

The Sawtooth Community

A Journey Of Love



By James Kozlik

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THE SAWTOOTH COMMUNITY

Introduction: In the previous titles, Circumstance and Consequences, A Hero's Journey, The Essence of Existence, and Tapas Jim and Julian along with a group of acquaintances whom became dear friends, had been asked to form a small community. Joseph, Jim's Medicine Man and guide leaves and does his "last Vision Quest" atop Big Horn Mountain where a great medicine wheel still exist to this day. Relationships and how they evolve are of utmost importance for this endeavor. Blue Cloud is Joseph's nephew and new Medicine Man that guides the "self guided" group. The Divine Intelligence of each individual plays out in their lives as they struggle to create new identities of Self. And as this happens relationships change and honor and respect for each individual pervades. Once this happened, the group formed from Molly's sketch class were ready to build the physical community, aware that their personal growth and interactions will always be an ongoing process.

" 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

CHAPTER 1: AN AVALANCHE OF TEARS

WE ARE SEATED AT THE SMALL TABLE IN THE PIONEER CABIN WHERE IT ALL STARTED A SECOND TIME FOR JULIAN AND I. THE FIRE HAS WARMED THE CABIN, FOOD HAS BEEN EATEN HOURS AGO. WE ATE IN SILENCE. IT WAS HARD TO LOOK AT EACH OTHER. SO MANY MEMORIES AND THOUGHTS. SO MUCH LOVE BURSTING IN THIS LITTLE CABIN. THE ENERGY WANTING TO BLOW OUT THE WALLS. WANTING TO ESCAPE THE MOMENT. I FELT IT, SHE FELT IT.

"YOU'RE GOING THROUGH WITH THIS, THIS VISION QUEST? NOW? WITHOUT ME? THIS TIME IT'S YOUR TURN TO ABANDON ME AND FAMILY. AND YOUR FAMILY HAS GROWN BEYOND ANYTHING YOU EVER IMAGINED. HOW DO YOU EXPLAIN YOURSELF?" JULIAN STANDS AND REACHES FOR THE TOP SHELF AND PLACES A WHISKY BOTTLE ON THE TABLE. IT HASN'T BEEN TOUCHED SINCE JULIAN'S ABANDONMENT ISSUE. IT WAS ALWAYS HER TRUTH SERUM. UNTIL THE DAY STEPHANIE FOUND HER IN A SUFFERING STATE OF DRUNKENNESS. SHE HEAVED THE BOTTLE FAR INTO THE BRUSH. THINKING THAT WAS THE END OF IT. NOT SO, WHAT WE SEEM TO NEED TO WORK ON THE MOST RAISES IT'S UGLY HEAD TO SURFACE BACK INTO PSYCHE. SHE REPLACED THE BOTTLE NOT TO LONG AGO. AS A TEST OF WILL POWER.

"OH MY LOVE, JULIAN, ALL OF YOUR SUFFERING IS MINE AND ALL OF YOUR JOY IS MINE. THE BEAUTY OF THE SUFFERING IS IT PASSES INTO JOY, IF YOU LET IT. AND YOU KNOW HOW TO WITNESS THE SUFFERING AND MOVE TO JOY."

THERE'S A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. IT'S RATHER LOUD. THE LATCH IS TURNED AND IT SLOWLY CREAKS OPEN. "JIM, JULIAN?" IT'S FRANK.

"COME IN," WE BOTH MUMBLE THE SIMPLE GREETING.

"HOW ARE WE DOING HERE MY FRIENDS? JIM, THERE IS A SADNESS PERMEATING THE LAND AROUND THESE PARTS."

JULIAN IS STREAMING TEARS. THEY STARTED THE MOMENT SHE ABRUPTLY PLACED THE WHISKEY ON THE TABLE. FRANK PUTS AN ARM AROUND JULIAN. HIS BIG HEART FULL OF SO MUCH COMPASSION FOR THIS WOMAN HE ONCE LOVED AND ALWAYS WILL.

"SO YOU ARE GOING UP TO THE MEDICINE WHEEL ON BIG HORN PEAK? WHERE JOSEPH STARTED HIS FINAL VISION QUEST? IT'S WINTER COMING ON AND UP THERE IT HAS STARTED IN EARNEST. WHY NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LATE SPRING AT LEAST."

"IT IS MY TIME FRANK. JULIAN KNOWS IT DEEP IN HER HEART. THE GRIEF IS HARD TO LET GO OF. FRANK, PLEASE TAKE CARE OF JULIAN. AND JULIAN LIVE YOUR LIFE TO THE FULLEST. CARE FOR FRANK. WHEN YOU GRIEVE, GRIEVE NOT OUT OF PITY FOR YOUR LOSS. GRIEVE FOR THE TIMES WE HAVE SPENT TOGETHER. MAKE IT A CELEBRATION OF ALL THE ROUGH OCEANS OF EMOTION THAT WE NAVIGATED THROUGH AND ALL OF THE CLOUDS WE FLOATED ON." JULIAN TAKES MY HAND IN HERS.

THERE'S ANOTHER KNOCK ON THE DOOR, THE LATCH TURNS AGAIN AND AS IT CREAKS OPEN WE JUST STARE AS MAGGIE ENTERS.

"OH, SORRY BUT I THINK I BELONG HERE TOO. TO SHED A TEAR? JULIAN, MY SISTER I FEEL YOUR DESPAIR. JIM, RECONSIDER WHO YOU ARE LEAVING BEHIND."

"I WILL NEVER LEAVE ANY OF YOU BEHIND. HOW COULD THAT BE WHEN YOU ALL HAVE BURIED ME DEEP IN YOUR HEARTS. IF I DO NOT RETURN IN FORM, YOU WILL STILL KNOW ME AS BEING AND YOU CAN COMMUNICATE WITH MY PRESENCE. I WILL NEVER LEAVE YOU."

"IT IS AMAZING THAT WE CROSSED PATHS SO MANY YEARS AGO TO "BE HERE NOW" AS THE SAYING GOES." MAGGIE CHUCKLES AT THE MEMORY OF OUR SCHOOL DAY DISCUSSIONS. "THANK YOU JAMES FOR ALL THAT YOU HAVE DONE HERE. FOR THIS COMMUNITY."

"WELL, MAGGIE, FRANK, JULIAN, ALL I HAVE DONE IS LET ENERGY PASS THROUGH ME. AND IT CAME IN SO MANY DIFFERENT WAYS. THROUGH THIS HUMAN FORM A DIVINE SPIRIT FLOWED. NOBODY CAN DEFINE HOW THAT HAPPENS. WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO GRAB ONTO THAT ENERGY PASSES ONTO ANOTHER, IF IT'S BEAUTIFUL ENERGY DO NOT LET IT GO. HANG ON TO IT, LOVE IT, BE GRATEFUL FOR THOSE WONDERFUL MOMENTS. NEVER LET THAT BEAUTIFUL STATE GO. WITNESS EVERYTHING, BUT STAY IN THAT BEAUTIFUL STATE AND ALL GRIEF WILL DISSIPATE."

THERE IS THE THIRD KNOCK ON THE DOOR AND A SWIFT OPENING OF THE CREAKY DOOR. IT'S JONI, FULL OF CRYING EYES. SHE LOOKS AT

JULIAN, AND JULIAN GIVES HER A NOD, "YES JONI, SHOWER HIM WITH YOUR LOVE."

AND JONI PLACES HER FULL LIPS WITH TEARS ON THEM, AND ENCAPSULATES MINE, OUR TONGUES TALKING. COMMUNICATING WITH THE MEMORY OF A LONG AGO KISS. THERE IS NO TIME OR SPACE. ALL IN THIS ROOM HAD BEEN WAITING FOR THIS MOMENT FOR A VERY LONG TIME. FINALLY, WITH AN EXASPERATED RASP JONI SAYS, "THANK YOU JULIAN FOR ALLOWING ME WITH ALL YOUR GRACE TO HAVE THIS MOMENT."

THE LAST KNOCK ON THE DOOR? IT CREAKS OPEN AS THE IMAGE OF WALKING STICK SLIPS INTO THE ROOM. "FRIENDS, IT IS TIME FOR JIM'S SWEAT WITH BLUE CLOUD. JULIAN, I WILL WALK YOU AND JIM TO THE LODGE. PLEASE SAY YOUR GOOD BYES AND LEAVE THIS AREA. TONIGHT IS A SACRED NIGHT FOR JIM AND JULIAN TO BE IN UNION."

WALKINGSTICK CLOSES THE DOOR BEHIND HER AND WAITS OUTSIDE. WE ALL STAND, LOOKING AT THE WHISKEY, UNTOUCHED BUT KNOW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WHAT WAS ONCE CALLED THE TRUTH SERUM. WE HOLD HANDS IN A CIRCLE OF FRIENDSHIP AND LOVE. THERE IS AN ENERGY I CAN FEEL SIZZLING BETWEEN US ALL. I AM CERTAIN THAT WE ALL FEEL IT IN OUR OWN WAY. WITH TEARS OF SORRY AND JOY WE SILENTLY TOUCH FOREHEADS AS A SIGN OF BROTHERHOOD AND SISTERHOOD. A SENSE OF ONENESS PERVADES.

AS WE FILE OUT OF THE CABIN, JULIAN AND I FOLLOW WALKING STICK. I LOOK OVER MY SHOULDER FOR ONE LAST CONNECTION. I SEE THE BACKS OF MY DEAREST FRIENDS AS THEY SINGLE FILE DOWN THE PATHWAY BACK TO THEIR HOMES ON THIS SCARED LAND. WE CROSS THE CREEK AND GET TO THE OPENING IN THE BUSH WHERE THE SWEAT LODGE IS LOCATED. THE FIRE IS SMOLDERING AND STILL HOLDING SOME ROCKS. WALKING STICK MOVES THE ENTRY FLAP ASIDE. JULIAN AND I ENTER. BLUE CLOUD MOTIONS FOR US TO SIT ACROSS FROM HIM IN THE WESTERN QUADRANT. THE DIRECTION OF LIBERATION. JULIAN'S AVALANCHE OF TEARS FINALLY CEASE AND HER BLOUSE ABOVE HER CHEST IS SATURATED, LIKE THE GROUND IN THE LATE SPRING OR SUMMER WHEN SOME AVALANCHE VICTIMS ARE FOUND. AT THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL, IF THE RESCUE TEAM IS LUCKY.

WE SIT AND I CAN FEEL JULIAN'S EYES ON ME. BLUE CLOUD SPEAKS, "MY FRIENDS, I CAN FEEL JULIAN'S EMOTION OF FEAR THAT YOU WILL NOT RETURN. I CAN FEEL JIM'S DESIRE AND DETERMINATION TO FIND

JOSEPH HIS ONE TIME MENTOR. THERE WAS REASON JOSEPH ASKED YOU TWO TO FORM COMMUNITY. THE STRENGTH OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP AND THE TRUTH YOU BOTH DESIRE FOR YOURSELVES AND THOSE WHOM ARE IN YOUR SPHERE OF INFLUENCE IS WHAT JOSEPH SAW IN HIS VISION. YOU MAY NOT REALIZE HOW YOU HAVE AFFECTED THOSE AROUND YOU. BUT YOU FEEL DEEPLY ABOUT THE INFLUENCES IN YOUR LIVES AND YOU ARE SO WILLING TO GIVE YOUR WHOLE BEING TO ALL. YOU LIVE BY THE NOTION OF A SWEET SURRENDER. A SURRENDER TO THE DIVINE AS YOU SAY IT OR THE GREAT CREATOR AS WE SAY IT. EITHER WAY THAT IS WHY YOU HAVE BEEN ASSISTED IN THIS ENDEAVOR IN SO MANY WAYS. NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO KNOW DEEP IN YOUR HEART THAT YOU WILL NOT BE SEPARATED. YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN TO ACCOMPLISH A SMALL GATHERING OF PEOPLE TO LIVE AS ONE. MAY THIS NEW COMMUNITY THAT IS FORMING STRIVE LIKE THE WORLD WAS MEANT TO LIVE IN THIS GREAT CREATION. TONIGHT WILL BE YOUR FINAL NIGHT TOGETHER. TOMORROW MORNING I WILL DRIVE JIM TO THE BIG HORN MEDICINE WHEEL. HE WILL FIND JOSEPH ALIVE AND WELL OR HE WILL FIND HIS SPIRIT. JIM, YOU WILL KNOW WHAT TO DO EITHER WAY. SO TONIGHT TAKE IN EACH OTHERS MEDICINE AS IF IT IS THE LAST TIME. TAKE IN EACH OTHERS TRUTH, AS IF IT IS THE LAST TIME. TAKE IN EACH OTHERS JOY AS IF IT IS THE LAST TIME. AND HONOR EACH OTHER. GRIEVE AS IF IT IS THE LAST TIME. AHO, I HAVE SPOKEN. OH YEAH, JULIAN, STAY AWAY FROM THE WHISKEY. LET FRANK BE YOUR COUNCIL."

JULIAN STARTS TO LAUGH, "OH YEAH, FRANK USED THE SAME TRUTH SERUM. SO WHO PUT THE BOTTLE BACK IN THE CABIN?"

"I DID." IS BLUE CLOUDS FINAL RETORT AS HE RISES AND LEAVES THE LODGE.

THE THREE SISTERS ENTER WITH FURS AND BLANKETS, MORE HOT ROCKS AND CANDLES. NIRVANA EVEN BURNS SOME INCENSE.

WALKING STICK SPEAKS, "RELISH THIS NIGHT LIKE TWO LOVERS WHO CAN NOT BE SEPARATED. LOVE AS IF YOU ARE ONE. I THINK YOU TWO KNOW HOW TO DO THAT."

AS THEY EXIT, STEPHANIE TURNS AND GIVES US A BEAUTIFUL SMILE AND A PEACE SIGN.

JULIAN LOOKS AT ME AND BECKONS ME OVER TO ONE OF THE FURS. I ASK, "WERE DO WE START MY LOVE?" AS IF IT WAS THE FIRST TIME.

SHE TAKES MY HAND AND PLACES IT OVER HER HEART AS WE FACE EACH OTHER AND LIKE SECOND NATURE I RECEIVE HER HAND OVER MY HEART AND WE PEER INTO EACH OTHERS SOUL. RATHER THAN SAY ANYTHING WE REMAIN SILENT. AND IN THIS WAY WE ENTER EACH OTHERS SOUL.

AT SOME POINT WE MAKE IT BACK TO THE CABIN. I DON'T EVEN RECALL WHEN OR HOW, BUT WE FIND OURSELVES AWAKE IN OUR BED. ONE OF THE THREE SISTERS MUST HAVE STARTED A FIRE FOR THE CABIN IS RADIATING WARMTH. THERE IS COFFEE BREWING AND SMELLS OF A FULL BREAKFAST ARE ON A WARMING TRAY ON ONE SIDE OF THE STOVE TOP. THE TABLE IS SET. THE WHISKEY BOTTLE IS GONE, BUT I LOOK AT THE TOP OF THE SHELF AND THERE IT SITS IN TEMPTATION. WE HAVE OUR ARMS AROUND EACH OTHER AND ROLL INTO EACH OTHER WITH SMILES ON OUR FACES.

"MY LOVE, YOU TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF ON THE JOURNEY TO FIND JOSEPH. MY GUESS IS YOU ARE TAKING YOUR SKIES. SO BE REAL CAREFUL. YOU ARE NOT REAL FAMILIAR WITH THAT MOUNTAIN."

"YEAH, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS OF BACK COUNTRY SKIING WHERE I KNOW THE TERRAIN AND AVALANCHE POTENTIAL, I DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE BIG HORN. I DID CHECK THE EARLY SEASON WEATHER FOR THAT AREA AND IT SOUNDS LIKE A FOOT OF SNOW ON TOP OF ABOUT 16 INCHES. SO AT LEAST THE SNOW PACK IS NOT IN MID SEASON DEPTH. BUT STILL. I HEAR YOU."

"SAY THIS WITH ME...I PRAY, COME ON YOU HAVE TO SAY IT. I PRAY FOR THE MOST BENEVOLENT OUTCOME THAT I (WE) FIND JOSEPH OR HIS SPIRIT. AND WE PRAY FOR JIM'S SAFE RETURN HOME."

"THANK YOU JULIAN. LET'S EAT THIS WONDERFUL BREAKFAST THAT THE THREE SISTERS LEFT FOR US. IT FEELS SO LUXURIOUS TO BE TAKEN CARE OF LIKE THIS. I FEEL LIKE A WARRIOR."

JULIAN GIGGLES, "YOU ARE HIGH ME, YOU ARE MY SPIRITUAL WARRIOR."

WE FINISH EATING AND I HAVE A SENSE OF TIME, FINALLY. I HAVE A HUNCH THAT BLUE CLOUD IS WAITING FOR ME AT THE ROAD.

"OKAY, JULIAN, I THINK IT'S TIME. MY GUESS IS THAT BLUE CLOUD IS WAITING."

"IT IS SOMETHING, HOW COMFORTABLE WE COULD BE RIGHT NOW AT THE GRIZZLY CABIN. JUST YOU AND ME AND NATURE. HOW'D WE GET INVOLVED MAKING A COMMITMENT TO BEING IN COMMUNITY WITH PEOPLE WE DIDN'T KNOW MUCH ABOUT?"

"I HAVE THOUGHT OFTEN ABOUT THAT. BUT REMEMBER AT MOLLY'S LAST SKETCH CLASS REUNION HOW SHE WANTED TO MAKE IT ALL ABOUT US. LIKE REUNITED LOVERS IN A ROMANCE NOVEL. AND HOW WE ALL REALIZED IT WAS ABOUT ALL OF US IN THE ROOM THAT DAY."

"IT WAS YOU MY LOVE, THAT REMINDED US ABOUT THAT. THE ONENESS THAT THE TREE SCULPTURE REPRESENTED. YEAH, I REMEMBER THE FEELING OF SERVING SOMETHING GREATER THAN US. SERVING THE GOD OR KRISNA CONSCIOUSNESS THE SPIRIT THAT RESIDES IN US ALL. SERVING GOD THE HIGHEST FORM OF SPIRITUAL AWAKENING."

I RAISE MY EYEBROWS AND WITH A SHEEPISH SMILE I SAY, "YOUR SPIRITUAL WARRIOR IS READY FOR THIS MISSION. THE VISION OF COMMUNITY AS IT SHALL BE."

WE HAVE NERVOUS GIGGLES AND CHUCKLES, HUG AND KISS AND I AM SENT ON MY WAY. AS I WALK THE PATH TO THE ROAD WITH A DUSTING OF SNOW THAT FELL SOMETIME DURING THE NIGHT, I FEEL REFRESHED AND WHOLE, AND SUDDENLY I FEEL ALONE.

I GET TO THE OPENING WHERE THE PATH MEETS THE MAIN RANCH ROAD. AND SURE ENOUGH, BLUE CLOUD HAS THE TRUCK IDLING AND AND WAVES A HELLO. I CLIMB IN.

"WE'LL HAVE TO GO TO THE GRIZZLY CABIN SO I CAN GET MY GEAR."

"YES SIR, THANK YOU FOR DOING THIS JIM. I OFTEN DREAM OF MY UNCLE AND WONDER WHAT REALM HE LIVES IN RIGHT NOW."

"YES, I HAVE OFTEN WONDERED MYSELF. HE IS OR WAS QUITE AN INSPIRATIONAL MAN."

I TURN AND LOOK BACK AT THE SAWTOOTH. A RIDGE THAT LOOKS LIKE THE TEETH OF A SAW CUTTING INTO THE DISTANT SKY. A GOOD PORTION OF THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE RANCH SITS BELOW IT. BLUE CLOUD MUST HAVE TAKEN NOTICE.

"JIM LETS REMAIN SILENT ON THIS RIDE. ENJOY THIS BASIN AS YOU ALWAYS HAVE. AS YOUR NATIVE BROTHER, I APPRECIATE HOW YOU HAVE ADMIRERD THIS PART OF THE WORLD."

CHAPTER 2: THE AVALANCHE

IT'S A GOOD SIX HOUR DRIVE TO THE BIGHORNS. IT IS A VERY STEEP AND SLOW RIDE TO THE TOP WHERE THE MEDICINE WHEEL IS STILL IN PLACE AS A MONUMENT FOR VISITORS. THERE IS STILL PLENTY OF LIGHT. IT'S ABOUT ONE IN THE AFTERNOON. OUR DISCUSSIONS ALONG THE WAY MOSTLY EVOLVED ABOUT THE RELATIONSHIPS THAT FORMED. THE BONDING OF THE GROUP AND DETERMINATION TO MOVE FORWARD WITHOUT KNOW EXACTLY HOW IT MIGHT TURN OUT. WE TALKED ABOUT HOW COMMUNITIES OF THE PAST ARE EITHER EXISTING BY A THREAD OR TEND TO HAVE A TRANSIENT FEEL WITH THE MAIN GROUP TRYING TO KEEP IT AS A SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY. WE TALKED HOW PEOPLE GET RESTLESS WITH A SIMPLE LIFESTYLE. BUT ONE THAT REQUIRES PHYSICAL WORK. ONE THAT REQUIRES THE APPRECIATION OF NATURE AND LIVING WITH NATURE, RATHER THAN MAN VS NATURE. BE ONE WITH ALL LIVING THINGS. WE NEVER TOUCHED ON THE SUBJECT OF LAND OWNERSHIP, OR A BLUE PRINT WE MIGHT FOLLOW. WE NEVER DISCUSSED GROWTH IN COMMUNITY. WE DID DISCUSS HOW WE ALL TOOK THE TIME TOWARDS THE IMPORTANT FIRST STEP, MAKING SURE WE ALL CONNECTED WITH EACH OTHER. HOW WE ALL SHARED OUR PERSONAL FEARS OR SUFFERING, HOWEVER YOU WANT TO LOOK AT IT.

AND SO IT'S TIME. WE UNLOAD MY GEAR AND GIVE A MANO HUG TO EACH OTHER. BLUE CLOUD CLIMBS BACK INTO THE TRUCK AND I WATCH AS THE EXHAUST FUMES CONDENSE WITH THE COLS AIR.

AND I FEEL ALONE AGAIN. BUT I REFUSE TO DWELL IN LONELINESS. I PUT ON MY SKI PACK, GET MY SKIES OVER MY SHOULDER AND WITH MY LIGHT WEIGHT TELE BOOTS ALREADY ON I TRUDGE OVER TO THE WEST DIRECTION OF THE MEDICINE WHEEL. I LOOK AROUND AND SEE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A LONG NOT TOO STEEP OF A GRASSY SLOPE. I SAY THAT BECAUSE I DON'T SEE STUMPS OR ROCK OUTCROPPINGS. I CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THERE IS ENOUGH EARLY SEASON SNOW TO HAVE A NICE GLIDE DOWN. AT A CERTAIN POINT I NOTICE THAT THE SLOPE NARROWS WITH TREES ON BOTH SIDES. I ALSO NOTICE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A FINGER OF A CHUTE ON THE RIGHT. IT'S HARD TO TELL, ALL I CAN GUESS IS THAT THE BREAK IN THAT TREE LINE MUST BE HIDING SOMETHING COMING OFF THE STEEP SIDE SLOPE THAT GOES INTO THIS DRAW. SO WHY AM I PICKING THIS AS THE PLACE TO LOOK FOR JOSEPH? WELL, FIRST OFF IT IS FACING WEST AND THE WEST IS THE DIRECTION OF LIBERATION. I ALSO SEE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A LARGE POND NEAR THE BOTTOM OF THE SLOPE. I SEE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A TEEPEE. I COULD BE WRONG

BUT MY SENSE IS THAT WOULD BE A WONDERFUL CHOICE FOR A VISION QUEST. IT IS SOMETHING OF HOW MANY TIMES WHEN I MADE MY ASCENTS THAT I THOUGHT OF YOGIS, OR BUDDHAS OR INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, EVEN THE PIONEERS MAKING TREKS IN ALL SORTS OF CONDITIONS. JUST TO BE ALONE AND DISCOVER MEANING IN THEIR LIVES? WAS THAT IT? OR WAS IT TO DISCOVER WHAT LOOMS AROUND THE NEXT BEND IN THE ROAD? AND WHAT WHERE THEIR THOUGHTS? I DECIDE NOT TO USE TOE CLIPS SINCE I AM UNCERTAIN OF HOW THIS SLOPE OR THAT CHUTE TO THE RIGHT MIGHT BEHAVE. IF THERE IS A SLIDE I WANT MY SKIS POPPING OFF. I ADJUST MY POLES AND SLIDE OUT IN A HORIZONTAL LINE TO THE SLOPE. I JUMP AND KICK HARD TO SEE IF I CAN SET ANYTHING OFF. SNOW IN MOTION, OR A FRACTURE LINE ANYTHING THAT WOULD TELL ME NOT TO SKI IT. THE BASE SEEMS PRETTY GOOD. NOT ICY UNDER THE TOP LAYER OF FRESH POW! YOU MIGHT BE THINKING IF I AM PRYING OR ASKING FOR THE MOST BENEVOLENT OUTCOME. BUT INSTEAD I AM IN SWEET SURRENDER TO THE SNOW GODS. AND IF THIS IS MY LIBERATION TO ANOTHER REALM, PERHAPS THE GLIMPSE I HAD AFTER DEATH, FLOATING ABOVE THE CLOUDS, IS MEANT TO BE. OKAY, I AM SET TO GO. I DON'T USE POLE STRAPS AROUND MY WRIST. I MAKE THE COMMITMENT TO GO. I START WITH A FEW TENTATIVE TURNS AND EVERYTHING FEELS GOOD, THE SNOW FEELS STABLE WITH A NICE CUSHY FEELING BELOW THE SURFACE. MY TURNS BECOME LESS CAUTIOUS AND I AM ON MY WAY WITH CONCISE MEASURED TURNS. AS IF I AM LEAD IN A FIGURE EIGHT CONTEST. IT IS SO EXHILARATING, THE FIRST TURNS OF THE YEAR. EFFORTLESS, NO THOUGHT, JUST PRESENCE. I GET NEARER TO THE RIGHT HAND CHUTE THAT CAUGHT MY ATTENTION WHEN I WAS SCOPING OUT THE LINE. THE ROUTE I AM ON HAS NARROWED AND AS I PASS THE OPENING ON MY RIGHT I TAKE A QUICK LOOK UP AND NOTICE THAT IT IS A PRETTY STEEP AND NARROW CHUTE. IT DOESN'T TAKE LONG BEFORE I HEAR A RUMBLE OF SORTS...A SLIDE HAS STARTED. THERE IS NO WAY I WILL OUT RUN IT. SO I CONTINUE TO SKI ANTICIPATING WHEN I MIGHT FEEL BEING DRAGGED UNDER. THERE IS SOME SLUFF PASSING ALONG SIDE ME AND IT'S NOT FROM MY TURNS, IT IS MOVING MUCH FASTER. I FEEL MY SKIES BEING GRABBED AND A FORCE OF SNOW LIKE I HAVE NEVER FELT BEFORE. THE POLES ARE RIPPED FROM MY HANDS AND I START A SWIMMING ACTION WITH MY ARMS, TRYING TO STAY ABOVE THE ONSLAUGHT OF HEAVY SNOW. I POP OUT OF MY THREE PIN BINDINGS AND HAVE THE FREEDOM TO KICK MY LEGS BUT IT'S NOT ENOUGH. I FIGHT TO STAY IN THE SWIMMING ACTION AND SUDDENLY I SEE A MOCCASIN WHIZZ BY MY RIGHT SIDE, FOLLOWED BY A LONG STICK THAT

ZIPS PAST MY HEAD. A SPEAR? I AM BEING PULLED UNDER SO I QUICKLY GET MY HANDS IN FRONT OF MY MOUTH. THEN IT'S "LIGHTS OUT". EVERYTHING HAS STOPPED. I FEEL FOR MY LEGS AND REALIZE THAT THEY AREN'T PINNED IN SOME AWKWARD POSITION. OKAY, I IMMEDIATELY START MOVING MY FINGERS TO MAKE AN AIR POCKET AROUND MY MOUTH. I MAKE IT BIGGER AND BIGGER. I SEEM TO HAVE MORE MOVEMENT THAN I ANTICIPATED. I FEEL WHAT SEEMS LIKE A FIST POKING MY RIGHT RIB. I CAN USE MY LEFT HAND TO MAKE A BIGGER OPENING TO MY RIGHT AND SOMEHOW IT FEELS LIKE I POKED THROUGH A CAVITY IN THE SNOW. I CAN MOVE MY HAND AND FEEL A FACE? I SCREAM "HELLO?"

"HEY," IS THE RESPONSE. "WHOSE THERE?"

"ME!"

"DIG"

I DIG AND MAKE A BIGGER OPENING. I CAN TURN MY HEAD A LITTLE AND THROUGH MY GOGGLES I SEE, IN AMAZEMENT, "JOSEPH?, JOSEPH!!"

"JIM, GET US OUT OF HERE!"

"THERE'S NOT MUCH TIME BEFORE THIS SNOW STARTS TO FREEZE."

"CAN YOU STAND UP?"

"I DON'T KNOW."

"STAND UP."

"HOW"

"LIKE A BUFFALO, YOU'RE MY WHITE BUFFALO. STAND UP!"

AND I CAN GET IN A KNEELING POSITION EASIER THAN I EXPECTED. I PUSH MYSELF UP AND POKE THROUGH THE SNOW. BIG CHUNKS FALL AWAY AND I CAN SEE THAT WE ARE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE SLOPE AND AVALANCHE. WOW, HOW FORTUNATE. IT'S NOT THAT DEEP. I WIGGLE MYSELF OUT AND IMMEDIATELY START DIGGING FOR JOSEPH?... WITH MY LITTLE AVALANCHE SHOVEL THAT WAS ON MY PACK. I GO EASY SO I DON'T JAB HIM. I START USING HANDS AGAIN AND CLEAR A SPACE FROM AROUND HIS HEAD. MY JOSEPH!

"WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?"

"I CAME TO SEE YOU!"

"GET ME OUT OF HERE, IT'S COLD."

IT DOESN'T TAKE TOO LONG. I THANK GOD THAT IT WAS AN EARLY SEASON SLIDE. NOT MUCH SNOW BASE YET. MY GUESS IS THAT RIGHT HAND CHUTE SLIDES SEVERAL TIMES THROUGHOUT THE SEASON.

"PULL ME OUT NOW JIM."

"YOUR A PRETTY BIG GUY JOSEPH, LET ME DIG A LITTLE MORE."

"MY BROTHER, BISON HAVE BROAD SHOULDERS AND BIG STRONG NECKS, PULL!!"

AND SO I DO AND BEFORE YOU KNOW IT JOSEPH IS LAYING ON TOP OF ME FACE TO FACE AND WE ARE LAUGHING. MAYBE AT OUR LUCK WITH FATE. "I KNEW IT IN MY BONES THAT I WOULD FIND YOU. BLUE CLOUD DIDN'T KNOW IF I'D FIND YOU OR YOUR SPIRIT!"

"YOU FOUND BOTH," HE ROLLS OFF OF ME AND WE GET UP.

"LET'S GO MY FOOT IS COLD."

I LOOK DOWN AND HE IS MISSING A MOCCASIN. "HERE I WILL GIVE YOU A SOCK." I UNBUCKLE MY RIGHT BOOT AND LUCKILY I HAVE A THICK SOCK OVER A THIN SOCK. I GIVE HIM THE THICK SOCK TO PUT ON HIS FOOT.

"OVER THERE," JOSEPH NODS.

I LOOK IN THE DIRECTION AND NOTICE A TEEPEE ABOUT A HUNDRED YARDS AWAY. NEAR THE POND. WE HURRY OVER THERE. I OPEN THE FLAP AND PEER INSIDE, "WOW, YOU ARE WELL FORTIFIED. I THOUGHT A VISION QUEST WAS A MINIMALIST ACTIVITY."

"NOT FOR ME, ESPECIALLY SINCE I WAS TOLD THAT I WAS STILL NEEDED TO GO OVER THE VISION WITH YOU ALL!" JOSEPH CHUCKLES. "NOW LET ME INSIDE, I NEED TO GET WRAPPED UP. THERE'S A STACK OF WOOD BEHIND THE TEEPEE, YOU CAN START A FIRE AND WE WILL SMOKE PIPE, MY FRIEND."

SO THAT IS WHAT I DO. GATHER WOOD, AND MAKE A FIRE OVER SOME SMOLDERING COALS. JOSEPH IS PACKING HIS PIPE. A BEAUTIFUL, LONG STEMMED PIPE MADE FROM AN ANTLER. WITH A BEAD WORK WRAP AND SOME LEATHER STRANDS AND FEATHERS HANGING DOWN FROM

THE BOWL END. BOTH ENDS SHOW A LOT OF USE, SHADED WITH A BROWN RESIN FROM THE TOBACCO.

"JOSEPH, DID YOU SUSPECT ME TO EVENTUALLY SHOW UP, LOOKING FOR YOU?"

HE STARTS SUCKING, GETTING THE FILLED BOWL TO LIGHT. HERE COME SOME PUFFS OF SWEET SMOKE. HE BLOWS OUT A LARGE PUFF AND ANSWERS, "GOOD QUESTION MY FRIEND. LET'S JUST SAY IT'S ALL PART OF THE MYSTERY OF WHY WE CONNECT WITH WHOM WE CONNECT WITH WHEN WE ARE SUPPOSED TO CONNECT WITH A PARTICULAR LIFE FORM."

"YOU'RE SOUNDING LIKE A SAGE."

"THANKS FOR FINALLY ACKNOWLEDGING ME THAT WAY JIM."

"GURU, SAGE, WISE ONE, WHATEVER. IT HAS ALWAYS BEEN HARD FOR MY EGO SELF TO ACKNOWLEDGE THAT SOMEONE HAS A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF LIFE THAN ME."

"SO WHEN DID YOU BECOME HUMBLE?"

"WHEN I MODELED FOR MOLLY'S SKETCH CLASS. I WAS DETERMINED TO USE THAT PHASE OF MY LIFE AS A METAPHOR TO BARE MY SOUL. AND LET OTHER SOULS BE MY GURU'S, SAGES, THERAPIST WHATEVER." THE PIPE IS PASSED AND I DRAW IN SOME SWEET SMOKE.

"SO MY FRIEND, YOU SKIED THE WEST DIRECTION OF THE GREAT MEDICINE WHEEL. THE DIRECTION OF LIBERATION. AND YOU HAVE BEEN POSITIONED IN MANY SWEATS IN THE LODGE, WITH JULIAN BY YOUR SIDE AT THE WESTERN NODE. YOU HAVE TRUSTED BLUE CLOUDS COUNCIL. CORRECT?"

I NOD YES. JOSEPH TAKES A DRAW AND GIVES A PUFF, HANDS ME THE PIPE. THERE'S A BRIEF SILENCE. "DOES JULIAN TRUST HER DIVINE SOURCE AS YOU ARE DOING?"

"SHE KEEPS ME ON TRACK. KEEPS REMINDING ME TO TRUST THE UNIVERSE. I KNOW IT NOW AS DIVINE INTELLIGENCE." I PLACE A FEW MORE LOGS ON THE FIRE. THE TEEPEE HAS WARMED UP NICELY WITH THE TOP FLAP OPEN JUST ENOUGH TO ACT AS THE PERFECT CHIMNEY.

"I AM STARTING TO WARM UP THIS ANCIENT BODY. MY SOUL FEELS RENEWED TO HAVE YOU HERE. THIS VISION QUEST CAN BE LONELY AT

TIMES. FORTUNATELY I HAVE BECOME PART OF MY NATURAL SURROUNDINGS. AND I RELISH CHATTING WITH THE BIRDS AND TALKING WITH THE MOOSE AND DEER. GATHERING THE ROOTS AND BERRIES."

I WATCH AS JOSEPH PACKS THE PIPE AWAY IN ITS' SPECIAL SACK. HE TREATS IT WITH SUCH REVERENCE. PART OF WHAT I TAKE AS A RITUAL. MUCH LIKE MAKING THE FIRST SLOW BREW OF COFFEE IN THE MORNING. I AM THINKING, HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO OBSERVE ANOTHER CULTURE. SAME AS WHEN I WAS IN INDIA. HOW EACH CULTURE HAS IT'S WAYS, AND NOT JUST THE CULTURE, BUT PEOPLE WHO HAVE GARNERED THE METHODOICAL WAY OF LIFE AS A HEDGE AGAINST THIS FAST PASSED SOCIETY.

"YOU KNOW, JOSEPH, I HAVE BEEN THINKING HOW OUR WORLDLY SYSTEM HAS PROGRESSED FROM USING SIMPLE TOOLS AND PREFORMING SIMPLE TASKS AS A MEANS TOWARDS OUR SURVIVAL WITHIN THE KINGDOM OF ABUNDANCE. HOW WE BECAME OVER TIME SO INDUSTRIOUS THAT SOON WE USED UP RESOURCES FASTER THAN THEY COULD BE REPLACED. AND HOW WE NEEDED MORE AND MORE AND MORE UNTIL WE GREW SO BIG AND INVENTED THINGS SO MUCH BETTER THAN WHATEVER CAME BEFORE THE PREVIOUS WAY OF DOING THINGS THAT WE WENT FROM BEING PEOPLE TO BEING CONSUMERS FOR A SMALL BAND OF WEALTH SEEKERS. I ALWAYS WONDERED WHY WE COMPETED TO OUT DO THE OTHER. A VISCOUS CYCLE OF MADNESS WITH LITTLE TIME TO ENJOY WHAT WAS ALREADY PLENTY TO ENJOY."

"ENOUGH SAID JIM. YOU HAVE THE VISION. MY WHITE BUFFALO FRIEND. THERE IS SOME JERKY OVER THERE IN THAT POUCH NEXT TO YOU. LET'S EAT. I HAVE SOME DRIED BERRIES THAT THE BEARS LEFT FOR ME OVER HERE. WE WILL FEAST AND SLEEP SOUNDLY. THIS IS A CAMPGROUND THAT NOT TO MANY PEOPLE USE. TOMORROW WE WILL FOLLOW THE DRAW DOWN TO A HUNTING LODGE. I KNOW THE PEOPLE. THEY KEEP ME SUPPLIED. WE WILL STAY IN A CABIN FOR A FEW DAYS AND THEY WILL FEED US GOOD AND GET YOU SOME OTHER CLOTHING IF YOU WANT. AFTER WE DISCUSS HOW THE PHYSICAL COMMUNITY MIGHT CONTINUE TO TAKE SHAPE. THEY WILL CALL BLUE CLOUD AND HE WILL COME GET YOU. HE IS NOT FAR FROM HERE. HE IS ON THE RES."

"HOW DID HE KNOW TO STAY CLOSE BY?"

"IT'S AS MUCH AS A MYSTERY TO ME AS TO YOU. I SAY THAT WITHOUT REALLY KNOWING. JUST A SENSE SINCE WE ARE CONNECTED AS WISE MEDICINE MEN." JOSEPH LAUGHS HARDILY!

CHAPTER 3: THE GRAND PLAN

IT IS EARLY MORNING. THE SUN HAS NOT COME OVER THE TOP OF THE RIDGE YET, EVEN THOUGH THE DAWN HAS BROKEN AND THERE IS BLOOD SKY ABOVE US. I HAD ALREADY STARTED A FIRE AND FOUND JOSEPH'S COFFEE STASH, AND HAVE THAT BREWING. I CAN HEAR SOME GENTLE SNORES COMING FROM HIS BED ROLL. IT'S A BIG TWENTY FOOT TEEPEE SO I HAVE SOME ROOM TO DO A FEW SUN SALUTATIONS. I SIT AND MEDITATE ON EACH CHAKRA. THEN I DO A MEDITATION I LEARNED AT TAPAS. THE SOUL SYNC MEDITATION. I START OUT WITH EIGHT FULL CONSCIOUS BREATHS, USING MY THUMB AND FINGERS TO COUNT. I FOLLOW WITH EIGHT MORE FULL BREATHS BUT THIS TIME I HUM ON THE EXHALE. I HEAR A GRUNT FROM JOSEPH AND HEAR HIM ROLL OVER. NOW I BREATHE EIGHT TIMES AND PAY ATTENTION TO THE SLIGHT PAUSE BETWEEN THE INHALE AND EXHALE. THE NEXT EIGHT BREATHS I SILENTLY SAY ON THE EXHALE, AH HUM, MEANING I AM. AND I VISUALIZE NOW I HOLD THE TIPS OF MY THUMBS AND INDEX FINGERS AND JUST MEDITATE ON A GOLDEN LIGHT PERMITTING EVERY CELL AND TISSUE IN MY BODY. I AM UNLIMITED CONSCIOUSNESS. I AM PURE ENERGY. I SET AN INTENTION FOR OUR SAFE EXIT OUT OF THIS AREA TO THE HUNTING LODGE. AND I ALSO VISUALIZE THE COMMUNITY AT THE RANCH. I OPEN MY EYES AND JOSEPH IS LOOKING AT ME.

"YOUR MORNING RITUAL, JIM?"

"YES, IT HAS BECOME THAT. AND A CUP OF COFFEE AS I SIT IN CONTEMPLATION. IT IS STARTING TO SMELL LIKE BACON IN HERE."

"I HAVE SOME EGGS SCRAMBLED TOO, WITH BAKED BEANS. WE WILL EAT GOOD, THE LODGE IS NOT FAR FROM HERE, BUT IF WE GET IN ANOTHER AVALANCHE I WANT TO BE BURIED WITH A FULL STOMACH!"

"I LIKE THAT THINKING JOSEPH." HE POURS ME ANOTHER CUP OF COFFEE AND WE SET OUR GAZE ON THE FIRE AND RED HOT COALS.

JULIAN - IT'S EARLY MORNING. THERE IS A GLINT OF LIGHT POKING THROUGH THE RIDGE LINE OF SAWTOOTH PEAK. THE COFFEE IS BREWING AND I HAVE A FAVORITE BREAKFAST COOKING ON THE STOVE. I AM LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW AND UP THE SLOPE THAT I HAVE WATCHED A LONE FIGURE TRUDGE UP FOR MANY YEARS. THE ONLY THING MISSING ON THAT SLOPE OR AT THIS BREAKFAST TABLE IS JIM. WHERE IS MY SOULMATE AT THIS HOUR? SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT SOMETHING HAS HAPPENED. BUT I DON'T GRIEVE IN FEAR. I HAD A MORNING READING FROM THE BOOK FRANK GAVE ME LONG AGO. THE WAY OF MASTERY - THE WAY OF THE HEART. WHAT I READ RANG SO TRUE THIS MORNING. RIGHT NOW I KNOW WHAT EVER IS GOING ON WITH JIM, I AM CONFIDENT THAT HE IS FINDING HIS WAY HOME. "BELOVED FRIENDS, YOUR LIFE - YOUR LIFE - IS YOUR WAY HOME! IF YOU DO NOT LIVE FULLY, HOW CAN YOU EVER ARRIVE HOME? THEREFORE, FEAR NOT YOUR GREATNESS. FEAR NOT THE POWER THAT COMES FROM EMBRACING YOUR LIFE AND CLAIMING ITS VALUE. LIVE IT FULL OUT WITH EVERY BIT OF PASSION YOU CAN MUSTER! EMBRACE EVERY SECOND OF IT! EVERY TIME YOU WASH YOUR DISH AND YOUR CUP AFTER BREAKFAST, LOOK UPON THESE THINGS AND SAY: MY GOD! THIS IS MY LIFE! THIS IS MY PATHWAY HOME! AND I AM GOING TO LIVE IT!"

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. I INVITED FRANK FOR BREAKFAST.

"COME ON IN."

"GOOD MORNING DARLIN'. IT SMELLS GOOD IN HERE."

FRANK MEANDERS OVER TO THE SHELF AND GRABS A CUP THEN POURS HIMSELF SOME HOT, DARK COFFEE. AS IF HE HAS LIVED IN THIS CABIN BEFORE. WHICH HE HAS. SEVERAL YEARS AGO.

"YOU BY THE WINDOW, LOOKING UP AT JIM'S PRIVATE SKI HILL, BRINGS BACK A MEMORY JULIAN. A DAY IN TIME."

"YOU CAN SENSE WHERE MY MIND IS WANDERING, EH?"

"YES LITTLE LADY, SO MUCH EMOTION THAT DAY AND THE DAYS THAT FOLLOWED. LOST LOVERS FOUND AND OTHER LOVERS LOST. I AM GOING TO LEAVE IT AT THAT. BUT I DO HAVE SOME NEWS FOR YOU."

"WHAT IS IT FRANK?" I TURN MY WHOLE BODY AROUND TO FACE HIM. "BUT BEFORE YOU TELL ME, I JUST WANT YOU TO KNOW HOW COMFORTING IT IS TO KNOW YOU ARE STILL HERE FOR SUPPORT. I AM

SO LUCKY TO HAVE FOUND TWO MEN IN MY LIFE THAT TREAT ME AS A BEST FRIEND."

FRANK MOTIONS WITH THE CUP, AND I NOD YES. HE PLACES IT ON THE TABLE AND GETS ANOTHER FOR HIMSELF.

"FOOD IS READY SO DIG IN BIG GUY."

WE BOTH SERVE OURSELVES AND SIT AT THE TABLE. WE PEER INTO EACH OTHERS EYES AND AFTER SEVERAL SECONDS FRANK SAYS, "LET US PRAY. THANK YOU LORD FOR YOUR SPIRIT THAT RESIDES IN EACH OF US. THANK YOU FOR THE LESSON THAT "I AM YOU AS YOU ARE ME." AND THANK YOU FOR THIS WONDERFUL, SOULFUL WOMAN THAT PREPARED THIS HE MAN BREAKFAST AND SITS ACROSS THE TABLE FROM ME!"

NOW HOW CAN I NOT APPRECIATE THAT PRAYER. WITH A TWINKLE IN MY EYE AND A GIGGLE FROM THE DEPTH OF MY HEART AND SOUL I GRAB HIS HANDS ACROSS THE TABLE AND GIVE THEM A SQUEEZE. WE FREEZE IN THIS SPACE FOR A SHORT WHILE.

"AHH HUM," FRANK CLEARS HIS THROAT. WE GO FROM HOLDING HANDS TO HOLDING EATING UTENSILS. "SO, MOLLY AND I WENT BACK TO OUR OLD CONTACTS WHEN WE INVESTIGATED MISSING PEOPLE CASES WITH JOSEPH. WE FOUND OUT THAT JOSEPH IS ALIVE AND WELL. HE SET UP CAMP ON THE BIG HORN. BELOW THE MEDICINE WHEEL. WE ALSO HAVE BEEN INFORMED THAT THE HUNTING LODGE THAT IS LOCATED ON THE NORTH SLOPE OF THE RIDGE ACROSS FROM THE MEDICINE WHEEL HEARD AN AVALANCHE GO OFF LATE IN THE AFTERNOON A COUPLE OF DAYS AGO. THERE IS A CHUTE UP THERE THAT FACES SOUTH AND SLIDES OFTEN THROUGHOUT THE WINTER."

FRANK STOPS ABRUPTLY AND TAKES IN A HEAP OF BEANS THEN A HALF SLAB OF BACON AND STARTS CHEWING. GREAT, I AM LEFT IN SUSPENSE.

"I HAD A SENSE THAT SOMETHING HAPPENED. ANY MORE TO YOUR REPORT? ...PLEASE, AFTER YOU GET DONE CHEWING."

OF COURSE HE SHOVES IN A FORK FULL OF EGG SCRAMBLE AND HALF A BISCUIT FIRST. A PET PEEVE OF MINE. BUT I HAVE LEARNED TO JUST SMILE AS IF IT'S ALL GOOD. WHEN IN REALITY, I WANT TO REMIND HIM OF HIS MANNERS. LET'S SEE, ME HAVING THE PRETENSE THAT FRANK STUFFING HIS MOUTH JUST WHEN I EXPECTED HIM TO SPEAK IS OKAY, WHEN IT'S NOT. IS THAT A DENIAL? THE PART WHERE I MAKE IT SEEM LIKE ALL IS GOOD WITH ME WHEN I AM ACTUALLY SUFFERING BECAUSE

HIS GUT IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN COMMUNICATING WITH ME? ESPECIALLY SINCE I AM CLINGING TO HIS EVERY WORD? WAIT AWHILE, THIS KRISHNAJI GURU HAD A GREAT EXPLANATION THAT MEGAN SHARED WITH ME. BUT HOLY MOLY, IT CAN GET CONFUSING.

SHOOT, I AM NOT OKAY, SO I SAY, "FRANK BEFORE YOU STUFF YOUR FACE ONE MORE TIME, THE NEWS OF THE AVALANCHE, IS THERE MORE OR ARE YOU DONE SPEAKING?"

HE RAISES AN EYE BROW, THEN HIS HEAD AS IF I DISTRACTED HIM FROM HIS PRESENT TASK AT HAND...EATING LIKE A COW. AND HE SAYS, "DARLIN', I WAS ABOUT TO GO THERE," THEN TAKES A GULP OF COFFEE AND FINALLY RESPONDS, "NO."

I AM FLABBERGASTED. ALL I CAN DO IS BLOW AIR THROUGH MY LOOSE LIPS. "MAN THE WAY YOU ARE DEMOLISHING BREAKFAST, MAGGIE WILL HAVE ME AS BREAKFAST COOK FOR THE DUDE RANCH GUEST INSTEAD OF GARDENER."

"YOU'D MAKE A GOOD COOK JULIAN."

"SO WHICH NO IS IT?"

"NO AS IN NO WHEREABOUTS OF JOSEPH AND JIM. AND NO AS IN I AM NOT DONE SPEAKING. WE MIGHT WANT TO HAVE A MEETING AT THE YELLOW ROOM AND MAYBE DISCUSS SOME TOPICS RELATIVE TO ACTION STEPS FOR THE COMMUNITY TO START TAKING."

"IS THERE A REQUEST FROM BLUE CLOUD?"

"NO HE ACTUALLY IS ON THE RES. HE TOLD MOLLY THAT HE SENSED SOMETHING MIGHT HAPPEN SO HE IS THERE UNTIL HE GETS SOME NEWS FROM THE PEOPLE AT THE LODGE OR HUNTERS."

"YOU MEAN HUNTERS AS IN HUNTERS FINDING HUMAN BODIES?"

"I AM GLAD YOU PUT IT THAT WAY JULIAN. JULIAN?" I CAN SEE THAT SHE IS FINALLY SHOOK UP. SHE LOOKS DISTRAUGHT AND THE TEARS ARE A BIG GIVEAWAY. "MY DEAR," I STAND BESIDE HER, KNEEL AND PLACE MY ARM OVER HER SHOULDER. SHE TURNS TO ME AND CRIES, LONG HARD SOBS. SHE CRIES "JUST LIKE A WOMAN".

MEANWHILE...

"ALRIGHT JIM LET'S START OUR JOURNEY TO THE HUNTING LODGE. THAT DRAW, OVER THERE TAKES US AROUND THE NORTH SIDE OF THE RIDGE, WHERE THE AVALANCHE CAME FROM. THAT SIDE IS SAFE. THERE IS A TRAIL WE CAN FOLLOW AND IT TAKES US RIGHT TO THE LODGE. ABOUT FIVE OR SIX MILES."

"OKAY, CAN I BORROW ONE OF YOUR HIKING STICKS? YOU HAVE QUITE A BEAUTIFUL COLLECTION."

"I HAVE MUCH TIME TO WHITTLE DESIGNS AND MAKE LEATHER HAND HOLDS."

AND SO WE START. IT IS A MELLOW INCLINE FOR A WHILE. AFTER ABOUT A MILE I CAN SEE THE TOP OF WHAT APPEARS TO BE A DROP OFF. AS WE APPROACH IT, JOSEPH MOVES TO THE SOUTH FACING SLOPE OF THE DEEP RAVINE. THE EARLY SNOW HAS MELTED OFF FROM THIS SIDE OF THE RAVINE. WE ARE ABLE TO TRAVERSE IN SUCH A WAY THAT THE SHEER DROP OFF OF THE MIDDLE OF THE RAVINE IS NOT AS MUCH OF A FACTOR. THERE IS PLENTY OF LOOSE ROCK SO THE WALKING STICKS COME IN HANDY. WE HEAR SOME SCRAMBLING ABOVE US AND LOOK UP TO SEE A MAMA BLACK BEAR AND HER CUB HEADING IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THEY DON'T EVEN TAKE NOTICE OF US. JOSEPH MUMBLES SOMETHING IN NATIVE TONGUE, BUT I DON'T KNOW WHAT AND I DON'T ASK. WE CONTINUE ON AND THE FOREST STARTS TO THICKEN AND SNOW IS UNDER FOOT. MY SKI BOOTS ARE LIGHT WEIGHT, VERY COMFORTABLE AND STABLE IN THIS TERRAIN. JOSEPH IS WEARING SOME LIGHT WEIGHT HIKING BOOTS. I WOULD BE AMAZED IF HE HAD MOCCASINS ON. BUT THEN AGAIN, THAT'S WHAT HE HAD ON WHEN I RESCUED HIM FROM THE SLIDE. WE GO MAYBE ANOTHER MILE AND STOP. THERE IS A SMALL CLEARING IN THE SUN. JOSEPH SITS ON A STUMP AND OPENS A POUCH AND OFFERS ME SOME BISON JERKY.

"JIM, HAS BLUE CLOUD MENTIONED THE RETURN OF MY PEOPLE TO THE BASIN?"

"NOT DIRECTLY THAT I CAN RECALL. BUT MAGGIE HAS SHARED THAT WITH FRANK."

"THE BISON USED TO GO FROM THE PARK THROUGH YANKEE JIM CANYON THEN PARADISE VALLEY AND EVENTUALLY END UP IN THE GRASSY PLAINS THAT SURROUND LIVINGSTON. YELLOWSTONE WAS MISMANAGED A LONG TIME AGO. THE ELK AND WOLF WERE HUNTED FREELY. THE BISON WERE FORCED TO STAY IN THE PARK. ANY THAT TRY

TO ROAM FREELY ARE HAZED BACK INTO THE PARK. OUR PEOPLE HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THE DAY TO MANAGE THE WILDLIFE IN THE GREATER ECO SYSTEM OF YELLOWSTONE IN A MORE SUSTAINABLE WAY. PART OF THE VISION IS TO SEE THAT HAPPEN. THE WORLD EVENTS THAT ARE TAKING PLACE WILL HOPEFULLY BE A DISTRACTION TO WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE RANCH."

"ARE YOU SAYING THAT WE, OUR LITTLE GROUP WILL LEARN TO LIVE UNDER GUIDANCE FROM THOSE OF YOUR TRIBE THAT STILL KNOW THE OLD WAYS?"

"YOU ARE WISE TO BE AWARE OF THAT. STAY STEADFAST TO BLUE CLOUD'S AND WALKING STICK'S COUNSEL. WE WILL SPEND THE NEXT FEW DAYS GOING OVER A PLAN. ONE THAT CAN BE ADJUSTED, JUST AS NATURE MAKES IT'S ADJUSTMENTS. LET US GO NOW."

AND SO WE START AGIN. I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR THIS REUNION. JOSEPH'S WORDS ARE SIMPLE, HIS MEANING IS SINCERE. MY THOUGHTS ARE DEEP. HOW WILL WE LIVE TOGETHER? HOW WILL WE GROW AND NOT MISMANAGE OUR RESOURCES. HOW WILL WE BE INVISIBLE TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD THAT IS GOING DIGITAL, AND ARTIFICIAL, AND TOTALITARIAN? MAYBE, THAT ALL WON'T HAPPEN. THERE IS DEFINITELY A BATTLE RAGING. BUT I DO NOT WANT TO LET MY MIND WANDER IN FEAR. I AM NOT WANTING TO DO THIS OUT OF INDIFFERENCE TO THE WORLD AS IT IS. RATHER I CHOOSE A LIFESTYLE THAT SEEMS MORE SENSIBLE. THAT'S ALL. MY SENSE IS THAT AS A GROUP WE ALL JUST WANT TO DO THIS TOGETHER BECAUSE OF OUR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER. AND OUR ATTRACTION TO A MORE NATURAL MEANS OF SURVIVAL. I SEE SOME SMOKE IN THE NOT TOO FAR DISTANCE. JOSEPH STOPS AGAIN AND PLACES HIS PACK DOWN. HE MOTIONS FOR ME TO DO THE SAME. IN SILENCE HE TAKES HIS PIPE OUT OF HIS PACK. UNROLLS HIS POUCH OF TOBACCO AND FILLS THE BOWL.

"MY FRIEND, WE WILL SMOKE PIPE. WE WILL OFFER THE GODS OUR GRATITUDE FOR OUR SAFETY. WE WILL ASK FOR PEACE AND A PLACE TO REST AND PLAN AND JUST BE. LET US REMAIN IN STILLNESS NOW. FEEL THE BREEZE, LISTEN TO THE TREE TOPS AND THE GURGLE OF THE CREEK, THE SONG OF THE BIRDS AND THE MATING CALL OF THE ELK."

I CLOSE MY EYES UNTIL I SMELL THE PUFFS OF TOBACCO. THEN I OPEN THEM JUST ENOUGH TO SEE WHERE THE PIPE IS HANDED TO ME AND I TAKE IT. I RELISH MY FIRST INHALE AND LET THE SMOKE SWISH IN MY MOUTH. I TASTE THE SWEET TOBACCO AND EXHALE A PUFF OF SMOKE. I

OPEN MY EYES AND FIND JOSEPH'S HAND AND PASS PIPE. HE IS SMILING AND I SMILE TOO. THERE IS MUCH JOY IN KNOWING MY GUIDE. IT IS JOSEPH I CALL TO WHEN I SWING MY PENDULUM. IT IS JOSEPH I CALL TO FOR CONFIRMATION. IT IS JOSEPH THAT IS NOT JUST A MENTOR BUT RATHER A CONNECTION TO A MYSTERY THAT I DON'T NEED TO SOLVE. I AM JUST A DANCER IN THIS DANCE OF LIFE TO COIN A PHRASE. IT MAY BE ALL FOLLY, BUT I'D RATHER BELIEVE THAT IT IS A CONNECTION TO A DIVINE REALM OF GRACE.

WE COMPLETE THREE ROUNDS OF PASSING PIPE. A RITUAL I HAVE LEARNED TO APPRECIATE WITH REVERENCE. WITH MEANING AND CONTEXT.

JOSEPH PACKS HIS PIPE. I HAND HIM SOME WATER AND WE DRINK. THEN WE SILENTLY MOVE IN THE DIRECTION OF THE SMOKE. SOON I SEE SOME ROOF TOPS AND A CLEARING THAT LOOKS LIKE A SMALL PARKING LOT. THERE ARE A FEW CARS AND TRUCKS. THERE IS AN ELK HANGING FROM A RACK. BLOOD DRAINING OUT OF THE MEAT. WE STOP AT THE BOTTOM OF THE STEPS AND JUST STAND FOR A SHORT WHILE. A MAN APPEARS AT THE DOOR.

"JOSEPH, WE WERE HOPING THAT YOU WERE NOT AFFECTED BY THE AVALANCHE."

JOSEPH JUST LAUGHS, "MY FRIEND, THIS IS JIM. BLUE CLOUD MIGHT HAVE MENTIONED HIM. CAN WE HAVE A CABIN FOR A FEW DAYS? WE HAVE BIG PLANS TO DISCUSS. AND I TOLD JIM YOU HAVE GOOD HARDY FOOD." HE SMILES.

THE MAN LAUGHS, "YOU'RE MY BEST ADVERTISING. LET ME GET YOU A KEY TO THREE."

HE DISAPPEARS. JOSEPH LOOKS AT ME AND GIVES ME A THUMBS UP.

THE MAN REAPPEARS, "JIM, I AM ED, MY WIFE IS JULIE AND WE MANAGE THIS PLACE WITH FOUR OTHER PEOPLE. ANOTHER COUPLE WITH A CHILD AND TWO MEN. WE ARE ALL PART OWNERS. YOU'LL SEE THEM AROUND AND AT EATING TIME. ENJOY YOUR STAY. AND DON'T BELIEVE ANYTHING JOSEPH TELLS YOU!"

THEY BOTH LAUGH, "THANKS FOR THE COMPLIMENT, ED. I TOLD HIM THE FOOD WAS GOOD. DID YOU LOSE YOUR COOK, OR ARE YOU COOKING TONIGHT? I DON'T LIKE TO LIE!"

"ROOM THREE MY FRIEND SEE YOU AT DINNER. BARBECUED MOCCASIN IS ON THE MENU."

CHAPTER 4: CONSIDERATIONS

WE HEAD TO THE CABIN. JOSEPH SEEMS TO KNOW HIS WAY AROUND AND WE FIND CABIN 3 TUCKED INTO A POCKET OF GREAT SMELLING FIR TREES. WE HAVE A COUPLE OF BUNKS AND A SMALL WOOD BURNING FIRE PLACE.

"THESE ARE GOOD HARD WORKING PEOPLE JIM. WE WILL ENJOY OUR STAY. LET US GET A FIRE GOING. I WILL SMUDGE THE ROOM. YOU CAN START THE FIRE?"

"SURE JOSEPH, MY PLEASURE. I AM IMPRESSED HOW YOU HANDLED THE HIKE. YOU SURE DON'T SEEM LIKE THE OLD BODY YOU HAD REFERRED TO WHEN YOU DECIDED TO LEAVE US."

JOSEPH CHUCKLES, "THE GODS HAVE BEEN GOOD TO ME. THEY KEEP SURPRISING ME WITH HEALTH AND GOOD FRIENDS. I HAVE SO MUCH SUPPORT I DON'T KNOW WHAT I DO TO DESERVE IT."

"YOU MUST BE REALLY CONNECTED TO THE UNIVERSAL LAW THAT THE GREAT CREATOR, GOD HAS PROMISED US IF WE USE IT FOR GOOD ACTION."

I HAVE THE FIRE GOING AND THE CABIN SMELLS OF SAGE. JOSEPH HAS HIS PIPE AND TOBACCO ON THE TABLE. I SEE A BAG OF COFFEE ON A SHELF NEXT TO A BLUE PORCELAIN COFFEE POT. THE KIND YOU MIGHT SEE IN A HUNTING CAMP FIRE. I GET A POT STARTED. WITH THE FIRE ROARING IT WON'T TAKE LONG. "JOSEPH YOU SUPPOSE I CAN GET AN EGG AT THE LODGE TO SETTLE THE GROUND IN THE POT."

HE SMILES, "YES MY FRIEND, AS LONG AS YOU DON'T ASK ED, ASK JULIE!" HE LAUGHS AS IF HE IS STILL BANTERING WITH ED. I NOD AND WINK. I HEAD FOR THE LODGE. I SEE THE BACK OF A WOMAN THROUGH A BACK DOOR WINDOW. I CLIMB THE STAIRS AND TAP ON THE WINDOW. OH MY GOD, IF SHE DOESN'T RESEMBLE MY JULIAN. SHE COMES OVER AND OPENS THE DOOR.

"HELLO, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?"

"I'M JIM, STAYING WITH JOSEPH. I WONDER IF I CAN GET AN EGG, IF IT'S NO TROUBLE. I WANT TO SETTLE THE COFFEE GROUNDS IN THE POT WE'RE USING FOR COFFEE."

SHE LAUGHS, "THERE'S A COFFEE MAKER UNDER THE SHELVES, BEHIND THE CURTAIN. BUT HERE LET ME GET YOU AN EGG."

SHE TURNS AND GOES TO THE REFRIGERATOR. "BY THE WAY I AM JULIE. DID YOU LOOSE SOMETHING IN THE AVALANCHE?" SHE IS LOOKING DOWN AT MY SKI BOOTS.

I LOOK DOWN THEN UP AND PEER INTO HER EYES. EYES THAT SPARKLE LIKE JULIAN'S. "YES, I DID BUT I FOUND JOSEPH AND I FOUND MY WIFE'S EYES. AND I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR THE EGG." AND I MUST BE THREE SHADES OF BLUSH.

SHE IS LOOKING AT ME NOW, AFTER A QUICK GIGGLE, SHE IS SERIOUSLY LOOKING AT ME. "JIM, YOUR BEING WILLED YOU TO LIVE, IT WILLED YOU TO FIND JOSEPH AND IT WILLED YOU TO CARRY ON WHATEVER IT IS THAT YOU NEED TO DO NOW. WE WILL SEE YOU GUYS AT DINNER. THERE IS SO MUCH TO DISCUSS." SHE PUTS A HAND ON MY STUNNED SHOULDER AND TURNS ME TOWARDS THE DOOR. "BY THE TIME YOU GET BACK TO YOUR COFFEE, IT WILL BE TOO LATE FOR THE EGG." SHE GIGGLES AGAIN AND SAYS, "USE THE COFFEE MAKER."

I STUMBLE THE FIRST FEW STEPS, KIND OF IN A HAZE. THEN I STRAIGHTEN OUT MY WADDLE AND CONTINUE ON TOWARDS THE CABIN. WHAT IN THE HELL JUST HAPPENED. THIS MYSTERY STUFF KEEPS GETTING WEIRDER. GUIDES, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE, TAPAS, LOOK A LIKES, BINDING RELATIONSHIPS. I WAS ALWAYS KIND OF INQUISITIVE OF HOW THE UNIVERSE WORKED MIRACULOUSLY, BUT I WAS ALWAYS A SKEPTIC. ONE FOOT IN ONE FOOT OUT. HEDGING MY BETS. AND NOW, NOW? I AM ALL IN. HOW CAN I NOT BE ANYMORE?

I ENTER THE CABIN AND THERE'S TWO CUPS OF COFFEE STEAMING ON SAUCERS ON THE TABLE WITH A PACKED PIPE. JOSEPH HAS HIS EYES CLOSED WITH A SMILE ON HIS FACE. I TAKE OFF MY BOOTS, AND WALK OVER TO THE COFFEE POT ON THE STOVE AND PLACE THE EGG IN THE BOILING WATER. AT LEAST I CAN ENJOY A HARD BOILED EGG LATER.

WHEN I TURN AROUND, JOSEPH IS LOOKING AT ME WITH ONE EYE OPEN AND THAT INSIDIOUS SMILE ON HIS FACE. THEN HE OPENS BOTH EYES AND LETS OUT A HARDY LAUGH.

"COME, LET'S SMOKE PIPE AND GET STARTED."

SO WE DO, JOSEPH GIVES A PRAYER AND INTENTION. AS WE FINISH OUR LAST PUFFS OF SWEET TOBACCO.

"ARE YOU STILL GETTING THIS TOBACCO FROM BLUE CLOUD'S CLAN IN CAROLINA?"

"YES."

THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE. JOSEPH IS LOOKING AT ME DIRECTLY AND THEN ASK, "JIM, I UNDERSTAND THAT YOU AND MEGAN? IS IT MEGAN? WENT TO INDIA. ON A SPIRITUAL JOURNEY? PLEASE EXPLAIN."

"NIRVANA HAD GONE TO THE SAME PLACE, EKAM, YEARS AGO. WE GOT TO KNOW EACH OTHER DURING NIRVANA'S YOGA CLASS. EVENTUALLY WE COMMITTED TO GO. JULIAN WAS "ON THE FENCE" AND DECIDED TO STAY BACK. THE FOUR WEEK EXCURSION WAS ALL ABOUT LIBERATING THE SOUL FROM THE MAYA AND DISSOLUTION WE LIVE WITH. THE WHOLE PREMISE WAS TO RECOGNIZE WHAT CAUSES US TO SUFFER AND THEN TO GET TO A BEAUTIFUL STATE. SO THERE'S TWO STATES. WE ARE EITHER SUFFERING WITH STRESS, SADNESS, ANGER WHATEVER OR WE ARE IN A BEAUTIFUL STATE OF JOY, HAPPINESS, DETACHMENT."

"HAS THE GROUP DISCUSSED HOW SPIRITUAL, RELIGIOUS OR OTHER BELIEFS WILL BE ACCEPTED BY ALL. NOT JUST TOLERATED, BUT GRACIOUSLY ACCEPTED AND HONORED."

"WE HAVE SO MANY DIFFERENCES. RELATIONSHIP WORK HAS BE IN THE FOREFRONT OF OUR COMMUNITY MEETINGS. ONCE WE ESTABLISHED WHAT WE NEED TO DO CONCERNING RELATIONSHIPS, BLUE CLOUD SAID WE ARE READY FOR THE PHYSICAL PART OF BUILDING COMMUNITY."

"GOOD, THEN OUR TIME CAN BE WELL SPENT."

THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR. "COME ON IN," JOSEPH'S DEEP VOICE BECKONS.

BLUE CLOUD WALKS IN WITH A ROLL OF WHAT LOOKS LIKE MAPS. WE LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND HIS SMILE TELLS ME HE NOTICES MY SURPRISE. "AH, HELLO...."

"I WAS HUNTING UP HERE. THAT'S MY ELK HANGING OUT THERE. I AM GLAD THAT YOU FOUND MY UNCLE BEFORE THE BLOOD DRAINED OUT OF THE ELK. OTHERWISE I MIGHT BE HEADING TO THE BUTCHER.

BLUE CLOUD PUTS THE MAPS IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM AND SITS DOWN. THEY ARE BOTH LOOKING AT ME. BLUE CLOUD IS THE ONE THAT SPEAKS AFTER A LONG SILENCE.

"JIM, IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO CHOOSE A MASTER. NOT A GUIDE, OR A PHILOSOPHY OR SOME OTHER THING TO VALIDATE A BELIEF THAT CHANGES WHEN YOU NEED IT TO. YOU WENT TO INDIA AND RECEIVED TEACHINGS FROM GURUS. WHAT IMPACT DID THAT HAVE ON YOUR STATE OF MIND? WAS YOUR EXPERIENCE PROFOUND ENOUGH THAT YOU FOUND A TEACHER TO HELP YOU ON YOUR JOURNEY? WHAT IS YOUR SOURCE?"

"WELL I HAVE THIS MOLECULAR THEORY..."

"WE HAVE HEARD ABOUT YOUR THEORY. PROBLEM IS THERE IS A MISSING LINK. YOU TALK ABOUT THE SOUL. BUT WHEN YOU HAD YOUR EXPERIENCE WITH DEATH BEFORE WHO DO YOU THINK GAVE YOU A NUDGE AND TOLD YOU THAT YOU WEREN'T DONE YET? WHEN YOU WERE JUST BURIED IN THIS AVALANCHE, WHO DO YOU THINK GAVE YOU A NUDGE TO DIG AND WHOM DO YOU THINK HELPED YOU FIND MY UNCLE? AND WHO DO YOU THINK HAS HAD AN IMPACT TO BRING MIRACLES IN YOUR LIFE? OR DO YOU STILL THINK LIFE IS FATE?"

"I HEAR WHAT YOU ARE ASKING. THE MISSING LINK IS MY COMMITMENT TO THE DIVINE AND THE DIVINE INTELLIGENCE. THAT IS WHAT I HAVE NOT ACKNOWLEDGED IN MY CONSCIOUS MIND. I MADE MYSELF AS GOD. MY SOUL OR SPIRIT IS THE GIFT THAT MY BODY CARRIES TO FUNCTION ON THIS MATERIAL PLANE. BUT TO RECOGNIZE THE HIGHER SELF OR REALM? I'M NOT SURE HOW TO PUT IT, BUT THE CONTENT THAT I RECEIVED THUS FAR FROM KRISHNAJI AND PREETHAJI HAS GIVEN ME MORE UNDERSTANDING ABOUT MYSELF THAN ANYTHING I MIGHT CONCOCT TO VALIDATE MY EXISTENCE."

"AND SO I ASK, WHO ARE YOUR TEACHERS, OR GURUS IF THAT IS YOUR CHOICE? AND CAN YOU SAY IT WITH CONVICTION? AND ARE YOU WILLING TO PURSUE THE TEACHINGS WITH SINCERE COMMITMENT?"

"YES. YES, MY GURUS ARE KRISHNAJI AND PREETHAJI. I HAVE FINALLY DISSOLVED MY RESISTANCE TO ACKNOWLEDGE A MASTER."

"YOUR EGO HAS BEEN HUMBLLED?"

I SHAKE MY HEAD, "YES, THE EGO, MY EGO HAS ALWAYS BEEN THE CULPRIT. I AM NOT THE KNOWER OF ALL THINGS. I AM A SEEKER OF TRUTH!"

"GOOD THEN OUR TIME CAN BE WELL SPENT." BLUE CLOUD GETS UP AND GRABS THE MAPS FROM THE CORNER. JOSEPH AND I CLEAR THE TABLE. AS I REACH FOR A CUP, JOSEPH GRABS MY HAND AND WE PEER INTO EACH OTHERS EYES. THERE IS SO MUCH FATHERLY LOVE EMANATING FROM HIS DEEP BROWN EYES AND I AM FEELING IT."

THERE ARE TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS, WITH ELEVATIONS AND BLUE LINES FOR CREEKS AND WATER. WELLS ARE MARKED AND TERRAIN CHANGES CAN BE RECOGNIZED. THERE'S ANOTHER MAP SHOWING LOCATIONS OF ALL THE EXISTING BUILDINGS AND OTHER CABINS THROUGHOUT THE RANCH USED FOR GUEST CABINS. THERE IS A THIRD MAP WITH MAIN ROADS AND OLD RANCH ROADS OR JEEP TRAILS AND HIKING TRAILS. THE FORTH MAP SHOWS THE PUBLIC LANDS THAT BORDER OR ARE IN THE INTERIOR OF THE RANCH. THERES STATE LANDS, BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT LANDS AND NATIONAL FOREST. PEAKS, WITH ELEVATION ARE ON THE MAP. WE ARE ALL LOOKING AT THE MAP THAT SHOWS THE LOCATIONS OF ALL THE BUILDINGS AND CABINS ON THE RANCH. THERE IS A LONG SILENCE.

I SPEAK, "SOMETHING HAS OCCURRED TO ME. ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT WE JUST DISCUSSED AND MY COMMITMENT TO THE GURUS. WE HAVE QUITE A VARIETY OF SPIRITUAL, RELIGIOUS, AND AGNOSTIC BELIEVERS IN OUR SMALL GROUP. JULIAN AND I HAVE QUESTIONED HOW THAT MIGHT WORK OUT. IT SEEMS LIKE IN THE WORLDLY VIEW, PEOPLE GRAVITATE TO OTHER LIKE MINDED PEOPLE, WHETHER A RELIGIOUS SECT, OR POLITICAL BELIEFS, CULTURE, OR GENDER PREFERENCES. IF WE ARE LIVING SEPARATE FROM EACH OTHER FOR INSTANCE, SADIE AND JENNY IN THE CABIN OVER THERE," I POINT TO A DOT ON THE MAP, "OR FRANK AND JERRY REMAIN AT THE RANCH HAND CABIN, OR MAGGIE AND JONI AT MAGGIES CABIN...YOU GET WHAT I AM SAYING? AND WHEN YOUR CLAN RETURNS, WHERE WILL YOU LOCATE ON THE RANCH?"

"JIM HAS A GOOD POINT, UNCLE."

"JIM, DOES JULIAN HAVE THE SAME COMMITMENT TO THE EKAM GURUS AS YOU DO?"

"NO, AT LEAST NOT RIGHT NOW."

"AND YET YOU REMAIN UNDER THE SAME ROOF. HOW IS THAT? WHAT KEEPS YOU TOGETHER? IS YOUR LOVE MAKING THAT GOOD?"

WE ALL LAUGH AT JOSEPH'S WRY HUMOR, ONCE AGAIN.

"OUR LOVE MAKING HAS BECOME SPECIAL. BUT OUR RESPECT FOR EACH OTHERS LIBERATION OR PERSONAL JOURNEY IS WHAT MAKES OUR RELATIONSHIP THRIVE."

"HOW HAS EVERYBODY BEEN DOING CONCERNING RELATIONSHIP AS A GROUP?"

BLUE CLOUD ANSWERS, "WALKING STICK HAS FORMED THE THREE SISTERS FOR SUPPORTING INDIVIDUALS. JUST AS CORN, BEANS AND SQUASH SUPPORT EACH OTHER IN OUR CUSTOMARY GARDEN. WALKING STICK HAS WATCHED THIS GROUP BOND AND ACCEPT WHEREVER AN INDIVIDUAL IS ON THEIR JOURNEY."

JOSEPH - "YES, MOLLY TOLD ME THAT IS WHY THIS GROUP WAS SO SPECIAL TO HER."

"WHAT IF WE VISUALIZE A TOWN WHERE WE LIVE AND KEEP THE CABINS FOR RANCH GUEST, SINCE THAT WILL BE ONE OF OUR BUSINESSES. IT WILL ALSO MAKE IT CONVENIENT TO BE WHERE MOST OF OUR BUSINESS IS DONE AND DURING THE WINTER MONTHS WHEN MUCH OF THE RANCH AND CABINS ARE SNOWED IN."

"I HAVE ASKED FRANK AND JERRY TO CONVERT AN OLD BARN INTO MOLLY'S BARN. A PLACE WHERE THE GROUP CAN MEET FOR RELATIONSHIP BUILDING."

"AND WHAT ABOUT COMMUNITY MEETINGS BLUE CLOUD?"

"THOSE CAN STILL BE HELD AT THE YELLOW ROOM, MAGGIES CABIN, WHERE THE SCULPTURE IS LOCATED."

THERE IS A SILENCE. JOSEPH PUTS HIS PIPE OVER THE MAP AND PULLS OUT SOME TOBACCO. HE SETS A BOX OF MATCHES NEXT TO THEM. STILL SILENCE. THEN JOSPEH SAYS, "WE ARE THINKING, THOUGHTS ARE THE ENERGY IN THIS ROOM RIGHT NOW. LET US STILL OUR MINDS FOR SOME MINUTES."

WE CLOSE OUR EYES. IT TAKES AWHILE FOR ME AS MY MIND HAS TAKEN OVER MY BEING. IT WANTS TO PROBLEM SOLVE, OR HAVE THE ANSWER. THOUGHTS RACING TO AND FRO. SO I GO TO BREATHE. THE SERENE MIND.

A QUICK MEDITATION WE HAVE DONE MANY TIMES IN NIRVANA'S YOGA CLASS. AND AT TAPAS. I STAY WITH BREATH UNTIL THOUGHTS BEGIN TO FADE. NOW I HEAR THE WIND MAKING THE FIRE PLACE FLUE SQUEAK. I HEAR THE WIND GUST OUTSIDE. THE FIRE CRACKLE. A CHAIR LEG SCRAPE THE FLOOR. THEN I LISTEN TO NOTHING. I VISUALIZE A SMALL FLAME IN THE MIDDLE OF MY BRAIN. SILENCE. THEN I HEAR JOSEPH, "LET US SMOKE PIPE."

HE LIGHTS THE PIPE AND WE PASS IT THREE TIMES. THE BOWL IS SNUFFED OUT. JOSEPH LOOKS AT US...

"MY FRIENDS, NEXT TO MOLLY'S BARN, HAVE MOLLY AND ARTHUR SCULPTURE A VISION THAT SHOWS UNITY OF ALL RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL OR AGNOSTIC BELIEFS. A VISION THAT WILL REPRESENT THE ENTIRE GROUP ACCEPTING AND HONORING THE EXISTENCE OF THIS MATERIAL WORLD. UTILIZE THE BARN FOR A SKETCH CLASS AND LET ALL CONTRIBUTE THEIR VISION. THE SAME AS HOW THE TREE SCULPTURE WAS CREATED FROM OUR SKETCHES."

I AM STEADFAST LOOKING AT JOSEPH. WONDERING WHAT HE MIGHT SAY NEXT. AND GUESSING THAT I MIGHT NOT BE SKETCHING.

"YOU ARE READING MY MIND JIM. I WOULD LIKE YOU, FRANK AND SAMMIE TO BE THE MODELS." HE IS SMILING.

"WELL AT LEAST YOU DIDN'T SAY NUDE MODELS."

HE CHUCKLES AND SAYS, "WE'LL LET MOLLY DECIDE."

AND I SUPPOSE YOU ARE STILL IN CONTACT WITH MOLLY AND WILL HAVE AN INFLUENCE?"

JOSEPH IS LAUGHING NOW, "MY WHITE BUFFALO FRIEND, BLUE CLOUD LET'S GO EAT."

I AM SHAKING MY HEAD IN AMUSEMENT. I GET UP AND STOKE THE FIRE. BLUE CLOUD PLUCKS THE CRACKED BOILED EGG OUT OF THE COFFEE POT AND GIVES IT TO ME WITH A SMILE. JOSEPH HAS ALREADY DISAPPEARED.

"MY UNCLE IS ALIVE AND WELL. UP TO HIS SAME OLD TRICKS. THANK YOU FOR FINDING HIM JIM. THIS HAS BEEN A SPECIAL DAY."

I SAY ALL I CAN THINK OF..."AHO!"

CHAPTER 5: THE LAST SUPER

WE ARE IN THE LODGE AT A BUFFETT THERE ARE A FEW TABLES WITH, I'M PRESUMING HUNTERS. AT LEAST THEY LOOK LIKE HUNTERS WITH THEIR CLOTHING STATEMENT AND UNSHAVEN FACES. THERE IS A LONG TABLE SET UP AT ONE END OF THE DINING ROOM. SOME PEOPLE ARE GETTING FOOD, BLUE CLOUD AND I WAIT OUR TURN. I LOOK OVER AT THE TABLE AND SEE SOME NEW FACES. MUST BE THE OTHER PARTNERS OF FRIENDS OF ED AND JULIE. I LOOK AT THE FOOD CHOICES AND MY MOUTH IS SALIVATING. LOOKS LIKE ELK ROAST JUICY AND IN SOME KIND OF GRAVY. REAL MASH POTATOES WITH ROASTED GARLIC CLOVES AND MELTED BUTTER. BOILED CARROTS WITH SAUTÉED ONION AND MUSHROOMS, WHOLESOME LOOKING RYE BREAD AND STEAMED CABBAGE LEAVES WITH DILL LEAF AND CARAWAY SEEDS. WOW, I LOAD UP AND THEN PASS THE DESSERT! CHERRY STRUDEL? AND A COFFEE URN NEXT TO IT. I WALK OVER TO THE TABLE AND TAKE THE LAST CHAIR AVAILABLE, ACROSS FROM JULIE. ED IS SITTING TO HER RIGHT SIDE. SOMEBODY AT THE FAR END OF THE TABLE IS CLANGING A SPOON ON A GLASS. I LOOK OVER AND IT IS A LITTLE BOY WITH HIS SISTER?, NEXT TO HIM.

ED SPEAKS, LET US PRAY AND THANK THE LORD FOR ALL THIS FOOD AND ABUNDANCE. WITHOUT A WORD SPOKEN WE ALL BOW HEADS, PLACE HANDS OVER THE FOOD OR CLOSE EYES. THERE IS A REVERENT SILENCE. WHILE I AM IN SILENCE I AM REMINDED OF THE VEGETARIAN DIET AT TAPAS. A SIMPLE BUT VERY TASTY INDIAN CUISINE. A HEALTHY MEATLESS DIET. I AM REMINDED OF WHEN I STOPPED HUNTING. THE KILLING OF ANIMALS. I WONDER HOW THAT MIGHT RELATE TO ANY AFTER LIFE? WHAT DO I NEED TO FINISH ON THIS PLANE? I THANK MY DIVINE FOR THE NUDGE ONCE MORE. SOMETHING TO CONSIDER, A MEATLESS DIET HENCEFORTH. AFTER ABOUT A MINUTE I HEAR ED SAY AMEN AND JOSEPH SAY AHO! I LOOK UP AND SMILE, AND I AM MAGNETIZED TO JULIE'S GLITTERING EYES AND BROAD SMILE. I AM SHAKEN, AND HOPE THAT I DON'T SHOW IT. I TEND TO "WEAR MY EMOTIONS ON MY SLEEVE" AS THE OLD SAYING GOES.

THE KIDS ARE DIGGING IN AND SO IS JOSEPH. AS I PICK UP MY FORK ED SAYS, "SOME INTRODUCTIONS, JIM. TO THE LEFT OF JULIE IS PEDRO A LONG TIME FRIEND FROM RESTAURANT BUSINESS DAYS. HE GIVES ME A NOD AND SMILE. "GOOD TO MEET YOU JIM, I HOPE YOU LIKE THE FOOD." NEXT TO PEDRO IS MARGIE AND DAVID ALSO OLD FRIENDS. "MARGIE AND JULIE ARE THE BAKERS." BETWEEN BITES DAVID GIVES ME A NOD

AND MARGIE SMILES, "I AM GLAD YOU ARE HERE AND THAT YOU ROUNDED UP THAT GUY OVER THERE." SHE JESTERS TOWARDS JOSEPH.

MARK OVER THERE IS A MAINTENANCE MAN AND CONSTRUCTION GUY ALONG WITH ME AND SUE ALSO HELPS MAINTAIN THIS PLACE. MARK SAYS, "GOOD TO MEET YOU, BLUE CLOUD WARNED US ABOUT YOU!" HE LAUGHS AT HIS OWN COMMENT. I CAN'T HELP BUT SMILE. SUE SMILES AND SAYS, "THE GLASS CLANGER IS OUR, SON MAX NEXT TO HIM IS HEATHER. PEDRO IS MY HUSBAND NOT MARK THE JOKESTER. HEATHER IS MAX'S OLDER SISTER AND OUR DAUGHTER." HEATHER GIVES ME A SHY SMILE AND AVERTS HER EYES TO THE HEAPED PLATE IN FRONT OF HER.

BY NOW WE ARE ALL EATING AND AFTER A FEW MOUTH WATERING BITES I WIPE MY MOUTH OF THE DRIBBLE RUNNING DOWN MY CHIN. I TAKE SOME TIME TO SAVOR THE TASTE OF THE ELK ROAST. THINKING NOW IT MIGHT BE MY LAST DESIRE FOR MEAT. IT IS MELTING IN MY MOUTH. SURPRISINGLY SOFT. I AM THINKING IT COULD BE PULLED LIKE A BARBECUE PULLED PORK SANDWICH. AS I AM SAVORING THE TASTE, I AM LOOKING AT JULIAN! WHOA, JULIE? WAIT, I FINISH CHEWING AND SWALLOWING. JULIE LOOKS UP AND RAISES AN EYEBROW. PUTS DOWN HER FORK AND LOOKS DIRECTLY AT ME GAWKING AT HER! IN MY PERIPHERAL VISION I SEE ED LOOKING AT BOTH OF US.

I HAVE TO ASK, "JULIE, YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO HAVE A TWIN SISTER, DO YOU?"

JULIE, PUTS DOWN HER FORK, WIPES HER MOUTH WITH HER NAPKIN, LOOKS OVER AT ED, THEN ME AND ANSWERS. "YES I DO."

"HER NAME?"

"JULIAN. JULIAN BREWER. YOU ARE MARRIED TO HER!"

ALL SOUNDS ARE SUSPENDED. THE CHILDREN ASK TO BE EXCUSED. MY HEART STOPS, I AM SHORT OF BREATH. IT'S AS IF THE ONLY PEOPLE AT THE TABLE ARE MYSELF, ED AND JULIE.

"EXCUSE US," IT'S ED'S VOICE. I WATCH IN SHOCK AS ED STANDS, PLACES A HAND ON JULIE'S SHOULDER AND NODS OVER AT ME TOWARDS AN EMPTY TABLE IN THE CORNER OF THE ROOM. WE BOTH STAND AND FOLLOW ED.

WE SIT, AND I NOTICE A TEAR EMANATING FROM JULIE'S RIGHT EYE. THERE IS A SILENCE. ALL I HEAR ARE SOME CHAIRS SCRAPING THE FLOOR, SOME FOOTSTEPS, COFFEE CUPS BEING PUT ON SAUCERS, SOME WHISPERS ABOUT DESSERT. AND I SENSE THAT THE ROOM HAS EMPTIED OUT.

JULIE PURSES HER LIPS. SHE LOOKS UP AT ME, SWIPES AT THE TEAR AND SAYS, "TWENTY SOME YEARS AGO, I LEFT OUR FAMILY TRIBE, IF YOU WANT TO CALL IT THAT. I WAS YOUNG, WILDER THAN JULIAN AND JUST WANTED TO BE ON MY OWN. I HEADED WEST AND JOINED COMMUNES. WHERE I MET PEOPLE THAT WANTED NEW IDENTITIES. DRUGS, FREEDOM WITHOUT GUILT. WE GOT RID OF OUR PHONES AND HOOKED UP WITH WHOM WE TRUSTED AS COMPANIONS. I NEVER CONTACTED MY FAMILY AND TWIN SISTER. I KNEW I CRUSHED MOM AND DAD BUT I KNEW THAT JULIAN WAS BEYOND CRUSHED. HOW DO YOU ABANDON SOMEONE WHO WAS AN INTEGRAL PART OF YOUR LIFE WITHOUT THE IMPACT AFFECTING THE OTHER. I DID GRIEVE AND STILL DO SOMETIMES WHEN I THINK OF HER AND WONDER WHAT SHE LOOKS LIKE. THAT'S SILLY BEING AN IDENTICAL TWIN, BUT WE PROBABLY LOOK DIFFERENT NOW."

THERE IS A MOMENT OF CONTEMPLATION. NOTHING BEING SAID. SO I FIGURE IT'S MY TURN. "JULIE, WHEN I SAW YOU EARLIER AND ASKED FOR THAT EGG, I COULD NOT GET YOUR IMAGE OUT OF MY MIND. JUST AWHILE AGO I THOUGHT I WAS LOOKING AT JULIAN SITTING ACROSS FROM ME. THERE IS NOT MUCH OF A DIFFERENCE. MAYBE YOUR VOICE, BUT THE WAY YOU GIGGLED AT ME ABOUT THE EGG FOR SETTLING THE COFFEE GROUNDS...THAT WAS PURE TWIN SISTER MIMICKING!"

"HOW IS SHE JIM?"

"THERE IS A STORY TO TELL, BUT YOU ARE THE MISSING LINK TO JULIAN'S ABANDONMENT ISSUES."

"I AM SO SORRY TO HEAR THAT. SO MANY TIMES I WANTED TO REAPPEAR IN HER LIFE, BUT MY GUILT AND SHAME WAS SO HEAVY, I JUST COULDN'T."

"HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THE HAWAIIAN PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS?"
ED CHIPS IN, "HO'OPONOPONO?"

WE SAY IT TOGETHER, "I'M SORRY, PLEASE FORGIVE ME, THANK YOU, I LOVE YOU."

JULIE SHAKES HER HEAD, "OF COURSE, ED SAYS IT A LOT, TO ME." SHE IS SMILING NOW. "I'M NOT SURE IT WOULD BE THAT EASY."

"WELL...HAVE YOU EVER JUST SILENTLY SAID IT TO YOUR FAMILY? TO JULIAN?"

"HUMMM, I HAVE THOUGHT IT IN MY SLEEP, BUT NEVER REALLY SAID IT."

"JULIAN USED TO TELL ME WHEN SHE HAD A DISAGREEMENT WITH YOUR DAD, SHE WOULD TALK TO HIM WHILE HE SLEPT."

"YES, SHE USED TO TELL ME TO DO THAT. BUT I WAS TOO STUBBORN. AND IT SOUNDED TO HOCUS-POCUS TO ME."

"GOSH, WELL, I WONDER IF YOU COULD OR ARE YOU WILLING TO GO BACK TO EMIGRANT WITH BLUE CLOUD AND ME? RECONNECT WITH YOUR SISTER. HEAL A WOUND THAT YOU BOTH SUFFER FROM?"

THERE IS A LONG SILENCE. NOTHING NEEDS TO BE SPOKEN RIGHT NOW. I CAN SEE THAT JULIE HAS BEEN AFFECTED AT A DEEP LEVEL. TEARS ARE WELLING UP AND SHE TURNS TO THE COMFORT OF ED'S SHOULDER. I SLOWLY RISE AND QUIETLY LEAVE. I DO NOT KNOW WHAT ELSE TO SAY OR PLEA, IS THAT WHAT I AM DOING. AND SHOULD I BE MEDALING AS A GO BETWEEN THESE SISTERS? I GO AND GET A COFFEE AND A COUPLE OF STRUDELS. THE PLACE HAS CLEARED OUT. I AM SHAKING A LITTLE. MY NERVES ARE KIND OF SHOT. I LEAVE THE ROOM AND HEAD BACK TO THE CABIN. THERE SITS JOSEPH WITH EYES CLOSED. BLUE CLOUD IS GONE. I PLACE MY COFFEE AND STRUDEL ON TOP OF THE MAP WHICH STILL OCCUPIES THE TABLE.

I QUIETLY GO STAND BY THE FIRE TO WARM MYSELF AND EASE THE TENSION I AM FEELING IN MY BODY. I SWAY AND CLOSE MY EYES. I AM VISUALIZING JULIAN AND JULIE. THERE IS A GENTLE DRUMMING AND A CHANT COMING FROM JOSEPH. OH HOW I APPRECIATE THAT ENERGY OF COMPASSION THAT I AM FEELING. I SEE THE SISTERS HUGGING IN CHILDHOOD. WILL THEY EVER HUG AND LOVE AGAIN?

THE DRUMMING STOPS AND THE FINAL CHANT IS DONE A-CAPPELLA. I OPEN MY EYES AND JOSEPH MOTIONS FOR ME TO SIT. HE HAS COFFEE BREWING AND HAS A COUPLE OF STRUDELS ON A PLATE. WITH MY CONTRIBUTION WE HAVE FOUR STRUDELS. YUM! JOSEPH GRABS A CUP AND POURS SOME COFFEE AND TOPS MINE OFF TO WARM IT. HE SITS. WE

PEER INTO EACH OTHERS EYES. "MY FRIEND ALWAYS PRACTICE GOODNESS AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED AS ABOVE SO BELOW."

"THANK YOU FOR THE SOOTHING CHANT AND DRUMMING. I FELT YOUR COMPASSIONATE HEART."

"IT WAS A CHANT TO CLEAR A PATHWAY FOR JULIE AND JULIAN TO MEET."

"HAVE YOU KNOWN ABOUT JULIE? AND CONNECTING HER WITH JULIAN?"

"NO. I MOSTLY DO BUSINESS WITH ED. BUT I SAW THE RESEMBLANCE. SO I AM HAPPY FOR YOU THAT YOU WERE COURAGEOUS ENOUGH TO ASK."

"BLUE CLOUD KNOWS THAT JULIAN STILL SUFFERS FROM THE ABANDONMENT ISSUE. HE TOLD HER TO STAY AWAY FROM THE WHISKEY. HER TRUTH SERUM SHE HAS USED IN THE PAST. STEPHANIE FOUND HER ONE DAY. AN EMPTY WHISKEY BOTTLE AND A FLOOD OF TEARS."

"WE WILL PRAY FOR THE MOST BENEVOLENT OUTCOME BETWEEN THE SISTERS. LET US SAY IT OUT LOUD."

AND SO WE DO, "WE ASK THE DIVINE, THE GREAT CREATOR AND GOD'S WILL TO REUNITE JULIE AND JULIAN AND FOR THEIR MOST BENEVOLENT OUTCOME TO TRANSPIRE. MAY THEY BOTH BE BLESSED."

"GOOD JIM, HERE, LET'S DRINK AND ENJOY THAT STRUDEL, WHILE WE TALK ABOUT THE COMMUNITY."

CHAPTER 7: THE SAWTOOTH COMMUNITY

AS WE ARE ARE NURTURING OUR FIRST TASTE OF THE HUCKLEBERRY FILLED STRUDEL, JOSEPH IS FIRST TO SPEAK. "YOU ARE WELL AWARE OF THE CHANGING WORLD CLIMATE. NOT CLIMATE CHANGE, BUT THE MIGRATIONS OF FOREIGNERS INTO OTHER COUNTRIES, WAR AND SKIRMISHES WORLDWIDE. THE ECONOMIES COLLAPSING OR ABOUT TO COLLAPSE. THE SHIFTING OF POWER AND CURRENCY DOMINANCE. ALL THAT AND MORE, ESPECIALLY THE DIVISIONS OF PEOPLE AND CULTURE. THAT BEING SAID, STARTING A SMALL COMMUNITY WHERE PEOPLE HONOR EACH OTHER AND STRIVE FOR A SELF RELIANT SUSTAINABLE SYSTEM MIGHT BE A WAY TO SURVIVE OUTSIDE OF WHAT MIGHT BE A

NEW NORMAL. SO WHAT HAS BEEN DISCUSSED THUS FAR AT THE COMMUNITY MEETINGS?"

"WELL, ONE THING WE KNOW IS THAT WE HAVE A LOT OF TALENT WITH ART, GARDENING, RANCHING, HEALING, THERAPY, SPIRITUALITY AND HOMESTEADING TO SUPPORT THE START OF SELF RELIANCE. ALSO, AS YOU ARE AWARE, THE DUDE RANCH BRINGS IN OUTSIDE INCOME. AND THE CATTLE RANCHING IS ALSO A SOURCE OF SOME INCOME. WE ARE NOT SURE HOW AND IF WE WANT OUTSIDERS STILL COMING TO THE RANCH. TOURIST AND VACATIONERS ARE A WHOLE DIFFERENT BREED OF MIND SETS. PLUS, THE EXPOSURE MIGHT BRING TOO MUCH ATTENTION TO THE LIFESTYLE WE WANT TO CREATE."

"TELL ME WHAT ARE PEOPLE GETTING INVOLVED WITH CONTRIBUTING?"

"ARTHUR AND MOLLY ARE MAKING THE DONABE BOWLS AND WILL BE CREATING A NEW SCULPTURE THAT YOU INDICATED. SO MAYBE BOTH ENDEAVORS MIGHT MEAN A SOURCE OF FUNDS. FRANK AND JERRY ARE BUILDING NEW GREEN HOUSES FOR MORE WINTER FOOD PRODUCTION. MAYBE WE CAN SELL PREBUILT GREENHOUSE OR HOOP HOUSES. AND BOTH MANAGE THE CATTLE RANCHING ASPECTS OF THE RANCH. NIRVANA AND MEGAN ARE CREATING A YOGA AND MEDITATION RETREAT CENTER. THAT COULD BE A SOURCE FOR LIKE MINDED VISITORS AS OPPOSED TO THE DUDE RANCH WANNABES. SADIE, JENNY, AND JULIAN ARE SETTING UP A WWOOF HOSTING MEMBERSHIP ACCOUNT WHICH WILL ATTRACT YOUNGER PEOPLE AND BECOME A RECRUITING TOOL FOR A NEXT GENERATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE WHO WANT A RURAL LIFESTYLE. MAGGIE IS WORKING ON MARKETING THE RANCH AS A RETREAT CENTER FOR INDIVIDUALS THAT WANT TO FOCUS ON CHANGING THEIR LIFESTYLE AND CONNECT WITH THEIR SPIRITUALITY."

"JIM, BLUE CLOUD HAS MENTIONED HIS RELATIONSHIP WITH MAGGIE. THAT IS FINE BY ME. WALKING STICK KNOWS AND BOTH HAVE TOLD OUR CLAN THAT MAGGIE IS WILLING TO LEARN OUR WAYS. OUR CULTURE."

"THAT ALL HAPPENED WHILE I WAS IN INDIA. SO YOU KNOW AS MUCH AS ME. YOU KNOW THEIR MEETING PLACE IS BY YOU AND THE BISON PART OF THE SCULPTURE. I HAVE ALSO USED THAT SPECIAL AREA TO CONNECT MY ENERGY WITH YOURS."

"THANK YOU. THAT IS SPECIAL THAT YOU FOLLOW THE WAYS OF BLUE CLOUD. HE TOLD ME THAT YOU USED IT BEFORE YOUR JOURNEY AND

HAD A FINALE RECONCILIATION WITH JONI. IS YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HER FINALLY FREE OF PASSION?"

"YES."

"GOOD."

"YES, AND JULIAN HAS HELPED A GREAT DEAL WITH JONI'S HEALING PROCESS. I FORGOT TO MENTION, JONI AND SAMMIE ARE LEARNING MASSAGE AND THE ART OF HEALING. THEY ARE ALSO STUDENTS OF HANDS ON HEALING. SO IT IS IMPERATIVE THAT THEY OVERCOME THEIR PHYSICAL PASSIONS. THERE IS A GROUP OF US, INCLUDING ME THAT MEET TO WORK ON THAT ASPECT OF OUR LIVES."

"I AM GLAD TO KNOW ABOUT THAT." JOSEPH SWIPES THE CRUMBS OFF OF THE MAP AND WE SET OUR EMPTY PLATES AND CUPS TO THE SIDE. "I LIKE THE IDEA OF THE TOWN AS OPPOSED TO THE SCATTERED CABINS. THERE IS PLENTY OF ROOM TO HAVE SPACE BETWEEN BUILDINGS AND PRIVACY. I JUST WONDER IF MY CLAN WILL FEEL COMFORTABLE ABOUT LIVING AMONGST THE GROUP."

"I SURE DO ENVISION THAT HAPPENING."

"GOOD. COUNSEL WITH BLUE CLOUD AND WALKING STICK ABOUT THAT."

"HOW DO WE KEEP PEOPLE FROM ACCESSING THE NATIONAL FOREST AND STATE LANDS. AND WILL THAT BE A PROBLEM WITH THE LOCALS?"

"WELL, THE GREAT FLOOD TOOK OUT CABELLA'S BRIDGE. THAT HAS KEPT A LOT OF TRAFFIC OUT OF THE AREA. BUT MAYBE WE CAN WORK SOMETHING OUT WITH THE NATIONAL FOREST SERVICE OR A CONSERVATION GROUP."

"WOULDN'T THAT CLOSE OFF LAND USE FOR HUNTING?"

"YES, BUT THERE IS ENOUGH RANCH LAND THAT WE COULD JUST PUT A SMALL PORTION INTO CONSERVATION. SAY TWO PER CENT OF THE LAND, JUST ENOUGH TO BLOCK ACCESS. THESE NEW CORPORATE AND RICH RANCHERS ARE DOING THAT IN EMIGRANT. IT WILL HAVE TO BE RESEARCHED."

"MIGHT BRING UP SOME LAW SUITS."

"MAYBE."

"WE HAVE DISCUSSED A LOT TONIGHT. THE MAIN PART OF THE RANCH WHERE THE TOWN MIGHT FORM IS UNDER THE SAWTOOTH. HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF A NAME FOR THE COMMUNITY YET?"

"NO."

JULIAN - IT FEELS LONELY TONIGHT WITHOUT JIM. I AM GRATEFUL FOR FRANK AND MOLLY TRACKING DOWN SOME INFORMATION ABOUT HIM. GOD, HE HAD TO DO THAT, JUST LEAVE ME. THINKING THE ANSWER TO MY SADNESS WAS KNOWING FRANK WOULD TAKE CARE OF ME? I AM FEELING A HEAVINESS TONIGHT. AND WHAT IS IT, SOME GUILT, SHAME ABOUT LEAVING JIM? STILL AFTER ALL THE RECONCILIATION AND FORGIVENESS. I REACH UP FOR THE WHISKEY AND PLACE IT ON THE TABLE. I GO UNDER THE BED AND PULL OUT A LOCK BOX THAT JIM DOESN'T EVEN KNOW ABOUT. I GET THE KEY THAT I HIDE UNDER A BED POST. I OPEN THE BOX AND PULL OUT SOME OLD FAMILY PHOTOS. AND THERE SHE IS, MY TWIN. AT WHAT, ELEVEN, TWELVE IS THAT WHAT WE WERE IN THIS PHOTO. WITH MOM AND DAD. GOD WHY DID SHE LEAVE. ALL OF US. JUST BROKE OUR HEARTS. I CAN FEEL THE TEARS STARTING. I LOOK OVER AT THE WHISKEY AND GET A SHOT GLASS OFF THE SHELF. I PLACE IT NEXT TO THE UNOPENED PINT. I WIPE MY TEARS WITH MY SHIRT SLEEVE. I AM NOT ABOUT TO START UP WITH EMOTIONS RIGHT NOW. WHAT WAS THAT LIKE WHEN JULIE LEFT LIKE A THIEF IN THE NIGHT? HUMMM, THE FEAR WE ALL HAD, JUST A NOTE OF WHY SHE HAD TO GO. LIKE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO REASSURE US THAT ALL WAS WELL AND IT WASN'T ABOUT US. NO FAULT OF OURS. WELL AT LEAST SHE WAS CLEAR ABOUT THAT. THEN I LEFT MY FAMILY THAT CAME FROM MY WOMB AND THE MAN THAT PROVIDED SO MUCH. I LEFT NO NOTE. I WITNESS MY HAND ON THE WHISKEY. I HEAR BLUE CLOUD'S WARNING, "JULIAN, STAY AWAY FROM THE WHISKEY". AND HE IS THE ONE THAT PUT IT HERE. MY OTHER HAND HAS THE SHOT GLASS AND I AM TAPPING THE TABLE WITH IT. I FEEL JITTERY. I CLOSE MY EYES AND I SEE JIM AND ME WRAPPED IN EACH OTHERS ARMS COMFORTING EACH OTHER. HOW DO SINGLE PEOPLE COPE? JONI AND FRANK HAVING TO STEP OUT OF THE WAY WHEN JIM AND I REUNITED. AND HERE I AM LOST WITHOUT MY TWIN SISTER ALL THESE YEARS. IT'S CRAZY HAVING A CONNECTION WITH ANOTHER HUMAN THAT CAME FROM THE SAME EGG. I RELEASE MY GRIP ON THE GLASS AND BOTTLE. I DECIDE THAT IT IS BEST TO TAKE A WALK. A SLOW CONTEMPLATIVE WALK IN THE

DARKNESS OF NATURE. I PLACE THE WHISKEY BACK FROM WHERE I GOT IT. I GET UP AND GET ON SOME WINTER GEAR. I AM OUT THE DOOR, THE CRISP COLD AIR WAKES ME AND CLEARS MY HEAD. I LOOK UP AT THE MAGNIFICENT STAR LITE NIGHT SKY. I TAKE A FEW STEPS AWAY FROM THE CABIN AND LOOK NORTH. THE SKY IS LITE UP WITH A CURTAIN OF COLOR. THE BOREALIS, I DID NOT EXPECT NORTHERN LIGHTS LET ALONE A FULL BLOWN AURORA BOREALIS. I AM AWE STRUCK. I WALK FURTHER FROM THE CABIN, NEAR THE CREEK AND SEE MORE OF IT. IT HAS BEEN 15 YEARS SINCE I HAVE SEEN SUCH A SPECTACLE. I SMELL SMOKE FROM FIRE AND IT'S NOT FROM THE CABIN CHIMNEY. I LOOK OVER TOWARDS THE SOUTHWEST, OVER THE BUSH AND SEE THAT IT'S COMING FROM THE SWEAT LODGE. I CROSS THE CREEK AND MEANDER TOWARDS THE LODGE. I SEE SMOKE COMING FROM THE FIRE PIT WHERE HOT ROCKS WAIT TO BE PUT INTO THE LODGE. THE TARP THAT ACTS AS A DOOR FOR THE LODGE IS PUSHED ASIDE AND IT'S WALKING STICK THAT COMES OUT. I QUIETLY MOVE CLOSER AS SHE BENDS DOWN AND SHOVELS A FEW MORE ROCKS INTO A BUCKET.

"WALKING STICK..."

SHE LOOKS OVER AT ME AS SHE STRAIGHTENS OUT, "HELLO SISTER."

"YOU ARE TAKING A SWEAT BY YOURSELF?"

"YES, I AM IN MORNING. I WANT TO VISIT MY CLAN SISTER."

"OH, I HOPE I AM NOT DISTURBING YOU."

"NO, DO YOU HAVE ANYBODY THAT YOU WANT TO TALK TO THIS NIGHT? YOU CAN JOIN ME IF YOU DO."

"I HAVE BEEN THINKING ABOUT MY SISTER, TOO. CAN I JOIN YOU?"

"YES, COME."

I ENTER AS WALKING STICK PULLS BACK THE TARP. I SMELL BURNT SAGE. THERE ARE FOUR CANDLES LIT AND EACH SITS IN THE FOUR DIRECTIONS, NORTH, EAST, SOUTH, AND WEST. THE HOT PUMICE ROCKS ARE STEAMING. THERE IS A BUCKET OF CREEK WATER WITH A LARGE LADLE IN IT TO POUR WATER OVER THE ROCKS. SHE MOTIONS ME TO SIT. I CHOOSE THE NORTH NODE. WOMAN OF THE NORTH. SHE SITS AT THE EAST NODE...WISDOM. THERE IS A SILENCE AS WE SAY OUR PERSONAL OFFERINGS AND CONNECT WITH OUR SISTERS. AFTER A FEW MINUTES I

INTERRUPT THE SILENCE AND ASK, "WALKING STICK, IS YOUR SISTER OLDER OR YOUNGER THAN YOU?"

"MY DEAR JULIAN, MY YOUNGER SISTER PASSED A FEW YEARS AGO."

"I AM SORRY TO HEAR THAT. HOW OLD WAS SHE?"

"THIRTY NINE, I AM 42 IN ANSWER TO YOUR NEXT QUESTION."

I SEE A SLIGHT SMILE ON HER FACE IN THE DIM LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES. "DO YOU MIND IF...."

"SHE DIED OF WHISKEY. SHE WAS WITH THE WRONG CROWD OF PEOPLE AND ONE NIGHT THERE WAS A TERRIBLE ACCIDENT. THEIR CAR WENT OFF ONE OF THE SHARP TURNS ON CHIEF JOSEPH HIGHWAY. ABOVE THE CLARK FORK CANYON."

"I AM SAD TO HEAR ABOUT YOUR FAMILY TRAGEDY."

"I WILL TELL YOU ABOUT MY SISTER, THEN YOU CAN TELL ME ABOUT YOUR SISTER AND THEN WE CAN BE AT PEACE AS WE OFFER OUR BLESSINGS TO THEM. MY SISTER'S NAME WAS ANTELOPE RUN. SHE WAS AN EARLY CRAWLER AND RAN LIKE THE WIND AS SHE GOT OLDER. SHE WAS A RESTLESS ONE. SHE DID NOT WANT TO BE CONTROLLED BY ANY OUTSIDE INFLUENCES. SHE WANTED CONTROL OF HER LIFE BUT SHE DID NOT UNDERSTAND HOW TO LIVE WITH THE CLAN'S WAY OF LIFE. SHE REBELLED MUCH LIKE ONE OF OUR GREAT CHIEFTAINS, CHIEF JOSEPH OF THE NEZ PRECE TRIBE. BUT SHE WAS NOT AT PEACE WHENEVER SHE RESISTED OUR FATE AS AN INDIGENOUS PEOPLE. TO LIVE LIFE AS THE FATE THAT ONE IS GIVEN IN THIS LIFETIME, IS NOT WHAT ANY CULTURE WANTS. FOR OUR SMALL ABSAROKA CLAN THAT HUNTED THIS LAND WHERE WE ARE RIGHT NOW IT HAS BEEN A LONG PATIENT TIME TO BE GIVEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE SIDE BY SIDE WITH OUR VISITORS OF THIS NATION. ANTELOPE RUN MUST HAVE FELT THE ANCESTORS RESISTANCE AND LOSS OF THIS LAND. THERE ARE THREE WAYS OF A TRIBE MEMBER TO LIVE. ONE IS TO STAY CONNECTED TO IT'S CULTURE AND NOT LOSE THE WAY OF THE CLAN. THE OTHER IS TO SUBSUME THE WHITE MANS WAYS. OR ONE CAN REBEL AGAINST BOTH AND TRY TO CONTROL EVERYTHING THAT IS NOT WHAT ONE DESIRES. MY SISTER TRIED TO BE IN CONTROL AND LOST HER WAY. HER FRUSTRATION WAS TO REJECT ANYTHING THAT DID NOT FIT HER WAY TO LIVE. SO SHE WAS ALWAYS IN CONFLICT."

WALKING STICK STOPS TALKING. SHE WAITS AS SHE LOOKS AT ME.

"THANK YOU WALKING STICK FOR SHARING YOUR LOSS OF A FAMILY MEMBER. I FEEL YOUR LOVE FOR HER DESPITE HER CHOICES. I WILL SHARE MY SADNESS WITH YOU, NOW. I AM A TWIN. I HAVE AN IDENTICAL TWIN THAT LEFT OUR FAMILY WHEN SHE WAS NINETEEN. SHE LEFT A NOTE LETTING US KNOW THAT SHE LOVED US BUT WANTED TO LIVE HER OWN JOURNEY WITHOUT THE INFLUENCE OF OUR ANCESTORS AND IMMEDIATE FAMILY. SHE WAS ALWAYS THE EXTROVERT OF THE TWO OF US. SHE ACTED FEARLESS WITH ANYTHING SHE DID. I MIMICKED HER BUT AS WE GOT OLDER IN OUR TEEN YEARS WE HAD DIFFERENT FRIENDS AND INFLUENCES IN OUR LIVES. WHEN SHE LEFT THAT WAS THE END OF ALL CONTACT WITH HER. MY MOTHER, FATHER AND I WERE CRUSHED. MY PARENTS WERE SHAKEN, THINKING THAT AS PARENTS THEY DID SOMETHING WRONG. MAYBE TOO MUCH DISCIPLINE. THEY DID THE BEST THEY COULD. ALL THEY KNOW WAS THE WAY THEIR PARENTS RAISED THEM AND THE INFLUENCE OF A CHRISTIAN UPBRINGING. YOU KNOW ABOUT MY ISSUE WITH ABANDONMENT. WHEN I LEFT MY FAMILY WITH JIM, I DID NOT LEAVE A NOTE. I REACTED WITH MALICE AND FORETHOUGHT. I BURIED MY EMOTIONS VERY DEEP INTO MY BEING. BLUE CLOUD TOLD ME TO STAY AWAY FROM THE WHISKEY. AND THEN HE PLACES THE WHISKEY IN OUR CABIN. HE KNOWS THAT I CLAIM IT TO ACT AS A TRUTH SERUM. I FOOL MYSELF. SO TONIGHT I ALMOST BROKE THE SEAL OF THE WHISKEY BOTTLE. AND INSTEAD I AM HERE. IN THE GRACE OF YOUR PRESENCE. AND EVEN THOUGH I MORN FOR MY SISTER, I DO NOT KNOW IF SHE LIVES OR IF SHE TOO HAS PASSED, LIKE ANTELOPE RUN. BUT YOU HAVE GIVEN ME SOME PERSPECTIVE. MAYBE I SHOULD USE THE SKILLS OF MOLLY AND FRANK TO FIND OUT ABOUT MY MISSING SISTER. THEY AND JOSEPH FOUND ME AND REUNITED ME WITH JIM."

"THAT IS SOMETHING YOU MIGHT CONSIDER. BUT TONIGHT LET US BE WITH OUR SISTERS. LET US VISIT THEM AS WE KNEW THEM IN THE PAST. AND HOW WE MIGHT RELEASE THEM FROM OUR FUTURE. LET US SEND THEM OUR LOVE ENERGY FOR OUR ENERGY IS GREAT AND IT CAN TRAVEL. AND LET US ALSO USE THIS TIME TO VISUALIZE HOW OUR COMMUNITY MIGHT EXIST IN ACCEPTANCE OF CULTURAL INFLUENCES. LET US HOLD THE VISION OF ACCEPTANCE AND A WILLINGNESS. LET US LEARN AND APPRECIATE WHAT THE OTHER CULTURES BRING US. AND LET US HONOR BELIEFS WHETHER THEY PERSONALLY SERVE US OR NOT. AND FINALLY LET US NOT TRY TO CONTROL THE OTHERS THAT WILL JOIN THIS COMMUNITY. MAYBE WE WILL FINALLY BECOME WHAT THE UNTIED STATES WAS MEANT TO BE. THE BALANCE IT WAS SUPPOSED TO HOLD FOR THE WORLD. NOT THROUGH WAR, BUT THROUGH PEACE."

"YES, OBSERVE ONE ANOTHER FROM A LOVING HEART. JUST THAT THOUGHT BRINGS JOY TO MY SOUL AND AN INSTANT SMILE ON MY FACE WHEN I SEE ALL OF OUR NEW TRIBE. AND NOT JUST OUR IMMEDIATE CLAN BUT THE INCLUSION OF YOUR CLAN. AND I SEE BLUE CLOUD AND MAGGIE, HOW THEY HAVE ACCEPTED EACH OTHER AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO SEE THROUGH EACH OTHERS EYES, SO TO SPEAK. I KNOW IT IS EARLY IN THEIR RELATIONSHIP SO WE CAN ONLY HOLD THE VISION FOR THEIR RELATIONSHIP AS AN EXAMPLE OF TWO CULTURES GETTING ALONG"

"WELL SAID JULIAN. I AM GLAD YOU STAYED AWAY FROM THE WHISKEY TONIGHT. I AM SO GLAD THAT YOU JOINED ME. DID YOU SEE THE AURORA BOREALIS TONIGHT?"

"YES IN ALL IT'S GLORY."

"WE HAVE A LOT TO BE GRATEFUL FOR TONIGHT. LET US GIVE GRATITUDE TO THE GREAT CREATOR TONIGHT."

AND WITH THAT COMMENT WE STAY SILENT. OH HOW GRATEFUL I AM FOR THIS INTERACTION. I CAN SEE CLEARLY NOW. AND I KNOW DEEP IN MY HEART THAT JULIE IS ALIVE AND WELL. "JULIE, LISTEN TO ME. MOM AND DAD ARE ALIVE AND WELL. AND SO AM I. JUST LET US KNOW THAT YOU ARE TOO. CONNECT NOW. PLEASE." I LAY IN SUPPLICATION AT THE FEET OF GOD, OF KRISNA, OF THE GREAT CREATOR. IT'S ALL ONE AND THE SAME FOR ME. THAT POSE OF JIM AT THE FEET OF STEPHANIE IN THE GREAT TREE SCULPTURE TAKES ON THE MEANING OF WHAT JIM FELT THEN, THAT DAY. I HEARD ABOUT IT. HE TOLD ME. IT'S WHAT HE CALLS THE SWEET SURRENDER. HUMMM, WALKING STICK NEVER MENTIONED IF BLUE CLOUD CONNECTED WITH JOSEPH OR JIM YET. BUT I HAVE THIS SENSE THAT I WILL SEE JIM SOON. HE HAS NOT FINISHED WHAT EVER IT IS HIS DIVINE HAD IN MIND. WHEN IT TOLD HIM "YOU'RE NOT FINISHED YET". YOU ARE NOT FINISHED WITH ME EITHER BUSTER. AND I KNOW WE STILL HAVE MUCH TO WORK ON IN OUR RELATIONSHIP. AND I AM SO GRATEFUL. AND CONCERNING YOU JULIE, MY TWIN, WE ARE NOT FINISHED YET. FEEL ME TONIGHT, FEEL MOM, FEEL DAD. 'PLEASE FORGIVE ME, I AM SORRY, THANK YOU, I LOVE YOU.' AND I ASK FOR THE MOST BENEVOLENT OUTCOME THAT I MIGHT SEE MY TWIN AGAIN!

WALKING STICK - I AM SO GRATEFUL FOR THIS SOULFUL SISTER. HOW WE CONNECT SEEMS SO DIFFERENT THAN HOW OUR BROTHERS CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER. MAYBE I AM MISSING SOMETHING. I SENSE THAT SAMMIE, FRANK AND JIM HAVE A DIFFERENT CONNECTION THAN

OTHER MEN. I SEE IT WITH JERRY TOO. IS IT BECAUSE OF THE MEN'S GROUP THAT JOSEPH STARTED. WILL BLUE CLOUD CONTINUE WITH IT WHEN MOLLY'S BARN IS FINISHED AND USED FOR SPECIAL GATHERINGS? THERAPY AS THE WHITE MAN CALLS IT. I SURE HOPE SO. I FEEL SUCH A YEARNING FROM MEN TO UNDERSTAND THEIR EMOTIONS BETTER AND CONNECT WITH EACH OTHER. I CAN SEE IT IN THE EYES OF MEN WHO WITNESS HOW US SISTERS CONNECT. WHAT HOLDS THEM BACK? HOW MIGHT THAT CHANGE?

CHAPTER 8 "YOU'VE GOT TO SERVE SOMEBODY"

BOB DYLAN

JOSEPH AND I WALK OVER TO THE MAIN LODGE FOR BREAKFAST. WE SEE BLUE CLOUD HEADING OVER THERE TOO. FROM HIS CABIN. HE INSPECTS HIS ELK KILL, AND GIVES US A WAVE. WE CONTINUE ON IN SILENCE. SINCE THE TIME WE WOKE UP JOSEPH AND I HAVE NOT SPOKEN. I STARTED THE FIRE, HE MADE THE COFFEE. WE ROLLED UP THE MAPS AND JUST SAT IN SILENCE. WE LOOKED AT EACH OTHER AND JUST SMILED EVER SO SLIGHTLY. I WAS ABOUT TO SAY SOMETHING AND HE PUT HIS INDEX FINGER TO HIS LIP INDICATING SILENCE. WHEN WE FINISHED OUR COFFEE I WAS ABOUT TO PLACE ANOTHER LOG ON THE FIRE AND JOSEPH SHOOK HIS HEAD NO. SO WE EXITED THE CABIN AND HEADED FOR BREAKFAST. THE LODGE WAS EMPTY. THE HUNTERS HAD AN EARLY MORNING START, BEFORE DAWN. AT ONE TABLE SAT ED AND JULIE. BLUE CLOUD HAD A PLATE FULL AND WAS ON HIS WAY TO JOINING THEM. I NOTICED TWO OTHER OPEN PLACES, FOR JOSEPH AND I. WE SERVED OURSELVES AND HEADED OVER TO THE TABLE.

WE SAT AND THERE WAS A MOTION BY ED TO HOLD HANDS. WITH HEADS BOWED HE LEAD A PRAYER. "MAY THIS AUSPICIOUS DAY BE BLESSED, WE THANK MOTHER EARTH FOR IT'S ABUNDANT SUPPLY OF FOOD AND RESOURCES. WE THANK THE GARDENERS AND FARMERS, THE COOKS AND THOSE THAT DELIVERED THE FOOD TO OUR KITCHEN. WE ARE GRATEFUL FOR OUR GUESTS AND FRIENDS AND THAT THEY ARE ALIVE AND WELL. AMEN"

THERE IS A BRIEF SILENCE AS WE ALL "DIG IN". THE FOOD IS DELICIOUS. I HAVE MY HEAD DOWN, LOOKING AT WHAT I WANT TO PUT IN MY MOUTH NEXT, WHEN I HEAR JULIE'S VOICE. "I WANT TO GO TO THE RANCH WITH JIM AND BLUE CLOUD. WHEN WILL YOU BE LEAVING?"

THERE IS A PAUSE AND BLUE CLOUD SPEAKS, "MY ELK HAS BLEED. WE CAN LEAVE AFTER BREAKFAST."

JOSEPH IS NEXT, "THE ROAD TO MY CAMP IS BURIED BY THE AVALANCHE."

ED, "YOU WILL STAY HERE UNTIL SPRING WHEN THE ROAD IS CLEARED."

"THANK YOU MY FRIEND."

I HAD PUT MY FORK DOWN AND WATCHED AS PEOPLE SPOKE. NOW MY EYES HAVE SETTLED ON JULIE WHO HAS HER EYES ON ME. I HEAR FORKS AND SAUCERS BEING SCRAPPED AS THE OTHERS CONTINUE TO EAT.

"WHAT HAS SWAYED YOU TO SEE JULIAN?"

"I WAS AWAKENED IN MY SLEEP. THERE WAS A SONG THAT CAME TO ME, "I SHALL BE RELEASED", DO YOU KNOW IT?"

"YES,....."

"SO, IT CALLED TO ME. TO CONNECT WITH MY SOULMATE FROM BIRTH."

I GIVE HER THE SLIGHTEST OF SMILES AND NOD. IT IS A MOMENT OF IMMENSE GRATITUDE I FEEL IN MY HEART. I AM CHOKED UP. ED NODS AT ME AS IF HE KNOWS WHAT I AM FEELING. JOSEPH AND BLUE CLOUD SEEM OCCUPIED WITH THEIR FOOD AS IF NOTHING HAS BEEN SPOKEN.

WE EAT IN SILENCE, FOR AWHILE. THEN JOSEPH SAYS, "JIM WE HAVE FINISHED WHAT WE SET OUT TO DO. AT LEAST TO START WITH. I AM SURE THE GROUP WILL HAVE A LOT TO CONTRIBUTE. FIRST NAME THE COMMUNITY AND HAVE MOLLY CREATE THE NEXT SCULPTURE. LET EVERYBODY MAKE SUGGESTIONS. JUST LIKE THAT LAST REUNION WE HAD. WHEN THE THEME WAS ABOUT ALL OF US AS A GROUP. TOGETHER, AS ONE BODY OF PEOPLE."

BLUE CLOUD ASK, "ED CAN YOU HELP ME LOAD UP THE ELK INTO MY TRUCK?"

"SURE, OF COURSE."

"GOOD, WE CAN LEAVE IN ABOUT AN HOUR, WILL THAT WORK FOR YOU JULIE?"

"YES, BLUE CLOUD. THANK YOU FOR BRINGING JIM TO THE MEDICINE WHEEL."

WE ALL GO TO OUR RESPECTIVE CABINS TO GATHER OUR BELONGINGS. WHEN JOSEPH AND I ENTER, JOSEPH BECKONS ME TO SIT. "LET US PASS PIPE FOR THE LAST TIME."

"WHOA, WHAT DO YOU MEAN FOR THE LAST TIME."

"FOR NOW. LET US STAY PRESENT."

HE GETS HIS PIPE AND TOBACCO AND STARTS THE PROCESS. IT IS A RITUAL I HAVE COME TO EXPECT AND ENJOY. ACTUALLY ANTICIPATE. IT USUALLY HAS A PROFOUND MEANING, ESPECIALLY FOR PEACE AND GOODWILL. JOSEPH TAKES THE FIRST DRAW, AND HANDS IT TO ME. HE BLOWS OUT A PUFF OF THAT SWEET SMOKE.

"JIM, DURING YOUR COMMUNITY MEETINGS YOU MIGHT WANT TO DISCUSS THE TYPE OF CULTURE YOU ALL WANT TO BASE YOUR LIVING TOGETHER AS A PEOPLE."

"YOU MEAN HOW WE WILL CARE FOR EACH OTHER? BE AN INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY?"

"YES, THAT IS ONE AREA. HOW ABOUT THE ECONOMICS. WILL YOU GO BACK TO A BARTER TYPE SYSTEM, OR TRADE TIME? HOW WILL YOUR ECONOMY INTERFACE WITH WHATEVER COMES ABOUT...SUCH AS THE DIGITAL CURRENCY OR SOME PEOPLE ARE HOARDING GOLD AND SILVER. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"

"YES, THAT AND HOW WILL EVERYBODY CONTRIBUTE TO THE FOOD ASPECT OF THINGS AND MAINTAINING OUR NATURAL RESOURCES."

"GOOD JIM, YOU MIGHT HAVE TO CONSIDER GROWTH. NEW FAMILIES, HOW MUCH CAN THE RANCH SUSTAIN."

"THERE WILL BE BUILDING HOMES TOO. HOPEFULLY PEOPLE CAN EMBRACE HOMES MADE WITH THE RESOURCES ALREADY ON THE RANCH OR MAYBE BUILD WITH RECYCLED WOOD AND WINDOWS FROM DEMOLISHED HOMES AND BARNs."

"GOOD, I THINK MY CLAN IS DONE LIVING IN TEEPEES. BUT THERE MIGHT BE A FEW THAT WILL. LIKE BLUE CLOUD AND WALKING STICK."

WE TAKE OUR LAST PUFF. JOSEPH PLACES THE PIPE DOWN AND HANDS ME A HAND DRUM MADE FROM BUFFALO SKIN STRETCHED ON A ROUND FRAME. HE TOO TAKES ONE AND WITH OUR DRUM STICKS BEGIN A BEAT. JUST LIKE WE USED TO DO IN OUR MEN'S GATHERINGS.

THE BEAT GETS LOUDER AND MELODIC. JOSEPH STARTS A SIMPLE CHANT THAT I CAN FOLLOW AND JOIN. THE ENERGY IS BECOMING TRANCE LIKE. AS WE START TO SLOW DOWN THE BEAT BECOMES SLOWER AND THE CHANTING STOPS. THEN WE STOP AT PRECISELY THE SAME TIME. WE PLACE OUR DRUMS ON THE TABLE CLOSE OUR EYES AND BE STILL. I AM SEEING JULIAN AND CONNECTING WITH HER FROM ANOTHER REALM. JUST FEELING HER FROM AFAR. AFTER SO MANY YEARS OF BEING TOGETHER, IT IS EASY TO DO. I KNOW SHE MUST HAVE DONE THE SAME. WE HAVE SHARED TIMES WHEN WE DID THAT, WHEN WE WERE SEPARATED. THAT WAS ALWAYS THE STRENGTH OF OUR MARRIAGE AND UNION. DESPITE ALL DISAGREEMENTS, AND ANY OTHER DISCORDANT ENERGY. I AM LOOKING AT JOSEPH AND HE OPENS HIS EYES.

"JIM, THE CHANT WAS TO OPEN A PATHWAY FOR JULIE AND JULIAN."

"THANK YOU."

THERE IS A KNOCK AT THE DOOR. JOSEPH GETS UP AND OPENS IT. BLUE CLOUD ENTERS, "IT IS TIME FOR US TO LEAVE UNCLE. I AM HAPPY THAT YOUR VISION QUEST HAS LEAD YOU TO THIS PLACE TO BE WITH ED AND JULIE FOR AWHILE. THEY ARE GOOD PEOPLE TO TRUST."

"YES BLUE CLOUD. WE HAVE DISCUSSED A LOT. COUNCIL THIS GROUP AND CONSIDER THE WAYS TO UNITE ALL THE DIFFERENCES."

"I WILL, YOU HAVE TAUGHT ME WELL, AND I HAVE THE POWER OF WALKING STICK TO ASSIST ME."

"JIM, MY BROTHER. MY WHITE BUFFALO MAN, LET US HUG, UNTIL WE SEE EACH OTHER AGAIN."

WE EMBRACE WITH A WARM, LONG FORGOTTEN HUG FROM OUR SOULS. I PUT ON MY SKI BOOTS. AND JOSEPH ASK, "IF YOU FIND A LOST MOCCASIN MAKE SURE ED GETS IT. HE HAS A BARBECUE RECIPE HE WANTS TO TRY."

WE LAUGH, AND RAISE OUR HANDS AS A DEPARTING SALUTATION. I SEE JULIE ALREADY IN THE TRUCK WHICH IS WARMING UP. ED IS SAYING HIS FAREWELL AND GIVING HER A LAST KISS. AT LEAST FOR A FEW DAYS. I WONDER IF THEY CONNECT FROM AFAR LIKE JULIAN AND I. BLUE CLOUD MUST HAVE HEARD THAT FROM THE INNER. HE TURNS TO ME AND REMARKS. "TRUE LOVERS NEVER LEAVE EACH OTHERS HEARTS. TRUE LOVE STAYS FOREVER."

CHAPTER 9: THE SIGN FOR PEACE

AS WE ENTER THE RANCH BLUE CLOUD PARKS IN FRONT OF THE RANCH HOUSE WHERE FRANK AND JERRY LIVE. THERE ARE HORSES IN THE CORRAL AND FRANK'S TRUCK IS PARKED AT THE HOUSE. JULIE LOOKS A LITTLE BIT APPREHENSIVE. HESITANTLY SHE SAYS, "IS THIS WHERE MY SISTER IS?"

BLUE CLOUD GIVES HER A LONG LOOK, "NO, YOU WILL WALK ABOUT A MILE, FOLLOW THIS ROAD, THERE WILL BE A SMALL BRIDGE THAT CROSSES A CREEK. JUST BEFORE THE BRIDGE ON YOUR LEFT YOU WILL FIND A PATH. FOLLOW IT UNTIL YOU COME TO A CLEARING AND SEE A PIONEER CABIN. YOU WILL FIND JULIAN. IT WILL GIVE YOU TIME TO CLEAR ALL OF THE THOUGHTS YOU HAD AS WE DROVE HERE. BEST TO MEET HER AS IF IT WERE FOR THE FIRST TIME."

"JULIE, WE WILL BRING YOUR BAGS LATER, WHEREVER YOU END UP TONIGHT," I REASSURE HER.

BLUE CLOUD AND I GET OUT AND JULIE TAKES MY HAND AS SHE EXITS THE TRUCK. I HANG ONTO IT AND SHE TURNS TOWARDS ME. THERE SEEMS TO BE NO WORDS TO SPEAK SO I KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT AND GIVE HER A NOD. HER EYES SHOW SO MUCH EMOTION THAT NOTHING NEEDS TO BE SAID. I AM FEELING HOW SCARED SHE MIGHT BE BUT WHAT DO I KNOW. AND REALLY I DON'T WANT TO KNOW ANYTHING. ALL I WANT TO DO IS FEEL THE GRATITUDE THAT I HAVE FOR HER PRESENCE RIGHT NOW. WE SLACK OUR GRIP AND SHE LOOKS DOWN THE ROAD, BACK AT ME AND BLUE CLOUD AND MUMBLES, "THANK YOU."

JULIE - I AM SO GLAD THAT OUR CONVERSATION WAS LIMITED ON THE SIX HOUR DRIVE. AND I AM SO BLESSED THAT I HAVE THIS TIME TO BE WITH MY OWN THOUGHTS. THERE WAS SO MUCH ROLE PLAYING THAT I IMAGINED DURING THE RIDE. I REALLY DO NEED THIS TIME TO GET OUT OF MY HEAD AND TAKE A SLOW WALK UNDER THIS LATE AFTERNOON SUN. I START MY WALK UNENCUMBERED BY PHYSICAL BAGGAGE. ESPECIALLY SINCE THE MENTAL BAGGAGE I CARRY SEEMS SO HEAVY. WILL JULIAN BE JOYFUL, SHOCKED, UPSET? THAT IS WHAT I NEED TO CLEAR OUT OF MY MIND. HOW CAN I JUST BE STILL. THIS IS A GOOD STRATEGY BY BLUE CLOUD. AS I WALK AND ADMIRE THE SURROUNDING PEAKS AND FOREST, I SLOWLY START TO SETTLE DOWN. JIM SHARED A SMALL MEMORY HE HAD WITH HIS INDIA EXPERIENCE, AND HIS SKI TREK TO FIND JOSEPH. HOW THE WALK AND APPRECIATION OF THE SURROUNDING NATURAL ELEMENTS ALWAYS SEEMED TO GET HIM OUT

OF HIS HEAD, EVENTUALLY. AND THAT IS WHAT I AM STARTING TO LET GO OF. ONE THOUGHT AT A TIME. I CAN SEE WHAT APPEARS TO BE A SMALL FLAT BRIDGE CROSSING ABOUT A HUNDRED YARDS AHEAD. THAT BECOMES MY FOCUS. NOW I AM FOCUSED ON A DESTINATION. AS I GET CLOSER I SEE A MOOSE ON THE RIGHT OFF THE ROAD ABOUT ONE HUNDRED FEET TO THE RIGHT OF THE BRIDGE. SHE IS BUSY GNAWING ON SOME BRANCHES. I KEEP MY EYES ON HER AND THEN I AM AT THE BRIDGE. I LOOK TO MY LEFT AND I SEE THE PATHWAY BLUE CLOUD HAD MENTIONED. NOW I FEEL SOME NERVOUSNESS. I TELL MYSELF IT'S OKAY, WHAT DID I EXPECT. THERE IS SO MUCH UNKNOWN I MIGHT AS WELL JUST LET IT BE. OF COURSE THE MIND WANTS TO CONFUSE ME. PUT THE FEAR OF WHAT MIGHT HAPPEN INTO MY CONSCIOUSNESS. LET'S SEE, I DO HAVE A STUBBORN STREAK IN ME, STILL, AFTER ALL THESE YEARS OF LIVING. SO I SAY, 'NO WAY ARE YOU GOING TO PUT THE FEAR OF RETRIBUTION INTO MY BEING. BEGONE ALL YOU DISCORDANT ENERGY.' I SEE THE CLEARING AND AS I APPROACH THE OPENING, OFF TO MY LEFT I SEE THE CABIN. JUST A SLIGHT STREAM OF SMOKE COMING FROM THE CHIMNEY. I STOP AND TAKE A COUPLE OF DEEP BREATHS. I ADMIRE THIS SPECIAL SPOT. I SEE A SMALL GARDEN PLOT, THE CREEK ABOUT FORTY FEET FROM THE CABIN. SO THIS IS WHERE JULIAN HAS BEEN LIVING? FOR HOW LONG? THERE IS SO MUCH FOR US TO SHARE ABOUT OUR PERSONAL GEOGRAPHICAL LIVES BEFORE WE GET INTO OUR PERSONAL EMOTIONAL STATES AND HISTORY OF OUR LIFE AFTER SEPARATION. WOW. 'OKAY, SETTLE DOWN JULIE, NOT SO FAST. ONE THING AT A TIME. LIKE HOW ABOUT MOVING TOWARDS THE CABIN AND KNOCK ON THE DOOR. COME ON GIRL YOU CAN DO THIS.' AND SO I DO. THERE IS NO ANSWER. I SLOWLY TURN THE DOOR KNOB. IT'S OPEN. I CRACK OPEN THE DOOR EVER SO SLOWLY AND SEE A MADE BED. I OPEN THE CREAKY SOLID DOOR ALL THE WAY AND MOVE INSIDE. IT IS COZY. AND IT LOOKS LIKE THEY BOTH LIVE HERE. JIM AND JULIAN. THE SUN IS JUST ABOUT SETTING ON THIS EARLY DECEMBER AFTERNOON. IT IS DUCKING BEHIND THE MOUNTAIN AND I AM WELL AWARE OF HOW QUICKLY THE TEMPERATURE WILL DROP. THERE ARE SOME SPLIT LOGS BESIDE THE FIRE STOVE SO I DECIDE TO GET COMFORTABLE AND CLOSE THE DOOR. I PUT A COUPLE OF LOGS ON THE FIRE. I LOOK AROUND. THE EASTERN WINDOW WITH ITS PRISM CRYSTALS, THE BED WITH IT'S THICK LOG BED POST. AN AMORE FOR CLOTHES. THE REFURBISHED AND STAINED LOGS, THE WOOD FLOORING. SHELVES WITH PLATES AND FOODSTUFF. AND A PINT OF WHISKEY ON THE VERY TOP OF THE SHELF. HUMMM, ANNIE OAKLEY? I CHUCKLE AT MY OWN JOKE. THE WILD WOMAN OF DEADWOOD! I PULL OUT A CHAIR AND SIT. AND WAIT. I CLOSE MY EYES AND JUST SIT.

JULIAN - IT'S BEEN A GOOD DAY WITH FRANK, JERRY AND SADIE. WE ARE DESIGNING A FOREST GARDEN GREEN HOUSE. A BEAUTIFUL BOOK WITH FULL INSTRUCTION BY JEROME OSENTOWSKI. A HOW TO MANAGE AND DESIGN A PERMACULTURE INDOOR, YEAR ROUND GARDEN. FULL INSTRUCTIONS. WHAT I LIKED BEST IS THAT THIS GUY HAS BEEN A SELF TAUGHT GARDENER IN THE COLORADO ROCKIES. SO HE HAD A BUNCH OF CHALLENGES AND TURNED HIS SELF EDUCATION INTO AN AWESOME LEARNING TOOL FOR THE PASSIONATE GARDENER. I AM ON MY WAY BACK TO OUR CABIN, AND AM JUST RELISHING THE CONNECTION TODAY BETWEEN ALL OF US. WE ALL HAD A SAY AND LISTENED TO EACH OTHER. FRANK ACTUALLY STARTED THE DIGGING WITH THE BACK HOE AND FRONT LOADER. JERRY TIDIED UP THE TRENCHES WITH SHOVEL AND RAKE. SADIE AND I STARTED TO LAY SOME OF THE PERFORATED PIPE THAT WILL CAPTURE THE SOIL TEMPERATURE FROM THE EARTH. WE ARE DIGGING BELOW FROST LINE AND HOPE TO CATCH THE NATURAL TEMPS OF FIFTY TO FIFTY FIVE DEGREES. THERE WAS QUITE A DISCUSSION HOW FAR DOWN TO DIG. SO WE DECIDED AT A 3 FOOT FROST DEPTH IF WE WENT ANOTHER SIX OR SEVEN FEET WE SHOULD BE GOOD. THAT WOULD MEAN THAT WE COULD DRAW AT LEAST FIFTY DEGREES INTO OUR SUBMERGED GREEN HOUSE. I WAS STILL DEEP IN THOUGHT AND ENVISIONING THE PROCESS AND DESIGN WHEN I GOT TO THE OPENING OF OUR PATHWAY. I LOOKED UP AND SAW A PRETTY GOOD FLOW OF SMOKE COMING FROM THE CHIMNEY. YEAH, I REJOICED, JIM IS BACK! I RAN AND SCREAMED, "HIGH ME, WOO...IT'S YOU! HUMPH YOU'D THINK BY NOW HIS HEAD WOULD BE POKING OUT OF THE DOOR. I SWING THE DOOR OPEN AND....

SHE IS STANDING, SHE, SHE, JULIE? WHAT, NO....WE CAUTIOUSLY APPROACH EACH OTHER. SHE IS NOT SMILING, SHE LOOKS RATHER AWESTRUCK, LIKE ME? I REACH OVER AND SOFTLY STROKE HER FACE. I WIPE A TEAR. AND SHE DOES THE SAME. LIKE TWO NURTURING MONKEYS TAKING NOTICE OF EACH OTHER. I CAN FEEL HER BREATH BECAUSE I CAN FEEL MINE. SO DEEP, SO STRONG THAT THE EXHALE IS A SIGH. "GOD YOU ARE SO MAGNIFICENT!"

SHE SMILES AND GIGGLES. SHE GIGGLES LIKE ME. WE PULL AT EACH OTHER AND OUR FACES ARE NESTLED INTO EACH OTHERS SHOULDERS. WE ARE CRYING, LAUGHING FEELING CHEST AND STOMACHS RICOCHETING OFF EACH OTHER.

"GOD, GOD OH MY GOD," WE ARE SAYING IT IN UNISON NOW! WE PULL AWAY FROM EACH OTHER BUT ARE STILL HOLDING HANDS.

JULIE TALKS FIRST. "JULIAN I AM SOOO SORRY."

"DON'T, NO YOU DON'T NEED TO SAY THAT. AT LEAST NOT TO ME. MAYBE MOM AND DAD. YOU WILL CONTACT THEM RIGHT?"

SHE SHAKES HER HEAD.

OUR GIGGLES AND LAUGHTER HAS SETTLED INTO SIGHS. WE RELEASE OUR GRIP AND WIPE OUR TEARS WITH OUR SHIRT SLEEVES.

"I DON'T BELIEVE IT. I WAS TALKING TO YOU LAST NIGHT. LIKE I USED TO TALK TO DAD AND YOU THOUGHT IT WAS HOCUS POCUS."

"I HEARD YOU, AT LEAST I HEARD A SONG, "I SHALL BE RELEASED" SUNG BY NINA SIMON.

"YES I KNOW IT! OH MY GOD, WOW." WE SMILE BIG SMILES. IT'S LIKE LOOKING IN A MIRROR. WE GIGGLE AGAIN.

"OH JULIAN, I WAS SCARED HOW YOU WOULD REACT. IT WAS JIM WHO FIGURED OUT WHO I AM, YOUR TWIN. HE CALLED ME JULIAN. AND I KNEW MY LIFE WAS ABOUT TO BE CHANGED. AND I FEEL RELEASED FROM A BURDEN I CARRY DEEP INSIDE. HE SAID I WAS THE MISSING LINK TO YOUR BURDEN. HE DID NOT TRY TO SWAY ME. THIS DECISION IS MINE. TO REUNITE WITH MY BLOOD FAMILY AND SISTER. CAN WE GO SEE MOM AND DAD TOGETHER?"

"YES, YES WE WILL. SIT AND I WILL SHARE MY DISAPPEARANCE AND HOW MY FAMILY, MY FAMILY FROM MY WOMB AND JIM'S SEED WAS SO JOYFUL TO SEE ME THAT...OH, IT IS HARD TO DESCRIBE. WE'LL LEAVE IT AT THAT FOR NOW. WE CAN TALK LATER. WE CAN EAT HERE OR GO TO THE COMMUNITY KITCHEN. THERE MIGHT BE SOME PEOPLE THERE THAT WILL FREAK OUT. BUT WE DON'T NEED TO TELL THEM OUR STORY YET. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THAT. OR WOULD YOU RATHER EAT IN OUR PRIVATE LITTLE CABIN?"

JULIE SMILES, "I DON'T KNOW. I THINK THAT WILL BE FUNNY TO SEE YOUR FRIENDS EXPRESSIONS."

"YEAH," I GIGGLE, "AND YOU CAN STAY HERE WITH ME TONIGHT OR HOW VERY LONG YOU ARE STAYING. HOPEFULLY FOR MORE THAN A NIGHT."

"OF COURSE, WE NEED TO TALK. BUT WHAT ABOUT JIM?"

"OH, HE'LL FIND A PLACE TO STAY. PLENTY OF BEDS. THE WINTER GUEST ARE FEW."

"OK, ED, THAT'S MY HUSBAND, HE SHOWED ME THIS PLACE ON THE WEB. QUITE AND OPERATION."

"YES, BUT IT IS ABOUT TO HAVE SOME MAJOR CHANGES. WE ARE CREATING A SMALL SELF RELIANT COMMUNITY. COMPLETE WITH BLUE CLOUD'S CLAN FROM THE RES."

"WOW, SOUNDS LIKE AN ENDEAVOR OR AN ADVENTURE?"

"WAY MORE THAN EITHER OF THOSE. MORE LIKE A LIFESTYLE CHOICE."

"I GET IT, WHEN I LEFT I BOUNCED FROM ONE COMMUNE TO THE NEXT, THINKING IT WAS THE BEST LIFESTYLE FOR ME. BUT IN THOSE DAYS THEY WERE ALL FULL OF TRANSIENTS. PEOPLE MOVING IN AND OUT. NO STABILITY. AND THAT WAS ME TOO."

"DID YOU EVER MISS THE FAMILY?"

"YES, I DID. MAYBE I WAS TRYING TO PROVE TO MYSELF THAT I COULD LIVE WITHOUT ANY SUPPORT. THERE WERE SO MANY TIMES WHEN I WONDERED ABOUT YOU AND MOM AND DAD. I WAS SO TORN AND PRIDEFUL THAT I COULD DO LIFE ON MY TERMS. AND THE DRUGS AND INFLUENCES OF OTHER PEOPLE KEEP ME FROM CONNECTING. WHEN I LOOK BACK AT MY FOLLY, THAT'S WHAT IT WAS, I HAVE A LOT OF REGRET. SO MUCH SO THAT I JUST COULDN'T MUSTER UP THE COURAGE TO COME HOME AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS. EVEN THOUGH BY THE TIME I WAS DONE BOUNCING AROUND I STILL WAS ALOOF OF FAMILY. I DISTANCED MYSELF SO MUCH FROM THE FAMILY STRUCTURE AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT. MY INFLUENCES AT THE TIME WAS INDOCTRINATION INTO MARXISM, AND FEMINISM. I WAS RESCUED BY ED. HE NEEDED HELP IN A KITCHEN. AFTER SEVERAL YEARS WE BECAME MORE THAN FRIENDS. WE MARRIED. I SETTLED DOWN. AND YOU WERE ON MY MIND, BUT FOR WHATEVER REASON I COULD NOT GET MYSELF TO LOOK YOU UP. ONE DAY I DID. AND, WELL JIM APPEARS AND REALIZES WHO I MIGHT BE. HE DID NOT MINCE WORDS. BUT IT WAS SO CUTE, I KNEW HE RECOGNIZED SOMETHING ABOUT ME WHEN WE FIRST MET. HE COULD BARELY TALK, HE STUMBLED DOWN THE STAIRS. AND HE NEVER TOOK HIS EYES OFF OF ME. THEN HE CALLED ME JULIAN. AND POINT BLANK ASKED ME IF I HAD A TWIN!"

"AND TO THINK I WAS SO PISSED WHEN HE TOOK OFF ON THIS SKI VENTURE TO FIND JOSEPH. HE MADE IT SOUND LIKE IT MIGHT BE THE LAST TIME FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP. I USED TO THINK HE HAD A DEATH WISH WITH SNOW, SKIING AND MOUNTAINS."

"YEAH, WELL IT WAS A CLOSE CALL. THERE WAS AN AVALANCHE... "

"I HEARD ABOUT IT."

"WE BOTH HAVE GOOD MEN. MEN WHO LOVE US FOR WHO WE ARE AND MEN WHO WANT TO MAKE SURE WE ARE CARED FOR. YOU KNOW, WHEN I WAS GALAVANTING AROUND, THE ONLY ONE I KNEW WHO "HAD MY BACK" WAS GOD. CAN YOU RELATE? I DEVELOPED SUCH AN AVERSION TO RELIGION, SPIRITUALITY OR BELIEF SYSTEMS THAT WERE OUT THERE. SO MANY CONDITIONS WENT ALONG WITH "GETTING TO HEAVEN" OR REACHING A HIGHER CONSCIOUSNESS. YET I NEVER LOST CONTACT WITH GOD. HECK, I FELT HE WAS THE ONLY ONE THAT I COULD TALK TO. AND THERE WERE MANY TIMES HE HAD TO LISTEN TO THE GARBAGE THAT WAS SCREAMING FROM MY MOUTH! SO MANY TIMES WHEN I WOULD JUST BREAK DOWN AND TOTALLY SURRENDER TO THE WAY OF WHAT WAS AS A LESSON LEARNED. JUST GOD, AND I AM STILL IN THAT PLACE OF ONE ON ONE WITH MY GOD. IS THAT CRAZY? AM I IN DENIAL OF WHAT IT MEANS TO BE? I JUST WANT TO BE. IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"

"OH, JULIE, YES TO IT ALL. ALL THAT YOU SAID RESONATES WITH ME TOO. THERE IS SO MUCH OUT THERE POINTING TO THE "RIGHT WAY, THE ONLY WAY, THE BEST WAY " TO JOY AND GOODNESS. AND WHAT I AM FINDING OUT FOR MYSELF IS STILLING THE MIND AMONGST THE CHAOS OF HUMANKIND, IS TO LIVE MY LIFE IN REVERENCE OF THIS GIFT OF NATURE AND THE EARTH. TO BE GRATEFUL FOR WHAT I AM GIVEN. AND SO YEAH, I DO THE SAME AS YOU. MY GOD HAS THE FORM OF JESUS RIGHT NOW. I AM BEING INFLUENCED BY A BOOK THAT FRANK, YOU'LL MEET HIM, GAVE ME. SO WHO KNOWS WHAT WILL INFLUENCE ME NEXT. BUT WHAT YOU SAID, ABOUT JUST WANTING TO BE IS WHAT I DESIRE."

"AND WHO IS FRANK?"

"THERE IS A LONG STORY TO TELL. AND FRANK IS PART OF THE STORY. YOU KNOW WHEN JIM MENTIONED TO YOU ABOUT YOU BEING THE MISSING LINK, DID HE PARAPHRASE THAT AS MISSING LINK TO MY ABANDONMENT ISSUES?"

"YEAH, I THINK SO."

"WELL, FRANK PICKED ME UP, WANDERING ON THE HIGHWAY, WHEN I DISAPPEARED FROM MY FAMILY. I WILL CATCH YOU UP WITH THAT PART OF MY LIFE LATER. LETS GO EAT AND MEET."

"OKAY, I AM SO HAPPY I HAD THE COURAGE TO DO THIS. I AM SO WANTING TO KNOW YOUR LIFE AND ALL THOSE YEARS WE MISSED CONNECTED TO EACH OTHER."

CHAPTER 10: GOOD FOOD, CHEER, AND THE SCULPTURE

JULIE - I THROW ANOTHER LOG ON THE FIRE AND PUT SOME FRESH CLOTHES AND WINTER BOOTS IN A PACK FOR JIM. I AM GUESSING THAT HE KNOWS HE WILL BE SLEEPING ELSEWHERE FOR THE NEXT FEW NIGHTS. WE TAKE THE PATH BACK TO THE ROAD, CROSS THE BRIDGE AND TAKE ANOTHER PATH THAT I HAD WORN OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS, TOWARDS THE MAIN PART OF THE DUDE RANCH BUILDINGS. WE APPROACH THE GARDEN AND GREEN HOUSE AREA. JULIE IS WALKING IN FRONT OF ME AND I AM GUSHING THAT SHE WANTS TO KNOW ABOUT MY LIFE. HER HEAD IS TURNING AND PEEKING AT THE TURNED GARDEN PLOTS, HOOP HOUSES AND THE NEW GREEN HOUSE PROJECT. WE REACH THE END OF THE PATH AND SHE STOPS TO LOOK AT THE LODGE.

"THIS IS WHERE IT'S ALL HAPPENING FOR YOU NOW, JULIAN?"

"YES, AND IN HERE," I POINT TO MY HEART. SHE SMILES.

"OKAY, I AM A LITTLE NERVOUS. I HOPE THERE'S NOT A LOT OF EXPLAINING TO DO ABOUT YOU PRODIGAL TWIN SISTER RETURNING INTO YOUR LIFE."

"I HEAR YOU, I AM HOPING FOR THE SAME. LETS GO I AM HUNGRY. WE DID A LOT OF PHYSICAL WORK TODAY"

WE CLIMB THE BACK STAIRS THAT LEAD TO THE KITCHEN. SCOTT, ONE OF THE CHEFS HAS HIS BACK TO US. HE TURNS. "HEY, SCOTT, THIS IS MY SISTER FROM WYOMING."

"I WOULD HAVE NEVER KNOWN. I THOUGHT I WAS SEEING DOUBLE. BAD GREETING. HI..."

JULIE, "GOOD TO MEET YOU. I COOK AT A SMALL LODGE IN WYOMING. YOU HAVE QUITE A SET UP. GARDEN TO TABLE CONCEPT?"

"YEAH, THANKS TO HER." HE NODS IN MY DIRECTION. "DINNER IS READY LADIES, BETTER GET SOME. THE WHOLE CROWD IS HERE TONIGHT. THEY MUST HAVE BEEN TIPPED OFF ABOUT OUR SPECIAL GUEST."

I SMILE AND AM SO RELIEVED BY SCOTT'S NONCHALANCE. I LOOK AT JULIE AND SHE IS SMILING. RADIATING JOY. I SENSE THAT THE NERVOUSNESS HAS BEEN REPLACED BY CURIOSITY. WE ENTER THE DINING HALL FROM THE KITCHEN SO PEOPLE DON'T TAKE NOTICE RIGHT AWAY. UNTIL WE MOVE TOWARDS THE BUFFET. NIRVANA IS THE FIRST TO NOTICE AND GIVES US A RADIATING SMILE, HER BRIGHT WHITE TEETH IN CONTRAST TO HER BEAUTIFUL DARK SKIN. SHE HAS HER TURBINE ON, JUST NODS WITH MOUTH OPEN AND HEADS FOR THE TABLES THAT HAVE BEEN ARRANGED IN ONE CONTINUOUS TABLE TO FIT ABOUT TWELVE PEOPLE. WE ARE APPROACHED BY DELORIS AND FAYE.

"MY WORD, THERE'S TWO OF YOU WALKING THIS PLANET? OR DID I FINALLY DIE AND GO TO HEAVEN?" IT'S FAYE. DELORIS IS JUST SMILING THEN SHE KEEPS IT SIMPLE, "I LOVE SURPRISES. BUT I AM TOO HUNGRY TO SAY ANYTHING."

JULIE SWIPES AT HER BROW IN MOCK RELIEF. WE ALL CHUCKLE.

JIM SNEAKS UP BEHIND US AND I FEEL HIS LEFT ARM OVER MY RIGHT SHOULDER AND AS I LOOK UP JULIE, TOO, IS LOOKING AT JIM AS HE HAS HIS OTHER ARM OVER HER SHOULDER. WOW, AMAZING CONSEQUENCES. HE LOOKS AT ME AND SAYS, YOU DIDN'T HAPPEN TO PACK A BAG FOR ME, DID YOU?"

"OF COURSE, I LEFT IT AT THE KITCHEN DOOR." I LOOK DOWN, HE IS STILL IN SKI BOOTS. MAN THEY MUST BE COMFY. "BOOTS TOO, KISS?" I GET A SWEET PECK." HE HEADS FOR THE KITCHEN.

BLUE CLOUD WAVES US OVER TO THE BUFFET, WHERE WE GET A LOT OF LOOKS AND RAISED EYEBROWS. FRANK INTERCEPTS US, "JULIAN'NNN... YOU ARE TEASING ME NOW DARLIN'"

"JULIE, FRANK, THE GUY I TOLD YOU ABOUT." I LOOK AT FRANK'S STARTLED EYES, "I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT HIM LATER." I GIVE HIM A LITTLE GIGGLE, "YOU SHOULD SEE THE EXPRESSION ON YOUR FACE FRANK, MY DEAR." HE SMIRKS AND GIVES A NOD TO JULIE.

WE MAKE IT THROUGH THE BUFFET AND ALL ARE SEATED AT THE TABLE. BLUE CLOUD STANDS AS MAGGIE CLANGS A GLASS. "GOOD EVENING. I AM GLAD YOU ALL MADE IT HERE TONIGHT. THIS WILL BE A SPECIAL DINNER. FIRST WE HAVE A SURPRISE GUEST, JULIAN'S SISTER JULIE. EYES ARE ON US. LET ME INTRODUCE OUR TRIBE. WALKING STICK TO MY RIGHT, STEPHANIE, NIRVANA. THESE ARE THE THREE SISTERS. THEY FEED US THEIR NURTURING WISDOM AND CARE. NEXT IS JERRY, HE HAS BECOME AN ALL ROUND MASTER OF SERVITUDE. JONI, A VERY SPECIAL WOMAN WHOM YOU WILL KNOW ABOUT DURING YOUR VISIT. (I THINK SHE IS BLUSHING A LITTLE.) SHE IS ONE OF OUR APPRENTICE HEALERS. NEXT TO HER IS SAMMIE. ANOTHER HEALER ALONG WITH JONI. YOU MET DELORIS AND FAYE THE MASTER GARDENERS AND PERMACULTURIST. MEGAN, WHO JUST RETURNED FROM INDIA WITH JIM, WHOM YOU HAVE MET WHEN HE FAINTED AFTER SEEING YOU THE FIRST TIME. (LAUGHTER BREAKS OUT. GOOD MOVE BLUE CLOUD.) AND OUR BEAUTIFUL YOUNG SOULS SADIE AND JENNY. THEY CARRY A LOT OF WISDOM BEYOND THEIR YEARS. (THEY SIT WITH MOUTHS WIDE OPEN, THEN BREAK INTO A SMILE AND GIGGLE.) "FRANK, A SPECIAL PERSON WHO BROUGHT JULIAN TO THIS RANCH." LET'S SEE AM I FORGETTING ANYBODY? BLUE CLOUD GETS A SHARP ELBOW IN HIS THIGH. HE LOOKS DOWN WITH LOVING EYES. THERE'S A TWINKLE IN MAGGIE'S EYES AS SHE LOOKS UP. "OH YEAH, MAGGIE, WHO USED TO HAVE OWNERSHIP OF THIS RANCH AND HER LIFE. NOW SHE IS DETACHED FROM THIS MATERIAL PLANE." MAGGIE RESPONDS, "NOT QUITE, ENOUGH WITH THE JOKES. LET'S DIG IN BEFORE THIS BECOMES A COMMUNITY MEETING."

"WAIT, HOLD ON," IT'S MOLLY. "HI I AM MOLLY AND THIS IS ARTHUR. ARTHUR BOWS HIS HEAD, MOLLY REMARKS WITH AUTHORITY, "THERE WILL BE A COMMUNITY MEETING ACCORDING TO BLUE CLOUD. GOSH, I CAN TELL YOU TOOK YOUR MEDICINE MAN APPRENTICESHIP FROM YOUR UNCLE. NEXT YOU'RE GOING TO TELL US YOU SAW HIM RECENTLY."

"HE IS HERE MOLLY." BLUE CLOUD MOTIONS TO HIS HEART, "AND YES WE WILL SPEAK AFTER WE EAT. THANK YOU FOR REMINDING ME OF THIS VERY AUSPICIOUS GATHERING."

AND SO WE ALL START TO EAT. SADIE IS SITTING ACROSS FROM JULIAN. THERE ARE SEVERAL SIDE CONVERSATIONS GOING ON. FRANK AND JERRY ARE GIVING DETAILS OF THE GREENHOUSE CONSTRUCTION TO DELORIS AND FAYE. ARTHUR AND MOLLY ARE DISCUSSING SOME IDEAS FOR A SCULPTURE. THE THREE SISTERS ARE TALKING ABOUT

SOMETHING, JONI, JIM AND JENNY ARE JUST SLOWLY EATING AND ONCE IN AWHILE LOOK AT EACH OTHER AND JUST SMILE. MAGGIE AND BLUE CLOUD ARE TALKING ABOUT WHERE THE PLACEMENT OF THE NEW SCULPTURE WILL GO. SADIE ASK, " IF YOU DON'T MIND ME ASKING, DID JIM ALWAYS KNOW ABOUT YOUR TWIN, JULIAN?"

SHE LOOKS OVER AT JULIE, WHO GENTLY SWIPES HER MOUTH AND ANSWERS FOR JULIAN. "NO SADIE, IS IT OR ARE YOU JENNY?"

"SADIE."

"NO SADIE, I SKIPPED OUT ON MY FAMILY AND MY TWIN MANY YEARS AGO. I WENT AWOL. IF YOU ARE INTERESTED IN THE DETAILS I WILL INVITE YOU RIGHT NOW TO COME VISIT ME AT THE BIG HORN LODGE AND HUNTING CAMP."

"THANK YOU. I WILL APPRECIATE THAT. I AM CURIOUS BECAUSE IT MIGHT HELP ME. I LEFT MY HOME AND WAY OF LIFE FOLLOWING THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT AND WAS INFLUENCED TO THE POINT WHERE I AM STILL MENTALLY ENTRENCHED WITH THAT PHILOSOPHY AND BELIEF SYSTEM. I NEED SOMEONE ELSE'S PERSPECTIVE."

"I AM MORE THAN WILLING WE MAY HAVE SIMILAR REASON OF THE PATH WE CHOSE AND HOW IT AFFECTED US OVER TIME. YOU SEEM TO BE THE AGE WHEN I WAS FULLY INTO THAT CULTURE."

SADIE, WITH A FURROWED BROW, SHAKES HER HEAD AND SAYS, "THANK YOU. CAN I REFER TO YOU AS SISTER?"

"ABSOLUTELY!"

AS THE DINER IS WINDING DOWN, JIM, MEGAN AND NIRVANA START TO CLEAR THE TABLE, TAKING EVERYONE'S DIRTY DISHES. IT IS BLUE CLOUD THAT SPEAKS WHEN THEY RETURN TO THEIR SEATS.

"JUST SO EVERYBODY KNOWS, JIM FOUND MY UNCLE AND THEY SLID DOWN THE HILL TO THE HUNTING LODGE WHERE I WAS STAYING."

JULIE HAS A BIG SMILE ON HER FACE. JULIAN HAS A RAISED EYEBROW AND MAGGIE IS SHAKING HER HEAD WITH A QUIZZICAL LOOK.

"WE HAD A MEETING AND DISCUSSED SOME CONCERNS ABOUT THE COMMUNITY. ABOUT GROWTH, BUILDING, ECONOMICS, SELF RELIANCE AND MORE. THERE WERE SEVERAL ISSUES THAT CAME UP. ONE IS THE ACCEPTANCE OF OUR CLAN ON THESE GROUNDS. HOW WILL WE ACCEPT

YOU PEOPLE AND HOW WILL YOU ACCEPT US? OUR CULTURES ARE DIFFERENT. THE PEOPLE OF THE CLAN THAT STILL PASS ON THE OLD WISDOM IS DIFFERENT THAN THE PEOPLE WHO TOOK ON THE WAYS OF THE WHITE MAN. ANOTHER CONCERN IS MIX OF SPIRITUAL AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS. TWO THINGS THAT WERE MOST VISUAL TO JOSEPH WAS A NEW SCULPTURE THAT WILL CARRY THE MEANING OR INSPIRATION OF WHO WE ARE AS ONE. MUCH LIKE THE GREAT TREE SCULPTURE. WE ARE TO DECIDE WHAT IT WILL LOOK LIKE. THE OTHER WAS NAMING THE COMMUNITY."

WALKING STICK LOOKS AT BLUE CLOUD WHO NODS AS IF TO LET HER SPEAK. "LET US TAKE SOME TIME IN STILLNESS AND CONTEMPLATE THE VISION OF THE SCULPTURE AND THE NAME OF THIS GREAT ENDEAVOR. BLUE CLOUD WILL PASS PIPE. OUR RITUAL TO ALLOW THE GREAT SPIRIT TO ANSWER OUR CALL. WHOMEVER IT IS THAT YOU ASK FOR TO GUIDE YOU ON YOUR GREAT JOURNEY, ASK FOR A SIGN OR COUNSEL. THEN YOU CAN SPEAK AFTER WE PASS PIPE."

AND SO THE PIPE IS LIT JUST AS WE HAVE DONE IN OUR FIRST SWEAT LODGE MEETING AS THE NEW COMMUNITY. THE DAY OF THE WHISKEY BOTTLE LESSON AND THE MYSTICAL GATHERING OF ALL WHOM ARE HERE TONIGHT. THE LAST PUFF IS FROM BLUE CLOUD. HE SNUFFS OUT THE PIPE AND PLACES IT ON THE TABLE.

"LET US SPEAK."

IT IS SADIE WHO CONTRIBUTES FIRST, "I WANT TO THANK ALL OF YOU FOR ACKNOWLEDGING MY RELATIONSHIP WITH JENNY. I WANT TO THANK YOU FOR THE IMPACT YOU ARE HAVING AS AN INFLUENCE ON MY LIFE. I NEVER THOUGHT I WOULD QUESTION MY PERCEPTION OF WHO I AM UNTIL NOW." SHE LOOKS OVER AT JULIE. "I THINK THIS SCULPTURE WILL BE ALL ABOUT WHAT WE ARE SEEKING AS A GROUP TOGETHER. DIFFERENT THAN THE INSPIRATION OF THE TREE SCULPTURE UP AT MAGGIE'S."

THERE IS A SILENCE. BLUE CLOUD STATES, "WHEN ONE HAS COMPLETED THEIR CONTRIBUTION LET US SAY, AHO!"

JERRY WHO USUALLY IS LAST TO SPEAK, OPENS UP, "I WANT IT TO INCORPORATE OUR DIFFERENT BELIEFS OR SPIRITUALITY AS ONE WAY."

FRANK, "AMEN BROTHER. I WONDER HOW WE CAN AGREE TO SHOW ACCEPTANCE OF EACH OTHER AS INDIVIDUALS AND INCORPORATE OUR PERSONAL BELIEFS. "

SAMMIE, "WHAT I AM LISTENING TO IN MY HEAD IS JOHN AND YOKO LENON SINGING "IMAGINE"."

JONI IS LOOKING OUT THE WINDOW, "WHAT I SEE UNDER THE FULL MOON LIGHT TONIGHT IS THE JAGGED RIDGE OF THE SAWTOOTH." SHE POINTS OUTSIDE."

JIM NOTICES THAT, "THE REFLECTION OF INTERIOR LIGHTS ON GLASS OBSCURE THE VIEW." WE ALL SLOWLY MAKE OUR WAY FROM THE TABLE AND ONTO THE DECK OUTSIDE. AND THERE IT IS, WITH WHITE SNOW SHOWING BRILLIANTLY IN IT'S HIGHER CREVICES. IT IS THE RIDGE WHERE I DO MOST OF MY SKIING VENTURES. THE ONE THAT ALWAYS ATTRACTS MY ATTENTION.

NIRVANA, "LOOK THERE IS A PLANET SHINNING CLOSE TO THE MOON. I WONDER WHAT PLANET IS SHOWING RIGHT NOW. WHAT IS IT IN CONJUNCTION WITH?"

MAGGIE, "THERE IS SUCH INNER PEACE I GET FROM MEDITATING ON THE BUDDHA. THE BUDDHA ALWAYS REMINDS ME OF DETACHMENT."

JULIAN, "WHEN I WAS SEPARATED FROM JIM ALL THOSE YEARS I WOULD LOOK OUT MY CABIN WINDOW THAT FACES EAST. I'D LOOK AND SEE THIS LONE FIGURE TREKKING UP THE SLOPE UNDER THE SAWTOOTH. I KNEW IT WAS JIM. I WOULD WATCH TO SEE HOW FAR HE WOULD GO. IT VARIED, JUST LIKE THE RIDGELINE."

FRANK AGAIN, "IT WAS UNDER THE SAWTOOTH THAT I LOST MY BERTHA IN THE FIRE MANY YEARS AGO. I AM FINALLY AT PEACE IN MY HEART. MY GRIEF IS NEVER OVER, BUT MY SADNESS HAS DISSOLVED. IT WAS AT STAR LAKE, A NIGHT LONG AGO WHEN JULIAN QUESTIONED MY RESOLVE AND I KNEW THAT I WAS NOT FORSAKEN BY MY GOD, I FORSOOK HIM."

JENNY, "YOUR THOUGHTS AND WORDS ARE SO HEARTFELT. JUST FULL OF APPRECIATION, GRATITUDE. I THINK THAT THE SAWTOOTH NEEDS TO BE PART OF THE SCULPTURE."

MEGAN, "I AM NEW TO THIS GROUP. THANKS FOR INCLUDING ME. I HAVE SUCH A STRONG SENSE OF YOUR ONENESS AS A GROUP OF PEOPLE. ONENESS, A TERM USED OVER AND OVER WHEN JIM AND I WENT TO EKAM IN INDIA."

STEPHANIE, "THE CONNECTION THAT DEPICTS THE MOMENT OF DEEP CONNECTION I EXPERIENCED WITH JIM. IT SEEMS SO LONG AGO. DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN MOLLY HAD US WITH HANDS ON HEARTS PEERING INTO EACH OTHERS NAKEDNESS. THAT IS WHAT I WOULD LIKE TO SEE CAPTURED IN THIS SCULPTURE.

DELORIS, "YOU YOUNG SOULS ARE SO BEAUTIFUL. THIS SCULPTURE NEEDS TO RECAPTURE THE STRENGTH OF THE TREE SCULPTURE."

FAYE IS THE LAST TO SPEAKS, "THE FULL MOON

OVER THE SAWTOOTH

NOURISHES OUR GARDEN

AT NIGHT.

THE MORNING SUN

IS THERE TO WORSHIP.

THE HEAT OF THE SPICES

SET OFF THE FIRE IN THE STOMACH.

AND THE DIGESTION OF THE MAYA

BRINGS PEACE TO OUR SOULS."

ARTHUR, "WE CAN HAVE THE SAWTOOTH AS THE BASE."

MOLLY, "WE CAN ALL POSE IN A PEACE SIGN ENTWINED IN VINES OF FLOWERING VEGETABLES."

FRANK, "YOU THINKING SWIMMING TRUNKS," HE LOOKS OVER AT ME, "OR NUDE?"

BLUE CLOUD LET'S OUT A CHUCKLE. "LET US POSE IN HONORABLE POSITIONS. FULLY CLOTHED!"

WALKING STICK, "HOW IS THIS CHOICE FOR EVERYBODY?"

WE ALL SHOUT "AHO." WHICH WE ALL FORGOT TO SAY AFTER OUR PERSONAL SAY.

MAGGIE, "AND THE NAME? HOW'S SAWTOOTH COMMUNITY?"

FRANK, HOW ABOUT THE SAWTOOTH COMMUNITY? THE MAKES IT SPECIAL. EH?"

"AHO" SAYS EVERY BODY AND SOUL!

MOLLY, "ARTHUR AND I WILL LET YOU KNOW WE WE HAVE THE ART STUDIO READY FOR SOME POSES. WE WILL HAVE TO DO THEM THREE OR TWO AT A TIME. MAYBE YOU CAN CHOOSE PARTNERS AND DECIDE HOW YOU WANT TO POSE. YOUR CHOICE, WE WILL SEE HOW THE POSES CAN FIT TOGETHER." AHO!

WALKING STICK, "LET THE THREE VEGETABLES BE CORN, BEANS AND SQUASH. THE VINES AND LEAVES CONNECTING TO ALL." AHO!

JIM - SO THAT IS HOW WE CAME TO THE NAME AND INSPIRATION OF OUR COMMUNITY. WE WENT OUR SEPARATE WAYS AFTER SOME HUGS AND CHATTER. NIRVANA, MEGAN, JULIAN, JULIE AND I WERE LEFT IN THE ROOM.

NIRVANA OFFERS TO PUT ME UP AT THE YOGA STUDIO. "JULIAN, I'M SURE YOU AND JULIE HAVE A LOT OF CATCHING UP TO DO THE NEXT COUPLE OF DAYS. WE CAN HAVE JIM STAY WITH US, IF THAT'S ALRIGHT WITH YOU MEGAN?"

"YES, I WOULD ENJOY COMPARING OUR EXPERIENCES AT TAPAS."

JULIAN LOOKS AT ME, "OKAY THAT IS GRACIOUS OF YOU BOTH. I WANT TO SPEND A LITTLE TIME WITH MY MAN IF YOU ALL DON'T MIND. JULIE, THERE'S A FLASH LIGHT IN THE BACKPACK. I'LL FIND MY WAY BACK UNDER THIS FULL MOON. THANKS LADIES FOR YOUR OFFER."

THEY GIVE JULIAN AND I THE NAMASTE SIGN. WE BOW AND GIVE IT BACK. "I BOW TO THE LIGHT WITHIN YOU." AT LEAST THAT IS MY INTERPRETATION. WE ARE LEFT ALONE. THERE IS A TWINKLE IN JULIAN'S EYES.

"COME HERE BUSTER, HUG ME. I AM SO GLAD THAT YOU MADE IT BACK, ALIVE AND WELL. OH GOD..."

I FINISH THE SENTENCE WITH HER, THAT WE SAY SO OFTEN, "...YOU ARE SO MAGNIFICENT."

I WILL LEAVE IT UP TO YOU THE READER TO IMAGINE THE CONNECTION AND CREATE A LOVING SEEN OF GOD LOVE. JUST MEDITATE AWHILE. WHAT TYPE OF LOVE AND COMPASSION MIGHT BE IN YOUR HEART.

"IMAGINE ALL THE PEOPLE, LIVING A LIFE OF PEACE..." JOHN AND YOKO

CHAPTER 11: THE IMMERSION

I MAKE MY WAY TO THE YOGA STUDIO. THERE IS A SOFT LIGHT EMANATING FROM THE MAIN WINDOW. I ENTER AND NIRVANA AND MEGAN ARE CHATTING. THEY LOOK UP FROM THE CUSHIONS THEY ARE SEATED ON. THE SETTING SEEMS LIKE THE INSIDE OF AN ARABIAN TENT. THERE ARE SOME PLUSH PERSIAN RUGS, A LOW SOFA AND PLENTY OF LARGE PILLOWS WITH BEAUTIFUL DESIGNS AROUND A MEDIUM SIZE, LOW ROUND TABLE. THE REST OF THE ROOM IS OPEN FLOOR WITH YOGA EQUIPMENT AND MATS STASHED IN A CORNER. NIRVANA WAVES ME OVER TO THE TABLE. "JIM, WE ARE SO GLAD THAT YOU CHOOSE TO STAY WITH US FOR A FEW DAYS."

"THANKS FOR THE OFFER. I AM HAPPY TO BE WITH THE BOTH OF YOU. IT WILL BE GOOD FOR JULIAN AND JULIE TO HAVE THEIR PRIVATE TIME.

"WE HAVE SOME TEA, GO AHEAD AND POUR YOURSELF A CUP. MEGAN AND I WERE JUST DISCUSSING THE DIFFERENCES OF MY TAPAS EXPERIENCE AND HERS."

"YEAH, WE ALL SEEM TO COME AWAY IMPACTED BY THE TEACHINGS DEPENDING HOW THEY RELATE TO WHAT COMES UP FOR US. AND THERE WAS A LOT THAT CAME UP FOR ME FROM ONE WEEK TO THE NEXT."

MEGAN, "I CAME AWAY KNOWING HOW NECESSARY DETACHMENT FROM THOUGHTS BENEFITED MY STAYING PRESENT WITH WHAT WAS IN FRONT OF ME. WHAT I AM CURRENTLY ENGAGED WITH. I FOUND MY THOUGHTS COMING AT ME WHILE WE TOOK SILENT WALKS OR JUST SAT LOOKING AT NATURE, OUR SURROUNDINGS. I WOULD MISS OUT ON THE CRYSTALS IN THE SOIL OR THE MOON IN THE SKY. INSTEAD I WAS ENGAGED WITH PAST SITUATIONS THAT ALREADY OCCURRED. I WOULD GO DEEP, YOU KNOW LOOK AT PATTERNS THAT HAD AN AFFECT ON MY BEHAVIOR. PROBLEM WAS I WOULD DWELL ON OLD PATTERNS SO MUCH THAT I WOULD GET SUCKED INTO THE SUFFERING. I WOULD FORGET THAT I WAS JUST TO OBSERVE. MY AWARENESS BECAME MY STATE. IT TOOK AWHILE FOR ME TO JUST FEEL, CRY IF I HAD REGRET BUT NOT TO WEAR IT LIKE A BADGE OF VICTIMIZATION. DOES THAT MAKE ANY SENSE?"

NIRVANA, "YES IT MAKES A LOT OF SENSE. I ATTENDED AFTER MY MARRIAGE BROKE UP. I WAS IN A LOT OF PAIN AND BLAME. I WAS BLAMING ME AND BLAMING MY EX. I SAW MYSELF AS VICTIM AND PERPETRATOR. I WORE THE BADGE OF MARTYR BECAUSE I CHOSE TO BE A SIKH AND HE HAD NO INTEREST TO EVEN CONSIDER A SPIRITUAL PATH. I WOULD CHID HIM CONSTANTLY TO BELIEVE IN SOMETHING AND HE WOULD RIDICULE MY CHOICE OF A PATH. I BLAMED HIM FOR OUR DISTANCE GROWING LIKE A BIG FISSURE IN THE DRY EARTH. HE WOULD MOCK MY DISCIPLINES AND DISPARAGE MY CHOICES OF HAVING LITTLE WORTH. I WAS GLAD THAT I DID FOUR WEEKS IN ONE CHUNK OF TIME. IT TOOK THAT LONG TO START BEING FREE FROM ME BEING A VICTIM AND REACTING AS AN AGGRESSOR. I SAW THE ROLES OF MY FOLKS INTERACTION AS A SIMILAR PATTERN OF MY MARRIAGE. I TRIED TO INSTILL GUILT WHILE HE TRIED TO BLAME MY NEW BELIEFS TAKING PRECEDENT OVER OUR RELATIONSHIP. HIS FAVORITE LINE WAS, "YOU'RE MARRIED TO GOD NOT ME!" HOW SILLY WAS THAT, BUT NOW I REALIZE MY ZEALOUS BEHAVIOR FELL ON THE DEAF EARS OF AN ATHEIST."

I SENSED IT WAS MY TURN TO SHARE, "THE DEAF EARS OF AN ATHEIST, I NEVER THOUGHT OF MY SELF AS AN ATHEIST OR AN AGNOSTIC. WHEN I WAS AT EKAM, THE FIRST WEEK I QUESTIONED WHAT TEACHINGS AM I LISTENING TO THAT I DON'T ALREADY KNOW. I PAID FOR WHAT? AND I WAS ATTRACTED TO OTHER "DOUBTING THOMAS'S" AND THIS WAS AFTER I HAD GONE ON A TEMPLE TOUR AND SAW THE GRAVE OF ST. THOMAS AND READ ABOUT HIM. BUT WHEN I COMMITTED TO BEING SILENT AND SEARCHED FOR THE OTHER PARTICIPANTS THAT STAYED IN THE SILENT MODE I WAS NO LONGER INFLUENCED BY DOUBTS. IT BECAME VERY CLEAR WHY I WAS THERE, ESPECIALLY DURING THE PROCESSES. AND I ALSO REALIZED THAT "THE GOD IN ME", DOESN'T MEAN I AM GOD. AND WHEN I LISTENED TO WHAT WAS BEING TAUGHT AND NOT MY THOUGHTS, THAT IS WHEN I STARTED TO TURN A CORNER. THAT IS WHEN I STARTED TO GET BEYOND THE SURFACE AND MEET MY DWELLERS, THE MARA'S. FUNNY HOW THAT FIRST WEEK WAS ABOUT EGO AND I WAS SO INTO MY EGO, I MISSED OUT ON THE KNOWLEDGE. WHEN I LOOKED BACK AT MY JOURNALLING I SAW ALL OF THE MISINTERPRETATION. I WROTE WHAT I WANTED TO BELIEVE WAS TRUE. AS TIME WENT ON MY "I AM GOD EGO" BECAME HUMBLER. I CRIED, I WAS SHAKEN. I GAINED WISDOM OF SELF. I AM STILL WORKING ON THOSE MARAS, BUT NOW I HAVE THE TOOLS TO RECOGNIZE THEM, TO DETACH FROM THEIR GRIP. "KICK THEM OUT OF THE GUEST ROOM." I CHUCKLE, NIRVANA AND MEGAN HAVE A LAUGH, THERE IS MEANING BEHIND THAT COMMENT.

"SO HOW DO WE HAVE AN IMPACT ON OUR FRIENDS WITHOUT PREACHING?" ASK NIRVANA.

"JULIAN TOLD ME THAT WHEN FRANK HAD HIS RECKONING UP AT STAR LAKE, UNDER THE SAWTOOTH, HE MADE A REMARK THAT HIS CHURCH WILL DWELL INSIDE OF HIM. YOU KNOW HE WAS A PREACHER BEFORE BERTHA DIED IN THE FIRE."

MEGAN AND NIRVANA SHAKE THEIR HEADS...NO. "I LIKE THAT THOUGH, MY CHURCH WILL DWELL WITHIN ME. MY WISDOM IS WITHIN ME." MEGAN COMMENTS.

NIRVANA RESPONDS, "I AM NOT A MESSENGER, MY PERSONAL WISDOM HAS AN IMPACT."

"I AM CALM, I AM AT PEACE WITH WHO I AM AND WHOM YOU ARE. NO MORE AND NO LESS," I CHIP IN.

THERE IS A KNOCK ON THE DOOR, A TWIST OF THE KNOB AND A SOFT, "HELLO?" IT'S MOLLY'S VOICE.

"COME IN MOLLY," WE ALL SAY SORT OF IN UNISON.

"HI, THANK YOU. I SAW THE LIGHT ON AND JUST FELT DRAWN TO BE HERE!"

"COME SIT, JOIN US. TEA?" INVITES NIRVANA.

"THANK YOU, IT IS SO COZY. YES TEA IF IT'S NOT A BOTHER."

"JIM, GOOD TO SEE YOU. IT'S BEEN AWHILE. SEEMS LIKE WE HAVE ALL BEEN BUSY WITH OUR PHYSICAL CONTRIBUTIONS TOWARDS COMMUNITY AND SETTING UP OUR SPECIAL PLACES. AT LEAST I HAVE BEEN CAUGHT UP IN DO, DO, DO, AND OUT OF SIGHT. NO WONDER WHY BLUE CLOUD HAD HIS FUN WITH ME."

I RESPOND, "HEY, GOOD TO SEE YOU TO MOLLY. SOMEHOW, I FEEL ALL OF US CONNECTED AND I THINK THIS NEW SCULPTURE WILL SHOW THAT."

NIRVANA SETS DOWN THE TEA SAUCER IN FRONT OF MOLLY, WHO GIVES THANKS. SHE DOESN'T HESITATE, "WE HAVE BEEN HAVING A THERAPY SESSION MOLLY," SHE LETS OUT A LAUGH AND FOLLOWS WITH, WE WERE JUST DISCUSSING MEGAN AND JIM'S RECENT INDIA TRIP."

"WHAT HAVE I MISSED?"

MEGAN, "THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SCRATCHING THE SURFACE AND GOING DEEP INTO ONES PSYCHOLOGY."

"NOT EASY TO BE WILLING TO EXPOSE ONESELF, IS IT?"

"YOU DID A GOOD JOB WITH THIS GUY OVER HERE," NIRVANA NODS TOWARDS ME.

"YOU WERE SO WILLING BACK THEN JIM. SO WILLING TO BE VENERABLE. YOU HAVE CHANGED SO MUCH OVER THE LAST FEW YEARS. YOU HAVE HAD AN INFLUENCE ON ME AND SEVERAL OF US, BY JUST BEING YOUR HONEST SELF." SAYS MOLLY.

I MUST BE BLUSHING, I CAN FEEL IT IN MY CHEEKS. BUT THE LIGHTING IS DIMMED SO HOW WILL THEY SEE? "IT HAS BEEN AND STILL IS AN AMAZING JOURNEY. I AM SO GRATEFUL TO STILL BE LIVING IT."

"ARTHUR AND I ARE SO INSPIRED BY THE HUMAN FORM PEACE SIGN, AS A SCULPTURE. THE DIFFERENT WAYS WE ALL CONTRIBUTED TOWARDS THE VISION OF IT. SO WORD HAS IT YOU FOUND JOSEPH? YOU SUPPOSE HE HAD ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT TONIGHT?"

"OH, OF COURSE. YOU SAW BLUE CLOUD'S RESPONSE TO YOUR COMMENT."

"I AM CURIOUS, WHAT WAS YOUR DISCUSSION? BEFORE I BARGED IN."

MEGAN GOES RIGHT TO A RESPONSE, "WE WERE SHARING HOW OUR INDIA TRIPS HAD AN AFFECT OF HOW WE DELVE INTO OUR INNER BEING. OUR EGO, MIND, CRAVINGS AND THE DUALITY OF IT ALL. IT'S A LITTLE COMPLICATED TO EXPLAIN. AND WE LEARNED HOW THE CHAKRA CENTERS HAVE AN AFFECT ON OUR THOUGHT PATTERNS. YOU THINK I HAVE THAT RIGHT? JIM, NIRVANA?"

"HUMMM, YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT CHAKRAS, WE DO A LOT OF YOGA POSES TO OPEN UP THESE CHAKRA CENTERS. THERE'S A CHAKRA RELATED TO STABILITY, CREATIVE ENERGY, SELF-ESTEEM, COMPASSION, COMMUNICATION, INTUITION AND PURPOSE. THAT'S JUST THE MOST COMMON THAT PEOPLE RELATE TO. GOOGLE CHAKRAS."

"YES, I HAVE SOME INKLING SINCE THEY HAVE BEEN REFERENCED IN SOME OF THE WESTERN PSYCHOLOGY THAT I HAVE PRACTICED. I MOSTLY PRACTICE CARL JUNG. HE DID VISIT INDIA AND SPENT A COUPLE OF MONTHS THERE. HE GAVE SOME LECTURES AND TOOK IN VARIOUS LECTURES OF INDIAN PSYCHOLOGY. HE LEARNED EXPERIENTIALLY

RATHER THAN JUST KNOWING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE "MASTERS" HE LEARNED FROM HIS OWN UNDERSTANDING. HIS TRIP TO SOUTHERN INDIA WAS THE MOST BENEFICIAL. HIS PERSONAL JOURNEY INFLUENCED HIS BELIEF OF THE COLLECTIVE UNCONSCIOUS. SO MUCH OF THE WORK I DID WITH JIM UTILIZING VARIOUS POSES ESPECIALLY WHEN STEPHANIE MODELED WITH HIM SEEMED TO OPEN UP SOME PAST MEMORIES AND BEHAVIORS. WOULDN'T YOU SAY SO JIM?"

"YES, I RECALL A DAY WHEN I WAS UPSET AND ASKED IF YOU WERE A THERAPIST, NOT JUST AN ART INSTRUCTOR. YOU REMEMBER THAT INTERACTION."

"YES I DO. YOU HAD SHARED WITH ME ONCE WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED MODELING NAKED. IT WAS THEN THAT I REALIZED YOU WERE BAREING YOUR SOUL, YOUR WHOLE SELF AND GRASPING TO GAIN SOME INSIGHT INTO YOUR LIFE UP TO THAT POINT IN TIME."

"I REMEMBER TO, AFTER I WAS AMUSED TO SEE YOU AS THE MODEL. YOU CAME TO YOGA THE NEXT DAY, IN SHOCK THAT I WAS A PARTICIPANT IN THE CLASS. WE DISCUSSED THE KUNDALINI ENERGY WHICH EVOKES THE OPENING OF THE CHAKRA CENTERS. IT WAS QUITE A COMBINATION FOR YOU. KUNDALINI YOGA AND MOLLY'S CREATIVE EXPERIMENT WITH YOU AS A WILLING PARTICIPANT," NIRVANA IS LOOKING AT ME WITH SUCH COMPASSIONATE EYES.

WE ARE LOCKED IN. I AM NOT SO SURE HOW ELSE TO TAKE OUR CONNECTION. I AM LOVING HER SPARKLING EYES AND BROAD NATURAL SMILE. I AM NOT SURE HOW TO REACT, SO I JUST GET INTO BEING STILL. STILLING ALL NERVOUS THOUGHT. I JUST WANT TO STAY CONNECTED FOR AS LONG AS WE CAN. MINUTES PASS. I TAKE A DEEP BREATH. I NOD AND SLOWLY LOOK AWAY, INTO TWO OTHER SETS OF EYES. THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM THIS COMPASSION. NOW I AM FEELING LOVED FOR WHO I AM. I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO. I FEEL SO HUMBLLED AND SHY. IT TAKES ME BACK TO TEENAGE YEARS AND EARLY ADULTHOOD. I DID NOT KNOW HOW TO RESPOND WHEN A MEMBER OF THE OPPOSITE SEX LOOKED AT ME LIKE THAT.

"ALRIGHT LADIES, I AM BACK IN HIGH SCHOOL AS SHY JIMMY. I DON'T KNOW HOW TO RECEIVE THIS LOVE."

MEGAN, WITH THE MOST LOVING VOICE, SAYS, "FEEL THE GOD LOVE. FEEL THE COLLECTIVE ONENESS. WASN'T THAT A PROFOUND TAKE AWAY

FROM THE MUKTI GURUS...THE ONENESS MOVEMENT....OUR COLLECTIVE CONSCIOUSNESS AS ONE."

"THANK YOU, I DON'T FEEL SO NERVOUS NOW. YOU ARE ALL SO BEAUTIFUL, SO SOULFUL AND NURTURING. I AM SO FORTUNATE TO HAVE LANDED HERE, WITH NEW FRIENDS."

I LIKE TO THINK OF THIS NEW LIFE AS A REBIRTH, ANOTHER CHANCE AT COMPLETING MY CYCLE OF PERSONAL PURPOSE AND DESTINY. THE PATHWAY TO THE HIGHER REALMS. A CHANCE TO RECONCILE PAST KARMA THROUGH GOODNESS AND SERVICE. AND THAT'S WHAT CHRIST TAUGHT AND WHAT GOOD PEOPLE BELIEVE. SO HOW IS IT THAT THERE ARE HUMANS THAT COUNTER THE GOOD OF HUMANKIND? WE ALL SIGH, WITH SOLEMN FACES AND NODS.

"OKAY, YOU ALL, I HAVE ALL OF THE INSPIRATION I NEED FOR THE SCULPTURE. ARTHUR, HE IS A TRADITIONAL ZEN BUDDHIST. I WILL BE GETTING MUCH OF HIS INSIGHT AS WE DEVELOP THE PLANS. THANK YOU ALL FOR THIS GREAT ENCOUNTER AND CONTRIBUTING TO THIS GREAT EXPERIMENT, OF ONENESS." MOLLY RISES FROM THE CUSHIONS, AND DEPARTS.

CHAPTER II: CULTURAL STANDARDS

DELORIS AND FAYE - WE, FAYE AND I, ARE SITTING AT OUR LITTLE BREAKFAST NOOK THAT CONNECTS OUR CONDOS. CONDOS SOUNDS BETTER THAN A DORM ROOM AT OUR AGE. IT'S ACTUALLY NICE THE WAY FRANK AND JERRY REMODELED THIS SPACE FOR US. IT IS ISOLATED FROM THE REST OF THE LODGE ROOMS THAT ARE USED FOR RANCH GUEST. WE HAVE OUR OWN PRIVATE ENTRANCE THAT FACES THE GARDEN AREA OF THE MAIN RANCH COMPOUND. THEY EVEN POURED A SLAB AND CREATED A SCREENED IN PORCH WITH A VIEW OF THE DISTANT PEAKS AT THE SOUTH END OF THE BASIN. OUR ROOMS ARE SEPARATE WITH OUR OWN BATHROOMS. THESE ARE SUITES, AND WE EVEN HAVE WALK IN BATH TUBS THAT FRANK AND JERRY INSTALLED. WE HAVE OUR SEPARATE LITTLE LIVING ROOMS WITH COUCH AND SHELVES AND END TABLES AND A WRITING DESK. ALL SEPARATED FROM THE BEDROOM. THE HALLWAY AREA WAS PARTITIONED OFF FROM THE REST OF THE HALL. THEY CREATED A NICE SPACE BY A WINDOW THAT FACES THE WESTERN FOOTHILLS AND MEADOWS. THERE IS A TABLE FOR TWO AND A SMALL COUNTER AREA WITH SHELVING, A TWO BURNER

STOVE TOP, AND TOASTER OVEN. THERE'S A SMALL REFRIGERATOR LIKE YOU'D GET IN A MOTEL. SO WE ARE BEING TAKEN CARE OF IN OUR OLD AGE. ISN'T THAT WHAT IS SUPPOSED TO HAPPEN, AT LEAST IN SOME CULTURES AND WITH SOME FAMILIES. TAKE CARE OF THOSE THAT CAME BEFORE YOU JUST AS THEY HOPEFULLY TOOK CARE OF YOU. SO WHY AM I FEELING SAD. I LOOK AT FAYE AS SHE SIPS HER COFFEE AND LOOKS OUT THE WINDOW.

"FAYE, I NEED TO TALK A BIT."

SHE LOOKS OVER WITH FULL ATTENTION, "SURE MY DEAR, WHAT'S UP?"

"I WAS JUST BEING SO GRATEFUL AND ADMIRING THE HANDY WORK THAT FRANK AND JERRY DID TO KEEP US COMFORTABLE. IT IS NICER THAN EXPECTED AND I AM NOT EVEN MISSING THE BIG OLD HOUSE. ARE YOU MISSING YOUR CONDO."

"I CAN'T SAY I AM. PLUS WE HAVE THE GARDENING HERE TO KEEP US OCCUPIED AND WITH ALL OF JULIAN, SADIE AND JENNY'S EFFORTS WE ARE DOING MORE HERE THAN WE EVER DID."

FAYE COCKS HER HEAD AND LOOKS AT ME, "SO IS IT GRATITUDE THAT YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT OR AM I TOO NOISY WITH MY LOUD MUSIC?"

HA, SHE SURE KNOWS HOW TO LIGHTEN UP THE MOOD. "NO, THANKS FOR YOUR HUMOR, I HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY TUBA PLAYING?"

FAYE SLAPS THE TABLE AND DEAD PANS HER REMARK, "I HAVE BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THAT!"

WE HAVE A GOOD CHUCKLE. "WHAT HAS ME SAD IS THAT AT THE END OF MY PARENTS LIFE, I WISH I COULD HAVE BEEN AROUND MORE FOR THEM. WHEN I LEFT HOME TO LIVE ACROSS COUNTRY, I NEVER CONSIDERED THAT THEY WOULD AGE IN PLACE AND WANT TO STAY IN THEIR HOME. OUR GENERATION WAS SO DIFFERENT."

"SO YOU HAVE SOME REGRET THAT YOU DIDN'T TAKE CARE OF THEM?"

"YES, MY DAD TOOK ON QUITE A BURDEN AS A CAREGIVER. IN THE END IT WORE HIM OUT. I WOULD VISIT A COUPLE WEEKS OF THE YEAR AND THEY WERE SO THRILLED TO HAVE ME AROUND. COOKING, TAKING THEM TO THE STORE WAS A HUGE EVENT. AND FIXING THINGS THAT DIDN'T WORK ANYMORE. WHEN I WOULD HAVE TO GO BACK TO MY FAMILY AND WORK, WELL, IT BROKE MY HEART TO LEAVE."

"AND WHAT PROMPTED THIS MOOD? SADNESS AND REGRET IS WHAT I HEARD YOU SAY."

"WELL THE MEETING LAST NIGHT, HOW WE ARE INCLUDED AS AN INTEGRAL PART OF THIS COMMUNITY DESPITE OUR AGE. I KNOW IN SOME CULTURES THE ELDERS ARE RESPECTED AS THEY AGE. WHEN I SEE ALL OF THE OLDER PEOPLE IN THE HIGH RANKS OF GOVERNMENT MESSING UP THIS COUNTRY FOR THE NEXT GENERATIONS TO COME, I JUST WONDER IF WE ARE GETTING IN THE WAY OF WHAT THEY NEED TO ACCOMPLISH HERE."

"WELL NOW YOU JUST THREW ME A CURVE BALL, AND I CAN'T HIT A CURVE. YOU STARTED OUT SAD ABOUT NOT BEING AROUND ENOUGH FOR YOUR FOLKS AND NOW YOU THINK YOU ARE DEAD WEIGHT FOR THE YOUNG ONES HERE AT "THE SAWTOOTH COMMUNITY". CONCERNING YOUR FOLKS, YOU OBVIOUSLY WERE LIMITED UNLESS YOU AND YOUR HUSBAND WOULD HAVE QUIT YOUR JOBS, SOLD YOUR HOME AND MOVED YOUR FAMILY. OOPS, I AM JUSTIFYING YOUR PREDICAMENT."

"YES, YOU DON'T REALLY HAVE TO SAY ANYTHING. THIS IS NOT THE FIRST TIME I'VE BEEN "DOWN THAT RABBIT HOLE". I GUESS I AM JUST THINKING AT WHAT POINT DO WE STOP BEING A CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY?"

"NEVER, WE CAN BE THE ANCHOR FOR THE GENERATIONS THAT FOLLOW US. I THINK THERE HAS BEEN A FEW."

"WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT?"

"WE CAN SUPPORT THEM. THEY CAN HOPEFULLY LEARN FROM OUR MISTAKES AND NOT REPEAT HISTORY. AND MAYBE WE HOLD THE BALANCE FOR FOLKS WHO HAD A TOUGH CHILDHOOD, AND DIDN'T HAVE PARENTS OR A GOOD EXAMPLE TO FOLLOW."

"I SEE YOUR POINT FAYE. MAYBE HELP CHANGE THE PATTERNS THAT ARE FORMING SOMEONE'S LIFE IN A NEGATIVE WAY. BY JUST NURTURING AND SUPPORTING THE YOUNG ONES JUST LIKE THE THREE SISTERS, WALKING STICK, NIRVANA AND STEPHANIE."

"YES, NOW YOU'RE SEEING A BIGGER PICTURE. WE AIN'T DONE YET DELORIS. IN FACT IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO SEE WHERE WE WILL BE PLACED ON THE PEACE SCULPTURE."

MAGGIE AND BLUE CLOUD - MAGGIE IS LOOKING OUT HER WINDOW. IT'S LATE AFTERNOON AND THIS TIME OF WINTER THE SUN SETS EARLY. THE TEMPERATURE HAS DROPPED INTO THE LOW TWENTYS. SHE IS LOOKING AT THE SUNSET EFFECT OVER THE SAWTOOTH AND ALSO AT THE BRONZE TREE SCULPTURE.

I WONDER HOW THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BLUE CLOUD AND ME WILL WORKOUT. I WONDER HOW THE WOMEN FIT INTO THE CROW CULTURE. ARE OLD TRADITIONS STILL RELEVANT? HOW DO I KEEP MY HONOR. BOTH BLUE CLOUD AND WALKING STICK MADE ME VERY AWARE OF MY ACTION AND COMMITMENT TO HAVING BLUE CLOUD AS A MATE. THAT TERM SEEMS TOO LOOSE FOR SOMEONE OF BLUE CLOUDS STATURE. WIFE, I WILL BE HIS WIFE. WILL THE REST OF HIS CLAN ACCEPT ME. WHAT CHANGES IN MY WAYS WILL I HAVE TO CHANGE. I SURRENDERED EVERYTHING TO BLUE CLOUD. AND WHAT IS EVERYTHING THAT I OWN? MY DESTINY IS WHAT I WAS REMINDED ABOUT WHEN I CAME TO MY SENSES. SINCE I FOLLOW THE BUDDHIC WAY, MY DETACHMENT FROM THE MATERIAL WORLD IS MY COMMITMENT TO THAT WAY.... HUH, DON'T TELL ME HE'S HERE. AT OUR MEETING PLACE? WHO IS THAT OUT THERE, ALL WRAPPED UP IN A BIG COLORFUL BLANKET. THE WAY HE OR SHE IS LOOKING AROUND DOESN'T SEEM LIKE WHAT BLUE CLOUD WOULD BE DOING.

MAGGIE PULLS A COAT FROM THE RACK AND PUTS ON A HAT AND WINTER BOOTS. SHE TRUDGES THROUGH THE TALL GRASS THAT WAS LAID DOWN BY THE WET SNOW FROM A FEW DAYS AGO. AS SHE APPROACHES SHE RAISES HER VOICE FROM A SHORT DISTANCE, "HELLO, WHO ARE YOU, WHAT DO YOU WANT?" SHE STOPS WAITING FOR A RESPONSE.

"I AM FIRE CLOUDS. I AM FROM BLUE CLOUDS CLAN. COME HERE. I WILL NOT HARM YOU."

OKAY, DEEP BREATH MAGGIE. I FEEL NERVOUS. THE MARKED WHITE WOMAN. WHAT AM I THINKING? THIS IS MODERN TIMES. THERE MUST BE DIGNITY HONORED HERE. I AM BLUE CLOUDS WOMAN. "OKAY." AND SO I MAKE UP THE LAST FIFTY FEET AND AM STANDING IN FRONT OF THIS TALL CROW MAN! I AM FEELING VERY VENERABLE.

"MAGGIE, YOU HAVE NOTHING TO FEAR WITH ME. I DID NOT COME TO STEAL YOU FROM BLUE CLOUD."

"WELL, THAT'S REASSURING. WHY ARE YOU TELLING ME THAT!"

"THERE IS AN OLD TALE OF MEN STEALING WIVES IN THE SPRING. IT IS WINTER. YOU ARE SAFE."

"GET OUT OF HERE. YOU ARE SCARING ME EVEN MORE THAN I ALREADY AM!"

"YOU ARE PRETTY BRAVE FOR BEING SCARED. NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT. I AM JUST TEASING. BUT IT WAS AN OLD TALE. AT LEAST I KNOW BLUE CLOUD HAS A BRAVE WIFE. I WANT TO CALL YOU HIS WIFE EVEN THOUGH THERE HASN'T BEEN CEREMONY YET. IS THAT ALRIGHT?"

WOW, RIGHT TO THE POINT. NOTHING LIKE TESTING MY FORTITUDE AND COMMITMENT. WHAT AM I FEELING? NOT COMMITMENT, NO I AM HONORED TO BE CONSIDERED BLUE CLOUDS, UGH DO I DARE THINK, PROPERTY? "WIFE, THAT SOUNDS GOOD. I FEEL PROTECTED TO KNOW THAT YOU CONSIDER ME AS BLUE CLOUDS WOMAN."

"I AM HAPPY TO HEAR YOUR RESPONSE."

"TELL ME, DID BLUE CLOUD SEND YOU? AND ARE YOU RELATED TO HIM. I MEAN YOU HAVE A SIMILAR NAME."

"I AM RELATED. I AM AN ELDER TO BLUE CLOUD AND HE IS CLAN TO ME. HIS FATHER WAS MY BROTHER. BLUE CLOUD IS FAMILY. I AM HERE ON MY OWN. I WANTED TO MEET YOU AND SHARE WHAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL WHEN YOU MINGLE WITH OUR CLAN AS BLUE CLOUDS MADIAN."

WHOA, MADIAN, FIRE CLOUDS HAS A WAY WITH HONORING ME. "IT IS COLD, WILL YOU COME INTO MY HOUSE TO TALK MORE?"

"YES, THANK YOU. IT IS COLD WHEN ONE IS NOT MOVING."

WE GO TO THE HOUSE AND TAKE OFF OUR COATS AND OUTER WEAR. I BECKON HIM TO SIT AND WE DO. I HAVE SOME HOT COFFEE AND I POUR HIM A CUP. HE NODS IN APPRECIATION. WE SIT IN SILENCE FOR A BIT AND SIP COFFEE. THEN WE ARE LOOKING AT EACH OTHER.

"MAGGIE, WHAT YOU DID, SURRENDER OWNERSHIP OF THIS RANCH, FOLLOWS A TRADITION OF WOMEN IN CROW CULTURE. IF THEY HAVE LAND OR RICHES IT IS BESTOWED UPON THE MAN. YOU ARE BEAUTIFUL AND HAVE AN INFLUENCE ON THIS COMMUNITY THAT IS FORMING. BLUE CLOUD TELLS ME THAT YOU HAVE PATIENCE AND ARE AMBITIOUS. WOMEN ARE EXPECTED TO TAKE CARE OF FOOD PREPARATION,

CLOTHING, HOUSING AND WHAT YOU WHITE PEOPLE CALL DOMESTIC TASKS."

"FIRE CLOUDS, FROM THIS DAY ON I WILL PREFER THAT YOU SEE ME AS JUST A WOMAN OF NO COLOR. WILL YOU DO THAT?"

"YES, I CAN GIVE YOU THAT HONOR. THANK YOU," FIRE CLOUDS CONTINUES, "SINCE BLUE CLOUD IS A MEDICINE MAN, YOU WILL BE INVOLVED IN CEREMONY AT THE SWEAT LODGE. AND YOU WILL PLANT THE TOBACCO. YOU WILL ALSO BE ABLE TO DO VISION QUESTS TO GAIN SPIRITUAL POWER. YOU HAVE BEEN A WARRIOR IN A MANS WORLD. NOW YOUR FEMININE TRAITS ARE WHAT WILL SHINE. LET THAT BE YOUR NEW DESTINY. IT WILL GIVE MUCH HONOR TO BLUE CLOUD. I HAVE SPOKEN."

"THANK YOU." I CLOSE MY EYES AND TAKE IT ALL IN AS IF I AM MEDITATING. I HEAR SOME RUSTLING AND GRUNTS. THEN I HEAR THE DOOR OPEN. I LOOK UP. HE IS STANDING AT THE OPEN DOOR. I SAY, "PEACE BE WITH YOU." HE SMILES, NODS AND IS GONE.

I GO TO CLEAR THE TEA AND TUCKED UNDER THE SAUCER IS THIS NOTE.



Edwin T. Denig

The woman eventually known as Woman Chief was born to the [Gros Ventres](#) people; her birth name is unknown. At the age of about 10 she was taken prisoner by a raiding party of Crows, and was adopted by a Crow warrior who raised her among his people. She showed a disposition to assume traditionally male activities, and her foster father evidently encouraged her pursuits, as he had lost his sons to death or capture. She earned acclaim for her horse riding, marksmanship, and ability to field-dress a buffalo. However, unlike other [Two-Spirits](#), she wore typical female clothing rather than adopting men's garments. When her father died, she assumed leadership of his lodge.

My dear friend Maggie,

I leave this history of Pine Leaf. Tale has it that she was a woman warrior. There were many woman warriors in the Crow tribe who fought and hunted with the men. Know that you did not surrender your power. Know the difference between service and your freedom as a woman.

Fire Clouds

MOLLY AND ARTHUR - MOLLY GETS BACK TO THE ART STUDIO BARN AND GOES UPSTAIRS. ARTHUR IS SKETCHING. "HELLO LOVE, WHAT ARE YOU SKETCHING?"

"I'M JUST WORKING ON THE DESIGN. THINKING HOW THE SAWTOOTH RIDGE WILL INTERSECT WITH THE PEACE SYMBOL."

"I WAS THINKING ABOUT HOW WE WILL PLACE THE PEOPLE ROUND THE PEACE SIGN. AND I THOUGHT OF THE DIFFERENCES OF OUR WAYS, SOME OF US BEING SINGLE FOR A LONG TIME. OUR ETIQUETTE AND CULTURES CAME UP BIG ALL OF A SUDDEN. MAGGIE AND BLUE CLOUD, AND YOU AND ME. YOU BEING FROM A TRADITIONAL JAPANESE FAMILY AND ALSO A ZEN BUDDHIST."

"AND YOU WANT TO KNOW HOW MEN AND WOMAN RELATE IN THAT CULTURE?"

"YES."

"I LIVE AS A ZEN BUDDHIST BUT CARRY ON SOME OF THE TRADITIONAL FAMILY CULTURE. SO IT IS VERY CONFUSING FOR MY PARENTS. THAT IS A REASON I MOVED TO THE UNITED STATES. WHAT I FIND IS THAT THE OLD CULTURE IS STILL PREVALENT WITH MANY FAMILIES WHOSE LINEAGE CAME FROM ANOTHER COUNTRY. FOR ME MY CHOICE OF SPIRITUAL BELIEF CONFLICTS WITH MY PARENTS TRADITIONAL CULTURE. IF WE AS A COUPLE FOLLOW THE OLD TRADITION OF MY PARENTS, YOU WILL LIVE IN SUBMISSION. FINANCES WILL DEPEND ON ME. AND YOU MY NOT BE ACKNOWLEDGED VERY HIGHLY SINCE WE WILL BE A MIXED MARRIAGE."

"AND THE ZEN PART OF YOU..."

"MARRIAGE IS A CHOICE. THE SEXUALITY IS FOR BOTH MALE AND FEMALE TO ENJOY AND MAKE THE PARTNER HAPPY. SENSUALITY IS A ROAD BLOCK TOWARDS SPIRITUAL AWAKENING. ACCORDING TO THE FAMOUS BUDDHIST THICH NHAT HANH, TRUE LOVE CONSIST OF LOVING KINDNESS, COMPASSION, EMPATHIC JOY, AND EQUANIMITY."

"SO, ARTHUR, I REALLY LIKE FOLLOWING THE ZEN WAY. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT ME IN REGARDS TO HOW YOUR FAMILY MIGHT VIEW YOU...US...AS A COUPLE?"

"LIVING SO FAR FROM THEM GIVES ME A SENSE OF FREEDOM FROM HAVING TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE."

"I AM ASKING YOU, PERSONALLY. DO YOU FEEL GUILTY, WORRIED? ANYTHING THAT YOU FEEL RIGHT NOW."

THERE IS A LONG SIGH, HE HAS STOPPED SKETCHING NOW THAT WE ARE ON TOPIC.

"I LOVE YOU MOLLY AND WHAT WE DO TOGETHER. MY EMOTIONS CONCERNING US IS PURE JOY. MY EMOTIONS TOWARDS MY FAMILY IS RESENTMENT. THE THOUGHT THAT I WOULD EVEN HAVE TO CONSIDER LIVING IN THE TRADITIONAL WAY THEY HAVE CHOSEN."

"SO WHAT IS IT YOU SAID, TRUE LOVE, AND IN MY BOOK THAT INCLUDES OTHERS, TRUE LOVE CONSIST OF KINDNESS, COMPASSION, EMPATHIC JOY AND EQUANIMITY."

"AND MY STRUGGLE IS TO GIVE THAT TO MY FAMILY DESPITE OUR DEFERENCES."

"SO WHEN YOU SAY STRUGGLE, IS THERE ANOTHER WAY TO LOOK AT IT OR MAYBE A BETTER WORD?"

"ACCEPTANCE? ME ACCEPTING THE WAY IT IS AND NOT KEEP YOU A SECRET FROM THEM. MY SECRET LIFE."

"THANK YOU SO MUCH. TO ME OUR RELATIONSHIP INCLUDES YOUR FAMILY. IT DOES NOT MATTER THEIR PERCEPTION OF ME BECAUSE I KNOW THAT CAN CHANGE."

"NEXT TIME I GO HOME TO GET THE SPECIAL CLAY FOR THE BOWLS, WE WILL HAVE A VACATION IN JAPAN."

LOVE IS RADIATING FROM ME. "TO FEEL ACCEPTED AND KNOW THAT YOU ARE WILLING TO INCLUDE ME IN YOUR FAMILY...WELL THAT MAKES ME FEEL LIKE WE ARE SOULMATES"

"MOLLY, IN ZEN SOULMATES ARE REAL. WE BELIEVE THAT CONSCIOUSNESS MOVES FROM ONE LIFE TO THE OTHER. THE WAY OUR ARTISTIC TALENTS COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER IS A VERY GOOD EXAMPLE. HOW CAN I PUT IT? WE ARE ON THE SAME WAVE LENGTH, MOST OF THE TIME."

WE SMILE, WE HUG, WE KISS AND WE HEAD FOR THE BED.

PERMACULTURE - ALL THE LIGHTS ARE OUT ON THE RANCH. IT IS LATE AND I AM GUESSING I AM THE ONLY ONE AWAKE. MAYBE JULIAN AND JULIE ARE STILL CATCHING UP WITH THEIR ESTRANGED LIFE. RENEWED AND CONNECTED AGAIN. HOW WONDERFUL. THE SURPRISES THAT OCCUR IN OUR LIVES WHEN WE JUST STAY CONNECTED TO THE FLOW OF LIFE. AND RIGHT NOW I AM AWAKE BECAUSE I AM WONDERING HOW THIS LIFE WILL FLOW. THE LIFE OF THE WORLD. I AM REALIZING THAT THAT I CAN BE AN A SILENT ADVOCATE FOR A LIFESTYLE THAT MAKES SENSE TO ME. I AM A BIG FAN OF THE PERMACULTURE MOTTO, TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE, TAKING CARE OF THE EARTH AND SHARING SUPPLY. THIS GROUP HAS TOTALLY GRAVITATED TO THE PERMACULTURE CONCEPT WITHOUT EVEN REALIZING IT. WE JUST SEEMED TO CLICK AS A GROUP HOW LUCKY IS THAT. SO WHAT I AM TOSSING AROUND IN MY HEAD IS WHAT OUR CONCERNS MIGHT BE IN THE FUTURE. WE ARE DEFINITELY TAKING CARE OF EACH OTHER. AND IT SEEMS LIKE WE ALL REALIZE THAT WE NEED TO CONSIDER FUTURE GROWTH. WE DON'T NECESSARILY WANT TO CLOSE OFF THIS COMMUNITY TO THE REST OF THE WORLD. HOW WILL WE KNOW WHO HAS RIGHT INTENTION TO JOIN US? WITHOUT PLAYING GOD. AND WHAT KIND OF ECONOMY WILL WE CREATE THAT WILL BE ACCEPTED BY OTHER LOCALE COMMUNITIES? WE MAY NEED OTHER SUPPLIES AND WHAT KIND OF CURRENCY WILL BE ACCEPTABLE IF THIS COUNTRY'S CURRENCY CHANGES. LET'S SEE MAYBE WE STOCK UP ON SOME JUNK SILVER, COINS. OUR NEIGHBORING STATES OF SOUTH DAKOTA AND WYOMING HAVE GOLD DOLLAR BILLS. SO DOES NEVADA AND UTAH. HUMMMM, I WONDER IF THE LAKOTA RES STILL HAS IT'S OWN BANKING SYSTEM BACKED BY GOLD? I SEEM TO REMEMBER CHECKING THAT OUT ONCE. MAYBE THE LET SYSTEM? HOW WILL THE PHYSICAL TASKS GET DONE? WHO IS GOING TO MANAGE WHOM? TRANSPORTATION, GAS, AND ELECTRICITY MIGHT ALL BE A CONCERN DEPENDING HOW THE NEXT ADMINISTRATION RUNS THE COUNTRY. AT LEAST WE WILL NOT BE SO DEPENDENT ON THE ECONOMY OF THE WORLD. THE WORRISOME THOUGHT I HAVE IS WHAT WILL BECOME OF THIS COMMUNITY IF WE DON'T CONFORM TO SOCIETAL NORMS. AT LEAST MOST PEOPLE THINK PERMACULTURE IS SOCIALISM. SO WE WILL BE GOOD IF THE GLOBALIST TAKE OVER. IF AMERICA REMAINS THE LAND OF FREEDOM THEN WE'RE GOOD AGAIN. IF AMERICA BECOMES COMMUNISM THEN WE MIGHT HAVE PROBLEMS. REMEMBER WHAT MAO DID IN CHINA! AND WHY AM I THINKING LIKE THIS? FEAR? WORRY? MY MIND IS IN THE FUTURE EVEN THOUGH THESE ARE PRESENT THOUGHTS. WAIT, WAIT, JIM, YOU ARE IN WHAT STATE?

SUFFERING? UGH, GOOD TIME TO VISUALIZE THE NEW GREENHOUSE, MOLLY'S BARN, THE NEW SCULPTURE, BLUE CLOUDS CLAN MOVING ONTO THE RANCH, THE RELATIONSHIPS BEING STRONG AND LOVING. NOW THIS IS A MUCH BETTER WAY TO FALL ASLEEP. JUST FLOW, BABY!

CHAPTER 12: THE WAY OF PEACE

IT'S MID-DAY AND I DECIDE TO CHECK IN ON THE TWINS. SO I TAKE A HIKE DOWN THE PATHWAY PAST THE GARDENS AND INTO THE BUSH. I ARRIVE AT THE CABIN CLEARING AND SEE JULIE, OUTSIDE ON A BENCH, HER BACK AGAINST THE BUILDING SOAKING IN SOME SUN. IT'S A GREAT DAY UNSEASONABLY WARM IN THE FIFTIES TODAY. I APPROACH AND JULIE SENSES MY PRESENCE. SHE PLACES HER INDEX FINGER ON HER LIPS AND WHISPERS. "WE HAD A LATE NIGHT. AWAKE UNTIL THE WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING. JULIAN IS NAPPING." I SHAKE MY HEAD AND RAISE MY HAND IN RECOGNITION. I VERY QUIETLY TURN THE KNOB AND GENTLY OPEN THE DOOR PART WAY, AND DANG IT IF THAT OBNOXIOUS SQUEAK DOESN'T "KICK IN". I LOOK AT JULIE AND WE BOTH PURSE OUR LIPS AND SHRUG OUR SHOULDERS. I SQUEEZE THROUGH THE OPENING AND AM INSIDE LOOKING DOWN AT JULIAN CURLED IN AN ALMOST FETAL POSITION. MY HEART SWELLS AND MY LOVE FOR HER POSITION IN LIFE, RIGHT NOW, IS SWELLING WITH COMPASSION. WHAT MUST BE GOING THROUGH HER SUBCONSCIOUS MIND RIGHT NOW? WHAT MEMORIES, WHAT EMOTIONS DID SHE GO THROUGH LAST NIGHT? I GIVE HER A NAMASTE SIGN AND LET HER KNOW TELEPATHICALLY HOW MUCH I LOVE HER AND TO TAKE CARE OF HER BEING. A SOUL TO SOUL CONNECTION THAT I AM POSITIVE SHE CONNECTS WITH. WE HAVE TALKED ABOUT IT BEFORE, SO MANY TIMES WHEN WE ARE CONNECTED WITH THE SAME THOUGHTS AND OUR ACTION ACTUALLY RESPONDS TO WHAT THE OTHER WAS THINKING. I THINK THE LONGEVITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT HOW WE CONNECT NOW. I SQUEEZE BACK OUT OF THE CABIN AND LIFT GENTLY UPWARD ON THE DOOR AND MIRACULOUSLY IT DOESN'T SQUEAK. HUMPH, MAYBE THE UPPER HINGE NEEDS TIGHTENING?

I WHISPER, "JULIE, YOU UP FOR A LITTLE WALK AND TALK?"

SHE NODS AND RISES. WE START TOWARDS THE WAY I CAME FROM AND AS WE GET FURTHER FROM THE CABIN SHE SAYS, "GOOD MORNING JIM, OR IS IT AFTERNOON."

I JUST SHRUG MY SHOULDERS, "YEAH. THANKS FOR THE WALK. SO HOW DID IT GO LAST NIGHT?"

"LOTS OF TEARS AND HUGS. LOTS OF REGRET AND SADNESS ABOUT THE PAST. A LOT OF CONNECTING THE DOTS CONCERNING OUR PAST AND HOW IT HAS AFFECTED OUR LIVES. AND A LOT OF JOY FOR OUR REUNION AND BEING FOUND. WE SHARED THE SIMILARITIES OF WHEN YOU WERE FOUND AND HOW SHE WASN'T READY FOR ACCEPTING YOU BACK INTO HER LIFE. HOW THE SHAME WAS GREATER THAN THE HUMILITY OF ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS. SAME WITH ME IN REGARDS TO JULIAN. BUT HERE WE ALL ARE. SO WOW, ISN'T IT LOVELY."

I SMILE AND GET EMOTIONAL. I CAN FEEL IT IN MY GUT, LIKE BETWEEN THE STOMACH AND THE HEART AS IT RISES. KUNDALINI RISING?

"THANK YOU SO MUCH FOR BEING WILLING TO FINALLY HEAL THE PAIN FOR BOTH OF YOU."

"JULIAN SHARED WITH ME WHAT SHE THINKS IS YOUR QUEST TO YOUR SELF KNOWLEDGE. SHE SHOWED ME WHERE YOU CLIMB TO SKI IN THE WINTER. HOW YOU GO SOLO IN THE PURE WHITE SNOW. AND EVEN GO DESPITE THE ELEMENTS. SHE THINKS THAT YOU ARE ON A QUEST DURING THIS LIFETIME TO DISCOVERY OF TOTAL LIBERATION FROM THIS MATERIAL PLANE, SO TO SPEAK. SHE TOLD ME OF YOUR NDE. HOW YOU TOOK THAT EXPERIENCE AS NOTHING OTHER THAN BEING AFFORDED A GLIMPSE INTO WHAT MIGHT BE AFTER YOU LEAVE THIS PHYSICAL BODY AND WHAT YOU ARE DESTINED TO DO DURING THIS LIFE TIME. IT ALL SOUNDS LIKE AN ESOTERIC TRAIT TO ME. SOMETIMES EVEN HARD FOR HER TO FOLLOW YOUR... PERSONALITY."

THERE IS A SILENCE. JULIE'S NEWS HAS ME IN CONTEMPLATION.

FINALLY I RESPOND, "JULIE, JULIAN AND I SHARE A LOT OF OUR INNER TRUTH. HOW WE RESPOND TO THE LIFE AROUND US AND HOW WE CONNECT WITH THAT LIFE. I OBSERVE HER, HOW SHE CONNECTS WITH PLANTS, ANIMALS THE SAME AS SHE DOES WITH HUMANS. I WONDER SOMETIMES WHEN SHE CONNECTS WITH THE ANIMAL AND PLANT LIFE IF THEY GIVE HER A RESPONSE. AND WITH PEOPLE, HER DESIRE IS TO CONNECT AT THE DEPTH OF THE SOUL. SOMETIMES I DON'T EVEN UNDERSTAND WHAT IS HER MESSAGE. NOW THAT I KNOW SHE HAS A TWIN, IT'S AS IF SHE TALKS TO ME LIKE I SHOULD ALREADY KNOW WHAT SHE MEANS. AS FOR ME? I AM AN OPEN BOOK AS THE SAYING GOES. DID SHE TELL YOU HOW THIS WHOLE GROUP FORMED? IT ALL STARTED WHEN I POSED NUDE?"

"YES SHE DID. SHE REUNITED WITH YOU AS A RESULT OF WHAT SOUNDS LIKE PURE CIRCUMSTANCE. HOW EVERYTHING JUST EVOLVED AS IF IN A STORY CREATED BY A PLAYWRIGHT."

"YEAH, YOU COULD SAY THAT. BUT IN MY INNOCENCE, ALL I WAS DOING WAS BARING MY SOUL. AND BY DOING THAT MY LIFE AND PURPOSE CONTINUES TO BE REVEALED TO ME IN A MYSTERIOUS WAY. SOMETIMES THE WAY I CONNECT WITH PEOPLE DOESN'T MAKE SENSE TO ME. I USED TO FEEL LIKE I WAS ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING IN. AND THE SOLO JOURNEYS I DO WHETHER IT'S SKIING OR OTHER TYPES OF VENTURES IS WHERE I GET A BETTER HANDLE OR UNDERSTANDING OF MY EXISTENCE. I NO LONGER THINK OF BEING DIFFERENT OR SEPARATE FROM OTHERS. WE ARE ALL GRASPING FOR SOME KIND OF MEANING AND SUPPORT AS WE FIGURE THINGS OUT. SO TO BE PART OF THIS GROUP, THIS COMMUNITY AND IT'S EVOLUTION IS SPECIAL AT THIS POINT IN MY LIFE. I FEEL CONNECTED TO THE PATH THAT KEEPS WINDING WITH SURPRISES AROUND EVERY TURN."

"IS THAT PUN INTENDED AS IN SKIING, AND AVALANCHES AND FINDING JOSEPH THEN FINDING ME? AND...WELL CONVINCING ME TO REUNITE WITH MY TWIN. CONVINCING ISN'T THE RIGHT WORD. MAYBE IT WAS COINCIDENCE AND THE UNIVERSE, GOD? USED YOU AS A TOOL? DO YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF AS A CONDUIT TO THE SUPERNATURAL ENERGY THAT IS A SOURCE FOR ALL OF THIS LIFE. THIS MATERIAL WORLD?"

"MY DAD'S FAVORITE PRAY WAS THE PRAYER OF SAINT FRANCIS, "OH LORD MAKE ME AN INSTRUMENT FOR THY PEACE." I TEND TO MAKE UP MY OWN LINES BUT I DO SAY IT OFTEN. A SWEET SURRENDER TO WHAT IS."

"SWEET SURRENDER, I AM HEARING THAT FROM JULIAN, MAGGIE ANYBODY ELSE?"

"NOW YOU."

JULIE GIVES ME HER SWEET SMILE. WE STOP AS WE COME TO THE MAIN ROAD. SHE IS LOOKING AT ME..."THANK YOU FOR THE AVALANCHE."

WE PART WAYS, SHE HEADS BACK TO THE CABIN, I GO TOWARDS THE GREENHOUSE TO VISIT FRANK AND JERRY. SEE IF I CAN CONTRIBUTE. WHEN I GET THERE I SEE SADIE WITH FRANK AND JERRY. AS I APPROACH JERRY SAYS, "YOUR JUST IN TIME JIM. WE NEED SOME HELP GETTING THIS CENTER BEAM UP ON THE END POST." THERE IS SCAFFOLDING SET UP AT EACH END AND BOTH POST ARE BUILT WITH A

SLOT TO PLACE THE BEAM INTO. SOMEHOW THEY ALREADY HAVE THE BEAM ENDS ON THE SCAFFOLDING. FRANK AND JERRY ARE AT ONE END, I CLIMB UP TO BE WITH SADIE.

"HOWDY SADIE, YOU BEEN HELPING THESE GUYS?"

"YEAH, ALONG WITH JULIAN, BUT WE'RE SHORT HANDED TODAY."

I LOOK OVER AT FRANK AND JERRY. THE WAY THE SCAFFOLDING IS SET UP THEIR END OF THE BEAM IS LOWER THEN OURS.

FRANK SHOUTS OUT, "WE'LL HAVE YOU GUYS LIFT YOUR END IN PLACE AND WE WILL SLOWLY GIVE IT A PUSH IN YOUR DIRECTION AS YOU LIFT IT INTO THE SLOT. READY?"

WE BOTH SHOUT, "OKAY!", HEAVE OUR END UNTO OUR SHOULDERS AND THEN AS WE FEEL THE GENTLE PUSH WE START LIFTING IT ABOVE OUR HEADS. SADIE IS BEHIND ME AND AS WE GET THE END CLOSE TO THE TOP I CAN FEEL HER BODY PRESSED AGAINST MINE. THEN THERE IS NOTHING IN MY HAND. THERE IS A GRUNT FROM SADIE, I LOOK UP AND OUR END OF THE BEAM IS IN PLACE.

"GOOD WORK SHORTY," SADIE JOKES.

"SEEMS LIKE YOU HAVE BEEN ON THE CONSTRUCTION SITE FOR AWHILE. YOU EVEN HAVE THE COMMENTING DOWN!"

"WELL, YOU HAVEN'T HEARD THE CUSSING YET."

"YOU, CUSS? I WOULD HAVE NEVER GUESSED."

FRANK SHOUTS, "HEY WHEN YOU TWO ARE DONE GABBING WE COULD USE SOME HELP HERE!"

AND SO WE FINISH OFF THE BEAM PLACEMENT THE OLD FASHIONED WAY. BEFORE THERE WERE CRANES AND PULLEYS. JUST PURE BRAWN. LUCKY IT WASN'T A HEAVY BEAM. BUT IT IS GOOD TO MARK THAT MOST OF OUR BUILDING SHOULD REMAIN SIMPLE ENOUGH SO WE DON'T NEED TO SPEND MONEY ON HEAVY EQUIPMENT. ALL WE HAVE IS THE BACK HOE WHICH CAN DO A LOT, BUT IS STILL LIMITED.

WE GET OFF THE SCAFFOLDING AND ARE STANDING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GREENHOUSE.

"THANKS JIM," IT'S FRANK, "YOU HAVE ANY CONSTRUCTION SKILLS?"

"YEAH AS A MATTER OF FACT. I BUILT A FEW HOUSES INCLUDING THE GRIZZLY CABIN."

"GREAT WE'LL NEED TO PUT A CREW TOGETHER AS TIME GOES ON. SADIE HERE IS A BIG HELP."

"FRANK IS JUST SAYING THAT TO KEEP ME ON THE JOB SITE." SHE GIVES FRANK A SMILE.

"JIM, YOU SEE JULIAN OR JULIE TODAY?"

"YES. I JUST LEFT JULIE, SHE'S HEADING BACK TO THE CABIN. JULIAN IS SLEEPING."

"GUYS, I WANT TO CATCH JULIE AND TALK WITH HER. I'LL SEE YOU ALL LATER."

"GOOD THING WE'RE NOT PAYING YOU," JOKES JERRY.

WE WATCH AS SADIE DISAPPEARS DOWN THE PATH.

"SHE HAS REALLY PITCHED IN AROUND HERE. IT'S GREAT TO SEE." COMMENTS FRANK. "YOU KNOW I WAS THINKING, THE GALS HAVE THEIR THREE SISTERS AS SUPPORT. MAYBE WE SHOULD GET THE MENS GATHERING GOING AGAIN. WHAT YOU GUYS THINK?"

JERRY, "SURE, THERE IS THE FIVE OF US AS A CORE GROUP FROM BEFORE."

I CHIME IN, "LET'S DO IT. GREAT IDEA. MAYBE WE CAN HAVE MEETINGS AT MOLLY'S BARN, AND SOMETIMES DO A SWEAT LIKE THE OLD DAYS WITH JOSEPH."

"HOW'S THE OLD GUY DOING JIM?"

"REALLY GOOD. HE JUST AMAZES ME HOW HE HAS BEEN LIVING IN A TEEPEE ALL THIS TIME. JULIE'S HUSBAND HAS BEEN SUPPLYING HIM WHEN HE NEEDS SOMETHING. THE AVALANCHE HAS CHANGED HIS PLANS A LITTLE. BUT HE IS STILL ALIVE AND WELL."

"THINK WE'LL SEE HIM AROUND HERE AGAIN?"

"I DON'T KNOW. BUT WITH HIS CLAN COMING YOU NEVER CAN TELL. I REALLY SENSE HE IS ON SOME KIND OF PEACE MISSION. BUT HE DID NOT REALLY TELL ME ANYTHING. I DO BELIEVE HE HAS A HUGE INFLUENCE WITH WHAT IS GOING ON HERE."

"SO TELL ME A BIT ABOUT THIS IDEA FOR GETTING ENERGY FROM THE EARTH USING COPPER. JULIAN MENTIONED IT. WE DID SOME COPPER WIRE IN OUR FOREST GREENHOUSE AT THE GRIZZLY CABIN. WE DID SOME SPIRALS AND CIRCLES AND POKED THE WIRE INTO THE BEDS. JULIAN NOTICED SOME BETTER GROWTH AND PRODUCTION COMPARED TO LAST SUMMERS GARDEN HERE. SHE SAID YOU HAD A GOOD IDEA FRANK."

"WELL IT'S AN IDEA. EVERYTHING IS AN EXPERIMENT. SO I WAS THINKING WE GET SOME COPPER GROUND WIRE AND BOLT IT TO AN ABOVE GROUND COPPER PIPE WATER SYSTEM THAT WILL BE THE MAIN LINE TO THE IRRIGATION LINES IN THE BEDS. CAN YOU PICTURE THAT?"

"I CAN AND WILL THE MAIN LINE COME FROM A GRAVITY FEED CISTERN? DO YOU HAVE TO BE CONCERNED WITH FROZEN PIPE?"

"YES AND YES, BUT WE CAN WRAP IT WITH SOME HEAT TAPE, OR AT LEAST THE INSULATED FOAM WRAP TO ELIMINATE USING ELECTRIC."

"SOMETHING LIKE THAT SOUNDS GOOD. I WONDER IF WE COULD PUT TOGETHER A FILTRATED GREY WATER SYSTEM TO CATCH THE KITCHEN SINK WATER FROM THE RESTAURANT KITCHEN AND DUMP IT INTO THE CISTERN"

JERRY INSERTS HIS RESEARCH, "THERE IS A COPPER FUNGICIDE THAT WE CAN USE FOR SLUGS, TOO."

"SOUNDS LIKE WE ARE GOING TO CONSIDER EXPERIMENTING WITH COPPER THIS YEAR! ARE THERE GOING TO BE RAISED BEDS?" I ASK.

"THERE WILL BE A COMBINATION. JENNY AND JULIAN ARE DESIGNING AND PLOTTING OUT THE GARDEN DESIGN."

"NICE. IF WE HAVE A CREW, YOU THINK WE COULD OFFER A LOCALE SERVICE, SAY WITHIN A RADIUS OF 50 MILES, BUILDING OR DESIGNING THESE? YOU KNOW, A SMALL INCOME PRODUCER FOR THE COMMUNITY BUSINESSES."

"YEAH," JERRY, "NOT A BAD IDEA. WE COULD EVEN JUST SUPPLY COPPER DESIGNS TO PUT IN GARDEN PLOTS OR SELL OUR COPPER SLUG MIX. GOSH, WITH ARTHUR AND MOLLY THEY COULD DO SOME SIMPLE ARTISTIC COPPER DESIGNS FOR GARDENS. EVEN STUFF LIKE BIRD BATHS, ANYTHING RELATED TO GARDENS."

"WOW, I LIKE THE CREATIVITY COMING OUT OF OUR DISCUSSION. HEY COUNT ME IN FOR CONSTRUCTION. I LIKE PHYSICAL LABOR. I AM GOING TO PAY A VISIT TO JONI AND SAMMIE. I UNDERSTAND THEY ARE HERE TODAY. I'LL MENTION FORMING THE MEN'S GROUP TO SAMMIE. SEE YOU GUYS LATER."

"ADIOS PARTNER," REPLIES FRANK. A WAVE GOOD BY FROM JERRY.

I GET TO WHERE THE HEALING CENTER IS GOING TO BE CREATED. I SEE JONI'S CAR OUT FRONT. I GO UP THE TWO STAIRS, CROSS THE COVERED DECK AND OPEN THE DOOR. "HELLO, JONI?"

IT'S SAMMIE THAT ANSWERS, "JIM GOOD TO SEE YOU HERE." HE CROSSES THE ROOM AND IMMEDIATELY GIVES ME A HUG AND A PECK ON THE CHECK. "I AM SO GLAD THAT YOU DROPPED BY TODAY."

I HEAR JONI'S VOICE, "AVALANCHE MAN, DID YOU BRING IN THIS WARM WEATHER?" SHE COMES OVER TO US, "MY TURN SAMMIE." AND SHE GIVES ME A HUG AND PECK ON THE LIPS!"

"WOO, WHAT A WELCOME. I AM SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU TWO HERE. FILL ME IN ON THE DETAILS. THIS IS SUCH A NICE SPACE. BIG ENOUGH FOR A RECEPTION ROOM WITH A COUPLE OF COUCHES?" THERE IS A HALL WITH TWO DOORS ON BOTH SIDES. FOUR PRIVATE ROOMS.

SAMMIE STARTS, "YEAH, A COUPLE OF COUCHES AND A DESK FOR A LITTLE OFFICE SPACE. MAYBE HAVE FRANK PUT IN A COUNTER, SOMETHING LIKE YOU'D SEE AT A DOCTOR OFFICE, BUT MORE OPEN. JUST TO DIVIDE THE ROOM AND HAVE THE DESK BEHIND IT."

JONI, "MAGGIE GAVE US FOUR ROOMS WHICH IS GREAT WE THOUGHT YOU AND JULIAN MIGHT BE GIVING SOME MESSAGES TOO."

"ME FOR SURE, BUT WE'LL HAVE TO ASK JULIAN SINCE HER MAIN FOCUS IS ON THE GARDENS."

"WE ARE THINKING OF ASKING FRANK OR JERRY TO FILL THE WALLS IN THE ROOMS WITH BLOWN INSULATION TO DEADEN THE SOUND."

"HEY, I JUST VOLUNTEERED ON THE CONSTRUCTION CREW WITH FRANK, JERRY AND SADIE. SO I CAN DO SOME OF THE REMODEL IN HERE. IT WILL BE GREAT TO WORK WITH YOU TWO. ESPECIALLY IN THE MASSAGE CLINIC."

"OH JIM, WE HAVE SOME SURPRISES TO. JONI AND I HAVE MASTERED DOING TINCTURES AND HERBAL FORMULAS AND OTHER THINGS TO TRULY MAKE THIS A WELL ROUNDED CLINIC. INCLUDING SOME AROMA THERAPY."

"WALKING STICK IS WILLING TO DO SPECIAL SWEET LODGES FOR CERTAIN CLIENTS THAT COME FOR A WEEK LONG DETOX RETREAT. ANYWAY WE HAVE BEEN TALKING ABOUT THAT TOO."

THE DOOR SWINGS OPEN AND JENNY'S SMILING FACE BRIGHTENS UP THE ROOM, AS WE ALL TURN OUR HEADS IN HER DIRECTION. "JENNY! WE SAY IN UNISON."

SHE COMES INTO THE ROOM. "HEY, YOU GUYS ARE BUZZING IN HERE. I CAN FEEL THE HIGH ENERGY!"

"YES WE ARE. A REUNION OF SORTS."

"I SAW JONI'S CAR EARLIER AND DECIDED TO STOP BY. AS YOU KNOW I AM WORKING WITH MOLLY ON DESIGNING THE THERAPY BARN. BUT I REALLY HAVE SOMETHING ON MY MIND THAT HAS BEEN PERCOLATING FOR AWHILE. I FEEL THAT I HAVE A GIFT. I AM NOT SURE WHERE IT IS COMING FROM. BUT I HAVE BEEN WANTING TO APPROACH SOMEBODY ABOUT USING JUST HANDS TO HEAL. NOT MASSAGE, JUST HANDS ON HEALING. I HAVE DONE SOME RESEARCH AND FOUND SOME INFORMATION ABOUT HOW CERTAIN PEOPLE HAVE THE ABILITY TO HEAL BY SEEING AURAS AND BEING A CONDUIT FOR ENERGY TO FLOW FROM SOMEWHERE OR SOMETHING." JENNY LETS OUT A GIGGLE.

"YOU MEAN LIKE REIKI?" ASK SAMMIE.

"MAYBE, BUT SOMETHING ELSE, LIKE I GET A MESSAGE? ANYWAY YOU KNOW HOW I ASKED FOR THE GROUP ONE TIME TO DO THE HEART TO HEART "SALUTATION"?"

"YEAH, YEAH, THAT WAS BEAUTIFUL JENNY."

"WELL, JIM, YOU KNOW WHEN WE HAVE EXCHANGED SOME MASSAGE, YOU JULIAN, SADIE AND I. WELL SOMETIMES WHEN I WAS WORKING ON THE BODY I HAD MY HANDS A FEW INCHES AWAY, AND I COULD FEEL HEAT OR ENERGY IN CERTAIN AREAS THAT MAYBE NEEDED WORK."

"JENNY, MAYBE THAT IS THE DIVINE WORKING THROUGH YOU. MAYBE YOU HAVE A NATURAL HEALING ENERGY THAT PASSES THROUGH YOU. MAYBE YOU HAVE STRONG KUNDALINI ENERGY. I FELT THAT FROM YOU

A LONG TIME AGO, THAT FIRST TIME YOU AND SADIE INVITED ME FOR DINNER AND WE PLACED HANDS ON HEARTS AND FORMED A HUMAN MANDALA. THAT WAS YOU WHO INITIATED THAT. IT WAS SO BEAUTIFUL AND THE CONNECTION SO DEEP. IT HAD A LASTING AFFECT ON THE THREE OF US."

JENNY IS SMILING, RATHER SHEEPISHLY. I LOVE THAT ABOUT HER. HOW SHE DEFLECTS PRAISE, EGOLESSLY. BUT IN A HUMBLE WAY SHE LIKES THE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.

JONI, "LETS EXPLORE THAT ASPECT OF THE HEALING MODALITIES. WE HAVE FOUR ROOMS SO WE CAN EASILY TAKE APPOINTMENTS."

I AM THINKING HOW DEEKSHA IS HEALING THROUGH A TRANSMISSION OF ENERGY. THERE IS SUCH A FORCEFIELD OF ENERGY TO TAP INTO AND I FOR ONE DON'T TAKE THE TIME TO FEEL IT. IF THERE IS ONE THING THAT REALLY STANDS OUT FROM MY INDIA TRIP IT IS TO SLOW DOWN. CHECK OUT THE ENVIRONMENT AROUND ONESELF AND IN ONESELF. PAUSE, THAT WAS A KEY WORD FOR ME. THAT PAUSE KEEPS ME PRESENT TO FEEL THE INTUITIVE SELF.

WHAT I AM FEELING RIGHT NOW IS HOW WE ARE ALL CREATING COMMUNITY IN A FLOW THAT JUST UNFOLDS. SEEMS LIKE WE ARE A BUNCH OF SELF STARTERS AND THAT IS WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT THIS GROUP. EVERYBODY HAS A PURPOSE AND SEES THE BENEFIT OF THE WHOLE. PERMACULTURE MEANS PERMANENT CULTURE. IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT GROWING FOOD. WHAT DID BILL MOLLISON SAY? THE GRAND DADDY OF THIS MOVEMENT; "I DEEPLY BELIEVE THAT PEOPLE ARE THE ONLY CRITICAL RESOURCE NEEDED BY PEOPLE. WE OURSELVES, IF WE ORGANIZE OUR TALENTS, ARE SUFFICIENT TO EACH OTHER. WHAT IS MORE, WE WILL EITHER SURVIVE TOGETHER OR NONE OF US WILL SURVIVE."

I RECALL THIS QUOTE, THAT LAST DOOMSDAY COMMENT, "...OR NONE OF US WILL SURVIVE". I TAKE IT TO HEART. BECAUSE WE CAN STILL SURVIVE JUST IN AN ADAPTIVE WAY. AFTER ALL THE EARTH ADAPTED TO MAJOR CHANGES IN THE PAST, AND WE ARE WITNESS TO THAT PHONEME IN THIS CENTURY. AND I THINK OF HOW I CONTINUE TO ADAPT TO THIS WHOLE GROUP OF WHAT HAS BECOME A CLOSE NIT CIRCLE OF BEINGS.

CHAPTER 13: PARTNERSHIPS

JULIAN, JULIE AND SADIE - I (SADIE) AM DOING A SLOW WALK TO VISIT JULIAN AND HER TWIN. I NEED TO GET SOME PERSPECTIVE ABOUT MYSELF. ALL THIS TIME IT HAS BEEN HARD FOR ME TO RELATE AT OUR GROUP SHARES. I FEEL LIKE I LIVE IN A FOG OF JUDGEMENT. ME JUDGING OTHERS AND OTHERS JUDGING ME. JUDGING FOR WHAT I PERCEIVE THEM TO BE. I BETTER QUALIFY THAT. THEM AS THE HETEROSEXUALS. OKAY AND THEM FOR THINKING I AM WRONG FOR TAKING A POSITION OF EQUALITY AS A FEMINIST AND BEING JUDGED BECAUSE I LOVE ANOTHER WOMAN. I WONDER WHY JENNY DOESN'T SEEM TO BE BOTHERED BY THIS...WHATEVER IT IS I AM GOING THROUGH IT, MENTALLY. MENTALLY, MAYBE THAT'S WHAT PREVENTS ME FROM REALLY FEELING FREE. MY MENTAL IMAGES OF THEM AND ME? FRANK AND JERRY SEEM TO HAVE ADJUSTED TO MY CHOICE AS A LESBIAN WOMAN. HECK THEY LET ME BE ON THE CONSTRUCTION CREW. HA, I LIFTED THAT BEAM OVER SHORTY'S HEAD LIKE IT WAS A TOOTH PICK. SHOWING OFF MY MUSCLE! JIM, SEEMS LIKE HE HAS NEVER HAD A PERSONAL PROBLEM WITH ME. I HAVE TO CHUCKLE AT OUR FIRST DINER DATE. THE MEMORY OF THE TWISTER GAME AND THE TURTLE SEX! THE HUMOR OF THE WHOLE SCENE. AND MY ACCEPTING HIM WITHOUT ME BEING SEXIST. OH, THERE THEY ARE, THE TWINS. HANGING LAUNDRY? WHERE IS JIM, HE SHOULD BE HELPING!

"HEY!"

THEY BOTH LOOK IN MY DIRECTION, A BIT SURPRISED. COME ON PLEASE BE GLAD TO SEE ME? "HELLO TWINS!"

"WELL, SADIE, GOOD TO SEE YOU. WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?"

"THE WHISKEY, I KNOW YOU HAVE GOOD TRUTH SERUM!"

JULIAN LAUGHS HARDILY AND JULIE JUST SMILES. HER SMILE IS AS BIG AS WHEN JULIAN SMILES. WOW, WHAT IT MUST BE LIKE TO BE A TWIN. I APPROACH AND WE ARE CLOSE.

"HOW ABOUT HELPING US HANG THE REST OF THESE CLOTHS THEN WE CAN GO INSIDE AND TALK," ASK JULIAN.

GO FIGURE, JIM YOU'RE NOT NEEDED WE CAN DO THIS OURSELVES. WE ARE GOOD AT IT, BETTER THAN YOU MEN ANYWAY, IS MY THOUGHT.

JULIE, "I AM GLAD THAT YOU CAME SADIE. I MENTIONED THAT YOU MIGHT WANT TO DROP BY BEFORE I LEAVE, SO THIS IS A GOOD TIME."

WE FINISH THE TASK AND ENTER THE COZY CABIN. I BRING IN A CHAIR FROM OUTSIDE SINCE THERE'S USUALLY JUST TWO IN THE CABIN. WE SETTLE INTO OUR CHAIRS. I NOTICE A BOTTLE OF WHISKEY ON THE TOP SHELF. JULIE POURS SOME COFFEE.

FINALLY, JULIE SPEAKS, "YOU ARE A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN SADIE, AND I AM HAPPY TO KNOW THAT MY SISTER HAS A FRIEND LIKE YOU. SHE HAS MENTIONED THE TIME OF FIRST GETTING TO KNOW YOU AND HOW JULIAN, YOU, JIM AND JENNY DID MASSAGE AND CARED FOR EACH OTHER ESPECIALLY WHEN SHE REUNITED WITH JIM AFTER THEIR LONG HIATUS."

"GETTING TO KNOW JIM WAS A LESSON IN ME OPENING UP TO A MAN AND LETTING GO OF MY JUDGING HIM BEFORE EVEN KNOWING HIM. I HAD JIM IN A BOX FROM DAY ONE OF THE SKETCH CLASS. IT WAS JENNY WHO PROMPTED ME TO INVITE JIM FOR DINER. BUT THAT IS NOT WHY I AM HERE. I NEED PERSPECTIVE. THE HOME I WAS RAISED IN HAD STRONG BELIEFS ABOUT A WOMAN'S ROLL AND IT WAS NOT THE WAY I WANTED TO LIVE. MY FOLKS SAID I WAS GETTING BRAINWASHED AND THAT I WAS BEING INDOCTRINATED WITH SOCIALISM AND MARXISM. THE DESTRUCTION OF FAMILY NORMS. I REALLY DIDN'T THINK LIKE THAT. YOU KNOW BECOMING A MARXIST. THAT WASN'T WHAT I DESIRED, I JUST WANTED EQUALITY. WHY DO WE HAVE TO RELATE EQUALITY TO A MOVEMENT? AS TIME WENT ON I BECAME DETERMINED TO STAND FOR WOMAN RIGHTS AND BOOM..."

"DO YOU MIND IF I INTERRUPT FOR A SECOND SADIE?"

"NO, GO AHEAD JULIE."

"IT SEEMS LIKE THE EMOTIONS STARTED TO SNOWBALL AND IN YOUR HEAD FEMINISM BECAME A MOVEMENT. WHEN IT IS NOT. BUT ONCE WE TAKE A SIDE AND A STAND WE LOSE SIGHT OF WHAT IT IS. HECK, A MAN CAN BE A FEMINIST IF HE BELIEVES THAT MEN AND WOMAN ARE EQUAL."

JULIAN, "I THINK WHEN WE DO NOT TAKE THE TIME TO HAVE A PERSONAL CONNECTION WITH SOMEONE WE ONLY SEE OUR ILLUSION OF WHAT IS PERCEIVED AS BEING REAL."

"HUMMM, I CAN SEE THAT, HOW I HAVE LET OTHER INFLUENCES CREEP INTO MY MIND. BUT WHAT ABOUT THE COMBINATION OF ME BEING A LESBIAN?"

"YEAH, WELL I KNOW SEXUALITY IS A WHOLE OTHER DIMENSION TO WOMANHOOD AND MANHOOD. LET'S NOT FORGET ABOUT GAY MEN. I LEARNED BACK WHEN I WAS "A WILD WOMAN" AS THE SAYING GOES, THAT IF I THOUGHT ABOUT BEING A REBEL THAN I WOULD ALWAYS NOTICE RESISTANCE AND BE IN CONFLICT. WHEN I WORE MY BELIEFS AS A BADGE OF HONOR, I WAS A TARGET," REMARKS JULIE.

"AND LESBIANISM? EITHER OF YOU HAVE A COMMENT ABOUT THAT?"

"QUESTION YOURSELF, ARE YOU MAKING A STATEMENT WITH YOUR LESBIANISM OR DO YOU PREFER A SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH A WOMAN. IS YOUR ATTRACTION BASED ON EXTERIOR INFATUATION OR INTERNAL INTERACTION? A BODILY SENSATION OR A HEART TO HEART CONNECTION? AT A CERTAIN POINT ONE COMES TO THE REALIZATION OF SELF GRATIFICATION AND PASSION IN RELATIONSHIP VERSUS SUPPORT AND GOD LOVE. GOODNESS, KINDNESS, AND COMPASSION OR THE IGNORANCE OF ANIMAL MENTALITY. YOU EVER SEE TWO MONKEYS FORNICATE?" CHIDES JULIAN.

"OH NO, IS IT LIKE TWO TURTLES?"

THERE'S SOME HARDY LAUGHTER, "WORSE, IT'S ACCOMPLISHED QUICKLY!"

I WONDER WHAT'S WITH THE WHISKEY. BUT I DON'T ASK, THAT SEEMS LIKE A PRIVATE MATTER. BUT IF I EVER SEE HER IN A STUPOR, I WILL INTERVENE. AFTER ALL I LOVE HER TOO MUCH, NOT TO.

"GOSH, THANK YOU BOTH FOR TAKING THE TIME TO CHAT WITH ME. I KNOW YOU TWO NEED TIME WITH EACH OTHER. WOW, YEAH, THANK YOU."

AND I AM STRUCK BY THEIR RESEMBLANCE AND WHAT MUST SEEM LIKE A MIRACLE IN THEIR LIVES. I GET UP AND AM OUT THE DOOR. THERE IS A MALE AND FEMALE MOOSE IN THE CREEK LOOKING AT ME. I STAND FOR A SHORT TIME LOOKING AT THEM AND WONDER ABOUT

RELATIONSHIP. I AM BEGINNING TO FEEL MORE AND MORE ACCEPTED BY THIS COMMUNITY. MAYBE, THAT IS MY ILLUSION, THAT I AM SO DIFFERENT. WHEN IN FACT EVERYONE OF US IS DIFFERENT.

JONI, MAGGIE, AND JIM - "SAMMIE, YOU MIND IF I TAKE JIM FOR A BIT? I WANT TO GO UP AND HAVE A VISIT WITH MAGGIE AND JIM."

"NO PROBLEM, I AM GOING TO CONTINUE SETTING UP MY ROOM, LET ME GET MY MASSAGE TABLE OUT OF THE CAR."

SAMMIE GRABS THE TABLE, "JIM, YOU MIND HELPING ME AND GRAB THAT DUFFLE BAG?"

"SURE," I FOLLOW HIM INTO THE BUILDING.

"YOU CAN PUT IT RIGHT THERE FOR NOW. I'LL SEE YOU WHEN YOU TWO GET BACK?"

"YES, MAYBE WE CAN CATCH UP, IT'S BEEN AWHILE."

"I'D LIKE THAT, SPEND SOME TIME TOGETHER."

JONI HAS THE CAR STARTED AND WE ARE OFF TO MAGGIE'S. JONI TAKES A QUICK GLANCE IN MY DIRECTION, "SO YOU NEVER KNEW ABOUT JULIAN'S TWIN SISTER?"

"NOPE, NOT UNTIL MY BIG HORN ADVENTURE."

"I'M SURE GLAD YOU ARE BACK ALIVE AND WELL. I WOULD HAVE BEEN DEVASTATED IF YOU LEFT US, ME. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN."

"THANK YOU JONI, I AM GLAD TO STILL BE PART OF YOUR LIFE AND THAT OUR RELATIONSHIP IS STILL IS STRONG DESPITE HOW EVERYTHING TURNED OUT."

"YEAH BROTHER, YOU ARE EMBEDDED IN MY HEART. DEEP IN MY HEART. SOMETIMES IT IS STILL A STRUGGLE TO LET GO. WHEN MOLLY GETS THE THERAPY BARN GOING AGAIN, I SURE HOPE YOU REMAIN IN OUR GROUP."

"I LIKE TO THINK THE BARN WILL BE A PLACE TO PROCESS VS THERAPY. THERAPY SOUNDS TO PSYCHOLOGICAL TO ME. NEXT STOP THE NUT HOUSE. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"

JONI HAS A LAUGH, "YEAH, YEAH SOMETIMES I USED TO THINK SIMILAR, NEXT STOP THE SEX ADDICTION RECOVERY CENTER. YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN?"

"WE MIGHT BE GETTING INTO SOME DARK HUMOR IF WE DON'T STOP THIS LINE OF THOUGHT."

"HUMOR, WE MIGHT GET INTO SUFFERING. ISN'T THAT THE STATE YOU AND MEGAN TALKED ABOUT? AT LEAST I MIGHT GO THERE."

I REACH OVER AND SQUEEZE HER SHOULDER, "I WON'T LET YOU GO THERE."

"OH, SO YOU PROMISE ME JOY?," SHE SAYS THIS WITH TONGUE IN CHEEK.

"AT LEAST WE CAN PROCESS UNTIL YOU GET TO A BEAUTIFUL STATE."

JONI IS SMILING, "JUST DRIVING UP TO MAGGIE'S WITH YOU HAS ME IN A BEAUTIFUL STATE."

"AH, WONDERFUL. AND IF I WEREN'T HERE?"

"I'D HAVE TO PROCESS I GUESS AND SEE WHAT WOULD BE HOLDING BACK FROM ENJOYING THE LONELY RIDE."

"I THINK I SEE YOUR TONGUE IN CHEEK AGAIN?"

"YEAH, I AM HAVING FUN WITH YOU, BUT SERIOUSLY YOU WILL HAVE TO TELL ALL ABOUT YOUR EXPERIENCE AT EKAM."

"ONE THING FOR SURE IT IS AN ONGOING PROCESS. BUT AT LEAST I HAVE DIRECTION, SOME TOOLS, AND SUPPORT EVEN NOW THAT TAPAS IS OVER. IT'S A WHOLE DIFFERENT KIND OF KIND OF COMMUNITY AT EKAM. WHOO, WE GOT HERE QUICK."

"IT WAS THE CONVERSATION AND THE EXCITEMENT OF US HAVING SOME TIME TOGETHER. I AM GLAD THAT YOU WANT TO GET BACK INTO MASSAGE AND BE PART OF THE CLINIC."

"YES, I FEEL GOOD TO MAKE THAT COMMITMENT."

"COMMITMENT, YOU HEARD IT HERE FOLKS, HE IS COMMITTED!"

JONI TOOTS THE HORN, WE GET OUT AND CLIMB THE STEPS. MAGGIE IS ALREADY AT THE DOOR TO GREET US.

"COME ON IN YOU TOO MEMORIES OF MY PAST!"

"COFFEE? AM I SMELLING COFFEE?"

"YES YOU ARE JIM AND JONI HAD LEFT SOME DONUTS FROM THE HUT."

"JUST LIKE OLD TIMES MY FRIEND," IS A SOFT RESPONSE BY JONI.

"LET'S GO TO THE TABLE AND CHAT." MAGGIE LEADS THE WAY.

"UMMMM, THIS IS A NICE PRELUDE TO THE REST OF MY DAY."

"SPEAKING OF WHICH, WHEN WE FINISH OUR SHORT VISIT I AM GOING TO SPEND THE NIGHT UP HERE WITH MAGGIE. YOU CAN TAKE THE CAR BACK DOWN. IT'S UP TO YOU, BUT I KNOW SAMMIE REALLY WANTS TO CONNECT WITH YOU. THAT IS ONE OF THE REASONS FOR BRINGING YOU UP HERE."

"WELL, THAT IS A BEAUTIFULLY ORCHESTRATED MANIPULATION, IN A GOOD THOUGHTFUL WAY. THANK YOU JONI."

I HAVE A PAUSE, AND A SIP OF COFFEE. I REACH FOR A CINNAMON CAKE DONUT, WITH JUST A SMIDGIN OF COCONUT SUGAR SPRINKLED ON TOP. WOW, IT HAS BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE I WAS AT THE HUT OR EVEN THE WILDFLOWER WHERE THE PROPRIETOR SERVED THEM ON MY BEHALF, SINCE THAT WAS THE PLACE JONI WOULD HANG OUT. OUR MEET UP PLACE.

MAGGIE, "THAT WAS QUITE A SHOCK, MEETING JULIAN'S ESTRANGED TWIN."

"THEY ARE NOT ESTRANGED ANYMORE."

"HAVE YOU CHECKED IN WITH JULIAN SINCE THE OTHER NIGHT?"

"I WENT OVER THERE. JULIE WAS SOAKING UP THE SUN OUTSIDE, I WENT INTO THE CABIN AND JULIAN WAS CURLED UP ON THE BED IN A DEEP SLEEP. I COULD FEEL HER ENERGY, INTENSELY GRATEFUL AND RELIEVED. THAT'S WHAT I FELT JUST LOOKING AT HER. I LET HER SLEEP, JULIE WALKED ME BACK TO THE ROAD."

JONI, "WILL JULIE BE HERE FOR AWHILE?"

"YES, AT LEAST THE WEEK. WE WILL SEE THEM AROUND THE RANCH. I AM SURE OF THAT. BUT FOR NOW, IT IS GOOD THAT THEY ARE ALONE."

MAGGIE, "WHY DO YOU THINK BLUE CLOUD WILL NOT STAY WITH ME. WITH THE SNOW AND COLD, WE WON'T BE MEETING BY THE BISON."

JONI, "STAY WITH YOU? OR BED DOWN... WITH YOU?"

"EASY DEAR, BED DOWN AS IN PROVIDING HIM A BED TO SLEEP, JUST AS I AM BEDDING YOU DOWN TONIGHT." MAGGIE SMILES.

"HEY LADIES, YOU SEE THE COLOR OF MY FACE?" I AM FEELING FLUSHED AS I REACH FOR ANOTHER DONUT.

MAGGIE, "I STILL HAVE TO PINCH MYSELF THAT HERE WE ARE MOVING FORWARD IN A COMMUNITY AFTER BRIEFLY KNOWING EACH OTHER TWENTY YEARS AGO."

"YEAH, IT FEELS LIKE WE ARE OLD FRIENDS. SOULS THAT WERE DESTINED TO MEET AGAIN FOR SOME HIGHER PURPOSE THAT WE WEREN'T EVEN AWARE OF." JONI OBSERVES.

"WHAT ABOUT JOSEPH? THINK WE WILL SEE HIM AGAIN? JIM?"

"I AM NOT SURE MAGGIE, FRANK ASKED THE SAME. YOU TWO HAVE KNOWN HIM LONGER THAN ME."

"HE HAS BEEN SOMEWHAT OF A MYTHICAL FIGURE FOR ME. FRANK HAS HAD THE MOST CONTACT WITH HIM. MY STRONGEST CONNECTION HAS BEEN WHEN I MEET BLUE CLOUD AT THE BISON. THERE STANDS JOSEPH. THE THE GREAT PEACE WARRIOR OF THE NEZ PERCE TRIBE."

"AMAZING AND THIS LAND, THIS PLACE HAS SO MUCH HISTORY OF THE CROW THE ABSAROKA TRIBE. THIS WHOLE VALLEY. SO TO HAVE JOSEPH AND BLUE CLOUD'S CLAN LIVE WITH OUR GROUP..."

JONI, "AND THE FACT THAT YOU, MAGGIE, HAVE YOUR SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP AS SOON TO BE WIFE?"

"HMMMMM, MY LIFE IS GOING THROUGH A MAJOR TRANSFORMATION."

"YOU SEEM TO BE HANDLING IT WELL. ARE YOU?"

"I MUST SAY, I HAD TO BECOME FULLY DETACHED FROM THE IDEA OF BEING A LAND OWNER. WHEN I SURRENDERED NOT ONLY THE LAND OWNERSHIP, BUT MY PHYSICAL BODY TO BLUE CLOUD SOMETHING CHANGED RIGHT THEN AND THERE. YOU KNOW IN THE CROW CULTURAL WHAT WEALTH OR LAND OWNERSHIP BELONGS TO THE WOMAN BECOMES THE MANS. IT BOOSTS THE MANS VALUE. A FEW NIGHTS AGO, I HAD A VISIT FROM FIRE CLOUDS. A BIG GRAND FATHERLY FIGURE IN BLUE CLOUD'S CLAN. AND HE SCHOOLED ME ON MY POSITION AS A WIFE. HE LEFT ME A NOTE AND I FELT SO HONORED."

JUST SHARING THIS WITH YOU TWO, I NEVER KNEW WHAT IT IS TO BE REALLY DETACHED FROM THOUGHT. I DO NOT KNOW HOW TO EXPLAIN IT. IT'S AS IF EVERYTHING THAT WAS MY LIFE IS GONE. WHAT MY LIFE WILL BE LIKE HENCE FORTH? I DON'T KNOW. SO THERE IS AN EMPTINESS INSIDE. BUT I FEEL FULL. FULL OF LIFE, RIGHT NOW. JUST AS YOU MUST FEEL FULL OF DONUTS JIM!"

I GRAB FOR ANOTHER ONE! "OOPS, I WAS LISTENING. THE ADDICTION DID NOT PREVENT ME FROM HEARING WHAT YOU SAID."

"WHAT ABOUT FEELING, DO YOU FEEL MY JOY, AND WONDERMENT? BEWILDERMENT? AMAZEMENT?"

"I FEEL FULL OF THESE AMAZING DONUTS!"

"THIS GUY IS FULL OF IT!" EXCLAIMS JONI.

"NO, NO, I DO FEEL YOU. WHAT I FEEL IS GRACE. AND I FEEL THE GRACE YOU BOTH HAVE, GIVEN THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT IS TRANSFORMING YOUR LIVES. TO SURRENDER TO THE TRANSFORMATION IS NOT EASY. I TOO AM GOING THROUGH TRANSFORMATION. AND THAT PART YOU SHARED MAGGIE, THE EMPTINESS. WELL I SENSE IT AS THE NOW OR PRESENT PART OF MY LIFE. AND WHEN I AM NOT IN THOUGHT, IT CAN HAPPEN SO QUICK. SO WHAT I AM SLOWLY TRAINING MYSELF TO DO IS TO ABSORB THE MOMENT. LIKE THE GROUND ABSORBING THE RAIN. SLOWLY THE MOISTURE SEEPING DEEPER. BUT GOSH, IT COMES AND GOES SO FAST. SO WHAT WE DID AT TAPAS, WAS SET ASIDE A TIME OF JUST OBSERVING. BEING STILL. USUALLY AT SUNRISE AND SUNSET. IN THE MORNING IT WAS WATCHING THIS GOLDEN, OR ORANGE BALL RISE. I WOULD OBSERVE THE NIGHT SKY BE ABSORBED BY THE DAY SKY. THE FORM OF GOD, IN THE EVENING IT WOULD DROP BEHIND THE MOUNTAINS AND I WOULD WATCH THE DAY SKY BE ABSORBED BY THE NIGHT. DURING THAT TIME MY THOUGHTS WOULD BE ABSORBED BY STILLNESS"

JONI, "LIKE THE ENERGY COMES AND GOES? AND IN-BETWEEN IS EVERYTHING ELSE. SO TAKING A TIME OUT EVERY SO OFTEN HAS MADE A BIG DIFFERENCE IN MY LIFE. I GAIN SOME PERSPECTIVE AND THEN FOR AT LEAST A MOMENT I FEEL THAT EMPTINESS YOU TWO ARE TALKING ABOUT."

MAGGIE, "I AM SO HAPPY THAT YOU TWO SHOWED UP TODAY. HEY, LET'S GET THIS GUY ON THE ROAD. YOU CAN BED DOWN HERE TONIGHT JONI. WASN'T THAT THE PLAN?"

"I DON'T REMEMBER, BUT I AM HERE NOW!"

SO BEAUTIFUL THIS FUN INTERACTION. HOW CAN IT NOT BE WHEN WE SHARE FREELY.

SAMMIE - I DRIVE BACK DOWN TO WHAT WILL BECOME THE HEALING ALTERNATIVE ENERGY CLINIC. MY GUESS IS THAT AT SOME POINT WE MIGHT HAVE A SMALL CLINIC FOR A MEDICAL DOCTOR AND TO HANDLE EMT PATIENTS. I PARK THE CAR AND ENTER. THERE IS QUITE A TRANSFORMATION THAT HAS HAPPENED IN A RATHER SHORT TIME. THE RECEPTION ROOM ACTUALLY HAS A COUCH SET UP WITH SOME LARGE PLANTS AND A NICE CARPET. A COUPLE OF PHOTOS ON THE WALL ONE THAT CATCHES MY ATTENTION OF A BOY BENT OVER IN A YOGIC CHILDS POSE WITH WHAT APPEARS TO BE HIS SOUL LOOKING DOWN AND A SET OF HANDS RADIATING LIGHT. AWESOME, I AM LOOKING AT THIS WHEN SAMMIE ENTERS THE CLINIC WITH A BUCKET FULL OF RIVER ROCKS.

"HEY, JIM, YOU MADE IT BACK."

"YOU HAVE BEEN BUSY. I SENSE THAT YOU ARE EAGER TO GET THIS CLINIC IN OPERATION."

"YES I AM. AND I AM EXCITED TOO. JUST KNOWING THAT WE WILL HAVE A TEAM OF THERAPIST. I CAN SEE A LOT OF CLIENTS ONCE THE SUMMER RANCH PROGRAMS START UP."

"I THINK THERE HAS BEEN SOME DISCUSSION ABOUT TARGETING PEOPLE WHO WANT A HEALING RETREAT EXPERIENCE RATHER THAN THE DUDE RANCH EXPERIENCE."

"YEAH, THAT IS WHAT HAS ME EXCITED. JIM, IT HAS BEEN AWHILE SINCE I HAVE FELT YOUR MASSAGING HANDS. DO YOU THINK WE CAN RECONNECT WHILE MASSAGING EACH OTHER?"

"I HAD THAT THOUGHT IN THE BACK OF MY MIND. JONI MENTIONED THAT YOU WILL APPRECIATE SOME CONNECTION WITH ME."

"OH, BEAUTIFUL. I HAVE BEEN SO BLESSED TO BE TRAINING WITH HER. SHE HAS BEEN SO EMPATHIC AND TREATS ME LIKE A SOULFUL BROTHER."

I REMEMBER OUR EARLY ENCOUNTERS HOW EDGY SHE WOULD GET WITH ME. ESPECIALLY WHEN WE BOTH DESIRED YOU AS A MATE."

"HMMMM, AMAZING HOW PERSONALITIES AND CIRCUMSTANCES CAN LEAD TO A TRANSFORMATIVE STATE OF MIND AND ACCEPTANCE."

"THANKS AGAIN TO YOU AND JULIAN FOR ARRANGING THE USE OF THE GRIZZLY CABIN FOR US."

I JUST NOTICED HOW SAMMIE REFERENCED "THE GRIZZLY CABIN" VERSUS "YOUR GRIZZLY CABIN". HOW MAGGIE HAS SURRENDER HER OWNERSHIP OF THE RANCH FOR THE GREAT GOOD OF THIS GROUP. I DON'T FEEL OWNERSHIP OF THE CABIN RIGHT NOW, ALL OF A SUDDEN I SEE IT'S POTENTIAL USE AS PART OF THE COMMUNITY. I DON'T FEEL "SOCIALISTIC" AS IN A POLITICAL SENSE, I FEEL LIKE PART OF A SOCIAL UNDERTAKING, GOOD FOR THE COLLECTIVE OF THIS GROUP.

"JIM, YOU DRIFTING OR WHAT?"

"JUST CONTEMPLATING ON HOW YOU PHRASED THE GRIZZLY CABIN RATHER THAN YOURS AND JULIAN'S CABIN. YOU KNOW HOW MAGGIE HAS BEEN SHARING ABOUT SURRENDERING HER OWNERSHIP? ANYWAY THE WAY YOU SAID IT JUST STRUCK A CORD IN ME. JULIE HAS OBSERVED HOW SHE HAS HEARD THE PHRASE "SWEET SURRENDER" AROUND HERE. I RECALL EARLY ON IN OUR RELATIONSHIP HOW YOU DESIRED ME, PHYSICALLY. AND RATHER THAN REJECTING YOU LIKE I MIGHT A DEMON, I SURRENDERED TOWARDS A RESPECTABLE RELATIONSHIP. DO YOU RECALL THE EARLY PAINS BETWEEN US, A HETEROSEXUAL AND A GAY MAN?"

"YES. THAT IS ALL I NEED TO SAY AS A RESPONSE. YES AND THANK YOU FOR THIS RELATIONSHIP AND HOW IT HAS EVOLVED INTO A SOLID FRIENDSHIP."

"JIM, I WANT TO DO YOU FIRST."

"OK, I WAS CONTEMPLATING ON THIS PICTURE. WHERE DID YOU EVER FIND IT?"

"OH, THAT, YEAH A LOCAL ARTIST. SHE DOES SOME ILLUMINATING WORK. THIS ONE GRABBED ME. LET ME KNOW WHEN YOU ARE READY."

STILL THE MIND, STILL THE MIND, STILL THE MIND, STILL THE MIND

*SO THIS IS WHAT I'M NOTICING AS I BECOME MORE ENGAGED WITH LESS EGO. I'M SEEING IT SLIP AWAY I CAN REALLY RECOGNIZE NOW WHEN THE EGO TAKES CHARGE AND WHEN IT DOESN'T, WHEN I'M IN THE REALM OF ONENESS, EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT MUSIC SOUNDS DIFFERENT. THE FLOW OF THE DAY IS DIFFERENT, AND THE ENERGY OF THE MOMENT IS DIFFERENT. IT'S HUGE TO NOTICE THE FREEDOM FROM ALL OF THE OUTER CIRCUMSTANCES CREATED BY CRAVING. REAL ILLUMINATION BECOMES SO NOTICEABLE. THE ILLUMINATION IS THE ENERGY THAT SEEMS TO DIRECT MY STATE OF MIND AWAY FROM THE MATERIAL ASPECT OF THOUGHT. MARAS OF THE MIND. EVEN NOW I WANT TO STOP WRITING AND JUST BE....

EPILOG:

AND SO I REALIZE THAT I HAVE COME TO THE END. THIS WAS GOING TO BE THE *NEXT CHAPTER. AFTER DESCRIBING THE JIM AND SAMMIE CONNECTION. BUT IF YOU READ ALL OF THE SERIES "A JOURNEY OF LOVE" UP TO THIS POINT, THERE IS NO NEED FOR ME TO CONTINUE.

*CHAPTER 14: THE DANCERS

JOSEPH

JIM, JULIAN, AND JULIE -

BLUE CLOUD AND WALKING STICK -

NIRVANA, MEGAN, AND STEPHANIE -

FRANK AND JERRY -

DELORIS AND FAYE -

ARTHUR AND MOLLY -

SADIE AND JENNY -

SAMMIE -

FRANK AND ROBIN -

IF YOU ARE INCLINED, MAYBE YOU CAN CREATE THE REST OF THE STORY. ABOUT 90% OF ALL THIS WRITING BECAME AN EXERCISE IN CREATIVE WRITING. MY GHOST WRITER WAS THE DIVINE INTERVENING. SOMETIMES THE CREATION WAS FASTER THAN THE MIND. I TRIED BEST TO SELF EDIT. THE AMAZON EFFORT COST "MUCHO DINERO".

WHEN I DECIDED TO GO TO THE UNEDITED PDF FILE CONCEPT THAT IS WHEN MY DESIRE TO BE NOTICED AS A WRITER DIMINISHED.

AND TODAY, FEBRUARY 14TH 2024, I HAD JUST GOTTEN DONE WITH THE CRAVING TAPA NIGHT. I WAS FORTUNATE TO BE ABLE TO DO IT A SECOND TIME. AND THE RESULT CAME TO ME. HOW MUCH HOPE, AND LACK, AND WANTING, AND NOT WANTING AND CRAVING, AND MORE CRAVING AND NOT ENOUGH CRAVING RATTLED MY BRAIN.

I WAS ON A WALK WITH MARIAN, MY TRUE SOULMATE. I MENTIONED THAT I WAS READY TO END THE WRITING. IN THE MIDDLE OF THE FINAL BOOK TO THE JOURNEY OF LOVE SERIES. I HAD COME ACROSS THE ABOVE *JOURNAL WRITING I DID ONCE UPON A TIME. AND MENTIONED TO MARIAN HOW I FELT COMPLETE WITH THIS VENTURE. AND SHE THOUGHT IT WAS A GREAT IDEA. "YOU CAN INVITE PEOPLE TO FINISH THE REST OF THE STORY," THAT WAS HER COMMENT.

WHAT A RELIEF I FELT. DESPITE ALL OF THE FUN AND EXCITEMENT AND LAUGHTER AND JOY IT HAD BESTOWED ON ME THE OBSESSION BECAME A CRAVING OF LACK. I

NEED MORE STORY. I NEED A BETTER BLOG, I NEED, I NEED,
I NEED A PERPETUAL EXISTENCE OF MATERIAL THOUGHT.

I GAVE YOU MY HEART, MY SOUL, MY EMOTION OF
TEARS, AND LAUGHTER AND CONCEPTS AND MOSTLY
PURE UNLIMITED CONSCIOUSNESS. ENJOY YOUR OWN
JOURNEY OF LOVE.

BLESSINGS!

JAMES KOZLIK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

I meet Marian. It was a phone call to recruit helpers for a Untied Farmer Workers fund raiser. She is my wife to this day...45 years married and 48 years of love and gratitude. All other acknowledgements I have to give is to family and all of the people that I have connected with throughout my life. Without all of the experiences and seeking for a higher consciousness this book would have never been started. It seems like most people that have made it beyond addictive habits, had a teacher or mentor or guru that they connected with. Someone that touched their soul. For me, I want to acknowledge the teachings and processes of Krishnaji and Preethaji who founded Ekam. The Ekam Dasas. And the souls of the Ekam Oneness Movement.

Ultimately these writings were all about community. Now that I am paying attention to the environment of souls living in these bodies of ours, I recognize all the communities I live in or have lived in. Work communities, neighborhood communities, friends communities, the woof.org community, seeker communities and the World Oneness Community. I had always craved being in an intentional community. Then one day Ekam showed up in our life.

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