



JAMES D CONNOLLY

Expectations
of *Happiness*

Expectations of Happiness

Book Two:
The Department of
Truth Trilogy

James D Connolly

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Edited by: Lubna Siddiqi

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CONTENTS

Testimonials.....	6
Acknowledgements.....	8
Preface.....	9
 LIMITATIONS.....	 10
Enclosed.....	12
Life Sentence.....	31
Disorder.....	42
New Ground.....	65
 EXPECTATIONS.....	 84
Deeper Places.....	87
Earthbound.....	121
The Anvil.....	134
 CONNECTION.....	 146
All Things.....	150
Boundaries.....	162
Union.....	194
 PURPOSE.....	 215
Wastelands.....	218
Focus.....	239
Process.....	253
 ACCEPTANCE.....	 269
Happiness.....	273
Integrity.....	283

Author's Other Books.....	289
About The Author.....	295
Baha'i Quote.....	296
References.....	298
Recommended Baha'i Links.....	298

TESTIMONIALS

“Expectations of Happiness”, like “The Department of Truth”, is a book filled with magic and adventure. The author’s use of language draws you in, creating intriguing imagery as you read.

The story leads the reader on a journey of self-discovery and the learning of not only who you are, but how to become a happier, stronger version of yourself. It supports the challenge of reaching beyond your current limits by keeping an open mind, questioning current beliefs, and trying to better understand others’ beliefs. The book shows the need for a connectedness to yourself and to others. An entertaining read with deeper insight’s found throughout the story.

Being new to the Baha’i Faith, I found “Expectations of Happiness” another step in my spiritual growth journey.

Cathy McEwen, Life Coach, Australia

This book takes us on a journey that we have all taken part in. Some reject it. Others embrace it. Yet others misunderstand it. The journey of life takes us all in different directions, and without purpose, we lose sight of the joy within life. This book brings in focus a man’s journey for happiness. It is inspiring, insightful, and illuminating.

It was at times difficult to read because it reflected too closely my own struggles in life, but I could not stop reading it because it gave me hope.

This is one of those books that you will read a second time and pick up a new understanding. It is a book that needs to be read more than once. It is a book that underpins the importance of the *Creative Word*.

Thank you for its wisdom and illuminating His words.

Bruce Thompson, Lecturer, Canada.

In “Expectations of Happiness”, James Connolly continues to deliver gems of wisdom through the voice Jack Johnston – a regular Australian bloke whose struggles with anxiety and family relationships make him a relatable character for many readers. Dialogue and storytelling are used

to illustrate psychological barriers to happiness, and the relationship between spirituality and day-to-day life is explored in a way that is surprisingly down to earth and engaging.

More than providing a pleasant escape from (our physical) reality, reading this book is an uplifting experience that gives the reader an opportunity to delve into spiritual and psychological realities.

Catherine Bushnell, Clinical Psychologist, Australia

When I finished reading “Expectations of Happiness”, I was enjoying it so much that, I had a strong “Oh no!” moment at the end, because there were no more words to read!

The story is of one man’s adventure exploring the meaning of life, told against a backdrop of inter-dimensional travel, with mysterious friends, foes and a sprinkling of humour to light the way. Written in a conversational way, “Expectations of Happiness” discusses the limitations we place on ourselves and the journey we take to find true purpose and meaning.

Alexandra Popovich, Dental Hygienist, Australia

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PREFACE

“Expectations of Happiness” is the second book in *The Department of Truth* trilogy. It explores various aspects of the *individual* human creature, and the nature of this life. It is an exploration of *individual transformation*, in the reality of this existence and in the reality of our true nature. It is in the matrix of this life we grow our inner selves, as we seek purpose, meaning and happiness.

This book, while in the vessel of a symbolic story, is more grounded than *“The Department of Truth”*. It hopefully shares tools and insights that, if acted on, can lead to more happiness in this life. By understanding our true nature and the nature of this life, we can realise more effective purpose in this world and hopefully more happiness, in any weather. Life is an inner and outer experience, and it is perfect.

The three books in this series are inspired by my Faith, but I do not seek to represent it in any way. The mix of my own perceptions, philosophies, experiences, and ideas, let alone the books’ symbolic nature and the licence I have used in these books, leads me to this assertion. There are a small number of quotes from my faith in the body of the story, and at the end of the book, there is a quote and links if you wish to explore it for yourself.

This book does not pretend to be anything more than the sharing of ideas through a story. I love sharing understanding and ideas, and don’t expect all to agree. I also love writing, as the process itself is an adventure and it brings wonderful new ideas to my door. You can never be sure of what it will yield up, even if you have a plot and some ideas to share. A symbolic story, also, brings the reader’s perceptions very much into play. So, this book, as with the first book, is simply *what it is*.

The next book in the series *“The Halls of Certitude”* is in the process of being written and will follow soon. Its main theme is collective human transformation and community building. At the end of this book, you can find more details about the other two books in the trilogy, *“The Department of Truth”* and *“The Halls of Certitude”*.

I hope you enjoy *“Expectations of Happiness”*, and the whole trilogy.

Limitations

Jack Johnston walked up the inner stairs of his rented townhouse. He was over the grief now, but still emotionally tired from the, now thankfully waning, upheaval of his marriage breakup. There was a surety within him though, a weary inner acceptance of the weathering of life. It was one of those times in life that was just after the storm, yet before the coming out of the sun.

He had been married for nine years, and it had granted him two children; two children whom he was now giving some *real* time to. He had always loved and treasured them, and he worked hard to do the right thing by his family; but he had been so busy, and so tired, most of the time that he had gotten very little quality time with them. His marriage had not worked, and his wife eventually left him. He didn't blame her. The marriage had not been good. He had struggled

in himself and with his heavy workload, and now he was coming to the clear realization that he had simply carried too much, for too many, for too long.

Jack loved his children, and now simply being with them, and helping them to become good human beings, had become his highest priorities. He and his children made the most of the time they were now spending together, and their bond was growing stronger. *His* bond definitely was, and he was satisfied with that more than *anything else* in his life. He had also gotten right into his new faith over this time; enjoying time to wander in its mysteries, its understandings, and the evolution of its work. He had cut back his work hours, and his income, and had begun to follow his heart more. Right now, he was just a little worn out yet quietly happy; and it was now that he saw a door at the top of the stairs.

He just stood there on the stairway, in initial disbelief, but with a gentle smile coming to his face. There had *never* been a door there, *yet there it was*. A big dark blue door. He wondered if he was having a heart attack, or had just gone nuts, like the previous times such experiences had come to him. He stood there for a few seconds to gather himself, yet the smile on his face slowly grew in intensity as he took a big deep breath and continued up the stairs.

With every step, a feeling grew; one that was calling him to go through the doorway. He wasn't sure what part of him it was coming from, but it was a deep knowing, a real surety. As he reached the door, his hand went instinctively to the golden doorknob that sat at its centre. "*Maybe the timing is right, as it always is,*" he thought; and with just a little hesitation, and his heart beating faster, Jack turned the knob, opened the door, and stepped through.

Enclosed

The doorway opened up into a very wide, large, and well-lit circular room. Its high circular wall was a continuous array of cogs, belts, rods, shafts, gears and pullies, all shiny new steel and well oiled. There did not seem to be an order to them, even though there was some depth and intricacy to the wall. There were also doors all the way around this circular wall. They were of standard size and spaced about a metre apart. They sat neatly in the wall itself, with the cogs and pullies snug in around them. They were of all different styles, and each had its own particular colour and texture.

The floor was made of light, highly polished wood, and in the centre of the room there were two large dark blue leather lounges. They sat on a large circular, white woollen rug that extended a little way beyond them; and in between these couches was a chunky, low, dark wooden table, with some books on it. The ceiling was a huge single pane, concave glass, skylight which sat on a thick wooden frame that ran around the top of the circular mechanical wall. Inside that deep wooden frame was a single row of books that went all the way around the room, and there was a running ladder between two of the doors, so that the shelf's contents could be accessed.

The Milky Way, in all its night-time glory, stretched across the skylight, and it took Jack's breath away. He oddly felt at home here, and after his recent struggles it was a relief to be back in places deeper. Suddenly, there was a thundering behind one of the doors, and he instinctively went over to open it to see what was going on; or really, it was like he thought it, so that is what happened. It was certainly weird in this amazing room, as there seemed to be no difference between thought and action here.

He opened the roughly painted, blood red and deep yellow, door, and out came his black friend at a hundred miles an hour, or somewhere near that speed.

"Hey brother, shut the door!"

"What are *you* doing here?" asked Jack, in a surprised tone, as he shut the door behind his friend.

A young Brig looked back at him. He just looked at Jack for a while, and said, "You've settled a bit brother, and *you're older*."

"Well yes, a bit of both, I suppose."

"More than *suppose*, Jack. The fella' I knew was all over the shop without a mop," finished Brig, with a cheeky smile.

Jack just smiled and looked at his friend. It was strange seeing him again in this place, especially now that he had come to know the older Brig in the real world. Jack had become good friends with this young man on his last journey deeper. They were both younger men then, and

now both a little older, yet somehow too, this Brig had not aged. It was all part of the odd nature of this room.

“Yep, I *was* a bit all over the place,” Jack finally answered. “So, what’s going on behind that door?”

“Best you take a look for yourself, fella’. Things behind these doors look different to everybody,” explained Brig.

“Okay,” said Jack, as he opened the door again.

There was fire everywhere; trees and bushes burning. The ground had ruptured from very deep below the surface, and he saw a great white building crumbling and burning. It was somewhat like the one he had seen when his house had been engulfed by the fire tree all those years ago; he still wondered about that.

In the midst of the fire, he could see two figures. It was the Queen’s mother and Thomas with buckets of water trying to put out the raging fire. Jack could see, as anyone could see, that they were wasting their time and endangering themselves. He respected their spirit and their journey, but he was done with that place.

“They’re mad,” he said, with a tired look on his face.

“We’re all mad, Jack; in our own way. They can’t see the futility. Some people see, some don’t, and who sees it as it really is . . . well, *we’ll see*.”

“I know what I see, and what I’ve seen. Sometimes there’s no remedy, and something has to die for new life to come,” offered Jack, still looking at the raging scene behind the door.

“Yeah . . . hey cuz’ close the door will ya’,” asked Brig, with a questioning look on his face.

“Not a problem,” said Jack, and as he did, the door fell back into mechanical wall, like it was swallowed. The room’s cogs and belts and gears moved into action, and in a magical orchestration of precision moved the remaining doors to fit the room evenly. This and that had turned and slid, moved up and down and sideways; all in no apparent order. It was like the wall was alive somehow, its movement organic as well as mechanical.

“You just *closed it*. You *really*, just closed it! The old Jack would be racing off in there to help them see and help them out of there; or to try again. They told me you came back *a few* times when I finally got to bein’ there.

“Yeah, well, I’m not that guy anymore. Anyway, I was *forced* back there mostly, as I recall,” stated Jack.

“But you made the effort when you were taken there, eh. You *did* want to build a Garden,” retorted Brig.

“Yes, *I did*, Brig; *more* than you can know. But it was *too* many times, mate, and just too crazy. I have a choice now, and I am not going back. Everyone needs to learn their *own* way, and anyway, like you say, we all see things behind these doors differently.”

“Yep, we all have to learn *our own* lessons, in *our own* way,” agreed the first nation man.

“Yep, and there’s a limit to everything. So, *what happened* in The Garden? What started that raging fire?” asked Jack.

“There were deeper fissures, brother. Deeper than the ones you were part of. That garden was riddled with ‘em, and they were *growin’*, cuz’. Even the Light of the garden couldn’t cleanse it. There were endless words and so much hidden talk; the place was rotten with ‘em. This small garden simply couldn’t hold ‘em, so they just exploded up through the ground, shattering it, and starting the inferno.”

Even though Jack felt no real loss, he *was* saddened, and thought it was a shame, because the last time he had seen the Garden it was alive and vibrant, and the building had started. “There’ll be another Garden,” he then commented, with total surety.

“Yep, *there will*. Nothin’ lost, just more learning gained, eh. So, what’s this place brother?”

“A round room with plenty of doors, mate,” replied Jack, with his eyes narrowed, thoughtful, and just a hint of a smile.

“Yep, *you might just be right there, brother*,” agreed Brig, in the slow definite way an indigenous brother would, with big eyes and a big cheeky smile.

Both men laughed out loud.

THE MEN LOOKED AROUND THE ROOM, AND AT ALL THE DOORS, while doing the ‘maybe’ game. A to and fro of maybe it’s *this*, maybe it’s *that*, about the nature of the room and the doors. Also, about why Jack had been brought deeper again. Eventually they grew tired of guessing and sat down on the edge of the soft white rug in the middle of the floor.

“So, what ya’ been up ta’, Jack?” asked Brig.

“Well. The usual; living, working, getting married, having kids, and getting separated from everything you love. You know, all that stuff,” said Jack, looking down with a thoughtful acceptance on his face.

“Oh well, *as long as you learn*, Jack; would hate to imagine pain without learning, eh?”

“Yeah, Brig. Pain and learning. You sure get to know how life *really* is as you live it. We were brought up with expectations of happiness. All those stories and movies, with all those heroes and *happily ever afters*. I just wonder at that a bit.”

“My stories and upbringing were *different*, brother. I’m a saltwater man and life was *way* different for us. There *was* hope, but we sure didn’t have the expectations.”

“Yep, I suppose so,” offered Jack, remembering his time with Brig on his creek, and the depth of stories he told. Also knowing of the struggles of indigenous communities and the underlying judgement they had to deal with. “We had fables and Bible stories; we had a good education and *were* taught to work hard, *by* workin’ hard; but we sure had to learn about life in the world the hard way. Just expected it to be less complicated, you know.”

“Yep, sure, but we gotta’ go through the fire to swim in the sea, eh?” offered Brig.

“See, I didn’t know that. I thought life would be good; that you would find real love and just build a good life. I didn’t know what a tall order that was in this crazy world,” explained Jack, thoughtfully.

“It’s *an adventure* alright. Ya’ know, looks to me like this journey is about happiness.”

“Another journey! When you put it like that, it makes me feel even more tired than I already am; but I suppose it might be.”

“No *might be*, brother,” sprouted Brig. “It *always* is after a long run of pain; so, now’s for new horizons and new beginnings, I reckon.”

Jack smiled at his brother’s words, and said, “Yeah. That *would* be good. I *have* been kind of happy for a little while now. Never really knew what it was like before now.”

“*What?! Really?*” spurted out the black man, and then shaking his head. “Make that, *definitely* a journey about happiness, ’cause if this isn’t...*Brother, you’ d better take one,*” added Brig, with wide eyes. “Happiness is a *natural state*, cuz’.”

“*You reckon!* I don’t know *about that*. While life has been good to me, it also hasn’t. I’ve *always* struggled with life, in myself, and with the mindsets around me. Even after all that deeper learning on my travels, happiness still eluded me. Just couldn’t get its spirit on the ground, and life seems like one bloody disaster after another until recently. I even visited the bloody *Tree of Happiness*, and still couldn’t live here what I learned there.”

“Yeah,” said Brig, knowing the trouble with that himself. “Spirit’s a lifetime process, bud.”

“Yep, and a bit more probably, eh,” said Jack, as he lay on his back on the white rug to look up at the stars in the great skylight.

Brig lay back too, saying, “You can look at those stars forever.”

“Yep, and a bit more probably, eh,” repeated Jack.

JACK WOKE. Brig was gone, and there was an almost pitch-black night to be seen through the great circular skylight. The lights in the circular room came on gently and seemed to come awake with him. He lay there wondering at this new place, when his eyes caught something on the single shelf that ran around room under the skylight.

He got up, climbed the running ladder, and began to explore the great circular bookshelf. It was full of the books that he had read, and he only now realised just *how many* books. There were old school textbooks too: English, History, Biology, Geography and more. There were religious books, psychology books, spiritual books, and novels that he had read beyond his school days. There were also recording discs of documentaries, as well as movies that he had found meaning in. There were music discs too, and as he read the names of the songs, they played out loud in the room. After a while, he realised that he just needed to think of a song, and it would play.

All these things on the shelf were interspersed with the stories of his life. His life experiences and memories. They were just words on sheets of paper, stapled together and stuck in between the books and other things. When he read a little bit of one story, a song played that talked of how he remembered feeling at the time; like the room was reading his thoughts and emotions. There were also rocks, some feathers, and sticks he remembered picking up on his walks, dispersed around the single shelf. There was one piece of driftwood among them that he loved, but he knew it still sat at home, on his television cabinet.

He slowly began to understand the great treasure that sat on that shelf as he rode the ladder slowly around the room. What *endless treasure* was in a single life; and he was not even old yet. He took some of the stapled pages with stories of his life, and one book he remembered fondly,

and sat down on the couch. He smiled and he cried as he read the stories, and his eyes widened as he got a little more magic out of that old book. He saw so much more, in the stories of his life *and* this old book, than he did the first time around.

After a good while, he got up and returned them to their place, then continued to pull the ladder around as he looked at various things. Soon he came across words carved in the wood above shelf. It read...*Make sense of what is given. Do not just put it on a shelf. Use it well.* He sighed at that, and he rode the ladder around and around, stopping and reading here and there, interspersed with time lying on the couch remembering and playing the music that stirred his soul. It was like a dream, and days came and went, and did not seem to have an end.

ONE DAY ON THE LADDER, as is the nature of things, he found another inscription on the wooden shelf. It said...*It is never about what is gone, and what is ended. It is about what has come and what has begun.* Jack smiled as he looked at it for a short while and reflected on it.

Not all sayings fit a certain time in our lives or a particular situation, but the two he had found talked to him deeply right now. When he got down off the ladder, he noticed many other sayings engraved all around the great wooden beam that housed the shelf, both above and below the books. He thought about the treasures that might be there but did not feel the need to look at them; at least not now.

He walked over and lay on the couch. He was full, he knew his time up on the shelf was done for now and that a new cycle would soon begin, so he decided to rest his mind and sleep a while. He was about to close his eyes when a truck horn blared loudly through the room. The horn

sounded again from behind a white door that had a thick film of red ochre dust all over it. He walked over to the door, opened it, and peered through. The heat of the desert country came rolling through the door and he found himself on the side of a road. It was a highway that went in a straight line to both horizons, and he was standing in the shadow cast by a semitrailer.

“Hey Jacko, climb aboard mate, we got cattle to deliver,” called out the driver, like he knew him.

The man looked familiar, and his smile. Jack knew that smile. As he walked around to climb into the cab of the truck, all he could see in this great and endless flat expanse was red dirt, burrs, and small trees. He had lived in the desert country as a young man, sailing high and wide in those days, as young men did. Pushing all the limits he could was life; playing football, shooting, drinking, driving fast, and the rest. He was a little crazy and reckless now looking back, but he was alive and fearless then, when the world was still a wonder and life a great adventure.

Jack got up, into the cab, looked at the man, and remembered him. “Joe! *Mate*. How *are* ya’, big man?!” he let out, with real joy.

The big snowy-haired man smiled, and just said, “Good to see ya’, Jacko.”

Joe was his best mate in Cunnamulla; well, him, and a fellow called Sparra’ Crick. Sparra’ was his nickname, and Jack never did find out how he got it. He figured it was on account of him being small and chirpy, like a sparrow. Sparra’ could ride a motorbike like a trick rider. Most of the boys out there could do amazing things on dirt bikes; Joe included. Fond memories of these two and many other characters then flooded through Jack’s mind and heart. He realised just how

many friends he had back then. There were heaps of them; mostly young men, and one and all carrying on like a bunch of idiots. Jack just *loved* that place, and that time.

“How are those two bloody rogue brothers of yours?” he asked, remembering them as good mates too.

“They’re good, Jacko. You’re *lookin’* a bit skinny on it.”

“No beer these days mate, and no woman to feed me well,” answered Jack, by way of explanation.

“No beer! *Mate, that’s bad,*” expressed Joe, tragically.

“The beer’s no loss mate.” Then, he looked at his old friend, saying, “It’s *really* great to see ya’, Joe.”

“Yeah, mate, it’s good,” agreed Joe.

With that Joe just drove, and Jack just remembered.

IT WAS A GOOD WHILE, AND A HUNDRED KILOMETERS, before Joe piped up, “You know; this is your *life*, Jack. It’s the *only* one you get, mate. You’ve got to *live* it, and be up against it a bit, to be alive.”

Jack didn’t even care where that came from, he just knew he needed to hear it. He had been trying too hard to get life balanced; trying to get it *all sorted*. When he was married, life had also become a chase for money, things, and working out ways to get things done smarter. There was

just mental strain, and little joy, *or life*. He also looked further back, to when he had been alone before his marriage, and remembered being so locked away from others and life that even little things made him anxious. He could see a pattern; it was like he was constantly hiding from the struggles of life.

He had been happy this past year, though. Looking back at it, he saw that he had been *actually living*; he hadn't just worked and worked like before. He had less money, but he had gone out there and done some good things, met new and interesting people, and had fun with his children. He had also been up against all the recent sudden changes in his life, but he was very satisfied from the effort he made to resettle his life. Jack realised now how being up against things was good for us. He was also getting a clear message that he needed to be more adventurous, like he once was out west.

"We get older Jacko, and maybe we have to calm things down, but hey we still gotta' live life," said Joe, like he was in Jack's mind.

"Yep," said Jack falling quiet, as he looked out the window at the desert country. "I remember the heat out here now," he said, still looking out the window. He loved the desert. It got in your blood if you spent enough time out here.

"Yep, but nothin' like a little heat and a bit of sweat, and just make do. Makes you appreciate the shade and a cold drink. Makes you more appreciative of things."

"For sure," agreed Jack, his eyes still wandering out to the broad horizon.

“Not like the aircon’ beach coffee crowd, eh? I don’t really know, but I don’t think they know they’re alive. If things get tough, they scream like stuck pigs and blame everybody else, even when life’s little things happen. It’s *all* part of life.”

“I like my coffee and the beach, but yeah, we are getting soft. We aren’t up against it enough. A little too comfortable for our own good; me included.”

“Well, get out there and live. Take some chances. Build somethin’, Jack, and don’t listen to that *many lives* rubbish. We get *one shot* at this reality, may as well make it a life of value.”

“A life of value,” said Jack slowly, “I like that.”

“It’s *all* yours, Jacko,” said Joe smiling.

Just then, there was a loud bang, then fast repeating thuds. “Flamin’ hell! *Bloody tyre*,” cussed Joe.

Joe slowly pulled the rig to a stop. With the live load he had to take care. The two men then got out in the desert heat with the flies and the kangaroo carcasses. Carcasses in all stages of decay lined the road here. ’Roos could be anywhere out here, but there were always particular places like this, where there were always more of them for vehicles to contend with. They came to the roadsides for the green pick, in the cool of dusk, or in the early morning, on sun-up, then camped in the middle of the day in the shade. Jack now remembered back to half dark roads, and dodging ’roos like dodgem cars. He always had good spotlights on his cars to spot them on the road, or just beyond it, as well as a good bull bar on the front, if he didn’t manage to dodge them.

Actually though, he had more trouble with guideposts than anything else. Guide posts were very quick out west. They would jump out at you when you blinked off to sleep on the long straight stretches of road. It was either the rough surface just off the side of the road, or a guide post going *bonk* on the bull bar, that would wake you up. He had ripped off two rear bumper bars on his car swerving away from guideposts; the back edge of the car clipping them as he swerved back onto the road.

He smiled, as he remembered himself and his mates doing some backyard panel beating on the dented rear panel of his car, and fitting a new rear bumper once, to go home one Easter. They had had a lot of rain all through the southwest the week before and the red dirt roads were mush, and it was a long way before you made it to the bitumen. The police said they wouldn't get out in normal vehicles, but Jack, and too other mates in their cars, went anyway. It was a risk, but they all got through the almost two hundred kilometres to the bitumen, as the rain kept up. Then it was only seven hundred and fifty k's to go, for Jack.

One of them turned off for home at the Moonie Crossroads, horns blaring and light flashing as he did. Simple fun, and it all felt great until thirty k's on, when the water pump failed on his other mate's car. Jack had to tow him a couple of hundred kilometres, and they were hitting up to 120 km per hour at times, mostly because his friend was running out of brakes. The person being towed was always in charge of slowing things down, and Jack had mistakenly thought he didn't mind a bit of speed. There were no such things as mobile phones then, so his friend was in for the ride, like it or not.

Anyway, it was going okay, and would have, but when they were close to his friend's destination, they hit a metre of flowing rainwater in a dip in the road. Jack hit it first, which was

like slamming on the breaks suddenly and heavily. He smiled again, as he remembered waiting the split second for the towed car to hit him hard from behind. He had run out of brakes altogether, and the water had slowed him too, thankfully. The bumper was shot again, and the back panel too. But well, it just meant more work with his mates, or Joe's old man doing a bit of work on it maybe.

"Can we just go in on the other tyres?" asked Jack, with his mind now back on the job with Joe.

"Nah'. Better do it. Lucky it's an outside one, I s'pose."

Just then, a black shadow flashed across Jack's shadow on the ground. He looked up and he said to Joe, "What was *that*?!"

"I didn't see anything," said Joe, in a matter-of-fact way.

"It was too big for a bird. But can't see anything." Which wasn't a strange thing to say because on this flat ground and only sparse small trees at best, it was all dirt and sky out here.

"We got big crows out here," said Joe, with a wry smile, but now looking up from where he was crouched beside the truck.

"Yeah, *right*," said Jack, with a little smile.

"Maybe it was a Wedge-tail, they're big," offered Joe.

Jack looked up at the sky. "Yeah, maybe," still a little spooked.

"Jeez', Jack. You're wound up tight, mate; you weren't like this, as I remember. Give us a hand, eh," said Joe.

The two men went to work; Jack being the offsider. While they worked, another memory surfaced of two old furniture removalists. The old men had blown too many tyres on their small body truck, due to the heat and the old rocky dirt roads. They weren't from out here, had old spares, and didn't have inner tubes in their tyres. A good rock would often end a tyre's life suddenly and violently if you hit one. The men only had two spares, which they had used up, and were trying to sneak into town on four tyres with a big load on. They had been forced to stop, when the last one blew, and had waited in the heat for most of the day before Jack, Sparra', and gaggle of lads and ladies were driving home from the Bollon B & S Ball.

The young crew gave them some water; you always carried extra water out here. The old men were not concerned how hot the water was. It was wet, and it was water, and that was all they needed. The crew took the tryes into town in Newey's panel van. Jack and Sparra' arranged for new tyres to be set on the rims at the servo, got food, and headed back out to give the men a feed. The old men were very thankful and chowed down big time.

After a time and a few laughs, the lads headed back to town to get a few hours' sleep. In the morning, when the tyres had been put on the rims, the two friends took them back out to the old blokes in Sparra's father's ute. The men fitted the tyres and they all headed back to town together. It was a lovely memory, and a great time. Four hundred k's back and forth just to help some fella's out. Distance never mattered out here, and things like this were just what people did.

It took Joe and Jack a reasonable time to get the job done. They couldn't take too long with the cattle standing bunched up in the heat, as the air through the rails of the moving vehicle helped keep them cool. The two men drank a few good swigs of water and poured a good dousing over their heads when they were finished working. Joe climbed up on the rig to check that all the cattle

were up. When he got down, he said, “I got some stinkin’ hot soggy sandwiches and some nearly cold tea, if you’re interested,” while he was wiped more water on his neck with a wet cloth.

Jack smiled, and said, “Yep, *anything* sounds good to me, Joe.”

They ate the hot soggy sandwiches with relish and washed them down with the tepid tea. It was heaven from one end of it to the other.

“HOW LONG ARE YOU WITH ME, JACK,” asked Joe, after he and Jack had reminisced for miles.

“In these things mate, who knows? It’s been good though, I’ve found some things here.”

Joe smiled. He could see Jack had got what he came for. “Can’t be afraid of things being tough or life hurting, eh Jack? Life demands it, if you *want* life.”

“Yep. Why do we do that? Expect that life won’t be a challenge?”

“It’s a bit natural, but if we don’t risk a bit, we get too soft and live in little places, mate. The mind holds us back, especially if it holds too much fear. It’s enclosed. It doesn’t see what the bigger parts of us see. We tend to go by the mind’s view of things, and it’s just too small. Our minds are amazing, but mate, they’re only as aware as our experience, and even then, they have quirks that can muddy the waters or get in the way.”

“So, you’re here to show me something, *aren’t you Joe?*” asked Jack, finally seeing what he was really experiencing here.

“Yeah Jack, you’ve been shown one part of your mind that holds you back; thoughts that hold you prisoner. All the doors are something. That’s what the room is, Jack. It’s your mind. Some of the doors will go as you learn things, and others will take some effort and practice before they do. Then you may use the mind to its purpose, and not as the ‘be all and end all’ of perception. Like I said, it’s enclosed; and life, learning, and happiness can be held back by its limited nature. Anyway, you’ll see,” explained Joe.

“I still can’t see the mind being limited, Joe. Just can’t.”

“The mind is amazing Jack, but it has limits. It’s kept even much smaller, and becomes troubled, when it gets owned by our emotions and our animal drives. Fear, want, and ego are the big ones; they’re all attachment to the so-called ‘real world’, and the mind driven by these things can make up all kinds of threats that don’t even exist. Our minds naturally take input from the material world, and so, people tend to see it as master, or our highest reality; they then make choices, and a life, built on limited knowledge and emotional reactions. Only knowledge of our spiritual reality, our true selves, can open us up to the deeper beauty of life and even create a better physical life.”

“You mean knowledge of the soul?” asked Jack.

“Yep. You see, the mind’s like a computer, and the soul is like the human being at the console. The computer only knows what comes in through the senses, and what it can access. The soul is *far* more and can see far more. It’s a *whole* different level.”

“I visited a scientist who tried to explain this stuff to me once. I’m getting it now, but it’s not totally clear.”

“It takes time and effort to become awake inside, *conscious*, Jack. But if you do, you’ll see that it’s the difference between being an animal locked away in its own limited knowledge, only thinking about its needs and fears, up against a spiritual creature that knows it’s eternal, seeing how it can grow and what it can create here. There’s a huge difference.”

“So how does this spiritual creature work?” asked Jack.

“Your emotions will express themselves and your mind will chatter, but your intuitive soul needs to be present, aware, and in charge. The intuitive soul needs to see and feel the answer, or the next step, or the way forward. Or even more simply, just listen to your gut, and be aware when you are second guessing things with your limited mind.”

“I’ll have to work on that,” said Jack.

“It’s the only way; and there is much, much more, Jack,” offered Joe.

Jack nodded and looked down trying to sort the information and lock it into his memory. As he was doing it, Joe hit the brakes. Jack looked up and saw the dusty white door sitting in the middle of the road ahead. Standing all by itself.

“Looks like I’m out of here,” said Jack.

“Yeah,” agreed Joe, “Reflect on what you’ve learnt here, and practise being conscious and living life, until you live it. It’s a small step, *but own it*, or just keep living in those small places, mate.”

“Thanks, Joe,” said Jack, in deep sincerity, as he shook Joe’s hand and got down from the truck.

Life Sentence

When Jack went back through the door, he felt the hair on the back of his neck rise. He shuddered and turned to look behind him. There was nothing, but he was sure something wasn't right. Then, he thought that Joe was probably right; that he needed to get out of his mind and relax a bit. He knew there was too much fear in him. He *had* changed, and not for the better.

Then he realised something else; even though he did need to let go and live a bit, he had just fobbed off that feeling, *with his mind*, as he came through the door. He looked around the room again, but even though there was nothing there he was now *sure* something followed him through the door. He was also now sure that the shadow that passed over him in the heat was not a bird. He would just *trust* what he felt, what he *knew*, and wait and see. There is a difference between fancy and intuition; or understanding held clearly in the psyche, but as yet unseen by, or unclear to, the rational faculty.

Jack smiled at being able to see some of his inner mechanics, and as he looked around the room a little more, he wondered where Brig had gone, or whether he and Joe were even *real*. But as he walked over to one of the couches, he *was* happy that he had his old mates there to help him

settle in. It was great to see Joe again, and whatever that odd feeling was, he would probably find out soon enough.

He sat down on the couch, then lay back with a small sigh. He looked up at the stars and reflected a little. Looking back over his life, he saw how his mind had ruled his decisions, and how because of that, happiness had eluded him. He hadn't followed his gut mostly, or his heart. He could see how his limited mind just guessed its way forward too, with so little knowledge of life and its intricacies. He also saw how very present fear was in his thinking and decisions, and he saw the many times he had acted on other emotions too. They had gotten him into all sorts of crazy situations.

There were other times, of course, when he *had* followed his heart. Those decisions were almost instant, and there was a knowing and surety about them; and they brought good things and good people into his life. He also saw how decisions were also far more arduous to make with his mind, and that he had always felt uncertain about making them. He could see what Joe meant by the mind second-guessing the soul, and then, even *third guessing* itself, and back again. He could see how fear, or wanting too much, had also driven him to these confusing places. Each realisation made him more conscious, and he *loved it*.

He spent a good deal of time there on the big blue couch, snoozing and waking and reflecting. It seemed he had plenty of time here in this place. It seemed that it was time given to him to digest and understand what he had learned. Eventually, his mind wandered back to what Joe said about emotions talking and the mind chattering, and the higher nature and the intuitive soul needing to see or decide. He thought he would test it out a bit, so he thought of a problem he was facing.

He allowed himself to feel the emotions it engendered, and he let his mind do its inquiry, but he didn't let his mind or emotions create the response. He then let his mind go and was free to draw from a deeper well. It was then, that he got a good feeling about one pathway. His mind tried to come over the top with "ifs" and "maybes", but Jack held it back. When he was back in his real life again, he would test his decision out. The science of spirituality or testing of any knowledge is found in reality itself, because reality is eminently wise, and shows clearly what is imagined, what is intuitive, and what is true.

To feel what is best, in any situation, is personal and unique to us individually, in our own unique relationship to a situation; and this feeling of what is best, or true, is very different to emotions. Jack could now see the divergent parts of his being, and their place. He knew them and could see them all at work clearly; when his soul was awake, when he *looked on*. He also found that the mind could be focused, used, and informed by the soul, to make it more effective, more open, and more abundant.

He now rolled onto his side and saw a book on the wooden table. One he had not put there. He picked it up and read its wondrous sentences, feeling a rarified depth, just like the Words he studied with Sue; a lady he met on his last journey to these deeper places. Words like the Creative Word of his new Faith. His being interacted with them, and as it did, gentle Irish music began to play in the room, enhancing them and the feeling even more. Endless realisations then came flooding through his conscious, like offspring of these words, and his eyes grew wide with wonder. They came with such a flow that he had to let most of them go, well almost *all* of them. There was only futility in his mind's attempts to capture all those waters.

JACK HAD FALLEN ASLEEP AS HE REFLECTED, and later he woke just enough to see *them* in the room with him. But sleep dragged him back into nowhere and dreams. Later, when he woke properly, *they* were not there, and he was not sure if what he had seen was real. *It* could even have been a dream. Then he thought, “*What is dream or reality in this place anyway?*”

There had been two robed figures; one in black, who Jack felt was a woman, and one in white, who he felt was a man. “*Did gender even matter here?*” he thought, shaking his head. Human souls were human souls to him, and gender only mattered in material places, yet most things in this place held their own meaning. These robed figures had stood on opposite sides of the circular room with arms folded and heads bowed, so he was unable to see their faces. Jack now let it go; if they were real, he would find out in its time, and if they were just a representation of something, like in a dream, he would gather the meaning eventually.

He still had no idea of time here, or how long he had slept. The skylight didn’t help at all, as it showed skies at seemingly random times, morning could follow noon, and snow could melt in the searing summer sun. It seemed that in this place all things were relative to meaning. It was a lovely sensation to feel all things flowing free, and in an order that was more musical, rather than like clockwork. Right now, he was looking up at a pure light blue winter sky, with not a cloud to be seen. He remembered Joe again, and began to look back on his life again, as some things bear reflecting on until enough of their reality is seen.

Jack saw that he *had* lost his adventurousness, or at least, he had less tolerance for taking risks, and had often let judgement of people or fear rule him. He could now see how often it had stopped the flow of life’s bounty. Because he gave into these fearful thoughts, he had limited his own happiness. He had played it safe and controlled things, and could now clearly see, that control

was all about fear. He could see that he had let his mind, not only become the plaything of the fears, but also the wants of his lower nature, and his life had followed them both to sad and empty places, places with no life.

But as he reflected, he saw that it was not only his mind that was affected, but his soul too. He now *truly* saw his soul for the first time, here in this room, and he saw that an unfulfilled life was *not* the *greatest* loss. He had judged so many people so harshly, not been true, and fell to the passions of want too often. Now he saw very clearly his measure, his state, and what he *really* was. Even more so than when he visited '*The torture chamber of their own selves*', in the dark caves beneath a volcano on his last journey.

All this was hard to see, but the humility born of it brought a certain freedom to his soul. Following that came a gust of *sure will* inside him to remedy these things. He knew now that he needed more vision coming from his higher nature if he was to redeem himself and his life. He also could see how the sentences of the Creative Word, no matter the Source, would inform him and remind him. But just as much as these, it was going to take effort on the ground in his life. He was now also very clear that his mind's endlessly contrived fears and random thoughts could stop him, especially when his animal emotional attachments to the world ruled within him. So, it would be a fight, and one *continually* fought. That became *very* clear to him.

Just then, two bailiffs charged through one of the doors, to the back, and left, of where Jack sat on one of the deep blue couches. Strangely, the couches had a purple hue in them now. In any case, the bailiffs entered through a heavy steel door with a small window in the top half. The window had three bars in it.

“Mr. Johnston?” asked one of them.

“Yes,” said Jack tentatively, as he got up from the blue couch and turned to look at them.

“Come with us, it is time for your trial,” said the other guard.

“I need a little more time to reflect on this stuff first,” said Jack, thinking he was in charge.

“Well, you have a *lifetime* to reflect on whatever you wish; you have to *come* with us now,” and with that, both men grabbed an arm each, and escorted him through the doorway they had entered by. The door slammed shut behind them.

“WE WILL BEGIN SENTENCING,” pronounced the Judge, who was sitting on a *very* high, ornate yet restrained, wooden bench, while tapping her gabbie lightly.

“But, I just got here!” protested Jack.

“No, you have been *here* for a long time, Jack Johnston,” retorted the Judge.

“What am I charged with?” asked Jack, in his defence, while trying to understand what was going on.

“You’re not charged with anything, *yet*, and sentencing is of your *own* making. *My goodness*, I am so tired of this constant procession of idiots.”

Jack just stood there dumbfounded, not able to gather what the Judge was talking about.

“Anyway, back to *sentencing*,” pronounced the judge. “*Oh dear*, you have all the victim sentences, the neurotic sentences, self-denigrating, and self-destructive sentences . . . *My God*,

you're a *mess*. It is a *wonder* you haven't ended your own life by now. It would have saved *me* a job, that's *for sure*."

Jack couldn't believe this woman, but he was getting an inkling of what this was all about as he looked through his confusion. "*The mind questions*," he thought. "*Ask a question*."

"What are the sentences?"

"They are *your* sentences, young man. For crying out loud, do I have to do *everything* for you?" asked the judge, in an accusing voice.

"You could relax a little and help me out here."

"Oh! That's just *sweet*, isn't it? *You* need to relax, Mister Johnston. *You've* got so *many* negative sentences running in regular cycles in your mind, that the stress should have killed you by now. I have seen ones like you; ones who are that strong that they deal with it until it manifests in mental or bodily breakdown. Have you had head, heart, or gut problems?"

Jack just looked at her, now realising where this was going.

The Judge looked on her sheets, and said, "Yep, heart attacks, and some incoherence. *Get your sentences in order young man or you will die young*."

She then sat back on her chair and her demeanour changed a little. With a pinch of caring, she added, "Some gain great character from their struggles with these demons, but rest assured that happiness will elude you if you don't defeat them. Happiness, *and* inner growth, will constantly get snatched away at the last hurdle by these sentences."

“Now, I understand,” said Jack, not yet aware of all his sentences, but the haze of the proceedings here had lifted.

“Now, *he understands!*” expressed the Judge, back to her sarcastic best, looking to the gallery of people with a side glance and big eyes.

They all laughed, and Jack felt a little frustration rise in him again. But he didn’t just react emotionally, he listened to his emotions to found out why, sought what course would be the remedy with his mind, decided, and responded with his soul.

“How do I get rid of these sentences?” he asked the Judge.

“You must *know* them first. Listen to what sentences you say to yourself, young man; ones that attack you. They will be self-demeaning, self-limiting, and as it says here, some are neurotic,” explained the Judge.

Jack just stood there, unsure about what thoughts he might have in his mind; and he didn’t even know what ‘neurotic’ meant. His blank face showed his confusion outwardly.

“*Oh, for God’s sake,*” sighed the Judge, throwing her big eyes at the gallery again. “They are usually childhood sentences and judgements that you believed to be true, *and* continued to foster, as an adult. They are usually the words of adults, or peers, or beliefs about yourself, that you formed in your innocence, and many others you built because of them. Yours is quite an exhaustive list.”

“Then what?” asked Jack, knowing he would receive the big eyes again.

“*Evidence, of course! Evidence!* Not your hearsay; the evidence of witnesses to your life and actions, and the evidence of what has happened in your life. Not the hearsay of your thoughts and emotions; *dispassionate...objective...inquiry.*”

“Evidence?”

“Nothing can be proved, *or disproved*, without evidence, and be *very* careful who you call as witness to your life,” offered the Judge. “Put him in a cell, so he can serve his sentences.”

“Does my counsel get a copy of those sentences?” pleaded Jack, as the bailiffs began to take him away.

“You are your *own* counsel in this. You *do* need an advocate, but an *honest* one.”

“Sure. That’s great advice. Thanks,” responded Jack, getting her drift.

“Well! My goodness! You may *yet* be rehabilitated,” stated the Judge, *almost* nicely. “You see, most who are brought before me just deny their sentences, or don’t want the list, or they just tuck it away and sit in their cells. *Yes*, you will be given the list, and the *rest of your life* to work it out.”

The Judge just waved Jack and the bailiffs away, and he was taken to a small cell.

THE MIND IS ENCLOSED. Joe’s words came back to him as he paced around in his small cell. He sure was enclosed, and it looked like he had to rehabilitate to be set free. He was stuck here, but he was hopeful freedom would come with the focused work he could now do on himself. He

was more than ready to get rid of anything that stood between him and happiness; and anything that stood between him and getting his higher self on the ground in life.

Eventually an envelope arrived and he pulled out the piece of paper enclosed in it. The Judge had promised a list, but it was blank. He sat there in disbelief for short while, and then, he got angry. He yelled out for the guard, and when he arrived, asked what the hell had happened and why the paper was blank.

“*Don’t you know your own mind?* We may have to get you transferred somewhere else,” was the response from the guard, in an official tone, and he walked off as if looking to speak to someone about it.

Even though Jack was now *more* ropeable, he thought it was better not to yell after the guard and complain. He didn’t want to make things worse, and he settled as he realised that the guard had given him *the clue* he needed to move forward. He *knew* his *own mind* and decided to get to work on his sentences. He thought that he would start with just one and see what came of the process. He knew that he had to find them, and then look for the evidence. He grabbed a sentence; a negative sentence from his childhood that he still held as true, or at least one he would still say it to himself without even realizing he was. The sentence was, “You are weak.” He then put it to the test of evidence. He found *so many* things that he had done in his life that showed it was simply not true; *so much* evidence in fact that it simply fell away, never to be heard again.

What we think or feel rises from our sentences, so anything Jack *thought or felt* about that sentence’s truth was *inadmissible*. The thoughts and feelings were not impartial; and really, only mental or emotional hearsay. The evidence, *impartial* evidence, from what he had done in his life,

from what had actually happened, and from what witnesses to his actions, whom he respected or had truly known him, had related to him, had just thrown the sentence out of court. He couldn't believe how easy it was. Judgement had been made, the sentence cast away, and it had made him a little more free. Jack was so happy; he looked for another, and another. One by one, they fell under the lens of evidence.

Only two sentences showed to be true, but he knew that he just needed to work on them; to change them by changing himself. He just had to find the lights of human character that were missing, or weak in him, and practise them. It was about bringing things to light and using the light to rehabilitate them. There were of course many more failings, but he was yet to discover them in other ways. But he was now profoundly changed, and powerfully at ease, from this process. He no longer had to stare into the dark or get lost in these thoughts; true *or not*. He had the tools to *dismiss* them, or *change* them, so they no longer held the power to limit him.

Jack's elation settled to gentle relief, and he became aware of his tiredness again. It had been a very full-on time since entering his mind, or wherever he was now. He knew he was tired before he came here, and in reflection on the nature of this place it now occurred to him that he was tired in his mind, and that his body had been taken along for the ride. He sobbed a little at the sadness within him, now recalling what had made him so tired, and as he did, he saw a flash of what seemed to be the carpet that covered the inner staircase of his townhouse. Somehow, he knew that he was unconscious on his stairs, but he also knew that he had more work to do here.

He made his decision almost instantly, and somewhere in between those two places a deeper weariness took him, and he nodded off to sleep.

Disorder

Jack woke in a dream, in a dark and charred landscape. It was all about him, yet in the far distance, a mountain with a great forest of trees all around it stood regally in the sunshine. In his mind's eye, he could also see a river that wound through a greater forest beyond the mountain; one which led all the way to an ocean beyond it.

Then he saw them, nine huge crows bearing down on him. They screamed rather than screeched as they came, and he could hear words. He ran in the opposite direction to the mountain as absolute thoughts assailed him. They tore at him like they were rending his mind before the crows were even on him. The pain was absolutely excruciating. No matter how quickly or how far he ran, or how he waved his arms about, the crows would not give up the chase. The words themselves were even more painful than the physical assault that came with the arrival of the crows.

Then somehow, amid the delirium and pain, he realised that he was still in his own mind. Were the crows him? Were they his sentences too? With these questions opening his mind, he stopped running and turned to look at his attackers. The crows were suddenly gone, but the heavily torn

flesh and the mighty ache in his head from the screaming remained. Such was the pain and damage, that he fell to the ground and wished for death.

Suddenly, like the flick of a switch, the pain disappeared, and he felt himself being pulled deeper, as there are certainly places deeper than dreams. It was a strange feeling, but a great relief from the pain and screaming. He felt like he was being drawn down into the earth, and into himself, all at once. He could then feel the darkness physically envelop him, like a soft mattress, on all sides. It was a *good* feeling, and he relaxed, except for small niggle that re-emerged in his mind. It was his concern for his body's physical wellbeing, back on the stairs. *"Maybe I should have woken myself up when I had realised where I was,"* he thought. But he shook it off, as he knew he still needed to be here right now, travelling the byways of the soul.

Jack felt the darkness gently fold under him as he stopped falling, and the soft feeling that held him fell away. Light flowed in, and he found himself in a Great Library, on a comfortable, leather armchair.

"Welcome back, Jack. You are journeying again, I see," said the old man, gently and slowly.

Jack was glad to see the large framed old man across from him in a large leather chair with a wooden base. His slow words and gentle smile always made him feel right at home. "It is wonderful to see you again," expressed Jack, with his eyes tearing just a little.

The old man smiled with love, and asked, "So, young man, what are you learning now?"

"Well, I've been living in my world, and have become a runner, and worked on making the Running Man stronger. The tree of the Fourth Doorway is certainly alive and growing there,

and the number of all the doorways is exploding. But I now find myself separated, tired, and beginning again.”

“*Another* cycle. That’s wonderful!”

“Well, yes,” agreed Jack, not thinking that at all, but beginning to see. “I hope so. It seems that I’ve learnt so much, but my ability to live the Beauty on the ground has been, to say the least, *difficult*. It’s like I’ve forgotten all that I’ve learnt while I was doing the work and seeing to life.”

“Ah, you’ve struggled to live it and be it,” stated the old man, still smiling gently.

“Yep, and get my mind in order, so I *can* live it.”

“Ah, the mind. What a *wonderful, wonderful* part of our creation; the rational faculty, especially.”

“*Really!* I’ve just been learning how it’s limited in so many ways.”

“No, no, no. It is . . . *what it is*. Like all things, it simply has its particular purpose. *Yes*, it *is* limited, but it may be magnificent and bring forth great beauty in concert with other powers of the soul,” explained the old man, gently.

“I’ve been trying to get it out of the way,” stated Jack, then grimacing, like he knew he had missed something big in his exploration.

“Jack, you don’t want your mind out of the way. It is part of your soul; it is a gift of The Creator. The intellect and science are the *rays of the sun* in the life of humans. We investigate and discover the realities of systems, we look back at history to learn from it, and we create new things through discovery and *process*. Look at what the intellect has brought us; look at the endlessness

of invention in your world, look at science laying bare the nature of things, and look at all the libraries full of books. The intellect is an *abundant* reality of the soul. So, what do you *really* want out of the way, Jack?”

Jack was a bit dumbfounded, “Well, sentences mainly, I suppose. Out the way of my soul. So, I can be happier, and think more clearly.”

“Negative ones, I presume.”

“Yep. I didn’t know how much I had limited myself with these things, and the emotional turmoil they brought when they fired up. I tell you, I’m glad to be rid of the ones I found. Even though it now seems that I’ve got more of them to deal with. It seems that I have a lot of absolute thoughts.”

The old man chuckled just a little and smiled. He looked at Jack, the way a parent looks at an infant. “I am sure you will now be able to work these things out too, Jack. Sentences or not, absolute thoughts or not, *silence of the mind* is a good place to start. A busy chattering mind is good for an infant learning so much, but for an adult, *not so much*.”

“So, *don’t think*? That’s impossible!”

“Yes, it is a little, but silence inside is a pathway to a soul-centred life; one in which a soul may choose its thoughts carefully. A soul able to bring itself to a higher state, can choose silence, positive thoughts, and most crucially, not get lost in the constant murmur of the world or let the world choose its thoughts for it. If it can do these things, and connect with its Creator, then it is a living soul.”

Jack just sat there, trying to digest what the old man was saying. His mind was flickering away like a hard drive, as he tried to understand. The old man smiled, and even chuckled a little, as he watched the changing expressions on Jack's face and the obvious speed of his inner computations in his eyes.

"Stop . . . *now*, Jack. Stop and be. Be silent. Stop and listen. Stop and see. Life is the *process* of gaining knowledge. Be patient."

Jack stopped his mind, or at least the chatter, and closed his eyes. There was nothing there, so once more his mind kicked in to work out all the intricacies and implications of what he had just been given, and it just hurt. He was so used to using his mind that he couldn't help himself, and the old man could see it in his face again.

"You are certainly making it hard. Your ego wants to *own* all this. You must *let it go*. Just converse with me, and trust that *time* and *life experience* will grant understanding of these things to you. Trust, Jack, trust."

"Sure," said Jack, relieved that he could finally let go.

"Understanding comes in time and with humility. It comes through experience, with reflection, and in seeking learning and guidance. It is a *process* and not something within itself."

"Not something within itself?"

"Knowledge on knowledge is not life. While love and knowledge *are* the essence of our reality, understanding only within itself is just another empty void that the soul may fall into. Life is far, *far* more than the mind, and knowledge for more than mere thoughts."

“So, just live eh.”

“Yes, live, act, reflect, hope, seek, pray, strive, love, create, meditate on the Wisdom of the Creative Word, and maybe think a little. Understanding exists in *all* things, and your mind is not able to simply *know*. You are here to *learn*; to live. Enjoy the process.”

“Sure.”

“Use the mind to seek things, but don’t get lost in it.”

“Okay, that makes sense. You know, I like reflecting and just sitting and talking to the Big Man about things and being real about how I am feeling and seeing ways forward. I tend to talk to Him and my grandfather who has passed over. *That’s* gentle.”

“Yes. Seeking and gathering understanding from life does not have to be a strain.”

“Talking things out with those guys eases me and sorts things out in me. I also tend to just read something small and meditate on the words, with a prayer or two. It’s all usually before I head off to work. I naturally reflect on the meaning, on life, and gather insight that way. It’s *all* gentle and uplifting.”

“It seems healthy. The Creative Word takes one into a meditative state, as it draws us to the Realm of The Spirit. The soul refocused to *higher things*. Truly, reading and prayer, *and* reflection, do all interplay naturally.”

“Yep, they do.”

“If I may take the subject of meditation toward a new aspect, I read something today from the talks of ‘Abdu’l Bahá on the nature of meditation. Maybe something that we can read and then reflect on silently for a while...

“The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration; through it he receives heavenly food.

Meditation is the key for opening the doors of mysteries . . . This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, and puts man in touch with God.

This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts.”¹

JACK WOKE ON ONE OF THE COUCHES IN THE ROOM OF HIS MIND. He was lying on his back and there were tree branches thick with leaves of all kinds, green through to red, all around the edge of the skylight. The sky was bright and sunny but in the early morning. He relaxed as he gently reflected on his visit to the old man.

One thing *particularly* struck him as his mind wandered gently over the experience; it was *humility*. He only remembered it being mentioned once but it asked questions of him. He lay there and opened his soul for that word. He let it wander in him without thinking about it really, but he began to realise that insight *always* came from humility, and that wisdom, or the path to it, always seemed to start there. He could see that it was a useful power in learning anything, and even almost essential for it. The realisations kept coming and were really beginning to blow his mind as he explored its implications for himself and the world of humanity.

Through his reflection, or meditation, he saw that humility would be a valuable friend, especially in hard times...Jack's eyes suddenly lit up with that thought. Seeing that when people struggle, and life overwhelms them, they then begin to learn and see things differently. A thousand times he had thrown *his* hands up in the air, in his life, and in surrender the answers had come. Humility had always been the pathway out of heavy predicaments. It was *already* a part of his life, and the nature of life, but now, he was aware of its role there. He also now thought that this reflection had allowed him *conscious access* to it. Humility was a tool he could use; a powerful tool. He told himself that he would use it as often as he could, even in simple situations and in learning things, even though life's struggles may still have to remind him of its power at times.

His mind continued gently wandering on, gathering up the gems, when he came to thinking of actual ways he could learn to *always* live in his soul, or *be in the spirit* as it is said. He had been trying to do that for years, but the constant distractions of life, his emotional attachments, and his lower nature had often stolen his attention. Now, he believed that he had a clear understanding of how to be there; he just needed to want it enough and practise it enough. In any case, he thought that even just *some* more time in this 'silent, centred, conscious, now' place would be valuable.

Just then, two doors fell back into the darkness, and as the wall went through its magical dance once again, the door with the barred window flung open. Two guards then issued forth from it, just as the cogs and workings of the wall finished their work. One of the guards said, "You *are* a slippery one, Mister Johnston. You are to come with us. It's for your *own good*."

"Where?!"

"Everything is fine, *just relax*," said the other guard, as they both took a good hold of him.

“You can tell me where, this *is* my own mind,” said Jack.

“*Is it?*” said the first guard, as he turned to the other. “Well, there you go Charlie. I told ya’. He’s a bit lost this one. I don’t know how you got out of that cell, buddy, but don’t worry we’re taking you to a nice, *safe*, place; nice *soft walls*, and *nice* people.”

With that, they whisked Jack away through the door. They were very sure of their work, and walked with confidence until, suddenly, the two robed figures appeared and barred their way just beyond the dark doorway.

“Is it your wish to go?” were the words that were heard.

The fact that those words filled the air rather than coming from the creatures themselves was more than disconcerting. These creatures had the guards shuddering and readying for a fight that they somehow knew they couldn’t win.

“Who are you?” asked Jack, feeling a strange power.

“Is it your wish to go?” were the words that were heard, again.

“You had better let us carry on with the will of the court,” said one guard, with obvious bravado.

“*The Enemy!*” Were the words that were heard.

“*The Enemy!*” Were the words that were heard; again. Then, the black and the white figure were simply gone.

“*Man!* That was wild,” said the second guard, with obvious relief.

“Who are they?” asked Jack.

“More like, *what* are they? There have been stories of them going back a very long way. They’ve started turning up again, and we’ve been seeing a lot more of them lately.”

“We had better get moving,” said the first guard, and with that, he started to push the prisoner along the corridor.

Jack resisted to the unnecessary force, so the guard pushed harder, then suddenly fell forward over his own feet because the resistance was gone. Jack had disappeared!

“HELLO YOUNG MAN,” STATED THE OLD WOMAN.

“Hello,” said Jack, trying to come to grips with his instant change of place.

He was now in a quite big but simple room. It was a kitchen, with windows on two walls that let in good light, and a wooden door beside one of them. There were pot plants here and there and a massage table in one corner. It did not look out of place in the room’s gentle earthy order. He was sitting at a table and the old woman had just closed the oven after checking on something.

“It seems you need some help,” she said, as he sat down opposite Jack. “It seems The Department wants us to talk.”

“*Really*. You people create more questions than answers. At least that’s been my experience.”

“Do you want to sit in a schoolroom and learn life by rote? *I don’t think so*. Do you want to live by sitting reading a book for seventy years?”

“I..”

“Well, *you can’t*. The Creator has given you *life*; the wonder and joy of discovery, the struggle and victory, the wisdom and beauty. It is all *in living*, Jack, and anyway, we tend not to appreciate things easily gained,” said the tall thin woman, with no discernible accent.

It was like there were many accents in her voice, and you could not identify any one in particular; all accents, yet one.

“Well, seeing as you put it *that way*,” said Jack, with resignation, a smile, and a grudging respect for her candour. “What does The Department want me to learn about?” he added, only now remembering humility. It would be harder to remember it than he thought if he had almost forgot already. But we always forget, and we always need reminding.

A gentle smile and caring eyes appeared on her face, and she answered, “I am simply to talk with you. Maybe you are, again, simply being tended to.” Her smile broadened.

“*Maybe*,” said Jack, smiling back and shaking his head.

“So, where are you on your journey?”

“Right now, I’ve been finding that my mind has been a big bar to my happiness; at least the way I’ve been using it. This journey has really been opening things up for me though.”

“The mind can be a block, but not if the soul chooses thoughts carefully; if it allows for intuitive feel, follows higher inclinations, and is not a constant slave to one’s lower nature. Tell me, Jack, has the Creative Word *actually affected* your heart and your soul?”

“Yes, but apparently, my sentences have been getting in the way.”

The old lady grimaced and sighed. His mindset, and its words, were too small and uncomfortable for her. She now gathered her thoughts, while Jack watched her with a blank look on his face.

“Has the *Creative Word* affected you?”

“You asked that!” said Jack impatiently, but then slowed his mind and started to look a little deeper.

The Writings had changed him, but he could see that it had not been the great transformation that he had expected, especially considering the depth of his last journey and the time he had been in the work of his new Faith. As he now reflected, he could see that he had been seeing the Creative Word mostly with his mind and within his own knowledge. He could also see that he had acted in service to his Faith under his own power, instead of seeking aid and confirmations of the Spirit. He *knew* about all these things, but he had not opened the door to *using* them or to *becoming of them*. They had stayed in his mind, and he had just *thought* they were his. He was not *using* the guidance of the Creative Word; he was just *knowing* it.

“It does take time, Jack,” she said, reading his mind. “Guidance within the Creative Word, the revealed wisdom, brings the inner transformation you crave. But it needs to affect your heart as much as your mind. It needs to change you, and the living of the Creative Word brings the pure

essence of love out into the world. Love passes through you and me, Jack. The Creative Word is love, *and its doorway*.”

With that, the old woman grabbed a coat and a short staff, and said, “Let’s go for a walk.” She knew that he needed time to take in these words. He had enclosed himself in his mind again and was trying so hard to remember things that he wasn’t *listening* to what the old woman was giving him. She nearly laughed out loud from watching him, but she knew he had gathered the main ingredients, and now just needed time. Besides, she did not want to sit in his crazy loud mind of cogs and steel while he worked it all out.

They were out the door and walking before Jack’s mind realised where he was. They wandered through a lovely green mountain valley and through some hushed stands of pine on their walk. Walking helped his reflection greatly. It seemed to free his mind, and oil those cogs. He had time to let his mind see what he was being given, and after a good time, he reached the essence of the understanding the woman had shared with him, and let his mind go.

As he gathered this understanding he walked more slowly, and in some reverence, as he linked with The Great Spirit. He knew now that he just needed to let the Creative Word inform and transform his heart, and he relaxed more, finally understanding that it was the process that counted. He saw that his mind, and an emotional need to hold knowledge so that he could be happy, were not where happiness would be realised. It would be in the Spirit, in understanding in his heart, and in doing good things from these higher places. He now looked at inner growth and happiness with new eyes; he became steady and clear, and he was *here*.

His soul felt light and free, and his mind was quiet, as he walked and enjoyed what was around him. He was feeling free of thought, when parts of the Creative Word that he had memorised floated by his mind. He recalled them again, and in his current state, he considered them, yet not crowding himself with his own thoughts. The words felt good, as well as making things clear; and the good feeling grew. The implications for the world and humanity were breathtaking and extremely beautiful. These Writings filled him, gave him more purpose, meaning, and direction, as they interacted with his unique soul. The Word had a powerful Spirit, and it was not just sounds and syllables; it was love. The space of the soul is for the essence of love, and we are the gateway for its flow into the world.

“It is easy to be free in this beautiful place, but harder in action, and in the hub-hub of life,” offered the old lady, once more in Jack’s mind.

“Actually, I was just feeling I need to be back there, in my real life. I really want to be in the rough and tumble, and I want to give out. I know I’ll learn more in that rough and tumble. I want to breathe deep and run hard. My soul now understands the total emptiness of life unlived, and one of nothing given to others.”

“Yes, Jack. Consciousness is not just intellectual, and happiness not something you reach, but something you live. The blocked flow of love must be released in all of us for us to be happy. Love is the reason for all things; the Creative Word is love, and love is the nurturer of all things.”

“Wow. I don’t know even where to start with all that,” said Jack.

“You are flowering Jack. Be patient.”

JACK SPENT SOME TIME WITH THE OLD WOMAN. It was a time of discussion and reflection, some gentle study of parts of the Creative Word, some walks, also some prayer and meditation. He got plenty of sleep, a massage, and some wholesome meals as well.

After a couple of days together, she had suggested that he take a hike in the hills: giving him a map and some provisions. As she sent him out the door, she had added that he could let it all go now, and let his being do the rest of the work; explaining that there was a certain measure and balance in all things in life. “Walk, and let what comes, come,” she finished. “But mostly, just walk.”

The air was crisp, and Jack was feeling good as he now neared the crest of a high hill. He felt alive from the work of walking on inclines and being out in nature. He was glad for the emotional energy and sense of freedom the walk itself was giving him. He could see that there was a *‘thinking and doing balance’* that was natural, and quite necessary for happiness. In any case, it was a great relief to be away from the enclosed places he had found himself in recently; both for his mind *and* his body. A good blood flow always picked up his ability to think clearly and settle his emotions; as did being nature. Being active and being outside raised his being. He could see now that they were also a very real part of the nature of happiness.

He now came to the top of the high rise, and the view was stunning. A panorama of mountains almost surrounded him. As he swung around to take it all in, a glinting, high, but not on top of one mountain, grabbed his attention. He kept his gaze on it as he pulled out some binoculars that the old lady had given him, and he took a good look. He grimaced, then shook his head a little in an attempt to clear his vision, as he could not believe what he was seeing. As he looked again, he wondered how someone could have managed that. There, on the high and almost

vertical slope of one of the mountains, was a shiny silver bus embedded in the rock. It looked like it had been fired out of a cannon into the almost vertical rock face. Part of it was in the rock face and the back half of it was out. There was a man sitting on a small deck made by the cutaway roof at the rear end of the bus. He seemed to be eating something.

Jack smiled to himself, wondering what this man had to give him. By the look of where he had got that bus, he had to have some insight into life. It was a wonder to him just *seeing* that silver bus way up high on that almost sheer rocky cliff face. Even after all the amazing places he had been to, his travels could still throw up something different. He was beginning to understand that there *was* an endlessness to the joy of discovery, in life and learning. He now awaited what was to be revealed with real happiness, as he headed down into the valley. He had four valleys to traverse before his climb up to the bus; at least from his current perspective.

It took him well over a day of trekking to reach halfway up the mountain slope towards the bus. There had been more folds, more hills, and more stands of wood, blocking his progress than he had originally seen. The distance was also longer than he had calculated. He had to camp one night and found that he had to go off the path to find water at times. Effort and time always show the *reality* of something, up against one's original perspective. Jack was at home with that now, and had just enjoyed the walking, the fresh air, and the ever-changing scenery.

He now stopped and looked up at the bus. It looked even more amazing from his new perspective. He had broken out through the tree line and was on a loose dirt and stone path that was set into the steepening rock wall. Only small grasses grew in clumps here and there, and as he set off again his feet pushed a small amount of loose rock and sand away. It rolled away in a tiny landslide down the rock face, below the path he stood on.

The sound alerted the man on the bus to Jack's presence, and he popped his head over the railing of the deck, on the back end of the bus.

"Are you Ploddish?" he yelled down at Jack.

"I'm just taking my time," called Jack, in reply, thinking that the man said *plodding*.

"No, are you Ploddish? Not *plodding*," made clear the man; but not really.

"What is ploddish?"

"You know, the race. The people. Ploddish. With a capital P!"

"Haven't even heard of them, mate."

"Oh! Our world is lost; *truly lost*. The Ploddish constantly usurp your freedom through their dark ways, *and you don't even know they exist*."

"I'm not from here."

"It *doesn't matter* where you're from."

"I mean, I don't think this is my home planet."

"*They run the planet, my friend*. But they *don't* run me," continued the man, so intent on his own words he did not hear the meaning of Jack's.

"They'd have a *hard* time of it, reaching you up there," offered Jack, smiling.

“They would, *most definitely*. I can see for miles, and there are other ways to block them too,” explained the man, now almost thoughtfully. He then went on to explain gently some his understandings of life and why he chose to live here.

For such an extreme man, he did not seem to be completely unconsidered and was now reasonably gentle. Jack found the man’s words and being at odds somehow, and he was a little confused by it. Until he once again took up the battle cry, saying, “Come up young man, there is much more for you to be made aware of; things that need to be shared with other younger folk. They are the ones that will have to take this world back from the complacency that owns us.”

There was a clear pathway in the folds and gaps in the rocks. It zigzagged a little, and when he turned at one point, he saw a junkyard in the valley. It was on the other side of a stand of trees that he had passed on his way to the base of the mountain.

“A lot of good stuff there, boy,” yelled the man, as he had been leaning on the rail of the deck, watching Jack’s ascent. “People are so wasteful, and we can make pretty much anything from what we already have. We don’t have to lock into the consumer prison that modern society sucks us into.”

Jack smiled, nodded to him, and kept climbing. He was sure that this man was right about the consumer prison, but he wasn’t so sure about the extreme nature of this man’s remedy. It was good to be linked in communities; to create things and sell services to others. Creating greater supply infrastructure, building economies of scale, and developing channels of supply was generally a beneficial thing. Consumerism had just got too rabid, quite heartless, and greed too ascendant.

“It’s all madness you know; the blur of words, screens, and things; endless things. *Sophistication* they call it. The native people know it is a type of *madness*. They know that taking from many to give to one individual more than they can eat in a lifetime is a mental illness,” called out the old man. He was almost in Jack’s thoughts like the old lady had been, and it was a bit uncomfortable for him. He liked his own head, especially after his experience with The Queen on his last adventure.

“I will be with you soon, maybe then we can talk,” he called up to the old man. It was not that Jack did not see the insanity of the present societal reality; he just needed to concentrate on his foothold for now.

“Of course, take your time,” offered the man.

When Jack finally reached the rock shelf three metres below the bus, the man threw a rope ladder down. Jack climbed up, then the man pulled the ladder up while he kept a good look out. The man shook his hand and started showing him around. He showed him some things that he had made, repeating how he needed no one, and definitely not the *so called sophisticated* modern society. As they conversed Jack warmed to this man and appreciated what he had built; some of it was almost inspired. The man was intelligent, articulate, and had a caring heart. His goodness and honourableness shone like a beacon, and Jack grew in respect for him as they talked. He certainly had not expected to be impressed by this man.

As they sat down out on the deck to talk some more, the man brought out a book from his inner coat pocket. It was old and soiled, tatty, and falling apart, but he laid it down on the small outdoor table in front of Jack with such reverence that he sat up in respect. The man then began to

tell him about this book, called “Secrets of The Ploddish”. It began with high words of justice, but soon fell into scathing criticism. The manipulation and inhuman darkness in that book made Jack feel very uneasy, and as the man read more, it just took him deeper into that darkness. It was even beginning to make him feel physically ill.

“That is a *terrible* place to live in, my friend,” offered Jack, when the man finished.

“What do you mean?” asked the man, a bit dumbfounded at his visitor’s response.

“Well, even if it’s all true, why do you want that darkness inside you?”

“You have been *manipulated*, young man. We have just *read* that in the book. You can *see* how they do it. It *is* dark, but we *must* know their ways so we can combat them. Don’t you want to be free?”

“There is no freedom in concentrating on that level of darkness,” said Jack, almost sure this was just another hate book.

“You sound like someone I knew once. She fell to the spell of the *Creative Word* and got in cahoots with some *Department*. I’m *almost* sure that it’s *all* another one of the Ploddish’s evil manipulations.”

“The lady who lives in the seventh valley to the north?”

“Yes, she left me some time ago. She was my wife and I loved her, but she refused to see, and she gave up on me. She would not come to the high ground with me. She said I was too focused on my hatred; that it was drawing the life from me, and her. But *someone* must take a stand.”

Jack thought this guy wasn't standing *anywhere*, and he was alone. He just felt so sad for him, and while he was loath to say anything more, he decided that it might help.

"You know, light is more important, and it gives life. Like plants, we need light too. Darkness will only bring frailty, and cold, and death I reckon. We need to stop staring helplessly into the darkness and use the *light* to make the world better."

"These are lovely sentiments; lovely and true, but The Ploddish eat our flesh and they do not hold to your sense of justice."

"This darkness can't sustain you. Are you of any value here, *really*? Why not take part in the world?"

"If I link with the modern, *so-called sophisticated* world, I am bowing to them and being swallowed by their evil order. *I cannot. I will not.*"

The tone that the statement was delivered with stunned Jack a little. It was delivered with love and for love; love and honour were its intentions. It was also delivered with an absolute finality that was clear in this man's eyes. The traveller wondered how that could be. How could such a caring, loving, man become so lost as to cut himself from everything? This man's view of things barred him from life itself, and love, and yet *for* love he would not turn. Jack saw a great loss in that, as he now realized that a dark foreboding cloud had built in his mind. It was so hopeless a conversation that he now wished that the man had not shared any of this darkness with him.

Heavy weather was coming in along the mountain range too, and it looked as foreboding as what Jack was feeling inside.

“Looks like a bad one,” said the man, as a large bolt of lightning from the storm’s front hit the valley below.

The great dark cloud front looked like the underneath of a giant jellyfish. Both men were quick to go into the shelter of the bus, but all Jack could think about as he did, was the picture of a steel bus plugged into a mountain, and him inside it. If there was lightning, he had nowhere to go; inside or outside, the storm was dangerous. Then he remembered, he wasn’t really here; or was he? He didn’t know, so he just let it go to the *here and now*, and *acceptance*.

The man bade him to take a seat at a table inside, but offered no food, only the pure water that came off the mountainside. The two then shared more of their perspectives for some hours, but there was no argument that could help this man see. There was no turning, and all he would say about any understanding Jack had found on his adventures was, “Well, that’s a *lovely notion*, but the world is a beast with no conscience.” Even the beauty of the Creative Word was lost on him. Again, to him just lovely notions that could not save people, or another dangerous mind game perpetrated by the Ploddish. In time, and as the storm eventually passed, they had both went off to sleep.

Jack woke soon after midnight, as he could hear pages tearing, along with that deep sound a man gives out when he is eating something that he savours. He got up and went deeper into the bus, coming upon the man in a shallow cave that he had dug out of the rock beyond the driver’s seat and windscreen. He was crouching down in this small cave with his back to Jack. The man then turned his head, looking back at him with empty eyes and no sign of cognizance. He was munching on the book about how the Ploddish were controlling his world.

There were hundreds of other book spines on the floor of the cave; all the remains of copies of that same book that he had shown Jack earlier. Jack saw clearly in this sad and terrible scene, the nature of hate, and the traps of the mind, that can steal even the life of the most noble souls.

Darkness is never the way to light, even if you are right. This noble man was of the fallen, no matter how high up he was living. He had fallen to the death of light and life; to a futility born of hatred and a closed mind. In the man's empty eyes, Jack could see the darkness; the one thought that destroyed anything this man might be or give. He saw this limitless soul, bowed in prostration to one thought of *hatred*. It bound him to its will and held him forever within the limits of his mind.

New Ground

The next morning, Jack got out of bed and walked towards the deck. It was dark inside the bus and the early morning light was drawing him outside. As he got out onto the deck, the vista grabbed his senses and filled him with awe. He stood there taking it all in, now seeing that the great mountainous valley stretched all the way out to the sea. He had not noticed the sea yesterday, and he wondered why, when suddenly, a door that was not there opened in the air just beyond the rail. Two sets of arms and hands reached out, grabbed him, pulled him in over the rail, and into the portal.

The two guards now stood there in a darkened corridor in front of him with accusing looks on their faces and their hands on their hips.

“Thought you could get away from us, did you, Jack?”

Jack looked at the two guards with their hands on their hips, and said with a broad smile on his face, “Well *ladies*, I can see you are *very* upset,”.

One guard blushed and quickly took his hands off his hips, scowling at Jack. The other guard did so too, while fighting off a smile that was trying to force entry onto his face.

“*Let’s go,*” said the guard, who had blushed.

“I don’t need to go anywhere fellas; *really and truly*. I’ve learnt a lot and dealt with most of my sentences,” explained Jack, sincerely.

“It’s the order of the court. You are too much of a loose cannon, so you are off to hospital, *Ward E. They’ll* sort you out.”

“*Come on*. There’s really *no need*,” pleaded Jack.

“This process doesn’t end when *you* say so, it ends *when it ends*,” stated the first guard as he began to push Jack down the corridor; this time with much more gusto.

There were many corridors and endless doors, and Jack was getting dizzy from all the twists and turns.

“Why so many corridors and doors?” he asked.

“It’s *your* mind, bucko. Maybe you need to ask *yourself* that question. These busy minds are just hard work getting around,” expressed the guard.

“Now, it’s *my mind*. You guys better get your *story* straight. You said I was nuts thinking all this was my mind.”

“This part *is all yours*, buddy; other parts, *not yours*. All these corridors, and endless rooms *are* your mind,” explained the other guard. “You should *know* your own mind; what’s in it and what’s outside it.”

The twists and turns in the corridors seemed endless, and Jack began to wonder at the labyrinth of his mind. He could feel that this much complexity was not helpful to him or anyone else, but as he now knew this was his mind, he freed it by bowing his head in the presence of The Creator and letting go. The response was immediate, there was a flash of white light as all three men were taken into and out of a white tunnel. It happened so quickly that they could, only just, tell the entry, the tunnel, and the exit, apart. In any case, they found themselves at an unscheduled destination. The guards looked at Jack, now both nodding approvingly.

“It seems we are to drop you here, Jack. It’s all important,” said the first guard, with a very changed demeanour. “You learn quickly. *Nice work*.”

Jack was a bit confused with the change that had come over the guards and was wondering what was going on.

“This is The Doc’s office. The Doc is cool, so head in,” said the other guard, as he pointed to a wooden framed door with frosted glass. It had a sign on it saying, ‘Psychologist’s Office’. “You’re lucky, Jack. Your last move changed the destination. The Doc’s office is a hell of a lot better than *Ward E*. Keep your game on, eh.”

“Yeah, thanks,” responded Jack, as he nodded respectfully to the two guards. He then waved to them tentatively as he opened the door and walked through.

“Hello, Jack,” said The Doc, turning from a filing cabinet, but with his head deep in a file and not looking at Jack at all. “Please take a seat on the couch,” he continued, as he sat at his desk reading the file he had taken from the cabinet.

While the man was looking at the file, Jack sat down and took a look around. The furniture was all wooden and the walls were seemingly moving. Then widening his view he realised that they were on a platform; one floating in the air away from the door that he had come through. It was moving away from what now seemed to be a massive and almost endless wall of wooden doors. But the platform was, in fact, moving towards the centre of a great open gargantuan sphere of wood. As Jack now turned away from the wall, he realised the full scope of the sphere. It almost felt like it was a planet, it was *so* unbelievably huge. Some drifting clouds, and a large yellow glowing globe in the centre of the sphere, made it even more like a world.

The doors were uncountable, and of endless design and shape, filling the near and far distant curved surface of the great sphere; all of them made of wood. Jack just sat there with his eyes wide, taking in the wonderous scene. It was awe-inspiring, and he teared up a little in a deep appreciation that his heart, or his soul, was somehow aware of. The scene was awe-inspiring in itself and moved him, but it was like something in him knew what an honour it was to be here.

The platform now gently changed direction and took up a very wide orbit around the sun-like globe that sat in the air at the centre of the sphere. There were no railings on the platform, just the furniture, and even the platform was made of wood.

“You are certainly an interesting case, my friend. Even The Department is in the mix. We hardly see them here,” commented The Doc, as he finished reading and raised his head from the file. “So, how are those sentences going, Jack?”

“This place is amazing. What is it?” asked Jack, still looking around in wonder.

“We call it *The Seed*, Jack.”

“*The Seed; that’s cool!* How was it built? What are all the doors?”

“It *grew*, Jack. It is *growth*, and all the doorways to it in all the worlds of The Creator. There are doors within doors and some that simply issue forth in the atmosphere here. There are many worlds of physical existence for sentient beings, and endless, deeper worlds. So, there are many worlds to be grown and advanced, and many worlds for me to advance and nurture. It is lovely looking at it through new eyes again, my friend. Thank you.”

“Hey, the pleasure is *all* mine, Doc.”

“So, back to the sentences, Jack; how are you going with all that?”

“I’ve been given some time to work on the sentences and have had some tutelage from The Department...I think I got it covered; at least with some more work,” answered Jack, still gazing around.

“You have many common thinking disorders, blocks, sentences, distractions and even neurotic thoughts like, “*I will never be happy*”. They will take some shifting, and will pop up again and again, until they are truly gone,” offered The Doc, only at the end, regaining Jack’s full attention.

“I feel like I am well on my way, but I am open to whatever you think I need to see,” answered Jack.

“Well, as I see it, you may gain better results from moving your focus from getting rid of those sentences and focus more on growing the powers of the soul. As you connect with others honestly, and act on the Creative Word, endless opportunities to see more clearly and modify your thoughts will come. As you grow, some sentences will simply cease to be. You will find that when the true light is shone on them, they will not be there.”

“How do you shine powers of the soul on *nothing*?”

“It’s the powers of the soul, especially courage in action that births new evidence, and makes clear what is real and what is imagined. Much is imagined and feared by the human mind that does not exist.”

“Hmmm...”

“Humility too, is useful, as it allows flawed beliefs and sentences to be challenged and cast aside, but *living life honestly* is the most powerful light; with some *reflection* of course.”

“Okay, I see. ”

“Action provides evidence, brings new knowledge, and requires you to grow new sentences; new beliefs based on reality.”

“I get that it takes action; but what action?”

“Striving to use the deeper human powers more in situations, in service to others, and just living, Jack. The system you were birthed into is *perfect*. *Take part*. Exercise your soul.”

“So, just take part, eh?”

“Yes. You will be granted outward calamity, and little challenges will come too. Things also need to be built and created in the material reality that you live in, to advance it. So, it is in work, in life as it comes, and in caring for others, that the active realities for the development of your soul exist. You will be required, or at least given the opportunity, to evolve your sentences through *all* these.”

“All hard work and drama, eh?”

“It does not have to be dramatic. At least, you don’t have to be unhappy as you go through your growth opportunities. It’s *all* good, and guidance from the Creative Word is most advantageous. Prayer and asking for help are too. There is plenty of back up, if you truly yearn, and are open for guidance; open to seeking more True Understanding.”

Just then, The Doc looked a little to his right, and a look of concentration came across his face. It seemed that he was listening to something.

“Stay here, Jack,” said The Doc, as he instantaneously shrunk into a small globe of light, which now sat in the air just above the height of his heart. The large globe in the centre of the great sphere sent out a plasma beam, which reached The Doc and returned him to it in a flash. Just as immediately, another beam fired straight down to the wall in the distance far below from the large globe, and again returned. Jack knew that The Doc was on his way somewhere, and in a real hurry.

He got on his knees and crawled to the edge of the platform. He went down on his chest and poked his head over the side. He could see another wooden platform just coming away from the great wall, but it was tiny from this distance and at ninety degrees to Jack’s platform. Due to

the orbit of the platform, he was on he couldn't see who was on it, as those on the distant platform were on the opposite side of it. Gravity here, seemed to work at all angles, or the platforms had their own. Just then, five carpets with riders raced away from the other platform and dove off in different directions. They all accessed various doors on the great sphere's wall and disappeared; at least the three that were close enough for him to see, did.

Jack's heart had skipped a beat when he saw the carpets fly out from behind the other platform. There was something about seeing those of The Department in action and remembering his love for riding the carpets. He wished that he had known more, and gathered more, when he rode one those many years ago. He wondered why he wasn't like these other souls. Why hadn't he been called to the work of The Department like he thought? Wasn't he strong enough to do the work? Again, the pulse returned The Doc to the large globe in the centre, then to the platform Jack was on.

"Things are happening around you, Jack Johnston," pronounced The Doc.

Jack stood up and just stared at him. "So, *who* are you, Doc? You know about all the deeper stuff and The Department too. No one else on this level knows about them."

"Some others here do, but it's not important, Jack. I am just a creature like you, given a place and my duty in the scheme of things. I knew you had been deeper, but I didn't know you understood the order in the deeper places."

"I have *a bit* of an idea. You can just *feel* the difference between what is deeper, and what is deeper still. Well, generally I can. So, *what* are you, Doc?" finished Jack, with a 'go on tell me' smile on his face.

“*Ahh Jack,*” said The Doc chuckling a bit. “What matters here and now, for you and me, is how I can help you with what you are learning. We only have a certain amount of time, so let’s get on with it, shall we?”

“Okay,” said Jack with a smile. He lay back on the couch, staring up, and gathering his thoughts. “I have got one question that I’d like help with. I had a dream that I was being torn apart by absolute thoughts, but I don’t know what they are.”

“Yes, your file made it clear that you have more than a few, I’m afraid. They are any thoughts that say something absolutely, but which are *not actually provable*. For example... “I will never find someone to love me,” or “I will always struggle.” There have been wars fought, and many lives cut short or shattered, because of other kinds of unprovable absolute thoughts, but yours are personal ones.”

“So, nothing is absolute?”

“Some things are *indeed* quite absolute, as the order of any system or being requires them. Some are relative to time and situation, but some are as eternal as the system itself, like if the Earth slowed down it would fall into the sun. But these inner unprovable sentences are not, and even if things have been that way until now in a person’s life, it does not mean they always will. It is irrational to say it, and to think it. They are very limiting sentences, especially where growth opportunities and happiness are concerned.”

“Okay.”

“One just needs to check one’s language, inner dialogue, and sentences to find if one uses ‘*always*’ or ‘*never*’, or any other absolute or extreme words; where it is *unreasonable* to do so, *of course*.”

“So, they would be easy to prove wrong?”

“Well, yes, in mind, for some; but if a person has a long-held belief that says, “I will never be good enough at this job,” well...it would take some courage and effort in life to disprove it, even though it may be obvious. Some need to act and risk their perception of reality to get past the sentence. Some beliefs run deep, and the emotions hold us hostage to them.”

“So, watch out for ‘never’ and ‘always’, eh.”

“There are many other absolute or irrational words. But once you are aware of them, you can track them down.”

“Hunt ’em down, eh Doc,” offered Jack, with a smile.

The Doc smiled, and said, “Any extreme, dramatic, absolute, or catastrophizing words are a sign. You can also tone down your words to gentler ones, *especially* the adjectives. When the inner dialogue is less dramatic, the emotional response will be much less; and mostly, any action can then be more poised and purposeful.”

“Less drama.”

“Yes, because the body is not aware that you are being silly, and natural response mechanisms and hormones follow thoughts. Emotions rise from thoughts and take the body on a

ride. If we are over-emotional and reactive, then we may have negative, fearful, or absolute sentences to seek out.”

“So, thoughts create emotions, and we can use emotions to see these thoughts.”

“Absolutely, Jack. It does come down to some personal awareness of their existence, but reactions do tell us things. Many practitioners use the client’s feelings to find deeper thoughts and feelings that are creating struggle in their life; and so, can we.”

“So, emotions are useful?”

“Oh, definitely! Emotions can also be fired up by the gut telling us that something may not be right. Feelings *simply speak*. Each part of us is valuable if used in the right way. So, while acting impulsively on emotions is not valuable, listening to them is *very* useful. They may even show you where you need to grow spiritually, and as you do, *fractious* emotions should be less intense and more infrequent.”

“So, it all comes from words?”

“Yes, we *are* meaning, Jack; love and meaning, love and knowledge, made in His image. Images and words are core in the reality of self-aware beings. When we decide we are a victim, we become one; when we use words like always, never, wrong, idiot etc., we lock ourselves in another small cell. When we rely on our own perception and do not seek out more truth, or assistance from the Loving Father, life is harder. What we choose to believe, is our sentences, and as they change, we evolve.”

“I am *lovin’* this, Doc. It’s like you are waving a magic wand and clearing the fog away, clearing my vision. Even though I *do* see that I’ve still got to do the work, and that I still have a *long way* to go.”

The Doc smiled, and said, “Yes Jack, we *all* do. It is endless.”

Jack looked around again at The Seed, in all its glory, then back at the Doc, and said, “Mate, it doesn’t look like you need to learn anything.”

“*Oh Jack*, there is eternal progression for *all* of us, and humility before The Creator is the surest way to growth. That and courage can clear out any defensive or destructive thought forms. Honesty, humility, and the will to seek the truth are the way to all good things. If you rely more on the Creative Word as your guide and use the opportunity of life lessons that come your way, then you will progress.”

“A guide,” said Jack, deep in thought.

“The Word shines a light on what is in front of you, grants understanding, while it is also something you can gather your bearings by. More truly though, it brings new light to the reality of man. Jack, it is the *re-creative* force of The Creator. It can *transform* you *and* the world you live in, but you must access it.”

“I get that, and I have used it, but not enough it seems. It has saved me a lot of pain, though, when *I did* plug in.”

“The Creative Word is the food and water of the spirit; so, you need to *plug in* or partake of sustenance at least twice a day. The spirit needs food too, and in the struggle and joy of life we learn to use it and grow to understand it more.”

“Yep, sure, Doc. I gotta’ work on that. I sure could do with less pain,”

“Pain is *good*, Jack.”

“How do you figure that, Doc? I mean, pain and happiness don’t really relate, mate.”

“We learn our way out of our limited, ego driven, animal being through its aid too. The Creative Word of your world states clearly that you can progress greatly if you seek out more hardship.”

“I am with you Doc, and I can work on this stuff, but I am not at the *chasing hardship* stage. I’m only *just* learning to be at ease in struggle; *if that*. I know I’m learning; *but chasing* hardship...well, not yet,” explained Jack, with a smile.

The Doc smiled back, “Maybe in time, Jack.”

“I would like to think so Doc, but it’s hard to imagine right now.”

“It’s in you, Jack. It’s in all of us.”

“Yeah,” said Jack. “So, what now, Doc?”

“We will just keep you overnight. The court order was clear on that if you made it here. Just take the night to reflect and rest.”

Jack lay back on The Doc's couch. He let understanding come to him. He did not chase it with his mind. He let his mind and soul interact gently. The mind was creating focus by asking questions, and as his mind grew more silent, his inner vision opened up and the flow of understanding came. "*You just have to focus it; aim your attention, and let it come,*" he thought. Thinking had now taken its place in the order of things in his being, as had the understanding of other aspects of his being, and it felt great. He was sure that challenges, and the world, would test all this new poise, but he was also confident that he could sharpen it on the stone of life.

Just then, he gathered something that warmed him. He had already done a lot of work over the last nine years in his new Faith, and the Words *had* filtered into his mindset. There was already a lot of the Creative Word in his thinking. The Beauty's words had originally raced to his core when he had first heard them. They had matched his deep personally held beliefs and showed him a far greater depth of them. They opened his eyes to much more too, but it was actually him who wanted to transform himself and help facilitate change in the world. Then, he came to another foundational understanding; that his whole life experience was a *treasure trove* that he could gather *evidence* from. Suffice is to say, that Jack could now realise the value of all his previous efforts. He could gather the fruits of his life and of the life experience that would come. He just had to *continue* doing the work. Jack was truly becoming.

THAT NIGHT, A VOICE FROM DEEPER CAME TO JACK IN HIS DREAMS. It was the voice of the old lady from the mountains.

“Life will provide many distractions for your mind to grasp, and waste your soul’s time in this life, and there are many who will take you to your lower self. The modern world in which you live is full of illusions that will take your attention, let alone the constant yelping of your lower nature.

Know yourself, and know you are a spiritual being. Think for yourself, see for yourself. Be guided by The Word and your soul. Seek the wider view in all things and seek the truth.

See the world, but also do not judge. Measure yourself and take action to refine your own being. Remember your failings, so you may forget those of others. Bring light wherever you go; for you, and others, to see well.

Light is the goodness of the human soul; compassion, justice, humility, trustworthiness and the many others. Human powers are the only true foundation of civilisation. Nothing, no order, no civilisation, no matter how ordered, can stand without the lights of the soul guiding our actions.

So, choose your thoughts carefully; thoughts of goodness, constructive and creative thoughts, giving thoughts, higher thoughts; all from a quiet soul. Detach and be thankful. Remember that your emotions and your reality rise from your thoughts. Choose your thoughts. Seek The Creator.”

“What do you mean? Seek the Creator?” asked Jack.

“We cannot know God, but we can learn of His essence; love and knowledge. Where there is more virtue; more kindness and courage, compassion and justice, truthfulness and integrity, there is God. These are just some of the signs of God. In essence, where there is love, and where there is truth, there is God.”

JACK WOKE FROM THE DREAM. He found himself on one of the blue-purple couches. The guards were just leaving, and the mechanical wall was in a frenzy of movement. Many of the doors were falling back into the workings; some, after a few comings and goings. The guards seemed unconcerned about all the mechanical movements. As they walked to the wall, the door with the bars came forward, they entered, and again the door disappeared into the workings.

Brig was sitting across from Jack on the other couch, which was now a medium purple. He had in his hand a totem. It was small and carved out of wood. It had a snake winding upwards on a tree, and another snake winding down; both creating mirrored spiral shapes and overlapping in places.

“See what *you see*, brother. I have to go now. Good luck, cuz’.”

Just then, an intense light shot down from the skylight. Brig was gone, and the room’s mechanics were no longer steel. They were now fine, delicate, highly polished silver. He cried at the change. He sobbed and sobbed, then felt his daughter nestled into his chest. He remembered his children. He had been here too long...Then, he heard a voice. It was his son.

“Dad...Dad!”

Jack woke lying on the stairs of his townhouse, with his daughter nestled into him, and his son at the front door, at the bottom of the stairs.

“Are you okay?” his son asked, very concerned.

“Yes, mate. Just fine,” he answered, as his daughter raised her face to meet Jack’s loving gaze.

“Mum’s out in the car,” said his son. “*He’s awake now, mum.*”

“Get your bags guys, while I say hello to your mum,” said Jack, as he got up.

“Are you okay, Jack?” asked the lady, through the open window, as Jack walked up to the car.

“Just off the planet a bit,” replied Jack, with a smile.

She just rolled her eyes. She never understood that part of him. She had found his Faith very reasonable; but *it too*, was not for her. Her father and mother had bad experiences with religion, and she was simply not interested. She lived very much *on planet*, in the material reality she could see; and to her, Jack was like a wandering cloud.

“How are you?” Jack asked.

“*And Bob*,” added Jack’s five-year-old daughter.

“Yes. How are you both?”

“Good thanks, Jack.”

It cut like a knife to hear his daughter talk of this man as a natural part of the family. But Bob was a good man and Jack’s daughter lived with them mostly, so he held his pain at bay. With that, the kids had their bags out of the car and were at the door of the townhouse. Jack and his ex-

wife said goodbye, and she backed out of the driveway. He and the children waved goodbye and the three of them went inside.

His daughter then started to talk about this new man in their lives again, and he felt more deeply the pain of his separation from his family. After a short time listening, he finally said, “I don’t want to talk about him, darling.”

His daughter started to cry. She was only five, and it just broke Jack’s heart to see her discomfort, so he said, “Tell you what, darling. I’ve *changed my mind*. You can talk *all you like* about Bob. He seems like a good man, and he is someone you care about, so you can talk about him *anytime*, okay.”

Jack had taken the fast train to his soul and seen the truth; his own ego set against the reality of his daughter’s wellbeing. In an instant, through his love for his daughter and wisdom from his recent experience, he realised that he was being selfish and had to sacrifice his feelings. He had instantly gathered the humility required and sent his sacrifice into the world, in the form of love.

The magical thing was that by this one act of selflessness, he found more acceptance and freedom, somehow naturally gaining more release from a large part of his pain; the pain of his separation from these glorious little souls; from their everyday lives. He also saw clearly, after this single act of courage and humility, that this pain, if left in him, would only have been the cause of even more separation from these young souls. He also now thankfully came to understand that he would never be separate from his children, and set about to join their hearts more to his, and goodness, forever.

In spiritual matters, we sacrifice what we believe to be of great value, and in doing so, we set ourselves a little freer, and receive gifts of far greater value.

Expectations

The storm was building, and a few drops of rain were just appearing on the car's windscreen. It was looming but not quite yet over the town. The lightning strikes were nothing like Jack had experienced before. There were wide bolts like tree branches in the sky, and great straight bolts almost continuously shooting down to the ground; there was sheet lightning too. Strike after strike, and it did not stop. Even though the sky was black with the night, it was almost constantly lit up. There was also lightning rippling, again and again, along the bottoms of the clouds; something he had never even seen before. It was an awesome sight to behold, and very exciting to be out in. *"Well in the car anyway,"* he thought.

He had just pulled up in the driveway of his ex-wife's home; his old home, as he was dropping the children off on a Sunday night. There was no concern in him about the storm, but his

ex-wife did not share his calm. She was not impressed with him; not waiting until after the storm to bring the children home. But he thought that he was simply keeping his word with her, and besides, he didn't want his children to learn to be fearful. He also knew one of the safest places in a lightning storm was on rubber.

In any case, they got the kids inside, and Jack turned to go.

"Get home safe," she called out after him.

"I am heading down the coast," replied Jack.

"In this storm?"

"Yep, I've been invited by the community down there to a '*fun night*'. Haven't met any of them, so I'm looking forward to it."

"But *the storm*, Jack."

"I'll be right. See ya'," he responded, as he ran over to the car.

The storm was just beginning to whip up its fury as he drove out onto the road. He was quite excited to be out in it, especially after all the years of being so safety conscious. He remembered Joe's words as he powered off down the road, and even though life had called for some moderation and people around him had also influenced his perspectives, he *had* changed. He *was* more *grounded* these days, which was good, but he needed to *live* right now; and he just felt so free out there, driving in all this wind, and rain, and lightning. It was a feast for the eyes. It was exhilarating!

Jack could not believe this storm. He had been on the road for about half an hour now, and the sky was still putting on a full-on show. He almost felt like it was somehow a portend of him entering a new cycle. Even though he didn't believe the storm was made for him, he somehow could not believe it to be otherwise. Suddenly, a great bolt of lightning hit right in front of the car.

There was a blinding flash, a huge bang, and a sizzle, all at once. It even changed the very nature of the air. He got a fright and his whole being was suddenly energised with excitement. Just as suddenly, the light was gone; and road reappeared in front of him.

“Waaahhooo!” yelled Jack, and he started screaming, “Woooo! Yeah! Wooo!” followed by a good peel of laughter. “Ohhh, man! That was great!”

It was almost like he had passed through something and burst out the other side. He was very excited and smiling wide, allowing himself the full joy of the experience.

As he drove on down the road, he slowly began to calm and relax a little. The lightning continued putting on a show, and the smile, while gentled, had not left his face. Then, the thought of meeting new people came to him, and he felt even happier. His life was changing, and he was glad that he was finding his adventurous streak again. It kept that smile on his face as he drove on down the road.

Deeper Places

“Hi, I’m Jack,” he said, after a man came to the door.

“Hey, Jack,” replied the grey-headed New Zealander, with a handlebar moustache. “Come on in and meet the crew.”

There were about fourteen people there, and they were in the middle of a balance game of some kind, but Jack did not really notice any of them except one. She shone like the sun, but from the inside. She tilted her head just a little, as she saw him, but continued on with the game. He couldn’t be sure, but there seemed to be an instant connection. It had him smiling as he joined in.

Throughout the night Jack’s attention did not shift; and later, on the veranda, he managed to talk with her. She was free in some way and gave off a great and sure love for creation and The Creator. Strangely, she was not of his Faith, and yet seemed more connected than those around her; a bit like his saltwater mate, Brig. She was a surfer girl, and to Jack, she seemed to embody

the beach and the sun. When she explained that being in the sea and the sun cleansed the heavy energies of the world from her, and that it was her regular regeneration, he just smiled.

They talked for a good while, until she finally had to go. They bade each other goodbye, and he watched her go down the stairs. He couldn't help but follow her, around on the veranda above, while she walked to her car. She looked up and said goodnight. Suddenly, Jack thought of something and said it all at once. "What's your name?"

"It's Kai," she said smiling, and then got into her car.

Jack stood there and saw her off. He knew he was being silly. He knew he was infatuated, but he also saw something very special in this soul and hoped he would run into her again. Actually, he was somehow sure that he would.

As her car disappeared from sight, his attention went up to clouds drifting by in the strong moonlight. It was a wonderful display with the light in the clouds, the contrast with the black night sky, and the moon peeking out of the clouds from time to time. Just then, he noticed the evening star. It was brighter tonight than he had ever seen it, and the feel of the air was not normal somehow. He chuckled, and said aloud to himself, "This must be love."

"*Love*, eh?" commented a dark-haired woman, who had come out onto the veranda. "Kai is a good friend of mine, but she lives with a guy, so settle down, *Romeo*."

"*Geez* ', caught clean!"

"But don't worry, in there tonight, you were *very* discrete. It was only as obvious as watching an elephant squeeze into a mini, with all of us in the back."

Jack laughed out loud, and so did the lady. She had full long black hair and seemed very straight up and down in her bearing and character. She did look a little uptight but wasn't owned by it somehow. It was great meeting new people, and he was really beginning to enjoy this time in his life.

"So, are you one of our mob?" she asked.

"We *all* are, aren't we?" answered Jack.

"Yes, sure, we are one, all humanity. But our activities are open to everyone, and I was going to ask you to a deepening at my friend, Gerty's. I just didn't know if I had to explain what *a deepening* was."

"Gerty?" said Jack, picturing a robust strong looking German lady.

"Yes. Gerty and her husband have lived here a long time, and she is special to a lot of us. She is great to do a study with, because of her knowledge, and her wisdom."

"Sure, sounds great. This Gerty sounds like someone to get to know," said Jack.

"Great. The first deepening is in a few weeks' time. She lives in Eewah Vale. I'll text you the address."

"Sure, thanks," said Jack, remembering that his father grew up on a dairy farm there. It meant a little more to him now and seemed to be a confirmation of sorts.

"Great, and when you have finished swooning, come in, and *really* meet my husband and *the others*," she said, with a big smile.

Jack just smiled too. He had been bested, and just enjoyed it. Jack's father had always loved people giving *him* a hard time for fun. A quality he enjoyed most especially in the young, so he had loved it when they took a shot at him. To him, it showed that they had spirit, and there was nothing in him that wanted to get one over anyone; he just enjoyed the banter. Jack did not miss his dad at all, now he was gone. He actually felt him closer than ever. He believed that the world beyond was intimately linked with this one and didn't see any distance at all between him and his father. He could talk to him anytime.

THAT NIGHT, JACK SLEPT VERY DEEPLY. He was so relaxed and happy from the evening out, as company and connection nurture us all. But later in the night, they came; the White Robe, and the Black Robe. Jack began to stir with the changed energies in the room.

"You are the way," were the words that were heard, of The White Robe.

"We will supply anything you wish, the way is open," were the words that were heard, of The Black Robe.

Jack woke with the words that were heard and saw them there. He realised that this was not a dream, and he was definitely not unconscious like he was on the stairs the last time he had encountered them. He was at home, and he could feel their strange power inside him. He could feel their promises reach places within him, and they somehow, made him feel quite powerful and sure. But The White power would not allow for other ways, and no acceptance of other perceptions could be entertained. The Black power would only be given *to him*, and not concern itself with the

struggles of others or the consequences its actions. Anything he wanted in the physical reality would be given to him though; power, safety, status, money and all the rest.

Even though Jack felt very strong and sure right now, he knew how narrow and hollow these promises were. Even if they provided a certain kind of happiness, they would destroy his soul. He knew there was always a price, and he couldn't live in that kind of ignorance anyway. He could see that these things would only make him weak, and slowly rot his humanity. He could see how they would separate him from love.

"I am *not* the way," said Jack, plainly.

"You are the way. The way is open. You are the way, and we have come," were the words that were heard, of The White.

"The way is open. You have opened the way. The way is open. It cannot be closed," were the words that were heard, of The Black.

"Oh, it's closed! Now, get out of my head, and my life!"

"The way is open. There is only one way," were the words, of The White.

"The way is open," were the words, of The Black.

With that, the robed figures were gone. Jack was glad that they were now gone but was more than concerned. He got up, turned the light on, and went upstairs for a cup of water. Things were getting crazy; too many questions for *his* small head to handle. Then, he remembered his poise, returned to his soul, and asked for help to understand.

He sat down in the lounge and said a few prayers of the Creative Word, and as he prayed, he relaxed and centred more. As he reflected, he saw that these influences were growing in the wider picture. The world had already been almost consumed by the pain of ego, greed, and want, and of course, fear and all kinds of fundamentalist ideologies. But how had *he* been the way? There were still too many questions, and nothing was forthcoming, so he eventually got up, and was heading back to bed when he suddenly collapsed.

He lay on the floor, half conscious. He could hear a few yelling voices and machinery of some kind. He caught glimpses of coloured lights, and there was something else. It was a feeling of disconnection from something. He could feel his heart deeply pining for something too, but he did not know what it sought. Then, just as suddenly, the sounds, lights, and feelings faded, and he started to come awake.

He was very confused, when he got up, off the floor. *“First the Robes, and now this,”* he thought. He walked down the stairs and flopped into bed. As his head hit the pillow, he thought how things were getting too crazy. He remembered then, what Brig had said to him on his last journey, when his worlds were colliding, *“Just be here, Jack.”*

“Hey, Brig. You’re here!”

“Actually, Jack, you are here,” said Brig, smiling.

Jack chuckled, “Love your work, Brig.”

“Listen, Brother. Something in the Dream is not right. The Earth is calling out. Something is coming, Jack. Something is rising. We can feel it.”

“What?”

“We don’t know, Jack. We just feel it. Mother feels it.”

“Maybe it’s the Robed ones. I have seen Robed creatures, and they aren’t good at all.”

“They’ve been here for a long time. We’ve seen them come, wave after wave, but they never come to the real world; only their influence.”

“Well, I just saw them, in the real world, mate.”

“Mmm, maybe they did, maybe they didn’t. I don’t know if it’s them, but trouble’s comin’, Jack. Not soon, but soon, you know; and there is somthin’ else, Jack. Somthin’ else comin’ in the night; Mother knows.”

“What do I do with all this stuff, Brig? I mean, for God’s sake, this is nuts!”

“It feels like it’s more about what we will all have to do. All we can do for now is trust the Creator’s Plan, I reckon.”

“But, don’t you want to know what this is all about?”

“You know, we just aren’t big enough. All we can really do is have faith, play our part as best we can as things unfold, and do our day to day. Just live, do good things, and see what comes. Life comes to us, not us to it.”

“Sure, and be here, eh?”

“Yep. Be here.”

Jack woke with the bright sun coming through his window. He was at peace for a minute or so before his mind went back to all that came to him in the night. He knew Brig was right, that he had to do the day to day and see what unfolded. On his last journey, he had almost gotten over having to understand it all, and just gone with the flow of things. His real life was now seemingly becoming that way and he saw that he had to do the same here.

He knew the reality of his powerlessness, so he got up, let it all go, and got on with his life. He had no choice *anyway*.

JACK PULLED UP INFRONT OF THE SHED AT GERTY'S PLACE. It had been quite a few weeks since the stormy night, and the visits from Brig and the Robed Ones. He had just been doing the mundane stuff of life since then and was very glad of it.

His travels to deeper places had never concerned him, but the intrusion of The Robed Ones into this reality had stirred him up, so the mundane had been very reassuring. But he was now again beginning to crave something new and meaningful, so he was glad to be doing this deepening. He saw Michelle, the dark-haired lady from the games-night, get out of her car. She came over to him as he got out of his. They greeted each other and chatted as they walked over to the low set house among the trees.

"Hey, Gerty," said Michelle, when Gerty came to the door.

"Hello, Michelle," replied Gerty, as she looked at Jack.

Jack smiled and said hello. She was not at all what he had imagined. She was tall and thin, with fine features, and lovely blue eyes. She was also a little hunched from a childhood illness. She said hello to Jack, and as Michelle introduced them, she gently gazed at him. Even though they had never met, they knew each other. Gerty did have a special way with people generally, but there was something very much shared in these two; an understanding that was immediate as they regarded each other.

“It is lovely to have you here, Jack.”

“I’m looking forward to learning whatever you have to give,” said Jack, realising the oddness of what he just said; especially now that he was back in the contingent world.

“I am just an old lady, Jack, and we will learn together; *yes*,” replied Gerty, in a very firm, but extremely gentle, way.

He smiled and nodded in response, but he *knew better*. He knew intuitively who could give him more understanding, and who could not; well, mostly. While he understood that no one holds greater power, there are those people in our lives who mentor our growth, ones we drink from like a fountain, and he knew Gerty was one of them. This lady was only the second such person in his real life up until now. His sixth- grade teacher was the only other real-world mentor he had known. This man had opened his mind to a wider worldview; one that he had craved. He remembered him fondly, as all three now sat down in the lounge.

After some conversation, Gerty introduced the book, and they began their study. In time Jack would learn much about the actual meaning of words from her, as she used English words to their true meaning. It would make Jack realise just how much he had learnt his own language by

osmosis. Today was the first part of an informal study of this book, and inevitably, conversations on all subjects came up as they read and talked; on health, life, and struggles, as well as on the content of the book. They wound their way here and there and were now in a discussion about what was known to them as *The Covenant*.

“So, there was always a challenge, eh?” asked Jack.

“At every passing on of The Mantle of the Faith there were great challenges; but The Covenant was as solid as a mountain. This sad dynamic is also true to a greater extent when each new Messenger has come to us. Self-interest, ego, and the limited mind, cloud people’s vision. It was mostly people letting others do their thinking for them, and *literal expectations* of prophesy, that stopped many from accepting the new Messengers,” offered Gerty.

“Expectations; can we talk about that for a while?” Jack asked the group.

“Most definitely,” said Gerty, with gently curious eyes. “In what relation?”

“Jack’s *expectation* to have his love for Kai fulfilled,” sprouted Michelle, with a full-on cheeky smile and a laugh.

Jack went a little red, shook his head smiling, and said, “No, I had this discussion with a friend quite recently and we talked about expectations of happiness. At least I did. There is so much disappointment in the world and life seems to dash my hopes continually. I know I can’t have it all, and I know that the expectations of people are becoming more unrealistic, and almost reaching the realms of fantasy, but I still wonder why basic happiness has eluded me.”

“This is a huge subject, Jack. Life is a school, and it provides limits; limits in which we may grow stronger. Too many expectations fulfilled are not good for us spiritually. I think we generally have too many expectations of how our physical and material life *should be* for us, and *too low* expectations of ourselves in growing our human character. Material expectation seems rule the world with an almost hypnotic power, but hardship and contentment are truly good friends in growing our soul’s character,” offered Gerty.

“Well, that’s all great, but is love too high an expectation?” said Jack, as he sent a short, sharp, googly-eyed glance at Michelle. She smiled, but left it be, *for now at least*.

“It is okay to hope, but effort brings love. Love provides love,” offered Gerty.

“Yes, *hope, Jack*; and *real* love, *Jack*,” said Michelle, succumbing to the opportunity.

He just chuckled a bit and reflected quickly on the clear answer he had received. But he could see that he would be good friends with this one, also that she and Gerty were bringing life and happiness to him. Connection with these souls, was in itself, a lovely fulfilling thing.

“I was also in a discussion with another friend more recently, and we talked about the growth available in chasing hardship,” led Jack, further into the subject.

“Ah, in the Creative Word. We *all* know *that* one,” commented Michelle, laughing and pulling a face that said, ‘*Well that’s not gonna’ happen. Got enough to deal with.*’

Jack smiled at that, and then looked over to Gerty.

Gerty did not smile. “This quote is true, as the hard things in life grant us the most; the most learning, and love creates more acceptance of hardship. Parenting is a good example of these

truths. The reality of hardship, *and* expectations, can be seen in the nurturing of children too; children and *their* expectations, and how a good parent allows them hardship..." These words hit Jack like a slap in the face. His heart lurched, but his consciousness could not grab why. It felt like a crack had opened to something; a crack he could not quite peer through, and it came with a sudden headache.

Gerty was oblivious to Jack's inner pain, and simply continued sharing her perspectives, but to him it was like listening to the muffled voice of someone in another room as he continued to experience this painful event. Soon though, the crack, and the pain that assailed him, fell away. Strangely, it slipped away as if he had not even experienced it, and his attention simply came back to the conversation.

"...hardship is where the gems lay, and all important and valuable work take resilience. Resilience is part of a growing *character*, and not being distracted with the world's love affair with *personality*. The manic material and egotistical expectations of happiness of the modern world, if fulfilled, would be tragic, in any case. We would all become lazy, useless, weak souls. Humanity would fall to disorder and eventually nihilism. It could not thrive, and we would slowly rot on all levels in such a reality."

"Yep, that is all *so* true, but you just *really* get over the *continual* struggle," offered Michelle.

"Yep, *for sure*," agreed Jack, feeling a little ill at ease, but now almost forgetful of the sudden experience he had just had.

"Yep, I am *completely* over it," reinforced Michelle.

Gerty just sat there a while, in silence. She seemed to be gathering her thoughts. She was an old woman, and in her life, and her life with her husband, she had been through some quite solid ordeals. Jack knew her words were not going to just be from a book as Gerty reached deep inside herself, and her life experience, and began to speak.

“There is a beauty in agony, and a place of acceptance in melancholy. There is a freedom in powerlessness; as within the humility of these places, is learning. When all is said and done, we have life as it comes to us, and we have our striving, *and that is all*.”

We need hold peace within us and be detached from this place. So much of the pain in our lives is evident witness to our attachment to the physical world, and in our expectations of it. Struggle is not the only cause of pain, as emotional and physical attachments bring their own, and hardship may eventually produce more joy and more freedom. From struggle we also understand the value and sublimity of *contentment*.”

“Contentment, sure,” agreed Jack.

“I’m *all* for contentment,” responded Michelle, “and some ease.”

“Contentment is different to ease. Contentment may exist even in hardship. Too much ease *also* becomes a mire to wallow in; one in which a person is never to be satisfied, and a person’s character, eroded. Continual excess can also certainly be a lingering death.

If we do not strive and struggle, and realise the joy in mastering the powers of the soul, how are we living? If we do not struggle for others, where is the proof of our love? Where is the water of our existence? We would be ash, *lifeless*, without struggle in service to each other.

We live life in *this* place, this system, this reality, so we need *expect this place*; not expect another place or other circumstances that we wish for. We are here, and we need simply to let this place, this life, *continue* to create us. *Life* is in the pain *and the joy* of simply being here. This place is *abundant*, and it is *perfect*, no matter how it may seem. Life, in the end, is simply to be lived; and lived well.”

They all just sat there silently reflecting on those words. Jack was thankful for that. His present company had obviously learned the value of inner reflection and did not fill the air with their immediate personal wanderings. Each soul walks a unique path in this world, and although we can gain greatly from each other’s experiences and shared ideas, there is a time for such things, and a limit. There is a measure to all things, even personal reflection, but what Gerty had shared demanded some reflection.

Jack thought to himself how lucky he was to be here. He had much to learn from this lady and had been given a regular meeting to take in what she had to give. The joy of this meeting, the new people in his life, and the understanding he was gathering, made Jack realise consciously that special people and meaning, discovery, and many other joys, exist here too. He also saw, that although there was hardship in the world, it was his hardship that had opened the door to these new friends.

A whole new vista then opened before him, or was it just a reminder, as he saw the pain and struggle of his life and what fruit it had borne. The hardest things had given him the greatest gifts; all his struggles had yielded up their gold. He could now seek the golden fruit that sought release through his pain, and he could now be patient in his struggles as he waited to see what new growth or understanding would be granted by them.

Jack's happiness was growing.

HE WAS TUMBLING. It was always the same; whenever he gained his feet, and was charging along, something would whip his legs out from under him again. It was now some weeks later, in the late evening, and he sat on his lounge chair in the malaise of his own happiness.

He sat there wondering how *happiness* could cause *unhappiness*. He was content, but somehow, he was getting bored with his own happiness. He then realized that it was not a malaise from *having happiness* but that he was *dulled by ease*. While musing over this feeling, he found that he had a need to give out, or needed some challenge, or just to be more useful. But he just wasn't sure what to do. He sat there feeling a little lost, still caught up in his own malaise, until he eventually nodded off to sleep.

Jack woke to what seemed like an urgent knocking on his door. He got up, and as he walked past the window, he caught sight of the bright, white sliver, of the new moon, along with the evening star. He loved it when those two interplayed, seemingly alone, in a dark sky. He only remembered such magic early in the evening though, so thought it a little strange as he walked down the stairs and opened the door.

A blinding light shone in his face and Jack knew that he was somewhere else. The deeper worlds were closer for him now. It was just a breath away at times, and he wondered if that was why he saw The Robes. "*Maybe they were just outside reality,*" he thought. In any case, he could feel its nearness regularly now, but had withheld himself from it for some weeks. He had needed the ground of normal life and wanted to practise what he had learnt in the real world; make it all

part of who he was. Right now, though, due his malaise and the lack of challenge in life, he was glad of some movement deeper.

“Woo, back there, young fella,” said a sun-weathered old man, as he grabbed Jack back from the edge. “You don’t want to step over there; leastwise, not without a carpet.”

“A carpet!” spluttered Jack, as the immediate concern of falling five kilometers to the planet below, gave way to the thrill of hearing those last two words. Jack was on some kind of steel structure. It was huge and seemed to just hang there in the air. Above him many gigantic, spherical, steel-skinned fans that were drawing in the atmosphere.

“Yep, ’dem Department fella’rs don’t seem to have any fear in ’em when they are on those carpets.”

“Do they come up here much?”

“Sure, they’re always checking on our progress,” shared the old man. He was a little bent over, but very fit, and sounded like an old prospector from those American movies Jack loved as a boy.

“So, they will be here, *soonish*?” asked Jack.

“What’s the rush boy? Ya’ pert near weren’t here a minute ago. Lucky I was down here doing some maintenance.”

“Yep. For sure. So, what *is* this...?”

“Rig is the word yer’ looking fer’. It’s a sky miner. Not the newest, but it does the job.”

“What are you mining?”

“Mmm, don’t know if I can say.”

“You can tell me. I’m not even from here.”

“No, I mean, I don’t know.”

“You don’t know what you’re mining?”

“Lots of folk don’t know what their doin’. It ain’t as strange as it sounds. ‘Least *I know* I don’t know. Most folks work hard for a lifetime, and don’t even know what they’re here for. Damn waste if you ask me.”

“I suppose you’re right about that, old mate.”

“*Darn tootin’ arm’ right,*” said the old man, with a sure nod of his head. “Anyway, ‘dem Department people are needin’ an essence of some kind; an essence that does somethin’ or other. They seem to be the only ones who know how to gather it. They set up my old rig to gather it, *and so I gather it*. Perty simple.”

“So, when will they be back?”

“You know, boy, you just turned up here. Maybe *I* should be the one askin’ the questions; *and I just might*, after I get this maintenance done.”

With that, the old man went back to work. Jack tried not to look over the edge, and he backed up closer to the central pylon that the deck was attached to, while he watched the old man work. He was a gristly old bloke. Jack had known a lot of hard-working old men like him in his

time. Bent from the work, burnt skin from the sun, and hard as nails. Their hands were usually full of calluses, had gnarled knuckles, and at least one finger deformed or missing. There was a grounded and honourable simplicity, and a hard work ethic, in such men. He had Jack's respect immediately.

From a distance, the sky miner looked like a huge bunch of large steel grapes, thick at the top and tapering down towards the bottom. A huge central pylon projected upwards out of the top of the great bunch of spherical fans, and a shorter lower pylon, projected downwards towards the ground. The rig stood to attention as it floated in the air. The metal skinned fans, that sat on the outer surface of the main hull, hummed gently as they worked. The fans' casings nestled into each other snugly. They grew in number as they rose upwards, on the increasing diameter of the rig.

Two metres above the highest row of fans, set atop the upper pylon, was the main deck. It was a huge metal skinned disk with windows all around the outside. It was just a bit wider than the top row of fans below it. This was the rig's upper stabiliser and control room. There was also an outer steel mesh walkway, with railings, that circled it. The lower pylon held a small flat disc-like stabilising platform, about nine meters below the lowest set of fans, and that was the deck that Jack and the old man were on. The whole structure was made out of the same burnished steel.

The hum of the fans was low and somehow in sync with Jack's inner being. The vibration of the deck, and the sound of the fans, soothed and energised him. It was like the feeling of a stretch, only inside, and yet much more than that, somehow.

"So, how does this thing stay up?" asked Jack, not being able to help himself.

“Well,” began the old man, not seeming to remember that *he* wanted to ask the questions, “she’s got a grav’ drive. ‘Dey sure changed the nature o’ things when ‘dey come on the market.”

“How does it work?”

“Hell, I don’ know; somethin’ about turnin’ gravity on its head. ‘Dem science fellers lern’d it from black holes er’ somethin’. Clever people.”

Jack was thinking that this old fellow didn’t seem to know much about a lot of things and decided to have some fun. “Do you know how the fans work?” he asked, looking for a bite.

“You know boy, if I had come down in the last rain shower, I might’o bit. *But, I didn’t.* Been here a *little while longer* than that,” responded the old man, looking over at Jack, with a little smile.

“You’re *no fun*, old mate,” said Jack, with an open smile.

“You’re sure *beginin’* to be, boy,” responded the old man, as his smile widened.

Just then, a carpet flashed by; then another one.

“We better head up to the control deck. Follow me,” said the man. He turned to Jack and asked, “What’s your name, young feller’?”

“It’s Jack.”

“Mine’s Alabast.”

“Pleased to meet you, Alabast.”

“Mmm, we’ll *see* about ‘dat,” said the old man, with a cheeky smile, as he turned, opened a hatch in the pylon, and climbed through.

Jack and the old man wound their way up through hatches and up ladders in the central pylon, until they reached the control deck. The control room looked like a ship’s control room on a big ocean-going ship, with pipes, faucets, control panels, and dials all around. There were two ladies, standing beside a younger man, all looking at a screen on one of the control panels. They looked up, and a quizzical look came across their faces.

“Who is this?” asked one of the ladies, looking at Jack.

“This hars’, Jack. He just turned up on the lower pylon. Come to think of it, I didn’t even ask how he got there.”

“Jack *Johnston*?” asked the same lady.

“Yep,” answered Jack, tentatively.

The lady who had asked the question turned to the other, and the look they shared with each other held meaning. Each understood the other’s thoughts clearly.

“Jack, you should not be here. Maybe we have caused some instability by our work. We have some things to attend to, and then, we might have to take you back with us.”

“Instability? What do you mean?”

“We can’t answer that, Jack. Maybe the Counsellors can help you get back. You are too deep.”

“That is just so typical of you guys,” said Jack.

“We are not *guys*, Jack,” said the other lady. “We have some work to do, and it is not for your eyes, so if you could go out on the observation deck, we will be with you soon.”

The old man piped up, and said, “Through that hatch, young feller’.”

Jack walked out on the steel mesh hoop that looped around the main deck. He stood back from the railing, leaning against the hull. The hum of the fans was gentle and low, and quite soothing, but he was not feeling comfortable at all. The open mesh walkway, and the long drop, made his gut feel like it was falling out and coming up through his throat all at once. He stayed there and tried to beat the feeling by choosing his thoughts; and by having faith in the builders and The Creator.

Eventually, he managed to calm his being, and as he took some deep breaths his emotions settled, and his body followed. He still had to fight off further inevitable waves of fear as natural instinct commanded him to step back, but he held the line and was beginning to enjoy the view. Just then, the old man came out of the control room and came over to him.

“So, you’re an int’restin’ young fella’,” offered Alabast, to start the conversation.

“Life’s interesting, mate. Been working on my soul and my mind, and I tend to find myself here, there, and pretty-well anywhere.”

“Sounds a bit lost to me, boy.”

“No, *it’s great*. I *learn* a lot.”

“Sounds all too much like head learnin’ ta me.”

Jack turned and looked at Alabast. The old man saw that he had gotten the lad's attention, and turned to look down at the planet below, with his elbows on the railing.

“You learn a lot from bein’ up har’. Watchin’ the world an’ its people livin’ and learnin’. You get a wider view, yer’ know.”

“I’ll bet.”

“I only ever learned by doin’. If I could give you some advice, it would be to work your way out of yer’ head, and well, take home in yer’ heart, and just live yer’ life. Yer’ soul and yer’ mind’ll just grow natural like.”

Jack smiled, and the two men contemplated those words as they both now leant on the rail, looking at the world below.

THE TWO LADIES AND JACK WALKED IN AT THE END OF A TALK. Twelve Counsellors had come for a meeting on this planet. They had decided to meet here due to the local effort in the sky mining; wanting to gather understanding from them about the work. The Counsellors also wanted to share learning with the locals, and each other, on current aspects of the work of The Department.

They had come from all over the worlds of God, and only two Counsellors, out of the twelve, now remained. The lady Counsellor, who was speaking to the locals assembled, was a strong looking woman. She reminded Jack of a South Pacific Islander, and as he watched her talk, he saw the Spirit of The Beauty radiating from her.

“...Happiness, even in pain, talks of perfection. We are spiritual beings and real happiness for us, is to be spiritual. It cannot be found in the things of the material plane. Our work, and actions of love, are created in our spirit and brought to this material plane. By selfless efforts, we make this place less painful and more nurturing, and in the struggle of our service to our fellow man our souls may soar in the firmament of happiness.”

Jack stood in the crowd watching this lady, while the two ladies who had escorted him there, talked with the other Counsellor. They were off to the side of the hall and consulted for some time. After the lady Counsellor’s talk had concluded, Jack saw people going up to the woman, sharing pleasantries. He thought that he would like to share his thanks to her, as he thought she was glorious. When his turn finally came to greet her, he said, “You are amazing.”

The look on her face was almost of revulsion, and it shocked him.

“What would make you think that I would appreciate those words?” asked the Counsellor gently, but still feeling uncomfortable from his words.

“I’m not from here, and I just saw glory in you while you talked. What’s wrong with that?”

“Praise for action is appropriate sometimes, but I cannot accept it for my being. It is my love for The Beauty, and joy in the development of our work, that you saw. It is my love, not my ego, and my spirit will cease to shine if my ego rises to darken it. We must be detached from any great ability, and definitely forbid any illusion of greatness.”

“Why not to enjoy it and use it? It helps others.”

“It is not that...my goodness, this is so hard to converse about. My soul is burdened even discussing this,” explained the Counsellor, obviously distressed. Her body language was like she had eaten something rotten. She gathered her thoughts and said, “The beauty you saw was His spirit. I *cannot*, and *will not*, lay claim to it. To be less, we may give more. We are animal, and we are spiritual. The animal seeks more, the spirit seeks less. The animal seeks ease, the spirit seeks struggle. The animal seeks the ground, and the spirit seeks heaven.”

Just then, Jack got a flash of Brig’s Totem; *the snake winding down and the snake winding up*. He received a clear realisation of our dual nature; the material, and the spiritual, aspects of man. That totem, and this small conversation, had just made so much clear to him about his struggle to put his spirit on the ground, and the nature of happiness. He saw the struggle between these two forces within him, and the reality of a human’s dual nature. The nature of a human life dawned on him. He now understood that only his spirit could guarantee happiness.

It blew Jack’s mind that the People of the Land had this knowledge long ago. He felt a deep love for his country, his home, his land, in this. He felt fuller inside from that realisation, and his eyes teared up a little, in thanks for a clear understanding of the nature of what went on inside all of us.

“I apologise for any offence, young man,” offered The Counsellor, seeing Jack’s tearing eyes.

“*No, please*, your words gave me a good deal of understanding. I need to go home. I would like to go home.”

“Where is home?”

“Earth,” said Jack.

“This is Jack Johnston,” informed the other Counsellor, as he and the two ladies joined them. He was a very tall man with white hair and a very relaxed demeanour.

“Well, it is certainly an interesting day,” commented the lady Counsellor, pleasantly surprised, and now smiling.

“And you can’t share anymore with me, can you?”

“No,” said the gentleman Counsellor, “but if it is of any aid to your feelings, Jack, the work we do, the nature of existence, and the perfection of His designs, are all somewhat a mystery to us too. We learn as we go, also.”

“Thanks. *It is* helpful,” responded Jack, respectfully. “I am full anyway and have plenty to mull over. You know, it is feast or famine with this spiritual stuff.”

“It can be that way. But it is your thirst, your hunger, that brings you here,” said the lady Counsellor.

“No, I just find myself in places.”

“No, you are the main protagonist in your journey, Jack. You are reaching deeper and seeking answers.”

“I would like to think so, but I can’t say *I* am doing this.”

“Well, in any case, there is much for you to see. Until we meet again, Jack,” said the Islander lady, like she clearly felt they may.

JACK ENJOYED THE FEELING OF BEING OUT IN THE WIND AGAIN. These ladies were *very* adept at flying. It reminded him of rides in the back of the utility when he was quite young; around a paddock, taking a trip to the dump, and the like. Now, even a dog in the back of a ute seemed unsafe. He knew things had changed, and it was for the better that kids didn't ride there anymore, but he wondered whether there was something being lost in us by the drive to make everything so safe. Those who rode these carpets didn't seem to be concerned with safety.

In time, they came to a sporting field of some kind. It had a large five-sided grass playing field, with small goal nets on each side, and a white ring marked on the grass in the middle. He wondered how that game would be played as they landed, or more so, hovered near a shed door beside the field. The door opened, and in a flash of light, they were on the other side. There, in front of them, was The Doc.

"Well, hello Jack."

"Hey, Doc. It's good to see you," said Jack, smiling.

"We have to take Jack back up. We won't take long," explained one of the ladies.

"Let *me* take him up. It would be good to catch up a little," said The Doc.

"Our instructions are clear. We have to see him through."

"It's fine, I will take him," offered The Doc.

"I am sorry, but *we* have to," responded one of the ladies.

“You are in my house. One should not seek advantage over someone in their house,” said The Doc, very gently, but very strongly.

Jack was impressed by The Doc’s way. Even good people with good intentions, and doing good work, could overstep their bounds.

“Of course, you are right. His Glory is our glory,” said one of the ladies, in genuine humility, and in goodbye. In a flash, they passed back through the door they had come through.

“*Well, Doc!* You can *mix* it a bit, eh?” said Jack smiling, and with a good on ya’ look on his face.

The Doc laughed a little, and said, “Yep, I can mix it a little.”

“You know all this spiritual change is magnificent, but it’s good to have a little of the ground in you, eh?” offered Jack.

“I think so, Jack. Balance and flavour. There is value in the essence of *all* things; no doubt.”

“No doubt,” reinforced Jack.

“But you know, Jack, spirit is more real, and The Department does good work.”

“Sure, but I didn’t mean the physical ground, I was also meaning more of the foundational aspects of spirit. You know, like to me, courtesy is greater than prayer. Love is greater than even the outcome of the work because, without these, there is no real glue, no real spirit. It’s *how* we act that counts, and what motivates us. I have seen that where there is no love and respect, then all that is gained can’t hold together.”

“Well, Jack, you surprise me. Where have you been to learn this?”

“It was at home. You know in the work there; the work of my Faith.”

“Courtesy and love are part of the spirit of the work, foundational, no doubt, but all aspects are important and provide a balance. Just like, say, study and action do. One without the other is lesser. But the structure of the work is required too and rises from The Message, and those of The Department work the animating or structural spirit of the order of things. Spirit *is* the structure, and the essence of life. They work to bring forth new civilisations, and you will know great happiness when the spirit of building a new civilisation finds you truly.”

“I get that from my Faith, it has given me real meaning.”

“*Has it, really? Do you understand your Faith? Do you see what it can do? Are you animated by the breath of the Holy Spirit? When you are truly animated by the Spirit of the Age and find yourself connected and purposed in the building of a new world, then you will know an abiding happiness. There is an energy in the work that does not exist elsewhere. Those of The Department are selfless souls, even if they have to be reminded of things occasionally. Courtesy can be forgotten in the necessity of the work, and their work is very necessary. Maybe I will take you somewhere, on the way back, which will make the value of their work clearer.*”

“I’m a bit full, Doc. Need some time to digest all this, and a whole lot more. It seems all too much at times, even though I do get bored quickly when I have taken it in.”

“That is the nature of it all, Jack. You know when it is enough, and you know when it is time to strive again. It’s very natural. Sometimes too, we are not as full as we believe.”

“I don’t know, Doc,” said Jack.

“I just believe it is good for you to see what I have to show you. You will have time to reflect. So, are you ready to go?” asked The Doc, putting out his hand to Jack, like a handshake.

“Sure, okay,” said Jack, not feeling sure at all. But he trusted The Doc, and put his hand out and clasped The Doc’s hand.

“You are going to love this part, Jack,” said the Doc, with a wide smile.

They turned into a double ball of light, joined together. Jack could see everything, and feel himself, and he was light. He *was* light! It was the most amazing feeling. He was light looking out, and as light, he could now see beyond the shadows of reality. What seemed so small was a wider, deeper, reality in truth. Jack could feel everything, and see everything, differently. There were deeper realities within realities, and his wonderment ballooned and burst, as he cried at the beauty, and laughed at the same time, in the sheer exhilaration and awe of what he was experiencing.

Just then, the plasma globe grabbed them, whipped them to it, and shot them out again. Jack had never moved so fast, even in that tunnel of light that he had travelled in all those years ago. This time he *was* the light, a golden light, and the depth of grace he felt made him cry in thanks for such a wonderful experience. He had never felt so whole and sure. It was impossible to explain.

They arrived on a wooden platform, in front of a steel door. Jack was surprised, as he thought all the doors were made of wood.

“Yes, it is steel,” said The Doc. He could read Jack’s mind now, and Jack could somehow feel his, or see his. Even so, they both continued to speak.

“This door needs to be steel. Behind it is Ward E. Brace yourself, Jack, it is a place of real loss.”

He believed The Doc. He had never been in a psych ward before, and although he knew it wouldn’t be very comfortable, he thought that after all his travels that he could handle it.

JACK JUST STOOD THERE. He had seen loss, and he had known loss. He had felt the wilderness of not knowing his own mind. He had known the powerful darkness of depression, and the torture of anxiety. He had experienced, at times, the loss of knowing what was even real. He had seen pictures of the skeletal figures of the liberated camps, after World War II. He had seen the starving children, and the face of a mother standing over the small round hole that held the body of her dead child, but it did not prepare him for what he now saw. There were millions on millions, hundreds of millions of souls, in a sea before him.

It was a sea of emptiness and pain, and most in it seemed oblivious of their state. He almost felt physically ill from the foul odour that rose from that place. It was less the smell, and more the hate, the drama, the deception, the endless talk, the loss, and the feasting on things so unnatural. Such was the negative reality of those in that gaseous ocean of souls; such was the endless talk, and negative thoughts, so disgusting was the endless ego, that he had to turn away. Among the throng were the Black Robes, and the White Robes. They were everywhere.

“Yes Jack, the two great evils of your world, dance among you,” said The Doc, as Jack turned back again. “Before you are the souls of the lost, of *your* planet.”

“*It feels so empty, it hurts.* I can *feel* the unhappiness and despair. I can feel the ego and the endless want.”

“The Robe’s influence grows daily. The intensity is growing exponentially now.”

“The Robes have visited me.”

“They have visited you many times, Jack. It is just that they are rising, and becoming more present, in your minds as their influence is pervades the world.”

“What are they?”

“They are *The World*, and *The Self*, Jack. The Black, and The White. They are everything in the world, that takes you from your higher self, and every trace of pride and ignorance that takes you away from learning.”

“They look like monks.”

“They embody what we choose to praise, besides God. The Black are the animal satiations and needs, lost in the human reality. The human reality is far greater than that of any animal, and so, it can take animal drives of fear and dominance to the very lowest places, and to more extreme places of excess. Much of the pain and madness you see in this throng is built on the expectations of the modern world. If it does not release itself soon, there will be many more to come to Ward E.”

“So, who are The Whites?”

“It’s not who, as much as it is *what they are*. They are only truly alive in the hearts of people, and they only live by The Creator’s mercy. They are every ideology that disregards another group and dehumanises them, ones that seek to force their ideology on others; political ideologies, some extreme religious ideologies, social and cultural ideologies, even intellectual arrogance, all the way down to the ignorance and unkindness born of one individual’s mistaken superiority over another. They are the arrogant. The ‘knowers’, so called, who will fight anyone who is different with words or bullets. It is all venom and hatred, and all very destructive.”

“Seems like it’s all about fear to me.”

“They *engender* fear too, Jack, but they are much more.”

“Why would The Creator allow such creatures to exist?”

“I don’t think they do exist as such, Jack. But their reality is existent, so that people can see and learn; so that the light may be made more apparent by the darkness. They only rise, because the light has been rolled back by men; as each person chooses to fall to the lower nature.”

“This is all from choice?” asked Jack, still not looking at the throng, but recalling what he saw. He just could not bring himself to look again.

“People have let these powers grow in the world. They are focused down, and just like Adam and Eve were given the choice of spirit or self; all humanity too has free will. This is the constant abiding test of life. This is the nature of spiritual choice, and when the world is falling into real darkness, a new Messenger is sent to reintroduce light. Otherwise, the chaos simply deepens. It is just the nature of the system.”

“So, we will *always* fall without this light. Surely, we can grow up.”

“Jack,” said The Doc, pausing for effect, “The Sun renews life, and brings life daily; every natural system loses energy and requires input. An increase in the light brings Spring every year, and the seasons, and all life on your planet, follow the increase and decrease of light. The kingdom of man, as separate from the physical world, requires the renewal of light too; inner light, every thousand years or so. Today is the new Day, the new Spring. The Sun for the human kingdom is *The Messenger*, and the light is the *Creative Word* and *other deeper forces* associated with it.”

“But...” said Jack, as The Doc simply continued.

“Humankind can definitely mature, and release itself from the same mistakes, but it is still in the throes of adolescence. *It is* reaching into its adulthood, and may eventually learn to act as such. Its life experience and historical memory are growing, but it needs The Beauty right now, to guide it there. It needs the Sun.”

“So, we *will* mature, but will we still need the Sun?”

“Yes. Just like a plant, humanity will grow, and flower, and fruit, when it reaches maturity, but it will always need the Sun and the Spring. These support life, evolve new life, and bring new fruits.”

“Wow, that’s amazing. So, if we are reaching maturity, and The Beauty has come, what is all this then?” asked Jack, finally turning back to Ward E, and pointing at the loss there.

“It is deep winter, Jack. The Light has only just started to increase.”

“Okay,” said Jack, understanding a little more the nature of his times.

“But the plant has to make the effort to grow. Even with the Sun coming, effort is required,”
finished The Doc.

“Okay,” said Jack, more seriously.

Earthbound

The wooden platform halted as Jack and The Doc reached one of the endless number of doors on the Seed's gigantic spherical wall.

"Is this your door, Jack?" asked The Doc, a little puzzled.

"This is the door I came through when I was locked up in my mind. I didn't come through The Seed to deeper, this time. So, your guess is as good as mine, Doc."

"Well, the Seed has brought you here, so it must be right. I will keep the portal open for a few minutes after you go through, just in case."

"Yep sure, Doc, thanks."

JACK HAD FOUND HIMSELF AT HOME THAT DAY, and for six months, he simply went to work, came home, did all the necessary things, and spent time reflecting on all he had been granted recently. He gently practised being more in his soul, and seeing through it, as he worked, and lived. He watched his mind, and emotions, and he became more aware of what was his animal nature

and what was his spiritual nature. This didn't make him very happy at first, as he saw just how much he lived in his lower nature and how much of his intent rose there, even actions he thought were spiritually driven. He could now see, very clearly, why he had struggled to get his spirit on the ground.

He also realised that he had tried to grow spiritually by using his mind and emotions. Also, how he had relied only on *his* mental and physical abilities in his life and for service. His heart had driven him, but he was still only using his lesser powers to see and do things. So now, during this time, as he practised living in his heart and soul more, his actions and decision making were changing. He sought more often the view of the higher self, began to sit more often in The Creator's presence, and would ask for *His* power and assistance.

He would seek inner guidance and learned to become be aware of which of his various aspects was talking at any one time; these being his heart, his soul, his emotions, his ego and the rest. But the clear understanding of his dual nature and where his intent rose, his higher or lower self, gave him real clarity. He also saw how his mind followed his intent and did not seem to be able to delineate which of these it was, that it just chattered.

It was like living in another world, for Jack. He had simply missed the point. Though he had known the rarefied atmosphere of the spirit, in reading the stories of his new Faith, in prayer, and in service before this time, he had failed to *be* or *live* in the spirit. He needed to think with, and act from his heart more, with his higher creature, and found that this *had* to be expressed outwardly. In words and deeds, and service to others. What was planted and nurtured inside had to produce fruits *outside*. It had to at the least be brought into the physical world. A spiritual life was not simply an inner state.

On most weekends he would wander on a mountain to the south of his hometown. There were a number of mountains there, spaced some miles apart, and he loved the drive through the beautiful countryside in and around them. This place felt gentler than his hometown; a place to be away. Maybe it was just the freedom he felt, wandering free in this soul place, or just getting away from the everyday grind. Natural places are places of the soul, and today, as he drove down through the mountains, he was happy, and light, and free.

Soon, he reached his mountain; a mountain with a very small and gentle town at its base. He would sit in the street there and have coffee, and muse on life. Then he would head up the mountain to get his dose of nature. He thought of Joe every time he sat down to have coffee there. He had certainly succumbed to the new opiate of the masses. We all enjoy our little pleasures, and Jack was no different. He knew that there was only a certain measure of this kind of self-care, and reflection, that was valuable to his soul. It like a work and rest balance, but more intricate. But right now, some reflection time, and some coffee, felt very right to him.

As he walked up the small main street, he remembered back to a whole year that he had once taken in reflection. He had not set out to do it, but it was just a time of ending, and a time for gathering. It was a time to reflect back on the previous eight years of his life, and now he realised that these last months, this time now, was another of these times for him. There are times at the end of the greater cycles of our lives, for tilling the soil of our being deeply, gathering the learning from the years that came before, and then, waiting quietly for the spring.

The chairs and tables of the coffee shop were outside on the footpath, and the people who ran the shop were very happy and very real people; good folk. Jack loved everything about this little place, and he had just sat down when Kai came up to him.

“Hello, Jack.”

“Hey, Kai!”

“So, what are you doing here?”

“I come down most weekends. I love coming down here.”

“It’s a beautiful area to live in. I feel very fortunate. So, you like it here?”

“Yes. *Love* it here. Heading up the mountain soon.”

“Can I join you?”

“Sure, take a seat.”

“No, I mean, when you go up the mountain. I have a treatment to give a lady.”

“That’s right, you’re a healer.”

“Yes, but I really call it a treatment.”

“So, how do you treat people?”

“I try to be holistic; diet, emotional rebalancing, and some essences. I’ve found reflexology quite powerful in healing, and I work on lifestyle too. The lifestyle of the modern person is so out of touch with our nature. So, I give what I can.”

“That’s great. So, will you be long?”

“About, an hour,” answered Kai, with her tone and eyes asking, ‘Does that suit?’

“Yep, great. I can handle sitting here for an hour. *No worries at all,*” expressed Jack, relaxing back in his chair.

“*Great,* see you then.”

“Yep,” said Jack, smiling.

Kai turned and headed down the street, and Jack watched her go. He was really happy about running into her and was just dying to spend time with her. “*Well mate, the happiness-o-meter has just kicked up, quite a few notches,*” he thought. He only realised just how widely he was smiling when Kai turned to look back. He felt like a bit of an idiot. *You are so cool, Jack,* he thought, as he chuckled inside.

He then cooled himself a bit, remembering that Kai was attached. Maybe he was just making life hard for himself, but he only knew he wanted to spend time with her. He believed that he had no choice, and with that thought, he got up to order some coffee.

LATER THAT DAY, KAI AND JACK WALKED THE MOUNTAIN TOGETHER. They walked around and explored, sitting occasionally to look out at the view. They talked as they went, and stopped for water, some fruit, and nuts. Jack had a backpack he liked to take with him when he went out for more than a couple of hours. He would fill it up with apples, water, dried fruits, and nuts, and always had a jumper in there too. He walked light, and never went out for more than a day. He liked going for a wander in the bush, then heading home emotionally refreshed and physically tired for a good night’s sleep.

Kai was a real nature girl. She was so at home and at ease in the bush. Her beliefs were spirit and nature based, and what she had learned from her life and in her travels. Jack loved her gentle ways, and the two of them talked on all kinds of subjects. She had different perspectives than him and he enjoyed these differences. After all, who wants to sit down with someone who knows what you know and sees what you see. People enjoying shared belief is lovely and like being with family, but Jack couldn't stand people talking and talking, but not acting or learning anything. To him, sitting around and sharing the endless details of your spiritual journey or sitting in self-congratulation of your shared beliefs was just another sad place in which to live.

Talking with her was so different to how he had been feeling lately. He could literally feel closed minds choking his being; whether at work, in his Faith, from people whining or pushing their own ideology, as well as stories on the news. He had really had enough of loud, egotistical types who wanted an audience, or worldly types who had talked most of the world into the false God of wealth, at the expense of true wealth. He really couldn't stand fundamental believers who believed only in a literal interpretation of parts of their faith, and those with social or political special interests who spat their ideology like poison. Some political ideologies now seemed to even rule the thoughts of the mainstream mind and were full of religious zeal. For these people, there was only one way, their way, and you were either a loser, naive, damned, or labelled something else that dehumanised you.

“You look pained, Jack,” said Kai, breaking into Jack's thoughts.

“Ah, sorry. No, I'm really enjoying being with you, Kai.”

“Your face is not saying that.”

“Just a little tired of ignorance and arrogance.”

“Do you see me as ignorant, Jack?”

“No, I’m enjoying our time together, and I love that we share our ideas freely without ignorance, or either of us trying to control each other, or push an agenda, ya’ know?”

“Yes. I know, and I am glad for it too, Jack.”

“It just seems to me, that we just need to accept that others think differently to us, and that being strong in what you believe doesn’t mean you have to shove it down another’s throat, or call them names, if they don’t agree.”

“Name calling worries you, Jack?”

“Not in itself, Kai; but people label each other many things, which devalues and dehumanises them to others. It might be calling someone fat, to derogatory names for another political ideology. It’s not just racism, it’s a general prejudice, and seeking control on so many levels. It’s destructive. But with you, we simply share, and have no need to judge.”

“Yes, it is nice. I like that about you, Jack. I like it that you’re passionate about your beliefs, and share what you see. I can hear it in how you talk, but you never make me feel mine are not respected.”

“It’s simply good manners; courtesy, and the world is too full of manipulation, and anger.”

“Why focus on all that *anyway*, Jack? Just relax and make the world a better place, because fighting darkness doesn’t work, or is a lot harder. Increasing light can send the darkness packing.

It *has* no true power. People have been led to believe that darkness is *too* powerful, *but it isn't*. It fears *any light* and gets driven back by the *smallest* amount of it.”

“Geez’ Kai, you are very hard not to like,” said Jack, smiling.

“You are too, Jack,” said Kai, with her face turning a little red, as she looked away.

“So, how do *you* chase back darkness, I mean how do *you* increase light?” asked Jack, having explored this subject before and wanting to know how she saw things.

“I do it with honesty and love, Jack.”

“How?”

“Honesty brings up the sun. It makes it clear where you are in relation to another, and it makes it clear to them.”

“I don’t get it, Kai.”

“All true communication, and true relationships, depend on honesty. Even if someone else is being dishonest, or seeking to manipulate, clear honesty from you turns the light on.”

“How?”

“It just does. That’s been my experience. Honesty has the power to lay bare the wounds, *and* the beauty, in someone, so that at least any wounds may be tended to. Honesty in a situation, and nothing less, turns on a light to see what’s wrong or what is truly possible.”

“So, honesty brings out beauty too. I get that, *I think*.”

“Honesty, and especially self-honesty, brings the true relative potential in someone out. If they are shy, or pretending to be something else, for whatever reason, their true potential cannot be brought out. Any group of people is the same, and any couple, Jack.”

“Man! Yeah! So, *it's light. Honesty* is light.”

“And it will cut through the deepest darkness.”

“I gotta’ admit, I’ve hidden away, but mainly because I wasn’t confident, or didn’t want to rock the boat. But you’re right...I haven’t brought out my potential, and I’ve stayed quiet or away from people mostly to keep the peace. But the frustration just rises from things unsaid and I get angry. The anger just towels me up inside or I end up popping and saying hurtful things. I’m getting there, but it is still such a risk with people.”

“Courage comes before anything. Humility comes before learning, but courage comes before knowledge,” finished Kai, with a smile.

“Man, I don’t have to walk in deeper places. I just have to hang around with you,” commented Jack, smiling back.

“They’re just things I’ve learned from life experience. So, what is this walking you do in deeper places?”

Jack looked back at her, unsure how to share his travels with her. He did not know her well, and she did not know him well enough yet to know his character. The stories of his travels were very real to him, even though even he could not be sure. He had shared these stories with others in

deeper places, and with specific people he came to know well in the real world. But Kai was different. Jack didn't want her to think he was just an idiot, or worse, mad.

"Come on, Jack," encouraged Kai, with a smile.

There was trust in that smile, and somehow a light that says, 'I'll be gentle. Don't worry.'

"Well, I have been places; *maybe*. I've met some amazing people, and they have given me so much insight."

"Where, Jack?"

"Inside, I suppose; *deeper* places. That's all I know really."

"So, you get contact from the other side?"

"No, Kai. Well, I don't know. I go to places. I find amazing things, and come to know some amazing, sad, and sometimes scary beings. It's very cool, but it can be a *little crazy*," said Jack, honestly.

Kai could see it in his eyes; his honest feelings.

"Tell me about them, Jack. I would like to hear your stories."

Jack just looked at her. She fell at no hurdle. She shone like the sun. Her word was true. She was strong and yet so gentle, and so his guard went down.

"Well, I met a giant once. He was a bit lost, but he was good to me..."

MICHELLE SAT OPPOSITE JACK, WITH A CHEEKY GRIN. The smile today was different. She had something on him; something new. He just knew it. She saw the look in Jack's eyes, and her smile widened. It was like a scene from a western at high noon, and he knew that she was quick on the draw and had plenty of bullets. He felt like he was standing on a dirt street, sweating in the hot sun. He was uncomfortable, and she could feel it. Gerty finished speaking, and smiled, as she knew something was afoot. They had been studying together for some months now and knew each other quite well.

"So, Jacko, what have *you* been up to, lately?" asked Michelle, with a bit of a look away.

"*Kai*," thought Jack. "*She knows about the time we spent together.*" "Oh, the usual," he then said out loud, working hard on his poker face.

"That's not what I heard. I've heard you've been up the mountain recently," suggested Michelle, with just a hint of accusation.

"I go up there most weekends," said Jack, knowing that he was already beaten, but enjoying the game.

"Oh, I heard that you have company, and with a particular creature that was not a kangaroo *or* a koala."

"*Really*, my memory is bad. You'll have to fill me in, Michelle."

Gerty went off to make a cup of tea, as it was about time to break for a cuppa', and just as she left the room, Michelle piped up, and said, "Spill it, *Jack*."

"Well, it's lovely, actually," admitted Jack.

“She is a lovely girl,” offered Michelle.

“But, taken. I know. It’s great just spending time and talking with her. She has some real depth, and lives true to who she is, eh.”

“Yes, she is a very caring soul too,” said Michelle, with that cheeky smile beginning to re-emerge.

Jack saw it, and a confused look raced across his face. He was caught off guard, and although his poker face followed quickly, it was not quick enough. “*Damn, she’s got something else,*” he thought. Then, he saw the fun of it all and laughed, and Michelle laughed too.

“So, what have you got on me, girl?” asked Jack.

“She’s not with that guy anymore. She moved out, and lives near the mountains now.”

“*Really,*” said Jack.

“*Really,*” repeated Michelle, with a smile and raised eyebrows.

“Feel sorry for the poor bugger she left. I know what that feels like.”

“Oh, Jack. *Are you kidding me? That’s* what you get out of that?”

“Yep, among other things.”

“You’re not sad about that, Jack. Don’t lie to yourself, and me. It’s *great* news for you.”

“Hey, I feel both, Michelle.”

Michelle could see the various thoughts come and go across his face. He looked down in thought as he wondered what the right way was to see this. Part of him was elated, yet another part could not be joyous at the expense of another. He also knew that people required time to reflect and re-find themselves after a breakup, he did not want to get in the way of Kai's process.

“Jack, your face sure makes you an open book.”

He just looked back at Michelle, and made a ‘Well, you know’ look, as he shrugged his shoulders.

Just then, Gerty called out that the water in the jug had boiled and that they should help themselves to tea or coffee. The two friends got up smiling at each other, and Jack did a pretend punch to Michelle's shoulder. This escalated into a short pretend wrestle as the two walked into the kitchen of the modest home, much to Gerty's amusement.

They all then had some tea, scones, and some good belly laughs. There was plenty of good material for Michelle now that things were out there, and Jack being a man, well equality aside, was never going to win with two women on his case. It made for some real fun, and the news that Kai was unattached just added to the happiness now assailing Jack.

The Anvil

Jack stood there not knowing what to do. This dream was strong, and he could feel the primal animal energy coming off the black robed creature that sat on a rock before him. It had its back to him, and he wondered if he could get away without being noticed.

“It’s bad manners to come from behind someone, boy,” said the creature, slowly, and with no fear. It was almost said as a threat, and with the confidence of this creature’s ability to see any danger on its way.

“Sorry, I just got here,” said Jack, not really sure if this was a dream, or where it was.

The creature laid back its hood and started to turn. Jack’s heart skipped a beat or two, and he held his breath. He had not seen a Black Robe unhooded before and was quite concerned. As the creature turned, he could see that he was a big, very unkempt, man with his hair tied back into a ponytail. He was about a foot taller than Jack, which put him just over seven feet tall.

“So, what brings you to my door, boy?”

“Umm . . . don’t know,” said Jack, leaning sideways a little, ready to run or fight if he had to.

“Well, I am glad ya’ did. Good to have a little company. I’ been feelin’ the wailin’ of late. Been drawn here and waitin’.”

“The wailing?” asked Jack.

“Yep, creatures like me, feel the wailin’ before a big eatin’.”

“A big eating?”

“Things are comin’, I can smell it. It’s not looking good for this place. First, you feel the wailin’ of the people, and it is a load to bear, let me tell ya’.”

“Who are you, and what is coming exactly?” asked Jack, trying to understand.

“Death is coming, boy. I’ve been drawn here by the promise in the wailin’. It always comes like the heat before the storm. I’ve been waiting and eating. I’ve eaten the fear fed muscles, and tasted the pain fed offal, of men. I can feel emotions like a scent of the air, and there is a lot of pain in the wind.”

“So, you eat people?”

“Yep, I am Death.”

“You aren’t a Black Robe?”

“Those losers! I don’t think so. Call me, Reaper.”

Jack just shook his head and smiled. “I’m Jack.”

“Pleased to meet you, Jack.”

“So, you eat people?”

Reaper looked at Jack menacingly, and said, “Not fussy, Jack, any beast’ll do.”

“I thought The Reaper was all skeletal looking.”

“What! The way we eat; not likely. That just wouldn’t make sense. Hell, I ate a whole mess of Africans today, and a lot of Arabs. Those Arabs are gamey, and I like gamey, but Americans...now there’s some good eatin’. They just suit my palette somehow. They’re tender and have a lovely high fat content. Just right, mmm mmmmm.”

“So, are you gonna’ eat me, big man?” asked Jack, with a cheeky smile and his legs ready to run.

“Australians are a bit stringy, but the new ones are softer. They’re getting there. You’d be a bit stringy, Jack, but there might be some good eatin’ there. Had me a few of you folk,” explained Reaper, trying to make Jack nervous. He smiled, and added, “Of course, I can’t eat you, Jack. You’re not dead. But, I had you on the ropes a bit, eh.”

“Well, the old ‘run for your life’ thing was running through my mind.”

“You are in a funny place, Jack. You’re between worlds, and spread over places, but your sweet meat ain’t dead. I can smell your meat, but you ain’t there, somehow.”

“I don’t know where I am, mostly.”

The huge man-creature smiled, and said, “Yep, well that’s the nature of growth, Jack. New ground all the time, and more challenges. You’re where you’re supposed to be. The Creator doesn’t make mistakes. You can lay a foundation on that.”

“Yeah, I am happy to roll with it. All this jumping around does give me a lot.”

“So, your jumpin’ has brought you here. I wonder what brings you to me.”

“Now, that’s a good question,” said Jack, nodding, and with a vacant look on his face.

As Jack was speaking, Reaper pulled something small and wooden out of his robe. It was the carved wooden totem that Brig had shown him; two snakes, one winding up, and one winding down. Jack looked at the totem, and then cast his eyes up to Reaper’s now smiling face.

“You knew I was coming,” charged Jack.

“Hell, yes. I can smell meat from across worlds and came for the eatin’, but I was summoned to this particular spot, for you. Sometimes I get to educate certain souls; fit it in around my other duties. Seems you need some educatin’, boy.”

“So, the Totem?” asked Jack.

“It is life and death, Jack. It’s the spiritual nature and the animal one. Each is a part of life. It is also the spirit’s rise, and the animal’s demise. It represents the soul’s choice; spirit or animal; courage and growth, or fear and death. This Totem is so many things, my friend.”

In that sudden moment, Jack’s deep beliefs in The Beauty came together with Brig’s. It bound them together inexorably in his soul. He was not of this people, and never would he be, but the essence of the spirit of the People of the Land swamped in, and he felt its power.

He had never realised how powerful it was. He thought it had been fractured and was weak, but its deep and strong presence struck him. It was like he was feeling the weight of the land, the ancientness of the land, and the great age of the Ways of the People. Some of the symbols made him uneasy, as he saw Woman and Man, and their nature; and in those symbols, he also saw a powerful, yet simple way to show the complexity of all life.

Many vivid visions came immediately to his mind, and yet strangely, it felt like he was dreaming them for over a month. The first two visions were very powerful and seemed to be the mother and father of those that followed. He saw eggs jiggling in a waterfall that was bathed in sunlight, hearing the burble of water over rocks and the voices of women giggling nearby. In the second vision he saw the red country, and the deep shadows of night, and he saw the stark symbol of men. There was language too, and it was like listening to the joyous warbling of the birds of the bush. The People of the Land understood the power of language, as it had passed down law, story, wisdom, and song lines for over sixty thousand years.

As Jack came back to awareness, he had found a people of language, felt the great presence of an ancient culture that lived in the power of its longevity, and somehow also gathered a deep connection with the land. He now just stared at the Totem, to remember it, as he was sure he would see more of its meaning wherever he went. He knew something as essential as this would have meaning in so many things. Another essence that came to him clearly after this experience was that, in the end, we are all one people, that the core of all belief is one. But that race and tribe would be washed away in the tides of time; or more so come to be one, while still many, and that the time of a single humanity was surely coming.

It had seemed like Jack was away from Reaper for a long time, yet for Reaper time had not passed at all.

“So, make the most of your life, Jack. I will be comin’ for you. Better a physical death than bein’ a spiritual ‘dead man walking’,” finished Reaper, on the subject of human life.

Jack gathered himself, left all thoughts aside, and returned to the here and now. “Yeah...For sure, thanks,” responded Jack, as his eyes slowly moved from the Totem again, and regarded Reaper. “So, you eat people, eh?”

“I eat the physical body that’s left behind. I ain’t so scary. I’m only scary to those who haven’t made the spiritual effort. You see, I am the messenger of joy. I am the release of the soul, the gatekeeper, and the clean-up crew. It all works for me.”

Jack smiled, and asked, “So, where is your scythe? Isn’t that part of the clean-up equipment?”

“I haven’t got a scythe. Just good chompers,” said Reaper, and as he clicked his molars together, the earth shook.

Jack lost his feet for a moment, then found them again, and smiled at Reaper’s enjoyment of the situation. “What about reaping souls?”

“Well, boy, that is where people sadly miss the point.” Then pointing to the horizon, he then added, “There are answers on the top of that mountain; if you care to wander there.”

“I care to wander there, mate,” said Jack, confidently, always thirsty for an answer.

“Good man; so, I’ ll be seein’ you,” said Reaper, with a look of ‘Really! I will!’ on his face, and then a smile.

“Yeah, I suppose you will,” responded Jack, with a broad smile.

“No fear of death. That’s a good start.”

“Thanks, Reaper. You were right; you aren’t as scary as I thought Death would be.”

“Not ’til I’m chewin’ on your bones, at least,” said Reaper, with an ominous look, and they both had a smile at that.

IT WAS A CLEAR SUMMER’S DAY, IN THE MID MORNING, and the air around Jack seemed more real to him here at the mountain. Just then, he began to feel that crack in his mind again, the one he could not peer through, and a particular sadness came to him. He could not gather its meaning; he just felt a strong need to get through and find what lay beyond. It was terrible not knowing what this feeling was all about, and his frustration rose, and rose, until the crack mercifully left his mind again.

The deep feeling of concern left with it. He had not forgotten it, but it was just suddenly, not prominent anymore, and less urgent somehow. Part of him railed at his own seeming disinterest, and another part accepted it as a mystery, so as not to crowd his mind with endless maybes and guesses. He trusted that when it was time, he would see. Trust can settle the soul and allow the emotions to follow.

As Jack climbed on, he had a feeling that the ground he walked, was ground his feet knew. He was thinking of how this place felt more real than a dream, when a regular metal sound came to his ears; a slow rhythm that stopped occasionally, and then started up again, and again. It was steel on steel, and as it shared its familiar ring with the air about Jack's head, it reminded him of a drumbeat.

When he reached the top of the mountain, he found some flat rocky ground, with trees. He heard the sound coming through the trees and headed off in that direction. Soon, he came through into a clearing. There, on the edge of the mountain precipice was an old wooden dwelling. The building sat right on the edge but had no outlook towards the view. On the land side of the building, was a large strong open walled shed. It was open on three sides, built of solid wood poles, and had an almost flat roof that was higher than the dwelling it adjoined.

The steel-on-steel sound came from a blacksmith beating steel on an anvil. The strong light of the day almost hid the licks of fire in the brick pit to his side. He seemed to be shaping something, and he was oblivious to Jack, it seemed.

"Hello," called Jack loudly, but the hammer blow muffled his call. "Hello," he called louder, but strangely, the next blow was louder, and again, it muffled Jack's words. "Hello!" he yelled as loud as he could, but again, the blow was louder and synchronised with Jack's words.

The huge Black African man kept on, and after more blows turned to look at his work in better light. He looked at Jack, and his face and body language turned very serious. "Who are you, and why do you come here?" he asked, almost shouting, and making it clear that Jack should not be there.

“I am Jack, and I am...well...I met this Reaper guy...”

“And!” said the man, menacingly, as Jack stumbled to explain quickly.

Jack was still computing through the fear, when the man said, “White people and their endless details. Relax, Jack.” A huge and quite amazing smile then appeared on the man’s face, and was it about an African smile that just lit the world?

“Jeez’, you have me at a real disadvantage,” charged Jack.

“And I will ask of it, all of the joy that I can,” said the blacksmith, with his smile widening. He spoke slowly, like the old man in the library.

Jack had always loved hearing African’s talk; slow and less fluff, real, and measured. He smiled, and the man’s smile lit up more. In the man’s hand was a scythe.

“So, you have the scythe?”

The man smiled again, and Jack finally realised that this man had already called him by name. This guy and Reaper had to be tight.

“You knew I was coming, too,” stated Jack.

“Do you know that many wait for you?”

“Me?” asked Jack.

“We are all to be in each other’s lives, as it is written, and as we write. We all have lessons and wisdom for each other. The system is alive, and while much that we ask for may come, yet so much more will come, no matter what.”

“It sure is like that.”

“We must be very careful what we ask for, and truly, life is an anvil.”

“I get the rest, but you’re gonna’ have to explain the anvil part.”

“We all have our own scythe, and we all have the anvil. The hammer is our effort, and the anvil is life’s unyielding nature, the scythe is what we reap with. We cannot reap the powers of the soul without a sharp blade, and we cannot make a sharp and strong blade without a stone and heat. We cannot beat the scythe to the best shape without the uncompromising nature of the material reality, and the fire of life. We cannot grow without the anvil. It is a gift that many believe gets in the way of their dreams and expectations, but without the heat of the grindstone, and the unyielding anvil, how can we make the scythe?”

“Yeah, sure. Okay. It’s all a gift,” said Jack, enjoying the wisdom that was flowing out with this man’s slow and steady words.

“Struggle allows us to find deeper wells of love, justice, courage, acceptance, compassion, humility, and contentment; these and many more. The struggles of life have been likened to the ‘assault of a serpent’, in the Creative Word, yet it is in these attacks that we rise higher and discover what is deeper. They also create more times of awe and bliss in the realisations gathered after the storm. From struggle we may also appreciate much more the times of nurture between the work of the anvil, and the storms that must come to bring the water. All is good.”

“I’ve been on a journey that seems to be about happiness, and my ideas have been turned on their head. There is so much; from thoughts to spirit, from living in the detachment in our soul to living on the ground in the struggle. Where are we supposed to live?”

“We are spiritual creatures, and can simply decide to be happy, no matter what. No thought or contrivance can keep happiness in your grasp, or if you seek it outwardly and are emotionally attached to the world. Detachment is a key to happiness, but so are acceptance and courage when The Hammer crashes down on your life and seeks to shape you more. There is no spiritual power, or virtue alone, that is best, all are required. All can be grown between the hammer and the anvil.”

“So, hardship is a fact of life. The way to a grown soul, and we might as well get used to it, eh?”

“A fact of life that many face daily; facts the wealthy seek to sidestep. Those focused on the material, do not share easily, yet many good people with very little, work the anvil, give of themselves, and are content.”

“What stops us, fear, ego? I mean not wanting to face the anvil?” asked Jack.

“Yes, fears, and concern that our wants and desires may not come to us. Living for wants and desires alone, is the life of the walking dead. A truly grown soul knows that all life is grace, mercy, and succour; that material expectation is the enemy, and that humility, acceptance, courage, faith, and trust are the great allies in life against the anvil. But the truly wise know that challenge, service, and sacrifice are happiness.”

“So, we choose safety, or an easy way, when we should choose the anvil? But surely, some comfort is not such a bad thing?”

“There are endless gifts, and flowing streams in the material reality of life, and we should enjoy them and partake of their gifts, but the true abundance of this life is the fruit of a mature

soul. We can only find abiding happiness by living in the spirit; not trading it away for the baubles, and the short-lived joys of the material world.”

“Okay, that’s the trade off,” said Jack.

“More and more people assume all their wishes will come true, and life will always be gentle. It is impossible. It cannot be so. Just work on your blade, and know there will be heat and effort required, and if you can come to see beauty and perfection even in the deepest pain, then you may be happy always. As you live, you will see.”

Jack suddenly found himself high on the mountain that he always visited. He was on a ledge that could be accessed from the steep pathway that wound up the mountain. The ledge was a natural place beyond the trees where you could see out. He was not at the top of this mountain, but here he could gather the fullest scope of the town, and the land beyond. As he now looked out over the township below, he saw a life to be lived; a life to be chewed on, yet released from in spirit.

He now knew that happiness was a state of mind, or soul. He saw clearly the value of the anvil on which we shape our character, and he also knew that he just had to decide to be happy; to live, and to reap the powers of his soul. He didn’t think he could *chase* the hardship of the anvil *quite yet*, but he would no longer be afraid of it, or expect it not to be there.

Connection

It was a beautiful morning. Jack walked gently up the dirt road. The road was on very high rolling hills, so he could see a lot of sky, as well as look down into the fog-clouded valleys. He loved high places, and he loved the sky. He had found this road recently, walking it many times since that stormy night. His mind then wandered to Kai and what may be. It was a warm morning for August. Either winter was leaving a month early, or it had another blast of cold that it was yet holding back for later.

He wandered very much at ease today. The leaves and thin branches of the gum trees seemed to talk to him, and the grass that grew up on a high bank above him on one side, with its thin stalks and scarce seed, were somehow sublime up against the gentle morning sky. There was

spirit in the air; a rarefied reality that he had known in his service at times, when he studied the Creative Word, and other times when he reflected on the reality of things. He loved this feeling but had not felt it out in nature before. He had been given much by nature, but this was more; more than nature.

He wandered through what he called Willy-wagtail alley. They sang, as they knew him, and two gently flew right past his head, so close that he could feel the beat of their wings. They were not in alarm and simply going about their day. Jack looked down, and right beside his foot, was a quail just walking alongside him. He looked towards the grass and saw more, walking along the road near him. They were not hiding and chatting in the long grass, or flying off in fright, like usual. Today was different. Today was magical, and he breathed in deeply, drawing it into his being.

Just then, he saw a black sedan. It was parked on the verge of the road just up ahead of him. He had hardly ever seen a car on this road, and one parked here, extremely odd. The car was facing him, and as he walked closer, he could see two men in the car, in what seemed to be black suits and black sunglasses. It was just a little *too* strange, and Jack realised that he had fallen deeper without even noticing it.

The two men now jumped out of the car and started to run towards him. “Mister Johnston, please don’t be alarmed. We are here for your protection,” called one of them.

The intensity of their run increased, just as Jack felt a very dark feeling. He thought that these guys must be trouble, so he turned to run. But there in front of him, as he turned, were twenty or so Robes; black and white. He immediately turned back to the men.

“Quickly, Mister Johnston, with us,” beckoned the other man, with a quick wave as well.

Jack ran for the car. One man was back in the car fast, and had it started just as Jack and the second man tumbled into the back seat. As the car started to go, and turn away from the Robes, the door was suddenly ripped open. A terrible feeling entered the car, and a strong grip took hold of Jack’s arm. But the man in the back with Jack was *smiling* as he pushed a short staff into the chest of the Black Robe that had a grip on Jack.

“*Bye, bye,*” said the man, as the end of the staff discharged a white pulse that blasted the air with what seemed to be light. The light was like a pulse of energy, or a gust of vibration, that sent the Black Robe flying backwards in the air.

“That’s it! *Move!*” called the man in the back, just as the car finished its turn, and with a shower of rocks and dust, they sped off down the road.

“Love this stuff, eh,” said the smiling Agent.

“Those Robes give me the creeps, man. *You* can have them anytime,” expressed the other Agent, who was driving.

“I’m with *you*, mate,” said Jack, indicating his agreement with the driver.

“You have seen plenty of action from what I’ve seen on your files, Mister Johnston. I am sure you can handle a few of *those* guys,” said the Agent, beside him.

“No. *Not really,*” said Jack, with a look of pure cowardice on his face.

The agent pulled out some gum and chewed on it. Then looked out the window, as he relaxed back in the seat. “Well, maybe you can, and maybe you can’t, but you are definitely running too loose, Mister Johnston. Maybe you need more *regular* company.”

Jack didn’t know if he liked that idea, but he was sure glad that these two turned up when they did.

“You’re just swinging way too high and wide, and you are making some people *very* nervous. These Hoods, well, they like you a little too much, and they sense when someone’s alone. They’re way more powerful when folks are by themselves. Anyway, there’s a lady who wants to see you. She thinks she can help.”

“Who?”

“What kind of secret agent would *I* be if I told you? *Need to know*, Mister Johnston; *need to know*.” With that the Agent looked out the window again, and added, “For a guy who has seen what you have, you sure are *not too clever*.”

The man driving laughed, and said, “He’s just playin’, Jack, but you do have to see the lady.” With that, he accelerated, and with a blur of light they were gone. Only the cloud of dust from the dirt road remained.

All Things

“Well, *Mister Johnston*,” orated The Judge.

“*Oh, God*,” said Jack.

“*He* has nothing to do with it, Mister Johnston. *It’s all about you*,” she said, as she shot wonderfully acted, wide open, sarcastic eyes at the gallery; or as Jack was thinking, the audience. “So, *still in trouble*, eh? Well, I suppose your sentences were *so* tragic, that you would *have* to be struggling.” The Judge swung her arms wide, in a great dramatic style, as she continued, “I mean, the *drama* that must be playing out in your head.”

“He is here for sumthin’ else, Ma’am,” explained the agent in charge.

“Well, who have we got here?” said The Judge, as she shot a come-hither look at the agent who spoke.

“Ma’am, the people who sent us would appreciate you getting about the business at hand, as we have other places to be. We are on a tight schedule, and there is still a clear and present danger.”

“All *business, eh?*” said The Judge, followed by a deep inward nasal breath, as she tilted her head forward, while throwing another set of big eyes from her repertoire at the agent; ones of the more alluring kind. This agent had been in her court many times before and did not react outwardly.

“*What a shame,*” she said, with some emphasis, yet more gently, as she turned her attention to the file on her desk. “So, you are with us for *sumthin’* else, Mister Johnston.”

With the ‘*sumthin’*’ came a rolling chuckle from the gallery. The Agent’s eyes moved to the gallery and back to the job at hand with real discipline. The quip did not move him to any form of self-concern, or humour, on the matter. He was seemingly focused on Jack’s protection.

“*My goodness, Mister Johnston,*” said the Judge, still perusing the file.

“I’ve dealt with my sentences. I understand them and I can see them and where they come from. The agent has attested that this is something else,” stated Jack, defensively.

The Judge looked up with a smile, a very kind smile. “Yes, you have, but there are always more. One needs to reflect daily,” offered The Judge.

“Yes, I get the reflection thing.”

“Now, onto what you seem to have *no clue* about,” she said, as she burst out laughing. The gallery followed, the whole place erupting, but the Agents stood unmoved. They were not at ease, and one shot a look at The Judge to ‘get on with the business at hand’. The Judge shot back, the ‘okay then’ look with a little shake of the head, and more big eyes for him alone.

“So, what am I here for?” Jack then asked, very calmly.

The Judge looked at him, and said, “You *have* grown, Jack Johnston, but there is *endlessness* ahead of you. Why should *you not* be back here? We need to bring ourselves to account and be accountable. But, getting back to matter at hand, true responsibility is to keep learning; responsibility to yourself, community, and all life. I am talking about connectedness and your responsibility in it.”

Jack let the word enter his soul, and a knowing of how big connectedness was, followed it. He saw that he was one thing, within *all things*, and looked up with a smile at The Judge.

“Yes, Jack. *Beautiful* isn’t it; All Things. Most can’t feel what it is that easily, but even if you do see it intuitively, you still must do the work to truly understand its nature and become more of it. The process is endless because All Things is beyond you.”

“So where do I go to do that?”

“You don’t have to go anywhere particularly. *You*, sir, need to grow more meaningful connections in the life you are granted.”

“So, more work and learning, eh?”

“Always.”

“So, where from here? I mean this is not sentences,” asked Jack.

“Weren’t you *listening*,” expressed The Judge, with a turn to the side and a big side glance to the gallery. “Connection is in every small interaction and act wherever you are. *Connection*. *Meaningful* connection with others. Actions of love,” she added, with another look of love shot at the Agent.

“So, not sentences.”

“No. But do remember that your thoughts are sentences. Your thoughts are prayers, and the paintbrush of your life. There are always better thoughts, prayers, and intentions. There is always a deeper understanding of our being, and its reality, for them to rise from. There is also always greater connectedness. You need to make connectedness more real in what you do, and how you live.”

“So, where do I go first?”

“*My God*, you are smarter than this. Why do you keep asking the *same question*?”

A look of shared understanding passed between the Agent and The Judge, both asking for, and receiving, the message that the Agent had some work to do on this with Jack after they left the court.”

“Oh, I just have to get connected,” responded Jack, finally.

“*Yes*. Your two new *friends* may have places to take you, but you simply have to connect and be of service to your kind. You must learn to *actually care* about people and act to make the world better for all humanity. Your world is in decline. Your world is unhappy. Your kind is largely disconnected from the Great Spirit, and the earth, and the rise of individualism is destroying all connectedness. Chaos and death follow on the heels of this level of breakdown and separation. It will take nothing less than a reconnection with all things; The Source, His Light, each other, the earth, and all created things.”

“Okay. *Small* job then, eh?” said Jack, with a cheeky smile.

“Time to go, Ma’am,” said the Agent, smiling at The Judge.

There was something else in that smile, beyond the enjoyment of Jack’s little overstatement, and The Judge gathered it.

“A job that is not *just* yours, Mister Johnston,” she said, smiling back at the Agent. “Know that every small act is powerful and it’s more about all of you pulling together,” she added, bringing the gavel down on the desk.

THE BLACK CAR SPED DOWN A LONG GUN BARREL HIGHWAY. They were in the desert. It reminded Jack of the western country he knew, but this was another place. The natural stone sculptures in this place were very particular. Every place on earth had its own shapes and spirit.

“Where are we going? Why this place?”

“*Secret* Agents, Jack. *Secret*.”

“C’mon, spill the beans,” prompted Jack.

A smile came across the Agent’s serious face, as he said “We are keeping ahead of those robed freaks. We are keeping close to you, and searching for any place they find harder to break through to. They have come close to the surface before. What lives in people’s hearts rises to the world of being; but this time, they followed a certain someone. They used *your* pathways, Jack.”

“*You are the way*. That’s what they said,” said Jack, coming to realise his place in this drama.

“Yep, you *are* the way, Jack,” said the Agent, looking out his own window. He had looked away because this was not the whole story.

“Have they turned up in other places I’ve been? Are any of my friends in danger?” asked Jack, concerned for his new friends, and the people he had met deeper, very unhappy that he could be a cause of such trouble.

“We don’t know. It’s a bit new to us.”

“What about The Doc? I travelled through The Seed twice.”

“Don’t worry about The Doc, he can look after himself,” said the Agent, who was driving. He glanced back at his partner, and they shared a ‘that’s for sure’ look, and a somewhat hidden secret agent nod.

“So, he *is* special, The Doc? He turned me into light, you know,” said Jack.

“The Doc can do some wild things, but he can’t change your state. You are the being you are, Jack,” explained the Agent, in the back seat with Jack.

“*Really*, mate, I was *light*. It was *rock and roll*, I can *tell ya*’.”

“Rock and roll, what would we do without that, eh, Agent?”

“*Rock and roll*,” added the driver.

“You guys are not going to get me off the subject. I *was* light. *Light!*” finished Jack, to make his point.

“You’re deeper than light, Jack. It’s just an expression of your reality. It’s a long way deeper for you guys. Your reality is available on many levels,” said the Agent beside Jack, now remembering something deep in his past, something that linked him to Earth of the Outer Realities.

“*Really!*” said Jack, smiling wide and eyes in awe.

“You pushed it, but that’s *all* you’re gettin’. *Secret Agent*,” finished the Agent, while making official his ‘*secret-agentness*’ by opening his coat to reveal a gold badge with a star on it.

Jack knew from his tone that he had gotten all he was going to get from these two, and it was enough for now. He could now at least see the shape of the situation. He then felt a feeling of dread, deep in his gut, as he woke up to the fact that the Robes were coming for *him*. He was not at ease as he sat in the back seat looking out the window, but he was glad that he had the Agents to help him. Being connected was growing in importance already.

“How about that Judge, eh?” commented the driver.

“Yep, she is one crazy, deep woman,” agreed the Agent in charge.

“I think the feeling was mutual,” said the driver, as the Agent in the back with Jack looked out the window to hide a smile.

“*She’s a mad woman*. Well, mostly. You were really solid with her and kept her in her place though. So, I don’t get it.”

“Like she said, you don’t get connection yet.”

“If you like her, then why so cold?” observed Jack.

“Hell, Jack, is that what it looked like to you?”

“Well, yeah.”

“Well, it wasn’t, and anyway, don’t want to come over all excited and needy. It ain’t attractive in a woman, and *in a man*, well, it’s *just sad*,” answered the Agent, smiling.

“*Just sad*,” repeated the driver.

“So, Jack, how’s *your* love life?” asked the Agent in charge, with a smirk on his face.

“It hasn’t been pretty, let me tell you. I’ve been in relationships, and even married. Just never been right or lasted. Why does fate bring two people together to fail?”

“Fate might have other priorities, Jack,” stated the man driving the car.

“Yep,” said the Agent in charge, “the core purpose of life is growth, and change is inevitable. Connection is definitely important, and *man* can you learn *fast* when you are up close and personal in life with a woman, but two particular people getting together is not the core concern of life.”

“*Fate might have other priorities*. Sure. That makes sense,” said Jack.

“There’s the gateway,” said the head Agent, pointing a huge rock structure that actually looked like a gateway. “Throw a left, and up five degrees thrust should do it. You’re going through, Jack.”

“Where is this place?”

“Need to know, Jack, but what I can tell you is that the connection with The Great Spirit was never lost here. You can thank the people of this place for that. It is one of the few places on Earth that those Robes can’t get to. We will be waiting for you when you come back through.”

With that, the car swerved away from the gate, and before Jack realised it, he was shot out the door, in a perfect trajectory towards the opening in the large natural stone gateway.

“Thread the needle. Nice work, Agent!” expressed to lead Agent, with a large, satisfied smile on his face, as he saw Jack hurtling through the air with his arms and legs flailing; not *at all* poised.

THE LADY OF THE GREEN STOOD BEFORE JACK.

“My lady,” Jack greeted her, in great surprise, and with deep affection for a lady he had once taken on a great challenge with.

“Hello, Jack. It is deep in my heart to be with you, and a great joy to see to your time here.”

They were in a place of light. It could have been in the great pyramids of light, or in the place of pilgrimage that he had visited all those years ago. The Lady of the Green was whiter now, but a beautiful lustrous essence of jade green shone in her light form. Jack could see that she had evolved greatly here, and he felt even further behind her progression than he did the last time they were together; when her intention of self-sacrifice had raised her people up. It would be a wonder if he could even relate to her now.

“To compare oneself is good in striving to be more sometimes, but only in that. In this place, we are more so, one, so simply walk with me,” she explained, and Jack remembered that all was shared at this level of reality, or at least much was. “So, we understand you are on a new path to consciousness. The good lady Judge was kind enough to inform us of your state a little. You see, there are many seeing to your growth. There is much coming, and we need you strong.”

“Who is, we?”

“The Department,” she shared, without words.

“Those guys are everywhere.”

“He is everywhere, and All Things; even though nothing could ever be Him. He is beyond creation. All emanates from The Creative Source; The Source of Love and Knowledge. The Department is wherever He Wills, and it sits within His plan, and creation; as do all things.”

He could feel the truth of her words, so allowed them in. The same reality and allusions were also explained in the Creative Word of his Faith at home. He had trusted those words too; he had learned by allowing these words in, and had found new vision from them. He also came to understand that many things that he had considered to be opposing realities before, actually fit together. He had seen so much more, by allowing them.

His life back on the earth had not only been travelled in the trust and allowance of the Creative Word, but he had also wandered through quite a few wastelands. Like us all he had followed his emotional attachments when his lower nature guided his steps. Sometimes there was a mix of higher and lower intent, but it all told in what came of things.

There were yet other times, where he had walked away from what was generally considered the pathway of his Faith; at least by those around him. His being would take him there, like he had no choice, and it would eventually lead him to a deeper understanding of the Creative Word and himself. In these cycles, he had kept his mind open as he travelled, and each time, he was given many gifts. At least, this is what he saw, and sometimes these detours were just a mistake, even while much was learned from the consequences. Interaction with those who were not of his Faith gave him understanding too, both in what was true and confirming, and in the contrast of what they thought and what he knew to be true. These interactions tested his understanding of himself, and his own beliefs. "God is All Things," he thought.

The light now increased in intensity, as he wandered deeper with The Lady. Much passed between them, and many mysteries were laid bare as Jack simply allowed the flow of inner vision. It was like The Lady passed on a truth, and he contemplated it. The contemplation opened a stream of knowledge that poured down on him or rose out of him; he wasn't sure, yet all were the gifts of a storehouse beyond his reckoning.

As they wandered deeper still Jack found himself floating in a cloud. He was like a child in a womb, and pure love poured into him. It was love beyond measure, and he remembered his life's journey, and he was deeply thankful. He had felt this love before, but here, so much of what he had struggled to see, now became very apparent, and he looked back receiving the knowledge granted from the years of his journey with The Blessed Beauty. As he floated there, in the feeling of the pure intense love of his Creator, he remembered that love was the very reason for his existence.

Jack renewed his connection with The Creator, in that place. He now understood that The Great Spirit, and this deeper world was within him, not outside him; and the more connected he was to The Source, the more he could connect with all things, as all was intimately connected to the Well Beyond Deepest.

“HEY JACK, MANN... SNAP OUT OF IT.”

Jack was lying on hard ground in front of the great stone portal that he had been unceremoniously shot through. The Agents were all smiles, but he asked them to give him some time to come back. He just wanted to take time to remember a little, and transition gently.

It was broad daylight and he lay there looking up at the sky. He saw the moon. It was more like the great spherical rock that sat in orbit around the earth, and far more real, in the daytime. It was there sometimes during the day; once you bothered to look. He loved looking at the moon in the daytime, and he lay there feeling the awe of his place within all things.

Boundaries

Jack could hear banging. He dragged himself out of sleep and walked to the front door. The Agents had brought him back from deeper and left him here. They told him that the plans had been changed when they received some information on a weak spot where the Robes might be trying to break through. They told him that he had some things to learn on the ground anyway, and that they would be back when it was best.

Jack was more than a bit anxious about the Agents leaving, as the last meeting with The Robes, when his two new friends snatched him away, was very different to the other times. He felt that they were growing more powerful, and they weren't asking anymore. The agents *had* assured him that he was safe for now, though, and because of the trust that had grown between them he had eventually accepted their assurances. He also trusted The Creator, and the magnificence of His designs. Connectedness, it seemed, was a builder of trust, and trust, a builder of connectedness.

He was glad to be back home in any case and was looking forward to the comfort of this gently changing reality for a while. It was the perfect place to shore up much of what he had learned. He also had a good deal to reflect on and needed time to absorb these recent experiences.

He also wanted to refer to the Creative Word, on many things, for more insight. Mostly though, he was looking forward to opening his inner vision and receiving more of the flow of understanding. He had not been so aware of how to use this *power of the soul* before his jaunt through the gateway. He was keen to allow it more, and to learn how to focus it.

He now opened his front door, and there she was.

“Michelle. Nice to see you,” said Jack, smiling.

“I know you would have rather it was *someone else*,” she said, with a nudge to his ribs.

“All the fish have been caught in that particular billabong,” responded Jack, smiling.

“Oh, I think there is still some mileage left in that old cart. I’m sure as hell not letting you off that hook while I can still watch you squirm, even a little bit. So, would you like to come for a drive with me? We can have lunch in the mountains and get into some more good discussions about life. Some of the stuff you come out with just isn’t normal, and *I love it*.”

“Oh, I assure you, I am *very* normal,” said Jack.

“You have something saintly going on, Jack.”

“*Oh God, don’t say that*,” complained Jack, feeling some real discomfort. Just now understanding how the lady Counsellor had felt. “You know, Michelle, I do have a drive to learn more, and I want to be more useful, but *don’t say that*.”

“Oh, come on. We all want to be more, spiritually.”

“I don’t want to be a saint. I’ll let the real saints do what they do, and I’ll watch the pretenders from the bleachers.”

“*Sure*, Jack,” said Michelle, sarcastically.

“You *sure* are annoying, Michelle. Let’s go for that drive.”

“Yep, let’s,” agreed Michelle, smiling.

In a short time, Jack was organised and was closing the door of his townhouse. He was glad to be going out with Michelle. She was fun, and real, and there are just some people you just fit with. He thought of others he didn’t fit with, and the dramas that had played out between them, and he realised that you either gelled with someone or you didn’t. Good friends were the easy souls to Jack. So, like peas in a pod, the two friends drove off toward the mountains.

JACK AND MICHELLE HAD BEEN DRIVING FOR OVER AN HOUR. They had talked about all kinds of things; from Jack kicking his toe, to Michelle talking about a good book that she had read. She said that she had felt drawn to the book, and it had given her quite a good deal of insight. Jack said that he had had that feeling with books, and even movies that had something to give him; providing something *particular* that he needed to understand. He also mentioned that there were certain people who gave him much, at different levels.

It seemed both felt guided and taken to the people, places, and books that could grow them; from the books of science to a visit to a psychologist, from amazing magical subjective experiences to new workmates who taught them more about something or challenged their beliefs. It did not

matter what these people believed, or what the authors of the books thought they were giving. Whether they were atheist, spiritualist, or whatever else; there were always special people with things to give.

They had also both talked about the energy they gained, the magical times and moments of great awe they experienced, while wandering and reflecting in natural places and in meditation on the Creative Word.

Jack just thought, “*All Things,*” over and over again, as these two friends had talked.

Just now, they were exploring what it was about the people they were struggling with in their lives, and just as they parked at the café, Michelle piped up and said, “It’s a duck, Jack.”

“No, I mean, I struggle with this person. Where the hell did you get *a duck* out of that?” said Jack, laughing, and Michelle joined in a bit.

“Let’s go and have something to eat, then I’ll tell you,” suggested Michelle, with a smile.

“Sure, this *should* be interesting,” said Jack, as they got out of the car.

There was a great view from this high vantage point of some mountains off to the south, as well as the endless wide green fertile valley they stood in. Many times, he had come here, and sat by the side of the road to take in the beauty for a while. He had come down to another community near this place a number of times, to facilitate the growth of the training courses, over the years. This road had been a lovely way to get there, as the roads wound gently on this route and the drive was beautiful and energising.

The two friends sat down after ordering, and Jack piped up immediately, “So, *the duck*. What is the duck?”

“No, *it’s a duck*,” said Michelle, smiling, and quite enjoying her momentary power over him.

He smiled. He didn’t mind that Michelle did this to him, but with others, it was maybe not so good. It was a matter of trust. Since his last journey, and his struggle with The Queen, he had been very cautious with who he allowed to hold any small amount of power over him. He was not even sure that The Queen even existed now, yet his being still cringed at the thought of the control she had exercised over him.

“So, hit me, Michelle.”

“You were saying how you struggled with that person, and that it was a continual drama, and then you say you are good friends. Well...It’s a duck, Jack.”

“You can be friends, even though you struggle with someone, and you can love people even if you don’t agree on things.”

“It’s...a...duck.”

“For God’s sake, just put me out of my misery!” pleaded Jack, smiling and begging, all at once.

“You are explaining a duck, and calling it an eagle, Jack,” said Michelle, more gently, and with a caring look on her face. “If it looks like a duck, waddles like a duck, and quacks like a duck; well, it’s a duck,” she finished plainly.

He just sat there, suddenly more aware, but already ‘buts’ were appearing in his mind. This would take some time and reflection because much of the Creative Word talked of deeper bonds of unity and love between souls. As he began to look back, he knew that he had failed sometimes to reach this high bar with people and had succeeded at other times, but mostly, he had failed. It came to him that while he had struggled, he *had* kept on close terms with people in an effort to reach the great goal of unity. But he definitely did not feel in his heart the genuine friendship he had with Michelle or Kai. He looked up at Michelle, with a pained look on his face, and said, “It’s a duck.”

“I knew you would get it,” said Michelle, smiling kindly. “You are a good soul, Jack. Kindness and caring are deep in you, and in how you give out to others. Your will to serve The Beauty, and the truth of unity, is more than obvious. But a natural friend is a natural friend. It’s not a judgement of someone who isn’t; it’s just the way it is. If they aren’t a natural friend, then it’s like mixing water with oil; you have to keep stirring it to keep it mixing.”

“So, you’re saying that only some are real friends?”

“Yep, but not as a charge that they must answer; more a way for you to see that there are levels, and relative realities. Unity is very important, and being patient and tolerant is essential, but seeing who your true friends are, and who your natural friends are, is okay too.”

“Doesn’t sound good putting people on levels of friendship,” said Jack, with a strained look on his face. “I mean, sometimes I *have* walked away from friendships, and other times they have fallen naturally, but I don’t want to be the arbiter of friendship worthiness.”

It was then like Michelle changed right in front of him. It was not magic or otherworldly in any way. It was just like her face took on the glow and demeanour of wisdom, and she said, *“There is a natural measure of depth in any one to one relationship. It is guided by the reality of each soul, and their progression. Each dynamic between souls is also unique. Sharing, in various aspects, may be deeper in one aspect or another, and it is less about reaching a place than it is about finding it. A deep friendship has to be a mutual depth place and cannot be enforced by the want of any soul. It is simply a reality of existence.”*

“So, what about challenges and what we learn from them? I mean, I have been challenged by some of these hard relationships, and I’ve been forced to see and grow some good stuff.”

“Allowing time and accepting challenge will show you the natural place. You can learn much, just as you said, but the natural boundary will remain. You will have learned more about yourself, but your natural feeling for this person will remain the same.”

“Are you saying, it is what it is, and there is no way to be closer?”

“Not without a lot of pain.”

“But pain brings growth.”

“Yes, it does, but it does not change the state of each person in relation to each other. Only someone working on themselves can change their state, and there are natural boundaries within the realities of all things. It doesn’t mean there is not love, or care, but it does mean there are natural time or proximity boundaries, naturally existent.”

“Yep, I know a couple of people like that. I love them and believe in their soul, but I can only handle so much of them. When they continually step across the boundaries I have, it just burns me up.”

“Stepping across boundaries continually leads to physical, time and proximity, boundaries coming as a natural consequence. Otherwise the struggle will continue, or at worse, suffering and trouble. There is also a line within us that cannot be crossed, even in deep union.”

“So, the boundaries are natural,” stated Jack, deep in thought, and reflecting over past experiences. He realised his relation to most people had not changed deep inside of him, no matter his proximity to them or time with them. What stunned him was that the feel he got for someone was immediate too. “There is some movement, as you make the effort and get to know someone though,” he said.

“Yes, in respect and love, but not in natural proximity. Only a change in the inner state may change that, and like seeks like, naturally.”

Even though his mind did not want to see it, Jack knew that it was true. He had to take another look at his perception of friendship, connection, and unity. He knew that there were other pieces to this puzzle, due to the call of The Blessed Beauty to the unity of all humanity, but he knew this piece was very real due to the evidence of his life.

“We allow closer who we wish, and when it is natural. It can’t be enforced from outside us or held together unnaturally for one or both person’s emotional needs. It is not sustainable and just leads to pain, breakdown, and sometimes, even illness,” finished Michelle.

“So, it’s a duck,” said Jack, in resignation.

“It’s a duck,” said Michelle, smiling, as the change fell away from her.

JACK COULDN’T SLEEP THAT NIGHT. There was a battle for the truth going on in him. Psychologists called it dissonance. Two thoughts that did not seem to align were competing for acceptance in his mind. He knew from evidence one was true, but his perception of the Creative Word seemed to wish it be disallowed.

Then, he allowed his soul its eyes, and he explained to himself as one would a friend. *“We have found many truths, Jack, and many things have only become apparent in time. Understanding continually evolves. Relax, and trust to time that our understanding of The Word on this subject will change to a deeper and more intricate view. The child at three will see things more simply, and more absolutely, than the adult. The truth is the truth, hold these seemingly opposing beliefs gently, and await new learning. Endless new evidence comes. Change is inevitable. Be patient and allow the process of learning.”*

With that, Jack relaxed and finally went off to sleep. The wider view from his soul had allowed the mind its rest. He sighed deeply, as he relaxed into sleep, glad that he could keep an open mind on all this. In his sleep, a dream came gently to him.

He was younger again and could not feel the tiredness that currently burdened him. The weight of it was less now, but it held on a little, even when he was wandering deeper or while dreaming. It never seemed to leave him, but here, Jack felt great. He was walking in a desert, and alongside a high rock wall that seemed to go all the way into the distance. Suddenly, before him was a short and very thin, man-like creature. His head was too large for his body. The man-

creature drove his small staff into the ground, but the ground was hard and had no soil upon it, so did not give at all. The stick created a crack, like a whip, when it struck the ground, and Jack found he could no longer move.

“That’s better. There is no passing here. The boundary is clear,” said the little man, obviously weak from hunger.

“You don’t look real well, mate,” offered Jack.

“Can’t say I feel well, but I surely feel better than when I was force fed.”

“Force fed, by who?”

“Her!”

With that, Jack was crash tackled from the side. The taller and larger, lady-like creature, had him on the ground with arms now latched tightly around him. “I love you soo much, and I will feed you, and you will love me.”

“Let me go,” said Jack, wondering what the hell was going on.

“No, you need feeding,” she pouted.

“Don’t agree to it,” said the little man, cracking the stick on the ground again.

The lady-creature jumped back off Jack, and said to the little man-creature, “You are so cruel,” as she started to cry. Then, she looked at Jack, went red in the face, and ran off.

“That was close. She will stuff you full of her emotions as quick as she can look at you.”

“She must be just lonely,” said Jack, feeling for her.

“Would you like me to invite her back for you?”

“No, no, it’s all good.”

“I thought so,” said the little man.

“So, what is the deal between you and her?”

“No deal, young man. Just can’t live on that side of the line.”

“But she has food, and you are really weak.”

“The price is too high, and the food is soiled. In any case, I just can’t eat that much, and she will not let up. I also need to be able to breathe. She just squeezes a fellow to death. The boundary has to stay.”

“So, you have nothing to do with her?”

“We talk at times, but it usually gets crazy, and there is time apart again. I am moving on though. I have had enough of the up and down, the constant to and fro. And like you say, I need a good feed.”

“I hope you’re taking a train, mate,” said Jack, with a smile, thinking this guy wouldn’t make it five yards from the way he was breathing. He was out of breath from just two cracks of the stick.

“What is a train?”

“You get on it with other people and it takes you where you need to go.”

“Sounds good, this train. Thank you. Please step beyond the boundary.”

“Sure,” and with that, Jack stepped forward.

“So, you aren’t so closed off.”

“No. A sad state I find myself in, I must admit, but anyone who respects and helps me is very rare in my existence. Many have said they like me, and then go about the business of getting what they want, no matter my boundaries. She is only the last in a long line of those who I have let in. So, I have built the boundary strong. We have the choice to build whatever boundary we wish, if fear is not our master and want is not assailing us.”

“Not good though, mate. You are stuffed. Sorry, but you just are,” said Jack, in kinder tones.

“Yes, I know. It is not good, but it is where life has brought me. To be alone is not natural, not healthy, and not good. There is no creature in existence that can live without connection. But too much has been taken from me, and things given to me have only been to hold me, so that more of what was wanted could be taken. You, my friend, offered only something that may be of use to me. Your words are only of concern for me, and I will wager if I ask you to mind your own business, you will.”

“Yeah, so.”

“You seek no power over me. You are welcome here.”

“Thanks.”

“Now, can you help me get to the train?”

“Sure. Maybe we can get something to eat on the way.”

“Thank you. I should like that,” said the little creature.

IT WAS STUDY DAY WITH GERTY AGAIN. Michelle had turned up with Kai. Jack had been so busy venturing, working, learning, and reflecting that he had not had a chance to call Kai. At least that is what he told himself. He was a little shy about it, and not real sure of how to go about things now that she was available. Luckily, or providentially, for him, it seemed that his good friend Michelle was trying to help gently with the connection.

The friends had spent some time talking, reading, and sharing perceptions of the book they were still studying. The conversation had again wandered naturally here and there. Jack had been talking a lot about boundaries, as right now, he was using anything available to him to understand this reality more. This learning space was as good a place as any to discover more. The ladies had talked about all kinds of scenarios to help make him more aware. They seemed to understand this reality very well, but it was new to Jack, and he struggled to grasp it. After some time in conversation Michelle could no longer take the gentle course with him.

“Ducks, ducks, ducks, Jack,” stated Michelle.

“You can’t expect things to be locked in place in this existence, Jack. Even though solid laws of existence exist, much is still fluid,” offered Gerty.

“Yep, good luck trying to keep people *in place*. Nothing is simple where people are concerned,” added Michelle.

“If you can’t stand ignorance, or understand that all of us are only learning, then you will never stand people. And people are life, Jack. Connection is life,” added Kai, gently.

Jack was quite concerned about just how unaware and stupid he was looking right now. If he could have sunk back through the chair right then, he would have been most relieved. It was mainly that his wish to be with Kai may be threatened now that she saw how blind he was. He had learned so much and yet confusion still reigned in him on this subject.

He now found himself sitting back with all three women watching him, and he naturally re-centred within the power of humility and acceptance. He let go of his ego’s attachment to Kai, and said, “So, what other ducks am I missing? Give me the *whole* flock.”

Michelle laughed and went for it with much gusto, and without any of the beauty and wisdom she had seemed to muster when they had talked in the mountain drive; not in her words or in her manner. “It’s like this, Jacko. If a person is a duck, you won’t hope them into an eagle. It is *their* place to learn. It is the Creator’s business, and theirs. He provides the people and the places, and we all learn. It’s not your place to learn for anyone, even though you might believe you are being of service. *And mate*, if they do not want to learn, you can’t help them. I know you want to help, but it is not your place. If they are a duck, they are probably meant to be a duck.”

Gerty was not very comfortable with the last part of what Michelle had shared. “To me, it is not about seeing ducks or eagles; it is trying to learn who *you* are and making *your* effort to grow *yourself*; to become an eagle.”

“To me,” said Kai, “people are people. They are the people in your life. Actually, they are simply *people in life*, just like you; and you *need* to care, but also respect. What I know deeply is

that we should live *in humility*, because we don't know the *true* state of another, and we can be very unaware of our own state *so* easily too. Only The Creator knows truly."

"Life is life, Jack," added Gerty, smiling gently. "You will give aid to some; you will not gel with some. Some will challenge you and others will nurture you. Some you will run deep with and some it will not be possible with. There are boundaries and there is connection, and the two interplay, and are part of the contrast of life in which we learn. The system is perfect,".

"I am starting to see it," said Jack.

"Gawd' I hope so, Jack," said Michelle, frustrated with his struggle to understand.

"You know, life is what it is. We should see it as a reality in which we learn to love more deeply, even if there are natural boundaries. I believe they are part of the reality, but I also believe that when a soul is developed enough that no boundaries will be required, or at the least, will not need to be enforced," added Kai, to continue Jack's learning.

He was quite taken by that. He could see that Kai wanted to be of aid to him, and she did so very gently. He felt a deep love for her and knew there were no boundaries there.

"I was given a view of the nature of *all things* recently, but I didn't notice the boundaries. We *are* separate, but we are *not separate*," said Jack.

"I told you there was something going on with him," said Michelle, to Gerty and Kai. "Spill the beans, Jack."

"I have shared a little with Kai, but I can't be sure if any of it is real," said Jack.

"Just get on with it, bucko," challenged Michelle, while Gerty stayed very silent.

“Well, it started a long time ago. I had a heart attack and I visited other places and have seen deeper things. The whole experience was very unreal, and I struggled for ground afterwards. It was a little much for my mind so lost it a bit at the time. That was my first journey. Now I find myself journeying in nether places again. The first journey was the search for truth, and now I’m discovering the nature of happiness. Happiness is none of what I expected, and this time, I’m drawn deeper and travel more easily.”

“Sounds like you are on drugs, Jack,” said Michelle, smiling.

“Sounds like you have things to share with us, to me,” offered Gerty, which silenced Michelle, and settled her to listen.

The respect for Gerty was great in her community; not enforced in any way. It simply was something that came with her depth and growth, but mostly her integrity, and the patience and caring she gave copiously to all.

“I have been places, but you ladies also teach me so much, and life has taught me so much. I am still learning.”

“Soo . . . let’s hear about all this other stuff,” chimed in Michelle again.

“I don’t know what to share,” said Jack.

“One thing at a time, Jack. Like you did with me,” said Kai, gently.

“Well, I suppose something that suits the topic was a visit to the place after this one. They called our life here, the *first life*, and they were free of all the blah blah of this place, and they treasured acts of love...Acts motivated by love, in which there was no reward for them. All the

understanding in the world about boundaries, personalities, growth or whatever else seemed of little account. When they talked of what they had given, their hearts lifted, and you could see the brightness in them.”

“Love is the essence. Maybe our struggle with each other, yet staying connected, is the proof of love. Another piece of the puzzle maybe,” offered Kai.

Jack looked over to her, and said “Yes, Kai. Another one, at least.”

He had a far clearer picture of boundaries now, and he drifted off into reflection. The pieces had mostly fallen into place as his friends had worked on this puzzle with him. He could see now that his visit to the life after this had changed how he perceived things. It shone a light on subjects other than itself and he only now thought to use it to understand other subjects like this. He could see that our *perspective* of this life changes the reality we see.

It was then, that Jack saw another puzzle in his mind; a *far greater* puzzle, like a huge 3D sphere that sat in the air in front of him. It was *the puzzle of life*, and it was his own puzzle. It was a see-through sphere, with see-through pieces. They were coloured and had endless layers. He could see some pieces set in the sphere, and many pieces missing, while others floated by. Somehow, he knew that even some of the pieces he had placed in the sphere weren’t quite in the right place, but they sat there. His understanding of his own lack of knowledge also meant that some pieces probably didn’t belong at all, and as he moved one piece around it moved and melded with others. He then tried to push one piece deeper into the sphere, but it would not go.

Many of the pieces that he had up there did not seem to fit with each other in meaning, yet they were there, and he knew they belonged. How they could be part of the same picture, he did

not yet understand. It was then, that he remembered how small we are, and how silly we are, thinking we could know the reality of all life and all its pieces. Then it hit him. We aren't supposed to see it all; that *not knowing it all* was the nature of the challenge of this life. It provided the offer of growth, and the opportunity to act in love, in this reality. Some of the inner puzzle pieces moved and melded, as he came to this realization...

He just had to trust the pieces and trust the process. He had to trust The Guidance and his experiences. It would all come together, in time. Not that it would stop him searching hard for more pieces, and working on the puzzle, but life itself would prove or disprove the pieces he had added. Their true position and relation would become apparent from evidence, from guidance, from effort, and through life.

Then, clarity came with two thoughts he saw deep within the sphere; that it was all to be found in simply taking *the journey*, and that it was acts of love that *really* counted.

The others had seen him wander off into reflection, and were wondering when he was coming out; *especially* Michelle.

"So, what else, Jack," said Michelle, cutting into his thoughts.

"*Secret*, Jack. *Secret*," came a voice from deeper. He looked around but could not see anyone. The Agents were not there, and the ladies were getting a little unsure of where Jack was.

"It seems I have to talk with some friends before I know what I am allowed to share with you. But maybe I can tell you a little about one fellow I met, who I just love. His name is The Doc, and he taught me..."

JACK LAY DOWN ON THE BED. He knew he would sleep like a log tonight. The discussion with the ladies had made so many things clearer, and he was happier with the picture he had developed of friends and boundaries. He knew there was more but was happy to allow the process of life to uncover it for him. Seeing the ‘great puzzle’ had made him happy, or was it simply knowing that discovery and understanding was a process?

“A process,” he said quietly to himself, as he drifted off to sleep.

“Hello, Jack.”

“Hey Doc, great to see you,” said Jack, yet thinking that his going to sleep and coming here was impossibly quick.

“It’s always a pleasure to see you too, my friend. The boys are busy and couldn’t get you to me, so I used the dreaming doorway,” he said, referring to the Agents. “You know, there is something not quite right about where you are. Your boundaries are so blurred, I can’t get a bead on it. Do you feel okay? Is your reality, okay?”

“I feel great, Doc,” said Jack, finally feeling the tiredness, the weight he felt, lifting even more.

“Okay, that’s good. We will leave that for now. The Department wants you strong, and you seem in good spirits,” said the Doc, as he wrote notes down in Jack’s file. “So, what have you been learning lately.”

“Boundaries and connection, I suppose,” answered Jack.

“And what have you learnt?”

Jack reeled off his learning about friendship, proximity, love, and the nature of life. The Doc listened intently. He had been given instruction to do what he could to make this Traveller spiritually stronger. The Doc had to work with him, knowing that he could not disclose the nature of the test that was coming for him. Tests are not to be seen beforehand, as how otherwise can they be a test or incite a soul to push forward?

The two of them talked on many aspects of life, and how Jack was seeing things, and the subject came around to people whose inner construct trapped them in a victim mentality.

“Well, yes, I have seen many people who see themselves as victims. Only when they change this sentence can they truly act to change their lives. No one gets it easy, and there are true victims of tyrants and circumstance, and true victims of cultural norms. These must be fought against, but life brings challenges to all of us, and it doesn’t matter if it is real or not, no one can move forward and thrive in victimhood,” explained The Doc.

“I’ve been a victim, or at least thought I was. You get stuck in drama, and you don’t learn. I kept my stuff inward because it isn’t attractive, but don’t really know what it would be like to suffer real oppression.”

“Yes, to be oppressed is one thing, and to be a victim is another. As fear is a choice, victimhood is too.”

“Yep, like The Exemplar, in the stories of the Faith. He was a prisoner and exile for many years, but he was never a victim.”

“No, he was not. I have worked with so many people whose negativity made them very lonely people. They were mostly anxious and depressed, like the fearful ones. Did you know that depression is a lack of foundational connections, Jack?”

“Umm. No.”

“Connections to our family group and peer group are two of the big anchors that steady our emotional boat. Having the basics of physical life is another. If two or more of these are at sea, for whatever reason, well...the ‘black dog’ usually visits. So, being a victim, may lead to other struggles because they strain and break connections.”

“I’m seeing that meaningful connection is a huge part of happiness, and I am getting a lot more of it these days,” offered Jack. “You know Doc, I’ve been giving this a bit of thought, and one thing really struck me. I realise that I haven’t been honest in my friendships or with acquaintances, generally.”

“How, Jack?”

“Well, I didn’t see it really, but when I connect with people, I give them acceptance, and actual care and support, even if I’m uncomfortable with them. I just continue along, pretending everything is fine, but it hurts me, not them. I am beginning to understand that not everybody can be a true, deep, natural friend.”

“Maybe you haven’t accepted them as they are, Jack? Just a question.”

“Maybe,” said Jack, knowing that it a bit like that. He did evaluate people a bit too much, and it had led to judgement.

“Knowing yourself, being authentic, and being respectfully honest will create natural boundaries with old and new people in your life, Jack. If you are honest and aware, your intuition may also come to show you more the reality of things, in your relation to others.”

“But it’s like judging, and not loving,” argued Jack.

“Love for another is not reliant on a deep friendship,” answered The Doc, plainly. “People are in myriad different places on their journey and all have a different makeup. I would also add that discernment is not judgement.”

Jack thought about that for a while. He knew that unity was essential, and that union with all things was simply a fact, but there were other laws, and realities in people and in life too that tested our ability to love. He also knew from some of his deepest experiences travelling Deeper that once a soul was free of all attachment, that all people can be seen as wonderful creations of God. He could see that he had a long way to go, but accepted his current state for now, and continued, “I thought I was being kind and just using good manners with people, but it turned out to be dishonesty and bad manners. I can’t stand the disingenuous talk I see in the world, and by some in my faith; but today I’ve realised that I am doing it too.”

“Listen, Jack, your only crime is kindness, and trying to live up to high expectations of yourself. Understand that and understand that others struggle too. Know that The Creator loves you, and that He loves them just as much, and grow more from there.”

“The Creator loves me?”

“Oh, He loves all His creation. It is not that he loves you, but more that He loves you all.”

“There is something in that.”

“There sure is, and now that you know these things, you can move differently. You know, there are those, you wave to in the street. There are those, you talk with at your gate. There are those, you invite onto the steps for a chat, and there are those, you invite onto the veranda for a barbeque. But only a few will enter your house, truly. Yet, you may still love them all.”

“Sure, it’s all part of the puzzle...” said Jack, pausing for a while. He then told The Doc about the other great puzzle, he had seen, and what he saw in it.

“Ahh yes, the puzzle of life,” mused The Doc. “It is one for eternity, Jack. But, we are indeed kept from certain knowledge, and we are granted certain knowledge through the channel of the Creative Word. The Word is a guide, but it is in life itself that you truly come to understand it; to understand your reality and the nature of things.”

“Yeah, sure,” agreed Jack.

“In the next life, you will read in the spirit, be given vision of things, and be granted knowledge, more firsthand. In this life, there is the Creative Word, life experience, reflection, and inner vision. Prayer for aid is also so very valuable in the quest of life. So few use it, and less believe in it.”

THE FIGHT HAD REACHED A CRITICAL STAGE. There were many Agents in the battle, and they knew that they had to send these creatures back beyond the boundary, *right now!*

Jack slept as the battle raged outside the back of his townhouse. The two Agents that were on his protection detail had not left him; in fact, they had called for backup. They knew that if they disappeared for a while, and kept their distance, that The Robes would try to come through again and grab Jack. He was the gateway, and it seemed that *he* was required for them to pass fully into this world. The Agents were a little lost on the full nature of that, as this boundary had never been breached before. Just like The Doc, they felt something wasn't right about where Jack was, but in any case, they knew they had to force these '*clowns*' back to where they came from.

A great energy net had succeeded in pushing The Robes back to the entryway to this world, and the continual light pulses, seemed to hurt and weaken them.

"Blast pulse!" yelled Agent Deveroux.

A larger light pulse, that was more focused and intense, was fired from a weapon behind the fighting agents. Four of the robes blew into dust, which made the others turn back through the portal as fast as they could. Then, they were gone.

"Good work, boys," said the Chief Agent. "Seal that off and place a sensor on it."

Agent Deveroux and the other Agent who were on Jack's protection detail came over to the Chief, who was looking concerned. The Chief said, "That was tough, and your guy is up there just sleepin' away while all this is goin' on. Doesn't seem right, somehow."

"Nope, it doesn't. But at least, they're back beyond the boundary," said Agent Deveroux, as he lit up a big cigar, and smiled.

"That cigar is *so* cliché that it should be against regulations," said the other Agent.

“It’s not in the spirit of The Department, or life,” added The Chief.

“Yep, well, fighting robed *freaks* isn’t either. But I don’t make the rules, and you *don’t* gotta’ join me.”

“ARE SOME PEOPLE TRULY LONERS, DOC? I remember a thing I read once, saying it was a quote from Einstein, that said something like, “Be a loner. It gives you time to wander and search for the truth. Have a holy curiosity. Make your life worth living.” You seem like a loner Doc.”

The Doc smiled, and said, “Time in connection, time alone; there is a natural balance that is relative to your being and to your current circumstances. It is not always available to the level that is comfortable for each person.”

“Yep, that’s for sure,” said Jack.

“Life must challenge you to grow, Jack. Ease is not necessarily a friend.”

“But is it good to be a loner or not?” asked Jack again, still seeking the answer to his question.

“There are many, in your world and others, who have created great works, or plumbed the depths of science and spirit, in solitude; or by some good amount time there. I am also sure that many others have just wandered off in their imagination alone and have produced nothing. Beyond that though, too many have wasted away in an unhealthy solitude, for whatever reason.”

“So, if you are creative, it is more natural to be a loner?”

“Creative and explorative types require much time of solitude to gather certain gifts; to experiment, to deeply think on various things, meditate on answers; to draw down with inner vision wonderful things to share with their kind; be that art, scientific discovery, or spiritual understanding. But connection with others in society must happen, as these insights must be shared to be of any real value. They must also be proven within the nature of existence. Only action on these, on the ground in real life, can bring the full measure of these gifts. Only in life, and with others, can they be developed, appreciated, proven or disproven.”

“So, solitude is okay for some?”

“In a way, Jack, but every soul grows from time with others. The interactions with others challenge us to grow, and what use are we if we are not of some service to others. Service is the very action of happiness; and its gatherer.”

“Sure, I suppose it is. I spend a lot of time alone, and I need it; just to reflect over stuff, but I also really need connection...” with that, Jack suddenly broke down. He could no longer talk, and his eyes watered up. He had been so alone, even with people, and even in service, and for most of his life. It was such an empty place, because even among the throng, a place without honesty can be a lonely place. There was something else though, something underneath it all that his heart cried out for.

He had grown new friends lately though; true friends. That, and the hope that came with his new connection with Kai, began to buoy him. Suddenly, that something underneath hit him deeper, and he fell to the ground, and his heart broke, as a deep grief threatened to tear him in two.

The Doc turned to a ball of light and raced into Jack's being. Jack was unaware of The Doc; all he felt was the deep and galling pain of separation. But the attack was fortunately only of sudden duration, and he came out of it almost as quickly as he fell to it. It passed away and was suddenly forgotten.

The Doc came out and sat in front of Jack. "I know where you are, Jack."

"I am here, Doc. Learnt that one, a long time ago," expressed Jack, as a response to gather himself, even though just a scent of what assailed him remained.

The Doc sat there trying to make up his mind on many things. His silence worried Jack, and he asked, "So, this is big?"

"Huge, Jack. I can't know The Physician's place for you, so I don't know what is right to share with you, but I can see the intricacy of His design for you. It's certainly different. His designs never cease to amaze me."

"Need to know though, eh?"

"In this case, I would say so," said The Doc, with a very caring look.

"You know, Doc, I've come to accept where I am. I'm enjoying the journey more, and trust that what I don't know at any time is just as important as, what I do know. I will let Him create me."

"You are coming along, my boy."

"Just one question though...The Physician?"

“I work for The Divine Physician. He is not The Creator, but He has changed things in all the worlds of The Great Spirit. He is the bringer of new life, on all levels of existence. He sees what must be done from age to age, and from place to place, and He re-sets the order. He is intimately linked with The Creator, on a far deeper level. He is one, and He is many.”

“That’s beautiful Doc. The puzzle just grows when you get more understanding. It reminds me just how little I am, up against the knowledge of reality.”

“Yes, Jack,” agreed The Doc, as the two sat there, in contemplation and reflection.

JACK WOKE IN THE DARK. He was happier with boundaries now and had learned a lot about himself. He had come to see how honesty was of great importance when it came to connection, no matter what kind of connection. The Doc and Kai had made its power clear when it came to boundaries, and also self-honesty when it came to growth. In the ease of these thoughts, he went off to sleep again.

Just as he reached the place of dreams, something crashed through...

Jack was stunned by the feeling. It was like a great ship had hit his own small ship. It broke his boat open, revealing that most of the structure and workings were rusted. He could feel boundaries breaking down all about him. His ease in how he saw boundaries was shattered into a million pieces before the weight of this Great Green Ship that had hit his.

When he woke, he just stood there. He was unable to move.

“Hey brother,” said Brig.

“Hey, Brig,” said Jack, not believing what he was seeing.

“Bit of a surprise, eh?”

“I wouldn’t call it a surprise. I have other adjectives in mind. What are you doing here?”

“Bit of gardening. Bit of building. Bit of this, and a bit of that,” replied Brig.

“The door was closed, Brig. I closed the door,” stated Jack, firmly.

“In your mind, you did Jack, but these Gardens are deeper than our minds, cuz’; way deeper! Part of you left it, and part of me left it, but parts of us didn’t, and parts of us cannot let it go.”

“Geez’, I don’t know, Brig.”

“That’s right Jack, you don’t know. Your mind ain’t enough for this, brother.”

Jack looked around The Garden. He saw the original foundations of the new House of Law had held. The Queen’s mother was sitting on a short fire-charred foundation wall; just sitting.

The ground was dry. It had not rained here in some time it seemed. He could see Thomas off in the distance, who was tending to new plants in a little plot right at the far boundary. There was no other activity. It was like it all simply stood still, waiting; but he could feel The Garden’s power.

“What am I doing back here, Brig?”

“Waitin’ with us, I suppose. None of us is sure of the big plan for this Garden.”

“Mate, I can’t stay here,” said Jack, shaking his head.

“Then, just visit sometimes, until you can,” offered Brig in advice. “You can feel the power in this place. You can feel its almost unlimited potential. You can feel the power that has held this ground together even with the fissures that tried to blow it apart. It will be built, Jack. Sure as eggs.”

“So, only my mind shut the door?” Jack asked, with a pained and perplexed look on his face.

“Your emotions too, probably. Your mind still needs to grow yet, and it closed the door because it had to, Jacko. You can’t serve the future with your mind leading, brother. It has to be used, but it can’t gather this.”

Jack just sat down on the ground, and continued talking with Brig. “It’s hard, Brig. I thought I had the whole boundaries thing down; then this.”

“What’s new there, Jack. It’s always that way if you’re moving and growing. There is always something deeper and greater.”

“Yep, just never expected to be back here.”

“Some things you just can’t leave, and some things are very much written; other things are done for our sake, even if we don’t have a clue.”

“I am still on my new journey, Brig, and I have to finish it. I might come back, but I have to keep on.”

“Sure Brother, do what you gotta’ do. But gather what this visit is sharing with you and asking of you. Be honest, have courage, and meet it, eh.”

Jack nodded, and reflected for a while, then said, “Brig?”

“Yes, Jack,” said Brig smiling, seeing that his brother was struggling.

“Let’s go fishing.”

“Sure, sounds great. I think we could all do with a bit of fishin’ therapy, but you didn’t come here to go fishin’.”

“So, what’s the question I have to ask?” asked Jack, more of the universe, than Brig.

Brig and the universe answered, “What do you need, to be able to work in the Garden, Jack?”

Jack let that question run through his being, and in time, he answered, “I need to be free, Brig. If I can’t free myself from The Garden, then I have to free myself from me.”

“Yep, boundaries are fine, and part of the nature of connection, but releasing yourself is the greater path.”

“In learning all the boundary stuff, I forgot that...maybe I didn’t really get it in the first place. I don’t know,” said Jack, expiring air. He was still confused, but he knew it was good to struggle, as that was mostly the way to the new insight.

“Yep, you are con...fused,” said Brig, chuckling.

“I am, brother. I am,” stated Jack.

“It’s really simple, Jack. You can’t make others be what you want, and you can’t grab and hold onto anything in life for long, and you can’t control what’s outside of you. Well, you can try, but don’t expect to be happy.”

“Hmm...”

“Knowing things won’t even set you free. When you hold onto Him alone, then you are free to be connected to all things, otherwise, you are not connected; no matter what you might think.”

“Let go, eh,” offered Jack.

“Hang on,” answered Brig, smiling widely. “He is the Source of love, so keep Him close. He calls us to love through the knowledge he sends in the Creative Word. Walkin’ with Him will make you know what to strive for, and what to let go. It will make you content to just gather gently. Walkin’ with Him will make you happy, Jack.”

“Yeah, I can feel that. But this is a huge ask,” mused Jack, as he looked around The Garden remembering his galling struggles to connect with people and get this place going.

“Maybe. Maybe it’s a huge gift. Maybe your tryin’ too hard not to get hurt. Maybe you’re tryin’ to make it fit your understanding, or what you want. Maybe try True Understanding and make the effort to grow what It asks of you, inside and outside. You know people love their Faith, but we trade it off, or parts of it, for what we want or what we ‘know’. It’s probably all good learnin’ what you’ve found in your wandering, but The Garden is a commitment, Jack, and nothing less than real honest faith in The Physician’s Remedy, and a deep abiding love for God, can build it.”

Union

Jack walked up the dirt road. It had been some time now since his visit to The Garden. He felt light. He knew his reliance on the Creator and kept His wisdom close; his thoughts more aligned with the Creative Word. These things set him free, and even though sometimes the challenge to hold to them was too great, he kept on working at it.

The morning was quiet and warm, very warm for this time of the year. Suddenly, he heard the trees behind him talk, and he turned to look. He saw the wind in their leaves, quite a way back down the road. There was no wind where he was, but he could see the rustling breeze move toward him through the trees until a tree beside him began to rustle. He felt the cold air move in around him as it made its way across the hills. It was the first time, other than a storm, that he had actually felt a weather front. It was a real joy to be part of. "*All Things*," he thought.

A small Camphor Laurel tree ahead then gave out its own gentle rustling tone, as the weather front moved on. It was a beautiful tree, with its light green leaves dancing happily; and it gave him some more gentle delight. He could see that the tree had no qualms with God's will for it, as did the large rock that sat beside it. Animals too walked in The Creators' way, even though

they were given more freedom, and greater powers of life, than trees. Only humans, at least on this world, did He give the greatest scope, or was it the longest rope. They were gifts given us beyond imagination, yet it could take us so far from the Creator's presence. Jack thought that he might like to be a tree, or a rock, right at that moment, because the way he was feeling towards The Creator was more akin to the acceptance and contentment of such things as these.

Just then, he heard a lady singing. There were two women and a man, on the veranda of a house that was high on the hill to his right. The breeze caught some cloths on the table there and whipped them around playfully. The breeze had sent a few things flying but the three simply put things back in place and got on with their work. One woman was preparing food and the other was singing, while the man was crafting a large wooden table.

Jack was drawn there, and without words, began to work with the man. The lady who was singing, sang in another language, yet it buoyed his heart. It was all heavenly, as they all simply went about what they were doing. After the table was built, Jack sat down with them, and they shared a small meal and some genuine conversation. The whole thing was like a prayer, it was so beautiful. He was being given a glimpse of what was missing in his life; also, what was missing in The Garden, and generally, in human affairs.

THE COFFEE WAS GREAT AS USUAL. Jack sat at a small table on the footpath and was very satisfied.

“Hey, Jack,” said a man, walking towards him.

“Hey, Paul. What's doin'?”

“Just came down for a drive with my new lady friend.”

“So, you’ve got yourself a girlfriend eh.”

“Yep, she’s lovely, mate. Listen, can I ask you something?”

“Yep, I suppose so. What is it?”

“I had a situation with someone we both know. It was very controlling. Overstepping the boundaries, you know, telling me my business, mate. Anyway, I want your take on it.”

“Well, Paul, with all due respect and kindness, your relationship with whoever this is, is not my business.”

“Don’t be like that.”

“No, please understand, I say this with all respect, mate. Just bear with me. Other than the fact that we all have *our own* struggles to deal with, I don’t do ‘talkin’ abouts’ and getting in triangles. All my relationships now, are one to one; single lines. I have been in the middle plenty of times, trying to help people see each other better. I’ve listened endlessly to one or both sides. It all gets messy and ridiculous, and it’s usually the outside person, like me, wading in, that gets dragged under by one or both thrashing around in the water. I have been yelled at too many times from the water too, when I finally worked out that I couldn’t save them. I end up having to save myself.”

“Okay. I get that. I am just looking for some input. You’re a good man, just wanted to get a bead on it.”

“Let me tell you somethin’, Paul. If you work out what was under you about the situation, and have an honest conversation with whoever it is, with a little poise, you might just sort it out. You will either end up with a friend who is willing to discuss it, and trust will grow between you, or you’ll naturally move apart. And mate, you mightn’t see what he or she sees, or you may have even misconstrued what they said or did.”

“I didn’t misconstrue it,” said Paul, adamantly.

“That’s your call, but I know for sure that only dead honest *actual* communication with the person involved can sort anything out. Like I said, I go one to one. I’ve seen the destruction of talk; my own and others. Actually, the amount drama in the air these days is a mad testament to the lack of real communication in our world. People just talkin’ *about* people; endlessly, and not *to them.*”

Paul nodded his head. “Yep, true. Thanks, Jack. I see what you’re saying. So, see to it with a bit of courage up front, eh; not some drama behind closed doors.”

“Yep. Honesty. One-to-one.”

Paul looked up as his new lady walked up to the table. She had been wandering in the Newsagents, taking a look around.

“This is Jack, Darling. This is Jennifer, Jack,” said Paul, introducing them. “Do you mind if we join you, Jack? Do you want a coffee, love?”

“Sure, it’s fine,” said Jack, as the lady nodded her head.

Paul headed off to order, and the lady sat down. She looked over to Jack and he was staring at her. She smiled at him, and he apologised. They sat there uncomfortably for a short while, and finally, the lady started the conversation.

“So, you are a friend of Paul’s?”

“An acquaintance, I suppose. Nice guy.”

“He seems nice.”

The conversation fell away into that awkward place again. They were sitting there for a few minutes that seemed like an hour, and then, they both started laughing. Neither one sure which one had let go first. The spell was broken by the laughter, and they both now opened up easily.

“So, Jack what is it that you were staring at?”

“Well, I have seen you before.”

“Am I that memorable?”

Jack just sighed. He had not seen her before. He had worked with her in The Garden when the building was good. It was many years ago now. He just sat there unable to tell her, and not wanting to make anything up. He had just put himself back in *uncomfortable land*. She looked at him a little deeper and realised that there was something he was unable to share.

“You know, Jack. I won’t be upset; whatever you say.”

“I wouldn’t be so sure about that,” stated Jack.

“Give it a whirl. I have a very open mind.”

Jack just shook his head and waded in. “What if I told you that I had a dream that I worked with you? We worked on a garden and a building, and you brought such a lovely spirit that helped dissipate the struggle of that place. The wonderful thing about meeting you is the timing. I have a way to go, but I feel the struggle of that recurring dream is only just beginning to release me now, and you turn up,” said Jack, sharing the dream, but not the feelings that welled up inside him.

“Well, I wasn’t expecting *that*,” responded Jennifer, and they both laughed out loud.

“Yep, I *bet* you weren’t,” and they laughed some more.

“I’ve been feeling love strongly in *my* dreams, lately. Like there is someone close and we talk, but I can’t see him,” she said, feeling the love she felt in the dream, yet not sharing her secret with Jack. There was something about the way he related to his dream that made her question if he was a *traveller* like her. She wasn’t sure, as she had not met another *traveller*.

“Dreams; who knows, eh?” said Jack, not game to share any more with her.

“Yes. Who knows?” she said shyly, not game either.

IT WAS DEEPENING TIME AGAIN AT GERTY’S PLACE. They had just finished and were sitting having the usual cuppa’ and cake together. They carried on a lot...well, Jack and Michelle did, even though there were some serious topics explored.

Michelle now piped up with, “How do you address things with a man? I mean, forget it. They just get angry most the time.”

“I have a way,” said Kai.

Jack laughed out loud, and Michelle said, “Whose side are you on, Kai?”

“Isn’t one the main tenets of the Faith, the equality of men and women?” Jack put in quickly.

“*Watch it*, Jack. You’re looking for trouble.”

“Well, it goes like this,” started Kai. “You clarify the situation as you see it, *without blame*. Then, say how it’s making you feel, and then what you need and how it would make you feel.”

“I can just hear Michelle doing *that*,” spouted Jack, chuckling hard.

“Like I said, *Jack*, just watch it!”

“Bring it on, sister. I’m not afraid of you,” retorted Jack, still playing.

“I don’t think they are listening,” offered Gerty.

“No, I’m listening. *Sounds great*,” said Jack.

“Jack, I am feeling frustrated because of your words, and it makes me feel angry. I need you to stop talking. Could you stop speaking please?” said Michelle, smiling.

“*Geez*’, Kai, that doesn’t work *at all*,” said Jack, chuckling again.

“Michelle, you blamed Jack,” said Kai, carrying the learning forward in amongst the banter.

“And it hurt *my feelings*, Michelle,” said Jack, really enjoying himself.

“How do I get Jack to *shut up*, then?” asked Michelle.

“Try again,” said Kai.

“Jack, I am feeling belittled and frustrated. I would like to explore this subject, as it would help me a lot. Could we just continue on?” said Michelle, smiling.

“Sure, Michelle. That was *kinder*,” expressed Jack.

“Kindness is the *greatest* essence in true communication,” offered Gerty.

“But with real honesty, and no attack,” put in Kai.

“I like it, Kai. It’s real communication; gentled in kindness and powered by honesty. *I love it*,” stated Jack, genuinely impressed. “But does the other person then do the same back?”

“If they need to. It creates a safe emotional space,” answered Kai.

“But *both* have to be willing,” offered Michelle. “*You know*, in a relationship.”

“If they love each other, they should be willing, and once a couple does it a few times, I’ve found that they really begin to enjoy the freedom and happiness it builds in their lives,” related Kai. “It eventually becomes the first place they go to sort things out.”

“And if one partner is just seeking power, it would become immediately apparent,” mused Gerty, out loud.

“Yep, good old honesty; it really clears the decks, and stops the games,” said Jack.

“Do you want me to *be honest* with you, Jack?” asked Michelle ominously.

“*No*,” answered Jack, curtly, and they all had a laugh.

KAI AND JACK WENT DOWN TO THE SEA. He thought it was a bit nuts to be down there on such a cold morning, but he went with Kai because it was just lovely being with her. On the way down, in the car, he had realised that the feelings he had for Kai were not the sure comfortable feelings he had felt at the coffee shop with Jennifer. He did not know Jennifer, but the link was deeper, and he had only met her once. That thought though, did make him a little wary because of his copious experience with infatuation; his own and others. But he was sure this was intuitive because it was just deeply comfortable, not ‘wham bam’. It was like she came from the same place he did, somehow.

“Jack, can we talk about you and me?”

“Oh! Okay, Kai. Sure.”

“You don’t sound comfortable about that. You’re certainly in a different place to when we first met. Anyway, I’ve come to know you and I *love* your company. I’ve just been waiting to get a feel of how I feel about you.”

“Okay?”

“I feel like I’m your friend.”

“So do I, Kai,” said Jack, with some relief. “I thought I felt more, but it was just my emotions needing some hugs; and of course, you *are* quite amazing. I don’t know what that thing is that gets us over the line with someone, into a partnership I mean, but it has got to be there.”

“I think we will *always* be friends, Jack.”

“I think so too; *treasured friends*.”

They smiled at each other happily, as they arrived at the beach. It was always this simple with Kai. Jack felt the peace of a gentle joy and contentment enter his being, as he and Kai got out of the car and began walking down the sand track through the trees. He was so thankful for his beautiful and amazing friend, and this beautiful day. They wandered through the trees and as they got to the tree line, the beach opened its broad smile for them.

The water was cold but bodysurfing and boogie boarding kept them warm. A walk up the beach in the sun beforehand helped too. Jack loved it. It was so refreshing and enlivening. The cold was lovely when you weren't cold; it was more so, bracing, and quite wonderful. The physical exercise also filled his body with life, and he thought how good it was to be alive.

Happiness can come to us in so many ways.

THE ROBES FILLED THE GIANT CAVE. The Black were on one side, and The White on the other. They filled every corner of the floor of the cave, and every space on the large natural ledges that stepped up towards the back walls. The cave was a huge very irregular, but almost circular, amphitheater.

Jennifer was horrified to find herself in a high entrance, overlooking the great crowd of Robes below. She had heard rumours about them, and how dangerous they were. Right now, though, the feeling and smell that rose from this horrid crowd nearly overcame her. She had not been a Traveller as long as Jack, but she had courage, and she wasn't going to miss this opportunity to see these creatures up close.

Suddenly, there was a noise behind her. A small rock rolled up to her foot. She looked around in horror, only to see two Agents. One had the ‘sssh’ single finger sign on his lips, and the other was waving her towards them, but Jennifer stayed where she was. She crouched down and went back to watch the goings on below. She had seen Agents at work before but had kept to herself. She knew it was good to have them nearby, but she was not budging. The men were not at all happy, and one of them did the ‘damn, she’s not coming’ dance. They even tried a few more hand signals before they finally knew that they had no choice. They got down on their hands and knees and crawled over, sidling up on each side of Jennifer to watch the goings on below.

These were the *words that were heard*, this time, each like a chorus in the air.

“The White believe.”

“The Black see danger to the way.”

“In union, the way will be made.”

“This is not the way of The Black.”

“In union, the way will be made.”

“The Black do not believe.”

“The White believe.”

“The Black seek no partner.”

“In union, the way will be made.”

“The Black seek another way.”

“There can be no other way.”

The back and forth went on for a great time. The Black were closed, it seemed. It seemed that they wanted the way through but thought joining with The Whites was too risky. The Whites simply wanted the end they sought, for what they saw as ‘truth’ to reign over all creatures. They believed a deeper joining would allow the release of more power to break Jack, and break through. The argument raged for some time, and the energies were sickening, but in the end, these words were heard.

“The White believe.”

“The Black believe.”

At this agreement, The Black brought forward a huge machine into the centre of the great cave. They had always planned to join, they just wanted to use this particular machine, and The White could now see that. The Black thought that because The White were such zealots, they would not see what was right in front of them. Most of the victims of The Black Robes fell, because they could not see what was right in front of them. The White Robes simply wanted the end and did not care that The Black had resorted to trickery. The Whites also knew something about the power of union that The Black were oblivious of. The arrogance of The Black, in this one action, would come back to haunt them.

The machine powered up and it pulsed, and then again, and again. The intensity of the pulses grew, as did their frequency, until finally the pulses were heard as one sound. At that exact moment, all within the pulses’ bubble was disassociated, then reassociated. The Robes were one. They were all half Black and half White; the now unified *yin and yang of evil*.

Agent Deveroux tapped Jennifer on the shoulder and gave her the ‘*let’s go*’ sign. This time she moved, and the other man followed. The Agents had a car parked outside, what seemed like a missile silo. That made Jennifer feel more dread at what might come if these creatures broke through into the world. She could see they were the power of chaos, and she knew they were seeking to come through.

The car took off down the desert road, and Agent Deveroux turned to Jennifer. “*Damned* if you are not the luckiest creature in existence, lady. Who *are you*, and what *the hell* are you doin’ here?”

“I’m just a traveller,” answered Jennifer.

“Damn! *A Traveller that close* to those freaks. That’s like having a lovely fire, with a can of petrol half sittin’ in it,” expressed Agent Deveroux, with big eyes and shaking his head.

“I was just curious. I was careful, and anyway I just found myself there, so there must be *some* wisdom in it.”

“Darlin’, those freaks just *joined*, and you are ‘*the way*’.”

“That was close,” said the driver, in relief.

“I suppose they don’t know you exist yet, but they could still pick up your residual scent. Your scent is *there* now. Damn! Now, we got two *gateways* to keep away from those things.”

“But, hey, luckily we found her first,” argued the driver.

“Yeah, I s’pose that’s right, Agent,” agreed Deveroux, a little happier.

“Maybe that is what fate intended. I’ve found the perfection of my journeys quite astounding,” offered Jennifer, even though she did not understand a lot of what the Agents were saying.

“*Astounding*, is not the word foremost in *my mind* right now, *darlin’*.”

The car then disappeared deeper. The Agents had to go through the usual channels, and processes Jennifer. They had protocols that they were bound to follow.

“JENNIFER JOHNSTON,” SAID THE JUDGE, LOOKING DOWN AT HER NOTES.

“It’s Jennifer *Thompson*, Your Honour.”

“Yes, *of course*,” said the Judge, just revelling in the wonder of sarcasm.

“What, do you mean? I *heard* the sarcasm,” accused Jennifer.

“*Did you, sweetie*,” said The Judge, ramping up the sarcasm a few notches.

“Yes.”

“Girl’s gotta’ have a bit of fun. God knows this stuff is soooboooringggg. Same ridiculous blindness, day after day, *after day*. ”

“Okay,” offered Jennifer, trying to be understanding.

“Just have to put some spice and humour in there. It’s actually even helpful for most who come before me.”

“It has a good shock value,” offered Jennifer.

The Judge smiled at her, looking more deeply, and Agent Deveroux cleared his throat as if to say, ‘get on with it’. The Judge just looked up and gave him her *loving eyes*. It nearly knocked the Agent down. He held, but it showed. *Damn*, was the word foremost in his mind, *now*.

“So, Jennifer. It’s not pretty, darling; just rushing in there, telling Jack about the loving feelings. *How long had you known him for? I mean really*, a few minutes? Are you getting the picture here?”

Jennifer laughed, “Well, he was *more* foolish. Does he a travel like me?”

“See, you don’t even know him.”

“I feel like I do.”

“Yes, many feel that way for a few weeks, then after six months, they wonder what *drug* was slipped into their coffee that *fateful* day.”

“Okay, yes. I see that.”

“You are unlocking a whole new creature. There is so much in a soul: in a human being. Beauty *and* pain, issues that may be dealt with, and others not; scars, talents, struggles, loves, *and all constantly evolving*. We all have a past, and most of it not dealt with early on in life. When you get up close with someone, all of it comes pouring out, so unwrap them gently in friendship. Give them the respect of time. Give yourself that respect. Who you give yourself to is not an emotional decision. We need to be adults.”

“I see. I suppose, I trusted the dreams I had,” said Jennifer.

“Dreams, my darling, are dreams. They can be the need of our emotions, insight, future things, and aspects of cycles of growth that our souls are working through. The problem is that our emotional needs can bias them. Better you *walk in the world* and take your time. Even though *some* insight can be drawn from dreams, please understand they are not designed to lead you. They are an interaction that *may* see a little deeper into what you are learning, and maybe help you begin to understand the language of the soul, but they are definitely not decision-making tools, *okay*.”

“So, live on the ground.”

“Yes, my dear. At least, that is my understanding. I have also found that dreams are simply how *we* see things, not necessarily how they are. Even dreams are about *our* perception. The meaning of a dream may only play out in the *thoughts* we think as we walk in life and may have no physical reality. Even if we *do* see things ahead of time, it is that they happen, not that we have seen ahead that brings them. Life first, dreams another layer; *maybe*.”

“The love seemed very real.”

“Dream feelings can be strong, but back to life and to rushing in. There is a lovely psychology called Gestalt, and one of its aspects is that one should not get too close too quickly with others, and one should not shut oneself off unduly from others. You see it takes time and activity to know a person’s character. It means, meeting their friends, and taking the time to see how they relate to others.”

“You can kind of tell someone’s character intuitively, and almost immediately.”

“*Can you?* Well, that’s lovely, dear. It seems I am *wasting* your time. You can go,” said The Judge.

“*Hang on,*” objected Jennifer.

“Seems like you have it *all* worked out. So, we are finished,” said The Judge, holding her gavel up.

“Okay. I’ll listen.”

“Ah, Jennifer, you are *such a joy*,” said The Judge, with an over acted, large, arcing, gracious wave of her arm, that got a few chuckles from the gallery. Her face then changed immediately to a very sincere loving one.

“People just get together immediately from a feeling mostly in your culture these days. They have no patience, they have no detachment, and so two complete strangers become immediately intimate. *Childish behaviour*; and it can get *very crazy, very quickly*. To bring someone so deep into your personal reality, and your life, so quickly, will most likely create misunderstandings, as you can’t know a person you have *only just met*. If you get to know who they are, and ascertain their character, over time and in the activity of life, less will be misconstrued, and you will find your true place in relation to them. Wisdom is lacking in your actions, and the actions of many of your world.”

“So, I have to take my time.”

“Short answer. Yes. There are exceptions, but they are few, and why not get it right? Why not save yourself the pain from being a slave to emotions and chemicals? Wait for them to pass and see the person, deeper feelings will grow beyond this shallow pool. Even if your intuition is on the money, the process of really getting to know someone still requires time and effort.”

“How long do you wait?”

“How long have we known each other, Agent Deveroux?”

“Three years, Ma’am,” answered the Agent.

“How long would you say it takes to get to know someone, just basically?”

“Six months, absolute minimum, to get to see someone, and three years to really know them, I would say.”

“*Oh, agent,*” said The Judge, swooning.

“Maybe we can talk about that *later*, Ma’am.”

The Judge then returned herself unwillingly to a gentle composure, and said, “Time creates something real and deeper. These times are not set in stone, but wisdom needs prevail.”

“Is there anything else?” asked Jennifer.

“Well, a good tip is watching how they treat others; especially those who serve them in any way. Ah, yes, and work with them on something, and get to know their friends. Time is a requirement if you seek the truth of things between you and another, and if a man is an adult, he will *take* the time,” offered The Judge, as she looked with great kindness to the man she knew.

The Agent took off his dark sunglasses, and said to Jennifer, “Be authentic, Jennifer. Be true to yourself. *Know* who you are. *Be honest*. Love isn’t a game to win, or something you need to have; it’s like finding the truth. Yes or no. It’s only ever really *yes or no* with this stuff, and when you’re finally committed, it’s more about giving out and it’s a *whole* lot of work.”

“*Green eyes. I just love green eyes,*” said The Judge, with her elbows on the desk, and her face propped up by the cup of her hands; her eyes beaming.

THE AGENTS’ CAR PULLED UP AT THE COFFEE SHOP WHERE JACK AND JENNIFER HAD MET. Jack was sitting there, writing notes on his phone. He always let his mind wander and reflect on the drive down, and while he had some coffee, he would put down thoughts that came to him if they were insightful. As he finished his note, he looked up and saw the Agents’ car, and the Agents, and Jennifer getting out. She saw Jack, and their hearts skipped a beat.

The Agents waved as they drove away slowly past Jack; both with fully blown smiles. It seemed to him that they were not being very *secret* today, and he stood up as Jennifer came over to him.

“Funny thing, Jack.”

He just smiled and asked her if she wanted a coffee, and when she was seated, he went off to get her a cup. He was buoyed. “*So, she travels, eh. Thought I was the only one,*” he said to himself. It was hard coming to terms with most things on his journeys, but this was *just lovely*. He saw clearly again that life is not just hardship and challenges. *Keep learnin’, Jack,* he said to himself.

After sharing some laughs and a few stories, they headed off to walk the mountain. It was great having someone to *really* relate to. He could share anything with her. It was like he was home. Then, suddenly, Jack hit the ground as the crack opened again. His heart felt like it was being physically ripped out of his chest. Not in a physical way, but in a deep grieving, and it was

stronger this time. Jennifer was concerned for him, and when it abated, she asked him if it was the Robes trying to break through.

“No, it seems like something else,” he answered, and then a very scary thought occurred to him. “You’re in *danger; especially* with me. If they find you, they can use you, just like they want to use me.”

“And your point *is*?”

“That you’re in danger, and it’s best you are somewhere *away* from me.”

“The Agents are happy for us to be together. That way they can gather us more easily when they sense movement. They believe it may be soon, as the Robes are now one. We’re stronger *together*.”

“What do you mean, The Robes *are one*?”

“They’ve joined. We saw them. They are all half Black and half White now. They believe it gives them more power to break through.”

“It just *gets better*, doesn’t it,” expressed Jack, shaking his head. “Are you sure you’re safer with me?”

“Maybe you are safer with *me*,” offered Jennifer.

“Ahhh, that *was* a bit arrogant, eh,” conceded Jack.

“No, it was a kind and genuine concern. I assume, you don’t *want* to chase me away?”

“No, *I do not*,” answered Jack plainly.

“Thanks for caring about me, Jack.”

“With you it’s easy; with some, not so much.”

“But I’ll bet you still do,” said Jennifer plainly.

“I do my best. But I *am* human. You know, I read something once that said that a world built on *caring more for each other than ourselves* would be a glorious world, and that everyone would have the peace and nurture to grow, and work, and live. What *marvels* we could produce if everyone was *cared for*. People don’t think we are held back with all the mod cons, *but we are*. Vested interest, self-interest, greed, ego, and fanaticism, all hold back the flow of love, *and* the true potential in humanity; *creative and scientific*. I’m *sure of that*.”

“Well, I heard something once, in a place called Union. It basically said that for a people to have equality, there had to be justice, and that that justice could only prevail totally when people cared more for each other’s needs than their own. I would suppose that works with couples too. Unity is life.”

Jack looked at Jennifer. He had read in the Writings of his Faith that true human love for other humans was to see the attributes of God within one another. His eyes teared a little, as he saw many of these in Jennifer. He knew he had found a creature of light; one he had waited a very long time to meet.

Purpose

“Jump, jump, jump,” shouted the paratrooper, as the soldiers quickly lined up to dive out of the plane. It was a silver plane and bore an emblem of a nine-pointed star.

“Get up, lad!” shouted the leader at Jack, who had found himself at the back of the plane. He was sure it was a dream.

“Get up, soldier! We have a job that needs to be done. So, let go inside, lad, it’s not about you!”

“I don’t belong here,” explained Jack.

“Well, boy, all things are where they are supposed to be; so none of that business, alright!”

“I don’t belong here,” he protested further.

“There are others down there; others. The giants are closing in on that village. We are The Army of Light, and it is our work to do. Jump, jump, jump!”

Jack stood up, went to the door, and jumped. He knew that it was a dream, and he wasn’t afraid; at least, until he realized that he did not have a clue about the ripcord on his parachute. He didn’t know where it was, and was hurtling towards the ground, desperately moving his hands around in search for it. He found a ring, but then thought that he didn’t know when to pull it. He decided quickly that too soon would be better than too late, and he pulled the ring. But it turned out that he was just pulling on a ring on the webbing, and the ground was now approaching fast.

He felt a pull on his vest, then the brakes went on strongly, as his chute opened above him. Sailing down beside him was the soldier in charge, and Jack knew that this man had opened his chute.

“That’s what I am here for, old boy,” said the man.

“Yes, sir,” said Jack, thankfully.

“Just an assistant, old bean, none of that sir stuff in this army. All of us working together, eh? Get your fruit ready. Those Giants will be on us as soon as we hit the deck.”

Jack realised that there was a net with all kinds of fruit in it, slung around his neck. The fruits seemed like the ones he saw in the world of The Spirit Scientists, when he had searched for The Department of Truth. Most were purple and had the same odd shapes.

As he landed, he could see that all the other soldiers had discarded their chutes, and stood in a line. Jack could see a village snug in the tree line behind them, and soon enough, with the help of the assistant, he was in the line and ready. They were on flat grassy ground, looking away from the village, and towards some hills in the distance. He could feel the ground beating like a drum, and as he saw some movement, he looked up higher.

There were five heavily armoured giants coming at a run. Only their top half could be seen over the high hill fold. They were huge. They ran in a pack, and they were intent on destruction.

“Okay, troops, hold focus! Feel the Spirit of the Age. Purpose and love. They’re coming!”

“Purpose and love!” they shouted, in unison.

The giants thundered forward, and Jack just stood there almost in a daze, wondering what the hell he should do.

Wastelands

Jack woke suddenly from the dream, and would have wondered what it all meant, but he now found himself in a desert, with huge broken buildings scattered here and there among the dunes. They were large fallen skyscrapers, which seemed to have fallen by earthquakes, and were in various stages of being inundated by sand. He did not know where he was, or how he got there; he was now, more and more, in a free flow between worlds.

A man walked past him with a shopping trolley. Music played from his phone, and he seemed oblivious to Jack, or anything else. Jack heard some laughter behind him, and he turned to see some people sitting having coffee in the shade of one of the fallen towers. They were dressed in very arty clothes, and some of them strutted around as they regaled each other with their new words, or explanations of their new clothes. Just then, another man came by with a trolley full of plastic dishes, and something in a brightly coloured box. Jack could not see what was in it, but he found that he was very impressed with a person having such a good thing to have. The way he was thinking did not make sense to him, but he could not help it.

He wandered around a little, trying to regather his thinking, when a man drove past in a lovely sleek car that seemed to have *all* the new features. Jack thought that it was amazing, but out of place in this great sandy wasteland. As he walked up over the lip of a dune, he saw something even more out of place. He saw a wide flat area with thousands of TV sets, each with families sitting around them, eating, and eating, and eating. He wandered down the other side and saw what was on the nearest screen. He sat down to watch, and before he knew it, he was locked in and laughing.

It was a long time later when he woke up in the very comfortable chair he had sat in, now seeing that the people and screens were gone. He got up and walked for a long time, eventually reaching the top of a very high dune to the south. There were people everywhere; there, beyond this dune. They were looking at pot plants, and flash silver barbeques, and they were drooling; their big eyes focused intently on their game like cats do. They would pounce on these things eventually and eat their fill. Jack could not understand why they ate these things.

But there were bigger predators, who it seemed had drawn their quarry there, and they licked their lips, ready to feast on those who feasted. They stealthily snuck up on the others and brought them down. Then, satisfied with their fill, these large predators went home to the broken skyscrapers. They sat on the decks they had built, or on patios, high above the dunes, drinking their wine and eating their cheese. Jack could not see a blade of grass, let alone a vineyard, so wondered where the bottles had come from. Then, he saw the cellars. Cellars full of food and wine, so deep and large, as to be almost unimaginable. They could not hope to eat such an amount, in a thousand lifetimes. He wondered why they even needed to eat the others who feasted on things.

He looked out to the wasteland beyond the skyscrapers, and his heart broke through this strange malaise of his mind. He was drawn into this wide-open wasteland in the need to put something in his soul, and he headed out towards nothingness. He needed life. That's all he really knew. It seemed that this strange place he had wandered through had less life than even a desert, but it most certainly felt that way. Part of him called him back. Part of him wanted these things they ate, as well as some wine and cheese, but he was more driven to leave this place.

He was many days wandering when he came upon a great stone walled city. Many people walked on their knees here, and talked of high things, but acted like animals in the dark places. They praised the name of their God in the sunshine and did unspeakable things in the dark. There were some dark things done in the daylight too, but apparently that was God's business, so they were not seen, or it seemed, anything to be even concerned about. Some did not do the terrible things and walked upright, but simply went about their day in a circle of ground. They simply circled, and circled, and went home and slept and ate, and then returned, and circled, and circled. No one was to leave this walled city, and if any did, they were to be shunned for eternity.

Jack left that place too, and he wandered on, until he fell to the ground. It was not the hot sun or a lack of food, it was that this reality was so stagnant. He felt it in himself too, and he did not understand. He felt that life without purpose, purposelessness itself, assailed him here. Then he realized that there was no purpose, no connection, no higher goal, no deeper striving, no life; in this place. It was all wastelands, wastelands of the purposeless, and it was a truly empty place.

THE ROBES WERE ALL IN DEEP PAIN. The joining had taken their essence and mixed it with the other. They struggled with each other's competing wants and aspirations, that were now becoming their own. They became more insane, yet somehow, more powerful. There were some though, who became so at war with themselves that they broke free of the other evil force. A few of The White and some of The Black broke free. The White found The White, and The Black found The Black, and a small number of each left the cave through different pathways.

When they found a safe place to be what they were, a *place* well hidden, they would again begin new schemes. They were *Other Places* where *empty souls roamed*. Places of steel and cement. Places of the disconnected. The Black had to *capitalise* on any contingency that would rise from what may come from the melding. Black and White had seen the *others* leave the cave, both knowing that they may still use each other, yet.

Even though The White could not stand The Black, they would still use anything to break through, or tear down what did not fit their view. It was to be *their* ideology, or none. They only saw their own version of a new paradise, and all opposition to their 'ism would be struck down by whatever means, or poison, required. It was just then that the idea for 'The Weapon' came to be. The White Hood smiled deep in the darkness of its hood, elated at its cleverness. It would use this ultimate power for the ultimate Cause; the *Only Way*.

"I have found the Way," were the words that were heard.

JACK STILL WALKED THE WASTELANDS. He was walking the dunes aimlessly. He didn't know what direction to go because there was no goal, no place different, just more white dunes

now. He looked up the face of a high dune and thought that it might, at the very least, be a challenge to climb its almost wavelike face. He headed up, feeling a little better, from this very small purpose. He strode up the dune, and towards the top his thighs felt like they were burning, but he crouched down, and used his hands and arms to help him continue. When he reached the top, a great feeling of happiness entered his being, understanding that such a small thing, as other small acts, can lend to great happiness.

As he was looking around from the top of the dune, he decided to take a direction, and climb one dune at a time until he ended up somewhere. The thought of taking a direction buoyed him more, and heading off, he felt quite fulfilled. Jack climbed dune after dune, knowing that eventually, he had to come to something. He climbed, and he succeeded, and he climbed, and he checked his bearings, and he lived in the joy of all this. As it was *something*.

As time went on, he kept to his task, trusting that The Great Spirit would lead him. He prayed for help each night and gave thanks and praise to The Great Spirit. Jack wondered at how he could once have disbelieved, as believing there was no Great Wisdom of life was now voodoo to him, and a source of blindness to many. Even a reverence for life, the earth, creation, and the sheer size and intricate balance of the universe, needs fill the soul with awe and thanks. “*When we feel small, we remember,*” he thought.

It was days upon days, and he continued on. He never felt thirsty, or hungry, or weak. That was not the nature of *this* desert. In humility and detachment, he walked the dunes of this place, thankful for the small purpose given to him. As he now reached the top of another dune, he found that he had happened upon an oasis; or was it that his purpose and trust had brought him there? There was an encampment surrounding the oasis. There were tents of all kinds and colours, from

large Bedouin tents to one-man swags. It seemed to him that this encampment had grown here naturally. The large irregular circle of tents that centred on the oasis had an organic order, and it surprised him how lovely the diversity made it to the eye.

“Hello!” called out Jack, from the top of the dune.

People came out of their tents, but they just stood there. They didn’t call back, or rush to see this stranger, until a man came out of one of the large tents, and called out, “Hello! *And welcome.*”

Jack waved and headed down the gentle slope of the back of the dune. He felt that if this had been the sea, he would have been swimming up the fronts of the waves and falling down their backs. Somehow, after so many dunes, it felt like that, as he walked down the dune towards the encampment.

The tall Middle Eastern man came out and greeted him, then ushered him to his tent. They sat in the middle of the floor on carpets, and Jack saw that they were the carpets of The Department. A woman came with some tea she had made in a beautiful, but strange pot. It was large and silver, and it had a teapot perched on top of it, like a bird on a rock. The lady smiled and the man bowed to her in thanks. She nodded her head and walked through a thin curtain in the corner the tent. Jack felt so much love and respect in that place that it just melted his heart. To see the beauty of that simple scene was almost overpowering.

“You seem different from the others here,” observed Jack.

“I have come to live here. To see what I can give. To help these souls find their voice, and then help them explore a vision for their future. One *they* must initiate, and work for. It *must* come from them, and I will help them with The Essence.”

“Okay,” said Jack, with a nod, understanding the nature of The Essence he referred to.

“The Spirit is the essential element. These people will need to build their future upon *spiritual* foundations, *especially* on these shifting sands.”

“Yep, I’ve come to understand that all civilisations grow from a spiritual foundation, and that when it rots away, they fall.”

“You have learnt much. It is good you have come. I have been waiting for you. There is much more you need to know. There is a dire danger pursuing you, and a great test is coming. And even if you survive the onslaught there is still much more ahead of you.”

“I won’t give in to the Robes.”

“You may, and you may not. We are God’s mystery, Jack. What we will choose at any one time, is what we will choose. Be circumscribed. Be aware.”

“Their promises mean nothing to me.”

“Don’t underestimate them, or the potential darkness inside you. Even if you do not allow them to pass, they will still seek to destroy you. While you are the way, you are also blocking the way. You may be required to make the ultimate sacrifice.”

“Then, I will make it. I don’t care to allow them into my world.”

“Well, if you pass beyond this test, you may choose to do as I do. The life work ahead of you may be *more* far reaching. You need *purpose*, as *all* do to be happy, and it seems you have forgotten the essence of that which guided you all those years ago.”

“I follow The Blessed Beauty and am learning as fast as I can.”

“Yes, you are learning, but you have forgotten The Essence.”

“I don’t see that. I’ve had to come to understand life on the ground, and how it relates to Spirit. I have had to walk the earth to find the truth,” explained Jack.

“Where are you going, Jack?”

“To understanding.”

“The way to understanding is greatly in selfless service to others. The way to know your true self is through service. The measure of a man, what he is or what he isn’t, is in his actions and what he chooses to do, not his knowledge and not his words. Knowledge that ends in knowledge, words that end in words; what use are these?”

“I get *sent* to all these places *you know*. Well, at least the part of me that’s seeking growth and happiness,” said Jack, in his defence, “and I *need* to learn these things so I can act well.”

“Mmmm,” said the man, not saying yes and not saying no.

Jack could feel that he was stopping the flow of nurture in this experience. He could feel The Beauty’s Spirit in this place, and he said to the man, “Please, go on.”

The man began to talk slowly and quietly, “The single reality of any man or woman does not exist in a vacuum. The growth of each has an effect on others, and on the world of being. The individual reality affects the collective reality, and the collective reality also affects the individual. The Beauty came to reset the individual and *the collective* purpose of man. Do you remember the three purposes, Jack?”

“Yes, I do. They are, to know and love The Creator, to grow the virtues of the human soul, and to carry forward an ever-advancing civilisation. I know too that we are given the duty of protection and stewardship of the natural world.”

“Yes, I would say that the Third Purpose, houses the duty of stewardship of the natural world.”

“Yep, I suppose it does.”

“Renew your focus, Jack. Return it to all three purposes.”

“I am *on* the journey, I am *on*,” said Jack, trying to make the man understand that he had to see it through.

“As are *we all*, Jack. But understand its ultimate purpose, the renewal and regeneration of the kingdom of humanity. It is about the gift of future to your kind, and by giving it, you will grow more than by any other way. In this service, happiness will envelop you.”

“I see,” said Jack, falling back into humility. He felt himself returning to The Beauty, His life, and His Words. As he sat, he saw the vision for man, and the Spirit of his Faith. He now saw that his purpose was not for him to reach understanding, primarily. It was to love, to give and to

serve the future, no matter his journey. Maybe both were essential purposes, then he saw the three purposes more clearly. All journeys were *one journey*; that transformation of the individual, and the transformation of the collective, were indeed intertwined.

“Do you talk with The Creator, Jack?”

“Yes, more so in this place.”

“Have you received confirmations?”

“Well, finding you here has been the big one. Seeing you made me know that I was right to act. I was right to move. Until I found you here, the purpose in simply moving in a direction was enough somehow. It should not have been, but relative to the emptiness of this desert, it was life giving, and I felt happy.”

“So, you have communed more with The Creator in *this* place?”

“Yes, it has been so wonderful. It is such a joy in this empty place.”

“It is *always* a joy; empty place or not. You are simply more aware of it because here your mind and life here are less busy.”

“Sure, I’ve been so busy on this journey, and in life. One thing just comes on the heels of another.”

“How do you find purpose in that?”

“I suppose, I trust the journey, and find that discovering and learning are the purpose.”

“That is good but remember only *knowledge acted upon* is valuable. Humility, a quiet mind, and *active love* are the keys to happiness. In inspiration, we learn, in peace, we see, and in love, we endeavour.

“Humility, a quiet mind, and active love,” repeated Jack.

“This is the *state* of service. The essence of man is love and knowledge. All is love and knowledge. He is love and knowledge. And the *active* reality of love and knowledge in life is *connection* and *purpose*. These are active love and knowledge.”

THE MOUNTAIN LOOMED LARGE BEFORE HIM. It reminded him of the pictures of Kilimanjaro in Tanzania and Mount Fuji in Japan. It was high and wide at its base, and had a great single snow cap. The mountains he wandered through at home were dwarfs, up against this one, and it was awe inspiring.

Jack had left the encampment after a time, as he wanted to move on; to continue the process, and to walk some more. There was something in walking, and striving, and praying. He did not understand the allure, but he sure *felt it*. It did not seem to matter at all what was around him, as it was something powered from deep inside him. It gave him *satisfaction and contentment*.

In any case, he decided that the mountain would be his next goal. Even though one wonders if it is more so that life places them in our path. It would be a long climb, but he had time. He would walk and climb all day, and rest, and pray, and sleep at night. His goal was to climb the mountain and *purpose* had been born of that. “*Purpose requires a goal*,” he thought, as he headed off in high spirits and with great enthusiasm.

He enjoyed the climb as he could use his arms, and his poise, and balance. He almost skated up some small rock faces, and at the end of the first morning's climb he sat down to look about. All he saw below was desert, but even the desert has its magic. He meditated and allowed thoughts to come and go, and he saw the nature of *purpose and process* more clearly, as words and images came to him. They rose from his intent to understand more, and from the focus of his soul. The soul can reach for much more than the mind. Understanding and creativity rise easily from the meditative state.

He slept well that night, and on the second day of his climb he was feeling great. He was physically buoyed by the climbing. It reminded him of running across the rocks at the beach as a child, and how sure footed he was then. He remembered how far he could run, and how he loved the early mornings. Just then, he saw an old man sitting on a rock that projected out above the path. The man sat under a small thin tree with one bunch of leaves on top that looked like a Cooley hat. It provided this older oriental man with some shade. It was a strange sight, because there had been no trees since he had entered the wastelands. It had been all sand and dunes, and stones, and rock, in this place.

"Hey," said Jack, as a hello.

"How is your day?" asked the man, looking down from his elevated perch.

"My day *is great*, old mate."

"What is great?"

"I've been enjoying the regular exercise. My time in the desert made me fitter for this climbing, and I feel very well."

“Just that?”

“And the meditation and prayer; and to tell you the truth, I like going to sleep soon after sunset, and waking with the sun. It’s all pretty magic.”

“Early to bed and early to rise?”

“Yes,” said Jack beaming, he was overjoyed, and he just couldn’t help it. He did a dance right there in front of the old man. He just had to.

“I can see it is *all* very true,” mused the man, with a chuckle.

“*Boy!* Tell me about it,” said Jack, with a broad smile, while shaking his head.

“It would seem *all* these things are valuable and provide much happiness.”

“It would seem so,” answered Jack, still smiling.

“People can tell you of happiness, and they can tell you how to get it, but in the end, we must *act* towards it,” offered the old man.

“That would be my take, old man.”

“What else brings you happiness?”

“Being of value,” answered Jack, and his eyes began to tear a little. He had not realised just how deeply set and strong that fire was inside him. As his mind now naturally reached back though his life he realised that this was a deep purpose within him. *To be of value*. “Wow. I did not see that coming!”

“Somethings rise, and rise again, and we forget them and remember them again, until we become consciously aware of what ails us and what drives us. It seems *it* found *you*, in this place.”

Then, he remembered back to his time with Joe, and him saying something about it. He had also been very motivated to do something when he studied with a lady named Sue long before that. It had appealed to him then, but today it had hit Jack in the heart, and he now saw that his wandering and effort in his Faith had also been somewhat driven by this deep intent in him.

“It seems so. I have a lot to reflect on now,” he eventually said.

“Yes, purpose, especially our core purpose, brings us to life. Each of us has our own, yet I would be bold enough to say that giving to others is deep in the nature of man and a great part of his true reality. Altruism and being gregarious is at the core of us, and happiness and contentment cannot live in a heart that ignores it.”

“Altruism? I don’t see a lot of it out there.”

“That is because a madness has taken hold in your world. A madness!”

“Yep, I s’pose. Giving feels great, eh? It has gifts like nothing else, especially when people really need it, even a little thing can make their day. Those times are really beautiful and so warming.”

“*It is love*,” stated the old man. “And up against it, the madness is cold and hard, like these rocks.”

“Yep, we need a little more life, and caring, eh?”

“Yes.”

Just then, Jack laughed out loud to himself, and said, “As well as the little joys.”

“What little joys?” asked the old man.

“Things like a nice bit of fruitcake, and a cup of tea, after a hard morning’s work; something earned, or kind to the body. Maybe, just sitting in the morning sun and warming yourself. Simple things that give joy to life.”

“I have no time for such things. I live without them,” said the old man.

“With *that* podgy tummy, I wouldn’t think so,” challenged Jack.

“Well, I eat little, but in balance. I find I do not need much.”

“I went through the whole diet thing when I was married; all the way from meat and potatoes to being a fruitarian. Even though I believe we are vegetarian, I found that we’re all different, and it comes down to balance, good variety, and whole foods. I also found that you have to feel what you need and what you don’t need, but *mostly* I learned that super focus on diet is a luxury of the developed world.”

“Mmm, well, these things will all become clearer through time and process.”

“Yep. So where do you get food, old man?”

“I have a devotee, who tends to my needs.”

“You don’t even do your own shopping?” Jack was taken aback by this. He thought that this learned man would at least forage for himself, and he added, “There would be a few mothers

out there that would not be in love with *you*. They do a *lot* more than shopping, and you know what, they might just be a bit wiser than you.”

The old man nearly choked, and then he laughed. “It seems you have things to teach me.”

“I don’t know. I don’t get the whole teacher thing, never have. I mean, I get that people can give you much, show you things and teach you things, and I have had some wonderful people recently who helped light my way, but to set yourself up as a teacher when you don’t even do your own shopping . . .”

“Ahhh. *I see.*”

“There are a lot of people out there who believe they hold wisdom, and maybe some do, but when somebody sets themselves above others, or puts *themselves* forward as *learned*, well, I don’t like it. No one is above another. And when people who are in a place of trust or esteem, misinform others...well that *really* gets me angry.”

“In what way?”

“In just about everything of consequence. There is endless misinformation in our world, especially about the true nature of humans. People follow a kind of ‘*new church*’, and it is creating a spiritual wasteland. They’re basically saying that we are just clever meat with emotions. They are oppressing souls to me. They’re trying to disguise our true nature in their ignorance, and leading people towards lesser places. Ignorance is an illness and dubious guidance so destructive to the young. These things *fire* me up like *nothing* else.”

“How is this anger good for you?”

“It’s not. It has to go. I do understand that life is the *Creator’s* plan, and there is wisdom in what happens. I am also learning constructive ways to reach for positive change, but it’s not totally wrong to be angry.”

“It is not good for peace of mind.”

“No, and it should be cast away and risen above, but disinformation and injustice needs be railed against; if it *is* injustice and not some ‘*new nirvana’s*’ misshapen view of reality. Endless anger is just ego, but to open the door of anger and shut it again, in some instances, is good, as I see it.”

“It has its place and measure, as do all things, but I would say, focus needs be on some inner poise and activity in what is good. There is much in the world to be dissatisfied with, and much potential wasted in debate and anger,” offered the old man.

“Yep, for sure. Who knows what I will be thinking in a month’s time, but that part of the puzzle seems locked in for me. We will see, I s’pose.”

“Ahh, *process*. You understand its value.”

Jack looked up at the man and was glad for this conversation. It had given him much, but he wanted to put something to him. He was thinking about how he would go about it, when the old man, just said, “Please.”

“Well, if you do know some things deeper than most, you should be down there making a difference where people live. I mean, our conversation has given me some gems, but look at what I had to do to get to you.”

“I can be accessed, if anyone has the will.”

“Sorry, mate. That doesn’t cut it for me. And how the hell can you say you have knowledge for people who are up against the anvil every day if you don’t even do your own shoppin’. What possible, *real* help could you truly be?”

“I contemplate. I draw down. I seek answers in deeper ways.”

“We can *all* do that, you know. We don’t need some turkey perched up on a hill telling us how to deal with life; especially if it is a life he hasn’t even lived in amongst things. I think men and women who have *lived*, have much more to give.”

The old man sat in contemplation for a good while, and Jack eventually broke the silence, “Sorry, old mate. It’s not my place to tell you your life. It’s just that you have a lot to give, so why not muck in with the rest of us. Even the Dalai Lama has spread so much upliftment to the general population since being forced from *his* mountain. He gets contemplation time, but he gives his gifts too.”

The old man continued to sit in contemplation for some time. Then, he said, “I might walk back down the mountain with you, young man. It seems I have much to learn and more to give, and *apparently*, I have been missing out on the *little joys*.”

“JACK! JACK! COME ON JACK, WAKE UP.”

“Hey, guys,” said Jack, very gently.

“*Hey, guys,*” copied Agent Deveroux in an exaggerated womanly voice. “*Get with the programme, Jack. We gotta’ move.*”

“You know, you guys are so different to others of The Department.”

“We ain’t *Department*, Jack. At least, we ain’t that department. Isn’t that right, Agent?”

“Wat,” said the other agent.

“What?!”

“Agent Wat.”

“Oh, for God’s sake. Are you kidding me? Why do they send me these people?! Where’s Merlow?”

“He’s on furlough.”

“Are you tryin’ to be funny, kid? *You wanna play rhymes with the old man, do ya’?*” threatened Deveroux, with a menacing look on his face.

“*No, sir,*” replied Wat, obviously a little intimidated by the older Agent.

“Good answer, boy. No, Jack, we are not of The Department.”

“Who do you belong to then?”

“*Need to know, Jack. Secret Agents, Jack. Boy, I am just waist deep in ’em today,*” cursed the Agent to himself, and only Jennifer laughed.

After Deveroux finished shaking his head, he continued explaining. “The Department runs way deeper than us. They do what *they* do, and we do what we do.”

“Boy, you got out of the wrong side of the bed today, mate,” said Jack.

“Can’t be happy *every day*, Jack. Makes you appreciate the good days. Like I said, The Department runs deeper, and I run here.”

“There was a man from The Department who I met in the desert, and he told me that people talk themselves into unhappiness, mostly. They see themselves as victims to it and like to recount all the bad things that happened to them.”

“I ain’t whinging, Jack. I am just doin’ today,” retorted Deveroux.

“Yep, I see that, and you got the job on your mind, no worries. I meant *generally*. So *many* people sit in their mud puddles, and see who can complain the most, or they compare their mud puddles. The man I met said that it has turned into an epidemic of the soul,” finished Jack, as they all walked to the Agent’s vehicle.

“Yep, that’s why The Physician’s sent,” offered Deveroux. “Folks don’t realise they just need to *be* happy; to look out for others and find some *damn* purpose. Being meaningfully connected, and living purposed, are the bacon and eggs of happiness. That’s for sure.”

“We bring peace into this place, or more pain,” offered Jennifer. “*We* bring love into this place; into the human system. We are the way for love to come here, and yet, we just pour out negativity and fear. We are *all* responsible if life seems loveless,” she added, while Jack just stared in wonder at what came out of her.

“Many here seem to love the *idea* of a loving unified humanity, but don’t *really, actually* love *people*,” added Agent Wat, as they were all getting into the car.

“That sounds like a solid purpose right there; to actually love people,” said Jack, putting his seatbelt on.

“That sounds like, we are *outta here*,” said Agent Deveroux, as he fired the car up and jammed the accelerator down.

Focus

“Is this the place, Agent?” asked Agent Deveroux, as he brought the car to a halt.

“What?”

“Is this the place Agent Wat?”

“No, I was just off somewhere, sir.”

“What!?”

Agent Wat did not know whether Agent Deveroux was yelling his name or asking a question. He had always struggled with this kind of miscommunication. He gathered himself, and said, “Yes, Agent. This is where the map says we wait.”

“*Damn*, boy, we gotta’ work out a way to keep all that clear.”

“Yes, sir.”

“You are, Agent. *Okay?*”

“Roger, sir.”

Deveroux smiled, Jennifer was giggling, and Jack said, “I would leave Roger out of it, if I were you.” And they all had a laugh.

“*Fat Man!*” screamed Wat, suddenly.

“Damn! We’re sitting ducks,” cursed Deveroux.

The Fat Man drove a large car, and as he flew past, he sideswiped the Agents’ car, taking Jack with him somehow.

“Never shares the damn road! Even when you’re off it,” cursed Deveroux, some more.

“Jack’s gone!” called out Jennifer.

Deveroux almost instantly fired up the car, and flung it around to chase The Fat Man. Meanwhile, Jack was wondering why he was suddenly looking out the back window of the car, and the Agents were gone.

“Good morning, Jack. I’ve been watching you,” said the big man, in a white suit and a wide brimmed hat, as he barreled down the road. “You are a very interesting young man; very interesting indeed. You know, I’ve been doing some talking with some robed gentlemen, lately. Well, you couldn’t really call them gentlemen. Not like *ourselves*, of course. They are a little desperate to get a hold of you, *let me tell you*.”

“Who the hell *are* you?” asked Jack, as he turned around in the back seat.

The man was still driving fast, but was very calm, as he replied, “I am The Fat Man. *You haven’t heard of me?* Mmm, *not good*. I will *have* to talk to my publicist. He must be slacking. Anyway, I buy and sell, *you know*.”

“No, I *don’t know*,” replied Jack, curtly.

“Oh, you know, information, weapons etc,” he answered, as he checked how close the pursuing Agents were. “I fix things for all kinds of ideologues. There are zealots of all kinds out there, and they are certainly growing in number. Everyone has a barrow to push, it seems. The crazy thing is that they all think they’re helping. Your world is a basket case, but good for business.”

“So, who are you working for now?” questioned Jack, trying to gather the man’s intentions.

“Well, *you*, actually, and some side work with some food zealots on a particular issue they see as rather crucial. The Robes and I have *finished* our dealings, and *that* is why I am here to see you.”

“I don’t get it?”

“Jack, I have made a good living out of chaos, but only if it’s here and there. I see a big breakdown coming, and I have some things that may help strengthen you. Can’t have the whole place going to hell. Not good for business.”

“I talked to Death, recently, and by what he was saying, it seems that you are a little late.”

“Ahh...Reaper. He doesn’t like me, you know. I have tried to be of service, but well, you can’t be friends with everyone.”

“I don’t need your help, mate. Just take me back to the Agents.”

“Oh, don’t worry they’ll be along, soon enough. The Boss gives them faster cars,” he responded, as he glanced in the rear vision mirror and sped up a little more.

“The Boss?”

“They haven’t told you who the work for, have they?”

“I know *enough*.”

“You keep telling yourself that. Things usually work out *very well* that way.”

“Boy, you’re good.”

“I enjoy my work...and beyond that *little message* to you, it does work out well; but only for people like me. You see, people who think they know enough get into all sorts of trouble, very regularly, and they don’t grow.”

“A guy like *you*, talking about *growth*.”

“So quick to judge. Let’s talk about *humility*, Jack.”

“What!”

“Humility, Jack. You *will* require it, and far more than you are accessing right now.”

“I don’t believe this. Are you selling *advice*?”

“*Giving* you insight, young man. *No charge*. Do you think that learning comes only from holy places? It also comes from grave mistakes and sad entrapment in unsavoury places. The light

becomes very apparent in the dark. I live in the dark, and I have come to know the purpose of light quite clearly.”

“Why don’t you come out of the dark, then?”

“I have appetites, but this not about me. It is about light.”

“I don’t get where you’re goin’.”

“I haven’t explained it yet. Maybe some more *patience* would be useful, and we are in a car chase you know.”

Jack chuckled at that, and said, “Please go on then.”

“Well...Light is why your world exists. In your corporeal form you may know darkness firsthand and so learn of light’s true value; its reality and its beauty; that you might choose light, even when the darkness is alluring. Yours is a shadow world, Jack; the shadow cast by a deeper reality. The universe is folded up inside you, my friend, don’t cast it away for shadows. Your eyes will only be fully opened when you are born into the next life.”

“I’ve been there. I’ve *been* light.”

“*You are* light, and those Robes can’t really touch you, but you need more poise. So, close your eyes and feel what I am about to say.”

“I was told that my reality was *deeper* than light.”

“Oh, for goodness’ sake, Jack. Its relative terminology and semantics. Try to concentrate on what’s important,” he said, as kept on driving at dangerously high speed.

Jack just relaxed in the back seat. His gut was telling him this guy was for real, and so, he closed his eyes, and The Fat Man began to speak.

“By language it is. Images and words rise from the soul, and by language they are given out to, or created, in the world. Language can be symbols, or acts, or words. By language it is. We are meaning.

The Creator said ‘Be’, and it all became. You are made in His image and can say be. Your thoughts are prayers. They bring things to be. Take care what you think, they are words. By language it is. Choose meaning.

By language it is, and by His Will it is. You bring to your life, what you think; what you believe, what you focus on. Take care what you focus on, what you love, as this is intent. By language it is. Seek meaning.

Aid can be sought from deeper by focus. Guidance will be given if asked for, and assistance, if it be for your good. Accept what comes. By life it is. By its Wisdom it is. By Its language it is. Accept meaning.

The Messenger brings Light. By language it is; to see all such things, and more of your being. See what is deeper in you, what it can build, and bring it into this place. By language it is. Light gleaming.

Know your being. Beware. Ego will call to you. By language it is. Beware. Many will seek to create you in their image. Beware the endless words; of others, and of self. By language, they create the world. By language, it is. Not meaning.

Humility affects the heart mostly, and brings the mind in line with the soul, and The Will. Sit in humility, and feel your heart physically rest, as powers become more manifest within. By language it is. This is seeing.

Sit quietly and simply be. Be the soul of wherever you find your being. Don't fill that space with mind and emotion. Know all is possible, be humble and create what you and He, will. By language it is. This is being.

Create beauty. Trust The Fashioner as He works with you; more truly, as you work with Him. By the Creative Word, all is made again. By the Creative Word, new potential is released. The language. The meaning.

Your concerns are all shadows. A gap to show meaning. You are free of this place, yet not free of His Meaning. It is light. By focus, by intent, by language, it is...Guidance and Meaning.

By language it is! This is meaning."

Jack sat there in the back seat feeling, and *somewhat* seeing, what was said. He could not believe this came from this very sweaty and unsavoury man. He then remembered the kindness of a Giant some years ago, realizing again that there is good in all, and that where light comes from may, at times, surprise you. In his memory of the Giant, he also saw that very apparent darkness is part of the contrast that provides more clarity on what is good.

"Wolves are wolves, Jack. I am a wolf. Seek only the good in others, but *don't* be a fool," warned The Fat Man, now clearly in Jack's thoughts.

Jack brought himself out of his thoughts quickly, not trusting The Fat Man that close, and even wondering if this was all a ruse for him to gain information.

“*Oh, Jack, after all that.*”

“You brought up *wolves*, old mate.”

“Yes, I did, didn’t I?” admitted The Fat Man, with a small chuckle. “Just a little warning.”

“Yeah, Thanks.”

“Thank *you*, Jack. You have allowed me some air, and some light, and it feels good. It is good to give, and no creature can prevail without light,” he said, as he looked in the rear vision mirror, and slowed down a bit. “It seems your friends are just about upon us.”

Jack looked around and saw Deveroux swerving all over the road, hitting the horn, and flicking his lights as he pursued The Fat Man. The Fat Man then slammed on the brakes, and Agent Deveroux did the same, but he was going too fast and he was too close. “*Hold on!*” he blurted, to his passengers.

The Fat man’s car, though, simply went *through* the Agents’ car, and Jack found himself back in the front seat with Deveroux. The Fat Man had powered off and disappeared; the Agents’ car was now stationary; Deveroux’s eyes nearly popping out of his skull.

“Interesting guy,” said Jack, nonchalantly.

Deveroux was leaning on the steering wheel, still trying to deal with the shock, and he slowly turned his head and looked incredulously at Jack, or more so at his calm comment.

THE AGENTS' CAR PULLED UP AGAIN. They were back at the place Wat had found on the map. They were now parked on the sand just off a beach road and facing the ocean. The white sandy beach was set between two great green headlands that were about three miles apart. Suddenly, a surfer popped up in front of the car.

“*Hey, Jack, mannn,*” said the Surfer. “Didn’t know it was *you*, man? Who’s the *babe*, dude?”

“Hey, man. This is Jennifer,” said Jack, as he and the others were getting out of the car. He had met this man a long time ago, on a different beach.

“You surf, Jen?”

“No,” said Jennifer, laughing.

“I like *her*, man.”

“She is *very* likeable,” responded Jack.

“*Likeable*, yeah. That could be the new word,” said the surfer, as he nodded his head, and repeated it, “*Likeable.*”

Jack and Jennifer laughed, and Deveroux just looked on, wondering why. Wat looked down and smiled, as he kicked the sand gently.

“So, who is here to learn from *the master*,” said the surfer, raising his arms to indicate himself.

“Learn what?” said Jack.

“I’m a *surfer*, man. What do you *think*?”

“*Surfing*?” guessed Jack, with a confused look.

“I don’t get it either, Jack,” offered Deveroux. “But there must be a reason,”

“There’s *always* a good reason,” said the surfer, with a smile. “*Surf ’s up, Duuuude!*”

Jack and Jennifer went out on the waves with the Surfer, on and off, all that day. The Agents kept watch from the bonnet of their car in the shade of some trees. Jack was hopeless. He kept getting dumped. Jennifer had much more poise, and in Jack’s defence, the surfer had given her *way* more attention.

“*Focus, Jack!...Man!...Dude!...Man!*” The Surfer was getting a little more than frustrated.

“Do you think this is about the *waves*, Jack?”

“Well, *it is* surfing.”

“It’s about *you*, man. Don’t get battered by the waves. *Ride them, man*. Get focused, trust what’s *innate* in you, dude. Trust The Man.”

“I haven’t surfed before.”

“You’ve surfed plenty. Find your purpose, and get your focus, dude.”

Jack reached inside to find his purpose. He found his will to be of value, and somehow, it focused him. His fear of the waves and falling off the board, just fell away. It seems that focus comes from what is deep within us, or deep goals, and Jack found that he *had* surfed before. He

had surfed *life*, so knew he could surf these little waves, and he grew more confident with each wave he caught.

He was enjoying the feeling more and more as he surfed, when suddenly, a wave dumped him hard, and he hit the rocks. One forearm and his knee hit hard. He brought himself up to the surface okay, but he was in shock. He tried to relax himself, as he hung onto his board and let the fierce feeling of the shock pass. The Surfer and Jennifer could see that he was in pain and called out. He waved the 'I'm okay' wave, and eventually got up on his board and started to paddle out again. The Surfer and Jennifer were taken by his resilience, and as he paddled, the surfer kept on with the coaching.

"Humility, man. If you get good, you gotta' get in humility. You have to dig for more and more of it as you get better at riding. It's respect for the surf, man. It's respect for what's greater than you. It is respect for The Man. He made us this way. The more ability you gain, the more humility you need to balance it. *That* gives you poise. Dig deep for focus, but you need to *sit deep* for poise."

"Yeah, okay."

"You add faith to that, and then you are looking indestructible, or at least the anvil will be less of an issue. You might even come to appreciate the hard roads in service to others. Like the Blessed Beauty says... ***"The true lover yearneth for tribulation."***²

"I can really feel that now," he called out to the Surfer, sitting up on his board, and waiting for the next wave with real anticipation. The pain in his leg and his arm just made him feel more

alive, and more purposed somehow. “I couldn’t before, but I can now,” he added, as he watched for a good wave.

He was impatient for the next wave, and very excited about this new sense of being he had found. He could not gather it all right now, but he was now feeling that he needed to run and breathe hard, to know struggle, to produce something. He needed to get stronger; the world, his emotional attachments and wants, were now just sad to him. He needed to give of himself, even if that meant hardship. The malaise of his attachments, and his wants, just made him feel queasy. He knew that spiritual strength grew from challenges, but challenges in service to *others* made them meaningful, and more joyous. It was like hardening up for others, and it felt good.

But even deeper inside him, something else was calling for his attention. His mind went back to his first journey deeper, and his heart found there the golden key of Love for The Creator, and The Knowing of His Beauty; and in this, Jack found the core motivating force. the Creative Word was *His Breath*, and he had come to know The Creator’s power and deep love through it. Jack had come to know the sheer sublime beauty of The Remedy, that He had sent.

He knew deeply that he had to serve the New Message with renewed vigour when he returned home; his whole being knew that it was the true remedy for his time, and his kind. He wanted to *be of value* and found its actualisation was most fully and deeply available in *that* work. He found *real* meaning when he had found his Faith all those years ago, and it was not about him, but what he could give for love. It was about sacrifice, and this developing realisation created elation deep within him. He would never gather all he had felt that day, but he would seek more of its meaning in service and use what he *had* gathered to face The Robes.

He had been impatient for the next wave, but fate had other priorities, and he waited on his board, now easily settling into the perfection and wisdom of life, and its timing. As he relaxed, he looked across at Jennifer and smiled. He didn't know this lady. She was so light. She was courageous, and she had Travelled. He wondered what else lay within her and what *they* might learn together; what they might *become* together.

Jennifer sat on her board wondering too; at Jack, and what this man meant to her. He was so ordinary, and yet he wasn't *to her*. She sat there beside the surfer, watching Jack bob around on the rolling swell. He was now intent on the next set of waves coming through and Jennifer was looking forward to getting to know him more.

Jack caught the next wave and rose confidently on his board. He looked across at Jennifer with a huge smile, and as he did, he lost his focus and got dumped. This time, he was caught in a whirlpool, under the wave, and didn't know which end was up. When he finally breached the surface of the water he drew in the air deep and hard.

"What happened, Jack?"

"Not paying attention," answered Jack.

"What are you attached to, Jack?"

"What?"

"Whatever you are attached to will take your attention, and just like that head of yours, it can dump you, man."

"I just *smiled*," said Jack, in his defence.

“When you are on a board, one small move is all it takes to get dumped.”

“How much more is there? I just get good and then . . . *bam*.”

“There’s *always* more, *Jack, man*. Humility, focus, detachment, Jack, okay!” coached the Surfer.

“Okay,” Jack called back, as he paddled back out to catch another wave.

“The waves are The Creator’s grace, and there are *always* bigger ones,” yelled the surfer.

It had been a magical day out on the water, and all three were feeling the joy of it. Jennifer now just sat there, loving the gentle motion and the water lapping on her. The cool breeze coming across the water made it very comfortable. Jack had paddled out hard past the breakers to catch another set and now turned quickly to catch a monster wave. The surfer was thinking that it was a bit much for him, but he let it be, with big eyes and a smile.

The surfer turned to Jennifer, and said, “That dude is crazy, man. I see why you like him.”

Jennifer blushed, shrugged her shoulders, and looked away.

Jack yelled, “Woohooooo!” as he stood up and slid down the front of the huge wave.

“Woohooooo!” yelled the surfer, in shared celebration, and Jennifer just laughed at the look of sheer terror now growing in Jack’s eyes.

Process

It had been a long day in the water, and Jack was very happy to lie down on the sand. He just lay there, breathing in and out. Jennifer came up and sat beside him, while drying her hair with a towel. She had taken the time to put down another towel and was making herself comfortable.

“You look exhausted, Jack.”

All Jack could say was, “Yeah. Stuffed.”

Jennifer laughed, and said, “You just kept pushing it. You need to pace things. It’s not about cramming it all into one day, you know.”

“Yep, always been a bit focused, and tend to drive hard. My grandfather said I was going to be trouble for my parents with that much drive and tenacity. Though I think he might have called it *stubbornness*,” said Jack, with a smile. “It *has* been valuable to me, but right now, I get what you’re sayin’.”

“It’s all a process. Take the time. Enjoy it.”

Jack loved this girl. She calmed him, and she was always in equal mode. No kowtowing and no pushy attitude. She was strong and gentle. His mind flashed back to the past, to a woman who told him that he was too weak for her. Looking at Jennifer, he now realised that the woman from his past was too weak for him. She needed someone to fight with her and supply her with anything she wanted. Jennifer just *was*. She held her own and was content with life as it came. No mean feat for a Traveller.

“Sleep, Jack. I’ll wake you when the food is on,” she said simply.

He looked up at this fine-boned creature with kind eyes, and he just fell deeper for her, as he fell off into a sleep of exhaustion.

Some words came to him before the dream was upon him. “Not all that is cast upon the shore is driftwood.”

Jack found himself on a white dune high above the beach, with a Golden Anvil in front of him. A luminous deep green hammer sat easily in his hand, and he raised it up, and brought it down on The Anvil. It rang a glorious tone, and somehow, he learned of life from its ring. Each time he struck it the sound was different; each time, more magical and intricate.

Just then, he noticed the silhouette of a woman with a bun in her hair, high on a night cliff. He had no other words for it, as it seemed that he was in daytime, and she and the high rocky cliff above were in the night. He rang the anvil again, but she did not turn to look. She looked out to sea, or was it the sky? As he followed her gaze, he saw the great turtle. It flew across the sun, as it strove off into the sea sky. The sea sky turned green, then to blue, and then to purple. The purple colour made the sky seem night, and the sun seem like the moon, as some stars came out to guard

the early evening sky. The evening star, and the eyes of the wise man, took their place in the sky. It was not day, and it was not night, but all was as it should be.

Jack looked down and saw through the sand below his feet. There were eggs. They were huge, and there were hundreds of them, sitting in a womb of sand. He knew now what the turtle was, and The Anvil, and the eggs. He had not been at work in the real world to aid his kind on this journey. He had been cast upon a shore, but he was not driftwood. He was here, on his island, so he may later bring all the gifts of his journeys, out into real life, through the Golden Anvil and his efforts. The Golden Anvil was the Creative Word brought by The Beauty. The turtle was his journey, and the eggs, the potential of all that could come from it.

He knew these things could sustain him, and the time would come for the turtle to return. He knew he would have to leave his island eventually, and all the young turtles that did not perish, would fly off into the world with him. They would scatter, and grow, and bring good things. But for now, he had to work The Anvil, and gather all he could, so when released, he could once again take up his scythe in the real world.

Then, came these words. "Your poise and growth are a gift for others. If your life is not a gift for others, it is less of a life, and really, not a life. In sacrifice, there is the highest realm. Like the spiritual reality you found on the waves, you will in time crave its rarefied air. To be able to surf well is not, in and of itself, valuable. Acts of selfless love are the essence of life, and the gems of existence."

THE PALE MAN UNLOADED THE TRUCK NEAR A WAREHOUSE. There were many small pine boxes, all of differing sizes. He was a known associate of The Fat Man, and the few Black Robes that had escaped the bonding stood back watching him.

“You could give a guy a hand, ya’ know,” said the pale man.

“We are The Black,” were the words that were heard.

“I don’t care what colour you are, you could still lend a hand.”

“We are The Black.”

“The Enemy rises.”

“What was I thinkin’?” said the man, to himself, as he continued his work.

“The Enemy rises.”

“We are The Black.”

“Well, The Fat Man said you had better keep it that way. You don’t want this near The White Robes, or those damned hybrids, or it may overshoot the yield.”

“We are The Black.”

“We are The Black.”

“Boy, that joining thing really got you scared, eh,” commented the pale man. He knew what had happened to The Robes and could now see that they were talking to themselves, not him. They were in some kind of refocusing process.

“We are The Black.”

“Okay, that’s it. I have enjoyed our conversation, and your witty banter,” he said, as he happily and quickly closed the back doors on the truck. “Remember, keep it away from The Whites, and The Joined. Bad for business, *you know*.”

“We are The Black.”

“The Enemy rises.”

“Yep, so I hear,” said the man, almost in self-defence, as he got into the truck and cranked it up.

“We are The Black.”

“You are The Freaks,” he said under his breath, as he put the truck in gear and drove off.

The pale man felt a bit unsure in his gut about this delivery as he drove away, but he knew from experience that ‘The Weapon’ had to be good for business in their hands, as The Black had never failed. The White were a different matter, in his mind. They were dangerous.

“Anyway, the Fat Man is happy with the sale, and so am I,” he said, aloud to himself.

“TIME TO EAT JACK,” said Jennifer, shaking him gently awake. He opened his eyes, and she was looking down on him. He smiled, and she did too. There was patience and friendship in her gaze, as well as a little of something else.

“*Just perfect,*” said Jack out loud, before he could stop himself.

Jennifer smiled. She knew exactly what he meant, even though the words could have meant many things.

“Com’ on’ Jack, Deveroux is going to eat Wat if we don’t eat soon,” she said, with a smile.

They both laughed. Jack got up, and they walked towards the small fire together.

“Well, *Sleeping Beauty!*” shouted Deveroux, as he saw Jack and Jennifer coming to the fire.

“Your growling stomach woke me up, Deveroux. So, I thought, I should get over there quick. You should get that seen to,” called out Jack.

“You’re a funny man, Jack. In a *girly* kinda’ way.”

“And you’re *the man*, Deveroux,” said Jack laughing, and the others joining in.

“You *bet I am*. Now, let’s eat.”

The friends ate their fill and talked about The Robes. It really had Jack a little more stirred up tonight. A little bit of dread crept into his frame, at times, during the conversation. The wonder of his journey, internalising all the learning, and the need to have faith in what was to come, had pretty much kept him at ease until now. There was something about Jennifer, too; that she was simply there, somehow changed things for him. It made things less hard edged, and the struggle a little easier, in some ways. It was something more than even Brig, or The Surfer, or his new friends at home. She was *in* life with him. They were connected. Friends were friends, but this was different, and they both knew it.

“Well, ya’ gotta’ live right now, right here; or just miss the whole damned thing, if you ask me,” said Deveroux.

“The fire is nice, and the company is good,” added Jennifer.

Jack thought she was saying it to him, or about him, and to him alone. But even though it was a lovely feeling, he knew where it came from, and he had to keep it light and take his time with her. That was respectful, and he could enjoy the process more this way. He had also learned that as humility created poise on the waves and he could use that here too.

“Yep, you have got to enjoy where you *are*, and *the process*. Time can be a killer, or time can be a friend. It’s up to us to decide which one, from my experience,” put in Wat.

“Well, goodness me, you actually have something going on in there, boy,” joked Deveroux.

“And you are sounding more and more like a perfect match for The Judge, Deveroux,” said Jennifer.

“Ooo, that little slap *stung a bit*, girly. Lucky I’m a *strong* man.”

They all laughed at that, and Jack asked, “So, have I missed something here? I knew you liked her, but this sounds like something’s happening.”

“Our man Deveroux here, is quite the Romeo, Jack,” said Jennifer.

“Romeo Deveroux,” said Jack.

Deveroux smiled gently, and said, “Little by little, day by day. Good things come in time, and by gentle timely steps; *all* good things.”

“You like to do things solid, eh?”

“Yep, but we all stumble. The beauty of that though, is that even if you do fall down, you learn more, and it still gets you there in the end, Jack. Life is life.”

“Turning stumbling blocks into steppingstones,” added Wat.

“Yep, everything’s a process,” said Deveroux, “And there’s a lot of joy in a journey.”

“Why do we always want to just be there? You know, at the end, with the prize. I don’t think I do anymore,” mused Jack, thinking of the joy of steadily getting to know Jennifer.

“Go at a pace,” said Jennifer, almost in devotion.

“And also making some things *priorities*, because you can’t get to *everything* you want,” added Deveroux. “We can get all bound up and crazy, in wanting it *all*, like a child trying to choose lollies.”

“True, Agent,” responded Jack.

“*Yep, live it. Do it.* Choose, and let it unfold in front of you. *That’s cruzin’*,” finished Deveroux, smiling.

“I used to choke decisions to death with my mind. I always wanted to control everything. I had to learn to use my gut, and trust life eventually. I *always* check in on my gut now. It helps me with decisions and priorities,” added Wat.

“Nice,” said Jennifer, gently.

“Yep, and then again, maybe *fate has other ideas*,” said Jack, smiling at Deveroux.

“Touche, girly man,” responded Deveroux, remembering their discussion very early on in all this.

“So much seems ordered and written,” Jack went on. “But *either way*, I suppose you’ve just got to enjoy the process,” he finished, smiling at Jennifer because of their little talk earlier.

She just looked at him and smiled. She didn’t even seem to have sarcasm in her. She just appreciated life.

“You know what’s magic about the process?” asked Jennifer, smiling widely, *knowing* she had a bit of *magic* to share.

“Hit us, Jen,” said Deveroux.

“I was riding in a locomotive, in this really strange place, and this weird guy . . .”

“Like Deveroux,” cut in Jack.

“You and me are gonna’ have to have a talk, Jack; a very *physical* talk. Please go on, young lady.”

“Well, he said that there are *train stops*, and train journeys in between. You have to decide to get on in the first place, *and* you can’t get off everywhere.”

“Yep, for sure,” said Deveroux.

“But the really cool thing was that, he said, it was also like purpose and connection. We might get on a train to go somewhere, and then meet someone new on that train. That might change our purpose, and we might end up somewhere completely different. He said, *connection* creates

and builds purpose, and *purpose* creates and builds connection. Each builds *the other*, and they are inextricably connected. Families are like that. Groups are like that. Life is like that, a constantly changing process of connection and purpose.”

“Connection is love. Purpose is knowledge. Connection and purpose, love and knowledge, each leading to the other; each enhancing the other,” said Jack, joining some more dots in the great puzzle.

“That guy also said that *meaningful* connection build’s *meaningful* purpose, and vice versa, of course.”

They all sat back and contemplated all that on their full stomachs.

They were all purposed, connected, and happy.

THEY ALL SLEPT ON THE BEACH THAT NIGHT. Jack and Jennifer had stayed up late talking, and although they wanted to spend as much time as they could together, they had eventually succumbed to sleep. The physical day granted them a very deep sleep.

Sleep is something that nothing could truly replace, and Jack knew he needed enough of it to function well. He just knew that he needed his balance of sleep, and it seemed relative. He had suffered from insomnia once or twice; once really protracted, and he knew that it had myriad ramifications in health, happiness, and in many other things, inside and in life.

In the new morning, he was woken by the sea breeze and the sound of the surf. It had been a windless night, and very comfortable on the sand, so he got up feeling very rested, even though

a little muscle sore from the previous day's surfing. He loved being up early. The life of the new day was here, and he had always liked a good deal of time before heading off to work. If he didn't begin his day in a rush, the day was lived in a better energy, especially with time for exercise, and some spiritual nourishment, early on in it.

He now looked down the beach, and the want for freedom took him. He was still feeling a bit of trepidation at what might come with The Robes, but last night, before he went off to sleep, he had prayed for assistance, and it had fortified him. His walk in the wastelands had granted him the habit of regular prayer, and it was a little like food for him now. He had struggled all the years in his faith to keep prayer regular, but now as he walked up the beach he talked to The Creator. It was real and natural to him to do it this way, and he also reflected on things as he walked.

He interspersed his conversation with prayers and some verses. Having them in him, he could access them anytime he wished. The revealed prayers of the Creative Word were special; certainly, better at helping him centre his being. Some of the verses he had memorised were just sentences that held particular meaning, but the few small prayers he knew, were whole. Praying for others was *very* satisfying to him and praying with *a focus* was very powerful in creating movement, but mostly he just talked with God when he prayed. He talked with honesty and some passion, and sometimes he would even shout at Him to get answers to things he just could not remedy in his life. It was a very personal and very real relationship for Jack.

He had just finished communing with The Creator when he saw a black man sitting on the first dune above the beach. On the second small dune, above the man and to the right, was a something wooden. It was Brig, and he had the totem.

“This totem don’t belong to this country, but I got permission.”

“Hey Brig, why did you bring it here?” asked Jack.

“To remind you of free will, Jack. The choice; animal or human, physical or spirit, mind or soul, emotion or heart; they’re all perfection, but the choice is in which of these we choose to lead us.”

Brig’s words focused Jack back on his deeper being, just like the revealed prayers of The Beauty; not as deeply, but they carried some of their essence.

“*Remember* this, Jack.”

“I see it, Brig.”

“*Seein’ it*, is one thing, Jack. *Acting it*, is another, but *hold it there deep*, so when you need it, you got it.”

“Yep. Sure.”

“So, you enjoyin’ the journey, Jack. Enjoying *now*?”

“Yes Brig, and really looking forward to seeing what’ll unfold next. Now that I can surf with more poise, I feel less concerned with what might come in the future.”

“Yep, relaxin’ in it, and acceptin’ the seasons.”

“Yeah, mate. That’s for sure.”

“You’ come a long way, since we first met, Jack.”

Jack looked back to both his journeys, and his life, and he saw back to the man who fell down in the paddock; a man locked off from life, and his eyes teared up a little. He saw the endless gifts that had been given to him, through hardship and joy, through adventure and hard work. *“The gifts of life are endless,”* he thought.

“Yep, *endless*,” said Brig, now in Jack’s thoughts.

Brig stayed in Jack’s thoughts and brought to him an image.

There was a child planting a seed with her mother. The seed grew into a young tree, then a young girl was watering and fertilising it; giving it a good start. The girl became a teenager, and was pruning the branches, so it would produce good fruit. Then, as a young lady, she raked up some grass around the fully grown tree to keep the ground from drying out. She then picked some flowers for her table from it. Then as a pregnant woman, she collected the fruit, and shared it on a table that stretched around the world.

“We don’t know what we will become. We are planted here, and what potential lies in the seed of us, well, we can only tell when we’ve made the effort, and the fruit finally comes. We need be patient, and there will be many other seasons, after the first fruiting. People look for an answer, a secret, a way to be happy, a way to understand, when we are all just simply becoming what we were meant to be,” shared Brig, gently.

Jack got up and left, as it seemed natural somehow, and walked further up the beach to reflect on what Brig had shared. He loved the part about simply becoming what we are meant to be. As he walked up the beach, the wind grew cooler, and then colder. He saw a tree up ahead, on the edge of the beach. It drew him, and he walked towards it. It seemed warm, and as the wind was

getting colder, the tree took on a strange allure. He could feel its comfort, and he could feel it calling his animal nature. He was so drawn to the warmth of the tree that he could not help but go towards it.

As he came closer to the tree, it began to smoke; like it was cooking and beginning to burn. It offered, even more warmth now, from the cold wind. The sea was whipping up higher waves as the weather system deepened around him. He moved closer and saw that the tree had no branches. They had all been cut off close to the trunk. This tree could yield no fruit. He saw clearly the choice, and he reeled back from the tree, and turned to face the wind.

He turned straight into the arms of two Joined Robes, and they drove their hands into his being. The White side drove their hands into his mind, and the Black side into his emotional centre. The intensity of their attack was nothing Jack had prepared for, as he even had to fight himself. They energised any stray thought or emotion that could give them what they wanted, as they pushed him towards the tree; the tree that promised comfort, blind surety, and all his animal needs.

As the battle within raged on, the sea grew higher, and the rain came in; and these words were heard.

“You are The Way, or you will be no more.”

“Or you will be no more.”

“You are The Way.”

“You are The Way.”

Jack could feel himself being torn apart by his own self, his ego especially at the words that were now heard, but his soul would not yield. He was dying, and he knew it. The very water of his being was being boiled and drained. Jack began to die, and as he did, he saw a huge snake winding down around the tree. The Robes were overjoyed to see it. So much so, they almost screamed.

“You are The Way!”

“You are The Way!”

The totem came to Jack’s mind, then free will, and he chose; he chose the Spirit, and with that choice, a huge spirit snake wound its way up the tree. Both snakes sat there on the tree. As with all things, there is balance, and it is in the garden of man’s dual nature that the soul is grown. The power of free will, in this place, is unassailable.

The two Robes screamed in pain, and in unison, *“You are the way!”*

But there were questions in the words that were heard, and the Robes fell away, sinking into the sand. Jack could feel their loss, and their now growing rage, and it boiled up and exploded the sand near his feet. He jumped back as a three-metre portal appeared, and one thousand times, one thousand Joined Robes began to rise from the darkness.

Jack was spent. How could he hold back this insane crowd? His free will had made him immune, but they were still seeking entry, and he knew somehow that they could. Just then, Deveroux raced through the rain, then came Brig, The Surfer, and Jennifer. Jennifer was looking back into the rain behind her, and Jack was expecting Wat, but The Doc came racing out, and the sight of him filled Jack with elation.

They all made a circle around the portal, while Deveroux had some good fun pulsing the Robes that were trying to rise into this world. The Doc turned into a small ball of light, and shot into the centre of the portal, while Jack and the others all held hands around its edge. Light then shot out from The Doc towards all those around the portal, and strangely, bursts of light came from each of the friends around the portal, which met the Doc's light halfway; while on the wind, these words came in heavenly tones, and they repeated over and over gently, as if it was the wind itself calling,

“Love Me, that I may love thee.”

“Love Me, that I may love thee.”³

These words filled the friends with light, and the ecstasy of the purest love poured out of them, making the spokes of light to The Doc more radiant, and stronger. The Robes could not escape, as love was too great a force. Love is like light; it does not take much love to chase away the darkness of life. Darkness holds no power, and so is always afraid of the power of love.

The portal shrunk and shrunk until it closed, and as it did, all the friends slowly moved with it into a single embrace. The storm and the words that were repeated on the wind, fell away, and the sun broke through the dissipating cloud.

The bonds of love were too strong; disparate souls, one in purpose, too strong. *Nothing holds as much power and light, as unity.*

Acceptance

Jack woke up on the steps of his townhouse. He wept at being torn away from his friends, and then he realised that it may all have been a dream; *Jennifer* included. He just lay there and sobbed. He sobbed also in elation, for the experience and the gifts the journey had given him. Now he could truly bring his soul, to his life, and be more of use. His mind was a little confused, and his emotions were bursting out all over, but his soul was at ease. “*What is to be, is to be; and it’s all good,*” he thought, while he allowed the pain of his separation from his friends take its course.

He was not particularly lucid and was deeply parched. His mouth was extremely dry. He did not know how long he had been on the stairs, but his ribs were very sore where the edges of two stairs dug into them. They were carpeted but he must have been down a while now. His mobile phone was on the step beside him, and he began to pull himself up to sit. He was weak, and he grimaced as a shot of pain sliced deeply through his rib cage. When he fell unconscious on the stairs, he may have cracked a rib. When the pain subsided, he picked up his phone and rang his sister.

“It’s Jack. I need your help. I’m at home.”

“What’s going on, Jack?”

“I’m okay for now. Can you just get here?”

“Yes, sure, I’ll be there soon.”

“Nothing like family,” he thought, as he sat there on the steps with his head low and his elbows on his knees. His thoughts returned to Jennifer and his friends, and although he allowed himself to feel the sadness, an acceptance easily filled his being. It was melancholy, an acceptance of the sweet love, and life, now lost to him. It had all been so real, and him so lost in it, that he had not questioned it, but he now did.

In time, Jack’s sister came and took him to the hospital. They got there reasonably quickly and waited a while before they were called into a consultation room. The Doctor came in, did some testing, and asked some questions. He left for a short time, while a nurse stayed with Jack and his sister. Jack loved his sisters. They had so much love and were always there for him. He had never been able to meet the love and generosity they gave him, but was always, more than thankful.

When the Doctor returned, he said, “You are badly dehydrated, Jack, so we will keep you in overnight. You have more than likely cracked your rib too.”

“Yep, I thought so,” said Jack.

“Don’t worry, it will only hurt *when you breathe*,” added the Doctor, jokingly.

“Yep, had one of these before; a cracked sternum from football. It’s gonna’ tickle a bit, but it’s just good to be home, Doc,” said Jack, as the Doctor’s face changed to a little concern.

“Are you lucid? What is your name?”

“No, I meant, being conscious again. It’s good to be conscious again.”

“Okay, but what is your full name.”

“Jack Joshua Johnston.”

“*Really?*” asked the Doctor, to Jack’s sister.

She just nodded and smiled. The Doctor smiled, shook his head, and left the room.

It was a strange time for Jack. Even though his mind had learnt to deal with all those travels, and all those different realities, it was hard for it to settle back into this reality again. He still kept expecting something to appear or change, or for him to suddenly find himself somewhere else. Jack and his sister finally worked out that he had been on the stairs for three days. He then told her about the dreams he had had during this time. He didn’t know whether she was just humouring him, but she listened.

A couple of days later, after some rest, and more precautionary scans and tests, he got to return home. He just walked and rested over the following week. It was good to get outside and gently active after his time on the stairs, and in hospital. The friends of his journeys were now a dream, but he would always treasure them. But just now he thought of Brig; *he* was here. Jack thought that he would get in touch with him soon. He also knew that time with family was first.

Suddenly, that crack appeared in his mind again. Jack reeled at its awful feelings of loss and grief, and its intrusion into *this* reality. It was very brief, this time, and only a dull pain had come and gone with it. The Doctor had told him that his mind may play tricks on him, for a time,

as the dehydration would have played havoc with the chemical balance in his brain. He thought it was probably this imbalance that had broken into his unconscious dreams as he lay on the stairs, and now this time awake. He understood how chemical imbalance could muck with thoughts and create emotions that weren't real, so he let the grieving feelings go. He *knew* that they must be chemically caused, because the only thing he was really grieving, right now, was Jennifer. He would miss the others, but he would miss Jennifer the most.

Happiness

It was some of weeks out of hospital now, and Jack was still not working. He was just taking things easy for a while and reflecting on his journeys. Reflection was natural to him now, and because he had gone a little nuts after another stint *deeper* many years before, time off, and allowing his mind time to catch up for a while, were definitely the go. Right now, for him, was also about *gratitude* for all that was good in his life and for all that he had learned, and an aware *appreciation* for the beauty of every small thing.

He went about things slowly, with a less hurried or fearful energy, while he continued to practise a gentle mindfulness, or was that *soulfulness*. He watched what *petrol* he was running on, be it emotional, loving, mental, or spiritual, and he watched which of these his sentences were rising from. But firstly, he checked in to see *who* was talking, his *animal* nature, or his *spiritual* one. This one understanding gave him *so much insight* into himself, his thoughts, and a quickly available view of his motivations. He still listened to his emotional needs calling but he discerned their value with his soul.

Time out of his head and doing small jobs had been lovely too. It was peaceful and a great freedom. It took the strain from his mind and gentled its chatter. He used to love pottering around with no job in particular to do, when he had a shed and a small parcel of land. So now was a time for cleaning out cupboards, washing the carpet, giving the car a real clean, and dumping or donating old items that had built up over time. This ‘culling’, or unloading things made him feel good too. It seemed to clear his emotions, and his mind, also somehow seeming to invite the future; a clearing out, before moving on. All these many things, but *especially* gratitude and soulfulness, were powerful and gentle providers of peace and happiness.

He now thought about Joe, and even thought about taking a drive out west to visit the *real* Joe and other old friends, and just to let everything go for a *long* while. Then he thought better of it, as his body needed rest, and his mind still needed some solid ground. Home ground was best for that. He loved walking on the earth again. It was solid, and now, every footfall was a precious thing to him. He knew people didn’t really understand what we all have here; this wonderful nurturing place to live and grow. This marvelous vulnerable blue green gem alone in the expanse and lifelessness of space was just part of that, but the foundation and something to treasure deeply; something to care for and protect urgently, like our own children.

He knew that there were spiritual eddies in this world, and that all was built *more essentially* on light and love, but there was a comfort in just the physical for a while; a solid place to re-energise and reflect. He now remembered Jennifer’s account of a place, where she learned that all spirit is energy and that intent, amongst other things, is transferred in deeper ways. There were many other things in the reality of man that could see and hear what the mind and the physical senses could not.

He remembered times when *inklings* of friends would come just before they rang, as well as dreams playing out the next day or next year. There was one time when he could see and feel dark oppressive clouds below the ceiling in some meetings that he had attended in the past. It all seemed lovely and high-minded, but the dark enclosing clouds, and constant dreams of monks, had made him realise that something was not right. His mind had been tricked, but his soul could read the controlling dark energy of that place and time. He loved the ground beneath his feet, but he also trusted the intimations of the spirit.

It was almost like he was back in deeper places when he thought of such things. The feeling was the same. He knew that there was a *true* deeper reality; a deeper place within us, and within this place. The magic was *here* in the so-called physical reality too if we bothered to look. Even dreams, without being irrational, were proof to him that aspects of us transcended time and space. Science was fording new chasms, and reaching new knowledge, and even the essence of an atom seemed to require attention to exist. It was stranger than fiction, and part of the magic of discovery, becoming more available every day to humankind.

Jack was happy letting his thoughts flow, gather, and change, and he felt happy.

IT HAD BEEN SOME MONTHS NOW, SINCE HIS RETURN. He had been back at work, was rolling along in his day to day of life, and had just finished mowing the lawn around his townhouse. It wasn't a place to grow fruit trees, like he had in the other places he had lived, but finishing a good job always brought a sense of fulfilment; and sitting down in his lounge with a cool drink afterwards was a little piece of heaven to him. He sat there, *appreciating the simple things*.

As he did, he looked over to the side table, and saw a book. It was one of his favourite books, on one of his favourite people. The book was compiled accounts of the life of The Exemplar. It was full of many small stories of how he had acted in His life; simple acts that held great depth. This man was a *human example* of the spirit of Jack's Faith, not just in his words, but in how He *lived* His whole life. His *words* had also become part of this Faith guiding spirit, but it was who He *was* and *how He acted*, that was His greatest gift. He would say,

“Look at me. Follow me. Be as I am.”⁴

These words were not said in ego, they were His *service* to His kind. He gave His whole life to show the ideal way, and it was *never* about Him. He only ever considered Himself a servant, and He could forgive like no other. He was *a gift*, and He was simply saying, “Watch *how* I live, *live* that way, and *become* that way.” Which was living to the wisdom of the Choice Wine. This man would care for sick people when no other would, some who even *despised* Him. He saw diligently to the affairs of His family, gave out to the dispossessed, and even grew wheat to save starvation in wartime.

He would be happy almost always, even though He spent almost His whole life in a prison city, in denegration, and exile, with The Blessed Beauty. He said upon His final release from prison and exile that He was happy when He was imprisoned, as He spent those forty years in service to others. He said that he was always free, and that the greatest prison is ‘*the prison of self*’. It was a life of *empathy* and *service* to his fellow man, no matter their class, race, or creed; no matter his surroundings or people's abuse. He learned firsthand that service gave life *meaning* and provided happiness in even the darkest places.

He knew that if you lived in the spirit, happiness is attainable, and the more you attach yourself to this world, a world he called a *shadow world*, the more it would lead you to disappointment and sorrow. Jack could see how people wanted the shadows, and how he had, and still did a little; something *outside* ourselves, or *someone* outside ourselves, to make us happy. He knew that happiness couldn't, and can't, be sustained when we are too emotionally attached to the material reality. As he had discovered on his life journey, happiness was only attainable in the spirit.

Jack now thought how whining about life, and other people, had become the great conversation of the people of the world; as expectations had become too high. Most believed that the pains of life should not visit them, or that others should see things or believe as they did, and so, most recounted their pain over and again to all who would listen. Greater and greater numbers stayed these sad places of the mind and emotion; instead of forgiving, learning, and moving on. The endless negativity of *judgement*, and *drama*, was a galling weight on people's souls.

"The prison of self," Jack said to himself.

Happiness to The Exemplar, *The Servant* as wished to be called, was something that you simply *decided to be*, and it was also something that you *did*. He said that we are responsible for our own happiness, even though He was always trying to make other people happy. If they were sad, He helped them to be happy in whatever way possible, and He was always smiling. Humour, getting people to forget their woes, and helping them be happy, were paramount in the way he interacted with others. Kindness and unapologetic honesty seemed to be his way, to Jack.

There was also an account of this man's sister in the book; one that talked about the derision and abuse hurled on Her Father, His companions, and her, during their incarceration in the foul-smelling Ottoman prison city. On the second night, after their arrival, His sister and another, found themselves laughing so loud that the Blessed Beauty asked them to stop, as the guards might think they had lost their faculties. We *can* be happy and even *joyous* in the darkest times. Laughter elevates the soul, just like music does, and happiness and freedom, like fear, is a choice; an inner state.

As Jack reflected more on happiness, he knew that if we can settle down the wild horse inside us and see with *human* eyes more, that we could know more happiness. But that was a choice and a process. Time was required. He then looked back on how he had handled some things, or reacted badly, and how at times *he* had often sat in the mud puddle of '*life isn't fair*'. These were a waste of life, as well as him often getting too weighed down by things that happened *to* him. He knew that we all had struggle cast on us, and some injustice, but he had learned that bad times *pass*, and *good* times too. He knew that it is how you see things, and how you deal with what comes to your door, that really counts.

"*You may as well just be happy,*" he said to himself, as he looked up at a picture of The Exemplar, gently smiling at him from the wall.

It felt great to be alive right now. He could feel his soul being filled with good food, and he breathed in deeply. It was a single, *satisfying*, and relaxing breath. "*Such a simple thing, and such a beautiful thing*", he thought, just appreciating the deep breath, in itself.

He pulled himself down lower on the couch, as his mind wandered back to some hard times in his life, now remembering their gifts and the great places they took him. “*What are hard times really?*” he thought. “*And why not just enjoy the times of ease and joy, and appreciate what something hard is giving the other times? The hard and the joyful always follow each other, both with their gifts.*”

He was realising the perfection of life, the gifts life yields, and how being in the present and *being soulful* was a big part of being happy. That if we were centred in our soul and detached, we would always be *present*, and more aware within a *deeper perspective* of life. Just as The Exemplar was, and always happy.

He knew, at the very least, that if we could trust that pain is what comes before the spiritual gifts of life and be assured that whatever comes to us is the best thing for us, then, we could be happier. If we know that we are spiritual creatures, and noble; accept that the material is fleeting, and bring ourselves more to live life in the spirit; we can live a wider, deeper, life.

“And, *anyway*, the *good* rain always falls in the wildest part of the storm,” he said aloud to himself.

JACK WAS FEELING LISTLESS. He had to shake himself up and start getting on with life. He was working again, but he was not serving the birthing of the new civilization like he wanted to right now. He wasn’t sure what he should do, but he knew that if he just *started* the process, it *would* unfold and grow. His time in the desert wastelands had taught him about simple goals. Then, those famous words came to him, “***From little things, big things grow.***”⁵

He thought about what he could do, and he thought about the courses of the Running Man. He knew these spiritual courses had limitless potential and could develop the spiritual and intellectual capacity in people to grow new communities, ones built on spiritual foundations. The basic skills it taught could also power up people to take hold of their own future. He thought about getting into conversations with people, and helping them see their nobility, and helping them find a way to rebuild their own community. He thought about how he might go about helping them find a vision for even just their own neighbourhood, or their community area, so that they could be responsible for their own nurture and development.

Jack saw, how historically, people had given over their power to organise their own lives, and that they had become lazy, or had lost the knowledge of their own power. There were so many expectations of government and businesses to fulfil *their expectations*, and many had abdicated responsibility for more and more in their lives. It had now grown to the point of many even blaming their own lack of character and bad personal choices on the powers that be. He needed to help them see that happiness did not lie in expectations *or* ease, but in responsible, active, and constructive change in the part of the world they lived in.

No person was powerless in their lives, no community unable to see to its own future. Each community had a pool of talent, skills, and ability in the people who lived there, and more capacity could easily be grown.

Jack had also come across so many, who waited for God to make things right for them. Some just thought that believing was enough, and they did not act, but waited to be saved or set free, and of course *the others punished*. Others believed that they were born in sin, and didn't bother trying, because they were heading to hell anyway, and yet others, who believed that they

were here to suffer for, or receive the rewards, of past lives. But mostly were those who didn't believe in anything at all, or half believed, and had simply lost purpose. They were seemingly content with how things were, or focused on only material acquisition, or became nihilistic from not being able to believe in anything. Some *railed* Doc Quixote style against others, for the sake of justice in certain things, instead of taking people with them into a better future.

Meaning generally, whether spiritual or social, had fallen away to lesser things and lesser appetites, and Jack had clearly seen the deserts of meaninglessness that seemed to be slowly encroaching into the cities, villages, and towns of the world. *Meaning* was a huge part of happiness; meaning was a *wellspring of life*, and yet, most seemed to accept *the constant thirst* while they drank *anything else* they could; lost in a kind of lolly shop that advertised happiness but could never truly sustain us. Alcohol, drugs, food, and experiences seemed to be the lollies sold there.

He knew that only true meaning could slake this thirst. he knew that caring and meaningful connection were the remedy, and that there were powers in us that we could use to transform our neighbourhoods, and our world. He believed in the power of these inner lights, and these human powers of the soul. He knew *love*, and *therefore* meaning, could be returned by those empowered to *act*. He knew that life was really just about *being content*, and *giving out to those around you*, even if it was just smiling a little more to lift the spirit of a place.

All Jack could think about now was action; getting out on those waves to test his courage and love, and filling his heart with meaning, but his body was still calling for rest; at least beyond work and the everyday chores of living. He relaxed in that call, and as he continued to reflect, he began to set down his plan of action; empathy and hope powering him. He believed in people, in

an eventual great future, and in his growing health. He then smiled, and gave himself some advice,

“In God’s time, Jacko.”

Integrity

In the weeks that followed Jack visited friends and did the things we do in our lives, but purpose, *meaningful purpose* in reinvigorating humanity was still missing. He *was* thankful for the time to gather a vision for service, and was working, but his own ease was attacking him in his spare time; a nervous ease. Now sitting at home after watching a movie, he finally knew that *acceptance* needed to be his best friend; deciding to just be thankful, content in his comfortable chair for now, and appreciate that everything had its time and place.

He saw how acceptance, thanks, and contentment were all beautiful friends, as he began to think of things that he was thankful for. Gift after gift tumbled out, each one lifting his heart. These thoughts buoyed him, and then, relaxed him. A bit of *harden up and do what you can do*, and a bit of *let go and have faith*, was going on as well. The former was something he always had in his philosophy, among a lot of other old sayings that had power to them. He loved ‘*get up and get on with it*’ sayings particularly. But there were so many little wisdoms that were time tested. Letting go and having faith, was newer. It had grown as he learned to trust more in the wisdom of life, and

God, rather than himself and his own limited knowledge and ability; it had grown the more he simply believed.

He picked up a book of his Faith's Writings and read a little, figuring that it was something useful. As he read and contemplated the words he read, they released him even more from his impatience and expectations. The words granted him detachment from the world, and his heart was set free of any concerns. It was a good *ease* he then found himself in, a *thankful ease*, and Jack fell off to sleep on the lounge chair. He fell into a deep sleep, and this is what he heard...

"Rely on the guidance of The Creative Word, and seek to be of service, always. In any small kindness, at work, or in the work of building the New Civilisation. In these, you will find your true self.

The Word will guide you; not others, or their perception of it. You should think for yourself, and see through your own eyes, as all have their own creature. You are responsible for yourself in life. Your integrity is your responsibility alone.

If unhappiness assails you, look to see what you are attached to in the world, and seek release from it, through the powers of the soul, and higher thoughts.

If unhappiness visits you through hard events, then seek acceptance, humility, and contentment, as in these lie the poise of the soul.

If you are tired and thirsty from the struggle, then feel gratitude for the endless gifts that still surround you, and trust that you are learning what you are to be learning.

If life is hard, sit and talk with God. Pray yourself into the spirit. Get outside or go and give to someone who is even less fortunate than yourself.

Life is to test, grow, and shape you. Accept it and have realistic expectations. Live life in the spirit; live life and be happy. But remember, to connect, to give is to be happy.

All these things, already exist within selflessness, and in this state no longer need be sought. In selflessness itself, in service to your kind, in acts of love, you will find happiness, even while surrounded in hardship. It will be the truest happiness.

It is, in fact, the hardship, and sometimes severe vicissitudes, that bring you to this most true happiness. In self-concern, lies the greatest unhappiness, and the greatest veil to understanding. Once truly released from self-concern, one will never return.

Your world is being brought to unity. The time of human unity is upon you. East and West are coming to know each other and realising the connection of all humankind in the same struggles.

All humanity will find that they hold the same beauty, and the same darkness. A human is a human, and all are responsible for what seeds they sow.

We are called only to love, so let no name, colour, age, wage, or creed separate you, and be anxiously concerned with what is important in your time. Unity is not only possible, it is inevitable.

The Running man will be crucial to build what can be built, while the world crumbles. There is to be disintegration, but there will also be an equal force of integration. Gather this integrative force, and the friends of this force, and work together for the future of your kind.

Your recent journey was one of personal transformation, and you may now use it in the work of collective transformation. One builds upon the other, and both will evolve. One is an essential part of the other. You have work to do. Use what you have learned.

True happiness can only be found in connection to the Ancient of Days, and meaningful connection in service to others. As you live more in the spiritual reality, by striving to replace animal traits with spiritual powers, you will know greater happiness and peace.

Just as the embryo in the womb prepares its faculties for this life, you are preparing your spiritual faculties for the next life. The Creative Word is the true power of love, it is sent to renew meaning and purpose. To bring peace and happiness to the human system.”

MANY MONTHS LATER, JACK WAS CHATTING ON HIS PHONE. He was very tired, but up late text chatting with a good friend from Honduras. She lived so far away from his comfortable existence, and she knew a level of acceptance that he could only dream of.

They chatted about the work they were doing in service to humanity, as the Running Man had created a common ground, a shared experience, no matter what country one worked in. The courses had grown, and were recreating community through children, youth, and adults who got together to learn, give out, and take part. The first small buds of a new civilisation were flowering in different places all over the world.

Their conversation came around to happiness in day-to-day life, and because these two souls lived in very different social realities, it took on very different levels of expectation. Jack realised that his wants were far more than hers, and hers more about safety and opportunity. He also knew for other peoples around the world, that just having food, or attaining an end to war, was the great hope. There were many aspects of oppression in both their societies, violence and economic struggle in hers, and rampant self-interest, intellectual arrogance and ignorance, and separation, in his. He certainly knew just how much he lived in *the lucky country*, but there were great enemies of goodness and nurture in all places it seemed.

Towards the end, they shared their understanding, that *life was not just about happiness*. It was about *so many* things. The experience so wide and intricate, with so many gifts, within all its aspects, even the sacrificial. It was in love and meaning, in the effort to build things and more loving connections, and in the hard times and tragedy that grew character and pulled people together. It was in higher the human freedom and inspiration that we could found within our deeper selves, and in acts of great humility and selflessness.

They found that life was not about a singular search for happiness, but that happiness was a *byproduct* of all the endless wonderful, and deeply bitter, flavours of life; a *byproduct* of a deeper understanding of life, and one of focus on the wellbeing others, over ourselves. That *happiness was not something that could not be sought within itself*, as there was much more to gather from here, and endeavour for.

English was not his friend's first language, and as she typed her last response, Jack nodded off to sleep. These words appeared on his screen...

“Everybody has expectations of happiness, everybody look for it, and maybe a few can reach...or maybe it take time to find that we have been happy and blessed every second of our life.”

...Later in the night, Jack began to stir, and in that place between sleep and waking, he heard someone calling his name.

“Jack. Jack. I’m here. Jack!”

It was Jennifer’s voice. He called out her name in a half daze and strained to hear a reply. Then somehow, in the half dreaming, he could see an answer was coming, so he waited there to hear her voice.

As the message reached him, a Black Robe suddenly filled his inner sight, and its terrible loud booming cry muted Jennifer’s words.

“The Enemy rises. Fire the weapon!” was the insane scream that was heard.

Jack woke, startled, and shocked. His eyes wide.

AUTHOR'S OTHER BOOKS

As human beings we learn, discover, evolve, and grow, and what I can give as an author at the time of writing is subjective and relative; and so, does not seek to be absolute. There is much in these books that is symbolic, so readers can hopefully find their own perceptions of the concepts, which they may or may not agree with. My main hope for these books is to awaken investigation and discussion; even self-reflection, while also entertaining those who read them.

James D

THE DEPARTMENT OF TRUTH TRILOGY

The first book of this series, "*The Department of Truth*", is the original adventure of Jack Johnston, who is taken away on a journey of discovery, that he wanted to take, but did not realise it. Its main theme is the search for truth. It is an existential journey, and seeks to explore the nature of truth, and intimate that the continuing journey of humanity is full of promise. It is a wild and wonderful journey that wanders to many different worlds, and places deeper, as it explores universal themes. It hopefully mimics the feelings of awe, questioning, confusion, and realisation, of a spiritual journey.

The second book, "*Expectations of Happiness*" seeks to explore the nature of a human being, the nature of this life, and therefore, the nature of happiness here on planet Earth. The main character,

Jack, is struggling to get the great things he learned from his first journey, on the ground in life, and is again drawn to places deeper to find answers. “*Expectations of Happiness*” is about meaningful purpose, and connection in life; it is about striving and acceptance; it is about seeing ourselves as noble and working at that. It makes it clear that happiness is not something that can be sought within itself, and is not, only an inner, or only an outer experience. The book is mostly about the *personal transformation*, which is required for any *collective human transformation* to occur.

The final book, “*The Halls of Certitude*” attempts to meaningfully explore aspects of finding a sure way forward for humanity, collectively. The human race and its future evolution is a wondrous story to me, not one of darkness that most seem to believe lies ahead. There may be some big tremors, some chaos, and outmoded ideas we have to deal with and cast aside, but the way forward is ripe with new fruit. There is much to share on this subject, and we may find that the answers to building a *new civilisation* are more about local communities, very much simpler than we might have imagined.

The *Search* for knowledge, *Growth* of that knowledge within us, which transforms us, and action in *Service* to others, therefore transforming our world, are key building blocks of life; *the* building blocks to a new future for humanity. “*The Department of Truth*” turned out to be seminal in that way, as its three secondary themes have become the main underlying themes of the three books, respectively.

THE STORYTELLER TRILOGY

This is the author's second trilogy and continues on with what will be a series of nine books. It introduces many new characters and renews our connection to some old ones. These books lift the storytelling to new heights.

The first book of "*The Storyteller Trilogy*" is, "*The Storyteller*". It is a story of the passing into adulthood of two young souls, Able and Eedra, while Eedra's world and all its peoples are in the same process on a planetary level. It talks to some of the nature of this time in the life of a person, and this time in the evolution of a planet; the challenge, upheaval, but great beauty and potential of these '*passings*'. This story holds other stories within it, and all between its covers attends to the theme of crisis and victory.

The second book is, "*Letter to the World*". It is a prequel to "*The Storyteller*" and talks to the story of good versus evil. It is a look at humanity through an angel's eyes, and a street kid and two visitors who get caught up in His mission, the story shows the disjointed psyche of the world, and the distractions that take us from ourselves: mostly our own minds. Also, how we need to battle the forces of decay, by seeing them clearly.

The last novel of the trilogy is "*The Traveller*". It is a prequel to "*Letter to the World*", and explores civilisation; its great power, and how we mere mortals may wield that power in our own neighbourhoods; no matter what our own ignorance, or the social norm seeks to put in our way. It also seeks to portray how the great dark force of self is our enemy, and that we are all friends; a human family now finally being united in one river, and one future.

THE KNOWLEDGE TRILOGY

James D Connolly's third trilogy completes a series of nine books, whose characters and storylines intertwine. These stories are again, like all the author's books, wild, untamed, and joyous adventures. They attend to big themes in enjoyable and symbolic stories, leaving readers spellbound and reflective.

The first novel of this trilogy is "*Knowledge*". It asks us to talk honestly, yet with respect, about what ails us as a society, as we are responsible. It asks us to open our minds to more exploration, to more open communication, in a more and more ideologically tribal world. It challenges the clichés of apathy and shows how a small group of people can take part in community building; no matter their age or outlook; no matter how seemingly ordinary. It has a good hard look at the world, through common, day to day eyes, as well as spiritual ones. It seeks to show how we have the power of initiative, and how we can utilise growth engines to transform lives and communities.

The second novel is "*Volition*". It attends to human will and its nature, and looks at different stages in life, finding our vocation, relationships, family life, and child rearing. It looks at three core times in life, and how the knowledge we use underpins how we will act. It also seeks to create more understanding of the power of consultation in all parts of our lives, and free ourselves from the rising noise around us.

The final book of the trilogy, "*Justice*", looks at the boundaries of human life, and how the ego can seek to subsume the greatest within us and threaten take people away from their high destiny. It talks to the inevitability of a mature, just, and unified humanity: and explores the power, and nature, of our link to the Creator as humankind.

CRASH and THE HUMAN CONTINUUM

I wanted to write a book to explore some of the implications of our burgeoning AI and robotic future. What I found as I wrote though was *how amazing* it is to be human. I *was* able find *some* clear implications in the rise of AI, but indeed, it turned out to be more a look at the seemingly small, yet powerfully amazing, aspects of our human creature.

The story is about Crash; an AI crash-test dummy that wanders out into the world by chance. He is a lovely fellow, experiencing a good deal of struggle as he explores further safety solutions for humans. Strangely the damage enhances him, allowing him access to deeper fields of the human continuum. Mmm, *maybe*.

See what *you* think of Crash and his journey in the human continuum.

UNITY

"I don't know what turn of fate brought these two together. A woman of beauty and dreams, and a killer born in the belly of hatred itself. I don't even know where they were headin'. But the day I saw their path's cross was somthin' I wouldn't soon forget.

I've prospected all over this planet in my one hundred and twenty years, and life was hard out here back then. Much harder than it is now, and most folks were just lost in the grip of desperation. Well...it was that way beyond all the walled cities, and away from the high planets.

Those places weren't caught in the grip of desperation and loss, or bein' chewed up in the violent chaos on some other rocks, but they were livin' in their own kind'a hell, and growing a chaos of their own makin'."

CLOWN TOWN

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Duncan Connolly is an Australian writer and artist/ painter of Irish descent. He grew up in a Christian family, but as a young man his quest for knowledge and understanding of the meaning of life and the spirit led him towards the Bahá'í Faith and has been a member of the Bahá'í community since then. His driving interest has been the nature of the human creature, and this life. It has led him to many sources from psychology to history to religious texts. He also believes in the wisdom of nature and in human inner vision as great sources of joy and understanding. But believes that only by living life can anyone really hold knowledge. His writing and art are greatly influenced by his Faith and life experiences, and those of humanity.

The books of The Department of Truth Trilogy are his first published works; where he uses storytelling, in the form of novels, to inspire others. He has also been writing philosophical realisations and poetry, under the acronym JDC for a number of years.

BAHÁ'Í QUOTE

“O My brother! When a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading unto the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy.

He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments. He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth
...

He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory, must cling unto patience and resignation, observe silence and refrain from idle talk. For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century.

That seeker should, also, regard backbiting as grievous error, and keep himself aloof from its dominion, inasmuch as backbiting quencheth the light of the heart, and extinguisheth the life of the soul. He should be content with little, and be freed from all inordinate desire. He should treasure the companionship of them that have renounced the world, and regard avoidance of boastful and worldly people a precious benefit.

At the dawn of every day he should commune with God, and, with all his soul, persevere in the quest of his Beloved. He should consume every wayward thought with the flame of His loving mention, and, with the swiftness of lightning, pass by all else save Him. He should succour the dispossessed, and never withhold his favour from the destitute. He should show kindness to animals, how much more unto his fellowman, to him who is endowed with the power of utterance
...

He should not wish for others that which he doth not wish for himself, nor promise that which he doth not fulfil. With all his heart he should avoid fellowship with evildoers, and pray for the remission of their sins. He should forgive the sinful, and never despise his low estate, for none knoweth what his own end shall be . . .

These are among the attributes of the exalted, and constitute the hallmark of the spiritually-minded. They have already been mentioned in connection with the requirements of the wayfarers that tread the Path of Positive Knowledge. When the detached wayfarer and sincere seeker hath fulfilled these essential conditions, then and only then can he be called a true seeker . . .

Only when the lamp of search, of earnest striving, of longing desire, of passionate devotion, of fervid love, of rapture, and ecstasy, is kindled within the seeker's heart, and the breeze of His loving kindness is wafted upon his soul, will the darkness of error be dispelled, the mists of doubts and misgivings be dissipated, and the lights of knowledge and certitude envelop his being.

At that hour will the mystic Herald, bearing the joyful tidings of the Spirit, shine forth from the City of God resplendent as the morn, and, through the trumpet blast of knowledge, will awaken the heart, the soul, and the spirit from the slumber of negligence.

Then will the manifold favours and outpouring grace of the holy and everlasting Spirit confer such new life upon the seeker that he will find himself endowed with a new eye, a new ear, a new heart, and a new mind. He will contemplate the manifest signs of the universe, and will penetrate the hidden mysteries of the soul.

Gazing with the eye of God, he will perceive within every atom a door that leadeth him to the stations of absolute certitude. He will discover in all things the mysteries of divine Revelation and the evidences of an everlasting manifestation."

*Bahá'u' lláh*⁶

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6. Bahá’u’lláh. (1989). *The Kitab-i-Iqan: The Book of Certitude*, US Bahá’í Publishing Trust. Willamette. P.192-196.

RECOMMENDED LINKS

For further information on the Baha’i Faith the following links are recommended

www.bahai.org

www.bahai.org.au

www.bahaiebooks.com