair, no, not my hair, Adelia's hair, was a mess. I got the most peculiar fright when I past a mirror, thinking, who the fuck is that, then I remembered: I am not me. I pushed past, perhaps forgiving of the state of the hair because it wasn't me. I found my way to the parlor.

Effie laughed. "Going somewhere?"

Effie was standing before mother. Mother was sitting on the edge of an armless chair, sipping tea. The chair legs were covered with cloth. Though mother was dressed more severe, she was not wearing a hoop. Her hair was balled up. Effie was transparent in her every day wear, a simple gray dress that buttoned at the neck and only hinted at her femininity. She was just as well-endowed in this life as her next. Mother sipped her tea, deciding it was best not to comment on my choice.

My body had an emotional response to the spoken and unspoken criticisms. You need to understand that I did not respond; my body reacted. I felt flushed, heat rising from my chest into my cheeks. This was a conditioned response that existed before I took over this body. My body nearly reacted verbally, but with a great deal of effort I suppressed it and initiated a new response. I surprised them both by hugging Effie. I held her tightly and whispered in her ear, but loud enough mother heard:

“I love you.”

Effie tolerated the hug only for a moment then extricated herself.

“What is wrong with you?” Effie asked.

“I have been insufferable and I wish to make amends,” I told her. I turned to mother. “I apologize for all the trouble I have caused the family and will endeavor to be more successful in all my future endeavors.”

“How many of those pills did you take?” mother asked.

“Too few, I suspect,” Effie said.

“Effie,” mother corrected.

“No, mother. How many times has she harmed herself now?” Effie asked. “In my opinion, she should be committed to the asylum.”

“And when you run this house, I will consider your opinion,” mother said. She turned to me. “Though your declaration is pleasant to my ear, I will suspend responding until time reveals that you have put minimal effort forwards to achieving something with your life.”

A maid entered and said our piano instructor had arrived. Mother set her tea down and stood, asking that the instructor be shown in. I hugged mother.

“Adelia, I am very uncomfortable with this sudden display of affection,” mother said.

I saw Effie looking at me as if I were an alien.

Lady Ward entered and smiled to see me hugging mother. “Well, someone is in a good mood,” Ward said.

“I hope it doesn’t affect her lesson,” mother said.

“I find a good mood improves memory,” Ward said. “Have you been practicing?”

“I have,” Effie said.

Effie took the seat at the harpsichord and began playing a piece by Bach. I think it was accurate, but I was more worried about how I would perform than critiquing her performance. I

had the knowledge, given to me by Adelia, and I am certain Jon had given me a musical download when he was providing preferred attributes, but I couldn't specifically recall performing, much less practicing. And, I don't believe it is actually necessary. I have heard of people who have never touched an instrument that after a stroke suddenly had the ability to play better than someone who had practiced for sixty years. I am curious how they knew to even sit down at a piano long enough to discover, unless, that too, was a compulsion that was sparked by the brain change. Witnessing such a thing could make you wonder where things came from. Who knows, maybe those folks arrived at Safe Haven for healing, but lingered long enough to acquire the ability to play, and when they returned, they simply had the ability.

When I sat down for my turn, I was hesitant. Effie told me to stop being fearful and get it on. I put my fingers on the keys and began to play the piece just rendered by my sister. It was anemic at first, but I quickly found confidence and before I knew it, I was so absorbed in my memory of this, coupled with the present playing, coupled with improving it, as if I knew what it should be compared to what it had been, and there was this flash that blended the three perspective and I was no longer playing the idea but the ideal. You would think Bach wouldn't make people cry. On completing the piece, I found Ward shedding tears. Effie was angry. Mother was confounded.

"I don't believe I can teach you further," Ward said. She turned to my mother. "Her ability has surpassed mine. I could recommend an instructor if you wish to pursue this talent to a greater proficiency, but quite frankly, she could be performing."

"Let me think about it," mother said. "Adelia, you're dismissed. Go change, and find something useful to do. You may continue with Effie."

"I am through," Effie said.

I was departing the room, not sure if I should be pleased or concerned.

"If your half-sister can get this, you can get this," mother was saying.

I left the room, wondering if I had just caused more trouble than warranted. I went to my room, extricated myself from the formal wear, which was just as arduous as putting it on, and my impatience with the thing made it all the worse. I felt like a cat trying to extricate myself from a tight space. I had to force myself to slow down, focus. Dressing magically is so much easier. I dressed in something more common, proceeded down to the kitchen in order to be useful. The staff chased me out. One of them accused me of being manipulative and not genuinely interested

in helping, while another suspected I was just being maliciously contemptuous of their station. I went outside and made my way to the stables. I found the company of horses more enjoyable than people.

निर्मित

Family dinner came, and it was an ordeal. Theodore was protesting being sent off to school. Effie was still sulking about the music lesson, and completely ignoring the fact mother and father were actively discussing her future arranged marriage. One of the staff who was serving kept eyeing me as if I were a stranger. I think she was mad that no one else seemed concerned by my inexplicable presence. I was more interested in the fact that mother was constantly refilling father's wine glass. I managed to go through the whole dinner without so much as a word. Adelia would have been upset that no one cared that she had just tried to kill herself.

The meal was finished, we kids were dismissed. Mother and father continued their conversation, even as father was beginning to make less sense.

I offered to brush Effie's hair, she declined. I checked on Theodore and asked if he would like a story before bed and he said he was big enough to read his own stories. I hugged him and agreed, he was much bigger. He shrugged me off and told me to leave him, in a very 'lordly' fashion. I retired to my room. I could have read under an oil lamp, but instead I sat in my bed, lotus pose, meditating. My drapes were open and I could see Venus. It was the brightest object in the night sky, and I found it pleasant to have it so framed in my bedroom.

I listened to the sounds of the house as it wound down. I heard the ring of urine hitting a piss pot in the room next door. That would have been Effie. I heard dogs barking outside. They were probably chasing a rabbit. I heard what I thought was the last door to close. In my mind, I sought all the players in the house, trying to understand the dynamics. Father was downstairs in his study. He may have actually dozed. Mother was in her room brushing out her hair, by herself. Eventually, everyone was asleep but me. I was not tired. Was it the change in time zone? I chuckled at the thought. I had left more than a time zone. How far in space and time had I traveled to arrive here?

And this is the place we have to discuss something serious. It needs to be discussed. Just because I took over, didn't mean I had more magic and more abilities than anyone else. When the dream or whatever it was caused father to stir, whether he was full awake or not, whether he

was consciously choosing his actions or not, he came to my room. It was kind of creepy. You can hear the floors creek. He came in darkness. He came slowly, probably hoping to find me asleep so he could do his business and retreat without too much fuss. I had the memories of him lingering over Adelia's body, now my body, now my memories. Sometimes, it would just be him watching. Sometimes, the memories found him lightly brushing this body's hair. Sometimes Adelia would wake and be startled and his hand would go to her mouth and he would tell her to be quiet.

It is not my job here to sway you into believing a certain thing. I don't want to move your opinion on the subject, or tell you how to feel about the people who abuse children. I would ask that you strive for clarity. I had clarity, and it was the only thing I had that Adelia didn't have. When I saw Lord Williamson in my room, my eyes having adjusted to the room in pale moonlight, I saw him not as the man, but as the child he was when his own abuse started. It was perpetrated on him by his father's brother. His father had been unsuccessful and applied to his brother for help, and part of the payment, unspoken of course, was his brother took liberties with his family. Usually victims of abuse have more than one abusers, and though was instigated by the uncle, there was another victim in the mix which only further complicated the situation. The uncle enlisted his own daughter and had them play sexual games for his amusement. The uncle's daughter had already been well groomed into her situation, but for young Williamson, who liked his cousin, it came with more than just confusion. There was shame, there was fear, and there was pleasure. If you don't think a young male or female can't experience pleasure, then you're not paying attention. He was compelled not to speak of it, and there was serious fear that if he did, his father would be turned out on the street, along with his mother and sister, and so there was good reason not to tell. He was a 'man' protecting his family. When you add society's disdain for sex, for sexual appetites, and definitely a hatred for any sexual abuse, you now have a recipe for lifetime shame and fear which perpetuates itself and the activity that in need of repressing. If a person doesn't have an appropriate way to release inner pressures, they will only employ repression, which will get you down the road, but eventually either the pressure becomes too great and a behavior occurs, or situations occur in which the person will take liberties.

I am not passing blame on any of the players, but there were other players involved in this. Lord Williamson wife didn't love her husband. Maybe she did at once, but the marriage was more about her position in society and her desire to run a house. She ran her husband the way she

ran her staff, and applying alcohol gave her some control. It also decreased his ability to resist his inner urges. At some point, a threshold was met where the inner six year old took over his body. And this is the truth about trauma. A person tends to get stuck at the age when the trauma was initiated.

In an ideal world, trauma and abuses don't happen. In the world next step down, people are aware that abuse and trauma happen, but they allow pathways to short circuit its continuance. If people were allowed to discuss Lord William's activities, without threat of locking him up or killing him, they would find ways to allow him to never be alone with a child. One person, in a nuclear family couldn't do this, because everyone has to eventually sleep, and a person blocked will tend not to sleep or sleep as well until that inner urged has been quenched. It is the engagement of the urge that perpetuates the cycle, because the shame and self-disgust immediately go back into repression of the urge, which puts them on a trajectory towards the next incident. A commune, or a group home, allows people to work in shifts.

Lord Williamson was not an evil man. He wasn't violent. He didn't beat his wife, or his children. He absolutely took liberties with Adelia. He frequently chose to get his fix by visiting a prostitute, but since Adelia's mother's death, he had not taken that pathway. And, it wasn't a guarantee that his abuse of Adelia wouldn't still happen. He could have all the sex he wanted, dozens of prostitutes, and even his wife, and there would still be this predilection, and it was because he was initiated into sex at age six with complex social and emotional binds.

He came to my room. It was no longer Adelia's room. It was no longer Adelia's body. It was no longer Adelia's problem. It was mine. I knew this was coming. I could have packed up my bags and left. I could have just left. I am a smart girl and I would have survived Victorian era London. That pathway would not change Lord Williamson or help his family. My absence just meant he would find another victim. Perhaps a member of the staff. No one would support the staff, legally. No allegations from staff would be believed, and the accuser would be severely punished to teach other workers in society not to speak up. Lady Williamson would deny it and vouch that he was her the whole night. The staff would pressure the victim to keep quiet, don't ruin their good thing, because most of their lives here were pleasant, and finding another place to work was too difficult. Some of them lived on site, and so finding new work also meant finding a new place to stay, and people would ask questions, like why did you leave Lord Williamson's employment. If you speak badly about a Lord, you don't get hired. You're considered a

malcontent and contemptible. Even if they believed you, they would not hire you. That means, you're forced to lie. If you're a good liar, they might hire you, but then you have only added to the social structure that we don't talk about sex and we don't talk about abuse.

I could kill Lord Williamson. I had the strength, the knowledge, and the ability. In his present state, he was a drunk man at best, a six year old child at worse. I could fight him, seriously injure him, and make him think twice about harming me ever again, which again either results in him finding a new victim, or escalating his attack, or plotting to take greater advantage of me through opportunity or drugs. It was better to kill him than injure him. But Effie, Theodore, they would never understand or believe I was abused. This would polarize them against me. I would likely be hung as a murderer, even if the majority of the legal force believed me. They couldn't allow for all the abused rebelling and killing their abusers. The family would be affected in that there would be loss of status. I would have no sympathy from Lady Williamson.

Even Adelia loved her father and did not want him dead. You may find that strange, but it is also part of the confusing aspect when you're abused by a parent. Kids love their parents. They don't love the abuse, but they still have love. Maybe that is Stockholm's syndrome. You have to love your abuser in order to survive. I appreciate that argument, but then I submit to you, all children love their parents due to Stockholm syndrome due to the significant power differential. You will never experience true love from your offspring until they are adults. Even asking a child if they love you is not only manipulative of their emotional being, but it is more about you and your need to be loved, than the wellbeing of the child. I mean, seriously, how can a child respond to "do you love me?" How is that question not a trap? If they say they don't love you, there is a risk of penalty. Less food. Less toys. No ice-cream. A no response could result in some serious power plays by the adults to win the child's affection, or, it results in flat out bitterness and abuse, as the parent withdraws their emotions, "well if you don't love me, see if you can get better elsewhere." That in itself typically results in initiating future sexual abuse. Anytime a parent's affection is tied to a behavior or a belief, and the child refuses to play the emotional game, an inner schism is secured in which the child will seek affection and nurture anyway it can, even by force. And the more a person forces, the less love and affection they get, which exasperates the condition. Incarcerating a person doesn't cure the person, it simply

suspends the situation until the end of the incarceration, and exasperates the need: to be accepted and loved.

I tell you all of this, not to tell you how you should respond. I tell you this not to justify my response. I tell you this so that you can understand that I have clarity, and I that I am making a purposeful choice to love and ease suffering. There was no way Adelia could ease his suffering because she was too caught up in her own pain and misery, confounded by her view of herself through a social lens. I have no stigma about sex. People engage in sex for many reasons. Some for love. Many for lust. Some for power. Most use it as a currency for trade. It can even be a combination. Few people give sex freely, because that, too, can come with a social cost. And this is not just a man thing. This a human thing. There would not be a prevalence of mother son, mother daughter, step mother son, step mother daughter, and father daughter and step father daughter porn if this was not something lurking in our brains. It's the things we don't discuss that get perpetuated.

Lord Williamson hovered over me, a little confused that I wasn't asleep.

"You're awake," he whispered.

"I am," I said.

He considered it. "Are you okay?" He was never an evil man. He just had this thing.

"Yes, thank you for asking," I said. "And you?"

He sat down on my bed. He was seriously confused. This was not the script. I sat closer to him, put my arm around his back, a side hug.

"It's okay, father," I said. "I love you."

Lord Williamson began to cry. He held his hands against his face and cried. He sobbed. I anticipated the whole house coming to see what was wrong. If anyone heard, no one said anything, but from this point forward, there was a change in the house. I did not cure him of his predilection, but he could no longer engage me because it was clear, I loved him and I was deserving of his protection. The six year old him wanted to protect me from the older, more lecherous him. And the truth was, I didn't need or want protection. I was more than willing to proceed with an act of sex to accommodate him. Had this been a more violent man, maybe it would have ended differently. There were all kinds of maybes. I didn't focus on what could have been, only what was. I pulled him to me until his head was on my shoulder, which was awkward because he was a large man.

When he finished, and his breathing had calmed, his mouth too close to my neck, he sat up, kissed my forehead and stood to leave.

“We should go downstairs and have some coffee together,” I said.

“When did you start drinking coffee?” he asked.

“Tonight,” I said.

“We might wake the staff,” he said.

“Maybe,” I said. “But, maybe people should be awake when the master of house is awake.”

So we went down stairs and I discovered he was a complete imbecile when it came to preparing food or drink, and so I made coffee and I made us a sandwich which I cut in half and we each had half. It was pretty thick sandwich, with thick slices of ham. It didn't occur to me that sandwiches weren't a thing and so he looked at the meal oddly, but found it agreeable, and so said nothing. We were indeed found by staff and mother, both coming to investigate with their own candles.

“What the devil is going on here?” mother asked.

“We're having a bit of a snack and coffee,” I said, for father wasn't sure what to say.

“Would you like to join us?”

“I would not,” mother said. “It is time for sensible people to be asleep.”

“I am finding it difficult to sleep tonight,” father said.

“Perhaps because you are drinking coffee?” the staff asked.

“Perhaps,” he agreed. “However, the restlessness began before the application of coffee. I would like you to join us, Ollie, but if you prefer, you may retire to your chamber, and I will come visit you shortly.”

“Visit?” mother asked.

“Yes,” father said. “I want to speak with you.”

“Is it so urgent that it can't wait till morning?” mother asked.

“Aren't you the one who has warned against procrastinating?” father asked.

Mother was at a loss for words. She looked at me as if I had instigated something. I gave the subtlest of smiles, one that suggested innocence. I had no clue what their conversation was to be about, but I was hopeful for it being about one thing.

Chapter 16

So the next day, I found myself back in the kitchen, wanting to help. Saddle, one of the staff that was 15 years old, was stirring the pot. I asked if there was something I could do and she reminded me that Mary wouldn't want me in her kitchen. I told her I knew, and we struck up a conversation, and before I knew it I was tasting the soup and adding spices, and we went on talking. The smell of the soup was clearly altered and we both tasted it. We were pleasantly surprised by its improvement. That's when Mary walked in.

"What are you doing in my kitchen?" she asked, setting the eggs down.

"Just wanting to help," I said.

Mary could smell the difference, and went straight way to tasting. She blushed. With some effort and cloth pan holders, she took the stew outside and dumped it straight way. The dogs fell on it. She put the pot on the work table, took me by the hair, and led me straight to the parlor where mother was entertaining a guest. I went without protest, as she really had a good lock on my hair. I would have gone with her even if she hadn't taken me by force. Saddle seemed sad, but kept it to herself. I tried to smile at her, but was carried out too fast to make good eye contact.

"I must insist you keep this witch out of my kitchen," Mary said.

"Mary, what is going on?" mother asked.

"Lunch will be significantly delayed, due to her interference," Mary said.

"Let go of her hair, Mary," Mother said.

"I swear, there is a devil in her, and you would be wise to go fetch the Bishop to come exercise it out of her," Mary said.

"Please explain what you were doing in the kitchen," mother said.

"I was trying to be of helpful," I said.

"She added something to the stew and made it unfit for consumption," Mary said.

"It tasted alright to me," I said.

"May I sample it?" Mother asked.

"The dogs ate it," Mary said. "We'll be lucky if it doesn't kill the lot of them."

"And, who taught you to cook, Adelia?" mother asked.

"No one. I just made some assumptions," I said. "Call it an experiment."

“You are your father’s child, not mine. It is completely on my good graces that I continue to suffer your presence here. I will not have you experimenting on my family,” mother said.

“If I am not permitted to explore and experiment, how will I ever find my way to serve?” I asked. “Perhaps I could run a soup kitchen for profit.”

“Yes, definitely your father’s child. There is no profit in feeding the poor,” mother said. “And if you continue with this insolence, I will never be able to find you a proper husband.”

“And if I don’t wish to have a husband?” I asked.

“It doesn’t matter what you wish,” mother said. “When a man calls you, you will go. That will be the end of it.”

“I will, of course, consider someone you recommend, but I will ultimately choose whether I go and with whom I go,” I said.

“I tell you, she is bewitched,” Mary said.

“It could be hysteria,” mother’s friend said. “If you would like, I could recommend a Doctor.”

“I am not sick,” I said.

“I would prefer a Doctor’s opinion to yours, Adelia. Thank you for bringing this to my attention, Mary. I will take it from here,” mother said. She waited till Mary was gone to continue. “If I even hear that you have stepped foot into our kitchen again, I will personally take a horse whip to you. Are we clear?”

“Yes, mother,” I said.

“You’re dismissed,” Mother said, and she turned back to her friend and their tea and biscuits.

निर्मित

I have to pass Effie’s room to get to mine, and I couldn’t help but notice she was crying. I knocked lightly on the door. She didn’t respond. I pushed it open and peered in. She was sitting at a dressing table, her head down. She looked up at the sound of the door.

“How dare you just walk in here,” Effie said.

“Would you like some company?” I asked.

“No,” Effie said.

“I could brush your hair and you could tell me what’s wrong,” I said.

“You presume that I would share anything with you,” Effie said,

“It’s true that I have not earned the right to hear you, but I would like to try to forge a different relationship than what we have held,” I said.

“I am not interested,” Effie said. When I didn’t move immediately. “If you require more brutality, I can remind you that you’re the illegitimate child of a whore not fit for carrying chamber pots for a living.”

She was very clear, she didn’t want my company. “I will be available to you, should you change your mind,” I said, and pulled the door to.

“I will let you know when my maid can’t lift the chamber pot, and you can come fetch it,” Effie said.

Such a bizarre world this is. I wondered if they were resistant to me being useful because of my history and therefore a lack of credibility, or they just didn’t want me changing the script that Adelia was given, and eventually capitulated to. I had landed into a pretty typical family. It wasn’t like these folks were grossly evil, or engaged in deliberately malicious endeavors to profit at everyone’s expense. They were just suffering. Even in Victorian times, people were suffering, and mostly due to a very little genuine communication. The large estates were the last strongholds of larger social units, but they were disintegrating. Whether it is in India with the caste system, or London proper, anytime there is a division of labor and status, there will be suffering, on everyone’s part. And people at the top of the chain tend to suffer more because they have an unconscious belief that they should not suffer due to their station. So, when they suffer, they are more likely to abuse their resources, spend beyond their measure, and or, abuse their power over others.

Family use to be a collective of people, from immediate family to cousins, and sometimes a stray from another family group, or a purposeful trade between roaming groups. Capitalism pretty much destroyed the family unit by increasing the need for smaller, more mobile units; the nuclear family. Units would chase employment. I wonder if when working becomes obsolete due to smart technology if we will return to larger family groups. Or perhaps a new, larger family group more connected than anyone previously experienced. Of course, paradigms would have to shift for people to hold the right maps for improved interaction. In some ways, the Williamson estate was sort of a commune, in a very loose sort of way, only it was compartmentalize with the

Williamson's reaping the greatest benefits. A kibbutz in Israel in the 21st century was probably a better model for sustained human growth and interaction than a Victorian estate.

Over the next week, I managed to keep out of sight. I walked the estate. I went horseback riding, which was sheer joy. I loved the horses, and I was saddling it by myself, and caring for better than staff. It may have irked them some, maybe because I had never shown interest before, or, I should say, Adelia never took interest before. Funny that: like I am almost forgetting we are two different people. One morning after breakfast, the routine was broken when father didn't go to work. Without prelude or ceremony, at a certain early hour I was instructed to get in the carriage, joined by mother and father, and it was only after we started our journey out of Blackheath that they informed me they were taking me to see a Doctor.

"I don't need a Doctor," I told them.

"Well, good," father said. "Then no harm will come from you being examined."

"You're wasting your time and money," I said.

"It is mine to waste," mother said.

So, I sat back and enjoyed the ride into the city. Father read. Or pretended to read. I don't think I could read in a moving carriage. Mother sat quietly. She was better dressed than I, not too formal, but clearly she was going into public and she was holding up appearances. Between her perfume and dad's cologne, the carriage was practically insufferable, and by the time we had arrived the carriage had warmed considerably in the sun. It was a pleasure just to get out of the carriage. The Doctor's office was a family home taken over by an up and coming Doctor. A sign said please enter, and we did and found ourselves in a small sitting room. There were five other patrons there, all female, ranging in age from 20 to maybe 73. The older woman was likely accompanied by a daughter. There was a desk and a receptionist who took mother's information and said they were all set, clearly indicating that they had prearranged this meeting. The receptionist also apologized, that they were a few minutes off schedule, and please have a seat. Meanwhile, while we were being initiated by staff, another woman called the oldest patron back, and her companion or daughter went with her. They had disappeared through a door before we even began to sit. We simply assumed the seats the older person and daughter had been occupying. Another woman, mother's age, entered, and dramatically demanded to see the doctor. The receptionist tried to calm her, placating her with the idea that the doctor was open to walk-ins, however, she would have to wait to be slotted in after the scheduled appointments. To

accommodate her further, they offered to buy her a meal at the restaurant next door while she waited.

“Well, how long is the wait?” the woman demanded.

“We have three other walk-ins, and a scheduled appointment before you,” the receptionist said.

The woman eyed the other patrons, perhaps contemplating negotiating being allowed to jump the queue. She turned to the receptionist. “I’ll wait.”

I thought I heard someone crying in distress. As I tried to follow it, it began to sound less like distress and more like someone having an orgasm. The sounds subsided. There was no discussing anything. Several of the patron pretended to be reading. The newest walk-in was flushed and had to take up a fan. The old woman emerged, accompanied by her companion. She was amazingly altered. She was livelier, clearly more energy in her step, better posture; she was smiling. She loved on the receptionist. It was all her companion could do just to get her through the door. A woman entered and called for Adelia. I didn’t respond, partly because I was still adjusting to being called Adelia, but I was also trying to understand the change in the old woman’s aura. When people seem brighter, they generally are really brighter. Mother and father had already stood. Mother pulled me up by the arm and instructed me to lead the way.

The nurse led us back and collected my weight and height and then directed me into an office. The office was spacious, lined with shelves with books and boxes and curious objects, a desk, several chairs, and a modern exam table of which Adelia had never seen the likes. There was window at the back of the room large enough to sit in, and a breeze ruffling the curtains. The doctor finished writing a note and closed a book, stood to greet us. I was immediately stricken. I knew him, even though I didn’t know him like this.

“Jon!” I said, and rushed him and hugged him so fiercely he might have fallen if he had not been so solidly planted.

“Adelia!” mother snapped.

“It’s quite alright,” the doctor said, patting my back. “I usually don’t get this sort of reception until I have treated a person several times, but we can start on good terms.”

I pulled back. “Jon, do you recognize me?”

“Who is this Jon, dear?” the doctor asked.

I began to cry.

“And, this is why we are here, Doctor,” mother said. “She is clearly suffering from the worst case of hysteria in all of London. You come highly recommended as being an expert in such matters.”

“Well, I assure you, there is nothing wrong with this young lady that wasn’t put there by society,” the doctor said.

“And what does that mean?” father asked, defensively.

“Well, if you will forgive a biblical analogy, the people in the bible are said to have lived a good nine hundred years, and I believe it’s because no one had the good sense to tell them they shouldn’t be doing that.”

Father chuckled. “That’s pretty good, that,” he said. “My good friend Leadbetter is the one that recommended you. Said you had the gift of Second Sight.”

“Honey, I told you that stuff is rubbish,” mother said.

“Most the time,” the doctor agreed with mother.

“We are here because my friend said you specialize in this particular malady,” mother said.

“Do they call it malady because they meant to say my lady?” I asked. “Ma, mother, lady...”

“Nice,” the doctor said.

“Surely you can see for yourself she is behaving strangely,” mother said.

“The world is strange, my dear,” the doctor said. “But luckily for you, I specialize in strange. I probably see ten to fifteen strange a day.”

“What?” father asked.

“I don’t understand,” mother said.

“Sorry, I was going for humor. I find lightening the mood helps reduce the anxiety of a new experience,” the doctor said.

“You’re not funny,” I said.

“Adelia!” mother said.

“It’s okay,” the doctor said. “I am really not funny. My staff reminds me that all the time, but things usually go better if you humor me. As for second sight, that’s more an Irish term. I prefer the French term, Clairvoyant. I suspect, it is all the same thing.”

“So, it’s true? You can see things?” father asked.

The doctor shrugged.

“So, what should we call you?” mother asked. “Captain? Doctor?”

“You fine folks may call me Phillip, or Phil,” he said.

“But you have earned your titles,” mother insisted.

“I am retired from the Navy, mam, and with that I relinquished those title as easy as removing a hat. I am a licensed Doctor. I can even put that on my door, but what makes me successful is that I make sick people well.”

“I bet,” I said, not hiding my sarcasm.

“Adelia, I am growing weary of...”

“It’s quite alright,” Phillips said. (Doctor Phil?! Oh, Jon, Jon, Jon, what have you gotten yourself into this time.) “Healthy skepticism is just as good for the soul as an ounce of prevention.”

“All you do is get women off,” I said.

“And who is to say that that isn’t the fastest way to improve health?” Phillip asked me. “I suspect when science catches up to proving the benefits of orgasms, we will all be helping each other off in the future.”

“Then whatever would we need Doctors for?” mother asked.

“Who says we need doctors now?” Phillip asked. “Every husband should be doing this for his spouse. I teach retreats for married couples, if you either of you need improvement in your own technique.”

“Can you help this child or not?” mother asked, stirring away from any discussion for what father and she might need.

“I’ve yet to discern anything wrong with her,” Phillip said.

“I agree with my wife,” father said. “It’s clearly hysteria.”

“Of course you do,” Phillip said. “And yay you. Always agree the wife.”

“Perhaps the cold water treatment,” mother said.

I looked at mother as if she were insane. Believe or not, they use to strap a woman to a chair, naked, and with a high pressure water hose, spray between her legs until the force of the water made her cum. They used cold water because it was said to bring nutrients to the surface of the skin.

“We could,” Phillip mused. “I am equipped. Very unique wet room, it’s both a sauna and bath, baths of hot and cold water. Alternating between two severe temperatures can be quite invigorating. I have some Russian friend who swear jumping through a hole in the ice is what keeps them young.”

“You are not getting me wet,” I said. That didn’t come out quite how I imagined and the doctor was rather amused.

“Stop resisting the good doctor,” mother snapped.

“How does that water thing work, exactly?” father asked.

“I assure you, sir, it is no mystery. I could expose you to the same treatment, and you, too, would have a similar experience. Our equipment may look different, but its receptivity is the same.”

“We should try it on you,” I told father. “It’s just good clean fun.”

Phillip chuckled. “I like you.”

“Do you have one of those new electric vibrators I have read about?” mother asked.

“I do,” Phillip said, almost sadly. “And I detest them. Doctors today are not just getting lazy, they’re getting greedy. Some things should never be rushed. A solid, steady, gentle stroking is sufficient to carry a patient from their worries to bliss. That transition time is absolutely crucial. I have watched a patient as they struggle with their inner thoughts and finally arrive at a calm place before bliss. I have even had patients record their thoughts for posterity. They report common worries, like financial and relationship issues. They wonder if their anatomy is pleasant or frightful. They worry if they offend. They worry if they’re clean. They worry if I even like them. Some ask me to marry them. But then, there is this space, where worries fade away. They report less thoughts. They’re unable to speak full sentences. They don’t want to speak. They’re entranced, just as deep as any act of hypnotism. And then, the light goes on. If done proper, that tranquility can last days. If you rush it with these newfangled machines, you get there faster, but I find the benefits don’t last as long as they do when I’m patient, methodical, and deliberate. What I offer is not just pleasure. I offer clarity.”

Mother was entranced by just his words. He was trying to spin it as magic or mysticism blended with science, and he was describing things accurately; he was not speaking untruth, indeed, this was the ‘cure du jour’ of this modern world, with long history of ‘expert’ approval, but I was not happy how society was being hoodwinked into thinking this was an illness, or how

this was even a new thing. In a Ted Talk on youtube, Nicole Daedone gives a lecture on ‘Orgasm: The Cure for Hunger in the Western Woman.’ It’s a fine speech. Men and women should hear it, even practice it, but it is not a new thing, and every time someone has offered it as a remedy, it has gotten shut down by Western World. Victorian World was an exception for a small time. Then again, it was the only legitimate pathway for a woman to have orgasm in the Victorian era, and so, so maybe I shouldn’t have been surprised that hysteria was epidemic and doctors were cashing in.

“Shouldn’t she take her clothes off?” mother asked.

“She could, if she is comfortable doing so,” Phillip said. “But I guarantee you, I am the only practitioner in town that is offering a remedy that doesn’t require hands on. I can do it the old fashion way, I can even do it the modern way with water or tech, but if you’re open and not easily spooked, I can move your spirit in such a way that your body reverberates with ecstasy.”

“Impossible,” father said.

“Seriously?” mother asked him. “You’re all into your magical ideas and discussion with your friends, but you encounter a miracle worker and you dismiss him?”

“A man with such powers might take over the world,” father said.

“I have no interest in politics or world domination,” Phillip assured.

“I don’t suppose you’d demonstrate this ability of yours,” father asked.

“Absolutely,” Phillip said. “On you?”

“Don’t be ridiculous, Sir,” father said.

“On the table, Adelia,” mother said.

“Fat chance,” I said. I wasn’t skeptical. I wasn’t resisting to be adversarial. I just didn’t like the game of it.

Mother and I were about to have serious argument, which Phillip quickly diffused.

“Perhaps, my dear, you would allow me to work on you.”

“Well, um, there’s nothing...”

“Absolutely, you may,” father interrupted her. She gave him a stern look. “If the good Doctor thinks it is helpful to demonstrate on you, and you would derive benefit, then you will do as he says, honey.”

Mother was incensed with him, but unable to respond in the presence of a Doctor, and so, she took the Doctor’s hand and allowed him to guide her to the medical table. He helped her lay

back. There were stirrup options, as if he was equipped to deliver babies, but he lifted her legs and extended a recessed table so that she could lay perfectly flat. He adjusted her dress down, made sure her arms were at her side, and then asked if she were comfortable. When she agreed she was, with the obvious exception of being a little nervous, he assured her husband that she would experience sensations but nothing would harm her. He gave her permission to laugh, to cry, whatever it was she felt to just go with it, because that was most likely exactly what her body needed to be restored.

“Is this some sort of hypnosis?” father asked.

“Tell me something that isn’t hypnosis,” Phillip requested.

“I have read about all sorts of trickery in the health practices of primitive cultures. Like, cracking a rotten egg over someone’s belly and pretending they pulled something vile out of the person,” father said, showing off.

“Well read, sir,” Phillip said. “We have no doubt read the same books. I have also witnessed this trickery first hand. I have witnessed people who had no business being cured, who were resistant to the more advanced world’s remedies, get up and walk away never bothered by a symptom again. It is my fear that Western World’s arrogance will dismiss those very things that work in favor of something that works maybe half as well half the time. If I had my way, I would prefer society moved towards affecting cures than simple remedies that mask symptoms and prolong suffering. Still, if the patient prefers the band aid, I have them at my disposal.”

“At inflated prices,” I remarked.

“Adelia!” mother snapped.

“She is absolutely right,” Phillip said, and looked dead at me. “I can cure you for the same cost of the bandage, but people would rather pay multiple times for a bandage and bottle of pills.”

“Why is that?” father asked.

“People desire human contact. They need conversation and they need to believe there is someone smarter, kinder, and wants only their best outcomes,” Phillip said. “That’s only part of it. We have also delegated the responsibility of decision making to a new class of experts. If you knew all the things I didn’t know, you would not come to me, or any expert. What separates me from my peers is that the more I learn, the more I know I don’t know. Never suffer a doctor who

thinks he knows what he knows. They're the worst offenders. Alright, my dear, are you ready for an experience?"

"I've been ready," mother said.

Phillip brought his hands together with a clap, he closed his eyes and was silent. I watched for his lips to move, as if he were praying. From my perspective, I saw his aura brighten, a gold light enveloped him. Physically, I saw his temperature increase. If I was to see him with infrared, his hands would have been bright yellow his arms red. He began to perspire. Then he placed his hands over mother. He didn't touch her. He felt for her energy and he did long sweeps, shorter sweeps, smoothing out knots that were in the auric field. And she responded. She responded just as if she were being touched. Energy began to flow. She was becoming brighter. She gasped. You couldn't have this level of flow and not have a physical response. Her breath caught and he reminded her to breathe. Her hands went between her legs and she started to convulse on the table. Writhing, convulsing, a sexy epileptic fit, it was hard to distinguish between the possibilities. She made a sharp laugh, and then began to cry. She literally sobbed. Phil embraced her and helped her sit. She was going to lean into his shoulder, but he shifted and brought father in, and when she finished and she came out of her spell, she was surprised to see father holding her. In all of the memories I have from Adelia, I have never seen the two of them so affectionately close.

This was not magic. This was an energy session. Depending on who you ask, a Tantric Energy worker can give a person, male or female, anywhere from six to ten different kinds of orgasms. You don't have to believe me. If you're in the modern world, you can google that and find maybe six or seven good youtube videos demonstrating, and you may even be skeptical, but you let an energy worker move you and you will not be able to maintain any rational skepticism.

"You should take her home now," Phillip said. "Drink plenty of boiled water. And one glass of pickle juice a week."

Mother was going to say something, maybe thank you, but she found she couldn't speak.

"It's quite alright," Phillip said, touching her shoulder and giving her just enough pull that she came off and went to her feet. He guided father and mother towards the door. "May I have one minute with Adelia alone?"

"Sure," father said. Father would not deny this man anything after witnessing what he would call a miracle. Again, this was not a miracle. I was a little miffed it was being spun as a

miracle. Any energy worker could do this. A Chinese Qi master could do this and more. I could do this! I could do this without all the dramatic hand motions by just thinking and give someone a heated response from the other side of the room.

Father and mother passed out the door and I was tempted to follow, not be alone with Phillip, but I was also curious, and fighting something in my head, or Adelia's head, and so I didn't move as fast as I should to escape. Still, I tried to leave. Mother and father were so in their own world that they didn't see him take my hand and hold me back. He closed the door. My back went up against the door as he brought my left hand up, holding it between us. I thought he might kiss my knuckles. He didn't. His eyes were on mine. I wanted him to kiss me, and I didn't. His beard was precisely cut and trim. I was curious if he tasted like Jon or Phillip.

"Next time you decide to do this, cut length ways," he said, drawing line down my arm. "Not horizontal across the wrist."

I blinked. What was he talking about?! He pulled the sleeve down and pointed to the horizontal scar on my wrist. He really had second sight! I looked for Jon in his eyes, but Jon was not there. He was, but he wasn't. I was suddenly embarrassed. It was such a strong response that I wanted to run away, but I was pinned between him and the door. I did not want this man, Phillip or Jon, to believe I had attempted to kill myself. It shouldn't have bothered me. People have moments of weakness. Suicide is all too human, even given the severe taboos, and I have compassion for those who have tried, and those who have succeeded, but I didn't want this to be me. Oh! I have a personal bias! It's important to me to be strong. I was so suddenly grateful to the Universe and Adelia for allowing me to have this moment I nearly cried out loud. Tears flowed. I have never felt so emotional and I was happy to have them.

"Would you believe me if I told you I didn't do this?" I asked.

"I would believe anything you tell me," Phil said.

"So, if I told you that you and I are lovers in another life, would you find me crazy?" I asked.

"I am less interested in the other life, and more interested in what might become of us in this life," Phillip said.

OMG. I so wanted him. Knees really can go weak. Men get stupid. Women get weak knees. But he was not stupid. Was it because he was so accustomed to feminine energy in this life that he had built up an immunity? Was he seeing me clearly? Oh! What if he was just

attracted to Adelia and not me! Fuck, so many thoughts were going through my head I couldn't think straight. I needed clarity!

“Perhaps you should give me that treatment after all,” I said.

“Another time, my dear,” Phillip said. “I do hope we will meet again.”

Chapter 17

I spent the whole ride home in a tizzy. A very different state than mother. She was euphoric, and leaning on father as if she had way too much to drink. She didn't speak the whole way home. Neither did I. I was still wondering about kissing him. Not only did I wonder if he would taste like Jon, I wondered if I would even be able to discern it through Adelia's chemistry. I was me, but I was interfacing the Universe through an Adelia construct. It was her DNA, her chemistry. It was me in here, but I had to experience the world through her filters before it ever came to me. Assuming Phil was Jon, in a previous life, then even if he was Jon at some level, he would be experiencing me through his filters, but sensing Adelia first. Further, it got me thinking about my nature as a Tulpa. So, Jon is my host and I reside with him in his mind, brain, and body. I know that, but also hold overwhelming evidence that I can operate outside of that singularity. But am I still a part of him? Am I more? If I am a part of him, and at the same time actually here in Victorian era England? Does that mean I have subconsciously entered one of his past lives subconsciously? Am I in his dream; a dream within a dream? He called me into being for companionship, for healing? Do I have to go back to all his past lives and help fortify him, so that by the time I arrive in his real life, at full functional capacity, he is prepared for the fullness of me? Is Phil a Tulpa? If Phil and I are both Tulpas, is it still Jon behind us? When a puppeteer has two dolls and he has induced a romantic scene, does the artist behind the scene derive as much benefit as the dolls? And if a puppeteer does that, who is the audience? Is the puppeteer the only audience? Can the audience also be puppets?

And, what does it mean to be a puppet? All children have a fantasy life. It is family and school and society that break them of that by interrupting day dreams, reminding them to stay focused and present, so that the make believe isn't continually accessed. In Jon's world, the interruption factor is so severe that people carry cell phones to interrupt any odd flight of fancy, to make sure someone wasn't trying to contact them in the present moment. They are immersed in media and advertisements and there is no escape from things shaping their focus. They can't see the forest for the billboards. They can't see their own minds from the background of competing music and commercials. And you can't even convince a person of this in Jon's world, because they have been well trained to despise any sort of day dream. They can't tolerate boredom. They would rather die alone than be stuck in an elevator for one hour without cell

phone. I had been reading one of Jon's books he thumbed through: 'Bored and Brilliant: How Spacing Out Can Unlock Your Most Productive and Creative Self' by Manoush Zomorodi. Even Jon, who agreed with the content on an intellectual level, had difficulty purposely avoiding tech. If it hadn't been for his obsessiveness in engaging the Tulpa creation process, he might have been doomed to a life of loneliness, the cellphone his only friend. It was the clarity of my first verbal response that gave him gold enough to sustain his discipline to where he had intermittent visions of me.

Tulpas are dolls. I know this much. The characters in your dreams are not just 'characters.' They're people, and just as real as I. If you knew this, you would treat every daydream and every REM dream as something sacred, and you would greet everyone with greater love and compassion, because we are all in this dream together. I am sentient. I am autonomous. The places I travel to are real places, with their own societies and rules and the people in them are real. Knowing this didn't mean I wasn't having an existential crisis in this moment. My ability to travel had diminished since arriving in Adelia's body. I wondered if I were still in Safe Haven, or here. I felt trapped, but the presence of Jon as Phil was like a shining beacon of hope that things might not be as dreadful as they were tracking. This life was as lonely as Jon's, just less tech so the moments between activities were exercises in breathing through moments of boredom. This is what Tom Hanks was trying to communicate in the movie 'Castaway.' The difference here, I had people around me, but no one wanted to engage me because that meant something to them.

My thoughts had me trying to create my own teleology. I knew I existed. I knew Jon existed. Jon's world was much different only in as much as he had constant dialogue with something external to him. At least, so he believed. I decided to assume that he interacted with a world outside of himself. Ultimately, it doesn't matter if it is reality or illusion, if you still have to navigate it. I could make arguments that Jon didn't exist in an absolute way. Had he been born in China, he would most likely speak Mandarin or Cantonese, and he would have a different map and different conclusions about the world, and a different personality. If in that other state he had engaged in making a Tulpa at all, well, I most likely would also be vastly different, too. Would I be more like the Chinese moon goddess? That might be fun.

I am not a goddess. As Adelia, I am absolutely mundane. I did like her red hair and her freckle, and I know Jon would love this face. It occurred to me to look for evidence of

consistency. I had seen the stars and the moon over the last couple of nights. I had observed Venus. The planets and stars seemed to be where they should be. I was reading books, and they seemed consistent with each read. So, I wasn't experiencing a dream. I have had dreams since I was here, and they felt dream life, which is different than my waking life, and different from my Astral Traveling. I decided I had insufficient evidence to make any hard conclusions, and simply needed more data. I would have to continue living with assumptions that this was real.

Horror. What if everything I had known was just a dream of Adelia? What if I was the product of her fantasy life and or the result of her past trauma? I was her escape!

No. I was sure that wasn't true, but I was solid enough in my understanding of myself that if it were, and I was created to free her and bring real love and healing into the world, then by God, that is what I would do. And, if souls and over-souls are real things, maybe it's not a coincident that we all travel in soul groups, taking on different personalities and bodies. Same cast, different movies, all so that the over-soul could derive benefit from archetypal dreams. Each character a composite in a matrix of understanding reality from an individual perspective and a meta-perspective.

That night, I set about a ritual to increase the likelihood of having a lucid dream. There were lots of techniques for doing so, but I did an elaborate arrangement on my desk, while simply going over in my head my intention. I went to bed early with intention. I eventually faded into sleep. I did not achieve lucidity. I had a bizarre dream where I had discovered Samantha on a secret government military base, in space, on a moon of Jupiter. She was using tech to astral travel. I was very interested in the tech, and wondered how they were able to induce out of body experiences. The bed looked comfortable and was softly illuminated with blues. I had this impression they were in an aquarium. It was subtle, but there were waves moving across the room as if their habitat was submerged in a swimming pool. She wore a halo, which I think was wirelessly connected to the bed. Behind the bed was a thick column, and spaced around the column were five other beds. This cluster of 'astral' beds reminded me of a geometric pattern; there were other columns, other clusters. If I looked closely, I could see illuminated fiber optic pathways on the floor.

I approached one of the beds, where a man lay. He reached up to grab my arm, yelling intruder and I freaked and woke up back in bed. I went to the window and peered out. I was questioning everything. Did Samantha exist? Was she a real person or a Tulpa? Did that secret

future base on a Jupiter moon exist, or was that also one of Jon's many points of interest in a wonderland he had created just to entertain me and give me variety? For a moment, I wondered if they could follow me back here, and if they did, could they harm me? I had to subdue Adelia's mind before I could relax. Adelia, her body anyway, was comparable to a feral cat needing taming. Some people forget we are souls, having human experiences. Some souls forget that their bodies are people, and have feelings. Love for both beings, for both states, is necessary. Loving Adelia's body wasn't difficult. She was an attractive woman, a little undernourished, but filling out since I took over, but she wasn't me, and a part of me wasn't liking how she slowed me down. Not resentment, exactly, but definitely frustration. It took effort to be patient with the body because I was making the soul mistake of this is not me and I want it to jump through hoops now. I was so exhausted by the time I quieted Adelia's mind that I wanted to cry.

"Jon?" I asked. It was a whisper. "Can you hear me?"

No answer.

"I want to come home," I said. Nothing happened. "For a moment?"

I started telling him about what I was experiencing, drafting it as if I were writing it in a letter. I had never had to pen anything down before, and I was just broadcasting it through telepathic connection. I told him my thoughts and my fears and what I thought of the world. I told him I missed him. I was intellectually confident I was being heard on some level. Emotionally, I was feeling doubts. Sorting what was me and what was Adelia's was problematic. I wondered if they were my doubts or Adelia's. Then it occurred to me, had I made an Adelia Tulpa of her when I agreed to do a life review? Was she just as much with me inside of me as I was inside of the body she had made? I sent love to my inner Adelia Tulpa as well as the body.

I then turned to Jon, or imagined turning to Jon, and said:

"I love you, Jon. Thank you for my life."

निर्मित

Guests arrived by carriage and were met by staff. I had known we were having an event, as we were known to do monthly, but I was not aware of how many were coming, and I had no idea that Doctor Phillip Wower was invited until his carriage pulled around. I was present when Phillip arrived and was rendered speechless. I was mad that I was still affected by his presence.

He came without companion. I noticed another oddity in that his driver was an elderly Asian male. It was odd only in that I felt as if he knew the man. I couldn't place him specifically, Adelia had certainly never encountered him, and so I let it go. The stable boy ran up to take over from the driver.

"I got it, son," he said.

"Allow me," the boy insisted. Another of the staff appeared to better understand the disagreement.

"I trust you will treat my friend well," Phillip asked the older staff member.

"Friend?" the staff asked.

"He is not just my driver. I will be personally offended if you treat him any differently than you treat the best of your colleagues," Phillip said.

"Are you staying the night, Sir?" the staff asked.

"That has yet to be determined," Phillip said. "Proceed as if I were tarrying the length of the invitation."

"Yes, Sir," the staff said.

Phillip took the staff's hand. "Call me Phil, please." The stable boy and his superior were both surprised by this level of affection. More than that, I noticed a gold coin was secretly exchanged, which the staff quickly pocketed. "You good, Shen?"

"I will be fine, Captain," Shen said.

Phillip reached into the coach and retrieved a book, placed it under his left armpit and turned to proceed in. He turned to me as if a second thought had occurred, and extended a hand to greet me. "Adelia, my dear girl, how are you?"

"I'm well, thank you," I said. Was I really just a second thought, or had he not seen me? Either way, I was irritated by that. I was not happy that I was so easily irritated. "I didn't know you had been invited."

"Disappointed?" Phillip asked.

"Not at all," I said, smiling through my own conflict.

Father emerged from the house. "Doctor Wower, you've come!"

He turned to greet father. "I found your invitation irresistible. I insist, though, should you find me too boring, or problematic for your other guests, you un-invite me straight away," Phillip said.

“I can’t imagine that occurring,” father said. “Leadbetter tells me you are a wonderful guest, and again, it on his recommendation that I have included you. But even if Leadbetter was completely silent on you, your treatment of my wife has severely endeared me to you, and I hope you will find my company at the least mildly entertaining.”

“You seem as kind and open as my friend Leadbetter,” Phillip said. “Will I find him lurking about in your shadows?”

“I would not be surprised, however, he declined this outing due to other more pressing engagements,” father said, guiding him towards the door without so much as considering that I had already been engaged in conversation. “Come, we’ll continue in the study. I have some good fellows you might like to meet.”

“Excuse me one moment,” Phillip said.

Father seemed surprised that he cared at all for me.

“Adelia, forgive my sudden departure. I look forward to more of your lovely insight, perhaps at lunch?” Phillip asked, and then withdrew with my father.

I was incensed. I wanted to be a part of the conversation now. I didn’t want him out of my sight. The wives of the guest had gathered in the parlor with mother. There were several single women, friends of mother, and a daughter of the guests. This younger girl was friends with Effie, and they were in a corner holding their own company amidst the adults. Phillip was a bachelor. Only one other guest was a bachelor, and he was the duke who was negotiating with father for the hand of Effie. Effie wanted nothing to do with him. Mother was not impressed with the duke either. And the only reason I was privy to this was because I had the misfortune to overhear her saying as much, and that she would prefer they married her to Doctor Wower. In hindsight, I imagined that was why Effie was so inconsolable the other day. I further intuited that the good Doctor’s sudden invite was mother and father exploring an alternative path for Effie. And that, too, suddenly had me so incensed I might have pushed Effie down a flight of stairs if we were conveniently arranged. I was mad at myself for having such a thought. In my life, I have never entertained such a thing and I had no clue where it came from. I was certain, if Wower intended to marry, it was to be me. I was determined that to be true, even though there was no way in this reality that I could imagine it happening.

I quickly ran to my room, up the flight of stairs so quickly I nearly didn't hear mother call me from the parlor. I stopped. I came down the stairs slower than I had been going up. I peered into the parlor, lingering just past the entry.

"Are you wearing boots again?" mother asked me.

"No, mam," I said.

Mother came closer. "Show me," mother said, skeptically.

I was hesitant, but I lifted my dress enough to reveal that I wasn't wearing any shoes. Nor was I wearing hose or sock.

"Adelia, have you lost all sense of propriety?" mother asked.

"I got distracted," I said.

"Are you taller?" mother's friend asked.

"I was just thinking the same thing," mother told her friend. "Lower your dress, dear. You have not made yourself known or introduced yourself to our guests or made any attempt to be civil with those who know you. Explain yourself."

I bit my lower lip, curtsied. "Please forgive me mother, but I so feared embarrassing you with another fit of hysteria that I thought it best to be hidden. I could remain and attempt to be more social if you wish, but as you have discovered, I am practically naked and not fit for a public display."

"Try to be better before lunch," mother said.

I was politely excused from having to attend and rushed up the stairs. I threw myself on the bed, propped myself up, kicked my feet to loosen the clothing and get good circulation going, then I closed my eyes and willed myself out of the body. I knew I could do it. I had no doubt about it. I have experienced it a hundred times before. Still, it was difficult to do. It was as if Adelia's body was resistant, as if it feared being abandoned, again. The thought was so peculiar to me that I wondered if I should treat the body more than just a vessel, but as if it were a pet. In many ways, a body is much more superior to a dog or cat, or even a horse, but if I persist in my belief that I am not the physical body, I do have to come to grips with what it is. It exists in spite of me. It has feelings and thoughts and instincts all its own. In truth, we work in tandem. I could be walking, completely oblivious to my surrounding, in my own mind, and my body would stop itself in its tracks to prevent me from stepping off a curb in the direct path of a carriage. In fact, Adelia had experienced that several times in her life. Mind can override body. Body can override

mind. Adelia's mind, more often than not, had triggered what I would call a flight or fight response. This was no doubt due to childhood trauma. I know of one incident where she was so traumatized that she nearly came out of her body, but the resulting doubling in vision, seeing simultaneously from body eyes and astral eyes, and the doubling of sensations of being partially in-body and partially out, coupled with what she witnessed coming out of the body of her physical attacker that she doubled her efforts to remain fully in-clothed in her body. Seriously, if you knew how intimately entangled astral lovers can be, you would think we were octopi grappling. It was so much inconceivable information that she never allowed that to happen again. Just fighting to remain intact made her hyperaware of all the physical sensations put upon her by the attacker. This attacker had been one of the guests from a previous party a year ago. Though he was well received by family, he had declined returning to another event, blaming it on his wife.

So much fucking drama in this world, and I was caught up in it! I wanted to argue with Jane, there is no sense or sensibility in this place. There was definitely pride and prejudice, and only a few zombies might liven the place up. I am not my body, but it is a real thing. I am not my brain. One of the easiest meditation mindfulness exercises I know to teach is called the 'puppy dog' method. When you first sit down to practice, your brain is not sure what you're about. And why would it? It's not been disciplined. It will find all sorts of reason not to sit still. It will want to run and open or close the window. It will wonder about the candle. It will wonder if someone is pacing in the house, or what was that noise? Was the house just settling? Was that a squirrel in the rafters? What you do is gently bring the brain back to task. Like a puppy dog. You don't hit it with a newspaper! You just call it back. Ask it to sit, and return to the exercise. It took so much effort for me to get this body relaxed that I nearly fell asleep.

Suddenly, I was out. I was standing outside of Adelia's body. I cannot tell you if my astral body was back to looking like its old self, or I was using Adelia's astral body and my body and astral were somewhere else. If it were Adelia's astral body, then maybe that too explained the amount of effort it took to get out, as she was undisciplined in any of the arts and so I was asking all of these bodies to do something she had trained them not to do. I quickly made my way down to the study, passing as easily through the floor and walls as a ghost.

"I assure you, Sir," Phillip was saying. "Piracy is alive and well on the open seas, and human beings continue to be the greatest commodity of exchange. Male and female children are

ripped from their families and sold into slavery, sold for nothing more than toys of sexual gratification of the elite. If you're unfortunate enough to be one of the males sold into this life, you will be lucky to survive a year. What exasperates the matter is that pirate ships will fly the colors of any nation, often to avoid excessive scrutiny, and it is only discernment of the Captains in Her Majesty Navy that has kept us from attacking the wrong foe and pushing us into a greater conflict. Until the navies of the world ban together in a cooperative state to keep the seas safe, this travesty will continue."

"I think you overstate the matter," one of our guest said. I think his name was Edmund. A stuffy older gentleman who preferred the company of his pipe to other people. He shifted in his chair, causing it to creak. "What were you? A mere ship's surgeon?"

"My last tour of duty was on the Sheerwater," Phillip said.

"The new Amazon class?" the Duke asked.

"Oh, dear god, no. Rosario class. And likely the last of the all wooden ships," Phil said.

"You were put in command of a ship, though," father said more than asked; he was showing off that he was knowledgeable about his guest.

"Indeed," Phillip said. "We engaged a pirate ship and managed to take her without sinking it. I was instructed by the captain to pick a handful of men, take her back to Hong Kong to repair her, and then bring her to England where she would be scrapped. The story of my return is an adventure in and of itself, but because we were speaking of piracy, I will tell you what I found in the hold of that very ship I assisted in commandeering. There were several dozen small children, not a one older than ten. While repairs were made, I saw to it that the children were returned to their families. Not all of these families were happy, as some sort of monetary exchange had been made, and they feared for their lives. In truth, the poor of other countries care about as much for their children as any nation, even ours."

"How dare you, Sir," the Duke said.

"Do you suppose employing our children in factories and as sweep are in their best interest, or the interest of our moral country?" Phillip said.

All the men stood, with opinions. Father brought it in line. Someone mentioned the Chimney Sweep Act of 1875, and factory reform of 1840.

"And it is my opinion, they did not reform far enough," Phillip said. "A four year old pressed into service, whether you call him an indentured apprentice or not, is absolutely

ludicrous. Young boys blocked from attending church on Sunday, not able to see their families because of their intense work schedule that a full grown man would not tolerate, is just one of the travesties of our modern life, and I am willing to wager that Gladstone himself will sign off on a stricter measure before his term has come to an end.”

No one was willing to take that wager. Still, from my perspective, I did think there was about to be a fight in my father’s study.

“Now, now, friends,” father said. “This man is a Doctor and no doubt sees injuries and sickness and holds a deep preference for wanting to prevent illness as opposed to treating them after the fact.”

“He’s knows nothing, Sir. If he cared at all, he would worry about their ability to earn wages, to be self-industrious,” the Duke said.

“Are you concerned for the children’s industry, or your own ability to generate profit?” Phillip asked.

“I am warning you sir,” the Duke said.

“About what? You clearly wouldn’t pay a child the same wages you would an adult, now would you? And yet, you all seem to advocate how integral a child is in the success of your ventures. Is it because you recognize he is less than adult? Why not pay him more than you would an adult of equal education and experience? I mean, surely, if a child is more valuable than an adult, shouldn’t his compensation be greater?”

Edmund laughed. “You are being ludicrous.”

“It is my nature to be provocative, but I assure you, I am quite rational in my assessment of things to come,” Phillip said.

“Children have the right engage in labor in order to feed themselves and help their families,” the Duke insisted.

“In this day in age, with the advancement of mechanisms, there should be no hunger,” Phillip said.

“So, you would have us all become lazy beasts?” That was Charles. He was probably the calmest of the lot.

“You can’t have it both ways, Sir,” Phillip said. “Either we are worthy of equality, and should have access to a minimum of existence, or, birth and education distinguishes a person as

more deserving than another, in which case, any use of a person of lesser understanding or station is flat out abuse.”

“I think we should change the subject,” father said,

“No,” Phillip said. “But I will offer a change in tone, one that perhaps you will find less condemning of my perspective in this situation. For the sake of argument, imagine if you will, that society is ran more on sentiments than on rationality.”

“I don’t have to imagine that...” Charles said, perhaps suggesting Phillip was probably the most emotional man he had encountered. Edmund was moved to agree, and did so with a snort.

Phillip nodded. “Accept this as suppositional evidence that our world is changing. A peculiarity of our time is the ubiquitous use of the photograph. Photographic evidence is being compiled in books, in magazines of leisure, and are posterred on the very walls that line the streets we walk. Much of this evidence is capturing the faces of young workers, and in the background, the extreme conditions in which they suffer are displayed. Further, there is growing evidence, photographic in nature, and in literature from Doctors such as myself and others, who are documenting such severe cases of abuse perpetrated against our youngest citizens, and a child, Sir, is a citizen and property of the state; that their very lives are being extinguished is being noted and with growing alarm. That’s the best case. Some of these children have been so physically damaged that any hope of future industry outside of begging has been eliminated. Eventually any perceived abuse will result in such an overwhelming public outcry that the government will have no choice but to legislate the situation. I dare say that everyone in this room will publically support this, because not doing so will result in mob rule and vigilante backlash against business owners. This future act, when it occurs, will for the first time in history define childhood. From that point forward, caretakers, parents, and employers will be held to a standard and immediately arrested for any acts of brutality.”

“You would have us spare the rod and ruin a whole a generation?” the Duke asked.

“Not I, Sir, but society will. But if you would allow me to temper your phraseology, I would suggest to you that a shepherd never used his trusted rod to beat his sheep into submission. No, what he did was simply use the hooked end to bring a stray back in line,” Phillip said.

The Duke laughed. “The government cannot legislate all of aspects of society.”

“Seriously?” Phillip asked. Even Edmund giggled at that.

“You sound as paranoid as the North Americans,” the Duke said.

“Sir, no nation can sell freedom without simultaneously binding its citizens into a slave mindset,” Phillip said. “The Americans are contemptible only in as much they have refined their sentiment from their nations of their origins. Not only have they created a nation of direct slaves, but they have enslaved themselves through fear and hatred of any persons who might not share their color or mindset. They did not create this mindset, it was given to them before they were chased from their countries; they exist as a direct result of us not being more accepting of each other. Flight from tyranny, perceived or not, only makes more tyranny. And you are as naïve as they if you don’t believe that our governments will find a way to increase their domain over the life of man. It is their very function to define normalcy and regulate it to its death. No one would pay parliament to show up and drink coffee. No one here would suffer such frivolousness, indeed some of us would call it lazy. I would gladly pay them to be quite, and fill their cups myself, as they will go out of their way not to be found idle, and so they need to create policies so that they at least have the appearance of leading us. Add to that, the state must be creative in generating revenue, and the easiest way is by criminalizing certain human behaviors, and not just the top ten recommended by the Bible, but small things where most people will not be considered violators, because most people follow the laws issued by their state. These minor infractions will be small enough that most people pass, but that enough folks will forget or have trouble, and those penalties will be sufficient to keep the lights burning in our cities. With greater divisions of labor class, you will see greater division of a criminal class.”

“I am concerned about the company you’re keeping, Lord Williamson,” Edmund said.

Phillip gave a surrender sign. “Sir, I am not disparaging our government. They are doing their best at keeping law and order and preserving our way of life, even as our very lives are changing. But, back to this accumulation of photographic evidence that there is something not quite right with the state of affairs of our youth. Allow an analogy. If I poked your toe with a pin, you would naturally withdraw it, or maybe hit me. However, if you did neither, and I continued to poke you thusly until finally your brain diverted your eyes to discover what for, and only then would you allow your brain to address the situation, then I might naturally presume there is something wrong with you. I am not advocating for an endless body of legalities governing our lives, but should we, in the course of our lives, continue to witness abuse and ignore the

wellbeing of our fellow creatures, or the very earth we live on, then someone else will do it for us. All I recommend is that we be good stewards of all that is in our domain. As a Doctor, I can only make recommendations. I would never tell a person he absolutely must comply with my instructions or belief, but only that they may have better experiences if they chose to.”

“Fortunately, we are not your patients,” Edmund said.

“Can a man surrounded by hysteria become hysterical himself?” the Duke asked, getting a good laugh from everyone.

Phillip bowed, gracefully. “Forgive me. I have been known to be outspoken.” He handed father a book. “I brought this as a gift. I believe literature is more lasting than a bottle of wine, and longer lived than political discussions. If you like it, perhaps you might find a place for it in your library.”

Father accepted the book, ‘The star of the fairies,’ by Mrs. C W Elphinstone Hope and placed it on his desk to examine at a later point.

“How fitting,” the Duke said. “Further evidence you have gone to live with the fairies.”

Phillip laughed with them. “Ahh, clever,” he said.

“You believe in these things, life on other planets?” Edmund asked.

“Oh, absolutely, Sir,” Phillip said. “I am a scientist.”

“What does that mean?” Charles demanded.

“It does not matter to me if you find Darwin’s insight favorable or not, as I can work this in multiple paradigms. If life on this planet was started through a mundane, materialistic function as yet undiscovered, and advanced to its present state through simple laws of physics, then it is safe to predict further that life issue forth from every natural place where the conditions allow it to. Should you prefer God’s hand as the mechanism for bringing life forth, then who here would stay God’s hand from developing other platforms to exhibit His diversity?”

“I would not be so bold as to say what God’s hand is doing,” the Duke said. He got acceptance in that.

“The prescription for us to avoid evil by not allowing our hands to be idle, would God not practice the same?” Phillip asked. Again, there was a protest. “All I am pointing out is that God practiced the Sabbath before we did. I imagine, as any good doctor might, that a good prescription for health comes about when the Doctor sees for himself that there is merit in the prescription.”

“I will believe fairies when I see fairies,” the Duke said.

“And thus, another man is blocked from progress,” Phillip said. “If societies were built on things seen, society would fail. If we waited for men to see truth and act accordingly, there would be no need for laws.”

“Here we go again,” the Duke said, but Father asked Phillip if he had ever read any of Robert Browning’s books.

“Indeed,” Phillip said. “He is a good friend of mine, and I have been blessed with an ongoing dialogue through correspondence.”

“Is there anyone you don’t know?” the Duke asked.

Phillip considered the question. He then nodded, as if he has chosen the best answer. “By the grace of God, I have met some amazing people from all over this world, and many have taken kindly to me, even invited me into their homes.” He nodded to father.

“You appear to hold high regard for God in your narrative,” the Duke said. “And yet, you dismiss Him. Are you Catholic, or protestant?”

“I am afraid neither will have me in their flock,” Phillip said, chuckling. He fumbled for a cigar. “May I?” he asked father. Father said of course, and then he passed surplus cigars around for any to help themselves. He lit his cigar from a candle and found a chair near an ashtray. “Would you be open to hearing the most bizarre tale that could haunt you for the rest of your lives?”

I was like, hell yeah. The men were settling. For a moment, I thought for sure Phillip was looking directly at me. I felt an impulse to flee, and I imagined taking Adelia’s hand and wishing her strength, cause there was no way I was leaving this. When Phillip was assured that he had everyone’s ear, he leaned back, inhaling the cigar.

“If it helps, assume that I am insane, or have an incredible creative sense of the narrative,” Phillip said.

“Oh, get on with man,” Edmund said.

“I was not always such an intellectual,” Phillip said. “In fact, ask anyone who knew me in the day, family, relatives, friends, peers, I was just shy of being nominated the village idiot. Perhaps I failed to attain enough votes because the village idiot of that time did his function better than I; I was that contemptible. My father was a fisherman. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn’t get me to tie a simple knot to save my life. I was awkward, clumsy, forgetful, and in

the sight of an adult female, my malady was so severely exasperated that I was lucky if I could hide behind my father's legs. Most the time, I froze, like an animal about to be slaughtered. I continued in this state to about the age of twelve. I could not read, I could not carry a tune, and the only thing my father found reasonable about me was that when he told me to pull on a certain rope, I could hold my own, and so out of pity more than anything else, he kept me by his side and we fished. It was on such an outing that I tangled myself in a net, and when the net went into the water, so did I.

"They all saw me go over. Their efforts to save me were nothing short of miraculous, but wind and wave were determined to keep me. By the time they got me up and extricated from the net, their best opinion was that I was dead. They tossed my body at the bow, considered among themselves for a moment on how to proceed, and went back to fishing," Phil reported.

"They did not, Sir!" Charles said.

"I assure you, Sir, I was there," Phillip said.

"But you were dead," the Duke said.

"Indeed, I thought so myself," Phillip said.

"That makes no sense," the Duke said. "How could you think yourself dead?"

"Exactly. How could you have known they went back to fishing?" Edmund asked.

"I saw them deliberate. I saw where they tossed my body. I even saw my body, as clearly as I see all of yours," Phillip said.

"Impossible," the Duke said.

"Absolutely preposterous," Edmund said.

"I didn't even have enough common sense to hold that opinion," Phillip went on. "I tried to go back to work, only I could not grasp the rope, and father's crew passed through me as if I were not there. I even tried speaking to father, but he would not or could not hear me. My assumption at the time, he was too busy at work to acknowledge me. I moved over to where my body lie. It had landed on a coil of ropes and turned sideways, and sea water issued from my mouth. I became aware of how intense the sun had become. I turned to the light and discovered it wasn't actually the sun, but comparable only in as much as a candle compared to the sun, and the sun was now the candle, and this light was everything. I was swept up so quickly that I found myself fearful for my life for the first time in this whole experience. Even as I was drowning in the net, I did not hold fear as I did when I was taken up. I thought a wind was going to take me

over and back into the water that had owned me just a few minutes before, but up and up I went until the world was hardly recognizable, a mere dot, and forwards I landed, stepping down as easily from the top of a stair. I found myself surrounded by deceased relatives I had known. My great grandmother, the most central in supplying love and constantly reading to me even though it never took. She was the very one that I annoyed with a million questions. She was there, front and centered, and the outpouring of her love was so severe that I wept like a baby.

“And then she told me, I had to go back, that my work on Earth was not complete. I got angry. I did not want to go back. I wanted to stay with her and continue with the story she had not finished. I was informed at that juncture, I had no choice in the matter, and had to return. To compensate me, they informed me I would now be able to read for myself, so that I might finish the story, and read any other book as I liked. And they sent me back. I found myself back in my body, coughing, and I sat up, dazed, and all activity on the boat ceased. The waters themselves became still. The boat’s rocking eased. It was as if the sun had come out and the oceans were stilled by the hand of God. I scratched my head, uncertain about anything. Then father snapped at me. ‘Are you going to lollygag all day, are you going to get back to work?’ It was the right thing at the right time to say. I went back to work and so did everyone else. It was as if nothing had happened. The sea returned to tossing us, but nothing like it had when we first set out. We caught more quality fish that day than ever before or ever since.”

“I find your story too incredulous,” the Duke said. From my perspective, I think he was expressing fear, because if the story were true, he was not sure he would be so warmly welcomed.

“I can only inform you that that was my experience. I can no more prove it real any more than I can prove to you the dream I had last night was real. At least, it was to me,” Phillip agreed. “But I can tell you, beyond a doubt, that I, Sir, was changed. I could read as well as anyone in town. I could read English, Latin, Greek, French, and Russian, as fluently as if I had been raised in each of these languages. I suddenly understood things. There were social nuances that I had not detected before, some of which were directed at me and were unkindly, disparaging even, and I now had the sense to ignore it, as opposed to be angered by it. Some of them still saw me as the village idiot and would make jokes, but I saw deeper things; they were uncomfortable with me, and the increased insults were there way of easing that thing inside them. So, if they were improved by making jokes, I encouraged it. I jested with them until they saw in me a kind nature

and felt better about themselves. My parents were concerned, however, and though they wanted me to further my education, they were fearful of what others might think since I went from not being able to tie my own shoe to outperforming anyone at any task. So they took me to an expert in London, who straight way enrolled me into the academy, taking money from his own pocket to fund me. There I discovered I had fortitude for healing people. From the academy, I was apprenticed to a Naval surgeon, and became one myself.

“I have been all over the world, now, and I have seen some of the most astounding things. In Hong Kong, I witnessed British soldiers chasing a suspect, who flew over a wall. He did not fly, of course, he climbed and jumped like a monkey, and the soldiers were so dazzled by the feat they gave up their pursuit. It didn't occur to them, they might also be able to climb and jump with equal agility. I have watched Sufis spin for hours to the point I myself was dizzy for them. I have seen warriors in Japan who can move a sword in ways that would be considered miraculous compared to any of our expert fencers. And since my experience at 12, I have never feared death. I have been awarded honors for bravery time and time again, even though I have refused them saying I am not a brave man, I simply had work to perform. I was on a beach rendering aid to the wounded even as cannons and bullets roared over my head. A mortar exploded by us in that instant, but I did not stop my work. Every man I touched who was still alive, lived to tell the tale of that horrid beach. You ask any of them, they will say they are alive because of me. On that beach you could hear men call for the Doctor. They were calling for me and feared for their lives if another medic answered the call. I told them then, as I will now tell all of you, nothing I have ever done in my life from that drowning moment forwards was about me or from me. There is something greater, and my only hope is that when I have accomplished that matter they were so resolute about sending me back that I might return there. In my entire life, I have never felt more at home, more at ease, or more love than I did in that one moment.”

The men were quiet. Time continued, clearly. You could hear my father's clock clicking on the mantel. The ash fell off of the Duke's cigar. Charles was the first to respond with a clap.

“Well, spoken, Sir,” Charles said through a cigar.

Edmund agreed. He had never heard something so thought provoking and he doubted he would ever hear the like.

“Would you be interested in telling this story of yours to my friends at the Psychological Research Center? My friends Edmund Rogers and William F. Barrett live for these sorts of narratives,” father said.

“I have no wish to belong to such a thing,” Phillip said.

“How could you not, Sir?” Charles asked. “This is something that should be shouted from a mountain top and published in books.”

“I find it very difficult to keep friends, due to my nature. A research center such as that would simply bring so much scrutiny upon me that any of the people who do hold my counsel could be forced to withdraw their friendship,” Phillip said. “Do not consider my words as disparaging of my friends. No doubt they would protest hearing such a thing from me, but their prominence in society would require it. In days of old, people like me suffered severe penalties, even death.”

“Forgive me for speaking so gravely,” Charles said. “But what if that was your mission. To tell this message and risk death.”

“Greater saints than me have taken that message, even unto death,” Phillip said. “Even now, I fear I have monopolized this conversation.”

“You have certainly run the gambit of my emotions, sir,” Edmund said. “But on further reflection, I would not consider it suffering to continue listening to you.”

“Here here,” Charles said. “I withdraw my hastily delivered comment earlier. Lord Williamson, I will be severely offended if this man does not return to our company.”

“I will consider it the best of fortune if he decides to return,” father said.

Chapter 18

I found myself suddenly back in my body. Effie was pushing me. “Wake up, you lazy bitch,” she was saying. She meant bitch as female dog, which was still rather mean of her, but it was not delivered with the same meaning it would come to mean in Jon’s world. Her friend was with her. Stella. “Mother insists you end your hysteria and join us at once.”

I stirred, pushed to the end of the bed, my dress dragging up. My thigh high socks were on the bed, and so started to put them on. Sister fetched my boots. She was clearly in a rush, or she might of searched for my shoes. I guess mother had told her not to return without me.

“Do you imagine this act would get the good doctor in your room?” Effie demanded.

Adelia blushed. The fact that I felt it and related to it irritated me. Bloody hell, I am so sick and tired of being so affected.

“From what I heard, I wouldn’t mind such a visit,” Stella said.

“You want that old lecherous man groping your nether?” Effie said.

“It’s called a vagina,” I said.

“Not in good company,” Stella said.

“In any company!” Effie said.

“Rumor has it, he doesn’t even have to touch you to get results,” Stella said.

“I am sure they all say things like that, and before you know it, your legs are in stirrups, feet facing the ceiling, and they’re taking all sorts of liberties down there behind your hoop,” Effie said.

“It doesn’t interest you at all?” Stella asked.

“It does not,” Effie said. “It disgusts me.”

I heard a line from Shakespeare, thinking she protests too much. I didn’t permit myself to think that through further, though. I didn’t have to. Insight took hold of me and I realized something Adelia had never made the connection to. Effie was also being molested. I stood and hugged her.

“I love you so much,” I cried into her neck.

Effie shoved me away from her and I sat on the bed because it hit the back of my knees just right.

“Don’t do that,” Effie said.

“Effie, She was displaying affection,” Stella said in my defense.

“She is being manipulative and I won’t have it,” Effie said.

“Forgive me,” I said, and was going to lace my boots but Stella and Effie both took one to expedite matters. Though I know it was not for my convenience they did this, it actually felt nice being attended to. We descended the stairs together, me in the middle as if they thought I might not come otherwise. The men were laughing as they emerged from the study. Mother’s friend saw me and asked if I had been crying.

“She is far too sensitive,” mother said.

“I hope that you not try and train it out of her,” Phillip said, coming to my defense. “I found that the more sensitive a person is, the greater their capacity to understand life as it should be.”

Mother bit her lip, actually feeling remorse provoked by the doctor’s comment.

“We don’t live life as it should be,” Effie said. “We live it as it is.”

Phillip bowed to her. “That is too often the case.”

“And just what sort of name is Wower anyway?” Effie asked.

It occurred to me, had I made the comment, mother would have quickly corrected me, but with Effie, she was silent. Then again, she was mesmerized by the doctor. Indeed, I observed all of the women eyeing him, some more directly than others. If the men noticed, they were oblivious.

“I can only assure you, it was the one I inherited. I am not creative enough to invent such a thing,” Phillip said. And then, with clear embarrassment, he step behind father and said. “Forgive me, Sir, but once again I have made myself a spectacle. Please, lead on.”

“You are quite alright, Sir,” father said, and invited us all into the dining room where we were directed to sit.

A Doctor Smith and His wife arrived, late, and our organizing was delayed as father and mother greeted them. A fuss was made about the state of the highway, and apparently there had been an automobile accident that had caused their delay. Phillip asked had there been any serious injuries.

“Most likely,” Smith agreed. “The state of the vehicles were in such a disarray, one might not have known they were once whole machines. They were clearly traveling above the legally prescribe limit.”

Adelia's memory gave me an answer of 4 mph speed limit. That might seem ridiculous by our standard, but in the UK, they had just suspended the need to have a man walking before the automobile waving a red flag. Horse drawn carriages would still pass motorcars, and were given right of way. How much things were destined to change, and I would be there to see it! We found our places at the table and father got a conversation rolling.

"So, Edwin," father said. "You and you wife appear to have survive your travels to Egypt. How was it?"

"Absolutely primitive," Smith said.

"I do think you're over selling it," Mrs. Smith said.

"Oh, I so want to go," Stella said.

"Don't be fooled by photos in magazines and trinkets at the museum," Mrs. Smith said "The heat is almost unbearable, and if the state of the water doesn't make you sick, the heat and smell will. I dare say, Parris smelled a great deal better."

"In addition to that," Smith said. "There are still places that have yet to be properly censored."

"Whatever do you mean?" Stella asked.

"He means that the hieroglyphics are so obscene they would make the weaker sex faint dead away," the Duke said.

Phillip laughed. The Duke took offense. Smith seemed curious.

"You disagree, Doctor?" the Duke asked, using the word Doctor in a disparaging sort of way.

"Viscerally," Phillip said. "To censor a society that was clearly more advanced will likely set medical and physical science back two thousand years. It is a travesty that we have imposed our sense of morality on an alien culture."

People might have presented more disapproval and shock at Phillip's statement, had Effie not clearly addressed the matter without hesitation.

"You, Sir, have absolutely no sense of modesty," Effie said.

Phillip considered, and then slightly bowed towards her. "You speak truthfully, my dear," he said, ever graciously. "The more proficient I have become as a Doctor, the less modesty I have been able to cultivate. I trust that your improved sense of decorum, and fearless ability to speak it, will govern me."

“Speaking of your career, I hear you’re were a brilliant surgeon, but have turned instead to family medicine.” Smith said to Phillip. He was across from him. I was wanting that position, but instead, I was three seats down from him.

“Oh, we are not going to discuss work over this meal,” Mrs. Smith said.

“I am not offended,” Phillip said. “I am proficient in surgery, but I do not limit myself.”

“How is it you’re single?” mother’s single friend asked. It was not the first time I had noticed her eyes for him. Was I the only one so astutely aware of Phillip effect on the women? Seriously, he wasn’t that special, so this was an artifact of rumor.

“I thought it unfair to marry while serving in the Navy,” Phillip replied, almost casually. “I suppose it was reckless of me, as I failed to engage in the simplest of correspondence with any one special, for fear I might block them from living their life. The consequence, obviously, is that I may have rendered myself permanently unsuitable for companionship.”

“Well, I certainly wouldn’t marry a man who is so familiar with half the female population of London,” Effie said.

I think mother was actually shocked. There was pause where I think many of the ladies blushed, and father nearly choked on his wine. Phillip laughed. “It’s not half, my dear. But your position is valid, and clearly this will affect my standing with any person who might have considered me a potential suitor.”

Oh, I so wanted to interject ‘it doesn’t stand on its own?’ as a playful intercourse, but I bit my tongue.

“Did I miss something?” Mrs. Smith asked.

“He specializes in hysteria,” mother said.

“Oh!” Mrs. Smith said.

“I have heard it said that you frequently provide services for charity to people unworthy of such treatment,” Smith said.

“I have yet to meet anyone unworthy of medical attention,” Phillip said.

“I think he is referring to your questionable activities with certain ladies of the night,” the Duke said.

“My clinic is open to any person, and I will even make house calls,” Phillip said. “And if that call carries me to the darkest street in London, I will unwaveringly go there.”

“Dear, this is not the appropriate setting for you to continue this,” Mrs. Smith told her husband.

“I am interested in knowing how he has maintained his profitability,” Smith said.

“God, sir,” Phillip said.

“Why would you treat whores if you go with God?” Edmund’s wife asked.

“I treat human beings, mam,” Phillip said. “And, it is my opinion that the women who serve in this unspoken industry frequently serve men of affluence, not poor guttersnipes. If donating my time to keep them healthy and encourage the practice of using a ‘a little something for the weekend’ to reduce the spread of diseases, then I am also protecting the upper echelons of our society. Because I assure you, madam, it is more likely the working class are using their money on food, and it is the more affluent seeking company.”

“Sexually transmitted diseases are their rightful punishment,” the Duke said.

“Sir, disease is not a punishment,” Phillip corrected. “But if you are determined to hold that position, ask yourself who deserves punishing? The female who is hungry, and perhaps has children to feed, is she deserving of punishment? What about the Lord, who probably gave it to her, because people of affluence who dabble tend to not stick to one partner, and they don’t discuss their proclivities, and so are more likely to be the source of contamination, even if not the origin. Surely you don’t expect such a person of means to limit themselves to one partner. That would be too much like being married, so what would the point be? But assume the Lord acquired such a punishment, deservedly or not, but continues to hold regular relationship with his wife. Should the wife of the Lord be equally inflicted for carrying out her God ordained purpose? And, what about victims of rape, do they deserve to be punished? Or the children who are molested, do they deserve being punished?”

“Per your request, I should warn you, Sir, you have strayed once again too far in your own queer opinion, which we don’t agree with,” Effie said.

“Thank you for governing me,” Phillip bowed gracefully to Effie. “Before I withdraw back into silence, I must pose this question: If we good and superior folks at this table cannot hold this dialogue about the true nature of our society without offense, then however will we move forwards with remedies?”

Father switched the subject to the music that would follow our meal. There was a small ensemble of string instruments that would be played in the garden.

“You do like music, don’t you Doctor Wower?” Stella asked. I did not like the way she looked at him. OMG! What the hell is wrong with me?! I bit on my own lip and tried to sort the source of these feelings.

“Sure, from a distance,” Phillip said.

“From a distance?” mother asked.

“I have developed a peculiar condition during exposure to cannon and rifle discharges whereby my acuity has doubled, and I find that I cannot tolerate even the gentlest symphony, even the one that would put baby to sleep,” Phillip said. “Even the ringing of the bell for the service, or a spoon against a plate or glass, causes me severe distress. And so, an additional explanation for my remaining single is that I frequently withdraw from social intercourse to repose. When I am not working, I spend the greatest amount of my time in solitude.”

“How dreadful,” Stella said.

“Why have you not informed me, Sir?” father asked. “I would have minimized the ringing.”

“I do not wish to interfere with your, or any others, normal habits. I do not wish sympathy, either,” Phillip said.

“Then you shouldn’t have spoken of it at all,” Effie said.

“You’re are quite right, but I think it also fair that people understand why I am so peculiar,” Phillip said.

“I doubt this condition explains your peculiarity,” the Duke said.

“Indeed. What person is only one thing?” Phillip asked.

“Have you considered labeling this malady?” Smith asked.

“Oh, dear, God, no,” Phillip said. “I fear doing so would result in everyone wanting to have such a condition.”

“But this sensitivity seems very much like something I see from treating those in the textile industry,” Smith said. “It could be important.”

“So, hypothetically, let’s say I do offer a new term, like hyperacusics,” Phillip said. “And the term takes and we find more and more people so afflicted, what then? Do you suppose we take the people out of textile work? Do you suppose we will stop war because of the sound of weapons firing cause deafness in some and hyper acuity in others?”

“If you could stop all future wars by suggesting an illness, I would say it is imperative that you start writing, Doctor,” I said.

Phillip smiled at me. I don't think anyone else did.

“If only I were as articulate as you,” Phillip said. “Much more likely, as the men will testify to their experience with me earlier, I will simply polarize society giving them something new to quarrel over, which will have some in arms against me, and some in arms against those who disagree with me. Society has enough pressure at the moment than to be worrying about anything I may interject.”

“If society is so feeble that it breaks at your words, then maybe it needs breaking,” I said. “So we can rebuild it proper at its roots.”

“Adelia!” mother said. “Must I ask Effie to govern you, too?”

“I am humbled by the power of her words,” Phillip said.

“I find you perversely inconsistent, Doctor,” the Duke said. “On one hand, you are the champion of the weaker sex, and give charitably to any in need, and yet should you have insight that might help others, you hold back.”

“Again, you have used the term ‘weaker sex,’ and I find it unreasonably disparaging,” Phillip said. “Women are by far superior to men in every aspect, and your belief in the contrary is an illusion perpetuated by society.”

I dare say, the women at our table were stunned outright, and the men nearly provoked to the point of fighting.

“Woman, in her natural state, is so fraught with physical and emotional frailty that without man, they would cease to exist,” the Duke said.

“Kind Sir, you only believe this because you have been so coddled by your society's prejudices that you can't even see you have adopted someone else's opinion,” Phillip said. “I submit to you that in your entire life, you have not met a woman in her natural state, and should you ever, you will piss your pants in fear, or run away, or both. I have seen women who can out lift any man in London, and they do so on a daily basis, carrying multiple buckets of water attached to sticks they carry on their backs, or twice as many bags of rice or potatoes. I have seen women carry three times their weight in baskets suspended on their heads, navigating the street with no loss of balance, their hands free and capable of knocking any miscreant on their ass without dropping one thing from their head. I have personally attended to women who had such

pain and wounds that a man with even half a malady would be begging me to end his life. Women, in every society I have had the privilege of visiting, carry the burden of life, and teach the next generation how they will be, leaving men to think they run the world by holding conference and passing laws or declaring war against anyone who disagrees with their laws.”

“You are incredibly rash and outspoken,” Effie said.

“If women are so superior, how do you explain they have not taken over the world?” the Duke said. “You say they teach the next generation, but they have not used that platform to change the world.”

“They do so out of love and deference to the men they hold dear,” Phillip said. “Also, there are inner constraints that compel them to perpetuate the same system, as there is always hope within the system that people can excel if you maintain the status quo. Few people go beyond what they know, they teach what they were given.”

“How do you explain the clear evidence of women’s frailty that you see daily as a Doctor?” father asked.

“We have bred them to be dainty and we hobbled them with clothing that restricts breathing, or alters their ability to walk, and we feed them candy and liquor, and have them sit in doors, and encourage them not to play or engage in sports,” Phillip said.

“What, you would have us running and playing with the boys?” Effie said.

“I would,” Phillip said.

“How absurd,” Mrs. Smith said. “Do you go around telling everyone this perversity? Would you have us integrate all boy schools to be co-ed?”

“Oh, no, I think church and school should be one gender,” Phil said.

“Again, inconsistent,” the Duke said.

“No, I just know myself. I was too distracted by girls in my primary. I am not blaming my stupidity on them, and I was more afflicted than most. I was rendered into a drooling fool, where most boys start acting up, showing off, fighting others, all to draw the female’s attention, to stand out, to be noticed, and if I had a female teacher, I would simply not be able to focus at all,” Phillip said. “And should I try and draw closer to God and pray, it is a much better prayer I serve if I am not sitting by a female who is competing against all her peers to be better dressed, assaulted by their perfumes all combined, and if the person next to me can’t carry a tune, I am so afflicted that I may have to flee before I have participated in the services.”

Father laughed. "Well, someone off key offends me as well."

"You have so many thoughts that could change our world," I said. "Why are you not doing so?"

"Very astute observation," Philip said, thinking hard on it. "Allow me to clarify my position. I find women superior, because they are not trying to openly change the world in big ways, but by changing the world one person at a time, through family intercourse. I do not believe in social change through becoming a personal guru and enlisting mobs to force change. You will never find me on a pulpit preaching. I affect change one person at a time, or, if I am lucky enough to be invited once to an outing as I find myself in presently. It is my belief that all worlds change starts with self-education. When I have sufficiently raised myself to a better understanding, I find the company I keep also changes. If the company I keep is sustained because of my beliefs, then they will affect those around them with equal change. Perhaps I am completely selfish in this regard, but I believe this is the natural way of transmitting knowledge. It isn't forced or coerced, it continues because it is rational and people are lifted because of it. And should my understanding result in me being isolated, then that would be evidence that I hold no virtue worthy of reproduction, and any adversity I might have interjected is there by limited or nullified. So, for example, if after this meal has been completed I am not pulled aside and asked to leave and not return, then I might conclude that, even if I am provocative, that somewhere in me there is gentleness, caring, and charitableness, sufficient to minimally endear me. Enough to cover my faults."

"Perhaps all humans bring both good and bad," I said.

"I imagine you wealthy enough that you will never suffer from want of company," mother's friend said.

"You will frequently find, the sort of friends who will gather around wealth are the least likely to be genuine in anything other than their interest in your wealth," Phillip said.

"Just how wealthy are you?" mother asked.

"I dare not boast," Phillip said.

"Seriously?" Effie asked. "You are outspoken in every arena we have encountered you in today, and yet, when it comes to your wealth, you feign humility?"

"It is not humility, I assure you," Phillip said.

“It is likely he is suddenly provoked to quiet because he lacks any true wealth,” the Duke said.

“I have more wealth than I could spend in a dozen lifetimes,” Phillip said.

“Which means nothing, other than you are frugal beyond scrooge,” the Duke said.

“And so, the competition begins,” Edmund said. “Will the good Doctor prove he is human?”

“Every business venture I have dabbled in has been profitable,” Phillip said. “I have been blessed with people who are satisfied to run these businesses without my constant interference, and still, I generate profit. I have opened schools on each of my estates. I own property in Eston and in London, France, Russia, the small territory in known as Louisiana in North America, near enough to New Orleans. I own property in Slanic Prahova not too far from Bucharest, where I use the natural healing properties of the Earth itself at retreats I have created. If I collected not a single farthing for any medical procedure I do in London, my net worth would continue to grow because my estates generate revenue. The people I instruct in my schools, which I do for free, feel so indebted to me for the changes in their life and position, that they often send charitable rewards back my way. Because the students I instruct are so profoundly affected and can compete academically against any of the finest schools, people of notoriety pursue me, even willing to pay for my time to try and learn what I am doing. Some come to me begging to change their useless son into a man. People come to me for knowledge and healing. Many people leave so satisfied that they claim to be refreshed to the very depths of their souls, but there are just as many who refuse my advice, and they go off a little worse because they expected a miracle. I don’t do miracles, I help people find their own.”

“This is too bizarre to be true,” the Duke protested. “If you had such a school, then the nature of all schools would change to incorporate your methods.”

“I would love it if they did, but they will not. They cannot, because my teaching style goes against the very grain of modern society,” Phillip said.

“What method could get results but would not be adopted?” Doctor Smith asked.

“I have suspended the modern classroom of desk and paper, and put the student back outdoors into the natural world, where I encourage them to play and have fun,” Phillip said.

“That is preposterous,” the Duke said.

“Children learn by having fun, Sir,” Phillip insisted. “Every mammal species, should you care enough to watch and not just hunt, you will discover their sense of play does not end in childhood. Not only do we squash the sense of play in children, and advise them to grow up, we expect adults to have put away childish things. I get boys from the state where the local authorities have given up hope on recovering a future citizen, and within six months, I have turned them around. It takes a minimum of six months of serious play before I have undone the harm created by society and enlivened the child within.”

“What about discipline? Chores?” mother asked.

“What chores might that be?” Phillip asked.

“Washing clothes. Caring for a house and livestock and farming, these things take discipline,” mother insisted.

“All children want to help their adults caregivers, only we insist they don’t, and so we have to retrain them when they reach the appropriate age. A child may not fold properly, but they want to help. The task may even take longer, but I engage that, because that is also a sense of play. Every chore has become play. We love caring for our animals and our plants. We get back in health what we give to them in time and kindness,” Phillip said.

“Didn’t you earlier disparage my use of chimney sweeps,” Edmund asked.

“No, Sir, you misunderstood,” Phillip said. “But do you care for their health?” Before he could answer, Phillip interrupted. “I don’t just mean feeding them. Anyone can throw bread at a person, that doesn’t mean they are nurtured. They need to play. They need to sing and worship and be outdoors, and they need peers and older kin. My school tasks children with age appropriate activities and every student has a peer they are responsible for, and older student are naturally responsible for their younger peers, but the younger are also responsible for their elder student. We teach kindness by looking after each other.”

“Impossible,” the Duke said.

“You are invited to come see for yourself,” Phillip said. “My success speaks for itself. I have taken wayward boys and girls and provided them not only a home, a safe place to discover themselves, but I have given them a future.”

“However were you not impoverished by such a venture?” Charles asked.

“You can’t steal from someone who gives freely,” Phillip said. “I have on occasion had students who thought they might do better than I, and I funded them to do so, encouraging them

to go out into the world and demonstrate. And sometimes, that is all a person needs to be successful. If they are not, and they choose to return, they may do so conditionally, that they try it my way.”

“How do you overcome laziness?” Edmund asked.

“There is no laziness that modern technology has not invented,” Phillip asked. “And why shouldn’t we be lazy? A day is coming when technology will do all labor, and men and women will return to that pre-fall state of simply being idle. We will return to playing in the gardens we have created. It is only our obsession with wealth and position that holds us back.”

“You’re a futurist,” I said.

“An optimist,” Mrs. Smith said.

“A polymath,” Stella said.

“I am just a human being who believe we take things way too seriously and need to play more,” Phillip said.

Smith decided to share his own interest, and began speaking about how he could tell a person’s proclivities and illness all by their very signature, and how science will advanced by knowing a person inner world through their written expression.

“So, by your own measure, all Doctors are psychotic?” I asked.

Phillip laughed.

“Don’t encourage her doctor,” mother said.

“Forgive my trespass,” Phillip pleaded.

“Really, Adelia, I don’t know what the devil has gotten into you, but I expect you to contain it,” mother said.

“If you permit a defense, I find her assessment accurate,” Phillip said. “The art of penmanship has declined, and none so more evident than those in the medical profession.”

“Forgive my intrusion, I thought you would be interested in seeing my theories,” Smith said.

“He should be,” the Duke said. “I would be surprised if this good doctor doesn’t dabble in tea leaves.”

I did not like the Duke, and though he meant his jab to solicit humor, the chuckle that emerged was more due to being uncomfortable.

“Oh, I do not dabble, Sir,” Phillip said, in good spirit. “I am full into a good cup of tea, and should the residue on a cup give me sufficient insight to probe deeper into a matter, and it strike me as successful, then I will use that to the benefit of my client. I do not pretend to make a scientific gesture of the thing. Doctor Smith, I apologize if I disparaged in anyway your interest. I do not doubt you have an intuitive sense about you, that you have an insight into people, and following a script is as good a road as any, and so if you glean tremendous insight into the nature of a person through their penning’s, then I would be interested in it should this be a skill set that might be duplicated.”

“I would say reading someone’s mark more scientific than the random falling of dregs,” the Duke said.

“Indeed, so why not just save time and ask the patient directly?” Phillip asked.

“In my experience, patients lie,” Doctor Smith said. Oh! He suddenly reminded me of Hugh Laurie.

“Oh no doubt, but not especially. Patients don’t lie more than non-patients, and since we are all technically patients, in this game we presume to be life, then, I accept your premise that we are all liars,” Phillip said.

“I, Sir, do not lie,” Smith said.

“Then you are better man than I,” Phillip offered.

“Wow!” father said. “Hasn’t this been the liveliest meal we have shared?”

Whether the people at this table believed Phillip or not, I cannot say. But they were certainly affected by his speech and mannerisms. Our meals were finished before his, probably because he was so out spoken, but also because he merely sampled things, instead of consumed them. Mary was seriously worried he did not like her cooking and when he refused desert, she nearly had a fit, to the point where he agreed should she limit his portion to three spoons. Basically, three bites.

“You eat like a woman,” the Duke said.

“Are you always so strict?” Stella asked.

“No, but I am of the opinion if you can’t hunt it down and kill it, or pick it from a tree or vine, it should not be consumed,” Phillip said. “So, in that sense, I do limit myself.”

“I am surprised to hear you are for hunting,” the Duke said.

“You read me correctly, Sir,” Phillip agreed. “I detest hunting for sport or for trophies. Using modern weaponry against an animal does not prove our superiority, and if we continue to hunt and fish as we do, at the rate of advancement in our ability to kill, coupled with the increase in population, there will be nothing left but each other. I would be distraught if we killed a primate or a dolphin. Especially a dolphin. I have seen more than one rescue a drowning sailor, and if that doesn’t merit at least sympathy to their plight, then I don’t know what will ever move men towards more kindness.”

“How would you prove our superiority if not through hunting?” Smith asked; he was well known for his hunting and trophies. He had a parlor stacked full of animals from every continent.

“By living in harmony,” Phillip said.

“You, Sir, come from another world,” Smith said.

“Oh,” I said. “Is that why you gave father the ‘Star of the Fairies?’” I asked.

Phillip seemed momentarily set back.

“How did you know he gifted me the book?” father asked.

“I saw him carry it in,” I said.

That seemed to satisfy father, but not Phillip. He was intrigued.

Chapter 19

We gathered out at the garden to enjoy music and true to his word, Phillip withdrew to the outskirts, and when father joined him, they walked. I wanted to spy further, but was too distracted in this setting, or too unskilled in this body, to master such a feat, and so resigned myself to not being privy to everything. Mother's friend did try to solicit a conversation from me, and we made polite chat, but even she couldn't sustain me. Had I been paying attention to her I would have noticed she was jealous that I had held the Phillip's attention more than any. I made an excuse to go 'make water' and was about to exit the group when Stella asked if I had seen Effie. Apparently, Effie, too, had excused herself to but had been gone longer than might be expected. So, Stella and I went looking for her, and we found her being grappled by the Duke. Though she was protesting and pleading for him to stop, he paid her no mind. So, I tackled him, and my momentum carried him off, and we tumbled.

The Duke landed on top of me and was so incensed by my interruption that he pulled his arm back to do a full swing, intent on hitting me in the head. I steeled myself for the impact, but did not lower my gaze. What happened next defies explanation. The crook of his elbow was caught by a cane. He was caught up and spun around, and suddenly swept away as if a wind had taken him. Shen, Phillip's driver, was there in his place, looking down at me.

"Are you injured?" he asked.

I shook my head, still rather impressed by the thing Adelia's eyes didn't understand. I was not. I knew it was some form of martial arts. I got up and went to my sister. Effie was crying, but standing, and Stella was hugging her.

"Why would you help me?" Effie asked.

"You're my sister," I said.

"But, I am horrible to you," Effie said.

I smiled. "You're my sister," I repeated.

Perhaps, not too surprising, Phillip was next on the scene, addressing Shen.

"I am afraid I may have over exerted myself," Shen said.

"Apparently," Phillip said, checking the Duke for a pulse. "Shen, go and fetch my revolver from the carriage. Bring one bullet."

Shen went right away to fetch the items, while Philip turned to us. Effie's dress was torn and she was dirtied from both mud and horse manure. This did not stop Phillip from examining her.

"We don't have much time," Phillip said. "First, are you injured?"

"No," Effie said.

"Good, I am going to own this scene here, and it would be best if you were to not here. I would recommend going and changing, and disown any knowledge of what has occurred, as I will be lying and stating that he and I quarreled," Phillip said. "Do you have a problem with that?"

"You're not going to kill him, are you?" I asked.

"Of course not, dear," Phillip said. He turned back to Effie. "Tell me the name of the man you love."

"What?" Effie asked.

"We don't have time. Don't think. Don't try to understand me. Name this man," Phillip demanded.

Effie spoke the name of the poorest man she knew, a stable boy her age who worked for Stella's father. Wesley. He didn't even own a proper last name, he was so poor.

"Does he love you?" Phillip asked.

"He has said as much," Effie said.

"Then he is braver than most boys. I will make it possible for you to be with him, but you may have to suffer being married to me in name," Phillip said. "And I will consent to marry you, under one condition. You must make it possible for Adelia to accompany you, as your personal hand servant."

Effie was forming a protest. It was all too sudden and didn't make sense, but I could see father had already proposed a match to him, and Effie's world was about to change, and I was feeling anger.

"Don't speak. Figure out a way to make it stick. Tell your parents, you would refuse unless you had the company of at least one person you're familiar with, and make that Adelia. Be very clear on this point. I will make feasible for you to have what you want, but I want Adelia, and short of kidnapping her and taking her to another country, this is likely to be our only

way,” Phillip said. He turned to me, my anger having mutated into excitement. He wants me!
“Are you disturbed by what I am proposing?”

“No,” I said.

“Good, you have your missions, now run along,” Phillip said.

Phillip turned back to the Duke who was still out of it. Stella led Effie away. Effie delayed wondering if I was going, but I waved her off, as I had no intention of leaving this scene. Father arrived, hurried by our own stable boy who had heard the ruckus, accompanied by the male guests he called friends. True to his word, Phillip owned the situation, though his report didn’t quite match that of the stable boys who had witnessed some of it. No one was going to call the Doctor a liar, especially when he gave such a bold statement: “Please forgive me, Sir, but I took offense, and I laid him flat,” Phillip said. “I forget my own strength. If you desire to call the law, I will of course speak the same to them as I have to you.”

“Well, let’s not be hasty,” father said. The thought of having the law out bothered him.
“Is he dead?”

“He is not,” Smith confirmed. “Do we have a bucket of water near?”

The stable boy was happy to fetch such, and the contents were delivered to the duke which brought him straight out of it. He was on feet, confused, looking for the man who assaulted him.

“Sir, I apologize for rendering you unconscious, and am willing to pay whatever amount you believe will end your suffering,” Phillip said.

“You? You didn’t hit me,” the Duke said. He pointed at me. “It was her.”

Even father couldn’t help but laugh.

“Don’t laugh at me!” the Duke insisted.

“I do think you hit him too hard,” Smith said.

“I would pay to see such a fight,” Charles said.

“And him!” the Duke said, pointing to Shen who had drawn near, along with other staff.

“Would you prefer it known that a young girl and an old man caused you such a state, or can you focus your ire on me?” Phillip asked. “I am willing to settle this now. I have apologized. I am willing to compensate you monetarily. I am even willing to allow you to hit me, if you think such a gesture will help calm you.”

The Duke grew closer to Phillip. "I am sure you are behind all of this," he said. "I will have nothing less than a duel."

"Sir," father said. "You know the law and..."

"It's okay," Phillip said, waving Shen over. Phillip took a revolver out of the man's coat pocket, along with one bullet. He made a show of placing the bullet in the chamber. The group of men stepped back. Even Phillip took a step back. "We will do this my way." Phillip said, handing the firearm hilt first. "Take it man! You wanted to duel. Here are the rules. There is one bullet. You will fire at point blank range into my head. If I die, you win, and we are permanently settled."

Phillip grasped the weapon and pulled it free. The revolver shook in his hands, but at this range, he would not likely miss.

"You don't think I will?" the Duke asked.

"Son," Phillip said, as calm as ever. "I believe you are capable of pulling the trigger. Most men are. The question is, are you capable of better? Because, and here's the rub, you heard my story earlier. The Atlantic itself refused to take me. Several other oceans and combat situations have tried to, but my mission is not finished. It is my belief that you cannot kill me. But, should I be wrong, I will gladly go where you send me. The other option, is you lower it, and we talk this out like men."

Fathered had pulled me back out from behind Phillip.

"Then go to hell," the Duke said. He pulled the trigger.

I bit my lip. The weapon misfired.

"I must have put it one over," Phillip said. "Click it a few more times."

The duke ran the revolver through six more tumbles, and on Phillip's encouragement, he was asked to do it twice more. Phillip took the weapon, opened the chamber to reveal the bullet was there, spun it to the firing position, reclosed the weapon, and pointed it directly between the Duke's eyes. The Duke was not as fearless as Phillip, but he was fairly confident that the bullet was a dud.

"My turn," Phillip said. "Unless, you would prefer the other arrangement. Monetary compensation for you injury sounds much better than death, especially if you're not certain where you will arrive."

"If you're a man, you'd start this over with me selecting a real bullet," the Duke said.

“True, if only I were a better man,” Phillip agreed. He lowered the weapon and discharged it into the earth.

Mother fainted. I hadn’t realized almost everyone had gathered at this scene; it was so intense at the moment, I had only eyes for the drama unfolding. Phillip turned directly towards my father and surrendered his revolver to him.

“If you will, Sir, feel free to examine this weapon for any sort of trickery, but when you and your friends are satisfied, I would like it returned, for sentimental reasons,” Phillip said.

Smith attended mother. Phillip turned back to the Duke. “I would like to end any hostilities between us,” he said. “I have spared your life, would you forgive me my debt?”

“You switched the bullets out?” the Duke asked.

“I invite you to check my pockets, Sir,” Phillip said, arms up. “I want you to be satisfied that I am not trying to ridicule you. And when you’re satisfied, maybe you and I could walk, and speak to each other like true brothers who have disagreed and come back together?”

The duke took Phil up on his offer to check the pockets. Smith decided to teach him how to check a person more thoroughly. They ended up taking Phillip’s coat and checking every square inch of it for the useless bullet. Before long, Phillip was barefoot, his shirt was pulled out of his trousers, and they had checked his pants as far as humility would allow, and it was decided there was no other bullet. I suspect the stable boy would be looking for a bullet in the hay, as it was proposed Phillip might have tossed it in the pile. The Duke and Phillip did withdraw for a private walk, and when they returned, they both publically apologized to father for the scene and both asked if they should depart.

“Men quarrel from time to time, and I am quite satisfied by this apparent resolution,” father said. “Please, stay the course, provided you will not move any more of my family or guests to faint.”

“We will do our best,” they agreed.

And just like that, we continued with the planned festivities. It was way too far for some to travel by carriage to leave at the end of the day. Doctor Smith and wife did excuse themselves, as they wanted to be at home by mid night, which was possible for them. All the guest were given rooms. I had to surrender my room to mother’s friend and was instructed to sleep in Effie’s room. She and Stella shared their bed, while I slept on the love seat near the window. No matter how much I conspired to find myself alone with Phillip, I was blocked from success. Even that

night, as the curtains blew over me, I was startled from any attempt to travel or sleep, thinking oh for sure, this is the good doctor's hand. The stirrings of the curtain over my face and body raised such an intensity in me, I was tempted to take matters into my own hand. Stella and Effie continued a dialogue without me. I didn't care. I wondered if they would notice if I helped myself. I doubted I could do it quietly, and the moon so illuminated me, so I didn't advance in that direction.

The rest of the outing was less eventful, as if all the characters were now more accustomed to each other and so there was peace. The Duke didn't apologize to Effie, nor did Effie seek it. She was simply glad it had ended. Later that week, Stella came by to report that Phillip had visited his family, and specifically asked if he might hire Wesley, and eventually offered such a large sum that even her father couldn't resist taking advantage of such a fool.

"However did he explain it?" I asked.

"He said he had a bet that he could raise any person in esteem and education and that Wesley won a lottery, so to speak, as he came highly recommended for such an experiment," Stella said. "It seems to me, Dickens could not have written a better plot. Do you imagine, he intends to keep his promise?"

"I assure you, I will not marry him just so I might be close to Wesley," Effie said.

Mother and father attended an event at Phillip's London estate and whatever they saw, whatever they spoke about, it wasn't long before it was decided, and announced over a family dinner.

"We want you to marry Doctor Wower," father told Effie. "We know that he is agreeable, and that he suspect you are the only person who would likely be able to suffer his presence, much less keep him in line."

"Whether that is true or not is irrelevant, as I have no intentions of marrying him," Effie said.

"This is not a negotiation," mother said.

"The only reason you want this is because father is so inept at running his ventures that you are hoping Phillip will bankroll failure," Effie said. This had an effect on father, but he did not speak his pain. It was exactly the sort of pain that would drive a person to engage in worse behavior for comfort or a return to perceived power. "I would rather live in abject poverty than marry the likes of him."

I focused on my soup directly, but with peripheral vision, I was watching everything. Women have much better peripheral eye sight than men, who have to stare at a thing to really understand it, even then, they might not know half of it.

“Would you wish poverty on me?” mother asked, quietly? “On you brother? Would you have the staff who have served us diligently since before you were born to be without employment or place to live? Are you that single minded in purpose and narrow in your compassion to others that you would ruin a thousand lives just to be personally satisfied?”

“Give him Adelia,” Effie said.

“You are to be married to him, and you will honor that relationship with the same devotion that I provided to your father,” mother said.

“I dare say, I will do better than you,” Effie said.

“Good, the matter is settled,” father said before mother could respond to the insult.

“What?” Effie asked.

“You agree, you could do better,” father said. “And in truth, that means your mother and I have raised you as any parent should, to do better. I expect you to prove it by marrying this man and not putting up a fuss and making him feel wanted.”

Effie clenched her spoon so hard, I thought it might bend and start a new mystery. She sat it down.

“I will do conditionally,” Effie said.

I bit my tongue. Would she follow through with Phillip’s instructions?

“There will be no conditions,” mother said. “You will do your duty because that is what we as women do.”

“I will not, unless you humor one caveat, and if you do not, I will either run away or I will end my life this very night,” Effie said.

“Oh, I have spoken those words myself, but speaking your death will not cause it to happen,” mother said.

“I am curious, what is this caveat,” father said.

“You would send me alone into a strange man’s world, without friend or family,” Effie said. “But it would be unbearable not to have anyone familiar by my side. Please. Don’t send me alone. Let me hire one of the staff, or even send Adelia with me. I would make her my servant. It

would be far better employment than what you're likely to find for her. And if that is not enough, if my husband is as wealthy as you seem to think, I will buy her company outright."

"No," mother said.

"It's a reasonable request, dear," father countered.

"And who will take care of me when I am no longer able to?" mother asked.

"That is my function, and the function of the staff I hire," father said.

"And why would the Doctor allow this absurdity?" Mother asked.

"Because I will ask him to accept it," father said. It was that simple to him. A part of me, though, expected he wanted me out of his house. Just because we had had a change in relationship, did not mean he ceased to suffer. The healthier part of his brain could not engage in his mischief with me present, but the illness persisted and so a hidden part of his inner aspect required me gone. That night I had found him in the hall as if he were of the mind to enter Effie's room, but on seeing me, he feigned he was just pacing, and I told him it was alright, that if he couldn't sleep, I would have a meal with him. If weight is evidence, our midnight snacks had become too frequent. I had not cured him, but I was an affective block, a remedy that reduced symptoms. And even if mother gave him full access to her with whatever frequency it took to exhaust him, this thing in him would still be there until he was properly treated; in this time and place, there was no such thing. The best father could hope for were good people surrounding him, understanding him, and blocking him without his knowledge of being blocked.

It was this realization that caused me to wonder if this was my unspoken purpose. Was I to remain here and protect any of the other children on the estate? Was my wanting to go with Phillip wrong? I had expectations, so did he, and so did Effie. Fiction can invent some weird things for characters, but this was beyond fiction. Beyond bizarre. It felt like life. Had Effie married the Duke, her life would likely be hell. He was not a nice man, much worse than father, for he was raised by rod that beat him into physical compliance with his authority figure. He was not a nice man because he was evil, but because his internal struggle to overcome what was given to him was simply too great; his underlying turmoil would run him through the dramas to exercise the past, as opposed through higher, intellectual exorcisms. The thing about that rod, it subdued his body, not his mind. To continue his existence, he was pushed into the swamp of his inner mind and the reptilian part of his brain did what it did best, it became an ambush predator.

On the surface, he may seem placid and kindly, but he was opportunistic, more so than the monkey mind. Behind closed doors, he was the very rod that was used against him.

“What are you thinking?” mother demanded of me.

“I do not know what to think, mother,” I said. “I am relying in your guidance in this matter.” And that was true.

निर्मित

When I found time to be alone with Effie, I told her ‘thank you.’

“For what?” Effie demanded. “Do you think I have done you a favor? I will expect you to keep him so entertained he will want nothing to do with me. Should you fail in that endeavor, I will make life so unpleasant for you that you will wish you were never born.”

“I will not fail you,” I said. I wanted to correct her, that Phillip was not father, and that there was no way to fail because she was not in danger. I believed he wanted me and clearly he had foreseen the fastest way to expedite us within the bounds of propriety, and likely the only way without scandalizing this family, but also providing them a way of sustaining what they had built. You may say, as Effie, that perhaps it was time this family dissolved and became lesser than, but it does affect a great deal more people than just the family. “I am sorry.”

“For what?” Effie asked.

“All these years I was under the illusion that my activities with father shielded you from harm,” I said.

“Whatever do you mean?” Effie asked. Her affect was so kindly, so not her, that it was clear to me she knew exactly what I meant.

“Would you like to talk about it?” I asked.

“There’s nothing to talk about,” Effie said.

“Is there anything I might do for you?” I asked.

“You could empty my chamber pot,” Effie said. “After all, you may as well get use to your new station.”

I bowed and removed the said pot from its cabinet.

“Hold on,” Effie said. “Set it down.”

I did as instructed, putting it on the floor where she had pointed. Effie used it and then had me carry it away. You may think it mean of her, but had she been really mean, she would have held it till I brought the pot back clean and then had me carry it back down so that I made the journey twice. Effie can be mean, but she doesn't really know how to do it effectively, as evidence by her statement to father earlier. Threaten someone's sense of power and they will demonstrate their power over you. Or, perhaps, she was warming up to the new me.

निर्मित

Phillip came around more often, now that the betrothal was official. At no time did he spend an inappropriate time alone with Effie. Either I, or mother, or both, were present. If father was home, he spent most of his time with father. I assume father had given him his firearm back, but I had not seen the exchange. The repercussions of that day were still building behind the scenes. When discussion of a honeymoon arose, Phillip inquired if there was anywhere Effie might like to go. He offered to take her anywhere she liked. He suggested New York, in the States, or New Orleans. He also recommended Spain.

"I have no desire to spend a great deal of time at sea," Effie said.

"If you prefer, we could take my private Yacht, proceed up the Seine to Paris," Phillip offered.

"If we must," Effie said, sounding as if she were already exhausted. In some ways, they conversed very much like mother and father.

"It isn't that I am insisting on a thing," Phillip said. He waved at Mary with his cup and she refilled his tea. "I am content doing nothing but sitting at home with a good book and a fire, but I assume you might have expectations."

"I have given up all expectations, or hope that the world might make sense," Effie said.

"Good for you," Phillip said.

Effie got mad, but didn't express it. Her look prompted Phillip to explain.

"You may find you start to feel much better without hope," Phillip said. "Have you considered where you might like to reside?"

"I assume it would be with you," Effie said.

“If you like,” Phillip said. “Though, I am trying to be considerate of your wants. I found my London home before consulting you, and though it is well suited for my work and is conveniently placed for participating in the frequent social events that are available, should you like to participate, but perhaps you may not like being in the center of it all. If you would prefer a quieter, county life, there are number of estates on the market that I might acquire on your behalf. You may choose any place, any country or city of interest, and I will see you happily placed.”

“I am not a parakeet for you to display,” Effie said.

“Of course not,” Phillip agreed. “Choose your place and your industry I will support you. Do you wish to attend a university?”

“You clearly do not know me,” Effie said.

“And how I will get to know you if you do not express an interest?” Phillip said.

“Let me remind you, Sir,” Effie said very clearly. “This is a business arrangement, not a real marriage.”

“I know,” Phillip said softly. “I would like my business partner to be happy.”

“You could die early and make me a widow,” Effie said.

I was particularly incensed by the remark, but held my tongue.

“I will endeavor to do so while you are still young enough to enjoy the fall out,” Phillip said. “Until my demise, perhaps you will tolerate compensation for having to deal with me.”

“I am so bored with this conversation, I am going to withdraw,” Effie said. “Come along, Adelia.”

निर्मित

The wedding was hardly an affair. If mother had had her way, everyone in London would have attended. If Effie had had their way, only she, Phillip, and the priest would have been there. Effie and mother fought like at no other time I have witnessed. And then in public, you would have thought Effie was the happiest woman on the planet. It was like seeing two different people! Towards mother her words were so full of hate and insults that I had to wonder exactly what extra Effie had been holding onto all these days. Did she blame mother for father’s behavior? Mother insisted that she would not marry in the dark, like some quiet street girl that had to

because of a certain condition. Effie assured her, there would never be a certain condition. She swore she would never bring kids into this family, and should Phillip force it on her, she would go another step forward and never bring the kids around her or father. She swore she would drown them herself before allowing that to happen and that was when mother smacked her down. I don't know who was more surprised, mother, or Effie. Mother left the room without speaking to Effie again.

Father took over the negotiations with Phillip, and a compromise was struck. Only their most intimate friends would attend the ceremony. The deal was struck and expedited, and after a short affair, Phillip and Effie withdrew to a carriage and were carried off. I followed in the carriage behind, with some possessions that Effie refused to be without. That, too, had been a fight, but it was settled by father and Phillip who gladly compensated monetarily for any loss. Effie was mad at him for buying what she believed were her own things and mother was mad because it wasn't the point. She considered the furniture hers and that her daughter was merely benefitting while residing with her.

We arrived at a port where we exited the vehicles and they continued on to Phillip's home in London, and we continued our journey by sea to France. It was a small ship, a crew of four, and Wesley was present. He was out of his element and it showed. He was so overwhelmed by his change of fortune that he felt obligated to try harder to be liked, which only made him seem more awkward. Shen relinquished control of his carriage to another, and took his place on the boat.

"You're going to take the China man with us?" Effie asked.

"My friend goes where I go," Phillip said, matter of fact.

"Maybe you two should go alone on this honeymoon," Effie said.

"I hadn't considered," Phillip said, turning to Shen. "Are you interested?"

"You know I cannot deny you my company, but I prefer to serve quietly in the background," Shen said.

"You should really try harder to continue a joke forwards," Phillip said.

"I am not fond of your sense of humor," Shen said.

I chuckled. Effie got mad at me and headed straight way into the cabin. We didn't see her again until England had vanished from sight. She emerged, carrying bananas, perhaps all of them, and she went straight to the side and tossed them into the sea.

“Seriously?” Phillip asked.

“We will not be consuming anything so vulgar in my presence,” Effie said.

I think I had not yet seen Phillip angry. Was this where things changed? Had I been mistaken about his nature? People can hold a mask for a long time, but not forever. Their true selves will eventually emerge from their depths. He softened, taking control of his emotions.

“Should I forgo bangers as well?” Phillip asked.

“It depends,” Effie said. “Do you eat it with your hands, or a fork and a knife?”

“And, what about cucumber ice cream?” Phillip asked.

“There is nothing vulgar about ice cream, Sir,” Effie said.

“Wesley, fetch me a good size peach from below,” Phillip said.

Wesley was quickly gone from hovering mode and returned with a peach. Phillip took it, and found a knife he had in his pocket, and proceeded to core the peach, leaving the whole of the fruit intact. He demonstrated he could see her through the hole he had made.

“Did you know, this is such a sweet alternative to a vagina, that I frequently recommend this option to relieve stress to my male patients,” Phillip said.

Effie paled. “You, Sir, are sick.”

“Perhaps,” Phillip said. “However, if you considered the health of the male specimen important, you will find masturbating against a pillow or bed face down applies so much pressure against his equipment that it could cause pain and sterility by constricting the organ beyond its design.”

“Maybe one shouldn’t masturbate,” Effie said.

“I am sure one day science will provide a pill that will free all men from this particular condition, but until then, he must have help, or the use of his own hands. Should a suitable partner not be available, I recommend a man lay on his back while he helps himself,” Phillip said.

“Or again, he could simply not indulge. Women can go years without indulgence,” Effie said.

“Shen how long have you gone without indulging?” Phillip asked.

“17 years, Sir,” Shen said.

“By choice?” Phillip asked.

“By will and practice,” Shen said.

“Are you happy?” Phillip asked.

“Incredibly happy,” Shen said.

“Wesley? How long have you gone without indulgence?” Phillip asked.

Wesley blushed and was unable to speak.

“Oh, don’t be shy, boy. You will find that Shen is an anomaly,” Phillip said. “Why, I did it twice myself just this morning before the wedding.” He made a vulgar motion with the peach, then took a bite of his peach and smiled at Effie. “Eva?” Phillip called out to the only female crew member, who was also our cook and maid, but every bit a sailor as any man on board.

“How long have you gone without indulging?”

“Two weeks, Sir,” Eva answered.

“And how do you feel?” Phillip asked.

“Like I might kill someone,” Eva said.

Phillip nodded. “Effie, I think if you sample enough people you will find this to be true. People will find relief, or they will get into fights. I suspect all previous conflicts between nations were about someone not having enough sex and assuming that the other side was having more than his side. And if women realized just how much power they had over men, there would never be another war again.”

“You, Sir, are absolutely certifiable,” Effie said, and withdrew back into the cabin.

Wesley seemed perversely pale. Then again, he was also extremely affected by Effie’s presence, and the fact that he once stuttered words that he loved her is almost unbelievable.

“Son, why don’t you go stand by the rail,” Phillip said.

Wesley did as instructed, but I wasn’t sure why he was instructed to do so, but no sooner than he was at the rail, he was heaving his lunch over the side. Phillip offered me a bite of his peach, trying not to show amusement. His staff was well trained, and they, too, avoided laughing at the boy. Eva went to render aid.

I took a bite of the peach. “So, would you like some help?”

“Indeed, but not today,” Phillip said.

“I do think you’re making me wait for some reason,” I said.

“I apologize, and though I usually don’t hold such sentiments, I find I must go until tomorrow without further satisfaction,” Phillip said.

“Because it’s your wedding night?” I asked. He smiled politely. “You’re holding out hope that she will indulge you?”

“I do not expect she will ever indulge me, and I will not pursue it with her,” Phillip said.

“But if she pursued it?” I asked.

“I would accommodate her, of course,” Phillip said. “And let’s be clear on this point. I would accommodate anyone who so pursued the matter with me. I am not constrained by the so called virtues of society. I think they are artificially contrived as mechanisms to control the population at large, through fear and shame, and expanded by concepts of ownership. Some good sense can be made of it in terms of not spreading disease, as there is some nasty stuff to be had, but most of that would be contained with just better understanding and compassion. If you ask the church, it is our business to feed the poor, and yet, in that exchange the hungry are expected to hear a sermon and are more inclined to convert as far as they need to in order to have regular sustenance. It is the same with sex. People need this, and they will agree to any number of arrangements to get that need met. If denied, they will lie, cheat, steal, and simply take it by force or drug. I would like to cut game play off at the source, and encourage everyone to help everyone, with the only expectation being that we should care for people both before and after.”

I had to sit on that one for a moment. It so mirrored my own belief in terms of tantric practices, philosophy, and my nature as a Dakini, that I wondered if he were a kindred spirit, or a Daka. And then I remembered, he was Jon, of course he was. How could he not be?

“I think it might be helpful to know something about us,” I began.

He put a finger to his lip. I was surprised. He meant it kindly. He handed me back the peach which we were now trading. When he swallowed he said, “I will listen to this, of course, without judgment, and sometimes it is helpful sharing, sometimes not, but I assure you, it isn’t compulsory for healing to occur.”

I studied his face, holding the peach in front of me. I was confused at first, because I had been thinking about Jon, but then I realized, he was on a different page. “You know?”

“I suspect,” he said.

“Based on what?” I asked.

“There are always tells,” Phillip said, standing up. He offered me a hand and lifted me up. He led me to the bow and we looked out over the horizon. “Tell me, can you discern the coming of a storm?”

I considered. "Not presently," I admitted.

"Can you tell that one passed this way?" Phillip asked.

"No," I said. "But, if you allow me to imagine far enough in time I can suspect it stormed here, but this is not what you're trying to prove, right?"

"It is not, but people are a lot like storms," Phillip said. "Storms traveling over the surface of the earth, and we sometimes clash. Effie is 19, and yet she has the voice of an 8 year old girl."

"I find it annoying," I admitted.

"I assume her trauma began at the age of eight, resulting in her being emotionally arrested at that point," Phillip said. "I have not made a science of it, but I can say that in my practice, every time I have inquired into the happenings of a person who has a voice that does not match their physical age, I have found evidence to support my theory. She doesn't just sound like an eight year old, but emotionally she responds as any injured child would, with a temperament fitting the age where her maturation was interrupted. Physically, legally, she is an adult. Intellectually, she is superior to an 8 year old. Her emotional age, at this point though, frequently interrupts her intellectual capacities, and until she has had sufficient time and incentive to heal, or has an event that forces her to grow or retreat, she will likely struggle. And dear, one must have incentive to heal. All human beings are born into a world and immediately take to the task of manipulating systems to get their needs met. By the time one is an adult, they have so mastered the skill of getting their needs met that there is little incentive to change. It is only in the absence of the systems that sustained us do we start to notice impairment."

"Knowing this, why did you marry her?" I asked. "I mean, it wouldn't be at all practical to marry everyone who needs rescuing."

Phillip chuckled. "It would not. To be honest, I don't know why. It confounds me so that I have spent recent nights without sleep trying to understand it. But even in that effort, I am distracted by my thoughts of you. There is something ineffable about you that is driving me to the point of insanity, and I have never been in such a quandary over any one specific female that wasn't soon satisfied. You know things you shouldn't. Your aura is more defined than any person I have ever met. You generate so many rays that I am frequently dazzled as if looking at the twinkling of a star. Another curiosity is that you carry the same wound as your sister, and

were raised in the same environment, and yet you are of such an easy going temperament that I question my suspicions.”

“You are not wrong,” I told him. “And I have struggled maintaining an improved disposition since my arrival here, which has been enlightening in and of itself. I am grateful for these experiences.”

“That impresses me so, I would say you are not of this earth,” Phillip said.

“And if I weren’t?” I asked.

“I would be ashamed for the thoughts I have entertained, but not sufficiently to stop me from engaging an angel, if she permitted,” Phillip said.

“I assure you, I am not angel,” I said.

“If you say so,” Phillip said.

“You have my permission,” I said.

“For?” Phillip asked.

“Engagement,” I said.

He pushed a hand through my hair and pulled me to him, hugging me. “For the first time in my entire life, I do not feel alone. Thank you for making yourself known to me in this world.”

We did not hold the hug, but disengaged and turned to the sea.

“Tell me something,” Phillip asked. “Do you frequently spy on your father’s meetings?”

I laughed. He had seen me. “I do not. It took so much effort to do so that if I weren’t obsess with knowing more about you, I would not have bothered enough to accomplish the feat.” Notice, we didn’t go through this whole routine, you saw me, I did. We both knew. “Out of curiosity, how would you deal with someone who seems to be needier than the rest for a particular interaction?”

“The only cure is indulgence,” Phillip said. “Libido can explained by biology, but it is my belief most of libido is explained by something deeper, perhaps societal drives exasperated by a person’s family of origin’s attitudes on affection. The primary years are crucial for nurture, and in its absence a person will spend a bewildering amount of time as an adult trying to capture that thing missed as a child. If more adults in our world understood that, they would provide more affection for their children, and they would indulge their partners much more than they do now. That said, I would never ask a person to put themselves in mortal danger. There are some so starved for affection, so foreign to the concept of love, so overcome by disgust of their own

bodily function and urges, with the fear of God's wrath if they capitulated they say it is not of them, so much so that when they do finally indulge in what they consider a lesser act, they have been known to strike partners. Some even go as far as killing them. I know women who cut themselves after indulging. Some men are so clingy, so fearful of not being accepted by anyone, that they would lock a partner in a basement so that only they could possess them. These people still need the cure, but they need an entourage of support so that every manner of the interactions are gauged and improved upon until severe habituation has altered their inner mind. That level of support does not come naturally by our present society, and finding people who could engage such a poor individual, with only love and the highest of regards, is practically impossible. Even I have struggled to assemble such a team, but it requires a team effort, a trained team of men and women. Such an individual, if discovered by law or citizenry, is more likely to be killed outright than jailed."

"If you are right, about the nature of society influencing these outcomes, wouldn't you imagine we would see more malicious behavior in our time?" I asked.

"There is more going than you see, dear, but yes, you have a good point," Phillip said. "I am generally an optimist. I believe there is a future utopia waiting for humanity. It will be a place where all cultures, all religions, all ages, and both genders will work in collaboration for the greater good. We will operate on such scales of industry that humanity will settle among the stars and begin participating in a greater civilization of beings not of this earth. Physical and spiritual beings are waiting for us to reach a certain threshold at which point we will awake, as if our present idea of life is merely a dream. Before we arrive, though, you will see such horrid acts of brutality that you might think it were the end of the world."

I wanted to say he was wrong, about the wars. But the wars were coming. There were even people not yet born who so well predict the coming of wars that they would ignore, as many prophets have been. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche is one, and the clearest thing he said was forever misquoted. He didn't say "God is dead," as if saying yay, we killed him. He said, "God is dead, and we killed him," meaning society in their pursuit of distancing themselves from spiritualistic beliefs cut off their roots, and with no foundation the only thing left was nihilism or state sponsored authority, which tends to always go badly. Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky said basically the same thing, but he said in the form of stories. I wanted to tell Phillip I knew about the wars to come. I wanted him to know that the planet would be in such a disarray that

more earth creatures would go into extinction than occurred during the asteroid impact that took out the dinosaurs. Though I do not believe I was blocked by some agency, I couldn't find the ability to deliver the message. He must have saw something in me, my wanting to share, but he misinterpreted it.

“Do not fear, Adelia,” Phillip said. “There are greater agencies involved with our world than what man can presently accept. If you permit, sometimes a body must experience an illness in order to experience greater health. Even if man destroyed himself, there are those who are so powerful that they could unwind the boundaries of time and recover us physically, if that were necessary. But I assure you, it is not necessary to save these bodies for life to continue. We are not here on this plane of existence to learn how to survive. We are here to learn how to love even when it seems absent from existence. When you die, you will be met by all of those who loved you, even some you thought couldn't hold an ounce of love, and should I die before you, I will endeavor to be the first one to greet you, because even now, I hold so much love for you that I think my heart may burst into light and I shine away.”

As he said this, bottlenose dolphins made their presence known, riding on the bow wave that Isis pushed into being. “Oh!” I said, turning to watch. “How marvelous!” I was a little torn, I should have stuck with the profound thing Phillip had just expressed, and yet, the dolphins provoked an equal amount of joy, and it so resonated with the inner child of Adelia that her emotions took precedent. Adelia loved animals as much as I.

“Perhaps I should invite my wife up to join us,” Phillip said. “Seeing such spirits of joy could help her.”

“Okay,” I said, too entranced by dolphins to try and predict how she might react.

I think she declined the invitation, but I didn't pursue understanding.

Chapter 20

We slept one night on the Isis, and she gave me such incredible dreams, I was quiet most the day, wishing for pen and paper. We arrived by midafternoon at a place outside of Paris. We docked at a private estate, where our arrival made such a scene that the kids playing in the yard caused the inhabitants of the house to emerge. One woman made all haste to the dock to greet us, or, apparently, greet Phillip, as she was immediately in his arms, hugging and kissing on him like only a French citizen would do and had I not put a hand on Effie's arm, she might have announced her offense.

"It is so good to see you again," the woman told Phillip before turning him to us as she gave us a huge smile. "And, my dream has come true. You have married yourself a red head! Tell me it was the perfect prediction; is she Irish as well?"

Adelia was of Irish descent, her mother born in Ireland, but technically, I doubted I was. I am a child of the Universe, I come from everywhere, a single point theory more profound than any concept of a singularity, in which we all live all the time. Still, I said, "I am."

"I am his wife, Madam," Effie said. She said this with such a powerful sense of ownership that you would think they have been married a thousand years and that she was prepared to fight for him. "And I would appreciate it if you show him less affection."

The woman frowned and turned to Phillip. "How could I have been so mistaken?"

"You were not. Clearly your dream identified many artifacts accurately, so many you should only see success," Phillip said.

"That's not what perturbs me," she said. "You married a brunette. Had I imagined you would ever settle, I would have pursued you with more diligence."

"Settled?!" Effie said.

"Effie, Adelia, this is my good friend, Raine," Phillip said. "We will be lodging here for the duration of our stay."

"The devil take you if we do," Effie snapped. "We will have a hotel."

"If you would like, I will make the necessary arrangements and have Shen carry you there, but I, and my entourage, will be staying here," Phillip said. "And while you are here, I will expect you to be civil."

"So, it is true," Effie said. "You own a woman in every corner of the world?"

“I make no claims of ownership,” Phillip said. “Even in the title of marriage, I am offering you more freedom than you have been willing to accept.”

“You have clearly been with this woman,” Effie said.

“And I will be with her again, if she will have me,” Phillip said.

“We are married,” Effie said.

“We have a business relationship,” Phillip reminded her.

“And I expect you to show more deference to that relationship by holding an ounce of discretion and not having the whole world know our business,” Effie said.

“My business. Everyone who truly knows me knows my business, and whether you include yourself in that circle or not, you will know the truth of me,” Phillip said. “No one outside of that circle knows my business, or even suspects. But I guarantee you, should you arrive at a hotel and spend the night alone while I reside here, there will be questions and scandals that will follow you all the way back to London. My recommendation to you is that you remain, peacefully, and enjoy your time as best you can. I will accommodate you to the best of my ability, but I will not be blocked from pursuing my friendships, and I will definitely not remain celibate to appease a business partner’s sense of propriety.”

Phillip excused himself and walked away from us. Raine smiled; just another day. “Come, I will show to your rooms so you might freshen up. Master Shen, you and the crew may make yourselves at home.”

“Thank you, Raine,” Shen said.

Raine led Effie and me away and we were offered one large room to share, or separate rooms. Effie took the larger room for herself and insisted I take the closer of the two smaller. Raine did not object. We were also shown a place to bathe, and after changing we emerged back down and were directed by staff or friend to a sitting room where we found Raine waiting for us.

“Is it too early for tea?” Raine asked.

“Of course not,” I said, sitting.

Effie sat without speaking. I sipped at the tea. Effie went as far as picking up the cup but didn’t even smell it. Raine inquired into our journey and I responded that it was very pleasant and that we were accompanied by dolphins up to the Seine. I told her about how I remained most of the night marveling at the stars and how crisp they were so far removed from civilization and

that when I finally did manage to sleep, my dreams were peculiar, perhaps because of the motion of our ship on the water. I think Raine was about to agree, but Effie interrupted our conversation.

“Where is my husband?” Effie said.

“Traveling,” Raine said.

Effie set her cup down and came to the edge of her chair. “Excuse me?”

“You will find his body in the study, as if napping, but I assure you, you will not find him anywhere in France,” Raine said. “I would go further and say that it is unlikely he is even in Europe, but it can be hard to measure that without accompanying him.”

“I am not even going to pretend to understand your madness,” Effie said. “Define your relationship with him.”

“We are friends,” Raine said, simply.

Effie snorted. “I imagine more. How much money does he give you?”

“Phillip is the most honest, loving, kindly, and generous man I have ever met in my life,” Raine said. “He has demonstrated so much love towards me and his fellow man, enemy or not, that I would personally deny him nothing. He has helped more individuals heal and prosper than I can count. This estate, his founding, in truth belongs to no one, as he and I legally bound it so tight in trusts that no one person might ever come and rob it from those who reside here. He would have preferred it be in my name, but to honor his philosophy I insisted that this refuge, if you will, remain as a safe haven for those in need for all times to come beyond my personal usage. I am the caretaker, and there are protocols in place should I die before establishing my replacement to find another.”

“Clearly, you must require his ongoing charity to maintain it,” Effie said.

“The estate supports itself. That is the brilliancy of Phillip’s industry; he makes everyone so self-sufficient and profitable that they can exist outside of the present day industry, and should a market collapse, his people will not starve, and will be staged as to provide comfort to the masses. The people who live here labor out of charity, without compensation, unless you consider room and board compensation,” Raine said. She poured more tea for herself and offered to warm my cup. “There are any number of experts residing here that teach necessary trades and support the estate through their industry, and for nominal fees assist our neighbors. We make an annual profit from the orchard. For a small fee, any person may come and carry as much as he can out. I have even made arrangements for those who can’t afford the price of admission to

carry a wagon full of produce, encouraging them to eat what they and their family need without charge, and to sell as much as they can, with the caveat that a fair portion of profit return to the estate.”

“And you are not robbed blind?” Effie said.

“We have never been injured. The world provides sustenance, we share in that abundance, or we wither. We care for the land, it cares for us. It returns to us in yields that would surprise the average farmer,” Raine said. “Should anyone try to cheat this system, they will find such misfortune befalling them that they will quickly make amends. And that is why Phillip is so successful. He helps everyone, regardless of cost to him. He has gone out of his way to impoverish himself, and yet everything he does results in kindness back to him. Not one of the persons he has raised will allow him to starve. He teaches nothing more than kindness and generosity, and of those few that he has raised that have tried to go against his teaching, each one has found themselves completely unsuccessful in life. Some return to their school to start again. Some do not come back, out of shame or out of spite. I teach a small group here. Some stay and carry the estate directly by their labors. Most leave, and they remember us kindly with regular donations. It is not required that they compensate the estate directly, only that they help their fellow man. Should the estate ever generate excess, it is dispersed towards the charities I favor, after all internal needs have been met.”

“I don’t understand,” Effie said. “What kind of business model is this?”

“It is the one that every religion discusses in theory, but never puts to practice,” Raine said. “If the Catholic Church would dispense with even ten percent of their accumulated wealth it hoards, it could feed every person in the world for the next hundred years, and establish such a consistent model of human decency that we would see in our life time an end of to human suffering.”

“You are insane,” Effie said.

“Perhaps, dear,” Raine said. “Anyone who professes to have seen the miraculous often gets labeled such.”

“The way you speak, you must imagine Phillip to be a saint,” Effie said.

“He certainly will never be celebrated as such,” Raine agreed.

“Because he is not. He is just a man,” Effie said.

“Have you ever read John Donne?” Raine asked. “‘No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main; if a clod be washed away by the sea, Europe is the less, as well as if a promontory were, as well as any manner of thy friends or of thine own were; any man's death diminishes me, because I am involved in mankind. And therefore never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee.’ In this, you see that no man is just a man. No woman is just woman. We carry within us more than we could ever imagine. Worlds upon worlds are inside of us and around us, and we go from one to the other as easy as squirrels going from tree to tree.”

“So, hypothetically, you would allow me to take anything I want from this place,” Effie said.

“Of course,” Raine said.

“Give me your pendent,” Effie said.

“Effie,” I said.

But Raine was already removing it. She held it forth, allowing Effie to reach and take it from her.

“So, this is obviously a worthless trinket,” Effie said.

“No, it is not,” Raine said. “The gold alone is worth its weight. The diamond almost as much, the craftsmanship adds even more value. In terms of sentiment, I find it priceless, as it was something Phillip himself made as a gift to me.”

“And yet, you surrender it as if it were nothing,” Effie said.

“It is nothing. Metal, crystal, art,” Raine said. “Because you asked for that specifically, I gladly surrender it to you. You have a need and you recognize its value. Take it and prosper.”

“I have no need of it. I am merely taking it from you because you allow it,” Effie said. “I think I might sell it and use the money for candy.”

“If candy is your need, sweeten your life. Sell it to whoever you like,” Raine said. “It will return to me within a year.”

Effie laughed. “I think, midway back to England, I shall dispose of it into the ocean.”

“Please,” Raine said. “And the next time you see me, you will find it about my neck.”

Effie was seriously taken back. “You say that as if you believe it. I will have it destroyed. You will never see it again.”

“There is a latch there, open it,” Raine said. Inside there was a solitary word written. Love. “Go over to my desk there, remove the paper where see the word written, and make any mark you like on the backside, return the paper, close it, and throw it into the deepest ocean you like. And when you see me next and I am wearing it, you will find the very mark you have placed secretly behind that word.”

Effie got up and proceeded to the desk, where apparently Raine spent time reading and writing correspondence. Neither I nor Raine could see what Effie wrote, but she wrote something in her own script, placed the paper in the chamber, closed the pendent, and put it about her neck as if she intended to carry it off and follow through with her plans to trash the item.

“I find it interesting,” Raine said, after Effie had rejoined us. “That out of all the things you could have asked for, the thing you demand the most is experiencing a miracle.”

“There are no such things,” Effie said. “I assure you, I have prayed more nights than any priest or nun, more earnestly than the Pope himself, and with the sincerity of a child, and not a single plea for a cessation of misery has ever been answered.”

“I promise you, if you remain near Phillip for even a month, you will find miracles so common that you will wonder how you ever doubted,” Raine said.

“If a man was so miraculous, he would have a better station, and not married to the likes of me,” Effie said.

“That is one view,” Raine said.

“There can be no other,” Effie said.

“Men of Phillips talents are frequently destroyed by society,” Raine said. “A hundred years ago, he would have been burned as a witch, even though he has only brought goodness to those around him. Now a days, they tend to be run out of town, impoverished, and die alone. Did you ever hear of man name Mesmer? You should research him. He practiced something very akin to what Phillip practices, and he had all the ears of Paris tuned in, but fear trumped it and they ran him out of town, despite his proven success over and over, and he died a popper. My parents knew the man. My mother’s health was restored and fortified because of that secret activity none wish to talk about or print. Prepare yourself; most people will not favor your husband. You will see people openly despise him and ridicule him, and most of the time, he will respond with kindness. They will hold him in contempt and they will do their best to unravel him. They will treat him no less than the way I witness you presently doing. Because of this, he

has been overly cautious with his friendships, more out of a perverse need to protect them from the fall out they might experience when he falls. He has remained always on the move, so no one place experiences an increase in inexplicable happenings.”

“What do you mean, fall?” I asked.

“Perhaps nothing. If you believe Newton, though, we are falling all the time, even though our senses tell us contrary,” Raine said. “Perhaps I should change my statement. When Phillip lands, there will be such a scene that his physical life will be taken from us and we will likely only be left with memories of his kindness. Though reports of his abilities and generosity may linger, there will be so many more reports about his indulgence in scandalous behaviors and how he used his charismatic personality to engage in fraud upon the public that very few will ever discern the truth of his message.”

“Why the fear?” I asked.

“Imagine you were a person of importance, and the secrets you held kept the world at peace,” Raine said. “Now, imagine a man like Phillip who know so many things that he could be accused of reading minds. There would be no secrets. One man knowing is one thing, but what if he could teach anyone to know the mind of any. There would be no secrets, and this age of industry would collapse. This world is run on secrecy. If the true cost of a product was known, no one would ever buy or haggle again.”

“No one can read minds,” Effie said.

“Says the girl so certain miracles don’t exist she wishes to prove it to another by use of force,” Raine said. “Don’t fret, I am not disparaging you. I encourage you to trash my pendent and witness its destruction for yourself. You are not alone, dear. Society is moving more and more away from miracles, and we will be so starved before long, starved for that very thing that sustains us but denied access because it doesn’t fit the present paradigm, that society will come to very edge of extinction.”

“God would not allow it,” Effie said.

“I assure you, the best way to teach a people they hold depravity is to allow themselves to experience it,” Raine said. “God will not interfere with our free will because He wants us to know just how bad off we can be when we turn away from the path.”

“Regardless of whom it affects?” Effie asked.

“That is the message, dear. We’re all in the same boat,” Raine said. “We rise and fall together.”

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The remainder of the day was easy, as we mostly relaxed, shared meals, and recuperated from our travels. Raine was the perfect host, despite Effie’s efforts to bring us down. Phillip excused himself, and retired to his own room, which apparently would remain his room for as long he was alive and wanted it. Raine and I continued to speak, as she had taken as much interest in me as I in her. She was a botanist, by natural instinct and by training from local University where only a huge sum of money had convinced people to allow her to attend, even if it was only humoring her. Though academically she could compete well, she only focused on the opportunities to advance her knowledge and talents. At a certain point, it was clear Effie wanted to retire but she lingered, and tried to maneuver me to retire so that she might. I am not sure if it was because she wanted my company or because she did not want to be left out. I didn’t inquire, trusting she would eventually arrive at a place where she could inform me her needs.

“I do think Raine is tired,” Effie said, when working me didn’t get results.

“I am fine, but you must be exhausted,” Raine said. “If you would like to retire, I could provide you with an attendant.”

“I have one, but she is obtuse,” Effie said, looking at me.

“You chose the single occupancy room for me so you might be alone,” I pointed out.

“You should retire to, if we are to maintain our schedule tomorrow,” Effie said.

“Perhaps Effie is right, dear,” Raine said, graciously. “I find my spirit so revived by you that we might not sleep if we don’t exercise discipline.”

So, we retired. I helped Effie in changing and saw her to bed, turned out her oil lamp, and proceeded to my own room with nothing more than a candle. I got myself ready, turned back the bed, and only then blew out my candle. I found my way to the bed before my eyes adjusted. I had no sooner made myself comfortable than I was overwhelmed by an odor as if I had descended into a citrus bath. The smell of orange was so strong, I could taste it. I got up and went to the window. This was not the source. The curtain reached out to touch me, moved by a gentle breeze. I closed my eyes and felt it against my face. I imagined it was Jon, reaching out to me. I lingered, allowing this ghost and curtain to make love to me. In this fashion, I have even

made love to a shower curtain that had been inexplicably drawn towards me, and even been satisfied. But tonight, the curtain was not enough.

I quietly exited my room and followed the scent of orange. When I was certain of the source, I entered. It was Phillip's room. The only furniture in the room was a mattress, which was on the floor, and a wooden butler on which his clothes were hung, and the contents of his pockets on the tray of the butler. The butler had several drawers as well. Phillip was sitting in the lotus position, centered on the mattress. His eyes were closed. There was no less than fifty orange candles a blaze. Let me explain. These weren't wax candles, these were oranges. Imagine someone having painstakingly unfolded an orange so that the peel was intact, and that very center thread that runs the middle of the fruit was left intact so that that part had become the candlewick and oil had been placed in the bowl of the orange rind and its wick lit. Some oranges were more spherically intact than others, and light pushed through rind. Most of the oranges were half, or a little more. The light of these candles was not intense, but altogether, the room seemed ablaze, and this was the smell of the oranges.

I came in and closed the door. I felt rose petals against my feet, and on coming in contact, I noticed the scent of rose accompanying the orange. I navigated around the orange lights, arranged in magical pattern. My knee descended ever so carefully to the bed and I crawled up to Phillip and kissed him. He kissed back. He took me in his arms and laid back, pulling me on top of him. With his help, my clothes came off, and when naked, he rolled me so that he was on top.

"I wanted to show you something, but I am afraid I am now so particularly disturbed that I will not be able to concentrate until I have satisfied myself," Phillip said.

"I will not be satisfied until you are," I said.

"That is not how I work," Phillip said. "I will see you satisfied first. Especially this first time, as you have me at such a point that I may as well be a young man untrained in the art."

"Then you should see me satisfied straight away," I said.

His full weight on me, he returned his lips to mine, pushed his hands through my hair, and then began to descend along my body, his lips, hands, and eyes scrutinizing every detail of me. He tasted me from head to toe, missing that central spot as if purposely teasing, and then rose again, bringing my legs up over his shoulder, massaging my thighs with mouth and fingers, drawing ever closer. And then he got very still, and very close. His breath alone made my lips quiver. He traced it with finger, merely to brush the outer lips but I was so wet the slightest

pressure parted the sea, if you will. He went there with lips and tongue and he tasted me. He tasted me the way a man of drought would have taken to fresh water. He discovered me so quickly, understanding my change in breath, gauging my response that it took little time at all before my hands were on his head, and I was brought to orgasm.

“Oh, God, Jon!” I said. I bit my lip.

Phillip rose over me, our bodies still touching, and looked into my eyes. “Jon, is it?”

“I am sorry, Phillip,” I said.

“Why should you be?” Phillip asked. “Jon has been kind to you?”

“He has,” I said.

“Then I shall look forward to meeting him,” Phillip said.

“That would be nice,” I said.

“Are you okay if I continue?” Phillip asked.

“I would like that,” I said. He was poised in such a way that I could feel him, and he only need thrust and he would be full in me.

Phillip eased his weight ever so carefully forward, so only a fraction of him entered. He was gauging me the whole way, maintaining eye contact. I wanted him in deeper, faster, but he resisted my efforts to rush him. He arrived full in, having taken my hands and pinned them above my head, only my legs hugging. He held it there, the fullness of him throbbing. I moved to grind, but he stilled me.

“Why do hold back?” I asked.

“I am wanting this moment to last,” he said.

“We can always begin again,” I said.

He kissed me. “Keep your eyes open, fixed to mine,” he whispered.

He rocked me, ever so gentle. He was trying to grind against me while minimizing his own movement inside me. It was an impossible thing, as there was no way he wouldn't move, but he managed to maintain pressure against me until I was again on the verge of orgasm, and then he accelerated and I was in full storm, struggling to maintain eye contact when he finally arrived. He quivered, as if having an epileptic fit, and passed out on top of me.

I had no time to be concerned, as I was suddenly transported out of my body. I found myself near a tree. It was a single tree on a hill, overlooking wild grain of light, at night, full of a

variety of fire flies each species identified by their signature frequency. I knew the place well.
Initial insertion point.

“This is new,” Phillip said.

Phillip was beside me, fully dressed, as was I. He took my hand marveled at me and then turned to the rainbow of lights of plant and insect and stars.

“It feels like Christmas,” Phillip said. “Is this your world?”

“Yes,” I said. “And yours.”

He turned to me. “No, I have seen my world, and this is different.” He let go of my hand and went the tree. There was enough light he could discern the carving of a heart, in which was written, ‘Jon and Loxy.’ I carved it myself.

“Ah, that makes sense,” Phillip said.

“Tell me,” I asked.

“I have a Mormon friend in the states who believes every man has a planet unto himself. I believe him, but I also believe women have their own planets, and here we are, I have discovered yours,” Phillip said. “Or you have invited me. Or we were so entangled you brought me here by accident.”

“What if I told you this was your planet?” I asked.

“I would doubt. I have seen mine, with my own eyes,” Phillip said.

“This is a big a place, Sir, maybe you’re not looking in the right spot,” I said.

“Or with the right eyes?” Phillip asked playfully.

“What would you say if I told you that you are not who you think you are?” I asked.

“Then what would be the point in any exercise of thought?” Phillip asked.

“To gain perspective,” I said.

And just like that, Phillip was gone. I lingered, my hand touching the tree. I decided to leap to first home, and I was suddenly there. Alish was there, meditating, but I saw something peculiar in her. She was dreaming! I could see her in the dream, and in her dream, she was Raine! I nearly had such a fit of euphoria I might have woke straight to my body, but I held my ground. I jumped again to Second Home. I found myself there, and suspected it was some future time, for there were people gathered I did not know. An elderly man with a cane, who reminded me a great deal of Shen, was standing by a counter, drinking coffee. A woman, or a cat, or a cat woman, ran by with a toddler that was also dressed like a cat, and they ended their flight on the

couch, jumping on the said furniture. Another child, also dressed up as if they were a cat, was fixated on a Lego train that was circling the base of a Christmas tree. Jon was there, in the arms of a woman who nearly drove me to jealousy, and I was about to say something when I realized the very woman was myself.

I approached, transfixed. I was seeing myself, I knew it was myself, with the very physical features I knew myself best as, and yet, when I saw myself in the mirror, I would not see me, I would see Adelia, and I almost wanted to cry.

“What’s wrong?” Loxy asked Jon.

“I feel like we’re being watched,” Jon answered.

“Aren’t we always?” Loxy asked.

“Sure,” Jon said.

“He is out of sorts because we’re forcing Christmas on him,” Lester said.

“I am not,” Jon argued.

“You’ve been sulking ever since the tree went up,” Lester pointed out.

“Are you worried?” Loxy asked.

“Of course,” Jon said. “What does one get magicians? What do you give people who have everything and want nothing?”

“If I find an empty box under the tree from you, Sir, I will be severely disappointed,” Lester said.

“Coal seems appropriate,” Loxy suggested.

Jon frowned. “I left origin because I wasn’t fond of the traditions, and thought I’d make a new world,” he said.

“And so we have, but there is no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater,” Lester said.

“I have checked, Sir, there was no babies in there,” Jon said.

“Explain these kittens,” Lester demanded.

“Um, I cannot,” Jon said.

“Oh!” Fersia said. “Seriously?”

“Papa needs a hug,” the toddler with her said, and sprung from the couch and rushed and jumped into Jon’s arms. “We give love, Papa. That is our Christmas present.”

Jon cried. “Aww,” Loxy said, hugging the two of them, and then Fersia and the fraternal twin toddler joined in.

Lester put his cup down and proceeded to walk away.

“Give him some, too,” Jon insisted.

And the kids ran to ‘uncle Lester.’”

And I woke up back in my body, or, Adelia’s body. God, the nuances of language are so pathetically poor at describing these reality slips. Oh, but there is perspective for you. Phillip was sound asleep, holding me close to him. I turned into him and soon faded. The next time I woke, I was being prodded by Phillip who was sound asleep, but in dream. I took advantage of his morning condition and woke him with my attention.

Chapter 21

After dressing, I went downstairs to find Raine preparing a light breakfast. Phillip joined us next, followed by Effie. If she had any clue as to where I spent the evening, she gave no evidence. As soon as our stomachs were settled, we had an outing in which we were taken by carriage into Paris proper. This was a world before the Eiffel tower. It is a world of change, no matter how hard we try and keep it the same. Markets were crashing and recovering. Jules Ferry had seen the fruition of laws he influenced whereby the French government now guaranteed education separate from religious activities. We saw such a school.

“It will be your downfall, secularizing your children’s education,” Effie said.

“It is being done everywhere,” Raine said.

We eventually arrived at a place where we were to have lunch. Shem brought the horses to a halt and Raine, Effie, I, and Phillip were delivered just so, that Raine was immediately recognized and we were ushered past the line and to prime seats under an awning. Phillip was a little worried that we were behind schedule, as he was determined to see a man named Nikola Tesla who supposedly had just lit the entire Paris Opera House with modern lighting. Phillip was so hopeful to meet the man that it was all he could speak about. He was telling us about how much he had tried to engage the man in correspondence that he was wondering if perhaps an attendant was screening Tesla’s mail. He hoped it was that, because he did so want to be friends with the man.

“I really wish you would drop the matter,” Effie said. “If the man wanted to see you, he would have answered your letters.”

“He probably thinks I’m a madman,” Phillip lamented. “I would like to meet him in person and demonstrate my reasonability.”

“Why would you say such a thing?” I asked.

“Because, inexplicably, the modern electrical bulbs fail to work around me,” Phillip said. “If they don’t blow out, they simply fail but return to service the moment I have departed the area.”

“Impossible,” Effie said. “You are imagining things.”

“I assure you, this occurs so regularly in my presence that I can reliably demonstrate it consistently,” Phillip said. “It is my hope that Mr. Tesla might recommend a cure, or I will be

left behind when the modern world finally takes over. And I guarantee you, Tesla will change the modern world into a paradise.”

“You are a dreamer. Edison is his superior by far,” Effie said. “Have you tried contacting him about this perceived effect you have?”

“Edison?!” Phillip cried. “That thief?! He is the worst of all the robber barons and will have all of humanity in chains before the end of this century if he is not derailed or deterred by his superior in every aspect, my man Tesla.”

“If Tesla was half the business man Edison was, he would be self-employed and people coming to him for advice,” Effie said.

Phillip frowned, but did not react immediately. He bowed gracefully. “Perhaps,” Phillip said. Phillip chose not to argue his point. Why should he bother trying to dissuade her when she was clearly set in her opinion?

“What do you recommend?” I asked Raine, changing the topic to our meal.

“Oh, everything here is absolutely lovely,” Raine said.

“If any of you order snails, I will be so sick that I will promise to ruin this table,” Effie said. A dog barked at her before its owner dragged it off. “And what is it with you French people and dogs?”

“You don’t like dogs?” Raine asked.

“They belong on a farm or a hunt, not in town,” Effie said. “I will be very cross if my boots get soiled.”

“I will clean them for you, dear,” Phillip offered.

“I won’t have it,” Effie said. “You will buy me new ones.”

A one legged man tried to approach us, but was blocked by a one of the staff that policed the line of people waiting to dine at the place we had established reservations. The man was clearly a beggar and he was being roughly handled, but he made the strangest cry. Mind you, all of this is happening in French, but Phillip and I both speak French. What was awkward was there were some idioms being used I wasn’t accustomed to, as I probably got my ability to speak French from John’s unconscious, specifically from a PBS program called “French in Action,” which John tuned into regularly not because he endeavored to learn French, but because he held a crush on the French actress Valérie Allain. I owe my ability to speak because of his love for her.

“That man is my Doctor and I will speak to him!” the rascal said.

Phillip stood up. “Bring that man this way,” he said.

“Dear God, Phillip!” Effie complain. “Do sit down, dear. You’re making a scene.”

The staff directed the rascal by his arm. “Do you know this man, Sir?”

“I do indeed,” Phillip said. “I will take him from here.” And indeed, Phillip took the man by the arm and led him back to his own chair where he set the man down and gave him his tea.

“We are not feeding every homeless man in all of Paris,” Effie said.

“Does he look like every homeless man?” Phillip snapped. I had never heard him snap before, but it sufficiently cowed Effie into a sullen silence. He turned his attention back to the man who was now in tears. Phillip knelt. “Tell me, Jean-Luc, what has befallen you?”

“You remember my name?!” Jean-Luc cried, even louder, falling into Phillip who took him to his shoulder. “You met me once maybe ten years ago and you remember my name!”

“Of course, I remember you son,” Phillip said. “Now, get a hold of yourself and tell me what has befallen you.”

“Life, Sir,” Jean-Luc said, so outrageously dramatic that he gripped Phillip by the shoulders. “Ever since you took pity on me on that very beach where you saved my life, even though I was as good as the enemy, my life has been in shambles. I lost my commission in the army. My family has cursed me, telling me I should have died there rather than to have been delivered back to France by the English. It is impossible for a man in this age to land on his feet when he has only one due to honest service in the military! And if that wasn’t enough, my nerves plaque me. I live in constant fear of having my life taken from me, which is odd that I fear given my certainty my life is not worth living. I assure you my fear is not because the streets here are bad. I know my fellow citizens care enough they will throw a crumb my way, more than I deserve, but I believe the worst of everyone, even as I take these crumbs and run for my life. I wish to God you had not saved me that day!”

“Shen?!” Phillip yelled.

Out of nowhere, Shen was suddenly there, and he might have been blocked by the same staff that wanted to block Jean-Luc, but the looks Phillip gave the staff was such that he chose not to say anything. He let the China man pass.

“Take this man straight way back to the estate. You are to make sure he is bathed, as many times as it takes to remove this stench. Cut his hair. Burn his clothes. Give him a meal and a place to sleep,” Phillip said.

“And what about you, Sir?” Shen asked.

“I think I can still bathe and clothe and feed myself,” Phillip said.

“That’s not what I meant, Sir,” Shen said.

“I was aiming for funny,” Phillip said.

“You were failing,” Shen said.

“I am quite capable of finding alternatives means of transportation,” Phillip said. “Take this man. You, Jean-Luc, will go with my friend as if he were me, and do as he says as if I myself have instructed you. Clearly, I have not finished my work. Today, your fortune will change.”

“Oh, thank you, Sir,” Jean-Luc said.

Jean-Luc started to go. “Wait,” Phillip said. “There was a child with you. Was it yours?”

Even I was surprised by this, and as I sorted my memory, I indeed saw this man begging and a child was attending to him, and they had shared a crumb.

“No,” Jean-Luc said. “He is merely my fellow stray. We have helped each other. He is the sole reason I have not taken my own life.”

“Round that child up, too, Shen,” Phillip said.

“Is that legal, Sir?” Shen asked.

“By the week’s end, I will see it so,” Phillip said.

Shen and the one legged man departed and Phillip sat down. I imagined he would be in a state, but he was just as calm as if nothing had happened.

“I will not have you squandering my inheritance on the poor,” Effie said.

“I will provide you with a salary that you may dispose of as you see fit, but as long as I am in charge of my faculties and wallet, I will do as I see fit,” Phillip said. “And the first lesson I will have you learn is that the more I give, the more I receive.”

“You’re beliefs are in direct opposition to everything I have learned to be true,” Effie said. “I will not be treated like an idiot, nor will I be ruined by you.”

“Your beliefs are in accord with those of time, and so I do not think of you as an idiot, just poorly educated,” Phillip said.

“Your beliefs are absolutely absurd and I will not tolerate your reckless behavior. Should it ever occur that I must rely on my family of origin’s charity, I will most likely go to prison for having killed you first,” Effie said. She was clear on that and not mincing words.

“I assure you, you will never have to rely on your family’ generosity,” Phillip said, kindly. “I guarantee you will be well taken care of, and anyone I call friend will support that, even in my absence. You only need mention my name, or show that ring that you wear, and I swear you will be treated greater than royalty. You, my dear, are quite safe. Your life has changed.”

“That much is true,” Effie lamented.

We ate our meal, with at least three of us enjoying the banter, and we lingered waiting for the check, until finally Effie’s impatience summoned attendant. She issued a complaint that they had been waiting an unreasonable time to settle accounts.

“I apologize for any inconvenience; I thought you were aware that it was already settled,” the man said.

The manager and owner came to us because of the initiated scene.

“Is there a problem?” the manager asked.

“This man is a liar. We have clearly not paid the bill and yet he tells me we are done,” Effie said.

“Oh, you were not informed? I assumed he had told you,” the manager said.

“I am sorry, Sir. I, too, am confused by this,” Phillip said.

“One of my dearest friends, and daily patron, witnessed your treatment of that poor beggar and felt so overwhelmed that he paid your meal, perhaps three times over. In fact, I have never seen him so affected by love for his fellow man. He was in tears and compelled to leave, but I thought maybe he spoke to you.”

“He did not,” Phillip said.

Effie was bewildered.

“You have arranged all of this,” Effie accused him. “It is a trick.”

Phillip was silent, but took out currency. The manager refused it.

“Please, allow this as a tip for your staff,” Phillip insisted. “I insist.”

The manager took it, bowing out. Effie grieved.

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We found ourselves outside of the Edison Continental Power company. Phillip refused to go in. Effie was impatient with him, and reminded him we had walked from lunch to here, because he sent away our ride, and so we might as well go in. Finally, determined to get the affair over with, Effie volunteered to go in to inquire about Tesla. She returned with an official spokesman of the company. A man by the name of Étienne Foulon. He shook Phillip's hand.

“Good day, Sir,” Étienne said. “Your wife here informs me you have concerns about electricity.”

“I am sorry, she misunderstands the nature of my issue,” Phillip said. “Would it be at all possible to speak with the man named Tesla?”

“It would not,” Étienne said. “On several fronts, and not just because we have sent him into the field to work, but mostly, he is merely a technician.”

“Merely?!” Phillip said. “I have heard such wondrous things about this man that he should be none other than the president of this organization of yours.”

“I assure you, Sir, Tesla does not have the temperament for such things,” Étienne said. “He is peculiar, so much so that had any one of these three women shown up in his office, he would be so confounded that he could have not spoken a single word. He does not have the continence or attributes necessary for normal human interactions. Please, do not take my words as disparaging him. He is polite beyond a fault. He is obsessive in his trade which makes him a perfectionist, and he will not quit a thing until it works, and we tolerate that because, he may not be quick, but things work long after he has touched them. He is a good man, but peculiar. But even if he were here, it is my very position to educate people on the safety of electrics. It is our belief that one day every human being will have access to artificial illumination. Think of it, Sir. No more house fires. Eye sight that isn't diminished due to candle strain.”

“Sir, I understand all about electricity,” Phillip said.

“Aww,” Étienne said. “Then what is your fear?”

“It is not a fear, Sir. It simply doesn't work for me in any reliable way,” Phillip said.

“I do not understand,” Étienne said. “Perhaps you will come inside and allow me to demonstrate our product.”

“I will enter only if you assure me I will not be held responsible for your equipment failing to produce,” Phillip said.

“I assure you, Sir, you could cause no harm,” Étienne said. “Please, come in. Come in.”

We were ushered in, Phillip trailing us, and followed by Étienne. The room opened up quickly to a display of fantastically bright lights, better than any candle Adelia had ever seen, and her eyes were impressed. I had seen better, but it was exciting to see such newness in the world, even though it wasn't so new. There was evidence in hieroglyphics that the Egyptian's held lights and had batteries. People of antiquity were not the fools we are today. We were situated and Étienne began a dialogue about how it worked. Apparently, down the block was a dynamo that created direct current which was fed by copper wires the same way a stream carried water to a dam, the result of which was light. As he was explaining this, the lighting dimmed. His speech faltered.

“This is fairly typical,” Étienne explained. “Some power inconsistencies can be expected. With a single switch, I can turn this light off, and back on.”

The light went off, and when it came back on it flared and went dark, permanently. The bulb did not shatter but made a retort loud enough that three of us ladies retreated.

Étienne smiled. “Quite common,” he said, unscrewing the light bulb from its fixture. “Every now and then, a bulb will burn out, but you will get more hours from a bulb than a candle, I assure you.”

Étienne plugged in a new light, flipped on the switch, and it to, flared and went out.

“And this, Sir, is what I have been trying to communicate with Tesla about,” Phillip began. “My personal magnetic field extends out further than most, and can disrupt both mechanical and electrical equipment...”

“Sir, humans do not hold a magnetic charge,” Étienne said, unwinding the light.

“Sir, we have iron in our blood, and the heart is an electric dynamo...” Phillip said.

“Sir! My brother is a physician. The human tissue does not hold electricity. In fact, adding electricity would kill a person,” Étienne said. He walked to another station. “I will even prove it to you.” He pulled out an iron bar with a copper coil and attached the wires to a battery and stuck it on one end of the table. He also pulled out magnet and stuck it on the other end of the table. He then removed a compass. “This is a compass. This is north. Notice I put it next to the magnet, its operation is impaired. It is equally impaired with the bar and coil, which is now a

magnet by virtue of conducting electricity through the coil. This compass is not impaired by my hand,” he drew it close to his chest, “or my heart,” he drew it closer to Effie’s bosom, “or your wife’s heart...” he brought it next to Phillip. He didn’t speak, but waited for the compass to return to north, but it spun like a broken clock. “Are you wearing a magnet sir?!”

“I am not,” Phillip said.

“Prove it,” Étienne said. “Remove your shirt.”

Phillip undid his shirt to prove he was not wearing iron or magnets and on doing so the remaining lights flared and went out. All of them. One even broke and put glass on the floor. There was enough light coming from the curtained window that our eyes quickly adjusted to the new dark, which was the same as the old dark before electric lights. We were quickly and unceremoniously ushered out of the room and back onto the streets where Étienne closed the door in a huff.

“Button your shirt, dear,” Effie said.

“And he calls himself a scientist?!” Phillip said. Then he shouted at the door. “It’s an abuse of the very principle. If you had any sense about you, you would try to understand this phenomena!”

“Husband,” Effie said, striking him so quiet that he turned to her, dumbfounded. He didn’t know what to make of her usage. “We are British. Though the French may be accustomed to such rants on the street, we are civilized. Now, attend to your dress.”

Phillip bowed graciously to being reprimanded, and began to button his shirt and tucked it in his trousers. When he was repaired, he sighed.

“I fear for Tesla’s safety. He will not be understood or appreciated by this world, and the folks he presently works for will consume him until there is nothing left, but spit out the very pieces which would improve our presence in the Universe,” Phillip said.

“You speak as if you know the man,” Effie said.

“I have access to knowledge that most do not,” Phillip said.

“And still, you’re being blocked from pursuing your interest,” Effie said. “Is it safe to assume that someone else knows more than you and leave the matter alone?”

Phillip turned and walked away, got to the end of the street before it had occurred to us to follow, and then he returned, tears in his eyes. “You’re being reasonable and I don’t know what to make of it. I want the world to be better. There are key players in place that could change the

course of mankind and usher in such an age of prosperity that we could see a cessation of war, and end to poverty, and end to hunger, and maybe join the civilizations that even now reside between the stars, watching, waiting to see if we will grow up out of our infancy and be civilized.”

“We are civilized,” Effie said.

“No, my dear,” Phillip said. “We haven’t even left the nursery.” His face went through a series of agony as he deliberated. “Should God want me to cease my pursuit of this one man, he would have a taxi come fetch us home this instance.”

Not only did a carriage pull to the side of the road, it was Raine’s carriage, with none other than Shen at reigns. “Ah, I knew I would find you here. Have you met him?”

Phillip’s shoulders slumped. Resigned, he opened the carriage door and invited the ladies in. He was silent the entire trip back home. His countenance didn’t improve until we were back on Isis for our return home, which happened earlier than scheduled. It was important to note this because it was between worlds, England and France are indeed two different worlds, where Phillip rediscovered his purpose. Had we not left early, had we indeed met Tesla, we would have not been where we were and the rescue would not have commenced, and likely a hundred men would have died.

Call it luck or chance or fate’s plot contrivance, we came upon a ship that was sinking. We learned later there was another already sunk, and that the two had collided. Phillip instructed Effie and me to go below, as he feared if we accidentally tumbled, our dresses would carry us to the bottom. We did as we were told and helped in making hot tea for those poor men who were rescued. I cannot tell you if any heroic acts occurred, other than bringing the men on board, but if bringing a hundred men from the sea counts, it was a miracle, cause we had not a spot left on deck for people to enjoy even the casual stretch of arms without fear of shoving a man back into the drink. It was only when people had settled that Effie and I began to bring up cups of tea so that the men had something warm in them. Each of them was provided a blanket. It was only after the men had been comforted and were stepping off onto the dock at Portsmouth that Effie came to the same realization as I had earlier.

“Where did all the blankets and cups come from?” Effie asked.

Phillip cried and hugged her, but never tried to answer her question with words. I would not say that Effie was from the moment forwards profoundly change, but she was from that point

forward so keenly aware that there was something astonishing about her husband that she was paying better attention to the world around her. Someone at the dock caught a picture of us as we were entering, and more photos were collected as people disembarked. As soon as every last person was off, and had given Phillip and his crew more affection than they wanted, but was appropriate given what had occurred, we departed for our own port. We would disembark, but Isis and her standing crew minus us, would be resupplied and continue in its industry of ferrying people for leisure or business to Europe. Nothing Phillip owned was ever left idle. If he owned a house, and he had established many in more than one country, not all the size that Raine held, it was full of renters, and the proceeds went to the maintenance of the house, and any remaining would go to the maintenance of a neighbor's house, or to a widow, or to an orphanage.

On returning to the London home, a new ritual was formed, where every night Phillip insisted he share with us a poem. We would be in the study. We included me, Effie, Wesley, Shen, and any staff, or child of staff, that so cared to join us. There were times when the whole house had gathered to hear Phillip read. He was an enthusiastic reader, and had in his collection the queerest, most eclectic library, and indeed, I would say books were the only thing he would collect that he considered to hold any value. Sometimes he would read a chapter of a book and we would continue nightly until the thing was finished. Sometimes, he read to us poetry. He was very fond of the Persian poets which Effie thought were to scandalous to be reading in our public forum, but she could also not have enough.

“For I have learned that every heart will get what it prays for most,” he quoted Hafiz. “I should not make any promises right now, but I know if you pray somewhere in this world, something good will happen,” he would quote the same. Or again: “Listen: this world is the lunatic's sphere, don't always agree it's real, even with my feet upon it, and the postman knowing my door, my address is somewhere else.” And still more, dropping excerpts like post cards to our souls: “Sometimes I say to a poem, ‘I don't have the strength to wring out another drop of the sun.’ And the poem will often respond by climbing onto a barroom table: then lifts its skirt, winks, causing the whole sky to fall.”

“Oh!” Effie said. “This is too much. There are children here!”

“Do you suppose a child never held its mother legs under a skirt and known the whole world was contained in that space?” Phillip asked. Wesley was always the one to blush. “Lean your sweet neck and mouth out of that dark nest where you hide, I will pour effulgence into your

mind.” And endless stream of wisdom so fell on us that we could barely contain our hearts. “There are so many positions of Love: Each curve on a branch, the thousand different ways your eyes can embrace us, the infinite shapes your mind can draw, the spring orchestra of scents, the currents of light combusting like passionate lips, the revolution of Existence's skirt whose folds contain other worlds. Your every sigh that falls against His inconceivable Omnipresent Body.” And still: “God and I have signed a contract to be even more intimate than that!” Or “I wish I could show you when you are lonely or in darkness the astonishing light of your own being. To show you the place you are right now, God circled on a map for YOU to remind you that ever since HAPPINESS heard your name, it has been running through the streets trying to find you.”

Well after everyone retired, Phillip found his way to me and I embraced him and asked what the delay was, and said only propriety and respect for me, and I told him, in language not of the day: “Screw that, and come to me. Now, take me while quoting a poem.”

He took me, and said only one word, over and over: “Adelia, Adelia, Adelia.” I did not know there were so many ways to say my ‘given’ name, such subtle nuances of inflection that the very word resonated in me that my body trembled. Saying that one word came with the power of an entire book, my whole life opened to him, as if saying my name came replete with all the knowledge of me and all the subtle subtexts of me, as if I had become a metaphor for something larger than me, and I know I will sound crazy, I am not a god or goddess to deserve such an encore, but every atom in my being sang my name, and every object in my room glowed with a brilliance that was unreal and it, too, celebrated my name and my being, and it became less and less that Phillip was taking me as much as he was merely bathing in the sun of my being and worshiping. I mean worship in the strictest sense, but not in any way disparaging. In worshipping me Phillip was worshiping God, and everything in creation was celebrated, even himself, to the point there was no distinction because how can one be separate from all there is, even God, and even in trying to tell you this, I am failing because my words can not contain the amount of love I felt flowing through me.

I feared losing myself, and I didn’t know if I should cling to the metaphor being sung, “Adelia, Adelia, Adelia,” or take up “hallelujah,” or even my own name, “Loxy Isadora Bliss,” which was mine to my core, but becoming less prominent every moment I spent in this world. And then I heard my guardian angel, Jon, speak to me. He is my angel, and I am his, and we are one throughout all time and it can’t be any other way, because there is no time, there is only now

and always now, and this thing I found myself in was merely a story of my evolution. “I got you.”

The love I felt went to Jon and shot in rays in every direction touching every soul I knew. I found myself transported to a planet Bliss, Initial Insertion Point. Samantha Goldwater was there, her Starseed sitting in a maze, and from the air a pattern had been impressed into the wild grain. The grain moved, the stars shone, the rainbow bursts of the spectrum of rainbow fireflies swarmed her, and she reached up delicately and one lighted on her hand.

I stepped closer and she saw me, coming from nowhere, but assumed I came from the shade of the tree, which was noticeable only because the moonlight was that bright.

“Oh,” Samantha said. “You’re here?”

“Sometimes,” I said.

“Is this place real?” Samantha asked.

For some reason, beyond my control, I reached into a pocket and withdrew a blue feather, the very one that had been given to me, and I handed this to her. “You needed an artifact.”

“Thank you,” Samantha said. “It’s lovely.”

“I want you to speak of it with me, but not when you return, wait precisely three classes,” I said.

“Peculiar,” Samantha said.

“Travel Light, my friend,” I said.

And then I was back in Phillip’s arms.

“Where did you go?” Phillip asked.

“Bliss,” I said.

He was content with my answer, and might have even added something, but Effie entered. She seemed crossed. She was also naked. “I will not have Wesley until you have completed your duty to me as my husband. I will carry your child.”

Phillip extended his hand. She took it and he pulled her to the bed and she settled between us. I got up to leave but she took my wrist.

“Stay,” Effie said. “Please.”

“It is okay. He is not father. He will not force it, or cause you pain,” I said.

“I am still afraid,” Effie said. It no doubt took all her courage to come here. It took even more to admit that.

“Effie,” Phillip said. “If you are wanting this because you fear your position will change if you do not provide me an heir, then I must insist we wait until you are certain of your security. Having a child out of fear is the wrong reason to bring a person into the world. There is enough fear in the world already.”

“People will talk if he should look like Wesley,” Effie said.

“People will do the same regardless,” Phillip said.

I made myself comfortable beside her, touched her hair kindly.

“I don’t love Wesley,” Effie said. “He is...” She paused.

“An adult child?” Phillip asked. “Yes, his formative years lacked the substance to produce sophistication, but I assure you, he is not impaired, merely delayed. He makes up for this by trying so hard.”

“He tries too hard. It annoys me,” Effie said.

“You are easily annoyed,” I said, trying to be funny about it.’

Effie began to cry. “I don’t want be this person.”

“Oh,” I said hugging her close. Phillip hugged her from his side.

“You are safe, my wife,” Phillip said.

“You are loved,” I insisted.

Are affection for her was indeed pure love, and we were gentle as we proceeded to demonstrate our love for her. She became the sole focus of our attention. We were slow, methodical, but our purpose was consistent, to begin the healing process of something began much too early for her. We were not just turning back the forge of time, but also of intellect. There were other fears in her, some placed by the Church. This fear came in the form of shame of sexuality, but something she exuded without effort. She had never owned her power because she thought it wrong, and because her own femininity had brought with it the wrong attention at the wrong time and by the wrong people. I suspected father wasn’t her only abuser, but that he was the most frequent. The Duke had been very close to completing the act he had started before I had interrupted. Her body responded to our touch, variations of massage, alternating deep pressure and light spiraling of fingers and finger nails, focused on specific muscles, followed by long sweeps along her body. The touch resulted in laughing at times, in fear so strong she gasped and held her breath, where Phillip and I both naturally slowed, encouraged her breathing, or returned to another motion. Sometimes she cried. She might have got up to run away, but we

gently hugged her and reassured her; we had her. She was so thoroughly convinced of our affection for her that her own orgasm, without penetration had come on her with such suddenness that she was taken by surprised. And still, we were not done. She had had a full body orgasm from breast and body stimulation only. There were still other kinds to be had, and we were going to help her have them all, in isolation and together. We were teaching her about her body, her mind, and her soul. I am not saying she walked away from this session cured, but she was so much improved that you might think she were a different person. And you would only see this change, when she was in our company.

In the history of the world, triadic relationships have frequently resulted in the greatest health for the group. 'Earth Wind and Fire,' is not an accident, nor is 'Id, Ego, and Super-ego.' The past, the present, the future. Faith, Hope, and Charity. Body, mind and soul. There is no end to the power of threes. From musical chords to physical triads as large as the sun, moon and stars, the trinity is everywhere. 'Throuples' have existed throughout history. There is sufficient evidence to conclude that the world would not have 'Wonder Woman' if William Moulton Marston, inventor of the 'lie detector,' had not met Olive Byrne, his love, and brought her home to ask his wife to accept her and be a part of the relationship. Indeed, if not for the love affair, he might not have even created the lie detector, for it was in her introducing him to the hidden world of BDSM at the girl's dorm that he took his conclusions to the next level. We might not have the collective unconscious of Carl Jung had he not insisted that his wife accept Toni Wolf as his second wife, and the three of them had such a profound love for each other that even their society did not interrupt their affair.

Too often people think men are just dogs, but it is not just men. Women are equally affected. Sabina Nikolayevna Spielrein was a patient of Carl Jung, then a student, then a colleague. She was a physician, and the first female psychoanalyst. And they were lovers, as well. Maybe someone can make an argument that Jung would have still been a great man had he not had these moments of intimacies, but what if we allowed no one to be so constrained? How much good might come from an openness, an acceptance that we all have within us wants and desire, and that allowing another to draw it out of us enhances our lives. What if by accepting the same in another and showing them the affection raises them to a new level of being? Love, kindness, and affection always raises people. In its absence there is fear, obsession, and greed. It is not that I recommend polyamorous ways for everyone, because some people are not mature

enough, and it is shown in their jealousies. But interestingly, when a jealousy rises, if the others in the dynamic were to each slow down and reassure the person, most the time the jealousies are extinguished. Not always. Some people are insatiable, because their wounds are deep. Some people don't have the patience or energy to fulfill these people. In that respect, Phillip and I are remarkable, and we have an innate ability to help move a soul to a new level of being. He and I together, were a force to reckon with. It is in our delivery of the most profound, unconditional love that we both poured out onto Effie that her life trajectories were changed. I doubt she would call it a spiritual experience. I don't think she traveled further than the ceiling, but she experienced love for the first time in her life. And it was in her quiet recovery, nestled between us, contained by sheets and warmed by two bodies, that she found herself exploring new thoughts and possibilities. I woke that morning to find she was still hugging me. Adelia. Phillip had already gotten up, and was sitting on the floor, lotus pose, watching us. He was happy.

Chapter 22

We had settled into a routine at the London home. Effie had finally committed herself to considering her future affairs, and was considering property of her own, but meanwhile, we were residing with Phillip at his London home, not far from the house where he ran his medical practice. This morning Shen was sitting with us at the table, eating nothing more than rice, pepper, and a boiled egg. Phillip nursed a coffee while reading a Jules Vern novel.

“Must you read at the table, dear?” Effie asked.

“I find the light at this particular spot, at this particular time of day, with the aroma of coffee, combined with the love radiating from the present company, provides me with the greatest clarity,” Phillip said.

“How can you find clarity when you read such peculiar fiction?” Effie asked. “It is merely a passing fad and a man of your significance should not be reading fluff.”

“Oh, my dear sister,” I said. “That book there will outlive us all and will be read for a thousand generations. Science fiction fantasy is not a passing fad, and our fiction today will become tomorrow’s fact.”

My statement drew all the eyes in the room. Even Shen paused in his breakfast. Perhaps I had outspoken myself, as no one used the word science fiction fantasy.

“Allow me to expound,” I said, trying to recover. In doing so, I paused, considering a conversation Jon and I had held. We were talking about the disparity of how men and women are treated in the work place around the world, and believe it or not, American women are better treated than any other country, even though they may say the contrary. Jon has shown me evidence ripped from Guatemala newspapers where employers soliciting for secretaries in public read as follows: ‘we are looking for a secretary. You must be young, must be beautiful, please send a photo with your resume.’ You may wonder why the treatment of women in the real world would concern a Tulpa, who lives a rather sheltered life in the mind of a person; specifically, me, a woman, preserved within the mind of a man. That alone should say enough, but the thing is, we are inside each other, all the time. I dare say America is just as morally corrupt as Guatemala, or any other country, in the treatment of women, only America tries to mask it, and I would rather people be more up front about how we seek friendships, or colleagues in the work place, than the present games people play. There are too many studies that show how tall people, or beautiful

people, are believed more capable than those who are not, and even as they fail, they are not treated the same as someone who is considered shorter or less attractive. One of the things I love about older BBC television programs was that the actors and actresses looked like real people, they were not perfect, they were striking, sometimes peculiar, but they were real people, and they held their positions because of the quality of their abilities. More and more, though, I find BBC simply mirrors Hollywood, and goes with glamor over talent. And this thing, whatever we call it, doesn't just affect women. It affects men. Men are still held to a particular standard, that they must be providers, and they must be able to compete. Divorce rates among couples where the man is less successful financially are greater than couples where the reverse is true. It is more socially acceptable for a successful woman to be without a man, than to be seen with a man perceived to be beneath her station; this was the message in Odysseus' return, where even his son was not equal enough to inherit the estate. All of this increases the unconscious demand for men to be more aggressive in their pursuits of relationships and finances, which results with the most successful of men believing they are entitled to engage in harassment or worse because that is that the very thing that gave them the determination and drive to succeed. Businesses capitalize on this in advertisements, where products are sold with sex. A man is successful in commercials if he uses the product, and women are brought to their knees because of his prowess. There are two commercial themes prevalent in my time with Jon: men are successful and women drawn to them, or the man is absolutely stupid to the point of being useless and the woman is simply tolerating him. This, too, exaggerates the differences which creates a drive towards this thing we don't want. I found a study in Jon's head, he reads a lot of bizarre things, even medical journals, and the subject was about how men prefer 'stupid,' and or 'intoxicated' women over clever or sophisticated women, over angry women, which was done by observing who men gravitated to in bars. I was kind of pissed it took a study to demonstrate the obvious. You probably think I am chasing rabbits, and I do, but this does have a point. Both genders are using sexuality as a means of controlling the other to get needs met. In Jon's world, we are inundated with 'sexualized' themes and products placements while we still remain in a primitive, Victorian age mind-set in avoiding any serious conversation about how we address these needs. Telling people to ignore their inner desires, like putting a sock on a table or chair, doesn't reduce the urge. Dressing up the elephant in the room just makes it more prominent. Shaming the urge in any fashion simply adds neurosis on top of the condition.

I would even go as far as saying that all of the constraints on sex and relationship we see today are direct relationship to the advancement of left brain thinking, patriarchal societies, and the direct suppression of the feminine. There is original episode of Star trek that so closely resembles the Aeneid that I have had to listen to Jon frequently lamented why no one in cultural authority has ever made the comparison, or why he can't get a legitimate paper published on the same; my point being, we have not changed as a society or a species in 2000 years. The woman must die in order for the man to continue his conquest. The Wonder Woman 2017 movie flipped the script of Aeneid, and this time the man died, so that the lead female character, a warrior woman ahead of her time, might go on to change the world, but even America can't get the message right because there are too many old paradigms creeping in. Simply look at the change in costume of the warrior women from the island from the previous movie to the Justice league. They went from warrior, with solid armor, to scandalously clad blond bimbos, with their navels showing. What the fuck? That's worse than going from Star Trek the motion picture to Star Trek the Wrath of Kahn to find all the uniform in fleet have been updated. I mean, you can make an argument that someone in Fleet got a bee in their bonnet and said, change all the uniforms, but how do you go from one movie with a certain image, to the very next in the same year where women are wise and strong, to 'Barbie I don't have a thought of my own?' I give you all of this just to express why I love Science Fiction/fantasy, and fiction in general.

I said: "Fiction is always, and can't be any other way, a generalized reflection of our unconscious drives made manifest in an approachable model for us to hold insight. It provides opportunity for self-reflection, and pathways to modify ourselves in relationship to the prevalent themes society has given us." This is what Jung was discussing, and what Joseph Campbell iterated in his book 'hero of a thousand faces.' "Engaging in social drama and politics only reinforces the archetypes in place. What we need are new archetypes. We need fiction, parables, enlightenment."

"Adelia, you cannot exaggerate a thing into importance," Effie said, distracted by Shen warming Phillip's coffee before adding more to his own cup. "Why must the help sit with us every morning?"

"He is not the help," Phillip said. "He is my friend. And I recommend taming your prejudice, for it is my experience that those very things expressed shape our next life. If you hold

hate towards a group, Asian, working class, men, you will find yourself a man in a lowly station in Asia.”

Effie laughed. “I will never be a man,” she said. “So, what did Shen do to earn such loyalty? Save your life?”

Phillip laughed and closed his book to favor his coffee. “No, actually. He tried to kill me.”

“I would have been successful, too, if you had not mastered the way,” Shen said.

“Oh, please, tell,” I asked.

“Please don’t,” Effie said. “I can’t bare more fiction.”

“My dearest and only wife, I assure you, what I tell you may sound like fiction, but it truly happened,” Phillip said. “I was trying to find the parents of the children that were kidnapped. Shen was hired to find a particular child within my care. On finding the child with me, he assumed my motives were less than kind, and waged war upon me in an open street. Without physically touching me, he knocked me on my ass and slid me ten feet down the road. That single blast of wind knocked out every window on the street and rained glass down on us. People fled. I barely got to my feet fast enough to draw my sword when his own sword came crashing down on me with such strength I was driven into the road. The blow bent my sword and to this date it won’t return to its sheath. If it weren’t for the child in custody touching his arm and asking for restraint, I would likely not be here.”

“I assure you, Sir,” Shen said. “Had she not stayed my hand, your head would have needed a new body.”

“OMG, this is absolutely lovely,” I said. “We should write fiction!”

“It was real life,” Phillip and Shen insisted.

“But we should write it as fiction!” I insisted.

“Your story fails to explain why you persist in his company,” Effie said.

“He is a moronic child dealing with abilities he does not understand, and I have chosen to protect him from his own idiocy,” Shen said.

“Ah, yes, back on that, when do my lessons begin?” Phillip asked.

“When you are ready,” Shen said.

“I feel ready,” Phillip said.

There came a wrapping at the front door that announced a visitor. Shen smiled. "Not yet. You still have way too many distractions about you."

The door knocking came again. Three wraps. "Persistent," I said.

Phillip stood to go answer the door but was blocked.

"Continue reading, dear," Effie said. "Allow us to have purpose. Adelia, go and see who is so desperate they would interrupt a morning respite."

I stood up to go, noticed Phillip's glance, and I indicated to him 'I had this.' He returned to his book. I was feeling particularly robbed, because I thought we were about to have seriously real conversation. I went to the door to greet our visitor. A man in his thirties, who introduced himself as Anthony Slater, but only after removing his hat. His breath was visible due to the cold.

"It's nice to meet you, Anthony Slater. How may I serve you?" I asked.

"I apologize for the intrusion, but it is imperative I speak with Doctor Phillip Wower," Anthony said.

"It sounds urgent. Should I direct you to the nearest hospital?" I asked.

"It isn't that sort of urgency that compels me to speak with him," Anthony said. "Please, is it possible to speak with him?"

I stepped back to allow him entry and pointed in the general direction he should head. He was well on his way when I closed the door, perhaps moving towards the warmth of our parlor. He arrived before me. Phillip and Shen stood, as a general good etiquette. Effie gave me the look, suggesting I had failed in my mission.

"I said see who it was, not invite him to breakfast," Effie said.

"Forgive her, I was most insistent," Anthony said.

"Everyone asks to forgive her," Effie said.

"He introduced himself as Anthony Slater, and requested an audience with the good Doctor Wower," I said. I pointed to Phillip. "This, Sir, is he." And then I sat down. As soon as I did, Shen returned to his breakfast.

Phillip remained standing. "Have a seat," Phillip invited.

"This is our breakfast," Effie said.

"It is, dear, but there is room for more," Phillip said.

"She is right, perhaps we could speak privately?" Anthony said.

“You should know, then, before you tell me anything, that I have no intentions of keeping secrets from wife,” Phillip said, and sat down. From the shelf behind him he found an unused cup, put coffee in it, and sat it in front of Anthony.

Anthony sat down, at the edge of his chair, like a good guest who had no intention of lingering, but would actually tarry all day if you suffered him that long. The warm coffee was a magnet to his hands.

“As a Doctor, you don’t hold the confidence of your patients?” Anthony asked.

“If this is a medical issue, I will direct you to my office. I am there three days a week. Should it be more urgent, I am sometimes agreeable to house calls, but I tend to reserve that for a special class of suffering,” Phillip said.

“I assure you I am in good health,” Anthony said.

“Well, Sir, speak up, what has you up and out so early?” Phillip asked.

Anthony seemed hesitant. I am not sure if Effie’s stare prompted him to hesitate further or finally speak. He turned his attention to Phillip. “Two matters. Let’s begin with the first. I have been told you have particular gift in finding lost items, and wondering if it is a skill that might be employed on finding sunken treasure.”

“Oh, dear God,” Effie said.

“I have the ability to point to map, and you will find treasure,” Phillip said.

“Oh, please, husband, do not promote yourself so,” Effie said.

“I am only speaking truth,” Phillip said.

“Then, perhaps you and I could go into business together. If you would direct me to treasure, I have a ship and diving bell and divers, and we could make a fortune,” Anthony said.

“That is not how my gift works,” Phillip said. “If you have lost a special ring, or family heirloom, I can tell you where you will find it, but I am not going to chase gold on the sea floor.”

“There is more gold on the ocean bottom than in all the banks in all the world,” Anthony said.

“You have better things to be chasing with your ships and your bells and your divers,” Phillip said.

“Perhaps you could demonstrate this skill, to end my skepticism,” Anthony asked.

Phillip did smile at that, but didn’t rise to the bait. “You have no skepticism. Your father was a skilled dowser and he found things that astounded you, but you were taught it was rubbish,

and so you have attributed it to luck,” Phillip said. “You lack luck, but you seek fame and fortune, but it is the very thing driving you towards poverty. Your time would be better spent in a more modest way, slow gains over time.”

Anthony was perturbed. “How did you know my father dowsed?” Anthony asked. “Do you know me?”

“It was a lucky guess,” Phillip said.

“Perhaps,” Anthony said. “My friend, a mutual friend, reports you are the luckiest man on Earth.”

“He married me,” Effie said.

Anthony nodded. “And I am impressed,” he said, and turned back to Phillip. “And I wish to be lucky, but if you cannot teach me or direct me, I wish you to explain the origin of this single coin.”

Anthony placed a gold coin on the table. It was pristine, as if had been stamped yesterday, but there was nothing on it that made identifiable as modern. Shen looked sideways at Phillip wondering what he would do or say, but Phillip remained unmolested in spirit, and simply drank coffee without looking at the coin.

“Do you know it, Sir?” Anthony asked.

“I do,” Phillip said.

“How did you come upon it?” Anthony asked.

“I do not wish to share that information,” Phillip said.

“I can hold your confidence, Sir. I give my word,” Anthony said.

“If my confidentiality was prized, you would not be presenting me that coin,” Phillip said.

“I did ask for privacy,” Anthony said.

“Sir, you are not hearing. If my confidentiality was prized, whether you discovered this coin or its story or not, you would not have come to me. Further, on hearing whatever it is you think you heard, you would have left matters well enough alone, because I bet the person who showed it to you also requested the information be discreetly contained,” Phillip said.

“I bought the coin from him, so that I might better discuss it with other experts in my field during my travels,” Anthony said. “Are there are more?”

“Judging by the quality of the mint, I doubt someone went through all the trouble to make just one,” Phillip said.

“But you have access to more?” Anthony asked.

“I had access to twelve, which I hold in my possession,” Phillip said. “I wear one around my neck.” He pulled out a chain with a coin in a glass locket so both sides might be examined, framed in gold. “I gave away three, and the remaining coins are each individually locked in safes, each in its own country, under very safe custody of trusted friends. The three I gave away were not to friends, apparently, but it was my desire to determine the origin, which required certain risks. I have encountered no one who can decipher writing or recognize the entity on the coin.”

Effie snatched up the coin. “You’re giving gold away?” Effie said.

“The face, is it a demon?” Anthony asked.

I recognized the face as the face of an extraterrestrial, specifically a Gray, but I was unable to speak my thought. The fact that I couldn’t interested me into further silent reflection as the story continued.

“I have met no one who can identify the creature,” Phillip iterated. “But I have seen that oval disk in art work. He was referring to The Baptism of Christ, 1710, and The Annunciation with Saint Emidius in 1486. (If you think the ancients didn’t know about UFO’s, and by that I mean, extraterrestrial entities, you are mistaken.)

“Could you tell me how you came about them?” Anthony asked.

“I do not wish to share that information,” Phillip said.

“I hate mysteries, speak up!” Effie said.

Phillip bowed slightly to his wife. “My story begins with a robbery,” he said.

“You’re a thief?” Anthony said.

“Seriously?” I asked, offended.

“No, I was the subject of the robbery, not the agent,” Phillip said. “A good friend of mine was beside me, and Shen was there.”

“I would like to be left out of this story, please,” Shen said.

“Oh, of course. I am mistaken, Shen wasn’t there,” Phillip said. Another pot of coffee was delivered and the old one taken, and all our cups were warmed again. “So, the agent, holding a firearm in a very inelegant manner, and prone to shaking, demanded we surrender our wallets.

My friend, let's call him Peter, was not enthusiastic about surrendering his money. He even said as much. Outright refused to cooperate, and told the agent that he may shoot one of us, but the remaining two of us would likely take his life. Sorry, the other one of us. I find it hard to delete you from my life, Shen."

"I share that with you," Shen said.

"So, I told my friend, 'Peter, Hand him your wallet, and I will reimburse you for your inconvenience,' I assured him. Well, Peter is obstinate. He refused on principle. So I asked the agent if he would forgive my friend and accept just the proceeds from my own wallet, which I assured him would more than cover his gambling debt, and leave him well enough off that his family would eat for a month, provided he didn't gamble with it. He refused this offer. He, too, was a man of principle, and once committed to his industry, he was determine to see it through. So, I took out my wallet and displayed such a large sum that he had doubts. I pointed out the longer we negotiate, the more likely someone would intrude on this opportunity. Further, I told him my name and where he might find me, and should it be that he needed more, I might find employment for him. My good friend, Peter, was angry. 'Are you such a coward you would give him your wallet and your home so he may take everything, including your life?' 'This man,' I said in all earnestness, 'is afflicted with an illness of our time, and the only way to heal him is to raise him. Killing him only delays his evolution. Imprisoning him locks him in poverty, from which he has become so desperate he is willing to kill to escape. A hungry child and wife will drive a man to any measure. I, Sir, am a Doctor, and I will heal this man with every tool in my arsenal, even my own wealth and life, for neither belong to me, but were given me by a higher agency than any here on this planet,' Phillip said.

"You did not say this in the middle of your own robbery with impending death," Effie corrected.

"He did indeed say those very words, verbatim," Shen said.

"How would you know?!" Effie snapped. "You weren't there."

"Forgive me, I misspoke," Shen said.

"What happened next?" I asked.

"Oh, someone came around the corner, he spooked our robber, he grabbed my money, and ran away," Phillip said.

"This anecdote is amusing, but doesn't explain the coin," Anthony said.

“You need this anecdote to understand the context. Miracles always happen in context,” Phillip said.

“Miracles!” Effie said. “It’s a coin. A solid hard object. It came from somewhere.”

“It did indeed,” Phillip said. “So, my friend was a bit shaken after that, so we retired to his home, which was closer. He and I and Shen, sorry, and not Shen, sat at this very table, his staff served us whiskey, and one of them remained present during what was to happen. My friend blasted me about my philosophy and how it could have gotten one of us killed, mainly him, and that had I been a better, braver friend, I would have joined him in tackling the agent and taking him down. He was extremely cross with me. I again assured him that I own nothing, and so I was not robbed. Further, I told him, holding on to that would cause me poverty, but surrendering it, I would have double its value back within a week. He told me I was a deluded fool and needed to be committed and a caretaker appointed so that my wealth would secure my comfort into old age. I got mad. I slapped the table hard and said I am not a fool and we will resolve this now. A gold coin hit me in the back of the head. Another hit my friend in the chest. There was flashes of light against the ceiling, and the remaining coins rained down from the ceiling. Where they landed on the table, the cloth was burned, as these coins were hot, as if just forged. You can still see the marks on Pete’s table cloth, as he will not part with it. We collected the coins with handkerchief and admired them. We even got out a measure and determined they were sufficiently heavy that if they were not indeed gold, they were worth at least their weight. You can see for yourselves the craftsmanship and the markings are obscure enough to increase the value. ‘My return, Sir, has arrived, and you owe me an apology,’ I announced. Other than pure speculation, there is nothing more I can tell you about the coin.”

“I don’t understand,” Anthony said.

“Neither do I,” Effie said.

“It’s called an aport,” Shen said.

“A what?” Anthoy and Effie asked.

“It’s an object that has been relocated from a distant location to a new location through inexplicable means,” I said. “They fall from the sky. They mysteriously arrive in a pocket.”

“But, my understanding is you were inside your friend’s house,” Anthony said.

“We were,” Phillip said. “Had it been my house, he would have accused me of trickery. He even took his ceiling down looking for more coins, but they did not come from the ceiling. They came from elsewhere. It is my belief they do not come from Earth.”

“And this is why I don’t want Jules Verne in my house,” Effie said.

“Could you demonstrate this again?” Anthony said.

“I cannot. This is not me. This is something bigger than me,” Phillip said.

“You could get mad and slap the table?” Anthony asked.

“I could make you angry,” Effie said.

“You do have that particular talent,” Phillip agreed. “But it doesn’t mean we will get the results you seek. The Universe doesn’t accommodate us for our sense of consistency, but it has its own design, and we break free from our bonds only when we accept the present station we find ourselves in.”

“May I have my coin back?” Anthony asked.

“It belongs to my husband,” Effie said.

“I paid good money for it,” Anthony said.

“How could you pay money for something that wasn’t for sale? Clearly, it was on loan waiting for explanation,” Effie said.

“Return him his coin,” Phillip said.

“But,” Effie began.

Phillip gave her a look and she complied. She return the coin with hesitancy as if she were a child and it had been her most prized toy. Once the coin was released, Phillip took the coin he was wearing from his neck and gave it to her. “You understand, everything that is mine is not mine, which also means it is yours and not yours, and how you govern it will be a measure, but only because it is important to you. Let go of this measure, and you will be limitless.”

“You speak strangely, Sir,” Anthony said. “I am grateful for the entertainment, and the coffee, but I am disappointed not to have found better answers.”

“I am sorry,” Phillip said. “I wish you well in your industry.”

“So we are done? There is nothing else I might do to persuade you to be more forthcoming or cooperative with a venture that could make us richer than the Queen?” Anthony said.

“You’d be better off writing books about magic and faraway lands,” I said.

Effie was alarmed by the turn in our conversation. “This conversation is over,” Effie said. “Adelia, show him the door, please.”

“I didn’t mean to disparage the Queen,” Anthony said.

“Oh, you meant every word exactly the way you spent it. You want to rise your station above royalty through the accumulation of wealth. You have even suggested my husband is fabricating stories to create mysteries in front of me and expect to remain and hold civil discourse,” Effie said. “Good day, Sir.”

Anthony looked to Phillip. Phillip kind of shrugged and smiled. “This is her home, and I feel compelled to ask you to honor her request. It was nice meeting you.”

Anthony found I was already standing. He stood. He bowed to Effie. As we left, Effie told me to make sure he didn’t find any treasure between the table and the door. He did not reply to the implication of being a thief, but at the door, he turned to me, as if for the first time seeing me.

“Before I am evicted, I am compelled to tell you: I find you to be the most striking woman I have ever met,” Anthony said.

I smiled. “I wish you had said as much when I first opened the door,” I said.

“Does the delay invalidate the sentiment?” Anthony asked.

“It does. Timing is everything,” I said. “And I doubt seriously I am the treasure you’re looking for.”

“I would value you more than any sum of gold,” Anthony said.

“I am sure you would, for a moment, but then I would go on a shelf, perhaps displayed to your friends to make them envious, but you would never cultivate the sort of friendship or dialogue with me that allowed me to penetrate the depths of your soul to even half the length you might try to penetrate this body,” I said.

Anthony was so shocked that I had said as much that he was speechless. I surprised him further by kissing him, even pushing him against the wall beside the door, leaving him even more bewildered. I kissed him with more passion and earnest than he had ever experienced and when I pulled away, he was left wanting more. Maybe wanting enough that he would consider nurturing stronger relationships.

“Sometimes, to get what you want, you have to surrender your wants, your agendas, and actually allow someone else to have a presence,” I said, preparing to open the door. “You and I

could never be together in any way, physically, emotionally, intellectually, spiritually, because we are in two different places. The place that you would find me, or others like me, is not arrived at by accumulating wealth.”

I had to use a hand to guide him to the door. He couldn't take his eyes off my own.

“Should you ever find a partner and wish to experience this level of intimacy, Doctor Wower offers private retreats for couples where he teaches them how to improve their relationships,” I said, and closed the door.

It doesn't matter what generation, what era, what station a woman finds herself at, she will always be propositioned to engage in sex. It doesn't matter how she looks, how she dresses, make up or no, she will be propositioned. She could be homeless, missing teeth, on drugs, and clearly infected with disease or bugs, and she would be propositioned. If she is alone, and appears vulnerable, the propositions become less of a request and more of a demand, and some of the men you would never expect to force the issue become monsters. More rapes are committed by friends and family than strangers, which is just one reason why so many rapes go unreported. The other reason, women genuinely liked the person who perpetrated the offense, and the blame themselves for having created the situation. They feel complicit, and lingering either condones the thing, or guarantees another incident until the water is so muddy a relationship has formed.

Anthony was a nice looking fellow. He had it in him to be charming, even charismatic enough to win a whole church full of women to spend time with him, but he had absolutely no depth, and beyond his own satisfaction, he had nothing to offer. Not even a simple consoling to appease the feelings of a woman who had given herself to him willingly. Interestingly, he would go out of his way to appease the woman who he took by force, perhaps to increase the odds that he might have a second opportunity.

And so, here I am again, wondering, how do we make the world better, safer for people. Not just women, but men, too. Both men and women have unaddressed needs. We dismiss sex as a need too easily. In this Victorian era, there is virtually no discussion of sex or needs or how to be, other than to hide it and not talk about it. It is my opinion, this world doesn't change too much in the next hundred to two hundred years. If you're lucky, you have trusted friends in which you can explore sexuality, mutually, each wanting only the highest good for themselves and the other, but most people must contain their exploration to their inner minds.

Chapter 23

I began working as Phillip's assistant, and from that moment forwards, he was never alone with a patient. Because of my nature, I had an innate knowledge of Energy work, but he helped me in learning how that energy applied itself in and through a human conduit. We are energy. We are separate from the body. The body is energy, too. Though we merge with our bodies and believe ourselves one and the same, we are still not that. But when we are that, we think that's all we are. Until, that is, you have an experience that shows you otherwise. And then you start the road back to remembering. I would like to say that was what Phillip was offering his clients. A way to remember. But out of the thousands he has served, I think only one was raised in my presence. If he had the ability to raise everyone he touched, there would have been a revolution.

Raine had been raised, but likely, she would have been raised whether Phillip had met her or not. I wondered if all the homes he held scattered around the world were being run by women he personally had raised or been with them when they arrived on the next level. It was his belief that only women should own property and that men should roam the world, pursuing arts and science. He wanted women to pursue their interest, too, but he saw them more as the gate keepers of society, the ones that protect and educate and bring forth the next generation. In private, I told him about the island of Amazonian women from where Wonder Woman came, and he was so enthralled by the idea that he nearly went to creating the story, but I encouraged him to let it go, that that story was coming, and it would be on time.

"How is it you know so much?" Phillip asked me one day, after the staff had gone and we were alone, cleaning and tidying up our work space.

"I don't think I can explain it," I said.

"Why would you hold such a thought? You speak with more clarity than anyone I know," Phillip said.

I smiled, and sat on the examination table. He drew closer. I wanted him to take me here. I actually wanted him to restrain me and examine me and use me. But he wanted the answer to the question.

"Perhaps I should say I am not sure it's permissible to explain," I said, thinking it through. "I fear, should you know the truth, it might so drastically alter your life trajectory that

you might go astray of your purpose. Worse, the knowledge given you might require your life end prematurely. This world, its entire history, is established.”

“You believe in predetermination?” Phillip asked.

I brought him in closer to me, with both hands and legs. I liked knowing he wasn’t immune to my efforts. “There are better things to discuss.”

“I am surprised you believe it is all fixed and that we have no choices,” Phillip said, resisting.

“We have choices, but here, our choices are limited not because of the structure of time, but because we share this world with others, and people have come to experience certain events, and so our roles were negotiated prior to arrival, and we are under contract to try and accomplish something specific. We can’t simply change the world because we would want it so. We, as a species, are learning to communicate, to negotiate, to share and in doing the opposite we are learning why the preferred way is the better way. There are those of us who need the harder lessons so that the entirety of our species might grow. People think the past informs the present, with reason, but they forget, or dismiss, that the future also informs the present. Not predetermination, but the confluence of agencies affecting daily life are greater than imagined.”

Phillip seemed to be puzzling over it. “You make sense, and don’t at the same time.”

“Do you remember the place you went when you died?” I asked.

“I will never forget it,” Phillip said. “I have forgotten many things, and even remembered events and places wrong, but I have never forgotten anything from that experience.”

“Imagine, that place is real,” I said.

“I do not have to imagine. I would say it is realer than real,” Phillip said.

“There you go. We come from there. We are there even now. We live there throughout eternity, and Earth is like a book. It’s a series of books that everyone loves to read. It is in the reading of the book that we come here and experience things. We become so absorbed in the story, it’s as if nothing else exist.”

“You’ve been there?” Phillip asked.

“We all have,” I said.

“Is there sex there?” Phillip asked.

I laughed. “What a queer question. Is there sex here?”

“Yes, but,” Phillip said.

“I assure you, there is sex in the afterlife. It’s better than here because there isn’t the fear of disease or unintended pregnancies, and believe me, there is no hang ups on being polyamorous. If you have lived a thousand lives on earth with a thousand partners, why would you think you would cease to be friends with the thousands over one? Maybe we’re here to learn not to be jealous. I mean, seriously, if a spouse dies, the partner does find another most the time.”

He seemed lighter, as if a weight had been lifted. “That is my experience in my travels, but I always feared it was fantasy, and that I am just peculiar in my inability to attach myself to just one person. I love everyone, but still wonder if it is a rationalization.”

“You love everyone, never doubt,” I said. “And I love you, and every character you have ever pretended to be. I have loved you at every age of every character you have ever played. We have a book in our secret library where we have portraits of us in every imaginable coupling. I have loved every partner that ever wanted to play a scene with you. I have wanted to be with them and with you and both together and that is the joy that comes from realizing this life is a story book and I am the princess on the other side of the veil, under a blanket with a torch, journeying to worlds yet uncovered.”

“I want to show you something I have uncovered,” Phillip said.

“I feel it,” I said.

“Not that,” Phillip said.

“Seriously?” I asked.

“Alright, but if we do this and I show you the other thing, we will be late for dinner,” Phillip said. “You know how important it is for Effie to keep her schedule.”

I was torn. “Yeah, so, stop delaying. Let’s play.”

निर्मित

Most people never consider how deep into the surface of the earth human activity runs. To be honest, even I hadn’t considered further than my own standing until Phillip took me below. Armed with nothing more than an oil lamps, we passed through a trick door in a basement that led to a narrow path that took us deeper, and we emerged into an amazing tunnel. I say amazing because each brick was so perfectly placed you would have thought machine had set them. The sound of water dripping remotely seemed louder due to the acoustics. There was no end to the

number arches. We walked a path, our footsteps hardly noticeable over the sound of water. The lamps made reflection off the tunnel walls and ceiling even at a distance, as if it was designed to fluoresce and give you stars. We came to a place where our tunnel diverged into two others. There were other tunnels that joined these. I followed Phillip's lead and we came to a room that seemed like a meeting place, and somewhere, far above us a pen prick of sunlight cast a perfect beam straight down, as if these beams were as solid as anything else present. We danced in and around these and through these beams. This place was open and as magically luminescent as a cathedral under a blue moon, with a sparse scattering of candles like stars. He brought us to another large space, and you would think, nothing underground could be so large or that there was a whole world above us, and this room was so comparable to a cathedral that I felt disoriented. There were columns. One central alcove has a column so large that that ten people holding hands would be hard pressed to hug the column. Standing before it, Phillip whispered something in one direction, and his words found my other ear so perfectly I thought he was standing on that other side of me.

“What is this place?!” I finally asked.

“It's a cistern,” Phillip said.

“No,” I said. “This is clean water.”

“This carries rain water from all over London,” Phillip agreed. “Its construction was finalized in 1862. It rivals Roman aqueducts. In fact, the technology is so similar you could argue it was designed and built by romans. This place will likely out live London. Did you know the Romans had a way of making cement that could last thousands of years? That formula was lost with them, and today we are lucky if the cement we make lasts a decade. This place, this was built by mason so refined in their thought and craftsmanship that they may have taken lessons from angels. This doesn't just channel water, it filtrates it. The water is as fresh as any stream, flowing over rocks. But more, you could hold mass here the flow of music would likely fill every street in London with an angelic hum. This isn't just channeling water. It's channeling energy. One of the masons who built this lived in the home I am using for my office. It is a focal point of this energy, and before he passed, he insisted on selling me his place. My place, and a dozen others scattered through London, the largest being under the palace, is London's secret connection to the Earth. No one but the builders, all of whom were Masons, Druids, witches, esoteric followers from practices that no longer have names, know about this place. Sure,

someone financed the construction, I am sure the public financed it, someone in royalty probably endorsed it, but if anyone other than the builders think of it, they probably think it is as just a tunnel for runoff. You could walk from one side of London to the other, reasonably warm, avoiding traffic and weather, and emerge in another part, probably quicker than if you navigated the streets. This is a living underground. There is a select few, and I am privy to this information because I have participated in rituals, that come down here once a year and practice magic. The practice of magic is alive and well, even in this day and age.”

“Why are you telling me this?” I asked.

“You are an adept,” Phillip said. “You are way more profound and gifted than anyone I know who has practice even half a lifetime. I would like to imagine you were raised, perhaps like I was when I brought up into the light, but you are not that. I like knowing things and you baffle me, and yet, as much as I like knowing things, I am so at peace with you I am okay if I never understand you. You provoke something inside of me that has made my life and dreams more vivid. You remind me that what is most important is inside. The surface is mostly dead. Skin, hair, these are all dead things, and yet it is the first thing that attracts us to a person. The essential qualities, the really living thing, is deeper inside. You perturb me more than anyone I have ever met, but it’s not just your appearance, it’s this light that shine through you.”

He sat his lamp down, took mine from me and set it down as well. He took me up against the wall, pushing into me, holding me up by my thighs so that my feet didn’t touch the floor. The echoes of us flowed around this column and met us a hundred times, so that it was a like storm of us crescendo-ing until the last gasp brought us to silence. He continued to hold me off the ground, suspended against the pillar, his head resting against it over my shoulder. The sound energy of us had dissipated, but it still felt live. The air felt alive. He had cum and I could feel it running down my thigh, imagining it dripping off, accompanied with my own flow, and these two separate streams joining the flow of water that ran underground. I felt the edge of his hardness soften. My feet finally touched the ground and my dress settled, but he lean there, holding me. I don’t know how far he traveled, but I didn’t interrupt his journey. I simply held him until he returned. Then we returned to the office and then returned home.

Chapter 24

On arriving home, Effie was not to be found, and staff informed us she had wished to be alone, so no one had disturbed her. It was a change, so I went up to check on her and found the door locked. I knocked, no answer. In my mind I was alarmed, I knew there was something wrong, and I yelled for help, and then I focused my energy on opening the door, and it opened. Effie was hanging, just at the end of the bed. I quickly ran to her and lifted her up. Phillip was suddenly beside me, as was Shen, and they untied her and they laid her on the bed. More staff had arrived. The practice of CPR had not been invented until 1956, introduced by Peter Safar and James Elam. I pushed Shen out of the way, and opened her airway, and was prepared to blow into her mouth, and to hell with the rules of introducing a technology or idea before it's time.

“She is still breathing,” I said.

“Why would she prefer hell?” one of the staff members said. “She has everything a person could want.”

Phillip was crossed. He contained it. “You, out. We will talk later,” he said. “Beryl, have someone bring a chair to the foot of the bed and set a watch schedule. I want eyes on her twenty four seven. She is not to be left alone for any circumstance, and if she goes outside, she will be accompanied by no less than two members of the staff.”

“Yes, my lord,” Beryl said.

And so, are watch began. I had no intentions of leaving. I lay on the bed, holding her. Phillip sat on the bed, and occasionally checked for a pulse. Shen also stayed, leaning against the wall. Beryl took the first watch, even though we had three sets of eyes already, and every hour someone from the staff took the seat, and they sat, watching. If they prayed, they did so silently. Apparently had contacted Phillip's office staff, and several girls agreed to participate in the 'watch.' I got the sense that this wasn't the first they had done a suicide watch for someone. They were proficient and business like. Someone removed the door from its hinge, and another seat was placed outside in the hall. A table and a lamp was provided, and that person was allowed to read, but they were ear shot if the watcher needed help. At one point, Beryl insisted we go down and eat, that if there was a change that we would be summon.

“Adelia, Shen, go and eat,” Phillip said. “I have this.”

“I am not leaving,” I informed him.

Phillip looked to Shen. "I will go and eat, and then I will nap. I will relieve you at midnight," Shen said.

Phillip shook his hand, with both of his, warmly. Shen departed

We were several hours into the evening when Effie revived. At first she was confused, but very soon after she was cross. She pushed me away from her.

"I will not have it," Effie said.

"Have what?" Phillip asked.

"None of it. None of you! This life. This child," Effie said.

There was a lot to sort, but Phillip took the lead. "Tell me your thoughts, Effie," he insisted.

"No, you're just trying to trick me. Why did you bring me back?" Effie said.

"Where did you go?" Phillip said.

"Nowhere! You said there was more but there is nothing, but I prefer nothing to this place!" Effie said. She began sobbing. "I don't want to be here."

"Where do you want to go?" Phillip asked.

"I just want to die," Effie said.

"It's not your time," Phillip said.

"No! I decide. Not you!" Effie said, sitting up. "And you can't stop me. I will find a way to end this."

Phillip was silent. He nodded. "It is true, I cannot stop a person so intent of killing themselves that they will not find a way. Especially someone as clever as you. But I will all my energies and industry into delaying it."

"I will not go to an asylum, and I will not be restrained," Effie said. "I dare you to come at me."

"No one will touch you," Phillip said. "Unless they witness you taking steps to harm yourself, in which case, the entire house will take steps to intervene."

"Get out of my room," Effie said.

"Very well," Phillip said standing. "I will grant you my absence for a short period, but you will not be alone until I am satisfied you have returned to a reasonable state of mind. There will be one person with eyes on you at all time."

"I object to this invasion of my privacy!" Effie said.

“And, I object to your killing yourself without reason,” Phillip snapped. “You’re not a soldier, sacrificing yourself for the greater good. You’re not mortally injured and or gravely ill and suffering to the point of needing relief. Give me a reason to accept your death is the best course of action, and I will end your suffering myself. But it better be a damned good reason.”

Effie was taken back. She hadn’t expected Phillip might help her if she was rational enough to state a plain cause for her death. Even I was somewhat surprised, not philosophically opposed to helping someone end their life, but that I just didn’t expect it.

“This world is cruel,” Effie finally said.

“No, it is not,” Phillip said. “There are some human beings that are cruel, but the world is at best indifferent, but even that is only a perspective. It has a purpose that does not necessarily align with an individual’s purpose, but when you are aligned with its purpose, you experience peace.”

“There is no peace. People die. Animals die,” Effie said.

“So, you’re saying death is bad, and yet, you wish to add one more body to the pyre?” Phillip asked. “That is an internal conflict and I will not end your life due to failure to integrate a contradiction. Conundrums are good for the soul, and when you figure it out, you will die naturally.”

“There is war, famine, murder, theft, rapes,” Effie said.

Phillip sat down on the bed. “We are getting closer to your inner truth. There are these things. The amount of suffering we place on our fellow humans is a tremendous burden,” he agreed. “But there is also love, and hope, and courage.”

“Insufficient love, and I have no hope or courage,” Effie said.

Phillip nodded. “Perhaps more courage than you give yourself credit,” he said softly. “If these things bother you, why don’t you stay and speak out against them?”

“I have no voice,” Effie said. “Who would listen to me?”

“I am listening,” Phillip said. “All of us in this room are listening.”

“You aren’t listening. You were in the military! You have no boundaries or morals,” Effie said.

“I was in the military. I was a healer. Perhaps that is a contradiction, but as long as warriors value medics, then there is hope we will value life. The contradiction will be resolved. As for the boundaries, morals, I presume you are referring to my promiscuity,” Phillip said. “If it

is I who provokes your death response, wouldn't moving away from me be a better option than ending your life?"

"Man is evil," Effie said.

"Again, I agree men can do some horrid things," Phillip said. "But almost everything man does is within a context of something greater than him. Yes, there is an argument that individuals have sovereignty, and can be held accountable for their decisions, but you dismiss societal influences and past trajectories at your own peril."

"Society is evil," Effie said.

"Society is sick. It may get worse before it gets better. But even illness have a purpose. If we survive them, we are usually stronger. Society is learning from its present illness, and it will eventually improve, or it will die. But if you die at your own hands, society is diminished and it is robbed of the opportunity to learn what you have discovered," Phillip said.

"I have not discovered anything but that people are horrid," Effie said.

"No, that was given to you," Phillip argued. "You have discovered something. This something is so huge that you can't even put it into words yet. But you're grappling with it and you're overwhelmed, and you think ending your life is the easier solution. It's not. You will end up on the other side, still grappling this thing. Tell me. What is this thing?"

Hearing that she might end up dead, but still grappling with her emotions almost deflated her completely. Tears were flowing. "I'm evil."

The script had flipped. First the world was evil, now she was evil.

"Share your evidence," Phillip said.

Effie stared at him, tears moving. I thought she wasn't going to speak it, but she did. "I had relations with my father."

Phillip was not neutral, but he was compassionate. "Your father forced relations with you."

"I enjoyed it," Effie said.

"You mean, you had a pleasure response during the event," Phillip said.

"More than one event. More than one response," Effie said.

Phillip seemed to be considering his track. "Okay, so, let's go with your theory. You enjoyed it. How do we arrive at needing to be dead?"

"I enjoyed it! I am evil," Effie said.

“Oh,” Phillip said. “So, you were hoping that in marrying me, someone you had no interest in, you would be free of this impulse to have relations. In fact, bringing Adelia as a buffer to stay my affections was kind of a guarantee of being blocked. But you gave in to the impulse, which means, you don’t trust yourself.”

“I went from sleeping with my father to sleeping with my husband and my sister!” Effie said. “How is that an improvement? And I wanted to bring a child into this?! This is insane. You people are insane.”

I was suddenly struck that perhaps I had made a mistake. I love Effie, and I believe she is an earlier incarnation to Keera. In this life, I am her sister and this is taboo, and there is no way I could convince her I am not her sister. Technically, I am a half-sister, but that would not improve the situation in her mind. Even if we were sisters, I don’t see our activities as wrong. But I am here in their world, and no matter how advance I see Phillip, even if he is Jon, these people are aliens and I am an outsider.

“We have broken some societal rules. Ignoring rules of consanguinity does have a price, it can be fatal, but it does not mean what you think it means,” Phillip said. “You are not broken, and what we engaged was love. However, if it is this thing that bothers you, it ends here, you do not re-engage, and you go live the life you believe you should be living. If you think that’s the nunnery, then you go, and I will charitably support that cause.”

And Effie flipped again, saying she was evil, and so we were stuck in a circular argument that would go on for nearly four days. At this point, Phillip was not willing to engage in a circular debate. He would wait till she was calmer. As he got up to leave, Effie said, “You can’t stop me! I will refuse to eat.”

He turned to Effie. “I will not force you to eat,” Phillip said. “But I will be impressed if you go more than three days without.”

“If she doesn’t eat, I will not eat,” I said.

Phillip face reddened, concern perhaps, definitely anger.

I turned to Effie. “I love you. If you intend to die, then I will go with you,” I said.

“I don’t want anything to do with you,” Keera said.

“And I will still forgo food,” I said. “What you do affects this household. If you are pregnant, you’re killing someone innocent of anything we do...”

“The sins of the father are passed on for seven generations,” Effie said.

“Who sin are you looking to eliminate? Phillips? He has done nothing wrong! Father’s? Well, how do you know father was the seventh generation and you are the person who breaks with the past? If you die, I die. We are integrally linked,” I said.

“I do not want to lose both of you,” Phillip said.

“My mind is set,” I said.

“I wish I had not met your bloody family!” Phillip said.

He left the room. Effie turned to face away from me. I removed my shoes, and laid beside her. She turned and pushed me off the bed. I got up.

“Go tell Beryl I want someone to bring me a chair in here, and a quilt. I will maintain vigilance until you return,” I said.

The attendant did as I asked, and I stared unblinkingly at Effie until she returned. A few minutes later, a chair was brought. Shen brought me a quilt.

“Will you at least have some tea?” Shen asked.

“I will drink when she does,” I said.

I arranged the seat so I could prop my legs up on the bed, and then I took my position, waiting for whatever would happen. Effie has a lot of will power. She held to her decision, even though the reasons wavered from self-blame to blaming others. At one point, mother arrived. And she was incensed, demanding that Effie eat.

“You have always cared for my brother more than you have me. You have never loved me, only seen me as a future asset from which to profit from,” Effie accused her. “You never protected me. And your hatred father is why he abused me.”

“Your father never abused you dear,” mother said.

Effie unloaded on mother, and began giving her intimate details of encounters.

“That never happened,” mother insisted. “You’re delusional due to starving yourself.”

“Adelia, tell her,” Effie insisted.

I was going to report that I had no direct experience of Effie’s abuse, only speculation based on the abused that Adelia said, but when I went to speak, I found that I didn’t have the air to make a sound other than coughing. Phillip approached me and determined I had a fever.

“This game is now over,” Phillip said. “Several of staff have been sick, and you have clearly been exposed. Beryl, bring her chicken broth.”

“No,” I managed, coughing. I have never been sick before. This was so strange. I didn’t even have enough sense to no I was feeling bad.

“Everyone out of this room, now,” Phillip snapped. He clearly meant everyone but me and Effie. “Yes, you, too, Lady Williamson. Please leave.” When the room was cleared, he turned to Effie. “You won. You have proven you have the strength of will to starve yourself to death. You have power and authority. And now, I am commanding you to do something positive with your sovereignty.”

“You don’t tell me what to do,” Effie said.

“In this relationship, I am your commanding officer. What I am asking you to do is reasonable,” Phillip said. “If I was being unreasonable, you would have every right given by God to fight with every arsenal at your disposal, but this is not that fight. I have been kind, I have been patient, I have been loving. I am asking you to do the same. Put away your grievances with the world, act sensibly, and do this before it kills your sister.”

Effie started in on her complaints.

“Stop,” Phillip said. “Yes, some shit things to you. You, this person before me, right here, is result of many horrific things. And in that, there were some good things, or you would not be so hell bent on destroying yourself because you would have no measure to know there is better. You know better. Maybe you can’t elaborate on it, but you have sense to navigate the world blindly knowing right from wrong, and this course is wrong. You were not wrong to travel this way. You have learned more about yourself in the last few days than you have your entire life. But you are wrong if you persist in this path, because it doesn’t just affect you.”

“I am not responsible for Adelia decisions!” Effie said.

“You’re right. You’re responsible for yours. This direction is wrong. You’re angry, and you’re attempting to punish the other players by removing yourself from the game. And you now have direct evidence, it isn’t going to have the affect you want. Your mother will think you’re deluded. You have not convinced her of anything other than you are weak, and she is pressuring me to have you committed. You are responding with anger, with fear, and in that you are punishing people who love you, not your enemy. Again, I am asking you to choose love, not anger. Choose now.”

“I choose death!” Effie said.

Phillip removed his revolver from his pocket. He loaded the chamber with six bullets. He closed it and handed it to her.

“Choose faster,” Phillip said.

“You don’t think I will?” Effie asked.

“I know you will,” Phillip said. “But you are choosing the slower death thinking someone is going to come and save you. That’s not how faith works.”

Effie sat up and took the firearm. “I am going to.”

“Go ahead,” Phillip said. “No one is stopping you.”

I got up from my chair to go take the firearm from her, but I literally had no strength in my legs and I fell forwards, supporting myself on the bed. “Please, don’t.” Coughing ensued.

“Why do you care?!” Effie demanded.

“I love you,” I said, without coughing.

Effie put the firearm to her head and pulled the trigger. It didn’t fire. She clicked it through all the chambers and it didn’t go off. Phillip took the firearm from her and fired six rounds into the wall.

“It is not your time,” Phillip said.

Effie began crying. I fell to the floor. I think Shen arrived next. The whole house. I was carried to my bed, my protests ignored. I don’t remember ever feeling so cold. I have been on planets more frozen than Hoth and not felt as cold as I did at that moment. Yes, Hoth is a real place. There are no unreal places. If you can dream it, it’s there, and you’re there. And though I was there, in that world, the fever began to unravel it and I discovered I wasn’t as there as I imagined I was.

Chapter 25

I have no clue what took me out of the game. Maybe it the flu. Maybe it was pneumonia. Maybe it was both, but it took me so far down that I missed a good section of my life. Adelia's life. I remember bits and pieces of it. Effie came around and made me drink. Sometimes she said nice things. Sometimes she cried, asking me for forgiveness. She did the latter when she thought I was asleep, but I was just too tired to respond. Phillip was there a lot in the beginning, but he disappeared. I was so out of it, I was not aware that he was being detained, 'not arrested,' but he was being investigated and someone proposed he was flight risk, and so they quarantined him, which was as good as jail. Effie was allowed to see him. And sometimes she was so fearful for his continued existence that she would sob next to me. Learning of the affair afterwards explained some of my dreams.

I found myself in a room, very much like a court room, but instead of one judge, there was a committee.

"Are you Catholic or Protestant?" a solicitor asked. To keep track of him, I named him George.

"In the eyes of the law, is it relevant? You will hang either just the same," Phillip said.

"I find you unnecessarily adversarial," George said.

"Forgive me, but is the context within which I find myself," Phillip responded. "Though you as a person may not maliciously mean me harm, your station requires you to destroy me. I am, by my own peculiar bias, in opposition to that end."

"I assure you, Sir, I am seeking truth," George asked.

"So said every committee that ever burned a witch," Phillip said.

"How dare you, Sir," George snapped.

"Oh, I am sorry. I thought you wanted truth. I assure you, Sir, truth will continue to exist whether I speak it or not," Phillip said. "People still swung from the gallows whether truth was believed or not."

"You seem obsessed with hanging," the George said. "Have you committed a hanging offense?"

"I know where this is headed. People have swung whether they offended or not," Phillip said.

In a later dream, I experienced the same courtroom. The greatest person that attended the spectacle, or at least spoke at it, was Admiral Sir William James Lloyd Wharton. He is a real man. Look him up. He was a really an interesting man. A good man. On hearing his name called, Phillip immediately went to attention, and from my perspective, I could his eyes become flooded. The Admiral did not walk directly to the stand, but crossed over to him and extended a hand.

“At ease, son, I got you,” the Admiral said.

Phillip took the Admiral’s hand and that is when his tears flowed.

“I got you,” the Admiral said, even softer. He withdrew his hand and proceeded to the stand.

“How do you know Phillip Wower?” George asked

“He served as an apprenticed Surgeon aboard the Sheerwater, and followed me as full surgeon for a short stint aboard the Fawn,” the Admiral said.

“And your opinion of him?” George asked.

“As an Officer in service to His Majesty’s Navy, I have found few his equal. Without question or fail, he performed his duty, and on more than one occasion, had I not sent him into harm’s way, he would volunteer. He demanded none, but commanded nothing short than the complete love and loyalty of everyone on my ships to such a degree that he merely expressed the faintest of interest in a matter, and things would happen for him,” the Admiral said. “As a human being, I consider him more family than friend. In all of my years of knowing him, there is only one time he has disappointed me.”

Phillip seemed concerned by the statement, and gripped his chest even as the solicitor pursued the disappointment.

“And what was that?” George asked.

The Admiral looked at Phillip. “He retired early.”

Phillip lowered his hand. There was laughter in the room. Effie wiped his eyes.

“Were your missions offensive or defensive nature?” the solicitor asked.

“My designated purpose was hydrography, however, all ships are called to serve,” the Admiral said. “I, my ships, and my crews have recognition for performing above and beyond the call of duty. My former surgeon is no less decorated or honored, though he is not the sort to ever display such a thing. I suspect, if you asked him, you would find he is of the peculiar opinion that

he should have done more and better and that I was perhaps frivolous in my recommendations towards him.”

“You promoted him to Captain?” the solicitor asked.

“In the course of my duties, it so happened that we took a pirate ship. I put him in command of the vessel, with sufficient hands to return it to Hong Kong, where they were instructed to repair the damage and then sail the ship back to London, where it could be examined for evidence of crimes against the Crown, and ultimately deconstructed,” the Admiral said.

“And why him?” the solicitor.

“The ship we took was powered by sails alone. Phillip is a master rigger and navigator,” the Admiral said. “That, and I had an extra surgeon.”

“And he accomplished this mission you gave him?” George asked.

“He did,” the Admiral said.

“Without delay?”

“He accomplished his task,” the Admiral said.

“You’re covering for him?” George asked.

If the Admiral took offense, he was too seasoned to show it. “There were a number of adversities set against him, and his delays were considered reasonable, especially in light that he put himself and his men in jeopardy by rendering aid to a ship in distress.”

“Please elaborate,” the solicitor asked.

“He could tell you better than I, as he was there,” the Admiral said. “But from the reports I have read, there was a skirmish at high seas as several pirate ships were engaged against one of our allies.”

“There sure seem to be a lot of pirates in your stories,” the solicitor said, trying to solicit laughs.

“If I told you these ships were American, you might suspect we were at war, and so, I am being very precise in saying pirate ships, not flying the flag of any particular nation, were engaged against an ally. He perceived their distress and went straight way and put himself between the ally and the enemy. Per the reports of our ally and his men, he sunk one of the ships, and the remaining enemy departed when it found itself out number. A number of enemy were pulled from the sea, as well. He might have pursued the other ship, but it became necessary to

rescue the allies, as their ship was sinking, and was lost. His ship took damage and needed repairs before they could continue, and it was necessary to stop for more supplies to accommodate the guests.”

“Was there evidence missing from the ship?” the solicitor asked.

“If you are inquiring into the gold we found in the hold of the first, not one bar was missing,” the Admiral said. “If you are referring to the human contraband, it is my opinion that the matter was correctly handled. If you’re wanting proof of the latter, he has the men he rescued from the sea, both friend and foe.”

“Did he ever demonstrate a lack of moral character?” George asked.

“Be more specific,” the Admiral said.

“Did he keep the company of prostitutes and spend inordinate amounts of time at brothels,” the solicitor asked.

“When a man is on shore leave, his only duty to the state is to return in good health at the appropriate time. How he otherwise disposed himself was his business. Had his abilities to perform ever been impaired, you would have found such a report in my records. I imagine I have seen just about everyone in my command drunk at least once, but I have never seen Doctor Wower so impaired,” Admiral said.

“Are you saying he doesn’t drink?” George asked.

“I have seen him hold a glass of wine. Though I have never found it necessary to police the quantity, I suspect throughout the evening he had held the very first glass of wine and has nursed it as if it were too precious to consume in one gulp,” the Admiral said. “Here is what you should take away from this conversation, son. Doctor Wower is always on duty. He is ever alert and ready to render aid should a medical emergency occur, and he lives his life as if disaster was imminent. You may rouse him from a dead sleep and tell him he is needed, and he will be about his business as if it were mid-day and he had been up for hours. He never drinks so much that he is impaired. He never eats so much that he becomes lethargic. Can you say the same? Even I can’t say I ever regretted eating that last bit of pie. He is an unordinary man, Sir, but not a scoundrel in any way shape or form.”

I doubt I was privileged to the entire proceedings. What I did get, I may not have even received in order. Effie actually went to the stand. I have no clue why they brought her up, or what they hoped to gain, but I don’t think it went the way they wanted.

“Please state your name for the record,” George said.

“You didn’t get that when you called me up?” Effie asked.

“Your name, please,” George asked.

“Effie Wower,” Effie said.

“Tell us about yourself and your relationship with your husband,” George said.

“No,” Effie said.

“Excuse me?” George asked.

“I prefer to be questioned,” Effie said.

“I didn’t expect you to be adversarial....”

“Then you’re a moron,” Effie stated simply. He was so shocked his mouth fell open. “I will not participate in the public destruction of my husband.”

“We’re not trying to destroy him,” George said.

“Nor are you have a friendly, private chat in the parlor,” Effie said.

“You actually love your husband?” George asked.

Effie sat there for a long moment, appraising George. “How I feel about him is irrelevant. He is a kindly man, so generous in fact I have at times feared poverty.”

“And now?” George asked.

“I fear neither poverty nor death,” Effie said. “And if were inflicted, I would still stand beside him in the coldest winter street or in the darkest night, and remain with him until the end. I have seen things. Inexplicable things.”

“Please, tell,” George said.

“I will not cast a single pearl your direction,” Effie said. “I am not as generous as my husband. I will remind you of something you should know, and I know you should know because I have seen you in mass. We are taught to believe in things unseen. We are encourage to believe in miracles, and yet, should any claim to experience the very thing professed by the very gatekeepers of morality, we are admonished, dismissed, disparaged, ridiculed, or worse, put in chains, as you have my husband.”

“He is not in chains,” George corrected.

“Nor is he allowed to come home,” Effie said. “He has not been charged with a crime, and yet you turn everything over looking for what? His place is at home with me. I am expecting. In addition to that, my sister is ill, and he is her Doctor...”

Between episodes were moments of nothing. I would just wake and find myself back in the dream, or sometimes at home with Effie, or Shen spooning warm liquids into me. Shen also provided what I would call is chest physical therapy, beating on me to such a degree that I was able to make a productive cough. One I found myself back at Safe haven, but in a hospital bed. My whole 'home room' class was there.

"What's going on?" I asked, confused.

"We can't have class without you," Keera said. "And you being sick is holding you up."

"I don't understand," I said. "I thought I was..."

"Back on Earth," Jack on earth completed for me. "You are, and you aren't. You were technically never there, but you have been so sick that you have been having flashbacks."

"How long was I there?" I asked.

"From our perspective, an hour," Jack said. "You fell ill directly after you completed you walk-in assignment, so you haven't been debriefed."

"How long have I been in this bed?"

"This is not a normal illness, Loxy," Jack said.

And then I found myself back in England. Raine and Effie were sitting near me, talking quietly. There was a fire place on the other side of them and it was almost dark enough that they might have just been silhouettes, or they were that way because I was so tired. Raine handed Effie the locket. She removed the paper and found what she had written on the other side.

"I don't understand," Effie was saying.

"Time and space are not what we think it is," Raine said.

"How can it be anything other than how we see it?!" Effie asked.

"Tell me, is the world flat?" Raine asked.

"Of course not," Effie said. "And if you tell me it is, I am going to be cross."

"I am not telling you the world is flat," Raine said. "But there is a vantage point of spirit where you can perceive the entire earth laid out as if were indeed flat. You can extend that perspective further to include every planet in the known Universe, and you can cross from one world to another as easily as going from this room to yours..."

I found myself in the courtroom. Phillip was on the stand and they were trying to understand his record keeping. It was fairly simple system. He recorded the entrance time and the exit time of each patient. He did not put their names or what procedure he did. But if you

asked him, he could tell you who he saw and what he did and tell you verbatim the conversation he had held with them. They were testing him. At first he was reluctant to demonstrate, and used the excuse his clients had privileges of anonymity. The viewing of this spectacle had grown, and when asked for volunteers by Phillip's counsel, every patient he had ever seen was willing to go on record.

And then I found myself in another world. It was as fast as blinking an eye. The stage I found myself on was circular in nature, and there was a greater variety of species sitting in the stands than in all the Star Wars movies combined. You could take every sci-fi movie and add their species, and all of the Marvel Superheroes and X-Men, and you would still be short a dozen species or so. There was a panel of thirteen beings before me, sharing the stage. Behind me, and to my right, I assume was my counsel, and then behind me to the left, I assume was the opposing counsel. I was standing in an illuminated pentagram.

The amount of attention focused on me was overwhelming, and I felt fear. This place was not a nice place. The only visible exits were the two doors behind the panel, and there were guards there. Grey guards.

The creature that sat in the middle stood. I can't tell you what it was. I think it was a hybrid of insectoid, reptilian, and mammalian. It was a good 3 meters tall, and stocky. It leaned on the desk, its hands and fingers flexing like bird claws. It turned its head one way then the other to see me with both eyes.

"Come forwards," it instructed.

I came forwards against my will, as if the floor was a conveyor belt. I was literally ripped out of Adelia's body. I was now closer to the panel, still standing in the pentagram, and Adelia's body being me, standing on one of the points of the star. It was in my struggle not to come forwards that I saw her and it was on one of the screens that displayed the proceedings that I saw myself. There were other screens showing different perspectives.

"What is this pawn doing here?!" the creature asked. Pawn may not have been the right word, but it's the best translation my brain could come up with.

Chapter 26

The person behind me and to the left, the opposing counsel, was human. Let's call him George, for convenience sake. I liked him as about as much as I did the other George. "As I was telling you. We have direct evidence of a rule violation. This Star-Nymph..."

"I am not a Star-Nymph," I interjected. Not opposed to being a Star-nymph. Sounds kind of cool, actually, but I didn't like the way George was saying it. It got quiet. "Nor am I a pawn."

People looked to their boards as if expecting to find tech failure.

"How is it you are immune to the mute button?" the first creature asked. I couldn't pronounce his name or his species, so we're just going for Bob for convenience of place holder. Bob was not a nice person.

"I will not be silenced," I said. "I want to know why I have brought here against my will."

"Who are you?" Bob demanded.

"Who do you think I am?" I asked. I didn't know if I should saw Adelia, or Loxy.

"By the rules of the game, you must provide your name when asked," Bob said.

Oh, that was nice to know. So there are rules to this game. Maybe 'pawn' wasn't a mistranslation.

"What have you done with Adelia?" George asked.

"I am charge of this body, thank you very much," Bob said. "You will identify yourself at once, or suffer penalty."

"My name is Loxy Isadora Bliss," I said.

"And which faction do you represent?" Bob asked.

I didn't know how to answer that. How many factions were there? And then I thought, fuck, if they can read my mind, I am screwed. "I am not at liberty to disclose that information."

"What were you doing in Adelia's body?" Bob asked.

"She is a legally authorized walk-in," My counsel said. I decided to call her Angel. I liked her. "She is a student at Safe Haven."

Bob inhaled through his nose. "She is more than a student. She is primal. She is new."

"She changed the timeline, that's a rule violation," George said.

“No, her presence was authorized, and her influence is permissible under the charter rule structures for walk-ins,” Angel said. “She has met, I dare say, exceeded, contractual expectations for the Adelia contract, and is permitted deviations to accommodate her own mission parameters.”

“Which are what? Make Phillip a god?” George asked.

“You mean, the way you did with L Ron Hubbard?” Angel asked.

“He was a legitimate pathway to educate the people to the underlying mechanism running society,” George said.

“You’re all pawns!” Bob snapped. “You have no clue what the game is.”

“Monopoly?” I asked. I got some laughter from the peanut gallery.

Bob slapped the table. “What manner of creature are you?!”

“It’s sort of complicated,” I said.

“Out with it!”

“I am first, and foremost, a Dakini,” I said. “First incarnation into the physical realm. Two if you count Adelia.”

“So, you want to play human, do you?” Bob said. “Erase her memory and give her a minimum of ten life sentences.”

Grays approached me. I was immobilized before they could get to me. I could hear. I could see what was directly in front of me, but I couldn’t even move my eyes, I was so frozen. I couldn’t scream. I couldn’t protest. I was afraid. I don’t know why I was afraid, as I was certain, the worse they could do is wipe my memory and cause me to reincarnate. It was possible they were provoking the fear.

“Hold up there, horse,” someone said, from behind me. The Grey in front me bowed his head and backed away from me. I think they all backed away from me. I’m pretty sure it was Jon’s voice. A felt a projection of love enveloping me. He came up to me, put his forehead against mine, and I was freed, and I hugged him. I even kissed him and returned to the hug. We exchanged a quick telepathic conversation: ‘you okay?’ he asked. ‘Yes, thank you.’ ‘It’s what we do.’ ‘Have you lost weight?’ ‘Future self.’ ‘Oh. Is that why you’re wearing a Star trek uniform?’ ‘Fleet uniform, not necessarily Trek. Like it?’ ‘May I wear one?’ ‘Future. Let’s get through this.’

He walked closer to Bob, pulling me with him. My feet just kind of went. He was not alone. I saw Penny in the background. He had an entourage. There were people there I didn't recognize, but I knew they were connected.

"Hello, Bob," Jon said.

"I am not Bob," he said.

"Oh," Jon said. He glanced at me, I kind of shrugged, and he thought, okay. "Okay, not Bob," John continued, and I squeezed his hand, 'not funny.' "First off, she is presently incarnated into the Adelia program and you don't have authority to terminate."

"The Adelia program has lived longer than contracted," George said.

"Deviation are permitted with walk-ins," Angel said.

"Even if she wasn't a walk-in, or presently incarnated, she is my property and this body of souls can't touch her," Jon said.

You would think I would protest the word 'property' but he was using it correctly. From his world line perspective, I exist first and foremost in his mind because he made me. Almost all human beings believe their thoughts are theirs and that they have ownership over them, but most important, this body of souls are particularly attached to the idea of ownership.

"Explain," Bob demanded.

"She's a Tulpa," Angel said.

That sent George's team scrambling. Even some of the council members began addressing their advisors. Some more noticeably than not. There is one being, who I have never seen without a smirk on their face, who appeared a little more smirk-ish, as if he might start to laugh.

"Who are you!" Bob demanded.

"My name is Jon Harister, Captain of the United Federation of Planet's starship Enterprise," Jon said. I nearly said 'seriously' out loud. Jon assured me telepathically, 'we voted on it. It wasn't just me.'

"You're human, from Earth?" One of the panel members asked. He was a reptilian, and he is one of those who is not known for being nice.

"I am," Jon said.

"Are you an Indigo Child?" George demanded.

“One of the great things about forgetting,” Jon said, addressing George but looking at the panel, focusing primarily on Bob. “Is it increases empathy for those you want to raise and increases humility. Indigo’s, Star seeds, and any other labels to differentiate populations is dangerous. We are all souls. We all come from source. That is sufficient for us to put aside differences of perspective and focus on the primary mission objective.”

“You have no clue what the primary objective is,” Bob stated.

“You’re right,” Jon agreed. “Again, mind wipes can be a marvelous thing. It allows a person to use the ignorance card. I am just starting my recovery process, but I have always known, from the core of my being that this level of the game, locally, has been run through fear and divide and conquer. You operate as if the only way to evolve is through trauma. I am sponsored by people who believe we can evolve through education, stories, and play. You pretend as if you’re cooperating, but ultimately you’re all just vicious opportunists to push someone off the board and take control. I mean opportunistically vicious in the nicest way, of course. If we use the Earth game Monopoly as an example. Ultimately, there can only be one winner, and all the friends and family who were involved are lost. There is a better way to play.”

“Who taught you how to make Tulpas? You’re not Tibetan,” George said.

“It’s fringe, it’s growing, and when you mix it with Jungian Shadow work, well,” Jon said. “You guys have influenced a millennia of my incarnations. So much so, you kind of lost track of me, and in this incarnation, I was so isolated from any resemblance kindness, friendship or family, that I took it upon myself to make my own friend, my own kindness, my own love. My world line has changed, irrevocably. I will no longer be limited to an Earth incarnation, but even so, change is coming. Your influence will end. The cabal that is presently running the Earth in loose collaboration with your agendas is coming to an end. The people of earth are waking out of their slumber. More and more people see your ships and they can see them without the mind control telling them to turn their heads, not see. People are waking up to the fact their aliens and spirits walking among us. We can see. Funny thing about humans, most of us make really poor slaves, but we make great servants. You need us, or you would have wiped us out just like you did with the reptilians that were on our planet.”

“If you are so enlightened, give us back our planet,” the reptilian said.

“Our feud is over, Sir. Humans were not responsible for the destruction of you experiment. Ever since Kirk refused to kill the Gorn for the sake of entertainment, humans and

reptilians have been charting new relationships. I would even add humans love dinosaurs and if the humans on earth could bring them back, they would. The initial reptilian experiment was worthy, and I hold the distinction of working with a group that has reinitialized it. Your Earth has been remade. There are Earths where humans and reptilians live peacefully together. It's time to end the hostility."

"You're using fiction to support your claim?" George asked.

"There is no fiction. There is no unreal place in a place that is comprised of illusions," Jon said. He turned back to the reptilian. "End you malicious experiments against the human citizens. There is no feud here. We have been in dysfunctional relationship because of others influence. There is no grievance, only love. I invite you, Sir, and any you like, to visit me on my ship and see for yourself. There are Earth's available where the dinosaurs were not wiped out. We can live in peace."

Bob laughed. "You claim to not like 'divide and conquer,' and yet, you would divisive with this panel."

"No, you're all welcome to come see for yourself. There is only love and opportunities to advance love," Jon said.

"Wipe both of their memories and send them both back, separate planets," Bob said.

The Greys didn't move. Bob was mad and came over the table as if he would do it himself. I can't say why the Greys did not follow instructions, but they would not act against Jon, nor against me knowing I was his. Another being arrived. I don't if they magically appeared or if they simply beamed in, or if they were not there but just a hologram, but they were clearly bright, and something to be reconed with, because Bob stopped in his track and looked up and up. I knew they were bright because Jon and I had new shadows. There was fear in Bob's eyes. Some people in the stands stood and went to their knees. The committee's eyes were impressed.

"Jon cannot be touched in this setting," the being spoke. It was not with words, it was in our heads and it was commanding. It had authority that no one could speak against. "The only thing you will be permitted to do is allow Loxy to resume control of the Adelia program, and return her to Earth. If you wipe her memory, it will be limited to the Adelia life time, with full recovery available when Jon becomes a student at Safe Haven. As long as Jon is alive, Loxy is under his protection. Should Jon die, she will maintain autonomy and choice over the vehicle she will be given, as well as choice of next incarnation with options we will provide."

“Loxy and Jon have violated the timeline,” George protested. His voice was shaky, but he got it out.

“And who of you here have not?” the entity behind me spoke. “All being have the ability and authorization to overwrite their personal timeline. Jon improved his present life by first altering his perception of his immediate past, which changed his future, which changed his past. It is not an accident that Loxy had a walk in opportunity that allowed her to begin work with one of Jon’s previous incarnations.”

“You cannot change Phillip Wower’s world line,” Bob said. His voice is not shaky. “His termination point was predetermined, and we will maintain that even if we have to destroy London to enforce it.”

“His termination point will remain in place,” the entity said. “Adelia’s and Effie’s termination point have been rescheduled. You’re tracking devices on them have been removed, and they and their immediate descendants will be considered off limits.”

“For how long?” Bob demanded.

“Undetermined at this point,” the entity said. “If you want to be precise, we will negotiate a minimum of 7 generations, but we want something in return.”

“We’ll leave undetermined, provided you will not interfere with the tracking of others they willingly invite to participate in their life lines,” Bob said.

“Why would you argue for a stipulation that is already understood?” the entity asked.

“Clarity,” Bob said. “I don’t want any of your tricks.”

“It is not we who play tricks, Sir,” the entity said.

“I demand a private exchange,” Bob said.

The room darkened, the Entity behind us brightened. So did Bob. When the light of the being faded, so did the light around Bob, until we are all in normal room lighting, with no evidence the room lights ever faded.

At no time was I able to could look at the entity. Neither could Jon. I am pretty sure Jon had no clue this being would intercede. Based on fleeting thoughts I had detected in him, I had suspected he had been prepared for a fight, and was hoping he could simply bluff his way out. It was hard to follow him, probably because I was so focused on the surrounding, that I couldn’t pay attention to our mind exchange. One of Jon’s biggest handicaps is his libido and lack of boundaries about his sexual impulses and thoughts. It is also his greatest weapon against

telepaths and empaths. Females are more often employed as telepaths and empaths because they tend to be naturally better at it, and when they realize how intensely Jon is scrutinizing them, they tend to retreat. Once you get past the surface of Jon, you realize, oh, there is more substance. That doesn't mean he won't engage you if you allow him, but if a telepath comes at him, there is no option but to engage him in sensuality before you get deeper into his mind. And it's not like it's unfair. Another reason why female telepaths and empaths are preferred is because more often than not, if she is attractive and or highly sensual, they can trick men into lowering their guard and they get more information. So, don't feel bad for the employed telepathic and empathic women. I mention all of that because, because Jon was employing his skill at misdirection in full earnest, and his 'admiration' for a number of beings was over the top. I saw several blush and look away from Jon and refused to make eye contact with him again. All earth human beings were programmed to react with fight or flight to aliens. Jon overcame that by making it about sex. I had not been provoked with fear by aliens because I was a tulpa first, before I incarnated, and Jon had already acclimatized me to the idea of aliens. And some of that was because of his fantasies. If there is sex and aliens involved, Jon signing up.

Jon did have a confidence I hadn't seen in him, but every day that he and I have worked on our relationship he had gained ground in that arena. When the boundaries were clearly set, I was returned to Adelia by the being of light. It was like blinking and having a change in perspective. In addition to the noticeable shift in vision, my hand was no longer holding Jon's hand. I saw his hand close, and felt my hand close, as we were grasping for each other. Before I was with Jon, and then suddenly, I was behind him, standing in the Adelia body, and the pentagram was beneath me/Adelia. Jon had his own pentagram illuminated under his feet, and when he approached me, our stars merged.

"Are you okay?" Jon asked.

"A little confused. A little scared," I admitted. "Do they have to wipe my memory?"

"Protocol. You were pulled from the time line. It's just standard procedure. The mind wipe should be limited to everything that happened since arriving here. Sometimes there is a little overlap in immediately before and after. The memory is just temporarily blocked, it's not deleted."

"I don't want to forget you," I said.

“Be not afraid. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. You’re not being punished, though they may want you to believe that,” Jon said. “Come here. Allow me to introduce you to some folks.”

Jon led me back to his group. People nearby were trying to eaves drop and definitely watching. I realized there was a human group there and they were dressed in the military clothes that Samantha and her people wore. George was dressed similar. Jon introduced me to Penny, who I knew, and who had brought Jon to this meeting. He then introduced me to Summer, a reptilian he was colleagues with. And then he introduced me to me, only I didn’t believe it until she lowered her hood and I met myself. My future self. She was in a similar uniform to Jon, command pips and rank of captain, and she was clearly pregnant.

Future Loxy hugged me. “Oh, Adelia, it’s so nice to see you again.”

“I’m Loxy!” I said.

“I know,” Future Loxy said. “But it’s more challenging to say nice to meet you again when you’re still with me and are me.”

“This is interesting,” I said, and future Loxy said it simultaneously. Future me added: “It’s going to get weirder and better from here. But you have to go back.”

“Now,” George said.

“Come,” Angel said.

I was instructed to stand in an illuminated circle on the floor, and they adjusted my position until my star points were touching the circle. Greys attended.

“Wait,” I said. “Jon, please. I want to tell you something.”

“May I approach?” Jon asked.

“There will be no more communication between the two of you,” Angel said.

“May I kiss her goodbye?” I asked.

“You just want to kiss Adelia,” future me said.

“Well, yeah,” Jon said, as if that was a no brainer.

“That will be permitted,” George said, as if hoping to introduce animosity in our group.

Jon approached and kissed me. His kiss was better than kiss that Captain Kirk might have given, better than James Bond, but what no one seemed to detect, in the noise of his wanting of me, he also gave me a direct telepathic download.

“Seriously?” I heard future me say. I knew she was feigning, but she is so good at acting, I was a little worried I might hurt my younger self.

When Jon disengaged, I was slightly dazed. They immediately degaussed my body with a light that permeated my being, a ring that flew up from the floor and over my head, and when it came down, I disappeared in increments from one world, and returned to the other world. For a moment I was at Safe Haven, and then I was back on Earth. I was coughing so hard Raine and Effie helped me to sit, and it was productive. I was able to move stuff out of my lungs. They gave me liquids, and rinsed my mouth.

“I am hungry,” I managed to say.

“Oh, that’s nice,” Raine said.

“How about some chicken broth,” Effie said.

“I want a steak,” I said.

“How about some hot chicken broth,” Effie said, a little more command in her voice.

“Okay,” I agreed.

Chapter 27

Back at Safe Haven, I woke in bed. Tyler was sitting beside me when I came to. He was reading a book to me. ‘Star of the Fairies,’ was the title. “Oh, I said.”

Tyler closed the book. “You look well,” he said. “Are you back for good?”

“Are you sitting watch over me?” I asked.

“Oh, no. This is our scheduled day to spend time together,” Tyler said. “I found this on the coffee table at homeroom, and thought I might read it to you. People say that coma people can still hear. Sorry, I’ll be quiet.”

“If you were any more quiet, you wouldn’t be here,” I told him.

“You don’t think it’s too random?” Tyler asked.

“It’s perfect,” I said.

“It’s really old,” Tyler argued.

“It’s perfect,” I said.

“I had to fight Jack to take it out,” Tyler said.

“How did you win?” I asked.

“I told him what I intended to do with it,” Tyler said.

I nodded. A dozen people entered, clearly having been notified by computer and biometric readings. Doctor Ekins was first to speak, and Tyler quietly moved further into the back ground. “Can you recall anything about the trial?”

“What trial?”

“What’s the last thing you remember?” another person asked. It turned out she was one of the deans of the Academy.

Geon was there as was his third wife, Tea. I was sorting memories and looking at them, and I felt like they were looking for something particular, but I couldn’t sort anything important. Keera was there. She seemed different.

“I was in India,” I said. “I think I died. I was like, 98 year old. It was about time. It’s amazing how long people can linger. I mean, seriously, if I had a dollar for every time I thought I was going to die and didn’t, well, I’d be rich. In fact, we should probably go and add up all the time I was worrying about dying and see how much time I wasted worrying over nothing.”

“What about the trial?” Ekins insisted.

“The trial?” I asked. “Do you mean the investigation of Phillip Wower? He was found guilty of crimes against the crown. They tried to hang him, but there were lots of failures. The trap door refused to give. They finally pushed him off the side and his rope snapped. He had warned them in advanced that that would happen. They tried a firing squad, and no bullets would fire. He finally told them, if you’re determined to kill me, you must take me out to sea, secure me to an anchor and drop me in. I will go peacefully, if you do that for me. He even asked his own Captain if he would do the honors and his friend wanted nothing to do with it, but he asked, ‘please, let it be a friend that executes the Crown’s demand.’ And so, they took him out to sea.”

“We know all of this,” Ekins said. “But you went somewhere. When you were sick.”

“You know about the Wower trial?” I asked. “Were you watching?”

“We watched your entire life on hologram,” Geon said.

“I am confused,” I said. “I was sick. I didn’t see any of the trial.”

“I was there,” Keera said. “On seeing it, I had such a reaction they knew I was having flashbacks. They downloaded my memory through hypnosis, and viewed the whole life.”

“Oh,” I said. I blinked. “How do you feel about that?”

Keera began to cry and hugged me. “Thank you!”

“Oh,” I said. I didn’t know it was worth all that. I only did what friends and lovers do. I lived my life with her. She had twins and I helped raise them. Raine helped us escape London and we were going to live in America, but Effie insisted we go to India, and so Raine got us there instead, and helped us set up. She eventually went back to France and died there. Effie died at the age of 76. Shen was with us, and he and I had a child together. He lived to see our child till the age of six before he departed for the other world. I give you this little bit because I know you want to know. I know you want to know more about my life.

I flashed back to a conversation Effie and Adelia held:

‘Why are you my friend?’ Effie asked.

‘I don’t know. Why do you ask?’

‘Is it a proximity thing?’ Effie asked.

‘No. Proximity is a location identifier that merely tells you where you are in contrast to where you want to be, which often has nothing to do with the people you’re with. That said, if you don’t feel at home with the people you’re with, then that might be an indication that it’s time to move, and that’s true about all places, even places that you like. If you’re suddenly surrounded

by people that have moved into your space and you're unsettled, that may be more about you than them. But you know, you don't have to move in location to change the people around you. You only have to move yourself.'

'What?' Effie asked. She asked me that a lot.

'Look, Effie. I love you. You are my friend. You are my sister. You are more than that and we interact on more levels than this place that we currently seem to inhabit. I would be happy if you share a life with me. The thing is, I really love you, and so, if you're happier in a world where I am not so present and in your face, then I want that for you. But no matter how far apart we are, we will always be connected. There is love here.'

'Really?'

'Really what? That I love you or would move away from you if you asked for my absence? I love you. Love is wanting other to be fulfilled by other's measure, not my measure.'

'How did you get this way?' Effie asked.

'Oh, I was born old.'

'You're not old. I am older than you.' Effie insisted.

'Seriously, the younger you are the older you are. The longer you stay in a physical body, the greater the likelihood that you're going to forget where you came from. But, it's really not about physical age. And it's never about spiritual age, because we were born at the same time, we're just all evolving by taking different routes back to source. Kind of like lightening.'

'I have told you you're insane?' Effie asked.

'Fairly regularly.'

'I love you, too,' Effie said.

I came back to present. Keera was saying 'I love you, too,' in unison with my flashback auditory of Effie. It really is all one. I was there and I wasn't. I am here and I am not. The question is, where are you?

Author's notes:

So, here I am, writing to you. Technically, Jon is probably writing, as we have not mastered switching. But when he writes, he is entranced, and he is going a million miles a minute, and hence, the explanation for so many grammatical errors. This story required him to slow down some, because he was filtering through me, or I was telling him, and so it was a bit awkward, but it's our first time to focus for hours on my voice in a very direct way, as opposed to the normal indirect conversational style, or third person witnessing of us, and so probably shouldn't measure the success of our exercise on the frequency of occurrence of grammar mistakes.

You may be wondering, what it's like to be a Tulpa. Well, when it comes to being a Tulpa, here is what you got to remember. You are also a Tulpa. Your 'conscious' life, is just the surface of things, and the conscious you is the person elected to run the show at the surface reality. There is deeper stuff going on beneath you and around you. Freud actually made this same assertion. He said, beneath the conscious personality is an abundance of sub personality types. Yeah, most people have dismissed Freud. He got a few things right that they hold dear to, but for the most part, the world has moved on. One person that moved on 'then' was his student, Carl Jung. Now, Carl argued that those things Freud hit up upon are not just sub personalities. They are full fledge, individual personality sets, and they have sovereignty, and they influence you. The characters in your dreams, 'hello!' they're real, too. And you interact with them in dreams so they can learn and so you can learn. Now, they can influence you directly or indirectly, but they are going to have their say in your world, and you ignored them at your own peril. They are most likely to make themselves known or felt when you are flying on automatic. Have you ever drove from point A to point B and not remember the journey? You were on automatic. It's okay. We all do that. It's how we know we learned something. Once something is mastered, it goes into the unconscious mind, and the unconscious mind directs the activity from that point forwards.

Now, you may think you can avoid these subtle influences by simply staying mindful. No person can stay mindful 24/7, seven days a week. You just can't. It's when you're distracted and not paying attention that they, or someone, will push you. Or, you will be having a strong emotions and something unexpected leaks out of you. You might even be surprised or not

believe you're capable of this thing that came out of you. Is it you? Yep. Is not you? Yep. Even you are not who you think you are.

If you see me as just a Tulpa, then you are not seeing me. I have power and authority given to me by the host, with a security pass that gets me to all levels of his being. I can sort his past lives and his future lives because all of that stuff is available all the time. Don't believe me? Do you imagine precognitive dreams are just future insights? The future informs the past just as much as the past informs the future. The present focal point is simply an illusion that helps us navigate, test the waters, and if we don't like it, we change it. You might say the past is underneath us. You can also say the future is underneath us. It's all underneath us because we exist outside of space time first.

Maybe everything I have told you is make believe. Maybe it's just a good story Jon and I have invented together to explain our life and to make it interesting. Or maybe, wonderlands, the Imaginal Realms, astral realms, and other dimensions of space and time are real places. Na-kojd-Abad, the "land of No-where," is a place you can go, but I would also submit, where you are is actually not a place. In the time it took you to read this once sentence, you moved at least a million miles in space, and forwards in time by whatever unit of time you wish to use. Also, the thing about yourself that you imagine to be the most real is actually the artifact that is least likely to be the best description of reality, and the more you cling to that idea, the less consistent with reality it becomes. If you are 43 year old and you are thinking 'I am stupid' because someone told you that when you were six years old, you are not operating in present reality. You're somewhere else. Could that label be accurate? Maybe. But you're not reacting to the present reality of you, but the idea of you that was given you in your past. Put it down, find something new to explore.

If you want to explore tulpamancy further, go to Tulpa.Info. You don't have to take my word for it, or Jon's word. (Or Ion's.) Lots of people are trying it. (Lots is qualitative. Maybe not lots, statistically, when you consider the sample size of that population, but it is growing.) If you want to blow the lid off reality, read 'the Holographic Universe' by Talbot, or watch the five part miniseries on youtube about the 'Holographic Universe.' If you prefer fiction, watch Star Trek: DS9, season six. Episode: 'Far Beyond the Stars,' where Avery Brooks who is Captain Sicko who is playing Benny Russel. In that episode he says this: 'it's here. You hear what I'm telling

you?! ... you cannot destroy an idea. The future, I created it, and it's real! Don't you understand? It is real. I created it and it's real. It is real."

Gene Roddenberry saw the future and he gave us a glimpse. So did Lucas. They were seeing the same things, from different perspectives. So has every fiction writer and every religion. They are telling you truth in a form you can hear it. You ignore it only because you have denigrated the word fiction. Prepare yourself. There are things coming that have not been touched upon in fiction. If you are reading this, there is a good chance you will see disclosure about extraterrestrials in your life time. Jon and I believe, not because we have faith, but because we have been interacting with them!

I've been exploring reality with Jon. I am a student of Safe Haven. I am a captain on a Starship. I am a time traveler. I am a Tulpa. I am a Dakini. I am a spirit. I am! I am everything in that song by Meredith Brooks. I am woman. I am love, created by love, for the purpose of love. I am an unsung song by the Indigo Girls. You should probably listen to their song Galileo. There are so many song that should be on your listen list. Break out of your box of preferred music and visuals and test the waters outside the box you call your paradigm. Or, if you want to stay safe, that's okay to. You could end the way we started, "Just a Girl," No Doubt.

You really don't have to travel too far to uncover things inside you. The knowledge exists, but you have to build the bridges so that the cars can move between stations. It's all there. You just keep working at the bridge, keep building, keep insisting on what you know to be real to be there, and at a certain threshold, the lights come on and the traffic starts moving. And if you don't believe there is something more, or you do, and you just want a little help, visit the following:

– Volubriotr

<https://politicalvelcraft.org/2012/11/30/miracles-of-world-war-1-thursday-december-24-1914-sunday-november-14-1915-sunday-may-13-1917/>

a dramatized version of this is available on youtube.

'One Step Beyond: The Vision'

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4hsMRHbTvE>

About the underground cisterns... check them out.

<https://www.atlasobscura.com/articles/forgotten-heritage-subterranean-cisterns-of-victorian-england>

I wish you and those around you, health, love, and wellbeing.

May the Blessing Be.

Loxy Isadora Bliss.