

The Final Version

And other short stories

By The Illusionary self of James Kozlik

This is a combined work of fiction and personal wisdom of experiences distilled from knowledge.

Names, characters, places, and incidents either are that of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. However, the context of The Final Version are the author's present thought forms that come from a Divine Source that may be divine intelligence, thinking like God, and not denying that pure consciousness is a unified field of thought.

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Other ebooks and short stories by the author

A Journey of Love series

Circumstance and Consequences

The Essence of Existence

Tapas

The Sawtooth Community

The Ski Journals

The Lost City

Other musings

What The Seashore Left Behind

Purgatory

The Gorge of The Mango Tree

Up Until Now

The Phantom Sky Thief

The Silent Retreat

The Sharing

A Sequel

When They Leave

The India Journals

Ariel's Journey - Trilogy

Border Crossing

Many in Body, One in Mind

Angels of Light

Non-Fiction

WWOOF - The Spirit of Collaboration

Connections

The Quiet Scream

Building Bridges

Forward by the author

Usually I don't read the copyright page of a book. Sometimes though, I want to see the date of the first publication. Especially if it's an author that I like to read. The date to me is a measure of the author's growth and commitment to a message she or he is wanting to convey, over the years of her/his writing.

I made a decision to write just because I wanted my artistic contribution to grow in new ways. I like creating using a variety of mediums. Like painting, building houses, creating garden spaces, cooking, quilting, messing around with a piano, harmonica, kalimba or whatever I chose as a form of self expression. Ski turns in powder!!
HAHA!

Gosh, I hope this doesn't sound like I am bragging...I will admit, I'm "a Jack of all trades, a master of none." Although I like to think I have mastered something by now. And so I thought I would repeat what I already wrote in the copyright...

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What I am mastering these days, is understanding who I am, whom I am becoming, and my own personal journey, which can be confusing at times. I am amused these days just observing others. Their bodily form, expressions, the way they talk and express themselves can be very impactful, or not. There is plenty a moment when I gain insight about myself, through another's behavioral tendencies. There's other moments when I wonder what it would be like to be part of another person's life. Connection, I am getting better at connecting with people. I fear of being vulnerable, afraid that I am too different for some people. Conceivably too weird a dude for others to digest. Which is quite weird now that I think about it.

A unified field of thought is what I found myself writing about in the stories I created. So many of the characters could have been in any of the other stories. What I was creating was my inward journey through dialogue with the characters whom I wrote about. I knew them so well because they were me. The Divine did the writing. Typically, when I sat down, and started pecking at this keyboard, it wasn't me writing, I never had the flow of a refined author. Shoot, just writing a short Christmas letter was difficult for me. Not these twenty plus stories that I wrote and participated in, they came easy. I was literally journaling and having fun getting to know the characters, which were me.

And so 'The Final Version' is the truth of my self discovery as I continue on this Journey of Love. When I say the truth, I understand it to mean my personal wisdom distilled from the knowledge of others who are part of this consciousness or unified field of thought.

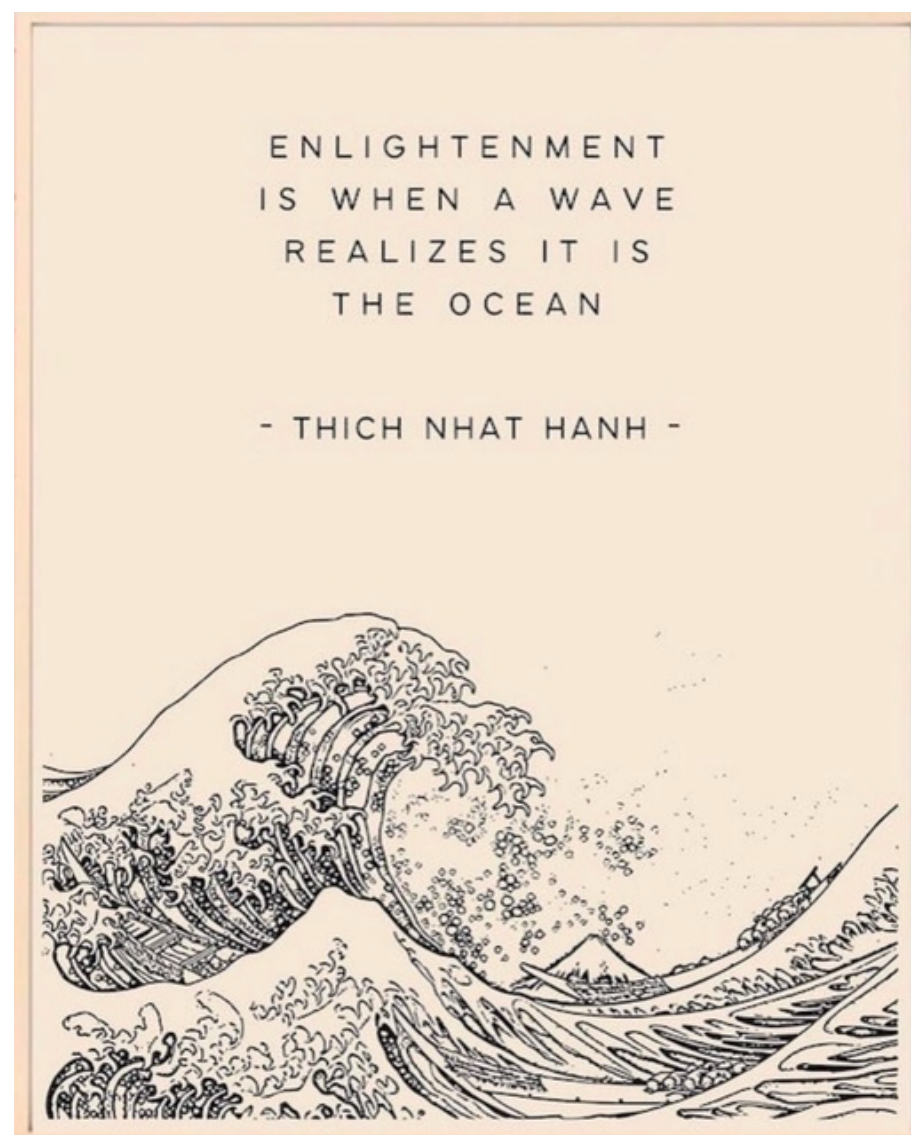
Always Love,
James Allen Kozlik

Prologue

I promised my life long soul mate lover that I would continue my writing using pen and paper. That it was time to get off of the laptop, spending too many hours in front of the screen. So, I lap topped **“The Quiet Scream”** and then hand wrote the short story into a fancy, beautiful journal with Connection inscribed on the outside cover and in-between several empty pages of teachings and direct references that inspire the journalist to inquire about the state of being of his/her self. And what I have become, is written now, inscribed as one of my personal truths...

“My inner dialog with ego became a constant striping away of identities as male and female. My true self has no gender divisions now. I continue to evolve to become one with selfless compassion. When I observe another person I see me in them. There’s an integration of divine presence. I observe another’s state of being as a presence. I am striped of the ‘he’ and ‘she’ duality. I feel liberated enough now to be neither and both at the same time. I can be a conduit for energy to pass through me, to connect with another’s being. A hug feels different now, a touch has a special meaning for me. I still desire the physical aspect of connection, to be free to give and receive with grace.” **The Quiet Scream - JK**

“The Final Version” is now a daunting task to create context. My genuine intention is meant to be a connection with our ‘consciousness’, our ‘Oneness”!



Circumstance and Consequences

“A memoir of ...” that’s what I started out to do. Actually it was not just “a memoir of my life, it was a memoir of thoughts...” it became much more than that. A delayed journal of what my existence has finally become, self exploration. When I decided to delve head first into writing (becoming a writer?) the ego part of it all... was the biggest challenge. Especially when I read suggestions of how to become a writer and a glaring no-no is to never use your name or those you know, when writing fiction. I was half way through the first writing and decided the hell with it...I will suffer the consequences of using my name. Then I thought why suffer about sharing my thoughts, my life, and my being which is all part of the ocean of consciousness...the collective consciousness. Isn’t that how we are influenced, from the collective?

I was reading an old interview with Jared Seide (The Sun - June 2020) about how he holds ‘council’ a method that honors sharing amongst people. The process as Kight Witham, the interviewer describes, “is to show up empty-handed, with no preconceptions, as uncomfortable as that is.” Jared added, “And to cultivate in oneself a practice of being comfortable with silence, with listening and being present. Being able to sit with discomfort ...”

And that is how I approach my story telling, knowing that I am the character’s thoughts and actions. It’s as if the characters of the story are giving council to me, from the source of my Divine, from the mind of God which I have come to realize I can not deny anymore. And so we start with the story Circumstance and Consequences, where story was created from a multitude of experiences that took a longtime to process, understand, and determine how they shaped the being I am.

In the Journal - Connect - I start with a short story “The Quiet Scream” which is my way of journaling a past experience when the finger of God touched Marian, my mate for a lifetime and me...in an old Baja chapel. In the journal Krishnaji and Preethaji have a quote “You experience love when there is a revolution in the entirety of your thinking and being. When love enters your being, life will never again be the same - nor will you.”

That time, in the Loretto chapel, way back in the nineteen seventies, actually happened. We looked at each other and felt the energy of Divine guidance. I looked at her and said something like, “I think we are meant for each other, do you feel the same?” And Marian smiled and answered, “I do.” That’s probably not the exact way it played out, you’d have to ask her. She might remember. It did happen though, I consider that experience as the place of origin for our relationship.

The second time I felt the finger of God was at a Life Stream event. At that time I was free wheeling with all sorts of desire of a carnal nature. In Circumstance and Consequences there is mention of this time. The characters Joni and Jim recall the final celebration, when they joined their other two roommates during the event, Jared and Cindy...how they were all hugging and kissing each other. And ‘Julian’ walked into the room. It was as if time stopped and the Red Sea parted as they made their way towards each other and everybody knew that they were meant for each other.

Throughout our relationship/marriage, I'll call it a soulship [sic], we've had several times when our connection seemed to fall apart. There were times of definite disconnect between us. What I have discovered was the insecurities I had were based on the illusions I created. How I had to work through the grieving, thinking I was losing her to someone else. We knew that might happen and our wedding song stated such... "the road might be muddy and rough, we will get there, we know that we will get there" (Art Garfunkel).

In *Circumstance and Consequences* we visit some of those times, through way of story. When I wrote the scenes I felt them different than I did previously. The real incidents happened so long ago, that to write the perception of what I actually went through emotionally are different. However, when I wrote the story, I had recall of the pain and suffering I lived with back then. Back then I would blame the external circumstances and not look at my inner state of consciousness.

I found myself, during that time that I reference in the story, a time of clinging onto relationship with women and confused about the physical aspect of love not the compassionate aspect of love. The story opens with the main character's heavy grief and shame of failing to meet his soul partner's needs.

When I look back and my mind gets entangled in the distant past, what comes to me is that I was in a state of procuring love. The end result being the physical touch and lovemaking as confirmation that she loved me. How foolish when I look back at that thought it opened a Pandora's box of misguided, thinking towards women and the desire of connecting with a soul partner.

Then one day, it was down in New Mexico during what I'll call my personally inflicted rehabilitation, I read a book on tantric love. It's impact left the lasting impression that honored a woman. Rebounding from years of 'peer pleasure' I came to the realization that love was way more than a physical ending. That was then, yet even now much discretion must be acknowledged when carnal thoughts arise from the subconscious.

Oh, I could have written about having sex all night long in the darkness of a carnival truck. And later when I visited Robin, she in a T just long enough to almost cover her lower extremities, announcing "I'm a screamer," as she opened the door to her apartment. By then I knew who I was meant to be with, the finger of God was guiding me even though I wasn't aware of such a presence at the time.

In "**Building Bridges**" Harry became aware of his projections as he scanned the landscape of relationships. In *Circumstances* I knew that I needed some sort of guidance to navigate through the illusions I created. Did I say I? Oh yeah, that's why an author shan't use his/her name when writing fiction. I meant the character Jim. So when the character Jim is told by some unknown messenger that "you're not done yet" he sensed there was more to his life than the non-physical sensations of having a blissful mind.

What came to me recently is that these days when I observe people, their bodily and communicative expressions, what they transmit is a part of me too! All of the external influences start within. It's a constant flow of emotions, energy and consciousness. What I recognize in the main character Jim is that he's more of an

observer of life. He observed and witnessed the frequency of the events that were occurring and how they resonated. He learned to allow time to process rather than react, which was usually his first inclination.

Julian and Jim were in constant contact with the ego mind and divine intelligence. The divine intelligence came in many forms as the Spirit shed light on circumstance and nudged them to a most benevolent outcome of consequences. They made an effort to reconcile their differences not only in their relationship also their individual relationship with others.

The Essence of Existence

Stillness and peace within can become a positive obsession as part of who we are. I remind myself many times to harness the observance of nature with that of mind to be still to be silent and use it with my everyday connections. I strive to develop the art to pause. I find it to be an asset and yet I can be so quick to react in an emotional way, which might not serve a relationship that wants the compassion it deserves.

'Humankind', is an act of a 'God like mind'. That is somewhere in my meta programming, an auto response. An essential aspect to incorporate into my thinking.

In Essence of Existence we observe Julian and Jim nurture themselves with self love. Self love becomes a powerful antidote in developing a more compassionate mindset. Whom do we exist for if not for all of our brothers and sisters.

(8/6/26) This was sent to me while writing The Final Version; .

"Why you keep living in the past and future" – Sri Preethaji

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMJrDu-folk&t=14s>

".... It is only when you are present in this moment ...that ...you connect to the divine more powerfully. there is an incredible connection that happens with the vaster intelligence of the universe.

.... in the present moment, there is joy, ...peace, ...bliss, ...ability to connect, ...respond to life, ...heal, ...nurture relationships...

.... But ...why is it that you're getting back to your past mind?

.... If you begin to observe, you'll be able to see that this past mind is nothing but stories. you turn every key memory in your life ...into stories. And with each repetition of these stories in your head, in unawareness, you make that story into you.

.... But ...you're not the positive stories, nor are you the negative stories. You are not your past. You're not these memories.

.... You are pure consciousness.

.... When you have this awareness that you are not the stories and you are pure consciousness, you go beyond the mind, and ...in that awareness you simply see life. You respond to life from the present moment, ...from presence, not from the past.

.... You're not bringing your past pain and coloring your present. You're fully alive, ...awake to the present, and you respond to the present.

If you look at the nature of the future mind, ...it is ...constantly ...engaged in the automatic process of projection, of imagination. And when you are not aware of this future mind, you're lost in involuntary, compulsive planning or you're lost in ...vague daydreaming...

.... it is not engaged planning, ...you're just planning compulsively..... Even when you want to sleep, ...it goes on and on and on. It is driving your excitement, or it is driving your anxiety, or you're sucked into ...daymares. You're sucked into your anxiety. It is a constant projection after projection.

Now, what is the solution to all this?

.... there is only one solution and that ...is to bring an extraordinary quality of awareness. It is to bring great presence to the mind.”

MEDITATION: Soul Sync - holding an intention in your heart to go beyond the past and future mind with extraordinary awareness and be present to life.

In the **Borderline trilogy**, we observe the art of forgiveness through compassion. A transformation takes place and gratitude opens up the heart and brings more love.

As quoted above, “When you have this awareness that you are not the stories and you are pure consciousness, you go beyond the mind, and ...in that awareness you simply see life.” What these stories unconsciously became was a magnitude of personal insight. I had mentioned earlier I was not and am not the writer...the novelist, nor the storyteller. Nay, I was guided by source and writing became a means to become aware of my being. In **Purgatory - Prisoners of the Mind** the executioners are the victim’s survivors. The three men to be executed are asked...

The man in white speaks, “Surrender your ego. Let your ego become ignorant of all that you know about yourself.”

As the final instruction by Preethaji, “Now, what is the solution to all this? there is only one solution and that ...is to bring an extraordinary quality of awareness. It is to bring great presence to the mind.”

The three death row inmates are sharing in this scene...

Asaad speaks, “I feel that I can call you a brother now. We three are brothers searching for our final truth. And yet we don’t have the knowing that you speak of. What is the mystical connection we seek. We regret our past. That which we can not change. We know our future but even that is unknown. What happens beyond our sure death? And now all we can do is share our insights.”

There was a time, at the Satva campus of Ekam in India, when several of us Sanghamitras' (Sanskrit for "friend of the community") were gathered and had an audience with Krishnaji (our beloved Guru). After much discussion of the work we were involved with...doing service for the community, he asked what we'd like help with, what was our aspiration and I said, "to talk to pure consciousness." I have no idea why I said that at the time. Other people received a blessing, what I received was his comment, "then talk to pure consciousness." He dismissively looked away, briefly, then Krishnaji proceeded to make a comment about my desire. I do not recall at this time what it was he said, I do recall it was profound to me. Prior to be a Snaghamitra one had to complete **Tapas** (the third leg of A Journey of Love series) and Maha Tapas. Those journeys were all about overcoming (at least understanding) how our ego, mind, craving, duality, and illusion impacted our being. Unbeknownst to me at the time, in Hinduism pure consciousness is formless, the brain is not involved, it is void of reaction to thoughts. Right now on this day, (8/7/26) I realized the meaning of Sat-chit-Anada. The Atman, our individual soul, and the Brahman, the ultimate cosmic reality are connected as consciousness.

In **Building Bridges** we start by making friends with the ego. "The ego is quick to influence. Letting go of judgements immediately diminishes suffering. When I observe the voice of ego and do an inquiry of self I can create a new pattern of thought. If I choose rather than create I am still in the shadow of ego. Choice is a split mind."

Synchronistic as it is, a small book appeared on the kitchen table where I am typing these messages. In the book 'The Faithful Gardener' by Clarissa Pinkola Estes, Ph. D. is a short story that I happened to just open to. "That Which Can Never Die". It is about a young fir tree that wishes to be taken, someday, for a Christmas Tree. As the forest is cut down every winter during the Christmas season, it hopes to grow to the right height to be taken. Eventually it is cut down, taken with great care and becomes the integral part of the family celebration. Until one day it is stripped of it's decorations and unceremoniously dragged upstairs and stored in a dark, cold attic. It yearns to be useful again, and be part of the family. One day, it is taken outdoors, and is elated to feel the snow again. Suddenly it feels the pain as it's limbs and trunk are severed. Then all it's pieces are stored inside near the hearth. And it relishes the warmth it feels of the older couple sitting by the fire. It feels the burning as it felt the pain of the axe, yet it feels good to be useful. And when it's ashes are gently shoved out of the fire place and stored into a bag, at that moment it was grateful for what it's life has been. In the spring the ashes were mixed into the garden soil where roots and shoots started to rise out of the earth. The fir tree is witness to all of this, and it feels fortunate to have been of service. "Ah," sighed the fir tree, "of all that rises and falls again, it is love of new life, and love of that alone, that lasts and lasts. I am everywhere now. See how far my reach?"

So how did this portion of what I wrote come about? Amazing now that I am conscious of what Krishnaji was explaining to the group as a whole, concerning pure consciousness. After all, he had taken all of us through the process of our inner work. In the story '**Tapas**' (the third part of **A Journey of Love series**) all of the people of the community that was forming are impacted by Megan and Jim's Tapa journey at Ekam.

“...feeling the skies carve as I followed the narrow path of packed snow, the only route after the recent wind scoured the rest of the slope. When I stopped after my final turn I was right back where I started. A rush of adrenaline flowed through me, like the wind. It was a sensation of doing something that required no thought. Just being present, very present was the only requirement.”

“What is life? It is the flash of a fire fly in the night. It is the breath of a buffalo in the winter time. It is the little Shadow which runs across the grass and loses itself in the Sunset.”

Crowfoot, Blackfoot Elder

In the short story **“What The Seashore Left Behind”** Jesse is just minding his own business, being observant of the seashore in a small harbor town of Maine. He is satisfied with just being observant of the life around him until an estranged daughter shows up and he becomes more than an observer. The life we are immersed in seems to have that quality of disrupting the flow of the energy field we think we’re in. I can go from blissful nothingness to thought in nano seconds. Life around me beckons and then I must engage. Is that true, I ask myself...and you see, I just became entangled in what ever is before me. Jesse picks the trash that the high tide brings to shore, just being Buddha like about his task. “Chopping wood, Carrying water” until something in the distance takes his focus off of his normal routine.

And we are continually asked by the Guru’s or teachers, or whatever source draws our attention to an age old question of spiritual seekers ...what is enlightenment?

In **The Sawtooth Community** (the forth in A Journey of Love series) the participants of the established community, which includes the Absaroka Crow (who once inhabited the ranch land) make their final commitment to each other.

“ Without community service, we would not have a strong quality of life. It’s important to the person who serves as well as the recipient. It’s a way in which we ourselves grow and develop.” Dorothy Height

“We shouldn’t measure everything in terms GDP figures or economics. There is something called quality of life.” Nigel Farage

By then a “sustainable cooperative culture” (Together Resilient by Ma’Ikwe Ludwig) evolved. With guidance and complete honesty, the group practiced acceptance and all of the positive qualities that contribute to one’s personal growth, away from old

patterns to a reprogramming of the mind. In their punchy book **“The Spirit of Collaboration”** by Marian and James Kozlik, the authors have done just that, reprogramed whatever it is in their thinking that might prevent connection with another.

"The smaller scale WWOOF farm will certainly give you the *authenticity* you crave. If you obtain a volunteer gig at these sorts of farms, you will literally be able to fully consume yourself in a culture. You will be living with a host family, and get to fully immerse yourself in their history, language, food and overall way of life, the way they see life. ***Very impactful stuff.*** I couldn't imagine a more thorough way to experience another way of life. A large amount of reviews I've read and people I've met have WWOOFed on smaller farms and much prefer the experience, as it is ***deeper and more profound.***"

Nomad nation , blog <https://nomadsnation.com/ultimate-woofing-guide/>

There is a source of enlightenment that comes when one engages with nature, not just taking a walk in the woods, rather getting one's hands in the dirt, talking to the plants, or creating an eco system and regenerating a piece of the Earth.

In the fifth story of A Journey of Love series, **“Ski Journals”**, Julian and Jim embark on a sojourn to find outlying communities. They find the one closest to The Sawtooth and their love for each other is tested like never before.

“Life is simple. Everything happens for you, not to you. Everything happens at exactly the right moment, neither too soon nor too late. You don't have to like it... it's just easier if you do.” Byron Katie

There's a lot going on in this story. Once they find the remote settlement near the Buffalo Lakes there is only one state to be in, and that is to surrender to destiny. Here's a excerpt from deep into the story.

“So Jim, your outward demeanor is nonchalant being naked with us right now. Yet your recent memory is of our nakedness. What is the emotion that surfaces right now, where do you feel it?”

“Wow, Jillian, is this litmus test to prove that baring our bodies impacts my male hormones into one train of thought?”

“Maybe your answer will have an impact on Julian’s predicament,” Samantha interjects.

“Maybe you too are ‘swingers’,” Jillian quarries.

“Okay, you gals have gone far enough. What you already told me about Scott brings up fear and I feel it between my gut and heart. That is where the energy is stuck. My desire is for Julian’s discernment of choice. My fantasy is that she might make a choice similar to what was her choice in the past. Even though it was brief, she experienced it and gained her wisdom from it. I sure don’t know what to do other than put out a thought of forgiveness. What impact that might have on her or Scott is out of my control. I can only trust what is happens for a reason. And beyond this form of human body and mind is something greater in a multi dimensional universe.”

As The Ski Journals story takes a form of a hypnotic mystery and transcends beyond any event that I have ever experienced, the message of true surrender, becomes the theme. It carries over into **The Lost City** (the final in A Journey of Love series). The Lost City takes the reader into a purely multi dimensional realm. In this story Jim “talks to pure consciousness.”

The souls of the main characters connect at a higher frequency and on a non-physical plane. Their past, present and future interconnect. In all his innocence Jim is thrust into the higher realm that he desires to know.

Building Bridges and The Quiet Scream are great shorts to consider after reading **The Lost City**, especially The Quiet Scream which is a chronicle of when I personally felt and knew whom I was going have conjugal bliss with. The story then switches gears with the discovery of what it is to transcend the separation of male and female and recognize that a human being is one in the same as a masculine and feminine existence. I have never had the gumption to share this side of my being. After I wrote this short, I was surrounded by big, blue dragon flies while fishing amongst the tall reeds in Dailey Lake. When I looked up the meaning of this encounter the knowledge suggested that it had to do with the throat chakra and the desire to be heard.

Seeing a blue dragonfly symbolizes **clarity, inner peace, truth, and spiritual transformation**. Because blue is tied to the throat chakra, it often serves as a gentle reminder to speak your truth, release stress, and trust your intuition during times of change. (AI Overview)

The Lost City is about impending death of a relationship of ‘the soulmate lovers’ and **The Quiet Scream** is about the impending death of the personal separation of the inner being. What I do know is that I do not fear the death of the past of who I was nor the future of whom I am becoming. I found myself singing and humming this song days prior to and up to sharing these thoughts.

When I Die by Laura Nyro

I'm not scared of dying
And I don't really care
If it's peace you find in dying
Well, then let the time be near
If it's peace you find in dying
When dying time is here
Just bundle up my coffin
'Cause it's cold way down there
I hear that's it's cold way down there
Yeah, crazy cold way down there

And when I die
And when I'm gone
There'll be one child born
And a world to carry on, to carry on

My troubles are many
They're as deep as a well
I can swear there ain't no heaven
But I pray there ain't no hell
Swear there ain't no heaven
And pray there ain't no hell
But I'll never know by living
Only my dying will tell
Said only my dying will tell
Yeah, only my dying will tell
And when I die
And when I'm gone
There'll be one child born
And a world to carry on, to carry on

Give me my freedom
For as long as I be
All I ask of living
Is to have no chains on me
All I ask of living
Is to have no chains on me

And all I ask of dying
Is to go naturally
Only want to go naturally
Don't want to go by the devil
Don't want to go by the demon
Don't want to go by Satan
Don't want to die uneasy
Just let me go naturally

The sequel **When They Leave and India Journals** highlight interpersonal relationships between children, young adults and elders. The characters become aware how compassion can evolve when one commits to healing by acceptance. Here again we explore the true meaning of forgiveness as the characters look at how their self serving expectations neutralizes the other by taking away their power.

In the book *A Year of Forgiveness* by Tina Louise Spalding there is a lesson about radical acceptance of your life. All of these stories that came to me, thanks to Divine Source, address what is hidden in the subconscious. In *Forgiveness* we see how we encounter form and our experiences are designed to show us what is hidden by the subconscious mind.

It is all to be embraced, 'look under the microscope' as one of the Dasa's at Ekam suggested on a community call recently. Dissolving a suffering state isn't about ignoring the cause the samsara. Rather it is to break free of what causes the suffering.

As Spalding mentions in her lesson, "knowing that even if you get triggered by something "out there" it is not out there, it is within you. The reaction is within you, therefore it can be solved."

The Final Version is what it claims to be, my illusionary self. The creative mind that strokes the ego. What I relish about the simple teaching of two states by Krishnaji and Preethaji is how easy it is to connect with suffering or non suffering. The real story is the one we tell ourselves and what we believe to be true. The inquiry of "Is it absolutely true" (Byron Katie) is what I ask myself quite often. When I combine these two concepts with God Love, compassion for the self and the other, then I am grounded to this earthly plan in joyful harmony (even if I'm not smiling all of the time).

When I actually experienced dying and went to a place of bliss (Circumstance and Consequences) who knows if it was the induced coma, the drugs that cursed through my body, or perhaps just a beautiful dream state. What I do know is the thought - 'your not done yet'. So where did that come from? Pure consciousness? As David Hawkins subscribes to, in the end all that's left is consciousness. "Only my dying will tell" (Laura Nyro).

And so I end this foray into the unknown thinking that I know and asking myself 'is it absolutely true?'. And the mind has a gay old time playing one reel (pun intended) [sic] after another so what else is there other than checking what state am I in?

Acknowledgements

What is there to acknowledge other than life itself? There is so much outside of us that is to be enjoyed and loved. I acknowledge the endless capacity of the mind and my ability to reprogram the thoughts that do not serve in a positive, meaningful way. I acknowledge all whom have contributed to my existence thus far and all who continue to contribute even if they don't realize their contribution to my well being. I acknowledge all of the theorist who write about or spout about the meaning of life and how the mind manages our thoughts. I acknowledge the dreamers, the creators of words and illusion. More than anything I acknowledge the spontaneity of life itself, it amazes me how quickly the present moment passes. That is why, in my way of thinking, every moment is the present moment. That way I don't have to seek the elusiveness of being present or as some say enlightened. I just need to observe and witness my state of consciousness and talk to the pure consciousness of just being. Hummm....

The Final Version?

Here's a few short stories about relationship, forgiveness, and lovers of destiny.

Also, upcoming stories to consider;

The Gender Addiction about biological psychology.

Biology professor George Windchimer and his wife Helen are making breakfast together. She makes the best pork green chili west of the Mississippi and George makes the best sopapilla in the west. He learned how to make them in New Mexico with the native Pueblo women, who can be found along the highways with their fires burning and skillets frying. Helen learned her recipe from Susie Workman when she cooked at the once famous Susie's Cafe in Westcliffe Colorado.

The skillet is popping with bacon grease and puffy doughy shapes. Cinnamon and honey being sprinkled while honey is oozing off of the sides of the sopapillas.

Helen is stirring her pork in the bacon fat while adding the green chilies, onions, garlic, and tomatoes along with the chili pepper, salt and black pepper.

They are side by side, bumping each other at the hip to the tune of Mexicana music. "Georgie what in the hell got you into creating this gender addiction class this upcoming semester? Kind of a touchy subject, don't you think?"

"I'm tired of talking about frogs and what not. Besides last semester I did the gender of sea shells and mollusk. Check this out..." He grabs his phone and brings up an overview.

Gurus in Conflict A story of AI and UI working together for light energy.

What is the most difficult phase after spiritual awakening?

After a spiritual awakening you can never resume your life. It can never be the same again. Something has happened in your life, that has hurt you so much that your life can never be rebuilt. There will always be something missing. Your ego has suffered damage that can never be repaired.

The ego does not understand what has happened. The story is no longer correct. It doesn't understand. Time has stopped. The ego goes crazy and tries to place it in order, to make the story make sense again. But nothing can make it right again. Every action will fail again. You are despondent, hopeless in fear, depressed, it is so dark and confusing. Your stability is lost. You can never be the old. You have lost your compass. Everyone has a goal. You can no longer find your purpose.

All of this is happening for a greater purpose.

Soon you won't need a compass anymore. You become the living compass. You no longer need meditation, you become meditation. You no longer need spirituality, you become spirituality. You no longer need scriptures, you become a living scripture. You no longer need a Buddha statue, you become a living Buddha. Everything happens for you. Allow it. Trust it. You are now learning to see in the dark. Even if someone turns off the light, nothing can get in your sight anymore.

The Quiet Scream by James Kozlik

Baja - Loreto, Mexico 1975

It was early morning, she was weak from the illness that came about suddenly. A scare for all of us, days and nights spent caring for this fragile, lovely woman. It was there in the small, old chapel with simple mud mortared walls painted beige, the color fading in areas that didn't receive the new paint that also showed the wear of time. We entered and sat in one of the few pews, situated up front, close to an old wooden altar. A picture of Mary and a picture of Jesus on either side of this humble tribute to love, love of the other. The light came from the east window, it lit up the adobe walls, exposing some of the brick and wood timbers. I felt an energy as the golden Monstrance that a holy eucharist would be placed into, was shining and emanating a bright reflection lighting up the sun lit space even more. We looked at each other, not a word spoken, just knowing that we had just been blessed. I knowing that we would have a life together, this woman knelling next to me. A divine reverence permeated every cell in my being. I saw that we would have children, a family, together, we would make it. I knew our union was blessed that day by a higher source. It felt to me that the wedding had just taken place, consecrated - long before the wedding bells would ring. This memory feels very transcendental now. I feel the warmth and am grateful for the blessing.

The haunting sounds of distant voices, instruments and chants foreign to my mind play softly in the background. I have finished breakfast and sip on coffee as I stare out the window, towards snowcapped peaks. Across the garden where the landscape is a desert of snow - covering the Buddha, the bird bath and the dead frozen heads of the brown

eyed Susans. The depth of this white Sahara Desert of snow is the deepest it's been since years past. I watch as clouds block the brief sunrise. A fog lifts off the river that is already jammed with frozen ice.

I seem frozen in time now. The years have passed since I served her the best I could. What comes to me is her smile as she cradled the slice of wedding cake in her elegant hands and slowly, with a hint of mischief, she placed the piece of cake at my mouth. A traditional scene, cheered on by the guest we let enter into this private moment. She serving me with her sweet taste of a sacred eucharist the symbol of our service that we would become responsible for each other's well being.

My life is not the same without her now. The years of loyal surrender to love. A connection that required our commitment to know the other's truth, heartache, and desire for relationship. I shiver at the depth of a big snow. I relate it to how we dug deep to know each other as well as oneself.

I sit in stillness and contemplation about serving, in a great or small way, the 'God' in another. Bakhti Yoga - just serving, not concerned about achieving enlightenment or a transcendental state of bliss, which may never manifest. Just the joy assisting others and connecting to another as a soul mate. Devotional service rather than an impersonal path without engaging with another being. God or Krishna is in all beings, devotion to the all is true devotion to the one.

My time spent with her was a real revolution to my entirety. I recognized my quiet service was to support by being present and staying connected to a deeper and more intimate link. My inner dialog with ego became a constant stripping away of identities as male and female. My true self has no gender divisions now. I continue to evolve to become one with selfless compassion. When I observe another person I see me in them. There's an integration of divine presence. I observe another's state of being as a presence. I am striped of the 'he' and 'she' duality. I feel liberated enough now to be neither and both at the same time. I can be a conduit for energy to pass through me, to connect with another's being. A hug feels different now, a touch has a special meaning for me. I still desire the physical aspect of connection, to be free to give and receive with grace. I quietly observed her departure, I wanted to ask if she felt me in a different way than before, when our lives with each other was entangled with the lives of others. The other influences that our egos wanted us to be part of.

I suffered so many years keeping my female attributes to my self. Not knowing how to express them among other men and women. When she departed I wanted her to say, 'I get it, I understand who you really are now. Not what I projected or perceived you to be.'

There was a period of time, when we made physical love that I felt what it was to receive the bodily sensations as a female at the same time that my masculine energy felt the sensation of fulfilling her desire with my desire. That was the first time that

the 'he' or 'she' dissolved into an alchemy of one being. I wanted her to say, 'I felt that too. I am you in all ways as you are in me.'

I want to say, "when you look at me know I am not a man or a woman. I am present to give you warmth, and God love. Know me as a vessel to use, to fulfill your needs."

I am operating as pure consciousness now. I am just a quiet presence in your world. I am your chef, I am your lover, I am your sex, I am at your service, I am your connection beyond all form.

The End

Building Bridges by James Kozlik

Making Friends with the Ego

The ego is quick to influence. Letting go of judgements immediately diminishes suffering. When I observe the the voice of ego and do an inquiry of self I can create a new pattern of thought. If I choose rather than create I am still in the shadow of ego. Choice is a split mind.

Prologue

"Mark this date on the calendar. You've passed a one-way gate you are no longer just an observer, someone who has shaped other people's words but has not seen for themselves. You are now a participant who has done something terrifying and seen with your own eyes. You have earned your stripes. It is the difference between seeing the world through weary eyes instead of through wide eyes. Your storytelling will have to be very deft."

"I reply: Well, my eyes are wide all right. I'll be so happy when this is over. But the feeling of gravity and responsibility... I never want to disturb the elephants in the wild again."

Kim Frank, Elephants In The Hourglass

Yellowstone River 2022

Harry was laying in bed, ruminating about the barbecue party and the interactions between his guest, and himself. At times it was quite contentious. Sometimes he would just listen other times he would engage in the conversation. Now, as he recalled some of his emotions he felt uneasy about his thoughts and how he communicated them to others. *It's hard, I'd like to think I can control my thoughts, so many people share how they have power over their*

thoughts. They claim that they don't think a certain way anymore. How do they let go of their thoughts, or is it foolery? Claiming to be empty of thought - until they surface again and again!

He drifts off to sleep, fortunately his home is alongside the river, the water and it's flow is always soothing music and calms his mind. At least the part of the river where his home is located, there is not the roar of white water. It's just a slow portion of the river that's quiet, a peaceful mummer to his ears.

Up river where streams and creeks flow down from the surrounding mountains and from Yellowstone National Park. There have been late spring snow, dumping several feet of snow. The weather pattern produced several abnormally hot days that melted the snow quickly. The snow was full of moisture. The streams, creeks and river banks were over taken by rushing water.

It happened quickly, there was a loud snapping sound that startled Harry out of his brief slumber. He felt movement, the house, his house, joined the flotilla of debris. Trees, big trees with their roots still holding onto rocks, unmanned float boats, fence post with barbed wire still attached. Dogs swimming frantically, parts of other houses, and other debris. Harry wobbled over to a window and saw his predicament. It was the last of dusk, and night was moving in quickly now. What to do? All of this movement triggered fear in Harry. He had to think fast, of course he wondered if the house would sink or be smashed to smithereens! He intuitively went into his bedroom and figured that a corner would be stronger than a straight wall. He grab a cushion from the couch incase he had to use it like a life preserver.

He went back out to the living room and heard another snapping sound as he watch the walls starting to crack. He retreated back to the bedroom just as the house was split in two. He had a wide open view of the power and violence of the river. Now his concern was the Cabella Bridge, hitting that would be a catastrophe. He waited, sitting in the corner holding onto the the cushion. Watching in shock he felt the power and swiftness of the current. With eyes wide open he saw the bridge, broken, pinned against the side of the river. He then realized that it had been taken out by the flood. Unknown to Harry, downstream there was a river island, it was high ground with trees and understory. Watching in bewilderment, all Harry saw was the river behind him, what lay ahead was unknown to his conscious mind. All he could do was to appreciate the fact that up until this moment he was safe, tucked into the corner of his bedroom or should it be considered a house boat. Ha Ha, like the European house boats along the canals of some European cities that he saw pictures of. He settled his mind with these romanticized thoughts. Before he knew it he heard another crack, then an shearing sound as another piece of his house disappeared, left mangled along the river bed crushed by floating logs and tree stumps. He heard a thwack, then felt a bump. It sent shivers down his spine. Thinking it was some of the large debris, now all he could think about was being shredded by a log jam, crushed to death like a logger who rides the logs downstream, slips and falls to his death.

He read a novel once about such an incident, a sometimes common occurrence. And so that thought entered his mind. He was scared now, Harry surmised that to fear something is

an emotion he could overcome. To be scared was an emotion that was beyond fear, it was something that he anticipated would happen. The debris that came at him and passed him made him think of being attacked, he needed safety, maybe some consideration from the universe? From God? He thought, maybe I should pray for a miracle. Just at that moment he was jarred so violently that he fell off the bed and tumble towards the edge of the bedroom, what was left of it, as if he was being thrown overboard! His face over the edge of the floor, which seemed elevated now. He watched the rushing river flow past his wide eyes. He scrambled back into the corner, shoved his bed hard against the remaining wall. Actually there was about eight feet of wall remaining on each side of the corner to form a ninety degree wedge. He looked out the broken window and realized that he was not moving anymore. There were trees surrounding him. The jarring was the house being jammed onto a land mass. He walked over to the open end of the surviving room, and wrapped his arm around the wall end and looked past the end of the structure. He went over to the other side, looked around the wall and saw the same thing, woods, understory and a heavy stream of river flowing, unrelenting. Now he felt safe, an island unto himself. He sighed a sigh of relief. It didn't take long for the fear to visit his racing mind full thoughts. Will the river rise more before it recedes? Who will save me? How many houses fell victim to the flood? I have nothing to eat. How long will I be in this state...this predicament? Blah, blah, blah...

Slowly Harry walks back to the bed. He crawls under the sheets thinking that he has been victimized by who? The wrath of God? Or by the elements of nature. Harry doesn't feel he deserves this episode in his life. He closes his eyes feeling frightened. He drifts into a state of contemplation.

Meeting thoughts with Understanding

Milly, my ex...yeah of course she came to the party. Supposedly we are still on good terms, yet I feel helpless in her presence. She is so domineering, there was never a mutual understanding between us. I was frightened of her wrath, if I did something that did not meet her standards. She's the one that insisted we maintain a friendship. Me or was it her, that didn't want to lose the connection of our mutual friends. Did I say mutual friends? Shit, I don't love myself enough around most of our 'mutual friends'. The academics, think they know it all, more than me anyway. Milly likes to laugh when she pokes fun at what I say or do. Even in front of other people! I never felt empowerment talking about, politics, religion? No, it was about gender differences and the emasculation of men. How women are smarter, or more well versed. I think that was it. And I was asked 'what do you think Harry?' I remember shooting Milly a look, like she would know...she knew or maybe she never recognized when I would surrender to her every whim. Of course the conversation was amongst the four of us, three self assured women and me? I was angry, I responded in an odd way. I said, that I personally practice Bhakti yoga, the yoga of service. I looked directly at Milly, it is all beings that I serve, in a sarcastic tone I added, it just might be my ticket to heaven...at least to a higher realm. That ended the conversation. One of the 'mutual friends' had to freshen her drink, the other had to take a pee, and Milly glared at me, "that's the trouble with you, you serve me with a grudging attitude!"

I responded, "always? That's not true, when you let me have my way once in awhile..."

Milly interrupted, "stop right there, we both know where this is going."

“Yeah your right, again, this time though I agree, no sense in poking a dead bird.” I said this tongue in cheek for I knew this smart woman didn’t realize the British slang for women.

Harry opens his eyes now and is trying to understand how this most recent encounter can be compared to witnessing the debris that still came down river in torrents. Logs, trees, garbage all piled on top of one another. His thoughts one after the other.

“How can I get rid of these thoughts? The resentment I still have towards Milly, or the modern day women whom I once championed for and now resent. Let me understand just that thought for now. Back then, even before I knew Milly, I witnessed how harsh men might treat women, or what they might say about their relationships with women. I was bewildered, I just wanted to know love, appreciation, and connection from both sexes. I was never able to communicate to either sex what my needs were. I wanted to be known for my masculinity amongst males and for my femininity amongst females. And so it might be that my resentment is my lack of sincerity of who I am or want to be identified as. Like non-binary isn’t that a pronoun these days that means it doesn’t matter if I’m masculine or feminine I recognize both rays in me, and I love myself enough to appreciate who I am. Hummm, okay, so why is it that I can easily judge another person and put them in a box just like I feel that I am put into a box. Okay, I get it, two walls have been ripped off of this square room, along with the rest of the house. So is this a gift for me to see outside of myself. Like the time when Milly and I really had a rage going and she said, ‘do you feel my hurt?’ And I did, my breath became altered, my heart was pounding and I couldn’t believe why I chose to be in a battle rather than create a serene environment so we could communicate. Through tears, we reconciled and during the cooling off period we felt the other. I knew she was also able to feel me, the feminine nature of nurturing. That’s what she did, and it helped me to create a new pattern of response. If I understand the thoughts my ego mind has to let go of them. Rather than me letting go of a negative thought, the ego has to let go of the thought. A choice to be in a suffering or non-suffering state. A choice seems dualistic, to create a new pattern of thought seems like the way God thinks. I am developing a God given talent, to create the way I think, not coming from outside influences.

Harry sighs a sigh of relief. He notices that he is no longer scared of what might happen. He knows in time he will be able to wade to shore.

Forgiveness

It’s getting late and dusk is turning into night. The water is still loud. Every so often there is a thump alongside the structure. A log or something that hits the side of the bedroom, like a torpedo. Harry hopes and prays that whatever it is does not penetrate through the wall. For now he at least has a dry area, and a warm bed to sleep in. Harry has never meditated before. He’s heard about it, Jack his spiritual friend would practically beg him to try it. At least a short serene mind meditation. Harry would just scoff at the concept of meditating to ‘clear the mind’.

The sound of the water is constant, it sounds angry, resentful that land is in it’s way. Kind of how I felt towards Milly, especially near the end of our marriage. How could I forgive her when I couldn’t let go of my resentment and bitterness, feeling as if she

was the cause of my vengeance. What did Jack say? I need to forgive myself first, before I could forgive someone else. So I would go along with whatever she wanted just to avoid confrontation? Is that true? Jack and his frequency concept. He believed, actually he stated it as the real deal...we live in a space where frequency...what we think the universe will give it to us, and how we vibrate impacts others. So my frequency was to avoid situations and my vibration was resentment. I was operating from a place of obligation, to do what someone else desired. And even though I fooled myself that I was serving somebody, I really wasn't since there was no joy in what I was doing for another. So what is compassion anyway? Jack used to say it is God Love. Now I need compassion for myself, I need to love myself. Why is it so hard, maybe ego? My ego can work against me or seemingly for me, in a negative way. Like when I get defensive thinking I am right...self righteous. Oh boy, I think I need a time out and just watch the river flow.

Milly

It's late in the day, Milly hasn't checked any of her social media since the flood started. She opened up her Facebook account to see if there was anything from friends that might be posted. She saw some some postings, mostly of the Cabella Bridge. She was in disbelief that the flood was that powerful. More powerful than any in past years. There's been two 100 year floods in the past fifteen years, yet this one was more viscous than either of them. This one came fast and was more devastating. The next posting she saw was taken by Jack. It was a posting of the NBC newsreel the day all hell broke loose.

What the F____, Oh my Harry...the house, was it after the party?

She calls Harry, nothing...not even voice mail. She nervously wonders if Harry turned off his phone tired of phone calls, people asking if he's alright. She tries Jack...

"Jack, my gawd, you posted our house, Harry's house dropping into the river. Have you had any contact with Harry?"

"Gosh, no Milly...nothing. I have tried several times, even drove out there to see if the car...it's still in the driveway. It doesn't appear that he went anywhere. I contacted the local Bozeman NBC station, asked when they shot that video. They were in a chopper, taking videos of the devastation of the bridges, Cabella and at The Point of Rocks, when they saw the house fall into the Yellowstone first hand. No reports if anybody was in the house."

"Shit, thanks for the post, I wish you would have let me know earlier."

"Yeah, sorry, I didn't think of it. Milly, I am glad to know that you are more than just concerned."

"Well yeah Jack, I still have feelings for the guy. I think we are still experiencing some kind of connection even if it is still discordant energy. You're the frequency guy, we are still connected even though it's by a thin thread. Hell, he invited me to the barbecue!"

“He did, didn’t he, yet the vibration between you two wasn’t the friendliest.”

“Stop it Jack, it’s not just me...why do you guys always stick together about your ex’s?”

“Touché, actually, for your information Alice and I are back on talking terms. Seems like she has gone through some kind of awakening and has softened up about us, how we both hurt each other. Doesn’t matter if it was intentional or not, what matters now is that we both do some processing of our self denial of who did what to whom.”

“Damn, listen, I’m going to take a drive along Old Yellowstone road, see if I can trace any of the wreckage maybe with some luck Harry will have hung onto to something and found an eddy to wash up to shore.”

“Be safe Milly, hey, when you find him, how about you, Harry, Alice and I have a get together and start to rebuild our relationships.”

“That would mean some honest sharing? What are you getting at?”

“Yeah, I haven’t thought about it, perhaps we can figure out a way to process. Alice might have suggestions with whatever it is that she is doing. The first barrier has been hurdled in a big way, just with her connecting with me. I felt a sincere vibration and effort of compassion.”

“I’ll think about it, meanwhile I want to find Harry.”

Inflicting Pain

Milly leaves her Gardiner home and drives by the high school onto the old gravel road that goes all the way to Tom Miner Basin. This gives her the best view of the river. Once she leaves passes the Cabella bridge. She drives slowly, stoping whenever there is a vantage point she pulls over and looks downstream. She continues this way for awhile. When she gets to the Cabella Bridge crossing she stops to look at the bridge pinned up along the river bank. Logs and debris piled up everywhere. She goes back to her car and continues along the river.

Pain, how we were so good at hurting each other in anyone of our disagreements. What is it that I project towards Harry that I think is wrong...whether it irritates me or annoys me? Whatever it is that might rub me the wrong way. Even his dry sense of humor. Some of it is how I must seem to him. Yet, I am so sure of myself that I can blame and shame him. And back and forth we go, still trying to make our relationship work, at least on the surface. ‘Look everybody, we’re still friends even though we are ex-lovers.’ Lovers of the flesh, until our love for each other diminishes with our perceived notions of how the other impacts us, the wrong way. Then we let everybody know how our ex was so terrible, that’s why we split. To be friends separate from each other works better until we meet again. What did I inject in the conversation at the party when Harry responded with his sarcasm about his ticket to be on a higher realm, by serving me? Was that an innuendo...he being better than me even though I know I am better than him. Shit listen to that self righteousness Milly darling, I hurt him, he attempts to hurt me so where is the love. Oh, Harry I want forgiveness in our life, in all our relationships.

I see now I do the same...perceived as being the accused even though I am the accuser. With others too, judgements, projections, annoyance, whatever is beyond my control I attack thinking that my way is best and will bring me happiness. Which is really satisfaction of seemingly having the upper hand. That kind of thinking is uncontrollable.

Milly passes Rock Creek and can see the raging river, starting to slow down. It's not anywhere near being calm, the current *is still strong*. Yet she is feeling a calmness in her presence. That tends to happen when one has an insightful moment. She slows down even more than the speed she has been going, looking, forever keeping her eyes on the river, hoping to see at least a part of the house. There's a rather large island in the middle of the river just before The Point of Rocks. At least it was a large land mass, diminished in size by the flood.

As she creeps towards it on the road, along the river, the sliver of pasture that separated the road from river, is now no more than a slight piece of land full of natural debris. She stops her car and looks out at the new tip of the island. There it is a portion of Harry's house. And there is Harry, sitting in meditation pose at the open end facing the river. Milly is intrigued watching his figure, wondering now if they can create a "frequency" (as Jack would say) to be felt between both of them. So she opens her hatch back and sits in a meditative posture in the back of her car. The dusk is starting to turn into night, an almost full moon sheds a reflective light on the river. She closes her eyes and wills Harry to feel her presence as a loving, energy.

Acceptance

The water seems to be quieting more and more. Harry closes his eyes now and grounds himself to the changing sounds of the river. Even where the water was viscously crashing into the side of his fractured shelter, it now was just lapping against the side of the exterior of the bedroom wall where he keep hearing a thumping, previously.

All of my thoughts that I have towards Milly, not only have they a bearing on our relationship, they also seem to carry onto my other relationships. Especially being so quick to judge, then I create a story that is the farthest from the truth. Just like this whole flood scene, it came quickly, out of nowhere, and now it is settling down and will soon be flowing the way it was before. The riparian boundary of the river may change, the pattern of the flow may change, still the water flow will come and go. So my thoughts come from nothing and eventually go back to nothing. No way to control them, I can reprogram them, all my old pattern of thoughts towards Milly. It took several years for us to get to know each other, did we ever accept each others quirkiness. My humor, her chattiness? My organized mannerism vs her (what seemed to me) unorthodox way of organizing? The different ways we wanted to control our environment. The friends we chose and how we conducted ourselves in

social situations. My stubbornness! Oh man, Milly, I am so in need of a rewind. Can we possibly do a reset with each other and work on accepting each other. I am the way God created me. You are the way God created you.

Milly -Is it really Harry who angers me or disappoints me? Or is it me that expects him to change to fulfill my needs for a workable relationship. If I believe that he doesn't listen to me, or he doesn't appreciate me, or agree with me, of course that will be how I see him always. That's me projecting who I think he is or has become. I see it now, what would our relationship be without those thoughts. When I believe those thoughts how do I react. My dramatic responses, or actions must turn him off. I can see it, when his body language goes limp, like he will give up. His tendency is to just go along with whatever I desire at the moment, trying to avoid conflict. Then the sarcastic, 'yes mama', which gets under my skin. Maybe it's me not listening to him, or appreciating him for who he is. If we can just be present with each other and work towards a compassionate interchange with each other, what might that do for our relationship?

Milly keeps a sleeping bag and quick back pack items for impromptu hikes and sleep overs. She comes out of her meditation and folds down the back seats and arranges the back so she can camp out for the night, She doesn't want to leave Harry.

Harry comes out of his mediation and is distraught, in a suffering state wishing that Milly could feel his compassion now. He gets up and goes the short distance to the bed. Maybe tomorrow he'll be able to wade to shore. He knows that before the flood, the part of the river between this island and shore was the shallow side.

Jack gives Alice a late night call, she answers, "hi Jack, I just saw Harry and Milly's house float down the river. Have you heard anything from Milly or Harry, if he's been found?"

"I think Milly went to look downstream for any remnants of the house and Harry too. Listen, I told Milly that when she and Harry reunite, if maybe the four of us can get together and work our our relationships together. You seemed changed since that Field of Awakening you did in LA last fall. Maybe you gained some personal skills and knowledge or wisdom that you could share with us?"

"What I am hearing you say Jack, is that you want to give us another shot at love?"

"Yes, you picked up on that frequency. I'm glad, do you have any desire for round two?"

"Hummm, you say that like a fighter that wants another chance...ROUND TWO! Is that true?"

"Yes Alice, it is true. I haven't spent all my time feeling that it was good that we broke up since we discovered how different we are from each other. Rather I started recalling what it is that I appreciate about you. It's like getting new software that promises to take the glitches out of the old program."

"And by glitches you mean...?"

“I mean my thinking, making it all about you...blaming you and feeling my shame that I am not worthy of you as a partner.”

“Or maybe you think I am not worthy to be your partner?”

“Because we don’t think alike?”

“Here’s where we can start Jack, if we can practice taking the time to understand our self as well as the other, we’d have an opportunity to accept who we are. Once we are able to love ourselves more that vibration as you say, will send out the loving frequencies that you talk about.”

“I love you more already, Let’s have a date? Maybe the Bistro in Livingston, some Frenchie food? After all you are part French.”

“Okay Jack, Let’s give it a shot. No expectations, let’s delve deeper into our interrelating and learn to accept each other in a loving way.”

Unified Consciousness

The sunrise is brilliant as it reflects on the undersides of the clouds a golden yellow light. The sky is a magnificent Azure Blue, there are rays of light reaching beyond the clouds into the distant sky. Harry is observing this from the edge of (the room with a view) and Milly is up and out of her car, stretching and taking it all in.

How do we get to this place of being in a unified consciousness that Jack talks about sometimes, when I am listening to him and not resisting what he has to say. Resisting and claiming it to be woo woo because it doesn’t fit my way of thinking. Just because I am unfamiliar with the concept of unified consciousness. I guess that means connecting with a network of other individuals with like minded thoughts? So maybe Milly , Jack, Alice, and I are connecting in some way. Not necessarily the same thoughts however our thoughts are frequencies, as Jack claims, and those frequencies are having an impact on all four of us since we are in similar circumstances.

Milly slowly walks down the bank and gets to a muddy beach created by the flood. The strength of the current during the last few days tore into this flank of the river, ripped through the old bank and left in it’s wake a clearing, full of natural debris (rocks and logs) and a smooth beach. She takes off her pants.

I know I can reach him now, unless there are any deep holes between me and the island, I can wade to his shelter. I don’t want him to see me yet, so this is a good line to wade towards the house. Hummm, Jack wanted to get together with us and Alice. It is hopeful for all of us, that is what Jack is vibrating like, a sphere of hope between friends.

Milly reaches the island, the deepest she had to wade through was just below the height of her chest. Her blouse is clinging to her belly and chest. She places feet on muddy land and squishes her way to the back of the wall that faces westward.

She peeks around the corner and Harry is still on the open edge of the floor, feet dangling over the edge. Milly pushes herself up onto the floor and is kneeling on all fours when Harry looks over his shoulder at her. They freeze, and do not move, nor do they utter a word. Harry is uncertain what to do, he spontaneously pivots onto all fours and they crawl towards each other covering the short space between them with exasperated expressions. They are like two dogs, nose to nose, tilting their heads until all they can do is laugh!

“How did you know I was here?”

“I just followed the river until I found this part of the house, our house, which doesn’t mean more to me than you Harry. I have been watching you, waiting for the flow to slow. And today, was the perfect time to unite. Harry, I’ve been thinking since I have been keeping watch over you. I actually felt your pain from the party. Finally, I felt you, what it must be like to have lived with me.”

“Hey, I have created a huge checklist of how I must have caused your pain.”

By now they are sitting, looking at each other. A slight breeze kicks up, just enough to cause an early morning chill.

“I’m getting chilled Harry, come hug me please.”

“Of all the pieces of furniture that remain, I managed to keep the bed safe in the corner of our bedroom.”

The Date

They stripe down and Harry wipes off Milly with his dry shirt. It is a quick tuck under the sheets and they snuggle and glide their hands over each other.

“So, Milly, one of the biggest impressions I had, contemplating all this time on our relationship is acceptance. I’m not sure, in fact I know, as time wore on during our marriage, I couldn’t accept who you were, your true personality. I was so full of a judgmental mind I didn’t bother to look at you as your own creation. To love who you are and what you have become and continue to become. I also realized that it was hard for me to accept myself. So I wasn’t capable of loving myself. What I thought I loved was when I met another’s expectations. When I achieved then my ego was flying high. Well, I realize now that to achieve does not take the place of compassion for my self and others... compassion for you.”

“Harry, you know how Jack talks about frequencies? By the grace of God we have been operating on the same frequency.”

“I...”

“Don’t say another word Harry, you have my full surrender. Jack wants us to meet with him and Alice. She too has had some major revelations. For now, right now love me

Harry, love me as much as you love your new found self. Love me as one with you. Love me as you are me and I am you, and we are all together.”

It's weeks later, Harry has set up a hunting style camp on the land. He is starting a new foundation, further away from the river this time. He and Milly have agreed on a simple house plan. He prefers to spend most of his days working on the rebuild and likes spending the nights on the land. The tent has a floor and a small wood burner. Sometimes Milly will spend the night. They are dedicated to finding a new ways to communicate with each other. They are both letting each other know what irks them. And they are aware when they are becoming defensive.

It's a Saturday night and they decide to celebrate their new found relationship. So they drive into Livingston - to the Bistro at The Murray. They enter and are greeted by the host. She smiles and leads them to a table...right next to Jack and Alice. They all have wide eyes on each other with smiles as Harry and Milly followed the host to be seated. They thanked her and instinctively moved their table adjoining with Jack and Alice. There was a bottle of red wine with a basket of bread in place.

“Well, fancy meeting you two here. We were just talking about you two. Both safe after the flood. Are you seeing each other again?” ask Jack.

“Hummm, yes we are rebuilding our relationship.” Milly looks over at Harry. “Jack, you mentioned to me about getting together with your beautiful, soulful...Alice.”

She looks over at a blushing Alice, “Seems like you have discovered some new way to approach life and relationships that is what Jack had mentioned. You went to some kind of event a Field Of Awakening?”

Alice looks at Milly then Harry, “thank you for the compliment. Yes an awareness of my state of mind. What thoughts contribute to suffering and how to develop a non- suffering state. That was the crux of the event. During the processes, what we did was to see what it is internally that makes one suffer.”

Wine is poured by the host into four glasses, “I see that you all must be friends? I can seat you at a bigger table.”

“That's alright, we like the intimacy,” responds Milly. She continues, “so shall we concur that the consensus between us is to make this our first gathering to dig deep into our consciousness?”

Jack looks at Alice, “this is our first attempt to...I should say date, since we have been separated. Alice, please don't feel like you have to agree to any kind of an arrangement here, right now.”

Alice takes a sip of wine, before responding. Everybody follows her lead. “Honestly, I find this shocking, yet I realize that to feel obligated is an old pattern of mine. And to be shocked is truly a suffering state.” She smiles, “there are so many routes we can take if we want to

experiment with several techniques of self therapy. Or if you want to I can try my best to navigate us to relate with each other and our partners in a non- judgmental, beautiful...non-suffering state that benefits all of us and whomever we come in contact with. We can have an impact on our world and this entire universe we live in.”

And so they begin a new relationship of friendship to understand and support each other. These days as Harry and Milly, Jack and Alice gather with a group of people what they are eager to share is how they developed a deeper meaning of what LOVE is. They took a journey and delved deep into their personal understanding of what is illusory and what is real. There is a difference of how one feels and navigates through life when one is not suffering.

The End

Purgatory

Prisoners of The Mind

By James Kozlik

The Legend of Purgatory Chasm

According to legend, an Algonquin Indian woman found herself in a tight spot (pun intended) shortly after she killed a white colonial settler. As she walked away from the scene of the crime, she encountered another settler who asked for her company on a short walk. Naturally, having just murdered one of his people, she was apprehensive and tried to run away. He lunged and grabbed her by the wrist. When she called out to the Native American god Hobomoko to save her, the second settler revealed himself as none other than Hobomoko in the flesh. Morphing into a devil-like guise, Hobomoko grabbed his captive by the waist and flew to Purgatory Chasm.

Colonists said that the devil’s actions on that day formed the chasm. The deep depressions were allegedly the places he stomped and threw his victim. The large, deep cuts in the rocks were the results of a swinging tomahawk.

Historians say that the legend actually served a religious purpose in the colonists’ efforts to Christianize Native Americans. By demonizing Hobomoko and creating a parable-like warning out of the woman’s murder, they cautioned Natives out of their own faith with the hope of bringing them to Christianity.

Geologists have another opinion. They say that a mile-high glacier let loose a gush of dammed-up water some 14,000 years ago, leaving the walls intact but carving out the 70-foot-deep chasm.

“First realize that you are surrounded by prison walls, that your mind has gone to sleep. It does not even occur to most people to see this, so they live and die as prison inmates. Most people end up being conformist; they adapt to prison life. A few become reformers; they fight for better living conditions in the prison, better lighting, better ventilation. Hardly anyone becomes a rebel, a revolutionary who breaks down the prison walls. You can only be a revolutionary when you see prison walls in the first place.”

From Anthony de Mello

Introduction

There were times in my life when I felt trapped. No way out of “the grind” like being born in a caste system. Born into a free world I had been told. So, I would just keep on going in a direction not knowing what direction I was heading. And so I would sign up for workshops and events that promised freedom from a chaotic mind. Then I would let the liquor soothe me, or maybe some smoke, only to realize the numbing effect it would have. Always returning to be a prisoner of my mind. Religion? Spirituality? The disciplines were a shock to my system and way of life. Just like everything else, I felt trapped, trapped, trapped but not anymore. Nope, I committed a murder. I snapped one day, just reacted in anger and punched and punched and punched harder and harder until...well, you don't need to listen to the details. All you need to know is how long I have regretted doing what I did. I am John Sutton and I live in Purgatory now, you've heard of it. That place between Heaven and Hell, a place of waiting, a trap of sorts, waiting for my mind to be still.

My name is Asaad. Yes, I am Muslim and like a lion I am courageous and brave. I pulled the plug, on someone and on my life. I was a caregiver for an old soul who was suffering. And I was suffering just watching him hang onto to life. I don't think he knew that he was even doing that. Hanging on to life when you could possibly be in the next realm. Maybe he thought that he needed more time. You know, extend life thinking he needed to work on forgiveness? Anyway, he was letting out agonizing screams and I couldn't bear it any longer. So I pulled the plug, he gave his last breath and I plugged his life support system back in, but they figured out what happened and here I am between Heaven and Hell. So what happens now you ask. When you are sentenced to die, there is solitary confinement and the wait diminishes the inspiration to live. The wait is excruciating and one becomes a prisoner of the mind.

I look over at Asaad as we sit under the “Tree of Forgiveness”. It's the only tree in the yard. All of the other trees are on the other side of the guarded wall. I call it the wailing wall, because where I live I will never get a chance to pray for redemption, at the Wailing Wall. Asaad is Arab, the same as the young man who soiled my daughter. I shot him in the back as he ran from my house. It's not that I hate Arabs, it was the fear that maybe my daughter should not associate with an Arab.

Maybe he was a Muslim. Yet my name is Abram after Abraham whose considered the founder of Hebrews through his son Isaac and by Muslim's through his son Ishmael. And why do I fear the Arabs who live as my neighbor? What thoughts have caused these misperceptions that we are enemies? The actions of a few? My daughter loves an Arab. I should love my neighbor. So here I sit with John and Asaad, waiting for death and allowed this last short glimpse of life out of solitary confinement as we sit under this tree of forgiveness. That is what we named it as it sits up the top of a small swale. I am reminded of Jesus on the cross between two other criminals.

Chapter 1

I look over at Abram and Asaad as they appear to be in deep contemplation. We are shackled to say the least, with two guards holding shot guns across their breast. What do they think we are going to do? The life blood has been sucked out of us. We are here to enjoy our last breaths of fresh air as we look at the prison yard. We watch the free prisoners doing their time with hope of a quick release back into the rhythms of life.

“Asaad, who’d you pull the plug on?”

“A Jew, an old Jew who never stopped talking about the fear of losing his motherland.”

Abram looks up and turns his head in the direction of Asaad. “How long have we known each other with a wall between us? Did you ever get a chance to talk to me. Your neighbor in confinement?”

“Oh, so now you are going to tell me about your God and diminish the value of Muhammad, the true messenger of God. Why would you not acknowledge that he preached the same teachings as did Moses, Jesus and Abraham.”

“No, I had plenty of time to think until I could think no more. I do not know you because of the wall that separated us. All I know is execution is what bonds the three of us as one.”

“John Sutton, do you both know my name? Do you want to know why I sit here with the both of you?”

Heads turn and peer over at John. Asaad is first to respond, “John, from the USA, a Christian who did wrong and now has to pay for his sin?”

“John Sutton, so when did you become Christian? You are saved perhaps, but from what, and who saved you, your God? Certainly not from death.”

“You sound bitter Abram, my friend.”

“I don’t think I am any friend of yours nor you Asaad. We don’t know each other. All we know is that we are all sentenced to death.”

“I killed someone, with my bare hands, fighting like an animal who is trapped into a corner. I was so present with my anger that the one I laid hands on was no longer a human being. Every punch I threw was as if I was just beating the big pillow my therapist had me hit. Just let it out John, what are you feeling? He was screaming louder than me, that’s when I went after him. All of my hate, and frustration, every punch became harder, every thought that was buried deep within surfaced. And even when his screams became a whimper asking me to stop, I hated him, the therapist. What right did he have to inquire about my past history with killing. He didn’t know anything about killing another man, and children and women.”

“I am glad you are shackled John, you are scaring me. Look, someone is coming and it does not look like the Chaplin,” observes Abram.

They all peer in the direction of the prison yard. All of the free prisoners are gone. Back inside where they belong. Confined, crowded into cells and work spaces. To learn their lesson of retribution. There is a third guard with a shotgun across his chest walking slightly behind and to the right of the man dressed in white. One guard for each man, shackled, destitute and destined to die. The man in white approaches with a demeanor of confidence, kindness and joy. Why is he smiling, nothing joyous about the situation.

“Good afternoon men.”

There is no response. Just stares - six eyes fixated on the man in white. Waiting for their final instructions prior to execution. There is silence and an air of calm. A leaf gently floats toward the bare ground. They watch as it flutters to the ground.

“You chose your final contact with this earthly environment wisely. Look beyond the cyclone wired fence. Here is the only place where trees prosper in this area. They are connected with this lone tree, that connects each of you to the outside world.”

“I wouldn’t start that conversation chaplain,” it’s Abram speaking, “I don’t know who my daughter is anymore, and my wife? I wonder if I even have a wife anymore. The only connection I have in my mind is the boy that I killed. His soul, that is whom or what I seek, to talk to, ask it for forgiveness. And I don’t even know if what was once my blind faith is valid anymore.”

“What do you mean by your blind faith, Abram.”

“I am not in a mood to have a discussion with you. What happened to the other chaplain, Frederick.”

Abrams question is ignored. He ponders - now I find that intriguing considering this is our last day to be outside for the remainder of our human existence. “Did they pull the plug on old Frederick? And your name, please.”

I am your executioner. We do not give out our names. You are fortunate to partake in a new type of execution. The guards will take you to your cells. Tonight you will contemplate on contempt. Observe your past and all that you had contempt for. What impact did that have on you at the time and what was the consequence.

Asaad is aghast at the thought, “we call this tree the tree of forgiveness. I came here with full remorse for what I did. I have recalled my past actions so many times that I bleed the guilt for what I did. Now I must die because I pulled the plug on someone who was dying a miserable death.”

“You have come with three guards armed with shotguns. Why not just shoot us and end this farce of an execution? There is nothing human with the time spent in solitary confinement.” The anger was building up in John Sutton. His fist clenched and the chains on the shackles rattled.

It was time to go. The guards poked their rifles into the shoulders of each man. They instructed them to start moving. And so they did, slowly taking their final walk under a clear blue sky.

Chapter 2

Calm - John: John slowly shuffles his feet towards the cell block. He stops and looks up at the sky, and blazing sun. When his eyes return toward the ground he sees dark spots. He chuckles, “I can’t see yet. I have been blinded by the light.”

The guard pokes him with his rifle tip, “move or you’ll get the butt end of my rifle. Your last day on earth will be miserable if you don’t keep moving.”

Contempt, I sure didn’t have to wait long to feel contempt. That therapist had to poke deeper and deeper into my soul until I was lost again, my mind programed to kill. Here’s what the enemy looks like. Here is where you will find them. This is what you will do. There was four of us. One to kick down the door, I was to swing into motion kneeling and gunning the lower part of the room. Joe moving from my right. Crouching just above my right shoulder and sweeping the middle latitude of the room. Pete standing taller was instructed to sweep the upper portion of the room with his automatic. There was no time to take in the scene. Just kill and move onto the next small one room house. Women screaming, children shouting and no time for return gunfire from the enemy.

The therapist probing, “how did it feel when you heard the screams? Why did you keep shooting?”

How dare him asking me questions thinking what, that he could deprogram me. That he knew what was cursing through my mind. He had no clue what it was like. I didn’t feel calm until the punching was all over. Until I was exhausted from killing again. That’s when I rolled off of him, lay on my back, closed my eyes and followed his previous instructions to breath. “Just breath, John, slow deep inhales your exhale should be longer than your inhale. Keep breathing, focus only on your breath and slowly, very slowly calm your mind.”

Acceptance - Abram: Why could I not accept the relationship between my daughter and her Arab boyfriend. Or was he her lover. Was I wanting to protect her so she would marry someone of Jewish descent? And who was the Arab boy, I do not know. He fled my house from fear and I reacted from fear. We did not get to know each other beyond our perceptions. I now must accept my fate. My loss of daughter, family and my life. All because of a contemptuous misunderstanding,

with no regard for human life. No regard for another's choice. And now I recognize my contempt of God. I followed His word and I believed we were the chosen Ones. I accepted my self righteousness as spiritual superiority. And now I am supposed to accept my fate as fatalistic as it's outcome. Excruciated within the confines of solitary confinement until death. Given one last glimpse of life, shackled under the Tree of Forgiveness. And who forgives me? Not my daughter, not my wife, not the family of the Arab boy I killed. GOD? Why would He forgive my disobedience to the commandment "Thou shalt not kill." Whatever is next is what I am doomed to accept. I am afflicted by the pain and suffering I have caused. I am besieged by this prison, weakened by lack of the outside world. And I am in contempt to have to accept all of this nonsense. Who is this man in white leading us to a different kind of execution?

Peace - Asaad: We fight over a sliver of land. It's not even my fight. I could care less. Yet I inherited this belief that the Jews of Israel are not in my best interest. Where did this thought come from? I looked at this Jewish man, aged and dying in agony. And what were his screams about? The pain of his cancer, eating away at his heart. Or was it wanting to leave this earthly plane in peace but still in contempt of his Arab nurse, me. My suffering was caused by my letting the external influences from those that govern, impact me. After awhile we begin to internalize these false claims. The Israelis become the enemy. Most of us ordinary people just want to live peacefully. We want to love one another without any cause or justification of who to befriend and whom not to. Love what is. I think that is some Buddhist notion I have heard in my lifetime. My patient became more than just someone assigned to me. He became all that I was supposed to hate. The screams from him reminded me of the screams from innocent people during an Israeli raid. They became war chants against my nation. And I retaliated, with contempt. I pulled the plug and the raid ended. I was at peace, finally.

Chapter 3

Guard number one is Running Horse, a native American. He is a big guy with a big heart. How he ended up with this job after serving in the military is another story. He opens the little door window. Today his job is to escort... "John Sutton, prisoner 1378965, it is time. You are going back to the Great Creator. Make your peace. Place your hands behind your back.

Fear - John

I am not fearing this execution. It does not matter if it's a new alternative to electrocution. Maybe it will be a morphine OD, that's fine with me. What I do fear is having to look at what in my past led me to end up here. I fear how deep I must go to justify my actions in the village battlefield. Think about that, having to fight an enemy who use innocent civilians as shields. Eyes and body language showing fear haunt my vision of a peaceful life. All I know is the chaos of the village raid. I will

never know if I killed an enemy or an innocent. In my mind I could not escape the torment of suffering. The therapist attempting to pin point what caused me to suffer so much that I had to kill. Maybe I was killing my demons. Maybe it was the gossip I heard spread throughout my small home town. The gossip about the day when Jack, Stevie and I killed Mrs. Townsend's chickens and had them roasting on a camp fire spit while we drank our liquor by the river. We were quite satiated by the time the flashing lights and sirens came upon us. Scared, we ran towards the river. There were three of them. Officers with pistols pulled out of their holsters. We frantically ran into the river. Stevie could not swim and got pulled by the current. I looked long enough to see him grab for a rock. Later I was told he drowned. I hid with Jack on the other side of the river. We watched as the officers all headed for Stevie sensing he was in trouble. We made it back to Jack's house. His bedroom was in the basement of his folks house. It had a private entrance so he could come and go as he pleased and have some buddies over too. We got into dried clothes and I spent the night, after calling my folks. It was the next day when we heard about Stevie. There was no indication or description of who else the officers saw that evening. That memory stayed with me all through boot camp and deployment. Even though I feared for my own safety I was determined to protect my troop in the endless wars of the middle east where I was deployed. I feared death for anybody in my troop. So when a door got kicked open I never considered whom I shot at. All I knew was that I would never abandon "Stevie" again.

Guard number two is Hamza, a Palestinian refugee whose brother was shot and killed by an Israeli father of the woman that he was having a secret romantic relationship with. His family is from the west bank. He had been living in Jerusalem when it happened. Several years ago. He was crushed by the thought that someone could hate so much because of a personal belief, that he or she would kill a human life. Total disregard of whom they shot. The thought that someone should not interfere in another's romantic life, two people who loved each other beyond the bias of race or culture. So Hamza came to America and chose this job not totally understanding why. Maybe, he thought, "I can see justice being served."

Possessiveness - Abram

"Let's go Abram, prisoner 1379062. It's your time to end your internal suffering."

Abram hears the small window opening on the cell door being shut. He finished his last meal awhile ago. He preformed a Shabath with bread and wine, that is what he had requested. Along with a full meal of chicken, kosher foods and a desert. There was nobody to share his final weeks' experiences on this earth. So he was full of thought and much suffering. The regret he felt for his action was a heavy weight that he has been carrying around for a longtime.

He rises out of his bed and as the door opens he looks at his executioner and sees a small Palestinian flag emblem sewn over the left pocket of his shirt. He makes eye contact.

“I know your history Abram.”

Abram does not respond, yet. He has a despondent mood as it is. He understands that there is nothing left in his life but death. He looks at Hamza’s eyes. There is no indication of compassion. No hate either.

“And what history about me do you know?”

“I am the brother of the lover of your daughter, whom you shot dead in the back.”

“I see, you followed me here. So why not shoot me now. I am to die anyway. Maybe it is the honorable thing to do.”

“I have been thinking what I might say to you for a long time. When my brother was shot, our family was living in Jerusalem. We had no bias attitude towards Jews. We are all Arabs in a sense. I have listened to you lament as I stood guard outside your cell door. I thought how solitary confinement must eventually tear through one’s false beliefs until all that’s left is his truth. I heard you weep many nights.”

“What is your name?”

“Hamza.”

“Hamza, I now realize how I was so extremely possessive of my beliefs that I wanted to demand my daughters full attention and love. The same as with my wife. I failed to allow them their independence. I wanted them to believe what I believed was true. And what I believed to be true was not my truth. I never became independent from what I was taught as truth. I was so obsessive of my knowledge that I never knew wisdom.”

“Abram, I too became obsessive for avenging my brothers death. When I sat in that court room for your trial, I swore to possess you. It was I, that wanted to make sure justice was served and that you would realize your death. This time has come and what I feel now is not compassion, rather it is love for a brother. Causeless love is what I believe we can call it. To love each other as human beings. I have observed the obsessiveness of my people. Of how my sisters were treated different from my brothers and I. How the elders cling to what has been handed down to them from centuries ago.”

“Yes, and I was the same, clinging to dogma. As a people we possess our dogma or rather it possesses us until our independent thinking is no longer relevant to our life. And yet your family managed to live in Jerusalem, did it change your spiritual values?”

“I am not sure, I do know that I saw a difference in the way my father treated his women. I observed more tenderness and indifference to how a woman should be treated in a traditional Arabic structure. He was no longer possessive of my mother and sisters. They had their freedoms.”

“Hamza, my friend we are not as different as we are made out to be. Why do our cultural differences possess our beings? You have given me peace of mind. I am honored that you have been

my guard. I am grateful that you heard me weep. And now lead me to my execution and you will have your divine justice.”

“Let us go in silence, my thoughts are not centered on seeing justice being served anymore. I am grateful for our brief connection.”

Guard number three is a Hindu. He goes by his American name, Robert. He chose the name when he was working as a website builder for GoDaddy. He was still living in India, Along the Pakistan/ Indian border. He moved his family to Pennsylvania and purchased a convince grocery and gas store. One of the little ones with a two island gas pump in a suburb of Philadelphia. He had studied the history of when the Muslims had been targeted by hate groups. The internal conflict during Mahatma Gandhi’s reign. The peace maker who had to agree to a new state (Pakistan) where Muslims could live in peace. Then one unforgivable night two Muslim men robbed his uncle who was working the register, and shot him in cold blood. He sold the store and after years of grief and despondency he became a prison guard. He had a fantasy that someday he would see his uncles perpetrators in jail and get revenge. His mind was still in conflict.

Inclusiveness - Asaad

So many decades have passed since my homeland was created. Pakistan is still considered a Muslim country. And still today our instinctive behavior is to listen to the old history of why we are different. Yet whenever I meet a Hindu, or Arab or anyone for that matter, I just want to be included into their world. I want to disregard the differences of culture. I’d rather merge with the cultural aspects of what makes us different. That has nothing to do with how we think of each other.

“Prisoner number 135209, Asaad from Pakistan, this is your lucky day. It is time, your last chance to claim your remorse. Or did you do that under the tree of forgiveness? Muslims killed my uncle.”

Asaad looks at the guard. There is no anger in his body language. His facial features show resolve. “I do not know of what you speak. What I do know is whoever killed your uncle had no identity of race.”

“Their identity was proven to be Muslim. Where I come from, our history shows that Muslims were band from our country. My upbringing taught me that we are different. That Muslims can not be trusted.”

“And what if I were to tell you that being raised along the Pakistani and Indian border, I had Hindu friends. What if I were to tell you we only new each other by our friendship and brotherhood.”

“You killed someone, so your friendships aren’t all inclusive.”

“I killed someone out of compassion. The dying man was in agony and pain. He did not know where he was. He screamed “kill me” and wouldn’t stop screaming until I silently killed him by interfering with his life support. The doctors were killing him with morphine.

“It’s time to go my friend.”

Chapter 4

John is the first one to enter the waiting room. Shortly thereafter, Abram had Asaad enter. John’s guard opens the door and motions with his shotgun to move aside. He nods and the other prison guards motion for their prisoners to move through the door. There is a long hallway, with a set of stairs at the end of the hall. It is a slow walk, very intentional as Abram leads the way. They make it down the stairs and go left about fifty feet and come to a large handicap door with an automatic open button. Abram’s guard presses the button and motions all to enter. The room has a large chair for electrocution or a drug induced execution. There is also a small conference table off to the left of the execution chair. It’s new to this room. There is a tempered white glass table top that is illuminated. This conference table is in the shape of a four corners intersection. It looks like a first aid cross. There is a chair at each end. The men are shackled to thier chairs. The open chair remains unoccupied, for now. The guards leave the room, through another, opposite door. They go down a short hallway and enter the gallery room. There are other’s already seated, peering through a large glass, shatter proofed window. These are the prisoner’s closest family and also the families of the victims. The man in white enters the execution room from the door that the guards just exited. He walks to the empty chair and sits.

“Gentlemen, you are meant to be here at this time in your lives. Each of you have had plenty of time in contemplation during your solitary confinement. Surely you have all been stripped naked of your outer garments and looked within. Your special guards have given you voice to speak. They were assigned to you by Divine source. The source you have believed or not, that dictated right and wrong up to this point in your lives. Your perceptions of others and self have inflicted the burden you carry to your death. We are at the four corners of your soul reincarnation. At this intersection your choice of redemption shall be determined. This is not a time to ask for forgiveness. This is a time for your truth to be spoken.”

The middle of the table vibrates every so slightly with a pulse of illuminated light.

Abram, “you who will not give us a name. You who are not a Chaplin, you speak in parables.”

“Gentlemen, prior to this execution you where left with your personal thoughts. Now you will share amongst yourselves with quality connection. Now you will observe your feelings, with compassion for self and others.”

There is a silence. The sound of a slow deep inhalation followed by a long exhalation comes over a hidden speaker system. The men react with eye movement that relays an energy amongst them. They nod at each other and close their eyes. The breath sounds continue until it turns into calm ocean waves lapping up on a seashore. After a time the sound stops.

A voice gives instruction, “John, speak of your surrender to what you perceive as your fate.”

Surrender - John

John takes a deep breath, “I am feeling anxiety right now. Now is what you want from us, right? The present feeling is anxiety every time I recall the time in Iraq, the killing machine I was. Fearing for my life. I was fearing for my comrades too. We were a unit, sworn to our loyalty to the group. I surely had no compassion for whom I blindly massacred. And you are asking me to surrender this past behavior even though the entire scene is embellished into my being. I was not fighting for my freedom at the time. That I know for sure. The assignment had no relevance to my life except that I was following someone else’s orders. I had no control of the situation.”

Assad speaks, “One has no control over fate, until they change. ‘Allah never changes the condition of people until they strive to change themselves’ (13:11). It is said, “If a Muslim performs Haj or gives charity he is automatically contributing to his good fate, that Allah will give to Him during his life.”

“I killed twice. And if there is a life hereafter, my time to make amends or go to a pilgrimage is over. I am confined to this execution now. In my mind I asked my God for forgiveness. I did this not having a true belief in a God. I have so much shame of self that it is difficult to be here right now. Shame that’s my feeling. Surrender, is that my need? Surrender to what, the flow of life? That might be my request. I watched my friend Stevie drown in the flow of life. I killed three times, I have no grand destiny to look forward too.”

Abram speaks, “my brother, seek redemption. By this I mean, you have wrestled with your lesser self. From now until death, as we share, seek what might be the standards of seeking a higher spiritual self.”

“I do not know a spiritual self.”

The man in white speaks, “Surrender your ego. Let your ego become ignorant of all that you know about yourself. Listen to your brothers who share the same fate. And what is fate but the flow of life. It is okay to feel too much within, connect now. We are here for you, my brother.

The breath sound is back on and without instruction, John, Abram and Asaad close their eyes and wait for the waves. There is a woman’s voice that leads a meditation “Sacred Surrender to the Divine” she instructs to place hands over the heart and see a golden ocean without waves, an ocean of Divine consciousness of sacred surrender. See yourself being cared for, supported, and nurtured by the Divine...”

The table top becomes more illuminated. The white light extends in all four directions of the intersection. The glow seems to be elevated like a low ground fog one might see early in the morning when the cool air comes in contact with a warmed earth.

When the meditation music ends, the man in white speaks, “ Abram, speak of all you know, concerning ego.”

Ego (All knowing) - Abram

“This small room has a limiting affect concerning my beliefs. I have so much time with my thoughts. I have dwelled in so much regret. I know now that forgiveness does not relieve my suffering. My inner hurt is the cause of my suffering. My belief that my daughter should not have a Palestinian boy friend. My perception of him because I identify with beliefs that do not serve all people. Who am I to judge another’s beliefs. It was my perception of a young man whom I met a few times and never took the time to connect heart to heart. I dishonored my daughter by not showing an interest in her relationship with him. I only know the knowledge of my beliefs. There is a knowing of wisdom that is beyond what I know. My disregard of the teachings of Jesus, of Buddha, of Allah, of other masters, gurus and philosophers limit my journey of mysticism beyond Hebrew tradition.”

Asaad speaks, “I feel that I can call you a brother now. We three are brothers searching for our final truth. And yet we don’t have the knowing that you speak of. What is the mystical connection we seek. We regret our past. That which we can not change. We know our future but even that is unknown. What happens beyond our sure death? And now all we can do is share our insights.”

John speaks, “The military has programed my mind. Or did I let that happen because I accepted a belief of fighting an enemy? Now as you both spoke, I am recognizing that it is up to me to reprogram my thoughts of despair. Feeling so limited and trapped within my mind. Now I am open to seek a different connection with pure consciousness, if that make sense.” He looks in the direction of the man in white. The fog of white light rises, chest high. The man in white becomes translucent, and says, “my brothers, you are no longer trapped in solitary confinement. You are free to realize your true existence. Strive for it. Asaad, speak of hate.”

Asaad speaks, “Hate you say? I can sense my judgements, that seem to be critical of another, turn into annoyance. And the annoyance turns into an ongoing thought of the inner voice saying, ‘I hate what effects me.’ As I dwell on the annoyance, whatever effect I am feeling affects me in a negative way. As a caregiver, I did not feel my compassion. So I was unable to feel the other persons pain. When I pulled the plug on my patient, I was annoyed. I convinced myself that I was doing the man a favor. I never felt an ounce of compassion for him. My job was to wipe his ass and bathe him. My job I did with no joy.”

Chapter 5

There is a formless translucent white blob at the head of the crossroads. The speaker has some euphoric background frequency music playing. The woman’s Hindu voice emerges with an instruction. “Touch your thumb with your index finger. You will take eight deep breaths with the exhalation being longer than your inhalation. You will use you thumb to count the breaths touching each finger. This we will do throughout the meditation. Start now with your breaths, focus on the breath. If your thoughts wonder, come back to the breath.

There is the sound of a gentle breath. The men start. Then finish in cadence with the sound of the breath.

Next the woman says, “now you will take eight breaths and on the exhale you will hum like a buzzing bee.”

The sound of the inhalation is followed by a slow pitched extended hum. The room is reverberating with the hum. It is heard over the speakers that lead to the gallery room for family and victims. They have listened, transfixed, throughout the execution process.

The woman’s voice with it’s Hindu accent, is forcefully soothing. “Now we will count eight breaths this time notice the slight pause between the inhale and exhale.”

Once the eight pauses are finished the instruction is given for the next eight breaths. “When you exhale this time you will silently say to yourselves, Ah Hum, which means “I AM”. I am unlimited consciousness.”

There is a transformation happening with the men. Some of the people in the gallery have taken up the meditation. Now they all have their eyes closed.

Finally, “see the light of pure consciousness. It may have a form or not. As you see yourself enveloped in this light make an intention, maybe you have a desire. See it, feel it, be it.”

The music dissolves into stillness. The voice of the translucent man resonates as an angelic voice, “We have come to this crossroads, the final earthly existence you will know. There will be no need to comment on the other’s truth. John, you will speak of the internal impact of what you believe to be true now. Abram, you will speak of acceptance of what is true to you now. Asaad, you will speak of causeless love. John will begin.”

Internal Impact of what you believe to be true.

“My mind has constant thoughts. Some I cling to and some I ignore or dissolve. What I cling to has an immediate impact of my actions. I become my thoughts, unknowingly. I say unknowingly, because if I don’t take the time to pause and feel the impact of the thought internally, then the external impact might have a consequence that does not benefit myself or others. So now I notice that the external cause, is not the result of my internal state. When I dissolved into the light of pure consciousness I felt joined with other light beings. We where all translucent like the man in white who you started out to be and are no longer. It’s as if you are me and I am you.”

The voice speaks, “Running Horse, place your weapon down and stand next to brother John.”

Acceptance of what is true.

“I am sensing that which is greater than me or any man. Someone once told me that God not only gave us his son to teach us the way, he also gave us His spirit which is the soul that He is. It is His power that we too can possess if we accept the Oneness that we are. I know now that there is no color, no organized religion or belief, there is nothing other than body, mind and soul. This is my truth now. I am ready for my execution and resurrection into the Oneness of the universe. That which was created. That which exist in my knowing.”

Hamza, put down your weapon and stand behind Abram. Place your hands on his shoulders.

Causeless Love.

“I know compassion now. I have witnessed a change as my brothers have spoke. I have felt their regret and pain. I have also witnessed their transformation. I have listened to them with no judgements, no perceptions. I just listened and felt a transformation in my heart. I felt my heart open wide to receive the Ah Hum the I am. I found myself whispering I am unlimited consciousness. What happened next is that I saw my body temple and realized the importance of keeping it healthy. I saw my mind and realized that it is my thoughts that I have dominion over. And then I saw a band of connected white circular lights. Fused together as one. What came to me is that the soul, the being part of ‘human being’ is hanging out waiting for me to have beautiful thoughts. Surrender to the Divine and being present to the moment. Then my body/mind can preform right action. Action that is love without cause. Whether it is hugging a tree or admiring an animal. Loving others as our brothers and sisters. Having a positive impact. Appreciating the existence of this creation. Loving the whole of the material plane for no other reason except that ‘It Is.’”

Chapter 6

Gratitude, an opportunity to let go.

The translucent being presses a button and the prisoners chairs turn one hundred and eighty degrees. There are bowls filled with hot water. Under the table. A voice says, “Guards, unshackle your brothers. Running Horse you will wash John’s feet with ginger water to ease his anxiety. Show him the benefits of observing the natural world. Hamza, you will wash Abrams feet with the special mud bath to reduce his angina and open his heart. Robert, you will wash Asaad’s feet with dry sand from the Sahara. You will preform Wudu and will pray with Asaad for gaining wisdom from the Divine. Pray to Allah and to Krishna.

Teach each other to pray to whom you follow as your God or the form you perceive as God. All of you can pray for Divine intelligence to permeate your being.

The feet are washed. Prayers are said. The button is pressed again and the chairs swivel back. The guards place their hands on the prisoners shoulders. They face each other at the crossroad.

The light that has engulfed this table that the three men have sat at for their execution, has now permeated the entire room. The man in white, his form that disappeared quite some time ago is lost in the light. Now all appear to be formless. They are instructed to state their names and give their last thoughts. Family members and close friends are sitting outside the execution room. There is a large window with oneway glass, to see into the room. All that is visible is a bright white light, like the brightest star.

The family members and friends are blinded by this light. All they can do is leave or cover their eyes. In the room a voice instructs the prisoners, “This is the last request. I ask you all to contemplate on what you are grateful for. John, you will be first, then Abram followed by Asaad.”

John, “ I have left this plane and am in a state of bliss floating above the clouds. I like it here, my mind is coherent but only to this time in space. I am grateful for forgiveness. Not how we think of forgiveness, rather than asking for forgiveness I have healed my internal suffering.”

Abram, “I have risen into the realm where a golden ocean exists. I float on a waveless ocean. My heart swells with gold. I aspire to value all life and my relationships with integrity, compassion, generosity and goodness.”

Asaad, “I am in Jannah the heavenly paradise I was destined to ascend here. I have asked for my salvation and have a good heart. Now I feel compassion for self and others. I have gratitude for all that is and all beings on this earth.”

The light is gone. The execution room is empty. What remains is a normal conference table with a few chairs. The execution chair and a single 65w light bulb that gives off a soft glow.

Those who remained in the gallery, look at each other with a quizzical stare. They leave and enter the hallway. There are no guards. They stand there just starring at each other. There is some nervous shuffling. John’s wife approaches the therapist’s wife and they hug with tears flowing. The others start to do the same, no words are exchanged. When the hugging and tears subside, they slowly transcend and go beyond the projections that existed in their thoughts, they exit the prison.

THE END

The Gorge of The Mango Tree

By James Kozlik

“As you walk, you must make the universe understand that you are extremely determined to reach your destination no matter how many obstacles intercept your path! When you do this, obstacles start disappearing one by one!”

— **Mehmet Murat ildan**

By Charles M. Skinner, 1896

Although the Crow feared the geyser basins of the upper Yellowstone country, believing the hissing and thundering to be voices of evil spirits, they regarded the mountains at the head of the river as the crest of the world, and who so gained their summits could see the happy hunting-grounds below, brightened with the homes of the blessed. They loved this land where their fathers had hunted, and when they were driven back from the settlements, the Crow took refuge in what is now Yellowstone Park.

Even here, the soldiers pursued them, intent on avenging acts that the Crow men had committed while suffering under the sting of tyranny and wrong. A mere remnant of the fugitive band gathered at the head of that mighty rift in the earth known as the Grand Canyon of the Yellowstone — a remnant that had succeeded in escaping the bullets of the soldiery, — and with Spartan courage, they resolved to die rather than be taken and carried away to pine in a distant prison.

They built a raft and laced it on the river at the foot of the upper fall, and for a few days, they enjoyed the plenty and peace that were their privilege in former times. A short-lived peace; however, one morning, they are aroused by the crack of rifles — the troops are upon them.

Boarding their raft, they thrust it toward the middle of the stream, perhaps with the idea of gaining the opposite shore, but if such is their intent, it is thwarted by the rapidity of the current. A few among them had guns that they discharged with slight effect at the troops, who stood wondering on the shore. The soldiers didn't fire but watched, with something like dread, the descent of the raft as it passed into the current and, with many a turn and pitch, whirled on faster and faster. The death song rises triumphantly above the lash of the waves and that distant but awful booming that is to be heard in the canon. Every Crow had his face turned toward the face of the foe with a look of defiance, and the tones of a death chant and in them, Smoothen of mockery no less hate and vaunting.

The raft was then between the jaws of rock that yawned so hungrily. Beyond and below were vast walls, shelving toward the floor of the gulf a thousand feet beneath — their brilliant colors shining in the sun of the morning that sheds as peaceful light on wood and hill as if there were no such thing as brother hunting brother in this free land of ours. The raft was galloping through the foam like a racehorse, and, hardened as the soldiers were, they could not repress a shudder as they saw the fate the Indians had chosen for themselves. Then the brink was reached. The raft tipped toward the gulf, and with a cry of triumph, the Crow men were launched over the cataract into the bellowing chasm, where the mists weep forever on the rocks and mosses.

Introduction

There is a body, curled in a fetal position. It is at the bottom of the canyon, laying on a large flat boulder that was warmed by the hot sun and radiated warmth through most of the night. There is an object laying next to the boulder, on a small sandy beach. There are some clothes laying on another large rock. And there is a slow current of water that passes the small beach. It gives rest to the weary river rats who dare to navigate this deep canyon that some call Grand.

Chapter 1

He slowly stretches out of the fetal position. Naked, chilled and disoriented. He rolls over on the hard rock and slowly opens his eyes. Groggy, he wipes the early dawn from his eyes. But what dawn? Where is the sun? He looks up as if looking through a hollow trunk of a tree. It's hollow branch reaching to the sky, offering a small glimpse of a morning sky.

Where am I? Where is she? Him? Was I dragged here as a sacrifice on this altar? Drugged? My body feels as if it was beaten. I have to get up. I hear the flow of quiet water. I see walls all around me. Grays, reds, beige, and streaks of glistening quartz up high on the walls of this prison. And that's when I see a spit of sky. Blue, bright and distant is this small opening to the life outside of a surrounding fortress. I look down and on a rock I see some ripped clothing laying flat as if it was put there to dry. I slide down this smooth flat altar, carefully. I can feel the tender skin along my hips and across my buttocks. My legs have black and blue marks, where I was tortured? I reach back and feel my glutes and recall the spankings. Who spanked me? I am older now and I thought that he was gone from my life. Not gone as dead, but as a father. A father who thought that his discipline was for my good, but his compassionate eyes betrayed his action. I am grown now and nobody spans me. My eye settles on an object. A broken paddle. An oar? I pick it up and try to recall the night of exhaustion. What were they doing to me? I notice some scratches along my breast and arms. There are rope burns down my lower forearms and wrists. I am beginning to feel scared. Was I a sacrifice? I begin to recall a group of people. Laughing, whooping it up then screaming hands grabbing me, bodies smashing against me. One after the other.

I am standing on the small sandy beach now. I slowly walk to the edge towards the water. I want to cleanse myself from what? I look up stream and down stream, from one bend in the walled canyon to the other. And even though I hear rumbling water, it is calm. The water is calm. I slow my breath now. That's what I learned, slowdown the breath, go to your breath. Is it shallow? Is it racing? Am I even breathing. I smile at that thought. I can feel the

burning abrasions as I ease into the calm of the water. I can wade out up to my waist. My toes are comforted by the cool mud. I sink down, into a soft barge of warm mud. What warmed up this small island of mud along this river bank?

Sun? I look up, I wonder how much sun I will see in this prison on a daily basis. Maybe, this hot, muddy earth is a connection to something?

(Psalms 103:14, "For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust"; compare Genesis 18:27; Job 4:19, etc.), and of his mortality (Genesis 3:19, "Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou ...

Return to where and how, I always wondered. I feel so frail now. No food to fill my belly. No warm body to hug and love. No quick memory to understand what has happened to me. Just bruises, and scrapes and sore limbs. And here I stand naked, in this prison of the earth. Wait, my preacher father quoted me this every time I was in disagreement with whomever woman I formed a relationship with...

"The woman's canoe is men's; they rise or sink Together, dwarfed or godlike, bond or free. She must live and learn, and be All that not harms distinctive womanhood. For woman is not undeveloped man, But diverse. Could we make her as the man. Sweet love were slain, whose dearest bond is this, Not like to thee, but like in difference; Yet in the long years liker must they grow, The man be more of woman, she of man; He gain in sweetness and in moral height, Nor lose the wrestling thews that throw the world, She mental breadth, more fall in childhood care. Till at the last she set herself to man, Like perfect music unto noble words."

WOMAN AS GOD MADE HER; THE TRUE WOMAN. by REV. J. D. FULTON,
(TEEMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON.)

As I rise out of the warm mud, and wade in the water Joy overcomes my dismay. She was with me. I look around and nothing. I shout now HEY! HEY! JOY! And the echo is long and distant. There is no response. I slowly walk in the shallow water down current. What I am looking for I do not know. And whom am I looking for?

He looks down stream again and instinctively begins to walk along the bank of the canyon. Opposite of the side of the canyon and small beach where he started from. The canyon walls start closing in ever so slightly. He realizes the narrowing of the walls, and anxiety surfaces as he hears the roar of the river. It gets louder the further he walks. Suddenly he feels as if his feet are going to be swept out from under him. Again pure instinct overcomes his state of confusion. He grabs for overhanging branches from a tangle of willows. It steadies him. Cautiously he pulls himself ever so closer to what is a spit of earth at the base of the canyon wall. His breath eases. He feels safer and slowly makes his way back to the lesser current. He stops and looks around. He was so fixated on the side of the river he was maneuvering to get a better look around the bend, he never noticed what was caught on a large jagged boulder. Situated on the other side of the river where an eddy swirled out of the flow of the strong current. He started in that direction, across the river from where he was at. But almost got swallowed up into the current again as the river's edge dropped abruptly. He backed peddled quickly as fear and adrenaline saved him from getting sucked down river. Towards the roar!

He backed up to the willows edge, stopped and looked across river again. Something wasn't right about that object hanging on for dear life to the jagged boulder.

Think, think, what happened to me? He scratches an itch on top of his head. He feels a roughness, where he is scratching. He feels something, ever so subtle on his fingers. He looks at his fingers and notices some blood. Just a light film nothing too drastic. But blood none the less. He looks back up stream and sees what appears to be a small beach on the other side. With a big flat boulder and some grassy meadow behind it. What is that? He starts his way upstream a little more, then with the flat boulder across from him, he makes his way wading in the shallow, calm stretch of river. He looks at the clothes on a rock next to the boulder and feels his naked body. His hand running over his chest, down his belly and over his genitals. Around his hips where the skin feels rough and burning. He gently rubs his tender buttocks and looks at the broken paddle laying beside this rock. He picks up the tattered shirt that has been ripped.

Did I have this shirt on. How did I rip it? Pants, those seem familiar. Where are my shoes? With pants and shirt now covering his nakedness, he looks up at the hole above him and the sky is bright and blue. He looks around nothing but walls of rock and this small beach and grassy meadow. He looks down river and sees what looks like a big rock with something on it. He takes a deep breath and starts to walk towards it. What did daddy used to say? There is nothing to fear but fear itself. Fear of the past failures is what he meant. But I don't recall my past. I only know now. I don't remember my past and what does it matter. But I would like to know how I got here. And how I ended up on that flat rock that looks like an altar.

"He has to wade again, but the water is shallower on this side of the river and the current is slight. And now he is in front of the jagged boulder. But he does not see the entire boulder from this angle. His hand reaches out and touches a rubbery vinyl. It is wrinkled in one section and full of air in another. He bends down and...Is this a boat, a raft that I was in. All of us? The people that took me here to be tortured? I can't recall what the trauma is that I am living through right now. Now I am here. There is nobody else. Where did they go? What is this? A knapsack. There is something in it. I think I will open it. I'll take it over there on some dry land. He opens the backpack and dumps out the contents along with some water a slew of candy bars and protein bars hail towards the ground. He picks one up and rips open the wrapper. He takes a bite and relishes the sensation of taste. He sits on the ground and slowly eats his way through the snack.

He looks up, through the hole, high above this narrow gorge. He gathers the candy bars and shoves them into the backpack. He slings the pack over a shoulder and slowly makes his way back to his altar. I must stay here, at least until they come back. I must see if there is a way, another path to follow. And so he walks a short distance and eventually wades in the water. What am I hearing now, a song sung in my daddy's church? "Wade in the Water, Wade in the water, children, Wade in the water, God's gonna trouble the water..."

And he comes to hear the roar of the river again. As he gets closer to this bend in the river, the current wants to push him back.

This is feeling like a trap. Nowhere to go. I have to think. I will go back to the rock, where the paddle is. He screams..."JOY, JOY, JOY!!" And there was Harvey? Yes, yes Harvey the guy with the long beard. Who else was there? Where are the others?

Chapter 2

Okay, I have to figure a way out of here, despite my pain. Maybe I was punished about something I did. I feel guilty but I don't know what about. There is nobody here to support me. Tell me what happened. Tell what to do next. I do know I can't go down river, or up river. There is violence in both directions. I can hear it. The roar of anger. He looks in a direction. Up there, I can see something green. Maybe I can get up to that ledge. See what I can see. I feel strong even though I feel pain from the bruises. I can climb despite that. Maybe I should go check the raft again. There might be a water bottle. Yes, there was something else that fell out of the backpack, but I didn't pay attention to it. I better start to become more aware of my surroundings. Not concern myself with how I got here. There it is a water bottle. Ah, it feels full. Okay, look around and not just at eye level. There, I see something that looks like a narrow sort of path going up the rock wall. I'll start there, maybe it goes to the green area. I see some rope up ahead lying on the beach. How did I get these burns on my wrist and forearms? Maybe I will need some rope. Okay, this is a nice length of rope.

He starts his climb. He is vary aware of the present and knows nothing about his past. Yet he is trying to recall how he got here now. And that is his mental predicament. He has ascended, on an angle of about thirty degrees, at least fifty feet but only sixteen feet vertically. He looks across the way, to the opposite canyon wall. He stops. Looks up and sees a way to climb upward. He does not know where that might lead too. He starts his climb, grabbing onto rock, making sure its solid before pulling himself up. He feels for foot holds. He studies the route as he goes so he doesn't find himself in a no return situation. He stops to ponder.

So this I have done before, it seems so automatic, and not new. It's as if I have been here before. Not here, in this canyon, but free climbing. Where? When? It does not matter now. I seem to have found a little ledge to rest and get my bearings. Ah, yes I can see a way to shimmy over to the tuff of green grass. Okay, let's go. "Easy pizzie", I got this. I feel strong and one with the mountain. Mountain? Did I free climb mountains? When? Where? Oh, my right hand is in some mud. I need to find a better area to grasp. I slowly look and see a rock about 4 inches to the right of the mud. Oooh, that changes my balance. Ok can I shift my feet and left hand to maintain this solid hold I have on the rock. Yes, okay move the right hand, tense the fingers, pull up and continue to move up and to the right and yes! I am here, sitting in damp, muddy, wet earth! Eureka, a spring coming out of the rock. Water!

Shadows have formed, the canyon is getting darker even though the sky is still visible above. The hole that lets in light is like a tunnel to heaven.

I think this will be a good place to stay for the night. In the dry, soft grass. I wonder how chilled I will get. I can still feel the warmth of the sun that heats this canyon. The sun, a real life saver that nourishes this planet. So how did I get here? My daddy, that's who I can recall right now. He being a preacher? God - Sun - Solar System - Earth. He preached the Bible and said God created everything, the entire universe. Wait, what is coming to me now? Big Bang? What is that? Seems like some sort of explosion? Who was with me in that raft? I'll bet Joy knows and Harvey knows. I wonder if....JOY, JOY, Harrrrrvveeyyyy!

He shouts and hears the echo reverberating but does not get an answer. His mind is tired of thought. The silence of this space quiets his mind for now and the peace is calming.

He awakes as the first light filters onto him. Like a special ray from heaven. The brilliant sunlight. All I know right now is to climb. I fill my bottle with spring water. The sun warms my body. The night wasn't too bad. I can see the raft from here. I can see up river just barely around the bend, where the water looks rough and punishing. As I peer down below, I associate the rough water with my anger. Sometimes I use anger to punish people. What I say and how I speak has an impact on others. Maybe I need to be kinder. I look up and see a new route to start this day. And I do what I know. I grab a crevice in the rock with my right hand, I lace my left hand over a protruding surface of rock and with my right foot I push off the ground and my left foot finds something to steady me. Now how did it know that there was a place to put that foot so I could gain upward propulsion? I am being guided, by instinct. But why can I remember how to free climb but not what happened to me? Maybe that is not important right now. He goes up, and up, one methodical hold after another. Slow, always staying on a route that has a slight incline so he can rest into the canyon wall once in a while. The rough rock feels like a worn mattress, but comforting none the less. Better that than open space with nothing underfoot. What is this? A deep, vertical ravine with moisture in the crack of it. Wow, a God send! Now I am able to position my feet differently and maneuver like a crab. Like a crab that is escaping the frying pan. A story I heard long ago. The other crabs trying to pull him back into the pan. To live the life that is so predictable. Like the Johnathon Livingston Seagull story. Oh, is this some memory? I see more sky from here. Now the small hole is below me. I just see the small speck of river. This ravine feels safe. Where did everybody go? Who was grabbing me when the raft capsized? Remember, who.... He screams, JOY, JOY, JOY HARRRVEYYY! The echo is not so loud now. He looks up and reaches for the sky. GOD, GOD save me! But who is God, a form? Maybe he is the Sun! Maybe he is that cloud that just passed overhead. Maybe HE is just something or someone to believe in? My instinct seemed to guide me on this route. I recall the wisdom my father told me. To follow my instinct. He used to say, "your instinct is the Divine voice that can show you the way when you are lost."

Ah, the sky is changing color. I best find a place for the night. Now, I must continue up this vertical ravine. And so he continues, and with each grip, and each movement he admires his body dynamic. The fingers rigid, gripping with strength. The veins and tendons causing ripples on the top of his hands. The forearms, are tense muscle. All in a pulling motion. He feels his legs in action. All the muscular structure of his body working in unison. Then, he looks up and sees a rim of grass as he makes his next grasp. And his instinct has him scramble like a crab and he is flat on solid ground! He turns his head and looks up to his right. His fingers are scratching at dirt and pebbles. He pushes himself up and sees that he is on a path! A path to follow! And it is going up! He rolls over exhausted now. The sky turning dark. He closes his eyes. And his quiet mind breaths a soft thought of comfort, and compassion for himself. And gratitude for finding a path to contemplate, to follow. But for now, it is just breath. And deep relaxation.

Suddenly...

There are bright lights, he can't see as he is blinded. A voice startles him. "Harvey, Harvey, you alright?"

“Is that you Joy? Your voice, I am so glad to hear your voice!”

“Harvey, did you fall asleep under the Mango Tree?”

“I’m not sure what happened. I am having a hard time to recall my experience.”

“Oh, my love, looks like you have a scrape on top of your head. Did you hit it on the frame that holds up this Mango tree monument? Did you have any self realizations in this magical tree, Harvey?”

“Okay, turn the light out of my face Joy. I want to see all of you. Thanks. This is better. How long have I been inside this tree?”

“I told you I wanted to hike some. But you insisted on staying in the tree trunk. So I hiked by myself. I saw a beautiful sunset.”

“Joy, I think we should cancel the Grand Canyon raft trip we have planned.”

THE END

The Phantom Sky Thief

A story of forgiveness from
the souls lost in War.

The Sky Pilot flies at sunset
He steals the soul of the
worthy dead left in the field
and takes them home.

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

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Introduction

We were sitting around in the sunroom. We had just finished a
meditation. There were five of us, chatting with each other. Two women
were engaged in a personal conversation about a future event they
were attending together.

One woman was sitting still, looking out the window at the garden and distant mountains. The clouds this day were spectacular, moving with the wind. Colliding and bunching up, then separating. That's when I acknowledged the sunset photos that Joyce had emailed a few days prior to our meditation group. In her email she requested any sunset photo's I may have taken from our sunroom.

Joyce is a writer. There was a time long ago when we attended her weekly writing group. We would start with a blank page in our notebooks and Joyce would give a topic and have us write. There was a ten minute time frame to create a story or scene or just journal one's thoughts concerning the topic.

Joyce asked, "Jim, do you have more sunset photo's." I reached for my phone and started scrolling.

"Yes, here, look at some of these."

That's when Joyce remarked, "You're a Phantom Sky Thief. There's a title Jim, what would you write?"

"About a Sky Pilot who takes souls from dead bodies left in battle fields. He flies them to other realms. A statement about the innocent lives lost because of the warmongers who don't consider life as precious. However, there is a consciousness, that is limitless light energy."

That was my response, it brought up an old 1960's song (Sky Pilot by Eric Burdon The Animals) concerning the Vietnam War. The song is a timeless anti war song and relevant today. I was inspired, by the song, by a book and by Joyce's title selection.

**This story is dedicated to Sri Preethaji and
Sri Krishnaji and the Oneness Movement.**

Chapter 1

His plane rises out of the Black Sea and climbs the steep southern slopes of the Crimean Mountains that drop into the sea. The Bbmoidaire Challenger 3500 rises effortlessly over the plateau shaped peaks. The Sky Pilot destination tonight is Donbas where he will steal a soul once occupied in the body of Bohdan Anastas whose heritage was that of religious scholars who believed in resurrection. Sky intuitively knows Bohdan Anastas's body is somewhere in the rubble of Donbas. He connects to his "source" asking for landmarks.

"There are two churches, one is blue. Search the rubble. Find his soul, bring him here. You know the routine."

Sky flies through the war torn country side. He sees hordes of people walking along road sides. They are trapped in this aberration. Innocent of any association with Neo-cons and warmongers. Their only crime was to live a joyous life.

Sky sees the two churches side by side. The blue building is still standing and looks stunning amidst the rubble and gray mist that surrounds everything else. He locates a landing. It's easy landing this jet that doesn't exist. As he descends it begins to dissolve into light energy and merges with the earth. He is walking now towards the blue church. His form takes on a human form with strong muscular arms. Sky stops at the church and sits on the steps.

He takes in his surroundings and listens. There are distant screams, crying, and he hears tanks moving from the area. There is a young girl approaching. She looks scared and disoriented. She stops at the stairs and just looks up at Sky who is looking directly at her. After a short while the girl says, "Я потребу допомоги" (I need help).

Sky responds, "Як вас звати?" (What is your name?) "Sophia"
Sky has the intelligence to speak whatever language he needs to speak. In Ukrainian he ask the girl, "where is your mother and father?"

"I don't know, I am lost. My home is gone. I need help."

Sky reaches in his pocket and hands Sophia a small loaf of bread. He watches as she eats. After several bites she says, "thank you." She continues to devour the loaf.

Sky ask, "I am looking for Bohdan Anastas, do you know him?"

She points to the rebar and cement blocks mixed with large ancient rocks that are piled next to the bombed building.

"Де твій будинок? (Where is your house?)," Sky ask Sophia.

She points in a direction towards the hillside that is west of the church.

"Я живу он там, біля пагорба (I live over there, next to the hill)"

Sky looks and sees more destruction. The village and most of the area is a mass of rubble. He is not surprised as he has visited many war zones with similar destruction. He gets up and walks over to the pile of rock where Sophia had pointed too previously. Sophia follows him in silence. Sky is standing with eyes closed arms stretched out and his

palms are facing outward, towards the pile. Sophia is observing and standing still as a rock. Sky opens his eyes and turns to Sophia.

"How old are you?"

"I am twelve years of age."

"You are about to witness something that might be hard for you to understand. I am about to extract the soul of Bohdan Anastas from this pile of rubble. You might not see him in physical form. Then again you might! You need not be afraid. Do you understand?"

"Will you talk to his spirit?"

"Yes, that is the same as his soul. I will talk to the light energy of Bohdan Anastas. Just as I am talking to your light energy right now."

"But, his body is dead. Will I be able to listen and hear what you say?"

"Do you know what it is to be telepathic?"

"Communicating without talking?"

"That is a good description. Since I have a power that allows me to communicate in physical form and non physical form, you will be able to hear me. You will not hear Bohdan's response. What you can do is use your will power to communicate. Do you understand?"

Sophia nods yes. Sky turns back to the pile of rubble and starts to remove some debris where he intuit's Bohdan's body to be. The first thing that appears is an outstretched arm with a hand clinging to a rock. He continues to uncover the body of Bohdan Anastas. Sophia is watching when she hears several heavily booted footsteps. Rifles hang from their shoulders, ammo belts across their chest. The men look menacing. Eyes darting from her feet to her head. Their eyes meet. Her

eyes show no fear. Their eyes are eyes of cunning desire. She looks away and sees Sky still moving rubble, uncovering more of Bohdan's body. She wonders if Sky is invisible and that the scene of him digging for a body is non-existent. She turns to the soldiers who are whispering to each other.

Sophia says, "Вы бы изнасиловали русскую девушку?" (Would you rape a Russian Girl?)

"Вы русская, живёте здесь?" (You are Russian living here?) ask one of the Russian soldiers.

"Yes my family lived here since before 1991. I still consider my self Russian. Look what you did to our way of life as Russians. The change of governments and borders meant nothing to us. Our community meant everything."

The soldiers look at each other. "Where is your family, then?" Sophia points at the rubble at the foot of the hill side. She does not show any fear of what might happen next. Secretly she is willing to see Bohdan Anastas rise from the dead. The soldiers move closer. Sky calmly removes more rubble. While he is doing this he ask Bohdan's soul, "do you want to remain in your human form and help Sophia and her new friends rebuild the village? Or do you want to remain in the realm of bliss?"

"Can I return to bliss when I complete my new purpose?"

"Yes, you will always have that choice. To take on a form or to remain as a light energy? You can be a Light Being on earth. You can be a "rubble rouser" and rebuild a village as you discover other souls buried in the rubble"

Bohdan rises out of the rubble. The sound of rocks rolling back alert the soldiers. They look over at Bohdan as he is brushing himself off. His arms are very muscular, the size of a weightlifter's.

"Well, Sophia, what have we here cousin? And whom are you my friends. Soldiers of the Russian Army. We have been decimated, so what need do you have to return? Looking for dead farmers and their daughters?"

"Нет, мы ничего не ищем. Это наш пост. Мы хотим восстановить ту Россию, которая у нас когда-то была. Вот и всё." ("No, we are not looking for anything. This is our post. We wish to restore the Russia that we once had. That is all.")

Sophia's stare penetrates their beings. She knows they are lying.

The two soldiers shift their bodies. Their hands instinctively are placed on the butt of the rifles that they are carrying. Sophia is aware of the uneasiness of the soldiers. The name Sophia means wisdom. "What are your names?"

"I am Alexei and my friend is Dimitri. You are Sophia? It is a wise name indeed. Why do you look at us with mistrust?"

"You have chose to do battle with a countrymen who are similar to you in many ways. In war you may think that you have certain entitlements especially when you see a lone woman in a village that has been overtaken. And so maybe you think that I will submit to what it is you really desired when you first saw me. Yet I am just a girl. Your hands now rest on your rifles. So you think you can kill again and then have me with no witnesses around?"

Their hands slacken and are at their sides. Their heads drop a little as they feel shame.

Alexei speaks, "My assignment was to defend my country. You, my child have looked into the depth of my being which has been misguided." He looks over at Bohdan. "You are Russian, too?"

Bohdan responds, "Да, я тоже русский" (Yes I am Russian, too).

Alexei sits on a pile of rocks. "My name means protector, yet I know not what I am protecting." He takes the rifle from his shoulder and lays it on the ground. Dimitri does the same. He is crying, "my name means earth lover, look what I am supporting. The destruction of life."

Bohdan speaks, "we have a friend who is in the rubble locating buried bodies. He is off in the hills you can't see him now. He will be gone soon. We might have a few live villagers. Some might have declared their Ukrainian heritage, some might still recognize themselves as Russian."

"Thank you for putting down your guns, I feel safer now," remarks Sophia.

Sky finds Sophia's father. He touches the father's heart. A light essence appears and Sky talks. "Mykola (Ukrainian name - means Victory of the people.) you are just energy now. I'm a Sky Pilot and I can take you to the next dimension. Your daughter lives. She is at the church now asking for you to be in human form."

"Will it be a form she can see and touch? Will I have a different type of wisdom in which realities exist?"

"If you choose to come back into a physical body to remain on this planet you will know what is real for you. Your understanding of who you are will give you a secure sense of existence and why you are meant to be here."

"And where is here? In this pile of rubble or in this blissful state that I wish to remain?"

"That is between you and the message you are getting from your personal Divine source. I am going to leave you now and look for your wife. Her

decision will not have a bearing on your choice.”

To everything, turn, turn, turn
There is a season, turn, turn, turn
And a time to every purpose under heaven
A time to be born, a time to die
A time to plant, a time to reap
A time to kill, a time to heal
A time to build up, a time to break down
A time to dance, a time to mourn
A time to cast away stones
A time to gather stones together

Source: LyricFind

Songwriters: Peter Seeger

Turn! Turn! Turn! lyrics © T.R.O. Inc.

Sophia sits down and there is a silence between her and the soldiers, Alexei and Dimitri. She is thinking of her mother, Lesya (Леся: Meaning "defender, helper, liberator of men"). She looks at the two young soldiers, then over at Bohdan who is frantically moving rocks in the rubble. She surmises that Alexei and Dimitri are in their late teens or early twenties. She wonders who sent them off to war and why they became soldiers in the first place. She looks off in the distance and notices some bright lights that seem to be radiating like a gleaming star in the sky.

She looks over at Bohdan, “what are you doing Bohdan?”

“I am looking for my Synodal Bible.”

“What will you do with it when you find it?”

“I will share some readings with you, Dimitri and Alexei. We might get some guidance from it’s knowledge.”

“What we need right now is some food and compassion.”

The men look at her, somewhat dumbfounded. Dimitri looks at his backpack, “we have some food, let us share with you.”

Sky finds Lesya and beckons her soul to be present with her recent past incarnation that has been violently disrupted.

"Lesya, I am a Sky Pilot here to gather souls that might want to go to the next realm."

"My unconscious thoughts are connecting with the collective consciousness of a band of light I recognize as home. So how is it that I am connecting with you? A Sky Pilot you say?"

"We are talking in pure consciousness, no ego to get in the way of our oneness, if you want to call it that."

"Where is this next realm you want to take me too?"

"That is a good question, I fly and drop souls off into the void of the universe. I never reach the sky."

"Where is my daughter from this past life?"

"I found her when I landed, she pointed me here, where she said you were, on this physical plane."

"Under this rubble, you mean. If I decide to leave and enter the void will I still have contact with her? Will I know how she is fairing in her physical life?"

"It will depend what she believes, or what she experiences. Maybe how you communicate"

"We named her Sophia so she will know her wisdom."

"I am going to leave you now, you decide what plane you want to continue to be on. I'll be back."

"Where are you going?"

"To gather more souls."

"How are you able to talk to me? How do we communicate at this... frequency? Is that a definitive description? Communicating through some sort of frequency?"

"Let's just say we are both in a state of pure consciousness. There are no thoughts, perceptions, judgements, identity, nothing but total presence."

"Then how is it that you have given me a choice to return into body, ego, duality... consciousness?"

"You got me on that one. All I know is that I have a plane that turns invisible. I have an energy that can flow in and out of form. I take souls into the void and watch them exit into darkness where there is light, their own light, that becomes part of a whole. Don't ask me what the whole is...maybe it is the Black Hole. Ha Ha, Maybe I am in a dream? Anyway, I have to find your administrative chief."

"Okay, his name is Vladimir, our mayor. If I decide to remain in embodiment, will I just walk out of the rubble or do you need to see me again?"

"I'll know whether you stay or decide to fly with me. I leave at sunset. I always fly at sunset."

Sky moves on, toward what might have been a town center. He intuitively where Vladimir may have been when the bombing started. He sees a desk smashed by a large rock. Perhaps the cornerstone of the building. He sees a shoe under the smashed desk. Sky starts to dig. He digs deep until he finds a body. He touches the heart, his connection to all souls.

"Hello, Vladimir? Is it you my friend?"

"Yes, what happened? Who are you? In this rubble I have dissolved into space. I seek my lover Anastasia."

"Vladimir, do you not know that your physical life on earth has ended?"

"Who are you?"

"I'm Sky and I look for souls that want to return to a state of infallibility. Where consciousness is not about the safety of body, money, sex, or any other thing that needs to be defended nor be dominant. War becomes the byproduct of body consciousness. Now Vladimir, you have witnessed how Anastasia lived on this plane."

"How did you get here?"

"I chose to transcend at some point and all I know is this present moment of Sky Piloting. I do not know how I got here in this seemingly unreality.

However, what is real right now is our conversation. That's all I know for now."

"So, I am dead. But I am not? And the choice is mine to be resurrected or ascend or return to pure energy, pure consciousness. Or whatever I believe as a belief system that is created by us humans. And you are some sort of a Hindu Avatar or Aviator?"

"Something like that, you get to figure that out. In the meantime, there is a young girl, Sophia who survived the bombing. She has young wisdom and needs the support of souls willing to return to make peace not war."

"Okay, thanks for all of your explanations. I still don't know what's real and what's an illusion. So I will contemplate on that and make a decision. At least I'm conscious of something. If you don't see me at sunset you'll know where I am? I just might want to check out the reincarnation that us Orthodoxies believe in."

Sky moves onto the next pile of rubble. He notices the long stream of refugees that are abandoning this decimated part of "their" country. Where will they end up? In another country to defend, or a country that wants domination. And what makes the majority give power to a minority of people that seem to want to control the masses? Small regions of Ukraine have self governing bodies, even though the "state" was created to have the final say. At least a small village such as this can recreate how to continue onward as a place of peace.

Sky gathers souls that want to ascend, or go to other realms, or return back to white light energy in a state of bliss. Whatever you want to believe about death and dying. He pilots his plane to the sky. Sophia, Bohdan, Alexei and Dimitri are sharing some of the soldiers rations when she notices four figures approaching them. In the distance she sees a white light rising in the reverse trajectory of a shooting star. She thinks and quietly says "good bye Sky. Will you return some day?"

Chapter 2

As they eat the rations Sophia ask, "you look different Bohdan, then when I knew you before the bombing. You are more muscular. Is that to help you find your book of knowledge of Orthodox beliefs? Or to help transform this rubble into a new town?"

The soldiers and Bohdan stop eating and are all staring at Sophia. The soldiers look at Bohdan waiting for his response.

"As I said before our Septuagint will guide our way. In another form perhaps, if the personhood so desires?" Bohdan looks at his forearm and feels his new biceps and triceps.

"Are you a Russian Orthodox? If so and I believe otherwise what might happen to me?"

The three light beings are getting closer. They are starting to take form. Only Sophia can see them since she is facing in their direction.

"You are young, to be questioning religion. What you have been taught is what is to be believed."

"And what if it is unbelievable? Bohdan has taken on a different form and we are not in heaven. Look behind you. That is my mother,

Dimitri ask Sophia, "what do you believe in?"

"Is that what you believe to be true? That there is one God? One who creates and destroys? One who gives birth and death? One who gives the resurrection of body and soul to live an afterlife? Or does the soul return. There's my father, mother, and our mayor. They all look different and the same. They are alive and were buried. You tell me Bohdan, what is believable? What we know and experience or what we believe?"

They all turn to look at the three figures walking towards them. They all stand, except for Sophia. She looks up at the sky and watches the

star disappear. The phantom sky thief, the sky pilot. How high will he fly? Sophia slowly rises and walks towards her mother and father. She is the first to approach the threesome. Her mother extends her arms towards Sophia who is gathered into her mothers bosom. She is hugged by her father.

Then Alexei ask, "how did you survive?"

They look up into the sky. Vladimir responds, "it was our destiny to survive. We are here to rebuild our town. If you Russians let us." Alexei replies, "we are soldiers of an unknown army for we do not know if we are part of a war or a conquest. We have laid down our weapons, we want to help here, be part of this rebuilding."

Dimitri shares his feelings, "this destruction makes me sad, for lives have been taken. I did not do it, yet I was part of it. Look, over there in the field. Sheep with their wool shorn off.

They will grow their hair again. We will kill some for our survival. You will eat some of the mutton and not think that you killed but you will have been part of it for your survival. Our fear is of dying and when a bomb hits dying is sudden. The fear of death is no longer. For us that live the fear to survive in war is ever present.

"I am happy to see you people who have survived the bombing. Since I am part of this war, I want to be at peace with you. Please allow me to build a new town. Maybe we will find more survivors. You men look strong armed and ready to build."

Sophia looks at the forearms and upper arm of the men. Her father, Bohdan and Vladimir's arms all look different than when she knew them before death. Something feels different about these men. She looks up at her mother.

"Mother, you seem taller than I remember and your body feels different, your hug gives me strength. Who found you in the rubble?"

She looks over where their home was. It is a mass of broken stone.

"It was a man we could not see. It was the light of kind energy. I was given a choice to remain here or know afterlife. I feared that I would never see you again, my daughter."

There's a silence. The breeze brings the smell of war with its fresh air. There is the sound of tanks rumbling in the distance. Alexei warns everyone, "they are coming for survivors. The innocent people will become captive and their world will change more than it already has. Over there, let us become parts of the rubble and maybe we will not be seen."

The group moves towards the low ridge where Sophia's family lived. Lesya points, "over there is a root cellar. We will go there."

Mykola says, "we have food stored. We can remove some of the rubble and hide in there."

They quietly walk over to where Sophia once lived. She wonders how it is that her body survived the blast. She knows for certain that Alexei and Dimitri are who they said they are. Her mother's hand, that she is holding feels different than the soft hand she knew. Who are Bohdan, Vladimir, my father and mother? They look like the people I have known, yet they seem different. She looks over at the soldiers who have picked up their rifles and walk as guards might march prisoners to a war camp. Her school studies have taught her about the casualties of war. Not just the injuries, but the captives and the immigrants who flee to another country. Maybe they are welcome as an act of kindness by some people. She is also wise enough to know that the welcome can wear thin when local country men and woman are fearful of a cultural shift that might happen in their community. They arrive to the area where the cellar is located. Mykola points, "here under these rocks, let us move them." Once they complete the task, Mykola opens the door. There is a candle and matches on a small shelf at the bottom of the stairs that lead down into a concrete and rock walled room. He lights the candles in the darkness.

Mykola instructs, "Dimitri and Alexei let us arrange the rubble to hide the cellar door better."

Once that is done they are all sitting on some chairs and boxes around a table that is used to process food preserves. Lesya has some water poured in glasses. Dimitri asks, "this seems well fortified, why did you build this?"

Mykola responds, "the history of our countries have known war. The blood fields of the past. War is the lack of consideration for all life. This root cellar

preserves life. We are farmers, we are stewards of the land. We preserve life, that is our purpose."

"Alexei, what is the movement of troops after an area is bombed?" ask Bohdan.

"The tanks and artillery is being moved. We might see some troops following, maybe foot soldiers to replace the wounded. If they come through here they might be looking for survivors. Depends on their mood whether they take them as captives, shoot them, or rape the women. It's war, despite what international law says about victims, some soldiers feel entitled to do what they please."

Lesya is preparing a meal from some of the canned goods. She is listening to the conversation. She sets an intention of protection for her daughter. She is aware of how in the past she would worry about Sophia's safety. Lesya rubs her arms and looks at her forearms and hands. She is wondering if indeed there are some changes that her body and mind have taken on.

Mykola is looking at his daughter who is asking Dimitri (the 18 year old soldier) why he signed up for the Russian army.

Dimitri responds, "I was just doing what I thought was patriotic. I really don't know much about why we are fighting. Some people say it's about resources. Others say Ukraine belongs to Russia, and my parents and grandparents like Putin. So I sign up for Army. But I don't like war either. I am scared. When you spoke so fearlessly to me and Alexei, your bravery made me wonder why I would want to hurt a girl like you."

"My sons, you two show great bravery and compassion for this decision that you made. It must be confusing to be fighting some of your own Russian people. And fighting for the desire of people you don't even know. Leaders of countries think that their beliefs are for our benefits. But they don't know who we are. They watch from hundreds of miles away from a war zone that they created. They don't know our lives. They don't understand the way of farmers, or country folks. They don't consider the land that becomes devastated. The earth that is precious. Who will want to live here again."

"We will help you rebuild," says Alexei. "I feel your pain, sir. As we passed some of the other villages I saw elders sitting. I thought, the last years of their

lives, ravaged by war, must be a heart break. To live through their history of life and have it end in war, I can't imagine what it is like. Excuse me sir for saying this..." Alexei looks directly at Sophia, "the thought that I could have your daughter and force myself on her is a thought I wish to never have again."

Sophia looks at the soldiers and gently says, "you Dimitri and Alexei, can be our protectors."

Bohdan remarks, "like the Archangel's Michael and Gabriel."

The sounds of rumbling tanks and artillery have passed through the area. It seems quiet above the cellar. Mykola looks over at Lesya, then states, "you all have something to eat. I want to walk and talk with my wife. Please Lesya, come with me."

"Sir, there might still be some Russian Soldiers taking up the rear. Let me go first and see what is out there," says Dimitri. He rises and takes his rifle that was by the door. "I will knock three times when I return. You will know it is me."

Slowly he cracks open the door, then opens it just wide enough to slip through. He is out amongst the rubble and cautiously climbs the low ridge. When he gets to the crest of the ridge he has a vantage point that allows him to survey the bombed town and its surroundings. He can see the tanks and troops off in the distance, heading towards an unknown destination. Maybe it is their march to Kiev. Isn't that the plan? Dimitri is satisfied that they might be safe. He starts to go back when he sees some other movement. It looks like some villagers. He goes back to the cellar and knocks on the door three times. Sophia looks at the four men sitting at the table. She considers being left alone. She has a fear now and is not sure what to do. Her mother and father don't seem exactly who they say they are. However, she wants to cling to someone to trust. "Mother and father, I want to be with you. May I come with you now?"

Lesya, "of course dear one, come."

Sophia notices a different kind of connection coming from her mother. She has never called me 'dear one' before. Father has never given an opinion about war

and calling Alexei and Dimitri 'my sons' what was that about? She rises from the table and meets them at the door. Before departing she looks over at the three men who keep their eyes on her. The family walks out a ways and surveys their surroundings.

Mykola ask, "Lesya, where were you found, and by whom?"

"Over there, near the apple trees and under the debris from the barn. It said it was a Sky Pilot here to gather souls. I had a choice to go to another realm or stay here in this plane. I chose to stay, with my daughter. I sense that I am in another body and mind. Sophia you look at me as if I am not your mother, how is it for you?"

"I want you to be my mother as you once were. You look a little different and say things differently. You have never called me dear one. However, I wonder why you call the Sky Pilot it, as if Sky is an Alien? Sky Pilot has a name, Sky."

"You were buried to? Where did Sky find you?"

"I was sitting on the church stairs when Sky came into my world. He talked to my energy, a field of light is how he put it. I took that to mean my consciousness. He made me aware of my thoughts. He was removing rubble where Bohdan was buried."

Mykola makes a contributing comment. "I think your mother and I have experienced the separation of the body and mind from the physical form to just conscious energy."

"If you are not my earthly father and mother, who are you now, on this earth? Am I talking to consciousness?"

Lesya speaks, "consciousness can be an unlimited reality once you become more aware of how you want to relate to your inner thoughts."

"To be honest I am living in fear. I fear you are not my mother and father whom I once knew. I fear the soldier boys. I fear Vladimir not sure what his motive is. I fear Bohdan that maybe he is losing his mind. And I fear that more soldiers will come and I will be alone. I fear what this war has brought into my life."

Mykola speaks, "we are here to support you. We have changed the patterns of our thoughts and that has changed our behaviors. Lesya and my self might seem different to you in some subtle way. Just know that what you project with your thought is what you create. It is a different reality when you stay present with the life that is unfolding in your sphere of existence."

"Let us get back to our friends with some apples and water," remarks Lesya.

The group is quietly sitting and eating some of the food that was prepared by Lesya, along with the apples from the tree that was near where Lesya was found by Sky.

Vladimir speaks, "I am sorry, forgive me Lesya and Mykola for not giving gratitude before we started to eat. I am also grateful that the apple tree is still standing to provide our new community with food." He looks over at the Russian soldiers, "I feel at peace with you Dimitri and Alexei. I feel your sincerity and honesty about the confusion you are aware of concerning war and why you became soldiers."

Dimitri looks up from his plate of food, "Some of the soldiers I have met are like us, confused and doing what we are told. There are some who are angry men and some who fight because it makes them feel power. Some relish the terror that they project. There is much inner conflict that we are dealing with. Someday we might know peace in ourselves and connect with our fellow brothers like the ends of the rainbow that touches the earth.

Chapter 3

There is still late afternoon sunlight. The conversation has been about what to do next. How long should they wait before building a structure. Bohdan has suggested they all move into the church. There is a small kitchen in the basement, and plenty of places in the main church with rooms in the back that could be made into private rooms. There are some cots in a storage room. Meanwhile Sophia is getting anxious to see the sun set and hopefully find the Sky Pilot.

She whispers to Lesya, "I want to go out to the fruit orchard and pick some apricots."

Lesya nods her approval and motions to a basket used for harvesting. She takes it and quietly slips out the door. Dimitri notices Sophia leave. He looks at Alexei who is deep in conversation with Vladimir.

He clears his throat and with a demanding voice he says, "Alexei, I think we need to go out and do some reconnaissance. Make sure that the troops have left the area. There might even be some Ukrainian soldiers still alive."

Vladimir remarks, "that is probably a good idea. If you see some guns and ammo you might want to gather them for our use."

They both rise grab their gear and head out. Dimitri ask Alexei, "did you notice that Sophia left, or were you to busy with Vladimir?"

"No, she left? Are we to find her?"

Up on a small ridge above the fruit orchard are two Ukrainian soldiers, who have been in the Ukraine military since the Donbas conflict started in 2014.

Danilo (Ukrainian name meaning "God is my judge) sees Sophia by herself picking apricots. He nudges Andriy (Ukrainian meaning warrior, manly and strong), "look over there" Danilo hands Andriy the binoculars.

"Ooo, a young beauty." He pans the binoculars over a long swath of the area.

"I do not see anybody, just rubble and a lone standing church."

"What is she doing by herself?" ask Danilo.

"We have been fighting a longtime, too many years without a woman."

"What are you thinking Andriy?"

"I think we should meet her, find out who else is alive here."

They have set up a small camp, out of view. They have been on the run ever since the Russian initiative turned into a full scale escalated conflict. Now that the Russian military are in control of the region that Putin thinks belongs to Russia, they fear for their safety. They are trying to retreat further into Ukraine. They leave their camp and make their way to where Sophia is laying down in the tall, soft grass under the tree.

She has two thoughts on her mind, trusting Alexei and Dimitri and the Sky Pilot.

Andriy and Danilo get closer. They remain silent and motion to each other to approach the 'sleeping beauty' from two opposite sides. Without uttering a word their thoughts betray their dignity. There is no dignity in war. To conquer gives one the right to entitlement. Despite IHL recognition of rape as a serious war crime, they both have discussed, over their years of fighting Russian separatist in the trenches, that the Donbas region should be declared Ukrainian. They get close enough that they stop. They look at Sophia who is about ten feet away. She opens her eyes and is startled by the site of Andriy. A big strong looking man in Ukrainian military uniform. She sits up. Her village was known to contain a large mix of Russian/Ukrainian people.

To her demise Sophia unwittingly says, "Ya russkaya (I am Russian), confused and scared of becoming a "spoils of war", she does not recognize the uniforms.

The men move quickly with lust in their eyes they view Sophia as an object to satisfy the pleasure of dominance and sex that has been absent in their lives. Like hungry wolves they move in tandem, Danilo grabs for Sophia's upper garments and rips them off of her torso, Andriy pulls her pheasant dress off, over her bare feet. Sophia let's out a yelp and is violently slapped across the face. She turns to face her assailants and all time stops. Her energy is calm, for Sky is present.

"Sophia, what do you fear? Your conscious thoughts are about to become fruition. So what is your thought now? Panic, or resolve? A surrender to what is about to happen? Or do you feel secure in your being that whatever the outcome it will be a process that you are willing to face to overcome the resulting circumstance?"

"Do you mean unwillingly? What if I am impregnated and carry a baby?"

"That might be the consequence, what I mean is; do you see how your thoughts create the world of your choosing?"

She looks at Andriy's surprised eyes and hears a blast that follows the American bullet penetrating through his heart. His body drops and lands over the right side of her body. Quickly she looks at Danilo who is holding what remains of her blouse as another blast is heard and an American bullet decapitates his head. His body falls backwards and a splatter of blood lands on her bared chest about where the heart is. There is a tear of blood that curls around the lower part of her breast.

"You saved your human form."

"I did not have thought of gun fire."

"No, you stopped thinking that you might be raped. Now what are you thinking? Here comes your friends whom you feared. I must go now."

"Where are you going?"

"I have to take some souls to other realms. You are thinking; 'even these souls?' and yes you can forgive Andriy and Danilo they'll need that for sure. Their souls are already boarding the plane."

"How come that even though we talk I can't see you only hear you, How do I know that you are real?"

"You have created your reality. You sense that there is something greater than you. You are learning to tap into energy, frequency and vibration. However harsh the circumstances might be, do not resist. Surrender to your personal Divine. Strive for gaining knowledge and turn it into wisdom. Your wisdom belongs to

you so go forth with courage. It is not something to believe in, it is your's to create."

Alexei and Dimitri are present now, Sophia feels a hand wiping the blood on her breast with a piece of her torn garment. She is handed her pheasant dress that was pulled off of her. The buttons popped off the shoulder straps, but she is still able to have a skirt. Dimitri is holding his army jacket for her to wear. He holds it open so she can slide her arms into the long sleeves. She looks at Dimitri and sees compassion in his forlorn eyes. They are locked into each other now.

She ask Dimitri, "can you wait for me to come into my womanhood?"

"I can wait for you as deep as a river flows through a canyon and as high as a mountain climbs to the sky I am young too, and we can grow our love."

Alexei clears his throat, "I will go see if these American made rifles have ammo they left at the camp." He leaves, they never heard him. He smiles and is full of joy for their connection.

There is a plane that circles overhead as the setting sun is lighting up the sky. It's a plane that they do not recognize.

Sophia remarks, "it's a phantom thief in the sky."

When Sophia, Alexei, and Dimitri come back to the root cellar, Bohdan, Vladimir, Mykola, and Lesya are standing outside, waiting in anticipation.

Bohdan is the first to speak, "What happened, we heard shots."

The two protectors replay two separate stories.

Then Sophia adds her experience, "The Sky Pilot was there, you all know about him, except for Dimitri and Alexei."

Dimitri and Alexei have puzzled expressions. "When we first came upon you Sophia and Bohdan, we felt another energy present. It was so powerful that our thoughts transformed into kindness, wouldn't you agree Dimitri?" states Alexei.

"Yes, and even now, there is a presence amongst us that I am consciously aware of, just as I am aware of my breathing."

Vladimir talks, "we will see more people appear from the rubble. They will want to help build a new community. I fear that the Russians will come back and destroy our rebuilt village."

Mykola replies, "we must change our way of thinking. We can camouflage the new village amongst the rubble, or we can rebuild it and declare our independence from an illusionary existence."

"Vladimir, I recall one of your old transcripts when you talked about your soulmate, Anastasia and you both help create a community of prisoners who were allowed a hectare of land outside of the prison. How did you get the authorities to allow that endeavor? Why did the prisoners stay and live next to the prison with their families? How cooperative were the prisoners with each other in building this community? Did they become self sufficient and not need any physical, economical, and agricultural support from the prison authorities?"

"Yes, yes, how can I forget?" He looks at Sophia. "You seem different to me Sophia. You seem to have a special maturity about you. I don't think of you as a 12 year old girl."

Sophia gives him a slight smile. Bohdan is also sensing something...

Lesya comes out with a change of clothes. Sophia unabashedly takes off Dimitri's jacket and as she is putting on a new blouse she realizes that the others are watching. "Oh my, excuse me. I wasn't thinking. I must go inside."

She doesn't seem embarrassed, just aware that she is with her new family tribe. As she enters the cellar she wonders were her mother got a new set of clothes for her to wear.

She is in thought now - I wonder how people, with a conscious thought process, would think of my nakedness? Just then, was it shocking for them to see a naked body? How many naked bodies have they seen in their lifetimes and what are their thoughts. What might they create in their minds? A carnal experience, or might they just be respectful of human form, whatever the form might be.

No judgement, or comparison with another's form. I wonder what the soldiers thoughts were when they first saw me and how they might have changed? I saw hunger for a woman's body when I looked into their eyes. Their desire was so great they did not see me as a young girl. I saw compassion in the eyes of Dimitri and I saw kindness the eyes of Alexei. Is a conflicted mind an unconscious mind? A mind that just reacts? How come Dimitri and Alexei acted differently than the Ukrainian soldiers?

She has slipped into a skirt. She takes a deep inhale and walks back out.

Bohdan is the first to greet her, "I'm sorry to know what has happened to you. This Sky Pilot that we all seem to have been in contact with, except for Dimitri and Alexei, how do you describe who he is?"

Lesya speaks first, "I was given a choice of what realm I want to live in. I had until sunset to decide. What I witnessed, when I emerged from the pile of rubble that had me pinned down, was so much more real than the thought of being in another realm. A realm that even the Sky Pilot could not describe. He said he was just doing what he was asked to do."

There are blank looks on everyones faces except for Sophie's. She has a calm, content look. Dimitri takes notice.

Mykola has his say, "I was left feeling directed towards a chance to acknowledge a higher source that operates separate from my rational mind. And when I was given the chance to ascend to another realm that could not be described, I chose to create my parenting as a support system that Sophie can rely on. Someone that can be trusted for emotional support as well as physical support. I discovered my purpose."

Alexei speaks rather quickly, " I am sorry if I interrupt..."

Mykola shakes his head no..."I completed my remarks."

"I have not been in direct contact with this Sky Pilot, however I have felt an energetic frequency that seems to transcend all that is inherent when we go to war. It seems that we suffer not only with our inner conflict, there is also fallout from compromised leaders or those I allowed to have authority and

power over me, over us. I choose to be part of your rebuild. I consider it to be OUR rebuilding process of self and community."

"Sophia, please speak. You have seen the Sky Pilot several times."

Sophia doesn't hesitate, "I am very aware of how the four of you have changed in demeanor and what you say. It seems different than what I am used to. It's as if you all had a near death experience and now you see life differently. Sky talks to me about consciousness. Dimitri and Alexei, you may be baffled by our conversation. What you said Alexei about an energetic frequency, that's part of what Sky talked to me about. He talked about how my thoughts of fear attracted rape consciousness. Consciousness being aware of my fear. He said we have the ability to create new behaviors and new patterns to live a graceful life without continual suffering."

"You speak with a wisdom beyond my insight which is created by beliefs that I have attached my thoughts too." Bohdan states. "The meaning I get from what you just described is this; I might be influenced by what I read, or what someone else says, yet it is the thoughts that I create that form my ever changing beliefs?"

"Yes, father, you mentioned before how you, my new father and new mother are here to support me. Are you saying that you can not transfer your wisdom to me, it is I that has to experience my wisdom?"

Lesya asks, "Sophia, just to be clear, you might be conscious of thought but, consciousness is the awareness of what you choose to do with the thought?"

"It's all a mystery to me, yet I have experienced how powerful fear can be if I don't change the thought."

Bohdan is feeling some anxiety. He is sensing how he has created his worldly experience based on what he has been told is truth. He is pondering if what he has been told all his life is really what he believes to be true. He had been searching the rubble for his Septuagint. Now he feels that it's not so important to find it. He surmises the situation and says to the group, "How about we go to the church and see how we can set up a place of comfort to live as community. From there we can plan our next course of action."

They all agree, and so they start the walk back to the church to see what is salvageable. As they pass through the streets they are all marking where friends homes and businesses once stood. Sophia is flanked by Dimitri and Alexei as they walk.

She looks at both of them, "Alexei and Dimitri, the three of us are the only ones who haven't been pulled out of the rubble. My mother and father, Bohdan, and Vladimir seem different to me. Do you think that they had near death experiences? Maybe that is why they are different?"

Alexei is first to speak, "Sophia, we did not know any of you before we came to your town. Sometimes people survive being buried."

"Yes, but Sky..." Dimitri interrupts, "this Sky you speak of, we have never seen him. Who is he?"

Sophia thinks, how can I explain what I saw and explain what he said, that I can't even describe. Was I talking to pure consciousness? Who was Sky anyway? She remains silent. They continue to walk in silence. The others are walking briskly ahead of them and reach the steps of the church. They hear some voices and look at each other with perplexed expressions. Vladimir places his index finger to his lips. Then whispers, "soldiers?"

Mykola looks back at Sophia, Dimitri, and Alexei. He whispers back to Vladimir, "we have all been in contact with the Sky Pilot. We know that he is a gatherer of souls. I think we are not the only ones that wanted to stay and rebuild this village and community. Sophia has seen The Sky Pilot and calls him Sky. They, and he points to the Dimitri and Alexei heading towards them, have not. But they have been witness to this phenomenon that is happening. Let us wait for them and all of us will enter the church together."

As the threesome approaches, Alexei's eyes are distracted by a rock with an inscription that is cruelly carved into the stone. It is carved twice, once in Russian and below the Russian inscription it is in Ukrainian. It reads:

Коли ми живемо життям у прекрасному стані любові та зв'язку,
ми не лише приваблюватимемо потрібних людей, але й
утримуватимемо їх на все життя.

Когда мы живем в прекрасном состоянии любви и взаимосвязи,
мы не только притягиваем нужных людей, но и сохраняем их на
всю жизнь.

When we live life from a beautiful state of love and connection, not only will we attract the right people, we will keep them for life. Preethaji

They climb the church stairs in silence. Bohdan gently opens the door and gazes in. He sees a rather large group of people, maybe thirty is his estimate. He closes the door and turns to their small group. "There are others gathered in there. They are mostly sitting as if they are waiting for someone. I see several nationalities."

Mykola, "let us enter."

They squeeze through the doors together, shoulder to shoulder and unconsciously they are holding each others hands, standing still and gawking at what they observe. There are several cultures that are sitting in the pews. Each in their own gathering. There are the Palestinians, Israelis, Afghanis, Africans, Syrians, Haitians, and other families and couples, including some singles. Some are children, adolescents, mothers and fathers, soldiers, and clergy. About fifty in all, it is quite a mixture of people, victims of war.

Author's note: Google where the conflicts are happening in the world. See what you get.

List of ongoing armed conflicts - Wikipedia

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ongoing_armed_conflicts

Wikipedia

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_ongoing_armed_conflicts

Where are most of the world's conflicts located?

Global Conflict Tracker | CFR Interactives

- Territorial Disputes in the South China Sea. ...
- Conflict in the Democratic Republic of Congo. ...
- Conflict in the Central African Republic. ...
- Conflict With Hezbollah in Lebanon. ...
- Conflict in Syria. ...
- Instability in Afghanistan. ...
- Instability in Pakistan. ...
- Tensions Between Armenia and Azerbaijan.

[More items...](#)

There are so many different conflicts and displaced people, especially children. Think about that for a moment. Then consider how is it that from one

generation to the next, the constant is that the status of the world continues to be controlled by governments that are self serving for special interest. Now I am not talking about governing or self governing in a community. That is different than governing the masses. A country and a world.

Let's get back to the story...

Lesya gently places a hand on the small of the back of Sophia and gives her a slight push forward. Sophia turns her head and looks back at her mother. She whispers, "it is you that needs to speak, dear one."

"I only know Russian, Ukraine and some English mother. How will they understand me, and what will say?"

Just then she feels another nudge, not physically, rather intuitively. Just as she moves forward the sun shines through one of the tall stained glass windows on the west side of the church and light filters through and obscures her form.

Sky whispers to her, "open your heart and you will speak your wisdom for all souls gathered here."

Sophia is startled, and mysteriously starts talking and nervously says, "hello..." A man responds in Ukraine by saying, "we can't see you, can you move forward out of the glare?"

Sophia giggles, "the light, I am in is consciousness!"

A cloud momentarily blocks the sun and she is exposed to all those gathered. Sophia laughs, and looks in the direction of the voice that made the request. It is one of the Ukrainian soldiers that ripped off her blouse in a rage of what he thought was entitled passion driven by desire, in a time of war. The other soldier is next to him and they stare at Sophia. She feels naked and exposed. Andriy and Danilo that was their names. She is frozen and no words are coming from her.

It's Danilo that speaks, "you forgave us, our souls were stolen from our bodies by that phantom sky thief, now we are here and humbled that we are allowed to be. Your heart is big we are changed and no longer at war."

Sophia blinks and has a soft spot for them, in her heart, they are victims of war. She returns her gaze at the others, who have risen from their seats and turned in the pews to face her and the small entourage standing behind her. The clouds are on the run and as they pass in front of the sun then move on, the filtered light emanating from the stained glass has a surreal effect as it settles on Sophia's presence.

She talks, "You have all come from other conflicts?"

There's a mummer in the room of agreement.

"We have a cross section of many cultures, beliefs, religion and spirituality. We have young children, I see some my age, and some Dimitri and Alexei's age." She turns and looks at them and Dimitri feels her love through her eye contact.

"And the adults are here to support us, the youth of this small world present in this church. I see some young ones with no parents am I correct in my observation?"

There are heads nodding in agreement.

"Please, is my English good? You can understand?" There are many yeas in response, so Sophia continues, "this Sky Pilot we have all been exposed to..."

There is a disruption as a throat is cleared and a voice is heard, "I'm here amongst you. I am you and I am not you."

The glare of the fractured light bathing Sophia lessens as the clouds continue to move. There is a silence, Sophia is slightly shaken by this phenomenon that seems to be taking place.

Lesya whispers, "continue Sophia, use your wisdom now."

She clears her throat, "we are a community of rekindled souls brought here to rebuild what has been destroyed."

She unconsciously giggles, not knowing why. She feels a sense of empowerment maybe that's it, a small release of joy that all gathered under the safety of this church are listening to a twelve year old girl. Can I be considered a girl on her way to developing her Womanhood? And the boys? Are they developing into being men? And the adults, are they supporting the youth with their wisdom that they have developed over time as they navigate their way through old patterns and behavior? I must continue with whatever energy is coming through me now. Is it pure consciousness?

Sophia closes her eyes, takes a breath and smiles. With nothing to hide now, all there is, is for her to speak. "We came here to convert this church and basement into a living quarters while we rebuild this village from the rubble. So, we might consider our new realization that all of us gathered here are to work as one. One helping another, one feeling another, one listening to another, one understanding another, one willing to change, one willing to allow and accept, one willing to love - another. As we rebuild for the next generation to come let us self govern with the youth in the position of leadership. Let the adults offer support when needed, like a silent board of directors. And since all we have right now is this church, let us start here and together we can transition into a new age of thought. We can enjoy new foods and customs from each other and appreciate life differently. After all we came together by choice. Isn't that what Sky gave you all? A choice to be in another realm? And you chose to come back to try this experiment again. With a new energy. At least that is what I have been told, by Sky. The Phantom Sky Thief?" Sophia laughs at that thought. "He steals souls and what does he do? Returns them here?"

Vladimir speaks, "if you don't mind, he said he releases them into the darkness of the universe, where the stars shine and other planets exist. Beyond that he doesn't know what is "driving his engine".

There is a huge laugh that shakes the building. Heads turn around, back and forth, and up towards the light filtering through the stained glass window again.

"Well put Vladimir. It's all a mystery. My plane is floating around somewhere in the universe. I decided that this realm is worth living in. It definitely isn't boring, and this young woman has given me hope and joy." Sky moves out of a

pew and moves forward visible to all, and yet seemingly formless. For he has shed all his pretense as to what the mystery is all about.

Sophia blinks, her jaw is slackened, then she smiles. "It is you, all this time you have saved me from thoughts that do not serve. You showed me how to be a conduit of energy to flow through. You showed me how to vibrate with gratitude. You showed me a higher frequency to operate from. You showed me love."

Sophia awakens this morning and looks out her bedroom window. The sky is red, but not from the sunrise. The clouds are gray but really she knows that it's smoke from burning cities. She looks around her bedroom and feels safe from fear, from victimhood, and from ignorance. She isn't feeling any kind of suffering. The dream seemed to speak to her being. She is inspired now and leaves her bedroom.

She enters the kitchen and sees her parents preparing a breakfast.
"Доброго ранку!"

They look her way with smiles on their faces. "Yes it is a good morning," says her father, "we are still here."

"Доброго ранку!, my dear," greets her mother, "how did you sleep?"

"I dream. I dreamt about you and papa. It was a beautiful dream."

"Then make it a real illusion," says her father.

The End

Acknowledgements:

“What would it take for us to reach out to those who have terrorized us and say: ‘You must have suffered deeply. You must have a lot of hatred and anger toward us to have done such a thing to us.

You have tried to destroy us and you’ve caused us so much suffering. What kind of thinking has lead you to take such an action?”

From – Calming The Fearful Mind by
Thich Nhat Hanh (A Vietnamese Buddhist monk)